

HUMANISM TODAY

Volume 8, 1993

Humanism and Postmodernism

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We wish, above all, to express our gratitude to the James Hervey Johnson Charitable Educational Trust for generously underwriting the costs of producing this particular issue of *Humanism Today*.

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FOREWORD

Humanism Today is published annually by of the North American Committee for Humanism, founded in 1982. NACH's major project and undertaking is the Humanist Institute whose purpose is to provide comprehensive training and education for future humanist leaders. Owing to the diverse, pluralistic character of its student body and faculty, the Institute seeks to probe the broad common ground of the humanist tradition and of the movements that have historically grown from it. The Humanist Institute admits students of any race, gender, national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational and admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

In most years the compilation of articles written for *Humanism Today*, largely centered upon a particular theme having to do with some aspect of rethinking humanism, has represented academic papers originally delivered at the Institute's faculty Colloquium held each year in January in New York City. In some years, however, when the germination of essays has required a period of two years, the annual issue of *Humanism Today* has been developed from the proceedings of a particular annual Humanist Weekend, usually held in November. Such is the case with this issue, volume 8.

INTRODUCTION

Among major challenges to Humanism in the late twentieth century are religious fundamentalisms, New Age thought, and postmodernism. While volume seven grappled with the challenge of New Age thinking, volume eight responds to the postmodernist critique of humanism.

Volume eight contains fifteen original essays that have been meticulously edited by my administrative assistant, Deborah Shepherd, and secondarily by myself. The writers of the various articles, as indicated in the notes on authors, are drawn partly from the faculty of the Humanist Institute and in large measure from its graduates. A few articles, such as those by George Erickson, Michael Werner and Carol Wintermute, represent contributions from individuals who have long been associated with humanist groups, NACH included. While all the essays cover vast areas of concern such as science, technology, spirituality, diversity, feminism, economics, and philosophy in relationship to the common denominator of a humanist perspective, special mention should be made of the spirited and highly original epistolary exchange between Andreas Rosenberg and Harvey Sarles. Originally the germ of this exchange was an extemporaneous dialogue at the opening session of the eighth annual Humanist Weekend held in Minneapolis in November, 1992. In reworking their ideas for publication, the authors generated a greatly expanded version of their views. In a sense, this epistolary exchange, then, is the linchpin of this entire issue of *Humanism Today*.