

FOR EVERYONE

HUMANIANITY

The Most Important Religion

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Please note that this book is a work in progress. I now have one more chapter to complete, on “Faith, Honesty, and Advocacy.” The titles of the last five chapters are tentative, and are to be written by others who are thoroughly familiar with the current book and the previously written “textbook” (For Everyone: Rational-Ethical Living and the Emergence of “Homo Rationalis”: The Most Important Book), downloadable free along with the current book at HomoRationalis.com, and who identify themselves as Humanian as defined in this book. The date of the book will be updated as new chapters and revisions are added. You can participate in the writing of this book by contacting me with your ideas through the Charlotte Philosophy Discussion Group at Meetup.com, for which I am the Organizer. You do not have to attend meetings or reside in the Charlotte, NC area in order to participate on the message board or to contact me.

Bill Van Fleet

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In addition to all those who have contributed to making my life possible and to helping me to think about the issues in this book, I wish to give special thanks to Scott Hofert, a pastor at Watershed, located in Charlotte, NC, who taught me so much about religious living and helped me to understand how better to promote the inclusiveness and generosity that is inherent in this effort.

Bill Van Fleet

INTRODUCTION: HUMANIANITY

WE SHOULD DO THAT WHICH WILL PROMOTE NOT ONLY THE SURVIVAL OF OUR SPECIES, BUT ALSO THE GOOD LIFE FOR EVERYONE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, “THE GOOD LIFE” MEANING AS MUCH JOY, CONTENTMENT, AND APPRECIATION (**JCA**) AS POSSIBLE AND AS LITTLE PAIN, SUFFERING, DISABILITY, AND EARLY DEATH (**PSDED**) AS POSSIBLE.

(REUEP)

EXPLANATION OF INTRODUCTION

This book consists of my opinions about a **new religion** that is available to **everyone**, a religion that I am **advocating** for everyone, and that I believe everyone can **accept**.

In one sense, the religion is not new, in that we have begun to practice it to an increasing extent.

In another sense, it is indeed new, in that it has not been recognized as an official religion, it currently has no organization, and it has not even had a name.

I am giving it a name: “**Humanianity**.” One who practices it I am naming a “**Humanian**.” I will comment later on these names.

The pronunciation of “Humanianity” is “hu MAN ee AN i tee.” The pronunciation of “Humanian” is “hu MAN ee an.”

The **definition** of this religion is “**the intention and advocacy to live completely by the REUEP.**”

The REUEP, given in the Introduction, is an **ultimate ethical principle**. There is no mandate to live by it. Living by it is not obeying someone. There is no reason to live by it. There is nothing logically above it. There is no proof that it is right, or good, or necessary. It is arbitrary. That is why it is “ultimate.” **You just decide to live by it (or don’t).**

But if you live by it (as your ultimate ethical principle), your life, and the lives of others around you, will be very, very different. That is what this book is about.

“**REUEP**” stands for “**rational-ethical ultimate ethical principle.**” “**Rational-ethical**” has a special meaning, spelled out and elaborated upon in the **free textbook** available to everyone on the Internet at **HomoRationalis.com**. The name of the book is:

For Everyone: Rational-Ethical Living and the Emergence of “Homo Rationalis”: The Most Important Book.

That book does not mention Humanianity but it will be helpful in understanding Humanianity within a broader context. It also will be helpful in understanding certain basic details about Humanian living.

In that book, “**rational**” means “consistent with the **rules of logic** and the **rules of evidence**,” the tools which are especially relied upon in the scientific methods.

In that book, “**ethical**” means “pertaining to beliefs about what we **should** do.”

In that book, “**Homo rationalis**” is the metaphoric name used to label our species at some time in its future when we will have, for the first time, begun to live in a drastically better manner than we ever have so far, no longer causing ourselves so much pain, suffering, disability, and early death (PSDED).

In that book, the **thesis** is that we have already begun to change in that direction, but that the change is so early in its development that it is difficult (though not impossible) to see. (In other words, our species is just a toddler.)

In that book, the **thesis** is that we will indeed at that time live, globally, by the REUEP—not that everyone will be equally successful, but that the global culture will agree upon the REUEP as the ultimate ethical principle, and will therefore have a much better life than we do now.

Beyond your intention to live by the REUEP, there is **no further requirement** for being a Humanian. There is no required creed or belief about anything concerning the world or existence.

Yet there is much to be figured out, much to be decided upon, and much to start doing. And this book is an effort to promote that process.

This book consists of **my opinions**, which may be correct or not. None of these opinions are beliefs required by Humanity.

However, my opinion is that these opinions of mine follow from a combination of the REUEP and what all of us can agree upon about the nature of the world, and therefore my prediction is that you are likely to agree with at least most of these opinions.

We'll see.

REUEP: A CLOSER LOOK

Here it is again, the rational-ethical ultimate ethical principle (my definition, for the purposes of this book), which, if you accept it as our ultimate ethical principle, makes you a Humanian:

WE SHOULD DO THAT WHICH WILL PROMOTE NOT ONLY THE SURVIVAL OF OUR SPECIES, BUT ALSO THE GOOD LIFE FOR EVERYONE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, “THE GOOD LIFE” MEANING AS MUCH JOY, CONTENTMENT, AND APPRECIATION (**JCA**) AS POSSIBLE AND AS LITTLE PAIN, SUFFERING, DISABILITY, AND EARLY DEATH (**PSDED**) AS POSSIBLE.

Our behavior consists to a great extent of that which comes **naturally**. It is our own human version of that which is produced by our **basic animal nature**. To a great extent, we do as chimps do, eating, drinking, playing, making love, exploring, fighting, struggling for dominance, rearing offspring, etc. And these behavioral tendencies have arisen through the process of **natural selection**, meaning that these behaviors have tended to promote the **survival of our species**.

However, natural selection has nothing to do with **quality of life**. Pain and suffering promote the survival of a species, just the same as pleasure, so behavior that causes PSDED may easily occur naturally, and frequently does. Chimps cause each other to suffer at times, just as we do. And I believe it is possible that we may do it more than they, for certain reasons. But whether or not that is so, we certainly frequently wish that we had done other than what we did, or that others had done other than what they did, because of the resulting PSDED, either our own or that of others.

But we have **two special capabilities** that no other species on this planet have.

- (1) We can use **language** (symbols and rules of syntax) in extremely complex ways (as I am doing now).
- (2) We can use the **rules of logic** and the **rules of evidence**, most carefully and successfully done in the scientific fields, to construct **extremely accurate models** of the way the world really is, and thus to **stop making mistakes** and **stop fooling ourselves**.

Because of the above two capabilities, we can achieve a high level of **cooperation** and we can **predict the outcomes** of our behavior much more than can any other species. So, we can cooperate to change our behavior into that which **maximizes JCA** and **minimizes PSDED**. We can at long last rise above our basic animal nature and work toward attaining **the good life for everyone, now and in the future**.

Except that we don't yet do a very good job of it. We are talking, hi tech chimps, often doing what comes naturally no matter how awful the consequences.

We can decide whether or not to eat saturated and trans fat, smoke, exercise, lie, steal, be unfaithful, save money, adhere to the terms of a contract, refrain from being hostile, ration our gasoline, carpool, invest, use diplomacy.... No chimp can make such decisions.

And in fact much of the time we do what is consistent with the REUEP. But much of the time is not enough. The amount of PSDED that we bring upon ourselves and each other is still enormous and tragic. Most of our PSDED is **human-induced**, the result of things we didn't have to do. And unfortunately, most people believe that such behavior is more or less inevitable. That's just the way we are, they say. But I say **we can do better** —**MUCH better**.

So we are talking about using our special human talents to, at long last, **promote the good life for everyone, now and in the future**.

And “**the good life**” is defined (by me, for the purposes of this book) as having multiple overlapping components.

JCA:

Joy – the good feeling that is a part of all good experience, such as food, sex, music, dancing, warmth, intimacy, good grades, admiration, sacrifice, cure.... But the joy must not be with accompanying PSDED, as in one’s using cocaine, suicide bombing, torturing enemies....

Contentment – the satisfaction with the way things basically are, security, comfort, abundance, equality.... But not with PSDED, as in one’s contentment with one’s wealth while others starve.

Appreciation – joy over the way things are, what has happened, what has been done.... But not with PSDED, as in one’s appreciation of skillfully performed crime.

PSDED:

Pain – a basic form of suffering.... But not always bad, often necessary, sometimes welcome.

Suffering – whatever reduces the quality of life. But not always bad, as in sacrifice for a good cause.

Disability – a relative concept, in that it is on the same continuum as ability.

Early Death – sometimes easily recognized as such, but also on a continuum with timely or acceptable death.

So there will be times when it will be **hard to tell** whether what is sought is consistent with the REUEP. There will be **uncertainty**. That is the nature of the world.

But are there not many, many examples of decisions that you would be able to say were **not consistent** with the REUEP? Can you imagine many crimes, misdemeanors, mistakes, bad lifestyles, deceptions, infidelities, acts of meanness, retaliations, etc., that would be justifiable by virtue of being **consistent** with the REUEP? Could not most such acts be shown to be **inconsistent** with the REUEP?

What would life be like for us if we eliminated **all** acts that seemed obviously **inconsistent** with the REUEP?

To be sure, not all problems would be solved if everyone lived by the REUEP. There would still be unintended (unpredicted) consequences. And there would be imperfections in our decision-making.

But would we even recognize ourselves? Would we seem like a different species?

In the **free textbook** at **HomoRationalis.com**, the metaphoric term I use for us at that time is “**Homo rationalis**.” They will look back on us with great compassion for our suffering, but also with great appreciation for those of us that worked to make possible their way of life, namely, you and me, to the extent that we are Humanian.

To the extent that we make our own and each other’s lives better, we serve as models and promote the betterment of the lives of our progeny.

Is there an even better ultimate ethical principle? Possibly. I don’t know what it would be. But we are about 2% along the way of globally living by the REUEP. When we get to about 95%, then maybe it will make sense to work on developing an even better ultimate ethical principle. So let’s now get busy with this one.

HUMANIANITY: NAME AND IDENTITY

I feel almost apologetic about this choice of name. The religion that I am describing and advocating is, I believe, **like no other religion**, in that it is rather thoroughly defined, is distinguishable from all other named religions, and yet is not automatically exclusive of any other religion, as I hope to clarify.

So I searched around for a name that would not cause it to be confused with other religions or philosophies, that would be consistent with the nature of the religion, and that would therefore be easily remembered and recognized.

I came across the problem that almost any word that might be appropriate has already been made use of by someone. I even found “**Humanianity**” to have been used occasionally, as well as “**Humanian**.” But it did seem to me that these words had not become recognized yet by the vast majority of people. So these are the words that I settled on. It should be noted that both are capitalized.

Obviously, there is a certain similarity between the words “Humanianity” and “Christianity.” I come from a Christian tradition, and perhaps if I had come from a different religious tradition, or spoke a different language, some other word would have come to mind. I do wish to state that I do not believe there is any special alliance between these two religions, and I do not see Humanianity as being a denomination within Christianity.

In fact, **I see Humanianity as having a specific kind of relationship to all of the religions.**

All of our religions have been our best efforts to help ourselves and each other to decide how to live life, what is important in life, what our basic values should be.

There are a few basic, observable facts about our religions so far.

Probably all of the religions have some aspects or components that indeed promote the good life. But probably all of the religions have some aspects or components that are less than optimal in this regard. In fact, many religions have been associated with large amounts of PSDDED. Therefore, we could probably say of all religions that, with regard to the REUEP, **improvement is possible.**

In fact, within each religion, I believe we probably could find some difference of opinion among its members with regard to the desirability of certain components of that religion. (When such difference of opinion has become prominent, there has been a tendency for the religion to split into two different religions.) So we could say that within a specific religion, there probably will be variations among the members of that religion with regard to belief about what is most important in that religion.

So we note that there is a tendency within the religions toward **change**. And when that change is contemplated, it is regarded by some as a **possible improvement**. And when that change is accomplished, it is regarded by some as an **improvement**. We can conclude that probably **any religion can improve.**

We can metaphorically imagine all of the religions around the base of a mountain, gradually moving up the mountain, the upward direction representing **improvement**. If by **improvement** we mean **more able to be consistent with the REUEP**, then we can consider the top of the mountain to be the maximal attainment of the REUEP, and we could imagine that as the individual religions are improving, they are becoming more like **Humanianity**, perhaps represented by the top of the mountain. In other words, **Humanianity includes the effort to make our religious traditions increasingly consistent with the REUEP.**

In this manner, we can look at all of the religions as being **religious traditions within Humanianity**. Humanianity does not consist of those people who behave 100% consistently with the REUEP. Humanianity

consists of those people who are **striving** to do so. Therefore, an individual in one of the current religious traditions, a member of that religion, certainly can also be Humanian.

Therefore, you can maintain your membership within your own religion and still be Humanian. There is no need to leave your religion. In fact, helping your religion up the mountain from within would be much preferable to leaving it, unless your religion, in your way of looking at it, is hopelessly committed to that which predictably will cause PSDED.

So you can be a Christian Humanian, a Buddhist Humanian, an Islamic Humanian, a Hindu Humanian, an agnostic Humanian, an atheistic Humanian, a humanistic Humanian, an existentialist Humanian, or an undecided Humanian. Or you can just be a Humanian.

I see no reason why you cannot be a Humanian Christian, a Humanian Buddhist....

Humanianity is a religion that **looks for the good everywhere** and **attempts to promote it**. That good which we already have can and should be **improved**, rather than destroyed and replaced.

Humanianity is not currently an organization. Hopefully, Humanianity will become an **association**, in that we accomplish the most by **working together**. Perhaps in the future it will also become organized. I do not see an absolute necessity for organization, though it could turn out that such an organization would be helpful in promoting the spread and development of Humanianity.

Humanianity will grow and develop in individuals like you and me, but perhaps in different ways because of our different educational backgrounds, interests, subcultures, capabilities, and religions.

And because of these differences, **Humanians will help each other to grow**.

But before jumping on the bandwagon, let's be sure that you understand the **enormous implications** for you of becoming a Humanian.

BELIEF AND ACTION

You have probably heard it said, “I don’t care what you believe; it’s what you do that counts.” And you have probably heard it said, “It is not doing good that is important; it is having faith.” (Of course, those who say the latter will probably also say that if you have the proper faith or belief, you will probably most of the time do good. It’s just that believing the proper thing has value in itself that goes beyond the doing of good.)

Well I, as a Humanian, have a different opinion to offer. Now a person does not have to have the same opinion as mine in order to be a Humanian. He or she is only **committed to the REUEP**. So let us restate it:

WE SHOULD DO THAT WHICH WILL PROMOTE NOT ONLY THE SURVIVAL OF OUR SPECIES, BUT ALSO THE GOOD LIFE FOR EVERYONE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, “THE GOOD LIFE” MEANING AS MUCH JOY, CONTENTMENT, AND APPRECIATION (**JCA**) AS POSSIBLE AND AS LITTLE PAIN, SUFFERING, DISABILITY, AND EARLY DEATH (**PSDED**) AS POSSIBLE.

So the only requirement of me by virtue of being a Humanian is that my opinion seem to me to be **consistent with the REUEP**.

Well, the REUEP states “We should **do**....” Do. That’s **behavior**, action, right? So what is important is what I **do**, right?

But I **believe** I should do that which will promote...(REUEP). It is my **belief** that I **should** do it that makes me **want** to do it.

But given that I **want** to do it, **how** do I do it? I have to **know how** to do it, right?

And what does **knowing** how to do something mean? Does it not mean having **accurate beliefs** about what will happen when I do things to try to bring about what I am trying to do? That means having **accurate beliefs** about the way the world works.

When I act, I do something to bring something about. I walk to get somewhere. I eat to get pleasure and become satiated. I work to make money. I turn left to get to work. I remain silent to refrain from disturbing. I speak up to get my idea considered. I dial the phone to talk to someone. I open the door to go outside. I go to bed to go to sleep. I get a good night’s sleep to feel good and function well the next day. I treat others well to be liked and to promote the good life for them.

Whatever I **do**, it is to **bring something about**. But what I **choose** to do is determined by what I **believe** will **happen** if I do it. And if what I believe will happen when I do something is what **actually** happens when I do it, or would happen if I did it, then my belief is probably, at least to that extent, **accurate**. My beliefs are probably accurate if, when I act according to them, what happens is what I expect would happen.

If I **do** something because I **believe** doing so will bring about what I **want** to bring about, and it **doesn’t**, then I have made a **mistake**, and my belief was probably **inaccurate**.

So to be maximally **successful**, I should try to have **beliefs** that are as **accurate** as possible.

If **success of action** is important, **accuracy of belief** is important.

The more important success is, the more important accuracy of belief is.

Okay, of course we will have to address the term, “accuracy.”

There are two kinds of accuracy, though deep down they are essentially the same.

First, there may be **only two possibilities**, yes or no, right or wrong, good or bad, heads or tails.... So if you believe one of the possibilities is true and you are correct, then your belief is accurate. Otherwise, it is inaccurate.

Second, there may be **more than two possibilities**, perhaps even an almost unlimited set of possibilities. In measuring the distance between two points, the answer can be to the nearest tenth of a unit, the nearest hundredth, the nearest thousandth, etc. There is, then, what is called a margin of error. So the distance may be thirty feet, plus or minus one inch, with any number of possibilities between those two limits.

How are these two kinds of accuracy the same? Whether the belief is accurate depends on whether all of the predictions you could make by having that belief would turn out to be correct. I believe the light is on in the next room, and I go see if it is. I believe the distance is thirty feet, and I measure this distance with my yardstick to see if it is.

Of course your belief may be accurate, but your prediction nevertheless be off because of other, inaccurate, beliefs contributing to the prediction, such as that your yardstick is accurate when it is not. The correctness of your prediction depends upon the accuracy of **all** of the relevant beliefs.

But now you can ask, how **certain** is it that the belief is accurate?

You may be close to 100% certain that you are right, or maybe only about 50% certain that you are right, or so uncertain you might as well just flip a coin to come up with an answer. So certainty is on a continuum

If the belief is accurate, then predictions based upon the belief will most likely be correct—even though you may not be very certain.

So your belief, or prediction, may have been very accurate, but very uncertain. (“Amazingly, I was **right**.”) And, unfortunately, your belief may have been very inaccurate, but very certain. (“But I was so **sure!**”) Or maybe you were very certain and your belief indeed turned out to be accurate. (“I **knew** I was right!”) Or maybe you were uncertain, and indeed inaccurate. (“Well, I’m not surprised!”)

Isn’t there one thing we can be certain about, namely, that we can’t really be absolutely certain about anything? (Yes, I know.) After all, we could be dreaming. (In my teens, I once concluded from something that seemed awfully odd that I must be dreaming despite my being able to find no other evidence of being asleep, and it turned out I was right when I woke myself up.)

To be thorough, we might mention that belief can vary regarding precision. “It is roughly 30 feet.” “It is 30 feet plus or minus about one inch.” “There were about 100 people at the party.” “His exact words were....” “We are headed for a recession, but not a depression.”

If you are following me, then it should be fairly clear that sometimes the more **precise** the belief is, the less **certain** we may be that it is **accurate**.

But what is the bottom line? It is that we are always playing the odds. We are always taking a chance. We could be wrong.

And yet, if we don't want to make **mistakes**, we need to be **right**, that is, **as right as we can be**. We need to know what will happen when we do things, that is, know the best we can. We can't be absolutely certain, but we have to **take a chance, make a decision, and act**.

(And we know that not doing so is making a decision also, and is therefore acting. Inaction is action. We can decide to stay on the railroad tracks or get off. We can decide to decide now or decide later. We don't have a choice as to whether to act, only as to what the act shall be.)

So it is my opinion that in order to be committed to the REUEP, it is important to have as accurate beliefs as possible, at least as related to decisions that are efforts to implement the REUEP, recognizing that the feeling of certainty that one is right is not the same as being right.

And it is **accuracy** that is needed, **not certainty**.

Let me emphasize this last point, because we have a natural tendency toward the opposite. At this point in our career as a species, **we worship and advocate certainty much more than accuracy**.

The open mind seeks accuracy. The closed mind seeks certainty.

The open mind is consistent with the REUEP, the closed mind is not. That is my opinion. Do you agree?

Of course there is no reason to agree until you are sure that we mean the same thing by our terms. The following is how I am using the terms:

The open mind let's things in; the closed mind keeps things out. The open mind engages in behavior that allows for and encourages feedback; the closed mind engages in behavior designed to reduce feedback, at least of certain kinds. The open mind is open to the possibility of being wrong; the closed mind is closed, at least to a great degree, to this possibility.

The person with an open mind is willing and eager to discuss difference of opinion. Such an individual tries to understand the other's viewpoints. He or she will ask the other to elaborate regarding the other's opinions that are different, in an effort to find out exactly where the opinions diverge and why, and in order to grow in wisdom and improve in communication.

The person with a closed mind avoids doing the above. In fact, he or she may actually avoid, shun, interrupt, shout down, attack, and/or kill those with a different opinion.

A given person may have an open mind with regard to some beliefs while having a closed mind with regard to certain other beliefs.

A culture or subculture may encourage and even require closure of the mind in certain areas, and such a culture or subculture is at a high risk for engaging in group behavior leading to PSDED.

Mild examples of closure of the mind include deliberately changing the subject, agreeing to disagree and move on, and engaging in hostility during the sharing and comparing of opinions. (The hostility is designed to let the other know that continuing to express disagreement is unwanted, and to cause the other to desist in order to avoid the anxiety produced by the hostility.)

The degree to which people **avoid feedback by avoiding discussion of difference of opinion** is **enormous**, but goes **unnoticed** because of the **mutual agreement** of individuals to refrain from discussing in any depth certain issues, based upon a recognition of the likelihood of the appearance otherwise of anger and hostility.

Because I am a Humanian, meaning that I try to make all of my decisions and therefore behavior consistent with the REUEP, I wish to minimize the chances of my making a mistake based upon inaccurate beliefs. Therefore, I recognize the possibility that **I could be wrong** no matter how certain I feel that I am right, I want to **find out** that I am wrong if I am, I specifically want **feedback** on any and all of my beliefs, I want to understand **why** someone believes differently than I do, and I believe I should **not be hostile** in discussions with those who have a different opinion.

Do you believe that my above opinions are consistent with the REUEP? If not, where would you say I am going wrong? How? Why?

Now assuming you are still with me, we have to ask **how** to accomplish having as accurate beliefs as possible.

We have already talked about **having the open mind**, and therefore the wish to share and compare ideas with anyone, especially those that disagree. But we can go farther than that.

We can ask what the **best sources for accurate beliefs** are. Remember, we are not going to say that any beliefs obtained from any particular sources are 100% accurate, nor worthy of 100% certainty. We are playing the odds, as always. But we are asking where we are **most likely** to get beliefs that are the most accurate.

First, there is **formal education**, what we advocate for and try to provide to our youngest Humanians (and others). Formal education provides basic knowledge (including basic skills, how to do things best). Basic knowledge is that set of beliefs that the society feels fairly certain about and that will help most anyone, by reduction of mistakes, to live well and contribute well to the society. There is basic knowledge that almost everyone needs, and then basic knowledge that certain people need because of their special roles or occupations within the society.

Formal education is carried out by societal educational institutions that are responsible for doing the best they can to identify those beliefs that are most likely to be most accurate. Peer review, open debate, and certification are some of the methods used.

And then there is the actual acquisition and testing of beliefs about how the world works, with methods that emphasize and promote maximal precision, accuracy, and certainty. **The sciences**, with their scientific methods based upon the rules of logic and the rules of evidence, test the accuracy of beliefs by deriving predictions from them and then seeing whether those predictions turn out to be what happens (by making observations of either natural phenomena or the results of experiments).

So as a Humanian, attempting to do that which will promote the REUEP with as few mistakes as possible, I value **formal education** and **the sciences** as primary sources of accurate beliefs, and believe that my beliefs should be logically consistent with beliefs from these sources, with the constant recognition that new evidence may be obtained that could reduce the certainty of such beliefs or cause them to be replaced with even more accurate ones. If I learn that I have beliefs contradictory to those provided by formal education and those arrived at by science, I have reason to be very uncertain regarding my beliefs, and motivated to check them out further.

Belief and action are mutually dependent upon each other. Our beliefs motivate us to do things, and they determine which things we will do. It is especially important, then, that our beliefs be accurate, in order to avoid mistakes causing PSDED. That is my opinion. What is yours?

Do our religions currently foster and advocate for openness of mind? My impression is that they are increasingly doing so, despite a history of having had a strong tendency to demand belief as an act of obedience.

So, as a Humanian in one of these religions, I would see if there were ways that I might **advocate** for more openness of mind, and therefore more **inclusiveness** in the religion of those with **differing viewpoints**. I would advocate for discussion groups within my religion in which the questioning of everything would be allowed and honored.

We cannot have no beliefs. All we can do is strive for increasing accuracy and certainty. But **certainty without accuracy can be a deadly combination**. Enormous amounts of PSDED have resulted from certainty without accuracy.

So my opinion as a Humanian is that **we should seek to attain accuracy of belief through openness of mind, this perhaps being the second highest ethical principle, second only to the REUEP**.

Okay, so **now we come to the most difficult part of all**. We know that many, perhaps most religions have had as a part of them a requirement that a member of the religion believe certain things that many people, even some within the religion itself, find it very difficult to believe.

There have been **two main reasons** for such difficulty in believing.

The **first reason for such difficulty in believing** is that all the person has to do is to look next door into another religion, or into the beliefs of someone not a member of any particular religion, and the person will find that **there is more than one belief to choose from**.

Now if there is no reason to choose one belief over another, then the odds that one of those beliefs is the most accurate are equal to one divided by the number of such beliefs. Usually there are quite a few to choose from, so the odds of one of them being the accurate one are extremely low. When the odds are extremely low, we would say of that belief that it probably was not so, or not accurate.

But what if there is indeed a reason? That would make things a lot different. That would increase the feeling of certainty considerably.

But what if each of the other beliefs had advocates that claimed that they did indeed have good reasons for believing as they did? Well then the odds go back down again.

And isn't that exactly the state of affairs that exists? If you were to ask any member of any religion whether he or she had good reason to believe the tenants of that religion, how many do you think would answer "no"?

And the other disturbing thing that one might notice is that the reasons given may be worrisome. Wouldn't we worry a little if the person said, "Well, it makes me feel so good to believe it," or "Well, I would just feel terrible if I didn't believe it," or "Well, I was taught to believe it in my childhood," or "Well, several people I know believe the same thing," or "Well, I got a special message from a deity that I was getting this special information directly," or "Well, if I don't believe it I will be tortured and/or killed." These would indeed be reasons for believing, but do any of them have to do with accuracy? And have we not seen many examples of belief maintained for one of these reasons, yet causing enormous amounts of PSDED because of inaccuracy?

The **second reason for such difficulty in believing** is that many of these beliefs, that perhaps first came into existence centuries or millennia ago, are **contradictory** to beliefs more recently acquired through the **scientific methods**, beliefs so precise, accurate, and certain that we rely upon them to make our most important decisions that affect our very survival, both individually and collectively. It is by virtue of science that we undergo surgery, travel by air, prepare for natural disaster, rely upon computers, etc.

So when a religion expects its members to believe that which would contradict the findings of the sciences, such members may feel caught between loyalty to their religion and loyalty to openness of mind and the valuing of accuracy.

So it is my opinion that when religions expect of their members maintenance of belief as an act of obedience, this is one of the bad components of such religions. As a Humanian in such a religion, I would seek to enable myself and others to shed this requirement of the religion's members.

But now how can that be done if the religion bases its identity upon such beliefs? Would not an individual in such a religion, if he or she were a Humanian, or if he or she simply could not believe as required, have to leave that religion?

I don't believe so at all. There probably would be many others within the same religion who would find themselves in the same situation. Yet, it is most likely that the religion was doing a lot of good for its members and also perhaps for others within the community or elsewhere in the world. It would be quite unfortunate to detract from something good that was happening. So what would be the appropriate approach to this problem.

I believe the answer lies in understanding, tolerance, benevolence, and reasonableness.

Everyone should understand that we all come from a background initially of highly inaccurate beliefs and only gradually make our beliefs more and more accurate. Our species once had beliefs similar to those of chimpanzees. The idea of the Earth being similar to a sphere is "counterintuitive." It took us a long time to arrive at that more accurate belief. In the same way, each of us starts with the mind of an earthworm, so to speak, and from birth onward begins acquiring beliefs. These beliefs originally were quite inaccurate, but through the processes of child rearing, formal education, interactions with others, and absorption from the media, our beliefs become increasingly accurate.

So each of us individually, and our species in general, all come from traditions of somewhat inaccurate belief. (When we look at certain inaccurate beliefs about the origin and nature of the world and about our history, beliefs that others have or have had, we refer to such beliefs as "myths.") So it is only to be expected that any religion will have its tradition, its myths, its leftovers from its childhood, its perhaps even cherished inaccurate beliefs, all of which have had a reason for their existence. And that reason has been the effort to cope, the effort to find out how best to live life, the effort to do the right thing.

So rather than turning away from such tradition, what makes more sense is to look more deeply into it for the understanding it provides as we attempt to learn about ourselves and each other and the world in general. This is no different than any of us undertaking self-improvement through understanding of the self and thereby transcending where we are now to become someone better still. It is the valuing of our childhood.

Within any given religion, there will be individuals who are still taking the identifying beliefs concretely, others who are taking them more abstractly and metaphorically in order to understand ourselves better, and others who are making more discrete judgements among the beliefs with regard to the issue as to how much or little they are consistent with the REUEP. Any particular religion should have within it the capability for individuals to grow religiously in this manner. In this way, such religions become dynamic, not static. They become more responsive to the needs of all its members. And they become more able to keep up with the demands of a changing world and all of the ethical dilemmas that therefore arise.

So discussion groups within the religious organization that are at various levels of religious growth would meet the needs of all the members of the religion, and would help the religion to grow, to improve, to go up the mountain toward the REUEP.

We will always have difference of opinion. What we need is openness of mind, understanding, and benevolence even toward those with such difference of opinion.

The above have been my opinions as a Humanian. You as a Humanian are not required to agree. But it is hard for me to believe you could be Humanian without being concerned about these issues and wanting to arrive at solutions in behalf of the REUEP.

So now what do you believe? What do you propose and advocate for? Why?

PUNISHMENT AND REVENGE

Let's say it again. The only requirement to be a Humanian is having as one's ultimate ethical principle the REUEP, which is:

WE SHOULD DO THAT WHICH WILL PROMOTE NOT ONLY THE SURVIVAL OF OUR SPECIES, BUT ALSO THE GOOD LIFE FOR EVERYONE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, "THE GOOD LIFE" MEANING AS MUCH JOY, CONTENTMENT, AND APPRECIATION (JCA) AS POSSIBLE AND AS LITTLE PAIN, SUFFERING, DISABILITY, AND EARLY DEATH (PSDED) AS POSSIBLE.

But having this ethical principle as your ultimate ethical principle means that you are committed to striving to have all of your ethical beliefs (about what you should and should not do), and therefore all of your behavior, consistent with it. And it is exactly because of this that your life, your basic way of living your life, is likely to become so different. That is my opinion. Being Humanian does not mean that you have to agree with me, but I predict that, with thought, you will.

So why, according to me, will your life be so much different if you are or become a Humanian? It is what is discussed in this chapter that will best clarify the answer to this question.

We are basically chimps. We are of course a different species, but with regard to our basic nature, we are most like chimpanzees. Yes, we are able to talk, and we are able to use the rules of logic and the rules of evidence to give ourselves science and technology, but all of this is in the service of our basic chimp-like nature. We are talking, hi-tech chimps. So we behave as chimps do, in our own human way. We have the same emotions, the same basic motivational states, hunger, thirst, the urge to play, the sexual urge, the wish for closeness, jealousy, envy, the tendency to fight, etc. Our ways of behaving, of manifesting our motivational states, are more complex and sophisticated, of course, because we use our language, our more accurate understanding of the world, and our many tools and gadgets as we live out our motivational states. But look beneath the surface at what we are doing and you will see that chimps do the same.

And nowhere is this more significant than in our motivational state of **anger**.

And there is, I will maintain, no other aspect of ourselves that produces as much human-induced **PSDED**.

In order for me to start to make my case, I would like to quote the third and fourth paragraphs of the chapter on Rational-Ethical Anger Prevention in the freely downloadable textbook at HomoRationalis.com (*For Everyone: Rational-Ethical Living and the Emergence of "Homo Rationalis": The Most Important Book*). Those two paragraphs are as follows:

It is my contention that the motivational state of anger and the behaviors (decisions) that are produced in response to it play the primary role in most of our human-induced hardship and tragedy, from the personal, interpersonal, and family level all the way to the global level. They are operative in most instances of breakdown of marriages, parent-child relationships, employer-employee relationships, and intimate relationships in general; "sibling rivalry"; meanness, teasing, bullying, and scapegoating; destructiveness; "adolescent rebellion"; child abuse and elder abuse (by both children and adults); rape; cruelty to animals; sadism and torture; self-injurious behavior and suicide; harassment (sexual and other); discrimination, "bashing," and persecution; conflict, inefficiency, passive aggression, underachievement, and absenteeism in our schools and in the workplace; lawsuits and protests; theft and vandalism (including production of computer viruses); public and domestic violence, battering, and murder; "wilding," rampaging, and rioting; serial killing, mass murder, and assassination; and revolution and war (including terrorism, purging, and ethnic cleansing).

It is also my contention that anger and related phenomena are an underlying factor in much illness and premature “natural” death. Anger has been shown to have deleterious and potentially fatal effects on the cardiovascular system and the immune system. Anger also produces fear, or anxiety, in others and in self, and this anxiety produces many of the other symptoms and complications seen in some of the psychiatric disorders, which may in turn carry a substantially high mortality rate. And since the status of our primary relationships is one of the most important determinants of our physical and mental health, the appearance of anger in those relationships, heralding potential or actual relationship breakdown, represents a major threat to our physical and mental health.

Well, the above two quoted paragraphs certainly call attention to the extremes of the consequences of anger, but I would also like to call attention to the **ubiquitous suffering related to anger**.

One of our most common forms of suffering is “**worry**,” the emotionally painful, repetitive imagination and/or prediction of potential bad situations. Of course we worry about finances, health, weather, etc. But one of the especially painful kinds of worry has to do with the reactions of others to ourselves. And this worry is often at least partly connected to our worry about what we have done or what we might do, and the consequences of that. We worry about **offending** others, and we worry about what others are likely to do if they feel offended by us, whether our intention was to offend or not.

We generally take many **precautions against offending**. We engage in tact, diplomacy, apology, mediation, “forgiveness,” and many specific behaviors designed to get around, minimize, and neutralize the anger of others toward ourselves and of ourselves toward others. (Unfortunately, these precautions don’t seem to work all that well.)

And much of our **conversation** with others is about interpersonal situations in which there is personal worry related to anger-containing interactions with third parties.

And then there is the **anger that we have toward ourselves**, our guilt and shame, our mortification, our putting ourselves down, criticizing ourselves, and wishing we would die, and even sometimes our purposeful self-injurious and self-destructive behaviors, consciously motivated or not.

That’s a lot of **suffering**, a lot of **PSDED**.

And I think that many would agree with me that we are actually **worse** than chimps. We have more problems with anger than chimps do. We are of course able to do worse things than chimps can do because of our language and science. But my impression is that more of our mental activity is consumed with anger-related phenomena than is true for chimps. And I think there are good reasons for this.

But first I want to clarify two important anger-related phenomena that are specifically the focus of this chapter, **punishment and revenge**.

WE BELIEVE IN PUNISHMENT AND REVENGE.

I think that if you start making specific observations regarding this issue, you will become as impressed as I am about this fact about ourselves.

Let’s take a closer look at each of these two phenomena.

Let’s start with **REVENGE**.

Revenge is the anger-motivated causing of PSDED in another or others who is/are believed to have purposefully caused PSDED in oneself or those one cares about.

So right away we see that **revenge adds more PSDED** to the world. This would make any Humanian immediately question whether revenge is consistent with the REUEP. I myself believe that revenge can probably never be justified (shown to be consistent with the REUEP), or at least that the circumstances in which it could be justified would be highly unusual. Thus, my opinion is that an important ethical rule of conduct would be that **one should never engage in revenge**.

(A rule of conduct is a device to make one stop and think before acting, the thinking being the effort to see if the contemplated behavior would be an appropriate or justifiable exception to the rule of conduct.)

But as I have stated, **WE BELIEVE IN REVENGE**.

There is hardly any question in anyone's mind that if somebody purposefully does something harmful to oneself, the **appropriate** action is revenge. Or even if perhaps it is not considered appropriate, it is at least **expected** and **understood**. This is true from the international or global level to the interpersonal level.

On the **interpersonal** level, if someone speaks in a hostile manner to another, the other is almost expected to speak in a hostile manner back, or at least to give the person a hostile look. When one person raises his voice, the other usually does also, this response sometimes being referred to as a "shouting match." And this happens all the time. You have seen it. You have done it (or the equivalent).

On the **international or global** level, just recall images of mobs of people with their fists or guns held high, shouting angrily about what has been done to them. When we are crying out for "justice," it is seldom that we are referring to fair distribution of resources, but instead to fair distribution of punishment and revenge. (If justice is so wonderful, why don't people want to be brought to it?)

We freely **recommend** revenge. "I'd get him back." "You ought to show him." "Are you going to just take that?" "Stand up for yourself." "Give him what he deserves." "Don't be a wimp." "I'd tell him off." "You've got to fight back." "I'd make him sorry."

We freely **report** revenge. "He hit me first." "I told him off." "I made him sorry." "I showed his ass." "I got him back." "I got even." "I made him crawl."

When we are born, it will not be long before we manifest our **built-in capacity for revenge**, while we watch those around us to see what are the most **effective** ways of achieving it. (We usually learn techniques of revenge especially from our parents, who serve as models.)

And we engage in revenge physically, verbally, nonverbally, legally, illegally, and militarily.

Now, to be sure, the **behavior** that we are calling **revenge** may, **at the same time**, be **self-protective** or **deterrent**. However, the fact that revenge is also an important component of the motivation is apparent from the frequent infliction of much more PSDED than would be necessary just to produce deterrence, and from the observation that the behavior we are calling revenge may be undertaken when there is no likelihood of repetition of the behavior that precipitated it. And rather than actually producing deterrence, what one frequently observes is a worsening of the situation, with no one willing to "back down," meaning that deterrence is much less likely. Yet, this lesson is seldom learned.

And our using the phrase "**getting even**" almost seems to imply that revenge is necessary and right in order to achieve some sort of **balance**, rather than necessary just to deter repetition.

And there is indeed some degree of **ambivalence** about engaging in revenge. There is some tendency to recommend refraining from revenge, usually by someone not centrally involved in the conflict. It's just not a very effective recommendation, and when someone engages in revenge, people tend to be "understanding" of the behavior, and may even secretly (if not openly) enjoy it. "Serves him right." "He got what was coming to him."

So the bottom line is that, even if we sort of believe that revenge is not good, we **also**, as is evidenced by **how we actually live**, do indeed believe strongly in it, and we believe in it strongly enough that we endure enormous amounts of predictable PSDED.

And even more, **WE BELIEVE IN PUNISHMENT.**

Punishment is the infliction of PSDED in response to the belief that the recipient of the punishment has done something wrong.

In the case of **child rearing**, punishment is usually administered by someone in a parental (or supervisory) capacity, in response to the belief that the child has done wrong, probably by virtue of the child having done what the parent didn't want the child to do, the child sometimes even having been told not to do it (called "disobedience").

In the case of **adults**, punishment is usually administered by some individual or group that is **above** the individual in the social hierarchy, again in response to the belief that the individual has done something wrong.

Even though punishment is thought of intellectually as a necessary method of **deterrence**, the most prominent component of the **motivation** for punishment is frequently actually **revenge**. Revenge is its **driving force**. In fact, even when what is happening is **revenge** against a **peer**, the behavior may be referred to as "punishment." "I will punish him for what he did to me." (Referring to the revenge as "punishment" has the added vengeful motivation of proclaiming oneself as being in a superior position to the other.)

Punishment works very poorly as a deterrent. Otherwise, we would have just about eliminated undesirable behavior long ago.

Even more obvious, however, is the observation as to how much people **expect** punishment, even when repetition is extremely unlikely. Every "crime" must be punished. The idea of someone "getting away with" something is extremely unpleasant. A person who did something bad early in his life but has led an exemplary life since then, when his past is discovered, must have his life ruined in the name of justice, in no way deterring him from repetition but providing that sense of evening the score through the administration of PSDED.

Perhaps nowhere is it more evident that punishment is primarily revenge than how punishment is depicted as administered by a **deity**. The deity is always depicted as administering punishment because of **wrath**, rather than as an effort to correct something or make something better.

I believe that punishment and revenge tend to make things worse. I believe that we should never punish and never engage in revenge.

But I have to modify what I have just written to say that I know that we cannot simply make a decision to eliminate all punishment. We cannot, for instance, pass such a law. Why we can't is that we have not yet **changed ourselves** such that we all **agree** that we should not punish. I believe that the time may come to pass when, globally, we will have as an ethical principle that we should refrain from punishment. But this will be as the culmination of a process in which more and more individuals change in this direction and advocate for the

change on the part of others. The change will not come down from above, but instead will be the result of what you and I, and others like us, decide is the right thing to do.

Also, we will not be able to alter our current approach to unwanted behavior until we find **alternative methods** of approaching such behavior that **work better** than what we have currently. We have to be able to **deter** future acts much more **effectively**.

But what we have to realize is that our motivation to punish (vengeance) will tend to **undermine** any efforts to bring about beneficial changes in those who have acted inappropriately. When parents punish children, children come to regard the parents as **enemies to be feared** rather than allies and coaches in the effort to improve and grow. They therefore tend to **deny and minimize** what they have done, thus **interfering** with motivation to get the most learning from the analysis and understanding of mistakes. The same may be observed in adult penal systems, programs, and processes.

In the textbook mentioned above, the **awful effects of punishment** during **child rearing** are spelled out in the chapter on Rational-Ethical Child Rearing. And an effort is made in that chapter to outline a different model of child rearing (than what comes naturally), that is not based upon the ideas of obedience, disobedience, and punishment.

I believe that as our religions improve, they will gradually move toward benevolence, understanding, and non-punitive approaches to inappropriate behavior. And for those religions for which the concept of a deity is important, there will be an increasing tendency to view the deity as **not** engaging in punishment and revenge.

I wrote earlier that I thought that we have more preoccupation with anger than do chimps (in the wild). The reason for us being an angrier species is, I believe, that **we are so extremely punished**. There is not much that the young chimp, in the wild, does that has to be responded to with efforts on the part of the parent to change such behavior. But we humans have to undergo a tremendous amount of molding of our natural behavior into what is accepted by our cultures. And our parenting individuals, responsible to a great extent for such molding, are forced into the position frequently of regarding our children as “disobeying.” Our natural response to disobedience is anger and punishment. And the response of our children that is most expectable is anger and some sort of rebellion (overt, passive-aggressive, or sneaky) as a kind of revenge. Escalating cycles of punishment and rebellion are quite frequent and well-known, some of them even making the newspapers.

We have to remember that punishment is **any** purposeful infliction of PSDDED as a response to unwanted behavior, so that even without formal punishment (spanking, standing in the corner, taking something away, grounding, etc.), there is an enormous amount of informal punishment administered by the hurtful things we communicate to children, called “shaming” and “scolding,” including both verbal and nonverbal behavior of a demeaning or threatening nature. Many of our children receive thousands of tiny verbal and nonverbal emotional lacerations and bruises, despite a presumed non-punitive approach to child rearing.

So it is not surprising that so many of us have so much anger and even paranoia toward authority, and so much internal resistance to cooperation, contribution, and conformity to expectations that are desirable and necessary for the benefit of all. “Self-interest” becomes the understood philosophy of life, and successful rejection of social expectations often leads to a kind of admiration that is elicited especially by many of our fictional heroes, in addition to our real ones. Indeed, much of our entertainment in the media comes from the depiction of rebellion and nonconformity.

(In no way am I saying that all expectations of conformity and cooperation are good and should be obeyed. There is much that is conducive to PSDDED that is required by social groups, cultures, leaders, and individuals in authority, and efforts to call attention to and change such nonoptimal expectations are of course consistent with

the REUEP. But I believe that it is easy to see much rebellious behavior as being **productive** of PSDDED, rather than as ultimately reducing it.)

There is so, so much that we do that we shouldn't do (assuming the REUEP). And this has always been true. Will it ever change? Will we ever start living the way we know we really should? If so, how will this come about?

It will have to come about through our **learning to be better than chimps**. We will have to learn to do what **works best** (to promote the REUEP). Chimps can't do it. But we are able to **understand** much more accurately the **probable outcomes of our behavior**, such that we can develop **ethical rules of conduct** that will help us to change our behavior from that which comes naturally.

And so, here is one such ethical rule of conduct, which I believe you, as a Humanian, can accept, namely, that **we should never engage in revenge, nor therefore in punishment that is for the sake of revenge**.

Also, **we should seek alternatives to punishment as methods of improving behavior, alternatives that do not produce anger but instead produce motivation for self-improvement through analysis of mistakes and the development of wisdom as to what the outcomes of our various contemplated acts are likely to be**.

We will not change in the above manner just by believing we should and wishing we would. We have to know **how**. This means that we have to **study**. We have to have models and paradigms that tell us what to do (rather than what we will just naturally do). And yet this is exactly what we **don't** have, that is, a globally understood and agreed upon set of such models and paradigms.

In the chapters on "Rational-Ethical Anger Prevention" and "Rational-Ethical Child Rearing" (in the freely downloadable textbook from HomoRationalis.com), such models and paradigms are presented for consideration. There is no reason to assume that these are the final answers to any particular questions or to our effort in general. There may indeed be even better. I don't believe there are, but that is because I have developed these and are most familiar with them. If there are better ones, then those should extend, modify, or replace what I have offered.

But as a Humanian, can you conclude that the REUEP is promoted most by **refraining** from studying, understanding, and using, if not improving upon, such efforts? As a Humanian, can you simply say, "Well, I'll think about that tomorrow"? Can you say, "Well, it sounds interesting. It's something to explore when I have nothing better to do." Can you say, "Sounds good to me. Hope someone starts doing it."?

I believe **being Humanian involves studying**.

And at the beginning of this chapter I commented on how **different** your life will become if you are or become a Humanian. It will **be** different because you will **do** different.

Humanianity is a religion of action.

SEX AND VIOLENCE

Within my culture, “sex and violence” is a recognizable phrase. Sentences in which it appears usually have an element of cynicism and/or humor and/or ambivalence and/or outright disapproval. Such sentences often pertain to entertainment, and “entertainment” itself appears to be a word or concept about which there is a certain amount of ambivalence. (I recall the negative reaction that occurred when, in a group discussion within a religious organization, I expressed the importance of services being entertaining.)

Now in this chapter I do not intend to perform an analysis of the role of sex and violence in our culture. There are others far better educated in the appropriate areas to perform that function.

This chapter is an effort to introduce Humanianity as the coming of age of a new religious orientation that is relevant to all religions and is, in my opinion, our opportunity to come to a far, far better way of living on this planet than we have ever known.

You should recall that Humanianity is not a religion to replace all other religions, but instead, by definition, an **ultimate** religion toward which all religions should aspire, each in their own way.

Every human is borne into some sort of **culture**, a set of habitual ways of believing and valuing and behaving that belongs to the group into which that human is borne.

And there are countless cultures and subcultures, all of which are **changing** in various ways, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad, according to whoever is making the judgment. In other words, cultures differ, and cultures have good and bad in them, and cultures change. Therefore, it is possible for cultures to **improve**.

But we have to remember that any culture consists of those beliefs, values, and behaviors that are considered **right** by the members of the culture, by definition. That means that in order for a culture to change, it has to come to the conclusion that it is not currently optimal, that it needs to change, that, basically, it is **wrong**. Herein lies one of our greatest obstacles to accomplishing this drastically better way of living on our planet that I stated was possible for us. **We have to question what we currently believe is right, or true, or best.** The very things that we are deeply committed to might turn out to be the very things that we should modify, improve, change, or even abandon!

And, by the way, is this not exactly what we would say about an **individual** undergoing psychotherapy because of the somehow self-induced suffering that he or she has been experiencing? Do we not, as a species, experience an enormous amount of PSDED (pain, suffering, disability, and early death), the vast majority of which is in part self-induced, at least to a certain (actually enormous) extent? So is it not quite conceivable that “the very things that we are deeply committed to might turn out to be the very things that we should modify, improve, change, or even abandon” **as a species?**

And if the above is true, what part, if any, do **you** wish to play in the response to that fact? You could easily say, “Well, it’s an interesting idea, so I will wait and see if anyone does anything with it, and what.” You could easily say, “Well yes, but I have important things to do, so I will let others worry about it.” You could easily say, “Well, changing ourselves is the job of our elected governments, so once I have put somebody in office I have done my part.”

But you could also say, “If I don’t put forth as much effort as I can to do this, how can I expect anyone else to?” And you could say, “I want to do my part, as much as I can, to promote the REUEP,” in which case you would be a Humanian, and you would be promoting Humanianity, whatever specific religion you might also be a member of or might espouse.

Let us restate the REUEP (rational-ethical ultimate ethical principle):

WE SHOULD DO THAT WHICH WILL PROMOTE NOT ONLY THE SURVIVAL OF OUR SPECIES, BUT ALSO THE GOOD LIFE FOR EVERYONE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, “THE GOOD LIFE” MEANING AS MUCH JOY, CONTENTMENT, AND APPRECIATION (JCA) AS POSSIBLE AND AS LITTLE PAIN, SUFFERING, DISABILITY, AND EARLY DEATH (PSDED) AS POSSIBLE.

Let us also recall that the only requirement, by definition, for you to be a Humanian is for you to indeed consider the REUEP to be your own ultimate ethical principle, and that anything else that I state in this book is simply my opinion as to how one can go about implementing the REUEP, an opinion that you may not share, and need not share to be a Humanian. But, it is my opinion that with sufficient thought you will agree with me in at least most of what I have to say, because what I have to say I believe is based upon things that all of us can easily observe. We will see.

And all of the above has been to prepare you for what is to follow, namely, an effort to arrive at some conclusions, not on the basis of what you already believe, but only on the basis of the REUEP and what you can easily observe. This is a top-down approach.

So we are not going to make any assumptions about what is right or wrong, good or bad, etc., but instead are going to ask some important questions as to what is really optimal, **independent of what our culture currently says**. We will not look to our culture for the answers. Therefore, what I am going to propose may sound terrible to some or even many, who will evaluate it according to the mandates of their culture. Humanians will not do so, however, but will instead evaluate it according to logical conclusions based upon the REUEP and what we can observe about the way the world is (especially as clarified by science, that now gives us our most accurate beliefs).

Okay, so we are primarily going to look at sex and violence. It should be evident that there are substantial differences between these two activities, even if, with regard to certain issues, they may be regarded together. So we will deal with them separately at first, and then go back to looking at them together, using perhaps a different perspective.

Let us first examine sex.

Sex is enjoyable.

Indeed, sex produces joy and is often followed by contentment, and it is certainly appreciated by many. So if existence were simple, we could say that promoting sex was promoting JCA (joy, contentment, and appreciation), and therefore the REUEP. But we well know that the complication is that sex is also associated with much PSDED.

So is sex good or bad? Obviously the answer is that it can be both, or let us say more accurately, that engaging in sexual behavior may be good or bad depending on how it is done. So far, I doubt that there is any disagreement. So the question then becomes, “How should sexual behavior be engaged in?” In other words, what would be the ethics of sexual behavior? What is the right way to do it? What are the ethical rules of conduct that everyone should use for guidance with regard to sexual behavior?

Now we begin our independent inquiry, independent from any particular culture.

First, we must simplify our approach. We all know that sex (sexual behavior) has certain well-recognized dangers, namely and primarily, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. But these are not inevitable consequences of sexual behavior, and, in fact, have increasingly become preventable by our use of

science and technology. So for the purposes of our discussion, we should temporarily set aside the issue of these two kinds of PSDED, in order to evaluate the ethics of sexual behavior in and of itself. The reason for this is that, even without the consideration of unwanted pregnancy and disease, there is substantial cultural condemnation of sexual behavior in and of itself. There is much to talk about without even considering unwanted pregnancy and disease.

And we may fairly quickly, I believe, dispense with rape, meaning forcible sex against a person's wishes, since that would almost certainly be inconsistent with the REUEP.

But what about sex between people of different races? Of the same sex? Of different ages? Outside of marriage? Between family members? Between children? In public places? In the media for adults? In the media for children? With more than one person? With more than X people per unit of time? In exchange for money? In exchange for other than money and/or reciprocal sexual gratification? Other than to produce pregnancy? With oneself?

So it is apparent that there are certain cultural proscriptions against various kinds of sexual behavior. And there are usually reasons given for those proscriptions. Sexual behavior X should not be engaged in because Y. And what are some examples of Y?

There are four main reasons that I have observed being given:

1. Doing so causes PSDED, by....
2. Doing so is against the purpose of sex (reproduction).
3. Doing so displeases a deity.
4. Doing so is inherently bad, for reasons that shouldn't have to be explained

The first reason seems self-explanatory and consistent with the REUEP, but there are some complications that I will come back to.

The second reason seems rather strange, if one believes at all that we should limit our population growth. The first sexual intercourse could produce twins, condemning that person or couple to a remaining lifetime of no sex, while someone known to be infertile would simply be completely out of luck. And we do not in any way limit other biological functions to the performing of them only for their essential biological purpose. For instance, we do a lot of eating beyond what is necessary for the sustaining of life.

The third reason, when elaborated upon, generally includes references to entities believed to exist by the person giving the reason, but not yet having been identified by the sciences. And there seem to be noticeable difficulties in discussing that fact in depth unless one agrees with the person.

The fourth reason, having to do with the wishes of a deity, is complicated by the difficulty in knowing what is in the mind of the deity, there generally being difference of opinion regarding such things, including difference of opinion as to what the source of authority should be. And of course some even question the existence of such a deity, such that there has yet to be a final answer regarding this issue. And of course opinions about the existence and values of a deity tend to be inherent in cultures, and different for different cultures. So conclusions based upon what a deity wishes regarding sexual behavior are bound to be uncertain and contested, leaving no possibility for agreement regarding sexual ethics, despite the importance of such ethics. For our purposes, as I stated above, we wish to look at sexual behavior independently from any specific culturally maintained beliefs.

But going back to the first reason for some of the cultural proscriptions mentioned above, namely, that such behavior leads to PSDED, such reasoning would seem to be clear except for one consideration: **To what extent is the PSDED due ONLY to the fact that the sexual behavior is proscribed by the culture?**

And here we come to what I believe to be **an enormous amount of human-induced PSDED.**

In the last chapter, I expressed my opinion that we should never engage in punishment and revenge because of the primary and secondary PSDED that results. Well, how much of the destructiveness of certain of the above kinds of sexual behavior is actually due, **not to the sexual behavior itself, but to the punitive, vengeful reaction of the culture.** For instance, suppose none of the behaviors listed were reacted to with disapproval, punishment, and/or revenge; how many of those behaviors would still indeed result in PSDED?

Probably the sexual behavior that is most responded to with anger, revenge, and punishment, at least currently, is that which is labeled “child sexual abuse.” Such behavior ranges all the way between consensual behavior between adolescents of slightly different age to adult sexual behavior of varying sorts with very small children. Certainly this range of behaviors is probably not best looked at as one kind of behavior. It includes behavior ranging from that which is almost certain to produce PSDED independent of the reactions of the culture all the way to that which (1) approaches what would be considered “normal” by virtue of its frequency of occurrence and (2) seems devoid of any identifiable resulting PSDED.

So what is the relevance of this kind of behavior to Humanianity? There is one extreme change in outlook that I believe is consistent with Humanianity. We currently view situations like this as containing a “perpetrator” and a “victim.” **A Humanian, I believe, must view both as victims.** A Humanian, I believe, will not wish to victimize even further either of the two individuals involved.

First we must look at the “**victim.**”

The traditional victim has been victimized by the **circumstances**, namely, as having become involved in the sexual behavior and thereby suffering the PSDED that may (or may not) result from just the behavior itself.

But then the victim is victimized further **by us, the culture**, insofar as we react to the event as if it were much more than it actually is. The way to determine what this (cultural) component of victimization would consist of would be to imagine **what would happen to the victim subsequent to the event if the event were considered normal and okay by the culture.**

Looking at it this way, we would realize that there are many reactions to and around the victim that **add to** the PSDED, producing in the victim elements of shame, irrational guilt, fears of punishment, loss of self esteem, etc.

And all of this is complicated by the tendency of those important to the individual to **avoid even discussing** what has happened with the individual, leaving the individual isolated and unable to benefit from healing interactions with others.

The **discussion is avoided** often because of a specific, painful issue. The culture defines what has happened as “bad,” and the culture often strongly believes that any “bad” must be punished. So if the victim has made any mistakes during the event (either through lack of judgment or through involuntary sexual arousal), he or she could be considered partly responsible for what has happened and therefore a candidate for punishment. Even if the punishment would not be from others within the culture, there would be the automatically self-induced pain of guilt and shame that has become a part of the individual by virtue of being reared in a punishing culture. And so those who care about the individual may avoid discussion for fear of bringing to light any such mistakes. When such discussions do occur, there is usually great effort to believe, and to convince the victim, that the victim did not make any mistakes, or, if the victim did, that he or she should not be held responsible for them for some specified reason. Often it is easier just not to have the discussion.

So the victim is a victim of whatever elements (if any) of the sexual behavior produce PSDED, and then also a victim of the culture, or the representatives of the culture (you and me).

But now we must look at the “**perpetrator.**”

If the behavior is significantly deviant from normal, we can assume that (1) this individual has probably had significantly deviant, and possibly traumatizing, life experience or (2) that he or she has received a biological makeup that has contributed to the tendency to engage in such behavior or (3) that he or she has had the onset of some disability that is leading to reduced ability to refrain from unapproved behavior or (4) that he or she has been reared in ways that have led to insufficient ethical beliefs and/or ethical sense. Thus, this person’s life has become involuntarily complicated in ways that most likely will limit his gratification from normal, healthy relationships, limit his or her ability to be productive and adherent to the culture’s expectations, and interfere with having satisfactory self esteem, all examples of PSDED. The individual is thus **a victim of these circumstances specific to his or her life.**

But even more, there is **the reaction of the culture**, that is, the reaction of the individuals close to and important to the person, and the reaction of the governmental hierarchy to what he has done, with the likelihood of **punishment and revenge**, and thus even more PSDED. The individual thus also becomes **a victim of his or her culture.**

The bottom line is that **the “perpetrator” is a victim also.**

Our attitude toward the perpetrator is substantially different from that toward the victim. But should it be? And if so, how?

There is no question, I believe, that a perpetrator is someone who needs to be supervised, until shown with a fair amount of confidence not to need to be. In addition to supervision, he or she needs our efforts to help him or her change to the point the supervision is no longer needed (assuming we have developed such capability).

But what is usual is **something in addition to, or even instead of, the above.** We feel sorry for the victim, but have **anger** toward the perpetrator, and our anger motivates efforts to ruin the life of the perpetrator, to inflict PSDED. And this tendency toward punishment and revenge **alienates** the perpetrator from the very people who might be of help, and it alienates the perpetrator to some extent from the society, making identification with the ethics of that society more difficult. In this way, our anger actually **increases** the likelihood of further such behavior. It interferes with helping this perpetrator, and it drives further underground other individuals who might need help with similar behavioral tendencies. It would seem that this approach to the problem is **inconsistent with the REUEP.** It is what comes naturally to us, to be sure, but it is not optimal. We should, I believe, be equally concerned about and benevolent toward the victim **and** the perpetrator, even though we may have to provide for supervision (to an extent proportional to the risk) of the perpetrator.

Please note again that the above is not a political proposal. Political and legal change will only reflect a change in the culture, and the culture will change only if individuals such as you and I do. So what I am writing about here is a potential change in your way of thinking that is part of the profound set of changes that are inherent in becoming a Humanian.

Another kind of cultural victimization is seen with regard to certain kinds of **negotiated sex** between consenting adults. The best example is **prostitution.**

Prostitution is associated with crime of various sorts. But to what extent is this true simply because prostitution itself, for no rational reason, is designated as a crime?

Now actually this issue is indeed currently being debated politically. In fact, some cultures **legalize** prostitution while others **criminalize** it. And the issues are complex. It is not likely that I can contribute anything that has not already been asserted in such debates. And this book is not a political one. But what I do wish to do is to focus on that aspect most relevant to the Humanian's approach to the issues.

It is said by some that prostitution is "inherently bad," that is, so obviously bad that no further explanation is needed. (Friendly debate regarding this issue is likely to be very difficult.) But how is this conclusion arrived at? I believe that this attitude toward prostitution is taught to children and young adults by the culture, without any actual logical consideration of the issues, because that is the nature of our unfortunate "standard model" of child rearing. Children are told the difference between right and wrong, and are expected to develop such beliefs as an act of obedience. A child is likely to be (informally) punished (disapproved of) if he or she questions the validity of such taught proscriptions. And within the standard model of child rearing, there is a tendency to believe that it is best to shield the child from any consideration that what is being taught may not be agreed upon by everyone, because that might weaken the effectiveness of the effort to produce in the child a strong, protective ethical value. (If anything, it weakens the child's developing ability to engage in ethical reasoning.)

(My reference to the "standard model" of child rearing is using terminology from the chapter "Rational-Ethical Child Rearing" in the "textbook" that can be downloaded free from HomoRationalis.com.)

But suppose we start from a different framework. Suppose we start from an absence of any assumption that such behavior is bad. What would the behavior then look like, and how would it be different from other behavior that is not disapproved of but accepted as good? Let us use our imagination.

There are individuals who, because of their appearance or certain disabilities, are unable to develop relationships with others that are intimate enough to allow for sexual behavior to occur.

There are individuals who are new to sex and wish to learn how to engage in it so as to be more confident when the time comes for such behavior to occur in a primary significant relationship.

There are individuals who do not have the time, due perhaps to a heavy work schedule that may even involve much travel, to develop relationships sufficiently intimate as to sustain sexual behavior as a part of them.

There are individuals who would like to learn to really get good at such behavior, in the same way that some learn other skills, such as sports, dancing, art, etc.

There are individuals who, because of certain life experiences, may experience substantial inhibitory anxiety when attempting to engage in sexual behavior, and who therefore wish help in desensitization and the ability to enjoy the activity.

There are individuals who have a primary significant relationship with another who is unable to engage in sexual behavior but who is accepting of the individual getting such gratification elsewhere, with the additional comfort in knowing that the gratification is confined to a relationship that is for that purpose only, and thus not a threat to the primary significant relationship.

And perhaps there are other such scenarios, in which the existence of individuals who enjoy this kind of work and regard it as a way they can be of help to others is a real benefit to our species.

Now if our species had no negative attitudes toward an occupation such as this, would there nevertheless be something about it that would make it "inherently bad"?

We know, of course, that there are awful aspects to prostitution that do indeed currently exist, such as sexual slavery, but can we not ask whether these varieties of the occupation, that obviously involve PSDED, are primarily **the result of the cultural condemnation of the entire occupation itself**, such that it is driven underground and is therefore less subject to the expectation of the maintenance of certain ethical standards of behavior that apply to occupations that are more publicly scrutinized? How much of what is bad in prostitution is actually not the sexual behavior itself, but behavior that would be bad in **any** occupation?

So my whole point of this discussion is to ask you, if you are a Humanian, whether it is possible that **the bad in the world comes primarily from what you and I do, as a part of our cultures**, as opposed to there simply being bad people among us good ones, bad people that need to be punished, quarantined, and perhaps killed. What would life for our species be like if we made the assumption that all behavior was okay unless it, in and of itself, produced PSDED? And would we all perhaps have much more fulfilling lives, able to enjoy all of our biological capabilities, if we specifically inhibited only those behaviors that predictably made things worse (caused unnecessary PSDED)?

But remember that although I am talking about what life would be like if our **cultures** became more optimal, such optimization of culture can only come about if **individuals**, such as you and I, **change ourselves** and **advocate** such change to other **individuals**.

At the beginning of this discussion, we talked about the PSDED that accompanies sexual behavior in the form of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. We should note that these problems are not significantly different from obesity and food poisoning, that require modification of eating behavior to reduce the risk. We do not regard eating as bad because of these risks, but we do have to take appropriate precautions.

So we have three main forms of PSDED associated with sexual behavior, (1) PSDED produced by inherently damaging forms of sexual behavior, such as rape and adult sex with young children, (2) PSDED produced by risks especially attached to sexual behavior, such as unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease, and (3) PSDED produced by non-rational cultural attitudes about sexuality. The first form of PSDED is prevented by abstinence from damaging forms of sexual behavior, brought about by education and adherence to ethical standards of behavior. The second form of PSDED is prevented by engaging only in safe sexual practices. The third form of PSDED is prevented by modification of sexual behavior and abstention from it in accordance with cultural values, **but also efforts to change the culture**, which begin with efforts to change the self followed by advocacy. And it is this last effort specifically (change of culture through change of self and advocacy) that a Humanian would perhaps be most able to put forth and be most likely to value.

I wish now to address **violence**.

Violence is the deliberate production of severe PSDED. It is obviously, then, behavior inconsistent with the REUEP. At least it would probably be very difficult to show that it was consistent with the REUEP, except perhaps in the case of self-defense or the saving of others from PSDED, when no other equally effective alternative seemed to exist.

But **what constitutes violence**? How severe does the PSDED have to be? Where is the dividing line between violence and non-violence? Let us assume that hitting someone in the face is violent. What about on the arm? What about poking real hard with the fingers? What about slapping the face? What about spitting in the face? What about spanking? What about screaming in the face of the other? What about making a devastating remark to the other? What about breaking the other's possession? What about ruining the other's reputation? What about threatening violence? What about threatening abandonment?

It should be apparent that there is **no clear dividing line** between **violence** and **nonviolent hostility**. So what we are talking about is some degree of **hostility**. (In the Rational-Ethical Anger Prevention chapter in the free

textbook at HomoRationalis.com, “anger” is used to refer only to the feeling inside, whereas “hostile behavior” or “hostility” is behavior motivated by anger and having as its goal causing pain, discomfort, and/or damage to the target of the anger. And the chapter points out that some hostile behavior is quite sophisticated and subtle, such that there could be difficulty in appropriately recognizing it as such.)

So if we talk about violence, we are talking about extreme hostility, but since there is no clear dividing line between violence and mild hostility, we need to talk about hostility itself if we are going to try to do something about violence.

It should be clear that hostile behavior, since it always tends to promote suffering of some sort, is therefore very likely **inconsistent with the REUEP**. (Playful hostility, as in friendly teasing, is a complex and sometimes problematic behavior that will not be covered here.) Thus, if you are a Humanian and you are about to act in a hostile manner, an ethical rule of conduct to the effect that you should not be hostile should immediately be activated, causing you to give thought to what you are about to do. (The anger prevention paradigm in the above-mentioned chapter of the “textbook” will give you very specific ways of handling such a situation.)

So, in general, as a rule, **we should not be violent, or even hostile**.

But what do we observe? **We LOVE hostility and violence!** We do it all the time. We believe in it. We crave it to the extent that we center most of our entertainment around it. We love to watch it. Even as children, we flock to see the fight on the playground. As children and adults, we love sports that have an element of violence. We set up talk shows designed to see people become hostile. Our sitcoms are enjoyable because of the portrayal of clever and sophisticated hostility.

We train our children to be hostile and even violent. We hit and shout angrily at our children. We let them spend hours watching TV cartoons and other shows depicting violence. We give them computer games in which they can practice engaging in virtual violence. And we send them to school where the bullies rule on the playground and serve as additional models beyond those of the children’s parents. And we show them how admired the most hostile and violent behaviors are, as evidenced in “professional” wrestling and boxing.

Basically, **our cultures not only condone violence and hostile behavior in general, but also even promote it**.

So **we are victims of our cultures**. And we are our cultures. If we are ever to come to a far better way of life, in which we stop causing ourselves incredible amounts of unnecessary PSDDED, it will be by virtue of you and I **changing ourselves and advocating such change to others**, till ultimately our cultures change.

I have portrayed only one half of the picture, of course, because we also have within our cultures the recognition that peace, harmony, and nonviolence are good things. Isn’t it interesting how we can believe opposite things?

We have as a part of our basic animal nature not only aggression, hostility, and violence, but also affection, love, caring, and, yes, sexuality. (Our biological cousins, the bonobos, use sexuality for bonding, taming of aggression, and resolution of conflict.) Isn’t it striking that we humans are far more condemning of sexuality than of violence, and that we protect our children from sexuality far more than from violence?

So, in my opinion, **what should we as Humanians do?**

First, we should study and learn those ways of becoming non-hostile. Learning the anger prevention paradigm well would be a way. Second, we should practice those ways in our daily living till we get good at them. Third, we should rear our children in ways that do not produce chronic anger in them, as

outlined in the “textbook” chapter on Rational-Ethical Child Rearing, and help them to learn, as soon as possible, the anger prevention methods that we adults are learning and practicing. Fourth, we should advocate that others do the same.

And because this changing of ourselves in a basic sort of way is a **religious** undertaking, as religion is defined in this book, we should work within our religions to **improve** them such that they aid us to a much greater extent in this changing of ourselves. Advocacy within the services, and provision of discussion groups and workshops to study and promote such values and skills, would be specific ways of doing so. (It should be noted that currently such group efforts are defined not as religious, but as clinical activities, designed for individuals who have difficulties with anger-related problems to the extent of being considered to have a “disorder.” Such is unfortunate in that this is an unmet need for all of us, contributing to an extreme amount of worldwide PSDED. This need should be met primarily by our religious organizations, all over the world.)

And our religions can indeed improve.

Our religions reflect who we are. Especially in earlier times, our gods have been portrayed as very prone to anger, judgmentalism, revenge, and punishment, and wars with neighboring tribes or lands would be in behalf of, and with the protection and assistance of, such tribal gods. We need to recognize that our ancient literature will include such portrayals, and to accept such literature for what it is, just **our best effort at the time**. If we use the concept of God as a sentient entity, we will do better to consider God to be non-hostile, non-judgmental, non-vengeful, and non-punitive. Such a God will be a role model for us and our children.

Overall, my impression is that the idea of a deity being compassionate, non-hostile, non-punitive, and inclusive seems to be growing, even if, so far, only to a very slight extent. I believe this change is consistent with our growing awareness that we are an endangered species on this planet and must **come together and work cooperatively** if we are to save ourselves from ourselves. The idea of world government as an alternative to world war has been growing, as has the idea of universal human rights and the fair distribution of resources.

Probably, the religious concept of “heaven on earth” has very little in it beyond the elimination of the PSDED produced by our innate tendency toward anger, hostility, and violence.

But now let us revisit **media violence**. Are we saying that we Humanians should advocate banning all fiction that contains violence, or even hostility of any sort? Are we saying that at least there should be that banning with regard to violence, or even any hostility, in media for children? I think that everyone would see this as inappropriate, ineffective, and unrealistic. It will never happen, and perhaps it shouldn't. Such media depictions are at times great works of art. And there appears to be a great hunger for them, quenched by a large portion of entertainment budget.

But more importantly, such media portrayals (and fiction in general), help us to learn about ourselves vicariously. They therefore enhance our capacity for intensive empathy, our ability to understand each other, to put ourselves in the places of others. And that is an extremely important capability, producing a major difference between ourselves and chimpanzees (and all other species on this planet). The last thing we want is to become out of touch with who we really are, what our basic animal nature is really like, what it is that we are dealing with in our effort to stop our widespread mutual infliction of PSDED. Losing that awareness and understanding would make us far less able to deal with anger-producing situations and with the (hopefully only occasional) hostile, violent behavior that some may exhibit.

So what is the answer? I believe once again that it rests with **you and me**. We have to **study, practice, model, and advocate**. And if enough of us do it, if enough of us become Humanians, we will eventually have an effect on our **cultures**.

As noted, it should be a top priority for anyone raising **children** to understand and use an anger prevention paradigm (an example being the one in the “textbook”) and to teach it to their children. Then, when allowing children, under supervision, to begin to watch media hostility and violence, it should be as a learning experience for the child to help the child understand his or her basic animal nature and how one rises above it through understanding and practice. We will have to acknowledge to the child that such images are indeed exciting, but that our actual behavior needs to be different from our play and imagination. (And this educational process must be done non-punitively.)

It should be quite clear that we have a very long way to go before we have changed our ways in this manner. And it just won't happen without you and me doing our part. (But even as we are doing our part, it will make our own lives and the lives of those close to us better.)

So, “sex and violence” are a part of our basic animal nature. They will always be with us, at least potentially. But with the help of our **increasingly Humanian religions**, we will more effectively supervise ourselves, and occasionally if necessary each other, in our efforts to eliminate behavior that promotes PSDED and is therefore inconsistent with the REUEP.

And as we, I hope, are seeing, in order for this to happen, our cultures will have to change, and they will do so only if you and I as individuals do our part to change ourselves and advocate such change to others. Currently, we are to an enormous extent **victims of our cultures**. Of course our cultures do much good, and they thereby reflect the good that also is in ourselves and that we advocate to each other. But we will need to take a stand against some aspects of our cultures that victimize us so extensively.

Our religions reflect, or are a part of, our cultures, but there is no other part of our cultures that is more appropriately assigned the function of **self-improvement—for ourselves, our religions, and our cultures**.

As defined in this book, this effort is **Humanianity**.

**FAITH, HONESTY, AND ADVOCACY
(In Preparation)**

CHRISTIAN HUMANIANITY

(Bill Van Fleet's)

I am a **Christian**. But what that means here is that I am very **religious**, and that I come into religion from the **Christian tradition**.

I consider myself to be **Humanian**, in that I accept the **REUEP** as my **ultimate ethical principle**. Let me restate it:

WE SHOULD DO THAT WHICH WILL PROMOTE NOT ONLY THE SURVIVAL OF OUR SPECIES, BUT ALSO THE GOOD LIFE FOR EVERYONE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, "THE GOOD LIFE" MEANING AS MUCH JOY, CONTENTMENT, AND APPRECIATION (JCA) AS POSSIBLE AND AS LITTLE PAIN, SUFFERING, DISABILITY, AND EARLY DEATH (PSDED) AS POSSIBLE.

The fact that I do not believe that there is a sentient superpower that is watching me and possibly altering events for me, or that I am due for an afterlife, pleasant or unpleasant, does not make me less religious and/or less prone to see the goodness in Christianity or any of the religions. And being of Christian tradition, I look to Christianity for the language, metaphors, and principles that will help me to understand and to work toward achieving the goals of my religion. And since I believe any of our religions can improve, my effort is to use the very best of Christianity and to leave behind those aspects that, to me, are outdated and inconsistent with the REUEP.

So what do I consider the central focus of Humanian Christianity? It would be the focus on **what Jesus was advocating**.

Of course, some have doubted that he even existed, and there has been controversy about who he was and what he said and did. Well, I don't choose to base my life on the necessity for things to have been a certain way, when there is lack of certainty about those things. If I did, I would either have to wait for something to be proven, or I would have to have a thoroughly closed mind lest something come along to disconfirm that upon which I have based and am basing my whole life. So I try to base my religious ideas on what we have evidence for, always with the openness of mind that seeks to examine, revise, and extend my thinking in ways that appear to be consistent with the rules of logic and the rules of evidence.

The evidence seems to be that there was a **historical Jesus**, there being varying degrees of agreement about various details of his existence. It seems fairly certain that he tried to **improve** things, ran into trouble because he didn't go along with the powers that were, and was tortured and killed according to the custom of the time. And sometime after the historical Jesus died on the cross, the **mythical Jesus** arose, and has been with us Christians ever since. The mythical Jesus is the Jesus we know, because it is what our concept of him is. That is all we can ever have, but it is a wonderful organizing principle for our lives, I would maintain.

And who is the mythical Jesus? It is that person who indeed **knows all the right answers, the specific answers, as to what we should do**. Therefore, within Humanianity, all of those answers would have to be **consistent with the REUEP**. So the more we follow Jesus, that is, do what Jesus would have us do, the more we are behaving consistently with the REUEP, by definition. So our effort to study and understand the mythical Jesus is our effort to understand **how to implement the REUEP**.

And in studying, we Humanians look at what others have concluded and compare those ideas with our own, always with the effort to **improve** our own understanding as to how to implement the REUEP. In fact, we look at **all** religious, including **all** ethical literature (that from our own tradition and that from other traditions), always comparing and contrasting, and making the effort to see what is and is not consistent with the REUEP.

This I believe is what the mythical Jesus would have us do, because this would most promote our ethical growth (improvement), and therefore our ability to live according to the REUEP.

Thus, my approach to any religious literature is that it is a **stimulus for further thought, discussion, and elaboration**, just as this book is. For a Humanian, there is no requirement to believe, as an act of obedience, anything written or spoken. All ideas, including any in this book, should be open for discussion and friendly debate, because that is what most promotes **increasing wisdom** (increasingly accurate existential beliefs, about the way the world is, was, or will be), and thus increasing ability to act consistently with the REUEP. My understanding of the mythical Jesus is that he advocated figuring things out rather than just believing as an act of obedience.

But success in implementing the REUEP requires more than just having accurate beliefs about what the right thing to do is. We also have to **want** to do those things. We have to **love** doing those things. We have to **love the mythical Jesus**, and to strive to be as much like him as possible. We have to take the mythical Jesus into our hearts, to use metaphoric Christian language. And in doing so we are filled, to varying degrees, with the **"Holy Spirit,"** the motivation to do right, the feeling of joy that one gets when one does what one believes to be the right thing to do.

"Holy" means to me "good" and "right" and "best" and "ultimate." **"Spirit"** means to me "enthusiasm" and "energy" and "will" and "eagerness," as would be observed in "a spirited discussion." So the **Holy Spirit** is, for a Humanian Christian, the wish, the desire, the eagerness, to do that which is consistent with the REUEP.

We are imperfect. There is room for improvement. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, having the motivation to do the right thing, promotes our doing the right thing. The Holy Spirit increases the odds that we will improve and be even more able to do that which is consistent with the REUEP. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit to varying degrees. And the more filled we are with the Holy Spirit, the more we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

So **understanding the mythical Jesus, and being filled with the Holy Spirit,** means **having accurate ideas about what the right things to do are and wanting strongly to do them.** The combination of these two things is what I mean by "loving (the mythical) Jesus." When we metaphorically let Jesus into our hearts, we are filling ourselves with more of the Holy Spirit--the wish, the determination, to figure out what the right thing is to do, and to make ourselves do it, even though for other reasons we might want to do other things.

So my awareness of how Jesus tried to make the world a better place for everyone, then and in the future, and even gave his life for everyone, then and in the future, makes me aware of how he gave his life for me. He is not the only one who has done so. Many have done so. So the mythical Jesus that personifies the ultimate effort at trying to make the world a better place for everyone is an entity that has existed in many all over this world, and throughout time, and even exists to some extent in everyone--but just not enough. The mythical Jesus is our way of becoming aware of, more intensely, the possibility of improvement, of working toward increasingly fulfilling the REUEP.

So Jesus tried to improve the religion of his time. And he was **heretical**. And he was killed for it. Heresy, I understand, is **the refusal to believe as an act of obedience**. If you will be one of us, you will believe as we do. Otherwise, you are to be at best tolerated, or perhaps ignored, or avoided, or punished, or killed. I cannot conclude other than that the institution of heresy is antithetical to the REUEP.

The concept of heresy is indeed consistent with the ultimate ethical principle which we much, much more tend to go by, that says that **we should do whatever X wants us to do, X being whoever or whatever is most powerful**. It is that we should obey the most powerful. (I call this the **"authoritarian-ethical ultimate ethical principle."**) And if the most powerful says to believe that the most powerful is right, and that contenders are

evil, then that's what we should do. And all over the globe we try to do that, and we seek out heresy and behave appropriately. That's what we did to Jesus, and that's what we do to each other. And sometimes we call it revenge. And sometimes we call it punishment. And sometimes we call it "justice," the fair distribution of punishment and revenge. (Of course justice also refers to the fair distribution of resources, making the concept, for me, one that contains good and bad elements.) And sometimes we just avoid, look down upon, berate, ridicule, discriminate against, and refuse to care about those who believe differently. And sometimes we torture and kill them.

Well, my mythical Jesus tells me that **I should behave well toward everyone**, even those who do not behave well toward me. He tells me that **I should try to see the good in everyone**, even if there is a lot of bad there also, and to make that effort the predominant factor in my relating to everyone. He tells me that **I should attempt to be understanding, not judgmental**. He tells me **I should try to understand anger (which tends to motivate behavior that causes PSDED) in such a way as to avoid having it and to avoid causing it**, as much as is consistent with the REUEP. And he tells me that **I should try to understand and treat well and fairly individuals from other social strata, economic situations, religious or philosophical orientations, sexual orientations, races, or cultures**.

Of course to allow myself to be taken advantage of or mistreated, or to recommend that people who are prone to do things that cause PSDED go unsupervised, would be against the REUEP. But for me to protect myself or for us to protect ourselves does not imply retaliation (punishment or revenge). We can "love" (treat well) our enemies without thereby becoming their victims. And by loving our enemies, we can set the model for others to do so, and thereby spread the Holy Spirit, as Jesus apparently tried to do.

So, what about **social institutions**? Just as there is a tendency to see individuals as either good or bad, we also tend to see social institutions as either good or bad. But what makes more sense to me is that institutions are what our species has come up with to help us to survive and have the good life, and that because we are far from our goal of perfection, it is not surprising to find that there is both good and bad in most any of our social institutions. There is good in dictatorship. But there is more good in democracy. There is bad in dictatorship. But there is less bad in democracy. So dictatorship can be improved, but so can democracy. And so can our institution of marriage. And so can Christianity. We need the Holy Spirit in our approach to all institutions, including our religious ones. And we need to work together to improve all of our institutions, including our religions, insofar as possible, in the name of our mythical Jesus, or in the name of any other entity standing for or symbolizing improvement according to the REUEP.

You may ask me, "**Do you believe in God?**" Or you may ask me, "**Do you believe God exists?**" (These are perhaps two slightly different questions.) Well, before those questions can be answered, the terms need to be **defined**.

At the very beginning of this document, I already partially answered the questions, and for some I answered them completely, because their meaning of "God" indeed is "a sentient superpower that is watching me and possibly altering events for me." I have already said that I do not believe that. But we know that there are various other definitions of "God." So is there **a definition consistent with my Christianity**?

All definitions of "God" almost always involve the concept of "**ultimate**."

An example would be the idea that God is the **ultimate cause** of everything. There are problems inherent in this idea, that are well known. Our concept of "cause" is complex, and much has been written about it. I am trying to keep everything simple, so I will say that when people say that God is the cause of everything, they are trying to "explain" something. But when we explain something, the usual process is to say that X (whatever it is that we are trying to explain, for instance, something that has happened) is an example of Y (a more general statement about the way the world operates). The explanation of this object falling is that it is an example of the

way all matter tends to attract other matter to it, etc. Let's leave aside whether the example of explanation that I have used involves an accurate understanding of gravity, etc. The point is that all of our explanations involve the use of a model (such as Y), from which, if the model is accurate, X can be deduced and therefore predicted. So my explanation of X having happened is that it could have been predicted to happen using model Y. Of course, if you don't agree that model Y is accurate, then you will consider me not to have explained X adequately.

Now our species has learned to use the rules of logic and the rules of evidence to such an extent that we have been able to construct absolutely amazingly accurate models of the way the world really is, i.e., our science and technology. But that is **all that science does**, namely, **construct models**. **If the model is accurate, then predictions using it will be accurate**, and what we anticipate happening when we do something will turn out indeed to be what happens. But notice that one can then ask what the explanation of **that** model is. In other words, "Yes, things do happen as described according to that model, but why?" So to answer **that** question, one needs an even more general or "higher level" model.

So "God" cannot be the **explanation of everything**, because it can't explain "God." **We can never get to an ultimate explanation of everything**, because we would then have to explain why that was the explanation for everything and it would therefore not be ultimate. This is understood by everyone as the question, "If God created everything, who created God?"

Leaving "God" out for a moment, we can say that science is not going to be able to answer the ultimate question, "Why is there something rather than nothing at all?" And if we try to put "God" back in by saying that God created everything, then we are right back to asking, "Why?" and "How?"

So I can't **explain** why there is something rather than nothing at all, nor, if we ever create a model that is completely consistent with everything that we observe happening, can I **explain** why that model is the one that is consistent with the way everything is, rather than some other model that I could perhaps think up. All I can do is **appreciate** that there is something rather than nothing at all and that it is the way it is rather than different (different such that I would not be able to have had this life that I am living). And what is **intense appreciation**? We have other words that mean to most people approximately the same thing. If I intensely appreciate something, I could label that as "**worshipping**" it. So I worship **the fact** that there is something rather than nothing, and that it is the way it is. If I were to say that I worship **the reason** that there is something rather than nothing at all and that it is the way that it is, I would have to mean something different by "the reason" than "the explanation." I could refer to "the reason" as "**the great mystery**," and thereby come close to meaning the same thing. I could call everything a "**creation**," but **this would not be in the explanatory sense**. If I were to use the term "**all creation**" to refer to all that is, **I could not be implying a "creator" as an explanation for the "creation."**

So, if our meaning of "God" includes the requirement that the concept is supposed to explain something, then the closest we can come to that meaning would be "the great unsolvable mystery as to why there is something rather than nothing at all, and that it is the way it is rather than some other way." And I can worship that mystery, that is, intensely appreciate it. But that's about all I can do with it. And for me, that's enough.

But perhaps we can make our word "God" mean something else in addition, or as an alternative.

Rather than regarding the word as a label for a particular kind or instance of **explanation**, since people say that they worship God, we could focus on the concept of "**worship**." I have already written above a kind of meaning of the word "worship," saying that it can be considered **intense appreciation**. By **appreciation**, I mean a **very good feeling (joy) that I get when I think about something having happened the way it did or something being the way it is**.

Now if I were to believe that whatever happened, or whatever the situation is, was something that was **brought about by someone who did it for me**, then **my appreciation could be called "gratitude."** So I can appreciate a sunset. If I were to believe that it had been designed just for me, or even for a group of people including me, then I would be grateful.

On the other hand, just as I can imagine most anything (possible, probable, improbable, or impossible), I can imagine myself appreciating the sunset, or all that I have, or anything that contributes to the goodness of my life, or other's lives, and while so appreciating, **imagine** it having been designed for me, and others, as a gift, given by an entity that goes beyond explanation. In this way, I could be said to be **grateful to God** for what I was appreciating. But I would really know that this was not a gift, designed for me by an actual knowable entity. This act of imagination would be carried out to enhance the intensity of the experience of appreciation. I would only be **imagining** that this portion of existence had been designed for me (and perhaps others), not **believing** it. (I could call it "pseudobelief.")

Well, I actually believe that the portion of all existence that was designed for me is infinitesimal. So I can **appreciate** all existence, while not especially being **grateful** for it. But **there is indeed something I can be grateful for**, having to do with the fact that I am living and can appreciate things. There is something that has indeed been designed for me and for others, namely, all those things that were done or created by those who have gone before me or us and have put forth effort in my or our behalf, that is, **have tried to make the world a better place for people, perhaps including me.**

Is that beginning to sound familiar? If someone tries to do that which will promote not only the survival of our species but also the good life, for everyone, now and in the future, is that someone to whom I should be grateful? So should I not indeed be grateful for whenever anyone has acted in a way consistent with the REUEP. And since people are more likely to act in a way consistent with the REUEP if they **know about it**, and **try to behave consistently with it**, then should I not be grateful to them for doing so? My metaphoric way of referring to **trying to know** about and understand what ways of behavior are consistent with the REUEP has been to refer to it as coming to know the **mythical Jesus**. And my metaphoric way of referring to **wanting to behave** in a manner consistent with the REUEP is to refer to it as having the **Holy Spirit**. So I am grateful to those who want to know (the mythical) Jesus and who have the Holy Spirit, even if they do not think in those Christian terms and do not come from a Christian tradition.

As children, we look to our parents as the ultimate. They know everything, including what is right. And we appreciate them and are grateful to them. We worship them. (Of course we do so only part of the time.) But it is not long before we find out that our parents are not the ultimate. We see their imperfections. And we want to understand more and do better. And so from the beginning of our species, we have looked beyond our parents and ourselves, speculating as to the answers. And those answers as to what is ultimate have been our "gods."

And of course our gods have looked much like parents, or at least extremely powerful beings, and they have tended to have the characteristics of our parents, those characteristics being both good and bad. And as we have become more able to attempt to implement the REUEP, by virtue of our science and technology, and especially the understanding of ourselves, we have looked increasingly toward the ultimate good. Our gods have tended more to have good, positive traits, rather than the kind of traits that foster child sacrifice, discrimination, slavery, murder, and ethnic cleansing. And this progression can be seen within the Christian tradition. And it is good.

So for me "God" has three components.

First, there is the intense appreciation that there is something rather than nothing, and that it is the way it is rather than different (so that I have this chance to live). This is the great mystery, the ultimate inability to

understand that which I am most grateful for. It is an extension of what I felt toward my parents at the beginning of my life. It is how I felt toward my father and my mother.

Second, there is the intense appreciation of the possibility of learning how this world works (now best done through our science and technology), and therefore how to do those things that will promote not only our survival but also the good life for everyone, now and in the future (REUEP). It is the awareness that I can learn from my parents, and teachers, and others who have gone ahead of me and are passing along their contributions to wisdom just as I am trying to do. It is how I have felt as a child learning from my parents, and later from all the world.

Third, there is the intense wish to learn from others what is right (that which will promote the REUEP), the wish to implement that knowledge in my own life and to contribute that knowledge to others, and the joy in the awareness that I am indeed being successful. It is what makes me feel and be “spirited” in my wish to do “good.”

Needless to say, I have been giving a sort of tripartite picture of “God,” the set of “ultimates” in my life. This way of conceptualizing or speaking about “God” is certainly not the only way, and it is not necessary in order for me to want to do good and to do it successfully. And it comes from my own religious tradition, which is not the only religious tradition. But it is my way of understanding how Christians can indeed be Humanians, and how Christianity is on the road to Humanianity, as are the other religious traditions also.

There are other aspects of the Christian tradition that are consistent with the REUEP.

From what I said at the beginning, it may be evident that I do not “believe in the **power of prayer**,” in the sense usually meant. And those that do sometimes experience discomfort with the idea that there is a sentient superpower that makes or allows bad things to happen to good people, but might not do so if enough of us prayed enough. But I believe in the power of prayer in another sense, namely, for **the effect that it has on the one praying**, because the act of doing so is that of **practicing caring**, of wanting the best for everyone if indeed that is what the individual is praying for. Many do indeed have the belief that they are intervening on the behalf of others and are thereby making the world a better place, by virtue of the actual effectiveness of prayer. But even for those that don't have such beliefs, the spending of that effort in wishing others well, or in wishing for good things in general, should be good exercise of those mental processes that will contribute to strengthening the Holy Spirit in the individual, the wish to behave consistently with the REUEP. And when we pray in groups, we enhance our solidarity as a group with the group code being the REUEP, just the opposite of our getting together as groups in order to attack, lynch, wild, desecrate, ruin, and kill.

The mythical Jesus has spoken of the **kingdom of God**. Some say he pointed out that the kingdom is potentially right here on Earth. We just have to make it happen. That time, to me, would be when we globally all had maximal knowledge of what the mythical Jesus stands for and were maximally filled with the Holy Spirit, whether understood with those metaphors or not.

I do indeed see us on this planet trying to learn how to behave more consistently with the REUEP, and making a little bit of progress. However, we need to do much, much more before we are anywhere near our potential. That achieving such a change in ourselves is possible is borne out by noticing that whereas some individuals do much that is the opposite of what would be consistent with the REUEP, others spend their lives in ways quite consistent with it. If we can just come to understand what makes such a difference, and then work toward changing our ways of interacting with one another and our ways of creating adults out of our children into ways that work the very best, we surely can come much closer to that ideal of complete consistency with the REUEP. And it will be our rules of logic and rules of evidence, that is, science, helping us to understand ourselves accurately, that will enable us at long last to make such progress.

So if we use the term “**Heaven**” as our current concept or fantasy of what it would be like to live, all over this globe, in ways 100% consistent with the REUEP, then we could all strive and pray for the time when it will be on Earth as it is in Heaven.

We are all born with our basic animal nature. But through our child rearing, education, interaction with others, study, friendly debate, and promotion of ethical thought through our religious institutions and individual activities, we modify this basic animal nature to some extent, meaning that we learn what works better than what comes naturally, and we make ourselves do what works better. And by “works better,” I, as a Humanian, mean “promotes the REUEP.”

Christians sometimes refer to “Satan.” From all that I have written so far, I think you might accept that concept as referring to the tendency we all have to fool ourselves and think that we are doing the right thing when in fact we are doing something that will promote PSDED. Thus, the concept should have the implication that we should always be on guard against our tendency to have a closed mind, even though, because Satan is clever, the concept has often been used to do just the opposite!

Let's go back to the "historical Jesus." I believe that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. How much, I do not know, and there is no way of knowing. I do believe that he tried to improve things and got tortured and killed for his efforts. I can have great sympathy for him, and much gratitude for his effort. And what happened to him was a tragedy. And I certainly do not want his tragic death to have been in vain. And so I am pleased to see that the mythical Jesus is still with us. The historical Jesus made a difference.

But the way that I have defined the Holy Spirit is such that it existed before the historical Jesus, just as it still exists today. Throughout the history of our species, there have been those who have tried to make the world a better place for others within their spheres of influence, just as is true today. So the Holy Spirit has always existed throughout our history, and the historical Jesus most likely had much of the Holy Spirit. But we need to recognize that Jesus is not the only one who has died or otherwise made major sacrifices for us, by trying to help us to be better (to behave consistently with the REUEP), so we should be grateful for all who have sacrificed themselves for the Holy Spirit. And we have said that probably everyone has had the Holy Spirit to some extent, so we need to be grateful for everyone's effort to make the world a better place for others.

For me, having a relationship with the mythical Jesus means connecting to others in an effort to make the world a better place. It is the good in myself reaching out to, making contact with, and receiving recognition and appreciation from the good in others. It means the Holy Spirit in myself making contact with the Holy Spirit in others. It means working with others to implement the REUEP.

If I were to spend energy on excluding my concern for others just to think about Jesus, I don't believe I would be acting according to the Holy Spirit, nor do I think the historical Jesus would have thought so. And obviously, torturing and killing in the name of Jesus would be inconsistent with the REUEP. But I believe discriminating against those that are motivated by the Holy Spirit, meaning are trying to make the world a better place, but are doing so with metaphors that are non-Christian, would be inconsistent with the REUEP, and surely the historical Jesus would have thought so also. So those of us who are Christian should study and learn about other traditions and join non-Christians in efforts to achieve consistency with the REUEP.

So I return to my explanation of my Christianity as being only my tradition. I have no belief that another tradition would necessarily be less valuable, less good, less consistent with the REUEP. I would have to see whether that tradition was indeed motivating people to do that which not only promoted the survival of our species, but also the good life for everyone, now and in the future. But I would imagine that all traditions are imperfect, and can be improved, including my Christianity. And I wish to do my part.

In behalf of that, I have written a **textbook, available free to everyone at HomoRationalis.com**, that specifically clarifies how every individual can participate in the effort to improve life on this planet. It is not a political book. It does not advocate belief as an act of obedience. It does not contain pseudoscience. It requires no special expertise or technical background. Though it is a religious book, it uses no specific religious tradition for its concepts or terminology. It is written for everyone. It covers in the most basic way possible how we can achieve a far better existence on this planet, by understanding how to implement the REUEP. The title of the book is:

For Everyone: Rational-Ethical Living and the Emergence of "Homo Rationalis": The Most Important Book

And whether the book lives up to its title awaits the book being read and evaluated.

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