

A Musical Road to Maturity and Humanism

Roy V. Jackson

I am looking at humanism through the prism of history. To strip it of much of the confusion and ambiguity with which various intellectual movements have imbued it over time. Considering the vast cultural transformations that have swept our history from ancient Egypt to the European Union, a credible view of humanism should reflect something inherent in the potential of the human mind to learn and grow.

Looking back at my own history, I remember a continuing passion for learning as I lived through stages of my life in a growing, rich and comfortable society — one created by the efforts of its people to build on the past without any apparent evidence of supernatural interference. That was when I learned about **Abraham Maslow's** hierarchy of needs that drive the stages of those people's lives as well as mine — the need for basic survival in infancy, security in childhood, togetherness in adolescence and esteem in adulthood, as well as promising further growth in maturity.

But what explained the stages in the history of Western civilization that seemed to reflect the potential of rational thought and the human mind to learn and grow through similar stages? Ancient Egypt built a civilization out of tribal chaos. Greece and Rome gave their empires military security in a barbarian world. England and America brought their people together to replace authoritarian rule with self-government.

While I was building my career as an international patent attorney in the 1960s, I found the explanation went back almost two thousand years to **St. Augustine**, who defined history as the education of the human race in the same stages as human lives, a process with a strong flavor of humanism.

In the 60s, popular music seemed to be expressing change. Changes towards a new stage that rejected the materialistic values and proprieties of the times. It was hard to miss **Bob Dylan's** countercultural call in these lines:

*Your old road is rapidly agin'
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'*

The fact that the future was announced in music by the younger generation pointed to the same appeal that music itself has had for centuries in the growing human mind. Concern with the lessons of the past as a guide for the future led to an openness expressed in **Paul McCartney's** song, *Help*, which includes:

*I'm not so self-assured
Now I find I've changed my mind
and opened up the doors*



I also realized that there is a human impulse to make a sad song better. McCartney expressed it best in his song *Hey Jude*. It was the driving force in the monumental movement, one step at a time, from the gods on Olympus to our democratic civilization.

For me, those songs were a wake-up call for a social transformation to a new stage that would be next in Maslow's hierarchy — his life-enhancing need for a self-actualizing maturity stage to replace the obsolete need for esteem by more and more wealth creation. The transformation that exploded in the counterculture also opened my mind to a new, more mature world, which seemed to be a humanistic move to value relationships with people instead of their acquisition of things.

The Beatles came to Greenwich Village before I had even heard of humanism, but what I would like to call humanism was beautifully expressed by the Beatles in *Baby You're a Rich Man*. The following lyrics speak beautifully of humanism:

*How does it feel to be one of the beautiful people?
Now that you know who you are,
what do you want to be?*

For me, the answer is: A humanist, rich or not.

About the author:

Roy V. Jackson is 94 years old. He was reared in the mountains of British Columbia. Jackson obtained degrees in chemistry and civil law from universities of British Columbia and McGill. Jackson has been a researcher, an infantry instructor, and worked for DuPont, Johnson & Johnson and Hercules.

While living in Greenwich Village, during the 60s and 70s, he worked with the Council of Episcopal Diocese of New York, the inter-parish Council of Midtown in Manhattan, and the World Future Society.

Jackson retired in 1994 and became an instructor teaching courses in Academy of Lifelong Learning at the University of Delaware. His book, *Growing up in History: A Memoir of Western Civilization* (ISBN: 9781432749149) is available through Amazon and at Barnes and Noble bookstore locations.