



Join Us

**Closing Remarks by Philip Fortune
Republic Day 24 September 2005**

I wish to thank Shane, Nicola, and Cedriann for their excellent presentations on different aspects of Humanism.

Who are we, these fascinating and restless creatures called human beings? Is there a fixed “human nature” predetermining our lives, or does human existence encompass the freedom to make choices within an ethical dimension - to choose to change the direction of our lives, or to change society as a whole?

Salvatore Puledda in his book “*On Being Human*” is correct when he said that “humanism is based on freedom of choice.” The entire history of humankind, which to this day has largely meant the suppression of freedom of choice, tells us that it will take a humanist revolution to guarantee this freedom to the human being, to allow room for the natural diversity of human existence. The affirmation of humanism is therefore a fundamental imperative of our time: it is the prerequisite for humanity’s survival.

Today, the word *humanism* is largely misunderstood. It is seen by many as a rational and secular philosophy, embraced by atheists and agnostics. This is because many believe that a person could not be both rational and religious at the same time.

Humanism is far broader than these abstract philosophical ideals. It is a *human attitude* in daily life that can resolve the paradox of building a society that embraces diversity while at the same time, unifying the people in a shared sense of their common humanity.

The Humanist Association like any other association has members of divergent beliefs. Freedom of choice also means freedom to believe or not to believe, and this is what we are about, freedom of choice.

In a sense, we were all born humanists. As young children, we had no prejudices. We questioned everything even the answers that our elders gave us when it didn’t make sense to us, and our race differences were unimportant. People were ... People. Then we got indoctrinated.

Our mission is to create a universal human nation, like the one seen from the eyes of a young child. For as events in our world accelerate, all of us will continue to face difficult choices that affect both our own lives and those around us.



Albert Einstein, in his Living Philosophies, Simon and Schuster, 1933, had this to say on the true meaning of life:

“Strange is our situation here upon earth.

“Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose.

“From the stand point of daily life, however, there is one thing that we do know:

“That above all, man is here for the sake of other men.

“For those upon whose smile and well-being, our own happiness depends,

“And also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a common bond of sympathy.

“Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received”.

This, my friends is the essence of humanism.

Now that the formal part of this launch is completed, I invite you all to have some refreshments and stay and mingle with us for a while.

If you are interested in joining the Association, you can contact me or any of the other members for subscription information or you can go to our web site.

Thank you for coming.