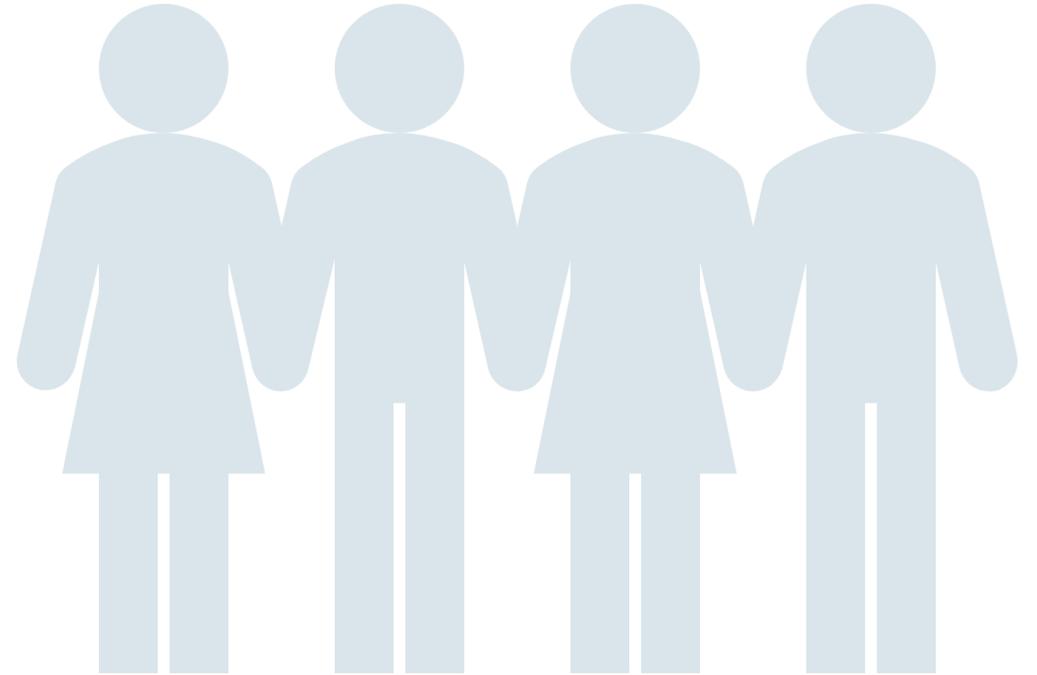




Secular Humanism

Mark D. Harris,
MD, MPH, MBA, MDiv, PhD, ThM,
DBA(C)

MD Harris Institute



Secular Humanism



THE TEN COMMITMENTS

Living Humanist Values

HumanistCommitments.org



EMPATHY

I will consider other people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.



CRITICAL THINKING

I will practice good judgment by asking questions and thinking for myself.



RESPONSIBILITY

I will be a good person even when no one is looking and own the consequences of my actions.



ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT

I will always focus on becoming a better person.



GLOBAL AWARENESS

I will be a good neighbor to the people who share the Earth with me and help make the world a better place for everyone.



PEACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE

I will help people solve problems and handle disagreements in ways that are fair for everyone.



ENVIRONMENTALISM

I will take care of the Earth and the life on it.



SERVICE & PARTICIPATION

I will help my community in ways that let me get to know the people I'm helping.



HUMILITY

I will be aware of my strengths and weaknesses, and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of others.



ALTRUISM

I will help others in need without hoping for rewards.

Secular Humanism

- The term “humanism” derives from the Middle Ages and had Christian overtones. Humanism sought the best for humans under God.
- Famous secular humanists – Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, Mark Twain, Robert Ingersoll, John Dewey.
- Humanist manifestos (1933, 1973, 2000)
- Secular humanism was the zeitgeist of the USSR and other communist and fascist nations.
- It is widespread in the world today, especially among the rich and powerful.



Religion makes claims for the existence of gods

Religion claims to explain reality

Religion claims to be the source of morality



Naturalism refutes this on the grounds of empirical observation which describes reality in ever improving detail



Humanism refutes this on the grounds of equality which is central to morality but absent from all religions claiming to be true

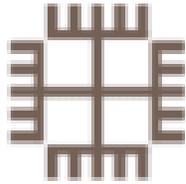


Atheism refutes this on the grounds of lack of evidence for any claims made by religion

Secular Humanist Beliefs (1)

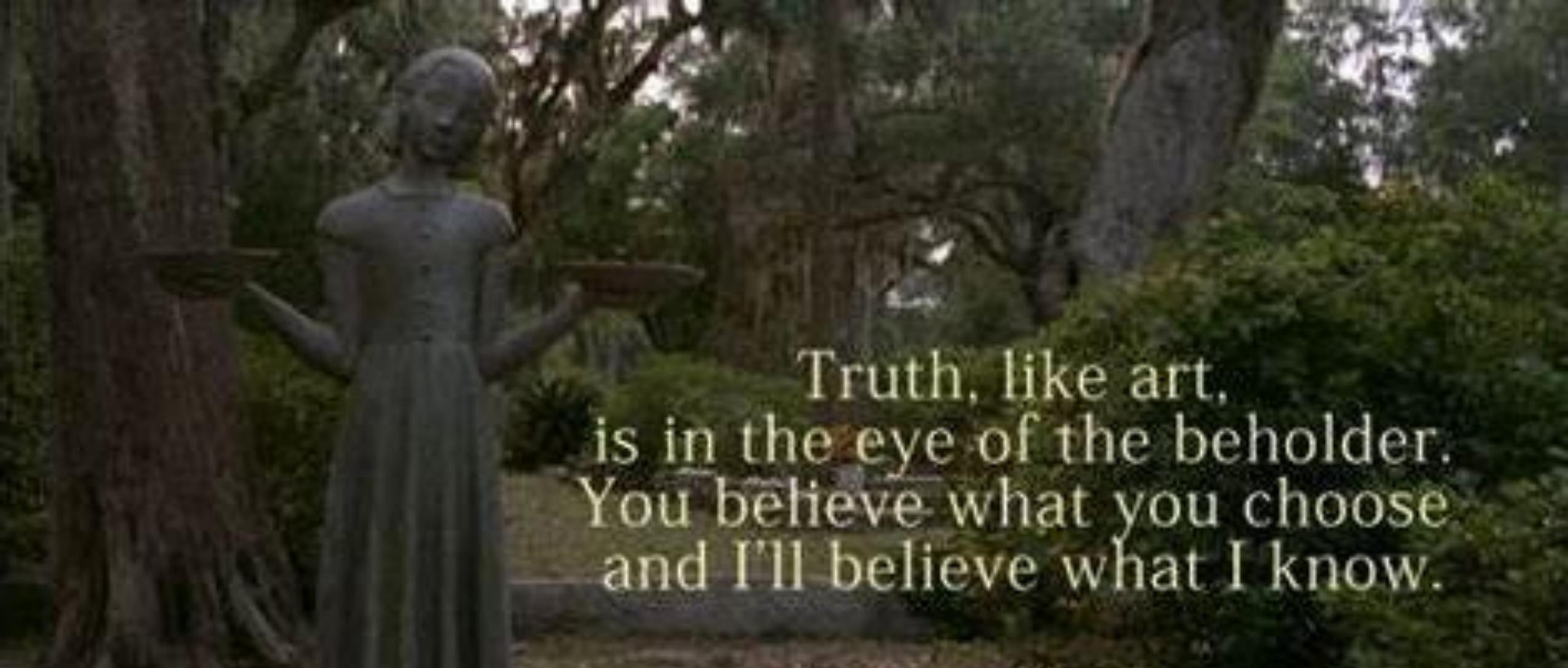
- Free inquiry – individuals have a right to pursue and promote whatever ideas they believe to be worth the effort.
- Separation of church and state – religious institutions should not be allowed to use their theological perspectives as a basis for drafting legislation or making judicial decisions to which the larger society is subject, and taxes should not be used to fund activities of religious institutions.
 - “You can’t legislate morality”
- Freedom – vigorous opposition to any limitation of conscience and belief.
 - Does this include limitations on action? Is speech an action?
- Ethics – humans are capable of cultivating moral wisdom and living virtuous lives without recourse to religion.
- Moral education – essential to maintaining an open, democratic society. Public education must develop and nurture good moral character in children

Secularism



Secular Humanist Beliefs (2)

- Religious skepticism – the physical universe can only be understood through scientific inquiry. Religion cannot convey truth
- Reason – the only acceptable modes of inquiry are those relying on logic, evidence, and empirical testing. Genuine knowledge of truth cannot be achieved in any other way, such as revelation.
 - “Logic is in the eye of the beholder.”
 - “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”
- Science and technology – the scientific method is the most effective means of understanding the world
 - The physical world, but true also regarding the moral world?
- Evolution does not require actors outside the physical universe and creation does. Therefore, teaching evolution is acceptable, and teaching creation is not.



Truth, like art,
is in the eye of the beholder.
You believe what you choose
and I'll believe what I know.

Relativism or arrogance?

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil

Secular Humanist Beliefs (3)

- Existence – the physical universe exists due to the inflation of infinitely dense matter and energy into what it is today. Evolution explains the natural world. Since our universe will end, there must be an infinite number of universes (multiverses). Nothing exists outside these physical universes. There is no heaven.
- Scripture – no book is holy. Dogmas, creeds, ideologies, and traditions are rejected
- God – does not exist (atheist). Human reason becomes God and is the only way to solve human problems.
- Mankind – not created, no soul, valuable insofar as he makes himself valuable and others believe he is valuable.
- Cultures – none is better than any other, and pluralism must be encouraged.

Fun Comparison between Western and Eastern Culture

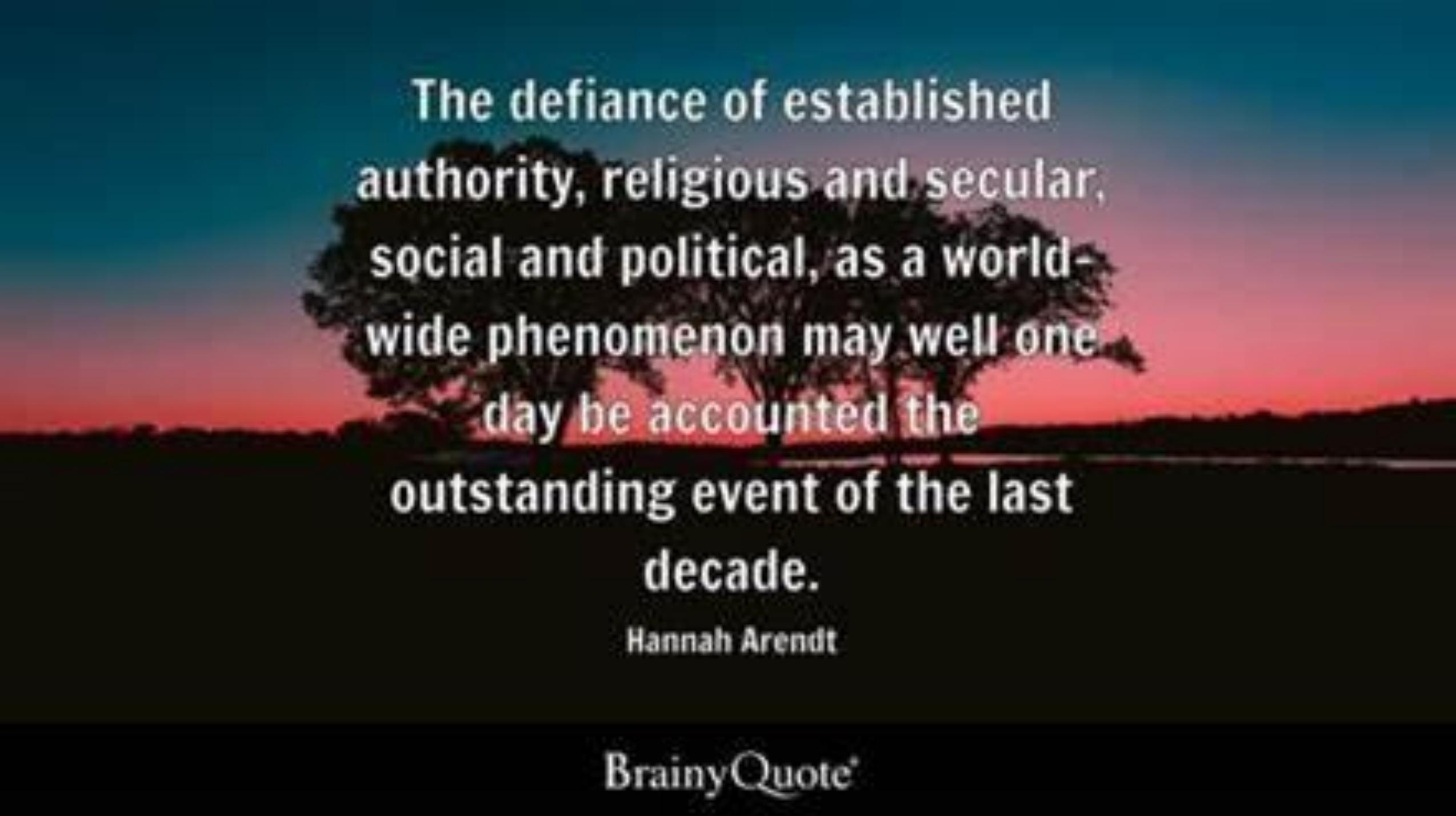
Western Culture	Asian/Chinese Culture
Life Style  Individualism	Life Style  Collectivism
Me  Emphasis on Personality	Me  Emphasis on Group Interests
Anger 	Anger 
The Boss 	The Boss 
Equality	Hierarchy
Weekends on the Road 	Weekends on the Road 
Desire Serenity	Like Gathering

Cultural Equivalence?

- What are some advantages and disadvantages of each culture as pictured?

Secular Humanist Beliefs (4)

- Sin – there is no transcendent moral code, but some things are bad:
 - Social injustice
 - Discrimination and intolerance
 - Opposing women’s rights, such as abortion
 - Homophobia (or other opposition to any type of personal sexual expression)
 - Islamophobia (or other religious or cultural phobia as defined by secular humanists)
 - Conservative politics
- Salvation – agreeing with secular humanists
- Afterlife – none
- Authority - none



The defiance of established authority, religious and secular, social and political, as a worldwide phenomenon may well one day be accounted the outstanding event of the last decade.

Hannah Arendt

BrainyQuote

Conclusion

- Discussion

References

- H. Wayne House, Charts of World Religions, Zondervan, 2006