

**A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SECULAR HUMANIST PHILOSOPHY AND ITS  
IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY pgs 32-54**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to examine secular humanists' claims and implications of such claims in Contemporary society. Using the method of hermeneutics, this paper critically examines the secular humanist world-view as well as showcases its social, political, religious and economic implications for our contemporary society. Secular humanist philosophy advocates the use of reason proposing that it is only when people feel free to think for themselves, using reason as their guide that they are best capable of developing values that succeed in satisfying human needs and serving human interests. Secular humanism is tied to the notion of civil liberties in all societies that is, freedom and dignity such as the freedom of speech, press, political democracy, the legal right of opposition to government policies, fair judicial process, freedom of association, and artistic, scientific and cultural freedom. Though good in many ways, yet has already plunged our society into almost irreversible social, religious and economic problems. Secular humanism is destructive of any social order in our contemporary society because it destroys any basis, foundation and reason for morality among politicians, teachers and the masses. The paper therefore recommends that secular humanist's philosophy must be rejected and its advocacy for a total secularization of the human society stopped at all cost if our contemporary society is to survive and live meaningfully.

**Keywords: Reason, Secular Humanism, Morality, Contemporary Society.**

## 1. Introduction

Our contemporary society is in decay. Terrorism and violent crimes have grown so much lately that many people are afraid to move freely during the day or go into our cities after dark. Our culture has been seriously eroded so much that sexual immorality has become part of our everyday life. There was a time only a generation ago when premarital sex was the exception not the rule. Now teenagers are having sex at a younger age. Many are even sexually active in primary school. Young men and women who desire to maintain their virginity until marriage are considered freaks or old school. In fact, priests and religious people who have chosen the life of celibacy are now seen as misguided individuals who misplaced their priorities in life. In the last thirty years families have been disintegrating such that the divorce rate hovers nearly over fifty percent. Today, adultery is both common and accepted by many in our societies. Premarital sex, drunkenness, drug abuse, theft, murder, abortion, lying, cheating, fraud, homosexuality, rape, cruelty and pornography are now a normal part of our societal landscape.

This large moral decline in our society lately cannot be explained in terms of poverty, racism and sexism, because these societal elements have been much worse in the past. The society in which we live today is in a period of great material prosperity compared with almost all of recorded history. Yet the society literacy rates and family solidarity were higher in the 1870s (under horrid social conditions) than today, when people in the ghetto live like princes, compared to their ancestors. There is indeed a reason for the moral decline of our society - we are experiencing the fruit or results of a secular philosophy or worldview change that took place in the Western worlds during the earlier part of the twentieth century. The worldview transition took place precisely in America between 1870 and 1930. The old worldview which dominated American culture was basically Christian with some right-wing enlightenment thinking tossed in. This Christian worldview was also transported to other cultures of the world. The Christian worldview had more or less dominated western civilization since the fall of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, this Christian worldview was replaced by secular humanism (or as it is also known today, materialistic naturalism). The secular humanist presupposes that the Christian God does not and cannot exist—that everything which does exist is merely the product of matter plus time plus chance. The essence of secular humanism is that man is the measure of all things. Man, not God, is the determiner of reality, meaning and ethics. In the midst of the promises of the secular humanist worldview to mankind, one wonders why the large scale of moral decay in our

contemporary society. The purpose of this paper is therefore to critically examine the secular humanist philosophy or worldview and show-forth its implications for contemporary society. In what follows, we offer descriptions of secular humanism as well as present the secular humanist philosophy and its implications for contemporary society.

## **2. Meaning of Secular Humanism**

The term "secular humanism" was adopted in the twentieth century by those who reject supernaturalism as a viable philosophical outlook to describe their non-religious life stance. Secular humanism is therefore, a humanist philosophy which grew out of late eighteenth/ early nineteenth century Enlightenment thinking. It is a philosophy and world view which centers upon human concerns and employs rational and scientific methods to address the wide range of issues. In addressing issues, secular humanism embraces human reason, instead of religion or revelation, as primary in determining morality and ethics.<sup>1</sup> In other words, secular humanism espouses reason, ethics, and justice, and specifically rejects supernatural and religious dogma as the basis of morality and decision-making

Furthermore, secular humanism is a lifestance, or what Council for Secular Humanism founder Paul Kurtz has termed a eupraxsophy: a body of principles suitable for orienting a complete human life.<sup>2</sup> As a secular lifestance, secular humanism incorporates the Enlightenment principle of individualism, which celebrates emancipating the individual from traditional controls by family, church, and state, increasingly empowering each of us to set the terms of his or her own life. Secular humanism also known as scientific humanism, is therefore, that philosophy of life that emphasizes a worldview based on naturalism: the belief that the physical world is all that is real. For the secular humanists, there is no divine purpose being worked out in the universe by Deity. Life has value and meaning only as we create and develop it. Because of its stance, secular humanism can also be seen as a religious worldview based on atheism, naturalism, evolution, and ethical relativism.<sup>3</sup> It is actually an attempt to function as a civilized society with the exclusion of God and His moral principles.

Secular humanism as an organized philosophical system is relatively new, but its foundations can be found in the ideas of classical Greek philosophers such as the Stoics and Epicureans as well as in Chinese Confucianism. These philosophical views looked to human beings rather than gods to solve human problems.<sup>4</sup> Hence, secular humanists are generally

nonththeists and typically describe themselves as nonreligious. They hail from widely divergent philosophical and religious backgrounds.

### **3. The Secular Humanist Philosophy**

The secular humanist philosophy is vividly captured under specific headings of religion, ethics, the individual, democratic society, world community, and humanity as a whole as shown in the Humanist Manifestos of 1933, 1973, and 2000. The manifestos explain the details of the secular humanist beliefs and represent the stand or the philosophy of secular humanism as we discuss below.

#### **3.1 Religion**

In the manifestos the secular humanists disclosed thus: "We affirm a set of common principles that can serve as a base for united action, positive principle relevant to the present human condition. They are a design for a secular society on a planetary scale. We submit this manifesto for the future of human kind. For us, it is a vision of hope, a direction for satisfying survival."<sup>5</sup> Hence, the principles or beliefs of the secular humanists are supposed to be a reference point for human actions in the society. One of these principles is the rejection of God as the cause of the universe. Consequently, Secular humanism maintains that traditional religions that place revelation, God, ritual or creed above human needs and experiences do a disservice to the humankind. For the secular humanists, the belief in the existence of a supernatural can only be supported by insufficient evidence. This particular stance, casts secular humanists as atheists. In fact, humanist Paul Kurtz, publisher of Prometheus Books and editor of Free Inquiry Magazine, says that "Humanism cannot in any fair sense of the word apply to one who still believes in God as the source and creator of the universe."<sup>6</sup> Corliss Lamont, a humanist, captures Kurtz's view vividly when he avers that "Humanism contends that instead of the gods creating the cosmos, the cosmos, in the individualized form of human beings giving rein to their imagination, created the gods."<sup>7</sup> Philosophically, Secular Humanists are naturalists as they believe that nature is all that exists - the material world is all that exists. Hence, there is no God, no spiritual dimension, no afterlife. Carl Sagan, another secular humanist said it best in the introduction to his Cosmos series: "The universe is all that is or ever was or ever will be."<sup>8</sup> Towing the same lane with

Segan, Roy Wood Sellars notes that “Humanism is naturalistic, and rejects the supernaturalistic stance with its postulated Creator-God and cosmic Ruler.”<sup>9</sup>

Note that secular humanist beliefs in the area of biology are closely tied to both their atheistic theology and their naturalist philosophy. For if there is no supernatural, then life, including human life, must be the result of a purely natural phenomenon. Hence, Secular Humanists must believe in evolution. Julian Huxley, for example, insists that "man ... his body, his mind and his soul were not supernaturally created but are all products of evolution."<sup>10</sup> All Secular Humanists, including Sagan, Lamont, Sellars, and Kurtz are in agreement on this. In general, secular humanists consider all religion to be superstitious thought that has held back the progress of humanity.

### **3.2 Ethics**

The question of what constitutes right and wrong actions has always remained a crucial engagement in the history of philosophy. While most philosophers based the source of morality outside of man or emanating from man, the secular humanists instead make man the source of morality as can be seen in their Manifesto thus:

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life. Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life, here and now. The goal is to pursue life's enrichment despite debasing forces of vulgarization, commercialization, and dehumanization.<sup>10</sup>

Because of their atheistic nature, Secular humanists adopt ethical relativism - the belief that no absolute moral code exists, and therefore man must adjust his ethical standards in each situation according to his own judgment.<sup>11</sup> If God does not exist, then He cannot establish an absolute moral code. This belief was made clearer by Humanist Max Hocutt when he says that human

beings "may, and do, make up their own rules... Morality is not discovered; it is made."<sup>12</sup> Equally, secular humanists posit reason and intelligence as the most effective instrument that humankind possesses. They stand high above other human endowment of its kind. To that effect, there is no substitute, for neither faith nor passion supplies in itself. The view is that the controlled use of scientific methods, which has transformed the natural and social sciences since the renaissance, must be extended further in the solution of human problems. Nevertheless, they were quick to add that reason must be tempered by humility, since no group has a monopoly of wisdom or virtue. Even though the secular humanists have an absolute belief in man for what he can do for himself, they point out that there is no guarantee that it is a matter of how the reason or intelligence of man is used; that all problems can be solved or all questions answered. All the same, they insist that critical intelligence, infused by a sense of human caring, is the best method that humanity has for resolving problems.

Meanwhile, Secular humanists posit that human beings are capable of being ethical and moral without religion or a god. They do not, however, assume that humans are either inherently evil or innately good, nor do they present humans as being superior to nature. Rather, the humanist life stance emphasizes the unique responsibility facing humanity and the ethical consequences of human decisions. Fundamental to the concept of secular humanism is the strongly held viewpoint that ideology - be it religious or political - must be thoroughly examined by each individual and not simply accepted or rejected on faith.<sup>13</sup> Along with this, an essential part of secular humanism is a continually adapting search for truth, primarily through science and philosophy. Many secular humanists derive their moral codes from a philosophy of utilitarianism, ethical naturalism, or evolutionary ethics, and some advocate a science of morality.

Secular humanists hold that ethics is consequential, to be judged by results. This is in contrast to so-called command ethics, in which right and wrong are defined in advance and attributed to divine authority. "No god will save us," declared Humanist Manifesto II (1973), "we must save ourselves."<sup>14</sup> Secular humanism aims to establish moral principles conducive to the freedom and well-being of humans based on ethical reasoning that is independent of all alleged supernatural sources of morality.<sup>15</sup> Because of its explicit rejection of the supernatural and moral codes based on religious convictions, secular humanist philosophy offers a way to develop an alternative to these traditional conceptions of morality.

### **3.3 The Individual**

The secular humanists' rejection of the supernatural or God is central to their avowal or enthronement of the individual autonomy and freedom. In the Humanist Manifesto, the secular humanists affirm:

The preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value. Individuals should be encouraged to realize their own creative talents and desires. We reject all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect, dehumanize personality. We believe in maximum individual autonomy consonant with social responsibility. Although science can account for the causes of behavior, the possibilities of individual freedom of choice exist in human life and should be increased.<sup>16</sup>

It is against this backdrop and to enhance the pursuance of the individual's full realization of creative talents and desires, that secular humanism reject in entirety all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect, and dehumanize personality. To this extent, they express a belief in maximum individual autonomy consonant with social responsibility. Although science can account for the causes of behavior, the possibility of individual freedom of choice, they maintain, exists in human life and should be increased. Hence, the secular humanists view in the area of sexuality is that which sees the orthodox religions and puritanical cultures as being intolerant in their attitudes; a situation that is seen as leading to undue repression of sexual conduct. They propose a right to birth control, abortion, and divorce. The secular humanists do not approve of exploitative, denigration forms of sexual expression. They at the same time oppose prohibiting either for law or social sanction of sexual behavior between consenting adults. Added to this, they make the case that the many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered as "evil". This is also an appeal for a tolerant society against the background of civilization. As far as others or the other party are neither harmed nor compelled to join the bandwagon, it is the view here that

individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-style as they desire. There is also an expressed wish to cultivate or develop a responsible attitude towards sexuality, in which intimacy, sensibility, respect and honesty in interpersonal relations are encouraged. Secular humanism therefore, recommends moral education for children and adults as an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity.

### **3.4 Democratic Society**

Secular humanism is tied to the notion that the individual must experience full range of civil liberties in all societies. This is in order to enhance freedom and dignity of the same individual. The freedom under consideration here includes freedom of speech and press, political democracy, the legal right of opposition to government policies, fair judicial process, religious liberty, freedom of association, and artistic, scientific and cultural freedom. Including too recognition of an individual's right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide. The secular humanists declare a commitment to an open democratic society. They at the same time vow to extend participatory democracy in its true sense to the economy, the school, the family, the work place and voluntary associations. In the mid ages, a line could hardly be drawn between the church and the state. They really worked hand in hand. The church had a lot of influence on the state. Aware of this, secular humanism insists that the separation of the church and state are imperatives. For the state, it should encourage maximum freedom for different moral political, religious and social values in society. It should not favour any particular religious bodies through the use of public monies, nor espouse a single ideology and function thereby as an instrument of propaganda or oppression, particularly against dissenters.<sup>17</sup>

Still dwelling on the issue of democratic society, secular humanism holds that the principle of moral quality must be furthered through elimination of all discrimination based upon race, religion, sex, age, or national origin. This means equality of opportunity and recognition of talent and merit. In this regard, individuals should be encouraged to contribute to their own betterment. They then declare a belief in the right to universal education. Everyone, they argue has a right to the cultural opportunity to fulfill his or her unique capacity and talents.<sup>18</sup>



### **3.5 World Community**

Before the present trend of globalization especially through hi-tech communication and super information highway network, secular humanism has already proposed world community without undue division. It is on this that it deplors the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. Here, an observation that spurred this proposal is based on the fact that, the world has reached a turning point in which humans should transcend the limits of national sovereignty and move towards the building of a world community in which all sectors of human family can participate. Thus the expectation is a development of order based upon transitional federal government that would appreciate cultural pluralism and diversity. On the issue of international face-off which crops here and there, the secular humanists are of the opinion that this world must renounce resort to violence and force as method of solving international disputes. In the alternative, the belief is the peaceful adjudication of differences by international courts and by the development of the arts of negotiation and compromise. War, they say, is obsolete. So is the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, they are of the opinion that the world community must engage in cooperative planning concerning the use of rapidly depleting resources. In the area of communication and transportation, the secular humanists are of the view that they must be expanded across frontiers. And for this reason, they advocate a censure to travel restrictions. They insist that the world must be open to diverse political, ideological and moral viewpoints and evolve a worldwide system of television and radio for information and education. Hence, they call for full international cooperation in culture, science, the arts, and technology across ideological borders.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.6 Humanity as a whole**

The humanists start by arguing that, the world cannot wait for a reconciliation of competing political or economic systems to solve its problems. These are the items for men and women of goodwill to further the building of a peaceful and prosperous world. They then urge that parochial loyalties and inflexible moral and religious ideologies be transcendent; also the recognition of the common humanity of all people. They further urge the use of reason and compassion to produce the kind of world they are advocating - a world in which peace, prosperity, freedom and happiness are widely shared. This is a vision they encourage every member of humankind not to abandon in despair and cowardice, reminding everybody that we

are responsible for what we will be. For them, the only way to attain a humane world by means commensurate with humane ends is by working together. Destructive ideological differences among communism, capitalism, socialism, conservatism, liberalism, and racialism, for the humanists, should be overcome. With the same humanistic spirit, the secular humanists call for end to terror and hatred, arguing that we will survive and prosper only in a world of shared humane values.<sup>21</sup>

From our discussion so far, the philosophy of secular humanism is primarily focused on humans. Human beings - not God, are at the center of all this thinking. Within secular humanism, anything dealing with the supernatural (including God, the Bible, angels, and demons) isn't considered. Hence the secular humanists proudly maintain that their philosophy is for the here and now as opposed to some supposed life after death. They believe in evolution—that man evolved upon the earth with all the abilities within himself for creating a peaceful, happy society. They believe that we humans only have one life to live and that each person should be free to live it as he or she chooses. They are advocates of contemporary sexual values determined by humans themselves and support all modern ideas of human rights including the right for a woman to have an abortion if she so chooses. The question is: how true and genuine are these secular humanists' proposals? In what follows, we shall attempt a critique of the secular humanists' philosophy with a view to determining its implications for contemporary society.

#### **4. Critique of the Secular Humanist Philosophy**

The secular humanism of the, whose beliefs were made popular by the American Humanist Association seems to be doing nothing exactly new in their subtle atheism and expression of anti-religiosity. Human history has been a witness to both theists and atheists, religious and anti-religious. People like Voltaire (1694-1778), who refused to accept all evidence from revelation and rejected the arguments of theologians, even to the point of seriously questioning God's goodness and denying divine providence. Thomas Paine (1737-1807), who rejected all forms of supernatural revelations in favour of religion of nature, elevating as he puts it, reason and scientific observation over these modes of superstition in Christianity. Nietzsche (1844-1900) who considered all supernaturalism opposed to reason, and Bertrand Russell, who became a militant opponent to all forms of supernaturalism, all simply opposed religion.

There is no doubt that religion has sometimes been used as a retrogressive force in society. But as some religion scholars would argue, we have to bear in mind that no matter how good a thing may be it could be badly used. In fact what may interest the secular humanists in our opinion is the fact that religion need not be a turning from the present but often represented both a force for enhancing of human life and social justice. On the general issue of religion, one would say that the secular humanists have a genuine case in deploring any effort whatsoever to denigrate human intelligence. The intelligence of man should be respected and regarded true to its ability, at the same time not denying its limits. To do this, that is to denigrate the intelligence of man, will keep his intelligence perpetually immature and grossly underutilized, which will undermine all his intellectual achievements.

On the proposal for the separation of the church and the state by the secular humanists, we recall that some liberal thinkers have also argued along this line. In the strict sense of it, some pursue the case for secularism from the point of view of the separation of state, politics and religion on the ground of the pluralistic nature of societies. There is no doubt that whatever evolution of religion may have in stock, it is clear that a process is now going on in large areas of the world, familiar enough in the history of Christianity, namely, secularization of law and politics and laicization of culture. The trend has actually led to some real situations in some areas of the world. India for instance, has deliberately adopted the policy of creating a secular welfare state. The Turks have formally committed themselves to giving up a secular state not tied to religious faith. So, if we consider the proposal for separation of the church and the society by secular humanism against the backdrop that, while a liberal secular society is an improvement over an idealistic sacred society, it has its own problems, among which is the economic injustice associated with it. The question we may ask is why then secularize the state? When we come to think of the fact, in terms of liberation of the human person from the inhibiting religious structure of a sacred society, liberal secularism cannot be faulted. This understanding stems from the observation made by Dunby who opined that the liberal society does not set itself any overall aim other than that of assisting as fully as possible that actual aims of its members and making these as concordant with each other as possible.<sup>22</sup>

The implication of all the stack secularization proposed by the secular humanism is that it has been caught in the web of “the paradox of twentieth century humanity whose tremendous material advancement has been contemporaneous with a frightening degree of human

disintegration and human depersonalization and human despiritualization.”<sup>23</sup> All these have failed humanity, as they have instead of humanizing man or even spiritualizing or taking him to a higher metaphysical level which will be an improvement upon what he is, for he is already human, or better still, instead of actualizing man to the fullness of his value, has rather dehumanized and agonized man and his essence. Secular humanism which has come to be a misguided attempt to do man a favour by preparing and presenting a secular society to him has rather done man a disservice by denigrating those values, though in somewhat subtle ways, which really makes him more human, and more so a multi-dimensional being. For by stripping man of his spiritual aspect and disassociating him from the sacred, all in the name of trying to move above and beyond dogmatic creed and ritual customs of past religion, man has rather been moved away from his dignity. This as it has come to be, has ushered in the unfortunate perception of man as a mere matter limited to earthly life, failing to recognize in him the presence and power of another element, which is spiritual, in virtue of which we talk of human life in the distinction between rationality and irrationality. If this is the case man would not, as we know, be in constant longing for fulfillment. All the things at man’s disposal would have been able to give him absolute happiness and fulfillment, yet all these have been unable to fulfill man’s inner quest. Hence, it goes without saying that there is that in man that yearns for something which all these have not and would not ever be able to give.

Be that as it may, our society has witnessed unprecedented and outrageous catastrophe no thanks to secularism. The twentieth century secularized system has been the “bloodiest” in human history. This is despite the loquacious affirmation of secular humanism calling for a secular society as a means of attaining dignity for man, which fundamentally has at its core preservation of life. At the end of the day secular humanism may have succeeded with the campaign of securing a secular society. The battle, as we know is against any form of indoctrination which will make the individual adopt any set of belief. The belief here is in all sense of it, that is political, ideological, economic, but more so religious belief. We sense a problem here. This is that secular humanism may have succeeded in scheming other contending interests from human consideration, only to take the stage. The point we want to make here remains that, critically speaking, secular humanism itself is, neither a free floating, non-allied system, nor neutral doctrine as it may be erroneously perceived. Secular humanism itself has a bias, an interest, a goal and a doctrine which it is proposing for the whole humanity. In fact, it is

an ideological pursuit, which goes to say that it is hued with a thought system. To then continue to advocate this unrepentantly is to be culpable of the same problem it is accusing religion of during the days of sacral society.

A closer look at the humanists would show that from the earliest days to the present, they have emphasized an ethic of freedom. They have together taken up the defense of the free mind and the right of individuals to live their life styles as they see fit so long as they do not harm others or interfere with their rights. In addition the freedom would permit one to end his or her life the way he finds pleasant. In other words, one is free to die the way he wants to die or she has the chance of making a choice, which certainly goes to see nothing wrong with suicide. The sense of freedom here looks quite commendable considering the fact that undue limitation of human freedom would not only inhibit his self-realization and actualization but would tamper with his living out his life in authentic way. However, a belief in common moral decency and a belief in situational or autonomous ethics as proposed by secular humanism seem quite contradictory. Common moral decency would imply having such a theory that is the same and applicable to anyone, everywhere and at any time, while the relativist and subjective disposition of ethic situationally determined implies that the rightness or wrongness of an act depends on the situation or the circumstances. What we are on the other hand contending here against the position of secular humanism is that there are universal or absolute moral principles independently not built on situations. It would be an extremist posture to assert that nothing is good or bad in itself. What we want to advance is that some acts are good while some are bad.

The view of secular humanism in the area of human sexuality looks anything but human, critically x-rayed. Even though the secular humanists express an opinion of not totally advocating for sexual promiscuity, the underlying message in their view is somewhat supportive of unrestricted sexual freedom. This unfortunately tends to reduce man to brute without any sense of restraint in sexual matters. One of the most controversial and or contradictory issue raised about life by secular humanists is the issue of abortion, which they advocate should be recognized. The contradiction stems from the fact that in the Manifesto, they have already asserted that they will affirm life rather than deny it. How is their support of abortion lead to affirmation of life? Since they support abortion, then they equally and automatically support termination of human life. Besides it goes against their own tenet or goal of universal society where people cooperate for common good. This is in no way portrays a belief in moral

excellence which the secular humanists tend to pursue. With this, the secular humanists proposal of a commitment to support of those less privileged or disadvantaged till they will be able to help themselves ends up an empty talk, which finds its beauty only in prints. There would be no greater charity than the support and protection of the needs of the unborn child.

Again, although it is quite a natural idea that adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations to express their sexual preferences, the danger inherent here is not far-fetched, for to allow mature adult “to express their sexual preferences” has an unprecedented far-reaching implication. First, there are several undertones or unexplained lines in the proposal. In the first place, we will ask: what are these preferences? With the present trend of deviant sexual behaviours, one can understand the preferences here is seriously crowded and clouded. In this consideration the preferences can be man to man sexual preference or relationship (gay), woman to woman relationship(lesbianism), human being to animal sexual relationship(bestiality). Lawless, normless and unguided sexual preferences advocated by the secular humanists can, on the other hand, be interpreted to mean a permission for sexual psychological anomalies. If sexual preferences, as it were are allowed or given social recognition by the social other (as is already done in some Western countries), which will go in line with the argument of the secular humanism, certainly the individual involved and the society at large will be seriously heading for serious devastating crisis and total collapse of the moral system.

Considering a lot of factors especially in the third world countries where the economy is obviously below poverty line, there is a great need for Planned Parenthood. Secular humanism in advocating for birth control is making a step in the right direction. The economic and social relevance cannot be underestimated. However, the problem here remains how this can be achieved. Even the church that has carried on the most aggressive campaign against birth control is convinced that avoiding pregnancy can be good, responsible or even necessary for married couples.

The whole idea of dying with dignity as proposed by the secular humanists raises another how question again. But we can start with why. Here if one lives and dies there is no real question raised. But then if one in order to die with dignity, and avoid a hard life then the whole issue becomes suspect. Like any other moral principle, there may be an example where one may be an exemption, that is where one may be justified to take one’s life, but then for secular humanism to advocate for freedom to suicide for whatever reason is quite unacceptable. Human

life is precious. In fact, it is a gift that paradoxically belongs to one but not to one. The life is neither just limited to here and now nor physical and biological confine only. For a life to end in suicide implies a life that has no hope or any more reason to live for. This makes the consideration limited to here and now affair. Even besides the supernatural aspect of the person, the community and social nature of the person is not considered in this type of human approach. If the community and social aspect of the person is lived along the line of shared life in a world, it would be extended to the individual in concern and compassion instead of encouraging suicide. Suicide has both sociological and psychological effect on the members of the immediate environment of the victim, and even the global family. Along the same line as suicide, secular humanism advocates for euthanasia which historically refers to an easy or a good death. Inasmuch as extraordinary means of prolonging life need not be employed, due to some other factors, allowing someone to die is wrong if the intention includes that person's death either as an end or a means. And this is basically where the secular humanists are purely wrong by unduly calling for recognition of euthanasia.

There is no arguing whether participatory democracy is good. And all other cases made in this line of decentralization and humanization of work, education etc are quite tenable cases. But what seems unclear and clouded is the proposal that people are more important than the Decalogue, rules, proscriptions or regulations. People are quite important, no doubt, but over denigration of these outlined concepts would risk exposing the same person to danger of the primordial era of the state of nature. For it is this laws that keep man from man and leave his dignity intact. Without rules and regulations, the secular humanists would not be able to contain the society. Survival would have been that of the fittest. This is for the reason that rules bring about order and harmony in the society.

The dream of secular humanism in a new world order is quite appreciable. In fact, what the division of the world along nationalistic line has done the harmonious co-existence of human being, viewed from one angle is quite outrageous. The division has caused undue nationalism which has sometimes resulted in wars with many lives lost. National pride has made those from developed and wealthy nations treat and look at the poor nations with contempt. The division of the world has recreated the world that is actually one into many bits and pieces. Breaking of these human limiting barriers would bring about the goal of secular humanism, 'a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good...

with a shared world". The issue of expelling people from a country in form of repatriation, just because they are alien to such nations, would cease. Everyone would be seen as a citizen of the earth with right without hindrance to reside and pursue genuine livelihood in any part of the world. This will bring about even development.

Bearing this in mind we lend our voice to the call by the secular humanists on the world community to engage in cooperative planning concerning the use of rapidly depleting resources. That is why it is proper to see the culture of cultivation and conservation of nature as a moral value. There is every need to free our world, as the humanist argue, from needless pollution and waste, responsibly regarding and creating wealth both natural and human. Needless to emphasize that exploitation of natural resources, uncurbed by social conscience, must end. Anyhow, the issue of population check raised by the secular humanists is seen to be out of place, and untenable. The basic reasons advanced for checking of the excessive population range from less food but plenty mouths to feed; limited Medicare, social amenities, general economy and other facilities. These seem to be genuine reasons, but then, the secular humanists fail to note that those affected are due to some man-made factors. For example in China it is due to communist misgovernment; in India there is enough food but the lower castes are systematically kept hungry and denied economic opportunity. While in Africa and Latin America the problem has been due to bad government and their selfish misguided economic policies. Total lack of investment and interest in mechanized agriculture has kept these two regions hungry. The famished areas of Eastern Europe and Africa in the recent past have been due to wars. One can then conclude that, people have been hungry not because of excessive population. For even if the world population had been fifty percent less and these factors remain as they are, the story would still be the same.

Factually, from Clark's research, the land surface of the world (excluding Greenland and Antarctica) measures 131 million square kilometer, of which only 8.6 million are altogether too cold for agriculture use. While arid desert measures 22.6 million square kilometer. The rest of the world surface is capable of being farmed, except for some other 22 million which for one reason or the other will be difficult agriculture areas. At the end of the analysis and a astute calculation, Clark submits that "even at our very high level of consumption the world's available agricultural land could feed over 40 billion people, besides food from the ocean."<sup>24</sup> He adds that these figures have not taken into account possible further improvement on agricultural technique. With the analysis already examined, the issue of available space to people does not occur at all.



Amenities and social facilities can always be increased correspondingly with the assured natural resources. Medicare would not only be available but would come with due sophistication as it already and has been proving.

The secular humanists have placed over confidence on the power of human reason and intelligence. The secular humanists made man a sort of more signpost which does the duty of directing all others but not moving. There is no question of man about his essence, he is left with inquiry and concern about what he will be not what he is, that is his being or essence. Instead the secular humanist places undue trust in science. Consequently, secular humanism has over secularized human being to the point that the humanness has been drowned in the secularized ocean of over-emphasized rationality. An enterprise that has reduced man to the level of any other animal, for if man's essence, his being which unites him with the supernatural is lost or not recognized what is left of him would be as good as what belongs to another brute. For both man's emotion, intelligence, will and reason are harmonized and properly humanized in the sense and connection with the ultimate reality which is not just man's matrix but his terminus ad quem.

### **5. Implications of Secular Humanist Philosophy for Contemporary Society**

The secular humanist philosophy has both positive and negative implications for the contemporary society. Unfortunately, the negative implications are so serious and quite self-destructive that ignoring them would spell doom for the contemporary society. The secular humanist philosophy therefore, has the following implications for contemporary society:

1. God does not exist. Having argued that nature is all that exists and that there is no God or afterlife, the secular humanists by implications make it clear that all who still believe in a God or gods are irrational, senseless and stupid. This is because the secular humanists believe that through the proper use of reason, man can discover that the universe including man is a product of chance. Hence, all those who still hold a belief in a God or gods are irrational. This equally suggests strongly that rather than teaching creationism in schools, evolutionism should replace creationism. But then, evolutionism championed by both the secular humanists and the modern

world-view has not yet been proven. Yet, the secular humanists capitalize on a theory that has not been proven to reject the idea of a being or God who is supposedly the cause of all things.

2. There is no knowledge or Science. Since the secular humanists believe that the universe is ruled by chance, by implication then, knowledge, meaning and or science do not exist. This is because if everything is changing, then science and its definition of things can only apply to things at a particular instant of time. Without an absolute, unchanging, ultimate starting point, real knowledge and science would be impossible. Hence the secular humanists philosophy rules out knowledge and science without realizing it.

3. Man is the measure of all things. The secular humanists tell us that instead of the gods creating the cosmos, the cosmos, in the individualized form of human beings giving rein to their imagination, created the gods. In other words, human beings or man in his imagination is the creator of the gods and not vice-versa. By implication, human being or man is the source of meaning, the absolute, the unifier of knowledge. Hence by implication, the secular humanists philosophy recommends that we accept man as the source and measure of all things. What this portends for the contemporary society is a situation or condition in which every human being has the sole right and power to determine what is and what is not.

4. Man has no value. According to evolutionary, naturalistic world-view championed by the secular humanists, man is really no more than a sophisticated machine brought into existence by chance. The implication here is that man or human being has no value in himself because a machine no matter how sophisticated and unique, is still impersonal – a machine. And even if one accepts the evolution theory of the origin of the universe and man, and takes man as a great animal – man in that sense is still just an animal – he is without a soul or spirit which makes him solely a material organism without value. This is why secular humanists champion and support abortion and euthanasia.

5. Life is Meaningless. The secular-materialistic view of reality states that the universe is the product of chance or pure contingency. Everything that is, is an accident. Everything is the product of chaos. In an impersonal, chance universe, where chaos, flux and randomness are king,

personality, meaning and universal laws of logic clearly have no place. If the secular-evolutionary worldview is true, then our lives and existence have no meaning whatsoever. We are nothing more than an accumulation of atoms randomly floating in the void. Our thoughts, desires, relationships, love and deepest concerns are merely the illusions of chemical-electronic impulses. We are an impersonal machine. We have no soul, no future and no hope. We and the random universe around us are heading toward extinction.

6. Morality or Ethics does not exist. The secular humanist philosophy presupposes that nothing can exist above and beyond the universe. Thus believing in no higher power who reveals absolutes to man, the secular humanists derive their ethical system from this world only. And the secular humanist' world-view of the universe is that the universe is evolving – a product of chance, impersonal and in a state of flux. And man himself is equally a product of chance and in a state of flux too. Now, since ethics according to the secular humanists is evolving, arbitrary, subjective, relative and changing, then there is no absolute right and wrong, and if there is no absolute right and wrong then there is no ethics or morality. So by implication, the secular humanists propose that we live our lives the way we choose without considering the consequences since there is no moral absolute and there is no future or God who would punish or reward humans according to their actions.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this paper we attempted a critical examination of the philosophy of secular humanists. As we were able to show in the course of this study, the proposals made by the secular humanists contained basically in their Manifestos and which represent their philosophy, look good and very attractive. But then, when we took a closer look, we discovered surprisingly that it is but sugar-coated deadly pill subtly hidden in a well-packaged world-view for the destruction of the human society. Otherwise, how can the doctrine or philosophy whose primary focus is to exclude God from the potential answers in life be a good idea for our contemporary society or the free society advocated by the secular humanists? The point is this: when the secular humanists world-view is taken to its logical conclusion, a lot of things happen – increase in child abuse, abortion,

euthanasia, homosexuality; anarchy reigns in the society; morality will cease to exist, and science itself would be impossible.

Quite unfortunately, these things are already happening in our contemporary society. In the last several decades for example, Secular Humanists have been very successful in propagating their beliefs. Their primary approach is to target the youth through the public school system. Humanist Charles F. Potter writes, "Education is thus a most powerful ally of humanism, and every American school is a school of humanism. What can a theistic Sunday school's meeting for an hour once a week and teaching only a fraction of the children do to stem the tide of the five-day program of humanistic teaching?"<sup>25</sup> John J. Dunphy, in his award winning essay, *The Humanist* (1983), illustrates this strategic focus, "The battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: A religion of humanity -- utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to carry humanist values into wherever they teach. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new -- the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism."<sup>26</sup> To satisfy the fundamental question of "Where did we come from?" children are taught the doctrine of Evolution in our schools instead of the doctrine of creation. Consequently, Creation Science has been successfully kept out of the public schools by organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (A.C.L.U.) on the grounds that Creation is religious, and the government should not support religion in any fashion. "In fact, evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it, and many are prepared to 'bend' their observations to fit with it."<sup>27</sup>

Over the past 75 years, Secular Humanists have exerted significance influence over a wide range of culture shaping arenas, including education, the media (TV, advertising, and mainstream news outlets), film, music. In education for instance, if you consider most of the disciplines of study and compare what is taught with the tenets of a Secular Humanists worldview, you find that in almost every case, the Secular Humanists view predominates, and in many instances, a biblical view is barred from the classroom. For example, the biological sciences are taught with an assumption of naturalism, which is the acknowledged starting point for evolution. Therefore, the theory of evolution from "amoeba to man" is not a scientific theory so much as it is a philosophical belief that only nature exists. Then, all scientific observations are straight-jacketed into this philosophical constraint. If another philosophical starting point is

offered, such as the idea that an Intelligent Designer might be involved in the origin of life, the scientific evidence supporting this idea is fought tooth and nail from being presented in the classroom. Most religion classes at the university also are taught from a naturalistic perspective, denying the possibility of miracles, since a miracle is by definition an event with a supernatural cause. In psychology, students learn that human beings are reducible to a combination of chemicals and electrical firings in the brain. The only version of law that is presented is positive law. In sociology, the traditional family is shunned for a more “inclusive” approach. Each of these perspectives corresponds with a Secular Humanist view on these subjects. Therefore, the only reasonable conclusion is that students are exposed with primarily Secular Humanist indoctrination. This is not to say that other worldviews do not have an influence. The bottom line is that Secular Humanism does have a negative influence in our contemporary society.

Although we do not take up the task of the Christian Apologists in this paper, yet, if there is no transcendent God above and beyond the created universe, and if everything is nothing more than matter plus time plus chance, then could not the universe just explode, or implode, or dissipate or turn inside out tomorrow? In a chance universe, there is no reason why universal laws such as the second law of thermodynamics should be universal. There is no reason or guarantee that tomorrow, or next week or next year, all the various scientific laws will not somehow change and mutate. Just because something has functioned a certain way in the past is no guarantee of its functioning the same way in the future, because the future is not the past. The secular-humanistic worldview, if consistent, would declare that knowledge and meaning are unattainable as we have already pointed out. In such a system it is as though man is made of water in an ocean of water climbing a stairway of water into a sky of water. Thus, with no fixed reference point for meaning and knowledge, the secular humanist is left in the void of nihilism.

Therefore, we submit that Secular humanism is destructive of any social order in our contemporary society because it destroys any basis, foundation and reason for morality among politicians, teachers and the masses. We therefore recommend that the secular humanist philosophy and or beliefs together with its advocacy for a total secularization of the human society should be rejected and stopped in order to save humanity from plunging deeper into the abyss of self-destruction championed by the irrational and illogical philosophy of secular humanism.

## References

<sup>1</sup>See “Secular Humanism”:

<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=secular%20humanist>

<sup>2</sup>Paul Kurtz, *Humanist Manifestos I* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Kurtz, in the preface to *Humanist Manifestos I & II* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>See “Secular humanism”: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular\\_humanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular_humanism)

<sup>5</sup>See *Humanist Manifestos I & II* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>See "Is Everyone a Humanist?" in *The Humanist Alternative*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 177.

<sup>7</sup>Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1982), p. 145.

<sup>8</sup>Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>Roy Wood Sellars, “The Humanist Outlook,” in *The Humanist Alternative*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1973), p. 135.

<sup>10</sup>Julian Huxley, as cited in Roger E. Greely, ed., *The Best of Humanism* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1988), pp. 194-5.

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<sup>14</sup>*A Secular Humanist Declaration: "Ethics Based On Critical Intelligence"*, Council for Secular Humanism, (New York: The Free Press, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> American Humanist Association, *Humanist Manifestos II* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p.20.

<sup>22</sup> John J. Dunphy, *The Humanist* (London: The Free Press, 1983), p. 7.

<sup>23</sup>George Omaku Ehusani, *An Afro-Christian Vision "Ozovehe" Towards A More Humanized World*, (Atlanta: University Press of America Inc., 1991), p. 203.

<sup>24</sup>Colin Clark, "The Myth of the Population Explosion", in *Crisis of Morality: the Vatican Speaks out* (Washington, DC., United States Catholic Conference, 1969), p. 48.

<sup>25</sup>Charles F. Potter, *Humanism: A New Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 22.

<sup>26</sup>John J. Dunphy, *The Humanist* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983), p.16.

<sup>27</sup>H. S. Lipson, FRS, Professor of Physics, University of Manchester, UK, "A Physicist Looks at Evolution", *Physics Bulletin*, vol. 31, (May 1980), p. 138.