

Secular Humanism in Europe: A Comparison of Two Current Approaches

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This paper introduces two approaches written by representatives of current secular humanism in Europe: Richard Norman's "On Humanism" and Michael Schmidt-Salomon's "Manifesto of Evolutionary Humanism". Although both books were published more than a decade ago, they still are the most widely circulated works on humanism in the European countries. While both authors reject religion and turn to humanism as the allegedly better alternative, their views differ strongly when it comes to the question what humanism is capable of: Is it primarily an individual life-stance for people without religion, or does it aim at improving the totality of human thinking and living? Do humanists still believe in historical progress, or do they represent a way to accept the limits of human fortune?

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Secular humanism in Europe: An empirical overview

For Sociologists of Religion, Europe has become a real challenge: In no other region of the world there are such enormous differences concerning religious affiliations as in the comparatively small area between Ireland and the Ukraine, between Norway and Greece. On the one hand, there are countries like Ireland, Spain and Italy that still have quite a strong confessional (i. e. Catholic) identity, which indeed has begun to vanish in the younger generations. On the other hand, in countries like the Netherlands or the Scandinavian nations, only a minority still believes in God or any other personal divine being. In Germany and France, the complex history of both countries has left its traces in the religious orientation of their inhabitants: While in France, based on the ideals of the 1789 Revolution, the ideal of "Laïcité" (the separation of state and religious confession) is an important part of self-understanding, still about 50% of its inhabitants describe themselves as Roman Catholic. In Germany, however, Reformation and the succeeding religious wars left the country as a patchwork of Protestant and Catholic confessions, with a focus on Catholicism in the south and Protestantism in the north – moreover, most of the inhabitants of the federal states in East Germany, the former German Democratic Republic, do not feel attached to either of both confessions. But not all of the countries, which belonged to the Soviet-dominated "Eastern Bloc" until 1989, have non-denominational inhabitants: Poland, with almost 90 % Roman Catholics, of whom still almost 40 % attend Sunday Mass, has a very strong confessional identity. Interestingly, Poland's immediate neighbor, the Czech Republic, which also used to be a traditional Catholic country, has now shrunk to 10 % Roman Catholic inhabitants and is therefore considered one of the most secularized countries in the world.¹

But why am I telling this here? Obviously, where there are such enormous country-to-country differences concerning Religion, there must be also measurable differences concerning those who see themselves opposed to any religious belief. And indeed: Even though the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), Humanists' and Atheists' global umbrella organization, has affiliate organizations in most of the European countries, the quantity of their members is varying strongly:

In the Netherlands the *Humanistisch Verbond* has got about 13,000 members, furthermore, in Utrecht's *Universiteit voor Humanistiek* about 500 students are enrolled for Humanistic Studies, which is more than twice as much as there are Dutch students of Catholic Theology. There is *Humanitas*, an organization for social services, *Human*, a broadcasting network, and the *Humanistisch Vredesberaad*, a peace organisation. Anyway, humanism is present in public with its own concept of spiritual care, *Humanistische geestelijke verzorging*, and with school lessons at elementary schools. Representatives of the *Humanistisch Verbond* talk of humanism as the "main tendency" within the different ideological orientations of the Dutch people, with about 650,000 people calling themselves humanists and 1.6 million people feeling connected to the *Humanistisch Verbond*.²

There are also strong humanist organizations in other European Countries: Norway's *Human-Etisk Forbund* is, with an amount of about 80,000 members, the largest humanist organisation in the world according to population (1.7 %). Humanist ceremonies are accepted and demanded throughout the country, the *Forbund's* civil confirmation is attended by more than 18 % of Norwegian adolescents.³ *Humanists UK*, known as the *British Humanist Association* until 2017, declares to have "over 70,000 members and supporters" (the term "supporters" is not explained any further).⁴ Together with their partner organization, the *Humanist Society Scotland*, they are offering namings, weddings and funerals, which have become a common part of British public life: As *The Guardian* reported in 2018, the humanist wedding is now the most popular kind of marriage ceremony in Scotland.⁵ Other comparatively strong humanist organizations can be found in Iceland, Sweden, Ireland and Belgium.

In most of the other European countries organized secular humanism is indeed more of a marginal phenomenon in public life. In Germany the *Humanistischer Verband Deutschlands*, which emerged in 1993 from some West and East German Freethinkers' organizations, claims to have about 20,000 members (0.02 % according to the current population).⁶ Like their Dutch and Scandinavian partner organizations, they organize secular ceremonies which, however, have so far not obtained wide acceptance among the non-denominational. A second German organization declaring itself humanist is the *Giordano Bruno Stiftung*, which has a stronger emphasis on polemical criticism of religion. In Italy and France the use of the word "humanism" is not even common for a secular life-stance – in fact, there are organizations declaring themselves as freethinkers, atheists or rationalists. At the end of the scale, there are associations like the Polish, Greek, or Romanian Humanist Unions, each with only a few dozen members.

So obviously while in some European countries secular humanism has been surprisingly successful establishing itself as a philosophy of life *and* as a kind of a national culture within less than a human lifetime, in most others only a manageable circle of very convinced followers gathers under the humanistic banner. What are the reasons for this? I will not be able to answer this question here, although I am sure that the topic "Secular Humanism in Europe" represents a long-neglected and highly relevant field for empirical research in sociology and religious studies. As a philosopher and theologian, I can only try to find an answer to a related question: If we take a closer look at different current approaches of "humanism", which core elements can be identified that may possibly make them convincing as a secular life-stance? And, as a second question – as I am a catholic theologian and *not* a secular humanist: Can these approaches express more about religious belief, that it is irrational, unscientific and obsolete? I also would like to raise this question due to my conviction that, as the coexistence of religious and irreligious people will undoubtedly continue for decades to come, a theistic-secular dialogue is a task we will increasingly have to face in the future.

The problem of defining current humanism

Over the years, humanist organizations have tried to define the fundamental principles of their attitude in different ways. The most general definition was adopted in 1996 by the International Humanist and Ethical Union at its Main Assembly. The recognition of this “Minimum Statement on Humanism” constitutes the requirement for membership of the IHEU:

“Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance that affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. Humanism stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. Humanism is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.”⁷

Humanism, as defined here, is open for everybody, who shares fundamental rational principles as much as certain ethical standards, and is willing to contribute herself to a society which still has the potential to be improved. Although it is only mentioned at the end that humanism is “not theistic” and denies “supernatural views”, corresponding intimations can be found from the very beginning: Humans have not only “the right” but also “responsibility” to give meaning to life by themselves (instead of fleeing into a religion); a “more humane society” is provided by “human and other natural values” (but not by any religious belief).

A second important document that defines core values of humanism is the “Amsterdam Declaration”, which was adopted by the IHEU after the World Humanist Congress in 2002 and since then has been regarded as the official defining statement of World Humanism. In this document, there is – like already in the “Minimum Statement” – a certain tension between humanism seen on the one hand as a life-stance based on individual freedom, creativity and a thinking away from “dogmatic” categories, and on the other hand as an attitude that leaves no doubt that only a “rational” worldview, based on “reliable knowledge”, is able to guarantee these values. Beyond (and consequently), there is a strong teleological orientation: for human individuals, “the fullest possible development” is seen as objective, furthermore, “human thought and action” is potentially able to solve “the world’s problems”, and finally, “the maximum possible fulfilment” can be reached through “the cultivation of ethical and creative living”.⁸ What can be said about those ideas? Surely it is no exaggeration to call them utopian, but nevertheless, it is difficult to contradict them. The implicit logic seems to work as follows: If only enough people share humanistic thinking, it will be possible to actually realize these values; until then, we are forced to try on. If I wanted to be mean, I could call the result a “humanist circle”: Human society is not as perfect as it could potentially be? Let us convince people of humanism! There are not yet enough convinced humanists? That’s the reason for human society being not as perfect as it could potentially be.

But of course, it is not my intention to suggest that secular humanists generally incline to have such a simple worldview (and of course, this example also works for other ideological and / or religious orientations). With this illustration I rather want to point out that a document like the “Amsterdam Declaration” has its pitfalls because of its brevity and also because of its property as a compromise: It not only has to formulate most things very vaguely; moreover, it presents some problems and contradictions that then need to be left unresolved. This is why, concerning the question “What makes secular humanism convincing as a life-stance?”, one has to take a closer look at individual approaches. Before I get to two of them, I would like to shortly summarize the problems that mainly interest me:

Individuality and Humanity: Obviously, the freedom and self-realization of the individual are of great importance for secular humanism. However, they only seem possible within an improvement of the entire condition of human thinking and living. How does the combination of those two goals work?

Ideal and Reality: As shown above, secular humanism has a strong teleological orientation, it wants to establish an ethical way of life that makes “the world a better place”. Indeed, the hope for a real world improvement has become a position that seems almost naive in the face of the real complexity of the world and current socio-political problems. Is it possible to maintain this ideal in the light of the real conditions?

Rationality and Religion: According to secular humanists, it is impossible to unite rational thinking and belief in God or any other supernatural being. Religion refers to unquestionable revelations and in this way restricts thought and other human potentials; humanism refers to scientific knowledge, creativity and imagination, so that everybody has the freedom to “give meaning and shape to their own lives”. Is this confrontation substantiated in a convincing way?

Contemporary approaches – I: Richard Norman, On Humanism

The first approach which I shall present here is closely linked to the *Humanists UK*. Richard Norman, British academic philosopher and former Vice-President of the association, published his book “On Humanism” in 2004 and, after the rise of “New Atheism”, a second edition in 2012. Norman’s book is still recommended in first place as “a great introduction to Humanism” on the *Humanists UK* bibliography for beginners.⁹ It has been translated into Norwegian, Icelandic, Arabic, and Korean; the Norwegian edition has been financially supported by the *Human-Etisk Forbund*.¹⁰ What is interesting about Norman's book is that, as he emphasizes, although there is “an organized secular humanist movement” which has shaped his views, it should “not be regarded as a statement of any humanist doctrine or orthodoxy, for there is none”.¹¹ As we will see, this basic decision has its consequences for all of the answers Norman gives to the questions asked above; as we will also see, there are other secular humanists, who indeed strongly value the fact that there *is* something like a humanist orthodoxy.

Norman: Presentation

At the beginning of his book, Norman cites some classical reference texts trying to define essentials of being human – Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Pico della Mirandola’s *On the Dignity of Man*, Bertrand Russell’s *Why I Am Not a Christian*, Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Existentialism is a Humanism*. The first result of his overview of these very different examples is, that it can neither be said that humanism is an ally of religion or of science nor an enemy of any of them; that humanism neither definitely implies the belief that human beings are “unique and special” nor denies it; that humanism neither can nor cannot be defined as a view of the world “with which we can make sense of our lives”. This is, because he does not “think that there is any definitive set of beliefs called ‘humanism’. There are many humanisms.”¹² As a consequence of this, he considers it necessary to define his own understanding of humanism more closely as a form of “secular humanism”, which is “an alternative to religious belief”: As Norman points out, for an increasing number of people religion is no longer able to provide a “practical philosophy of life” that gives answers to questions like “Why are we here?” and “What is the purpose of human life?”. Therefore, humanism in his understanding “is an attempt to think about how we should live without religion”.¹³ Here already a certain tension is perceptible which Norman has to face in his open-minded approach: Although there is no “definite” version of humanism that gives answers to the existential questions of human existence, his “secular humanism” has the claim to (at least) propose such answers; and although he defines secular humanism primarily as an alternative to religion, the “philosophy of life” he presents will differ from religious statements by a deliberate abandonment of validity claims. I will come back to this later.

Norman insists on emphasizing that religions are not inherently harmful: As he suggests, “there are deeper causes of human destructiveness than the explicit beliefs which people hold”; furthermore, “religion has inspired not only some of the worst but also some of the best human achievements”.¹⁴ He closely links this statement with a rejection of humanism as a secular doctrine of salvation: the “naive optimism” claiming that superstition (may it be religious or not) can be eliminated and replaced by “the triumph of happiness and virtue” by only giving “enlightened reason room to work” has, as he states, its roots in the “ideology of ‘progress’ in the nineteenth century”. Therefore, a convincing humanism has to be purged “of the remnants” of such “implausible optimism”.¹⁵ Hence Norman’s “personal” description of humanism’s goals is:

“I shall seek to show that the things which we value in human life are not an illusion; that as human beings we can find from our own resources the shared moral values which we need in order to live together, and the means to create meaningful and fulfilling lives for ourselves; and that the rejection of religious belief need not be a cause of despair.”¹⁶

The second chapter of Norman’s book is headlined “Why Science Undermines Religion” (since I am primarily interested in the positive aspects of Norman’s humanism, I will only briefly summarize it). As to him neither the traditional proofs for the existence of God nor the approach of the “creative design” theory seem convincing, he concludes that all “attempts to provide rational arguments for the existence of God fail”.¹⁷ Nevertheless, he asserts to have “every respect for those theists, who enter into the argument”, which is much better than an attitude “breaking off communication” by arguing that “belief in God [...] is simply a matter of faith, and reasons are irrelevant”.¹⁸

The question Norman asks in the third chapter is about the “human” part of humanism: “What’s so special about human beings?” According to him, scientific materialism, if understood in a narrow way, leaves out something very essential – the “mental life”, our “thoughts, beliefs, emotions, feelings, experiences, sensations, hopes, fears”.¹⁹ Although he considers “consciousness” a “rather slippery term”,²⁰ he emphasizes that what it means – awareness of one’s own mental states – is a crucial and distinctive feature of being human:²¹ most, “perhaps all, other species of living things lack it”, and furthermore, “the possession of consciousness seems to be an essential precondition for things that give our lives value and purpose”.²² After some brief reflections on the possibility that an “immortal soul” might be a distinctive feature of human beings (which he denies), Norman discusses another opposing concept – the “theoretical anti-humanism” which he sees especially represented by the French structuralists and post-structuralists. According to him, those thinkers argue, that “the very idea of the ‘human subject’ is a myth, conferring an illusory unity on what is really a bundle of drives, or a ‘site’ for the interplay of forces generated by social or psychological or linguistic structures”.²³ Their enemy, as Norman identifies it, is a kind of “cultural imperialism”: To them, the danger with the claim about a “universal human nature” seems “the risk of over-generalization”, so that “beliefs and values and emotions” may be only “declared to be universally human when they are in reality confined to one particular culture or social class”, which excludes “the experience of colonized or post-colonial societies, of women, of ethnic minorities, of sexual minorities, and so on”.²⁴ Although he appreciates the dangers of such an understanding of humanism, Norman stresses that these arguments do not have to lead to denying a common human nature as such: If “there were no human nature, there would be no standpoint from which to identify these inequalities and injustices and to understand why they matter”.²⁵ From that point of view, the “naturalistic basis of human behavior” and the “fact that all human beings share a common genetic structure” can in fact be of help when arguing against any cultural hegemony.²⁶ At the end of the chapter, Norman points out that even “our own insignificance in relation to the rest of the universe” does not “render our existence pointless”: As conscious beings, humans “differ from other animal species”, not by “being ‘masters of our destiny’”, but indeed by “possessing the capacity to think

about our situation, to assess what is good and bad about it, to weigh up different courses of action and try to change things for the better".²⁷

This leads him to the topic of the fourth chapter, which is "Morality in a Godless World"; in it, he opposes the "remarkably resilient and widespread" assumption, "that morality collapses without a basis in religious belief".²⁸ Norman's "fundamental objection" against any moral system founded in "divine commands" is, that it gets "things the wrong way round": According to him, humans do have a "shared moral understanding which logically *precedes* any particular religious beliefs". So if a divine being "commands or prohibits certain kinds of actions, that is because those actions are *independently* right or wrong": Killing is not wrong, "because God forbids it", but because it means taking a human life; so "if God forbids it (if he does)", he forbids it "because it is wrong".²⁹ The "humanist alternative" to the foundation of morality, therefore, is to leave away God (who, anyway, is only attached to this shared human understanding of morals) and constitute moral values as "*human values*".³⁰ Norman affirms that this does not lead to a moral subjectivism or relativism – from a humanistic point of view, all humans "share an impersonal value-language in which states of human happiness and flourishing are identified as good states of affairs and states of suffering and misery are identified as bad states of affairs", in short: "We *matter* to one another."³¹ The humanist ideal, therefore, is a morality "which acknowledges the needs and interests of all".³² Consequently, this also implies a certain exclusivism concerning human relations to other living beings: As they "help us to define what it is to be human" by differing from us, the humanist "welfare for non-human animals" will be "properly different from our concern for other humans".³³ And finally, a thing humanists have to give up, is the idea, "that there is always a single right answer to every moral dilemma", which is, according to Norman, "a legacy of the idea of moral actions as obedience to divine commands". Therefore, humanists finally have to live with the fact of "moral tragedy" – again and again, the real complexity of things "may defeat any attempt to reduce it to a manageable simplicity".³⁴

The fifth chapter of Norman's book is titled "The Meaning of Life and the Need for Stories". Due to the finding that everything he has said so far is "obvious" and would be broadly accepted "as a matter of common sense", his interest is to face the possible objection, that the humanism he defends is kind of "banal" and "shallow", a "scientific rationalism" which leaves "no room for depth or mystery", for "the spiritual dimension of human life".³⁵ First, he emphasizes, that also a humanist can be of the opinion, that "there must presumably be aspects of reality which no human being will ever understand". To that extent, "the sense of mystery is an aspect of the religious stance" which can also be shared from a humanistic point of view.³⁶ Although Norman does not want to use the term "spirituality" ("a word which I distrust", "inherently slippery"), he emphasizes that also in humanism there are "things that 'lift the spirit'" and "make life worth living": "satisfaction of creative achievement", "excitement of discovery", relationships, emotions, enjoyment.³⁷ Yet, all of these experiences alone are fragile, and furthermore, they do still not "add up to anything" giving life a real "meaning".³⁸ According to Norman, this is why humans need "narratives"; he argues that "especially literature and the other narrative arts can and do fill this role which religion claims exclusively to fill". Here also, things have to be turned around: religious belief "is itself just a special way in which narratives, stories, shape our lives and give them meaning".³⁹ Norman then tries to prove by two literary examples that the meaning presented by "stories" is not to be found "in some great revelation", but in "these elusive moments when things come together".⁴⁰ Unlike in religion, in humanism there is no single "privileged narrative" and no "monopoly on truth";⁴¹ it leaves the "problem of fragility" as "something we have to accept" and, with the help of different narratives, tries to "give meaning to our lives *from within*".⁴²

The sixth and last chapter of the book has been added by Norman to the second edition. After the "God debate" in which scientists like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens had participated from an

atheistic point of view, and been responded by theistic thinkers, he claims to be disappointed of both sides, not so much because of the debate's "polemical tone" but "its unproductive character": the "two sides seem to talk past one another".⁴³ One reason for this is that both of them do not only start "from different assumptions" but also from prejudices.⁴⁴ Norman finally recommends his fellow humanists and also religious people not only to fight one another but also to "learn from one another". With a quote from John Stuart Mill, he finally states that "there is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides".⁴⁵

Norman: Analysis

So, concerning the questions asked above, what can be said about Richard Norman's approach? Does he have arguments that are able to deal with the complicated ratio of individuality and humanity, of ideal and reality, of rationality and religion, which (as I have assumed) every secular humanism has to face? To answer these questions, I shall first take a look at the strengths and weaknesses of his specific arguments before I come to a more general evaluation.

Norman's basic definition of secular humanism is a negative one; he regards it as is "an alternative to religious belief" and an "attempt to think about how we should live without religion". His humanism rises from the human urge to give meaning to life, and from the fact that, given the current scientific knowledge, this urge can no longer be satisfied by religious belief. This view becomes only possible by strongly paralleling the concerns of religion and science. To put it simple: according to Norman, both of them want to show us, why the world is as it is. He therefore has to assume that both of them do not only pose the same questions, but that they pose them with a similar intention. "Why are we here?" – this basic question can, as he tries to show, be answered from a theistic point of view ("God started and 'designed' it all") or from a materialist point of view that values a good and consistent theory of life on earth, like the neo-Darwinian synthesis theory. My own position would be different from the very beginning: If asked by a scientist, the question "Why are we here?" refers to the generic conditions of human life on earth, which can indeed be reconstructed very well by the modern extension of Darwin's theory, and therefore be accepted completely also by a theist. But this very theist would possibly (and additionally) read this question in a different way; not concerning the *mechanism* of life's generation on earth, but concerning the *significance* of every single existence, which can only be guaranteed, when life has its ground in a higher reality.

For Norman, though, from an objective point of view, human "insignificance in relation to the rest of the universe" is a matter of fact. Therefore – even if he claims to be an opponent of any dualism – he has to answer the question "What's so special about human beings?" in a way which, besides materialism, highly values the subjective consciousness of every single person. Therefore, significance is founded in the conscious *experience* of every human being, although objective *knowledge* tells us, that we should not take ourselves and our existence too seriously. Norman mediates between these two ways of looking at ourselves with his understanding of "shared human values": According to him, it cannot be questioned that certain things are right and others are wrong; this insight precedes any hypothetical "divine command". – So, to make it short, there is, on the one hand, the insignificance of human beings from a cosmological point of view; on the other hand, humans are "special" because of their consciousness which is an "essential precondition for things that give our lives value and purpose"; and thirdly, there are "shared human values" that enable human coexistence and the awareness of common goods. I would not want to doubt any of these three points because they also seem essential to me. But after all, they do not form a whole picture; in fact, they stay what they are: different *perspectives* of human understanding of themselves and the world.

Norman recognizes this problem himself. He therefore reacts to the possible accusation that secular humanism does not “add up to anything”, let alone a real “meaning”. For him, the solution lies in different “narratives”: especially literature can provide “elusive moments” that really give “meaning” to life – just like religion, which also only produces narratives that try to “shape our lives”. But – doesn’t he miss something right there? In fact, every religion is characterized by the *binding nature* of its contents, by its *validity claims*. Knowing this, Norman throughout his book keeps stressing that this is a problem; he keeps stressing that secular humanism might be the solution, because it is not so patronizing and restrictive, because it provides meaning “from within”. The downside might be that this solution will not be able to convince many people of the “practical philosophy” of secular humanism because finally, every individual is left with the search for her own kind of “meaning”.

To summarize it: Norman makes it clear from the beginning that he does neither want to proselytize nor polemicize against religious people. His approach to secular humanism wants to be (and can only be) an individual one, “for there are many humanisms”. One elemental strength of this approach is, that no one can accuse Norman of a prescriptive and unrealistic understanding of humanism that wants to convert people to the best possible life-stance. Indeed, one elemental question which can be asked is a result of this attitude: If there are different “humanisms”, and if, apart from the property of basic “human values”, the “meaning” of human life varies depending on the “narrative” I choose – why then should I become a secular humanist anyway?

So the answers to the three questions I have asked above are in some points slightly different from the self-understanding which I wanted to insinuate secular humanists on the basis of the “Minimal Statement” and the “Amsterdam Declaration”:

Individuality and Humanity: Norman’s approach is *not* about an improvement of the entire condition of human thinking and living – to him, these ideas are remains of the “naive optimism” of the nineteenth century “ideology of ‘progress’”. Instead, his book is almost entirely focusing on the goal of individual self-realization: whoever, faced with the results of science, has lost her confidence in religion, is confronted with the possible alternative of humanism.

Ideal and Reality: Furthermore, the teleological orientation, which is still palpable in the “Minimum Statement” and the “Amsterdam Declaration”, have also been given up. Instead, humanists are committed to a pragmatic morality, “which acknowledges the needs and interests of all”. Furthermore, they have to accept the “tragedy” that for many problems of life there is no solution at all.

Rationality and Religion: In this respect, Norman is closest to a “traditional” understanding of secular humanism: Rational thinking and belief in God cannot be united because “science undermines religion”; scientific models of the origin of life and modern justifications of ethical values are far superior to religious models. As shown above, this claim would only be convincing, if the answers and questions of “science” and “religion” had the same basic intention.

Contemporary approaches – II: Michael Schmidt-Salomon, Manifesto of Evolutionary Humanism

The second approach which I shall present here has a pretty different character than Norman’s “On Humanism”. It is less an attempt that tries to show from a subjective perspective what humanism could mean today, but a “manifesto” that seeks to express how a contemporary humanism actually has to look like. The “Manifesto of Evolutionary Humanism”, written by Michael Schmidt-Salomon, was published in Germany about one year after Norman’s book. It is a commissioned work of the *Giordano Bruno Stiftung* (hereinafter: GBS), which had been launched in 2004 with funds from the furniture manufacturer Herbert

Steffen. The declared purpose of the newly founded organization was to establish an “alternative political mainstream culture” with the aim of “defending the unfinished project of the enlightened society against its enemies”.⁴⁶ The “Manifesto” is still available in bookstores today. According to the GBS, about 50,000 copies have been sold so far;⁴⁷ furthermore, it was translated into English and Polish. The English version, from which I quote here, has been available since 2014 as an e-book.

Schmidt-Salomon: Presentation

Schmidt-Salomon's “Manifesto” begins with a clear statement:

“We are living in an age of asynchrony. While technologically we are firmly in the 21st century, our world-views still owe much to archaic myths and legends that are thousands of years old. This combination of advanced technical competence and highly naïve child-like beliefs could have disastrous consequences in the long run. We are behaving like five-year olds who have been given responsibility for a jumbo jet.”⁴⁸

By turning away from the rhetorical device of the first person plural, Schmidt-Salomon then calls the cause of these problems by name. According to him, one “of the most pressing problems of our time lies in religious fundamentalists of all stripes” making “use of the fruits of The Enlightenment” (which includes “freedom of speech, constitutionality, science, technology”). In “the face of the dangers arising from the renaissance of unenlightened thinking in a technologically highly developed era”, he sees it as “a matter of intellectual integrity to speak out clearly – especially where religion is concerned”. Anyone wanting to “develop today a logically consistent (i.e., contradiction-free), ethically workable view of humanity and the world” has, as he tells his readers, to take the “results of scientific research” into account. The “traditional religions”, on the other hand, have not only been “sufficiently disproved in theory”, but have also “been found in practice to be poor advisors for humanity”.⁴⁹ So the constellation is clear from the beginning: While “science”, according to Schmidt-Salomon, applies as the “silver bullet for improving our standard of living, for liberating us from superstition and tradition, and for solving the great puzzles of the world”, this “triumphal progress” was and is still broken by “vigorous defensive reactions”, by people wanting to maintain the “errors of outdated explanatory models” against a “scientific illumination of the actual facts”.⁵⁰

In the following, I shall pass over the passages that primarily consist of antireligious polemics, and focus on what Schmidt-Salomon holds as the positive results of his “Evolutionary Humanism”.

What does “humanism” mean for Schmidt-Salomon? Basically, the term describes “any school of thought that [...] is not based, either in theory or in practice, on the existence of imaginary gods or stories about salvation” but on the “actually existing human beings”, and on the other hand “sets itself the goal of shaping living conditions so that a free personal and personality development is possible for all people”. For a practical postulate of humanism, Schmidt-Salomon quotes from Marx’ “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”: the “categorical imperative of humanism demands that we ‘overturn all conditions under which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being...’”.⁵¹ “Evolutionary Humanism”, as Schmidt-Salomon declares, feels fully obligated to this “central ethical goal”, but it also strives to “productively assimilating numerous new scientific facts” and therefore “starts from a fundamentally revised image of humans and the world”: As the “biological origins” of man cannot not be ignored any longer, it also has to “promote such conditions” under which “the positive potential of Homo sapiens can best develop”. This also means recognizing that “despite the major significance of cultural factors, humankind, like all other species of life on the planet, is not able to transcend the laws of nature”. As a

consequence, some traditional stock, like the “belief in a free floating ‘ratio’ (‘reason’)” must be given up.⁵²

As Schmidt-Salomon points out, in such a consistently naturalistic sense “life” can be defined as “a process of self-organization based on the principle of self-interest”. As every living being is born with the deep-rooted predisposition to increase its own pleasure and minimize its pain, this drive is also the “source of all human sentiments and decisions”. Therefore, one has to “be clever enough to incorporate it into our ethical concepts as the decisive impetus of life”.⁵³ Even “cooperative altruistic behavior” has its cause in self-interest: cooperation with “equally and higher ranked members of the species” is a form of evolution-based strategic thinking; an “altruistic behavior motivated by compassion” must be seen as a “side effect” of this.⁵⁴

In view of the fact that to “the critical, scientifically educated observer” man can no longer be viewed as the “intended culmination of a well meant and well-crafted divine creation” but as an “unintended, cosmologically meaningless and temporary epiphenomenon in universe without purpose”, Schmidt-Salomon states that only the “acceptance of the profound metaphysical meaninglessness of our existence” is able to provide “the freedom for individual creation of meaning”. In a “universe with no intrinsic meaning, humans enjoy the privilege of being able to seek and discover meaning for themselves, in their own lives”. Evolutionary Humanism therefore recommends all humans to “follow in the footsteps of the Greek philosopher Epicurus” and to become “enlightened hedonists”,⁵⁵ which means: As man is not “able to find the meaning of life outside of life itself”, those who look for “meaning” will have “to look especially to the senses, because sense grows from sensuality”.⁵⁶

For Schmidt-Salomon, all traditional institutions – “governmental and legal systems, religions, political ideologies, cultural traditions, etc.” – have no “intrinsic value” but rather are “subject to an evolution that can and must be steered by us”. All of them must therefore be subjected to a “critical screening”.⁵⁷ In this sense, “Evolutionary Humanism” does – apart from its basal ethical “imperative” – not accept “any absolute categories (absolute morals, absolute truth, absolute authority)”. Rather, it has to be regarded as an “open system”, which not only opposes traditional settings but also “the post-modern ‘anything goes’ mentality that would have us believe that all traditions are equally valid”.⁵⁸

“Scientific knowledge” is, according to Schmidt-Salomon, also “superior to religious belief” because it “understands and accepts its own limitations”; it is “by definition open-ended”, a “methodology of critical doubt” that does not rest “upon infallible eternal ‘truths’”.⁵⁹ Since science only provides “descriptive propositions but no prescriptive ones”, it must, according to Schmidt-Salomon, “at least partially ignore several of the questions central to human existence”. Religions, on the other hand, “have used this circumstance” and claimed to be able to “provide sensible answers to the existential questions of our life”. Yet in the face of their “miserable failure to discover even the simplest earthly truths”, one has to doubt that they would be able to provide better answers “in identifying so-called higher truths”.⁶⁰ Philosophy, therefore, offers itself as a “fruitful secular alternative to the meaning and morality espoused by religions”: the “ideal philosopher” seeks “truth and clarity by casting doubt on apparent certainties, by exposing potential inconsistencies and by developing alternative approaches to understanding the world in a logically and empirically consistent way”; in case of doubt he “has to question even the most fundamental articles of faith”.⁶¹ Once, as Schmidt-Salomon tells us, philosophy had “encompassed all the sciences”, this concept has “remained valid in its essence until the modern era”. However, due to the autonomy of the special sciences, there has been a “dramatic change”, science and philosophy have increasingly alienated themselves. However, according to Schmidt-Salomon’s observation, this process has come to an end in the course of the last decades; science and philosophy have, as “for example, the brain researchers Damasio, Roth and Singer” show, “taken great strides towards one another”.⁶² As a

result, it is now possible once again to pursue philosophy as it was originally intended, as a “specialization on the context”, a “perspective from which problems can be viewed from various angles without losing sight of the whole”, to make it short: as “worldly wisdom”.⁶³ In this way, “philosophical thought” is finally able to produce the “prescriptive propositions” and “existential attributions of meaning” that have been “excluded from the domain of the exact sciences” since the 19th century.⁶⁴ As a third “central pillar” of a “vibrant culture” alongside science and philosophy, Schmidt-Salomon calls “art” as the “creative venture of expressing knowledge and experience in a way that is both emotionally meaningful and aesthetically appealing”. Its “cultural significance” lies in “its ability to make the (historically transmitted) meaning of life accessible to the senses”; it proves its strength especially “in the creative use of the ugly, the painful, the frightening, or the unpleasant” and reflects “not only the present with its contradictions, but at the same time the urge to overcome a reality that is felt to be deficient”. Interestingly, it also includes “the ritual ceremonies with which people celebrate the major events of their lives (birth, entering into adulthood, choosing a partner, death, etc.)”.⁶⁵ In the name of “Evolutionary Humanism,” Schmidt-Salomon therefore strongly rejects “the much cited hypothesis that people need religion”; rather, “science, philosophy and art” are able to cover “all the domains claimed to this day by religion as its exclusive sovereign territory”.⁶⁶

In another key passage of his book, Schmidt-Salomon summarizes his reflections under the keyword of “partial enlightenment”, which he sees as a problem “still virulent today”: While only the “concept of instrumental reason” has prevailed historically, the “practical-ethical and positive ideological influences of enlightenment” (to which he counts the principle of “fairness and justice”, “skepticism concerning holy and absolute values” and the “commitment to worldly, as opposed to supernatural reasoning”) have been “largely ignored”. If these principles “had found greater support in the [German] population in the 1920s and 1930s”, it would, as he declares, never have come to “Hitler’s seizure of power”. The Enlightenment, however, reveals a “dual character” in the sense that, through the demystification of “old certainties”, it has contributed to “a majority of the population feeling unable to cope”, so that “many may have sought their salvation in the absolute acceptance of new myths”.⁶⁷ This “regressive problem-solving behavior” must be seen as an anthropological constant that “will not change in the future”.⁶⁸ Therefore, from Schmidt-Salomon’s point of view, it is important to focus not only on the “negation (abolition) of the status quo” but also increasingly point out the “positions” of the Enlightenment: it has to be made plausible, that “a knowledge of (natural) science is more fascinating than any religious creation myth”, and that it can cause a “feeling of awed wonder” which “is one of the highest experiences of which the human psyche is capable”.⁶⁹

When it comes to the relationship of humans to animals, Schmidt-Salomon sees an anthropocentric “speciesism” as having to be overcome; man is obligated to recognize the “principle of equality” also as a “sound moral basis for relations with those outside our own species”, since at least animals with a central nervous system are proven to be capable of suffering.⁷⁰ The “ethos of Evolutionary Humanism with regard to animals” can therefore be formulated as follows: “Cause only as much suffering to non-human life-forms as is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of your own existence!”⁷¹ The starting point of “right to life” (concerning humans and animals together) can, however, only be defined arbitrarily. Schmidt-Salomon pulls the line at birth, which is the time from which a “genuine interest in survival” can be assumed.⁷²

In his closing plea Schmidt-Salomon advocates a “mainstream culture of humanism and enlightenment”: Although “all the major achievements of modern times are connected with the tradition of The Enlightenment”, it has, “in the area of ideology”, remained “an ‘underground movement’” so far.⁷³ In order to change this, especially “in the field of education, new approaches will have to be found”;⁷⁴ the “uncritical instruction in claims that are unproven, or proven false” (especially in the form of religious

education) has to be stopped,⁷⁵ the legal “support of religions” has to be “greatly diminished”.⁷⁶ The “mainstream culture” he presents offers in his eyes “a path beyond fundamentalism and beyond ‘anything goes’”; on the one hand it “imparts sufficient orientation to give people a foothold in their search for meaning”, and on the other hand is simultaneously open enough (as opposed to religious or political-ideological dogmatism) so as not to limit people unduly in controlling their own lives”.⁷⁷ As nobody knows whether the “the mainstream culture of humanism and enlightenment will ever be able to establish itself in the cultural struggle”, it should be regarded as “an ‘in spite of’ philosophy” whose “paradoxical maxim” is “to expect the worst and hope for the best”.⁷⁸ A continuation of the “project of the Enlightenment”, however, still requires “energetic engagement” and the escape from the “ivory towers” of science; the “ongoing intellectual conspiracy of silence” must be “broken” in order to “reach a ‘critical mass’ which can contribute to overturning the ideological-ethical system.”⁷⁹ Schmidt-Salomon concludes his reflections by stating that “Evolutionary Humanism” conveys a “good news”: Its “meaning” can “really be sensually experienced”, furthermore, “it is in harmony with science, the best system of acquiring knowledge” ever developed, finally, it liberates from a lot of “morbid, moralizing ballast”. “Who can say no to that?”⁸⁰

Schmidt-Salomon: Analysis

I think that even before any analysis (and well before a discussion of the questions asked above) it is clear that Schmidt-Salomon’s “evolutionary humanism” is quite dissimilar from Norman’s approach: Where Norman seeks to mediate between different arguments, Schmidt-Salomon presents strong claims, and where Norman makes suggestions, Schmidt-Salomon has solutions. Before I come to a final evaluation, I will also in brief analyze his theory.

Schmidt-Salomon’s “manifesto” is based on a construction made up of three simple theses: 1.) As evolutionary theory shows us, religion is a mechanism that may have been useful in historical times of humankind but has also been proven to promote oppression and wrong theories about the world we live in. 2.) In strict contrast to religion, the historical movement of “The Enlightenment”, based on “science, philosophy and art”, encourages humanization, since there is no absolute knowledge in it. 3.) For the future, therefore, a comprehensive dissemination of the ideals of this movement has to be achieved as a “leading culture”.

In this way, Schmidt-Salomon operates with a constellation in which “religion” and “Enlightenment” are in inevitable opposition. This pattern of reasoning must be taken seriously, since the image of such a front position is quite widespread in popular philosophy and thus also shapes the social discourse more strongly than some theologians might want to suspect. Anyway, the lack of sophistication and complexity unmasks the basic assumptions of Schmidt-Salomon as constructs: By strictly opposing “religion” and “Enlightenment”, he has to hide the fact that both of them have been very strongly connected since the beginning of modernity, and that the ideas of enlightenment have evolved from ideas already prepared in previous (religious) worldviews.

Schmidt-Salomon, however, considers an elimination of religion to be easily possible, since “science, philosophy and art” are capable of covering “all the domains claimed to this day by religion as its exclusive sovereign territory”. Yet, a closer look at this concept quickly shows that a functional replacement of religion by them is unthinkable because the individual components of this constellation are untenable constructions themselves.

Schmidt-Salomon does not exactly define what is meant by the noun *science*, but it can be assumed that he primarily focuses on the empirical or rather the natural sciences. Yet the question of the veracity of scientific statements in his draft receives a highly ambivalent answer: on the one hand he sees “science” as the “silver bullet” for “solving the great puzzles of the world”, capable of “illuminating the actual facts”; on the other hand science is superior to religions because it is “by definition open-ended”, a “methodology of critical doubt” that does not rest “upon infallible eternal ‘truths’”. This unmistakable ambivalence has its roots in the anti-religious interest of his approach: he introduces the aspect of “scientific illumination”, showing “actual facts” to refute the errors of the traditional models of world-explanation; he simultaneously insists on scientific open-endedness to be able to demonstrate that this kind of knowledge is superior to religious belief because it “understands and accepts its own limitations”. Schmidt-Salomon can only disguise the resulting logical contradiction (“scientific statements are by definition open-ended, at the same time they illuminate actual facts”) by strictly separating these arguments.

Furthermore, also *philosophy* is in Schmidt-Salomon’s model characterized by a fundamental ambivalence: on the one hand he describes it as critical science; the philosopher questions “apparent certainties”, exposing “potential inconsistencies”, in case of doubt he “has to question even the most fundamental articles of faith”. On the other hand he considers a philosophical “specialization on the context” to be urgently needed. Ideally, philosophy would be “sight of the whole”, “worldly wisdom” which is able to produce “prescriptive propositions” and “existential attributions of meaning”. The first task of philosophy, the critique of elementary convictions, is again derived from Schmidt-Salomon's basic concern of a critique of religion; the second task, the universal view of a fundamental “worldly wisdom”, is also necessary to replace core functions of religion (prescription, meaning) with a secular equivalent. However, these two functions of philosophy – criticism and *Weltanschauung* – can only be combined with great difficulty: how should a critical world view which sees its task as challenging apparent certainties easily return to a new, positive, all-embracing view of the world? This is possible only on the condition that certain “apparent certainties” remain unquestioned - such as the basic attitude that science provides a system which basically leaves no questions unanswered.

Art, the third “central pillar” of Schmidt-Salomon’s “leading culture” has, according to Schmidt-Salomon, the “ability to make the (historically transmitted) meaning of life accessible to the senses”; it reflects the “urge to overcome a reality that is felt to be deficient”, and it includes “the ritual ceremonies with which people celebrate the major events of their lives”. Interestingly enough, this succinct definition of “art” unites two essential core functions of religion: on the one hand the dimension of rite and cult (a rather rare classification); on the other hand the perception of the paradox and the deficit – but, mind you, not its dissolution! With this construction Schmidt-Salomon puts himself on the defensive since both the ritual design of the “major events” of life as well as the reflection about the “deficient” reality of human existence cannot be thought with at least the *consideration* of a transcendental framework. An essential part of art has always been the confrontation with the *possibility* of a redeeming transcendence; art can therefore be supported by a positive as well as a negative attitude to religion, but not be separated radically from it.

A few more, very basic questions can be attached to Schmidt-Salomon’s approach: is his “leading culture” not ultimately designed to largely eliminate cultural peculiarities (if only because in almost all civilizations local culture is determined by religious influences)? Isn’t it an attempt to establish a (rather aggressive) secular Eurocentrism as the global maxim of thinking and actions of all people? But why the global character at all? On the basis of Darwinism, wouldn’t it be much closer to putting self-interest at the service of the individual or one's own small group? If we would like to follow his logic, isn’t the ideal of “humanity” part of those abstractions, which, like the overcome ideals of religion, must ultimately be

renounced? And for what reason does Schmidt-Solomon also want to recognize the “principle of equality” as a “moral basis for relations with those outside our own species”? To put it short: How can self-interest be the basis of a worldview which finally wants to establish an all-embracing humanization?

Schmidt-Salomon's design of an “evolutionary humanism” is not the first and will not be the last example of an approach that pretends to know how to deal with the big problems of humanity: it fits into a historical series of dualistic worldviews, fed by simple oversubscriptions, whose very low complexity lends them the ability to be recognized by many as seemingly evident. The fact that his “manifesto” can on closer inspection be revealed as a collection of several relatively obvious constructs, which are also partly in logical contradiction to each other, does obviously not detract the popularity of his argument. The talk of the “leading culture of humanism and enlightenment”, which seeks to convey its values to a largely unsophisticated society and thus eliminate religions, exposes him as a *missionary*, who sees his mission in the salvation of the largely misguided humanity; “humanism” becomes a battle concept in this way.

At least one cannot blame Schmidt-Salomon's concept for lack of bluntness. Therefore, also the basic questions I mentioned above are being answered in an unambiguous, yet not entirely convincing way:

Individuality and Humanity: Freedom and self-realization of the individual, as well as an improvement of the entire condition of human thinking and living are possible by achieving a “critical mass” engaging in “cultural struggle” for “evolutionary humanism”. (Therefore, if things don't work out, evolutionary humanists will have been too weak.)

Ideal and Reality: The world can indeed be made a better place. The alleged complexity of the world and current socio-political problems can be reduced to simple and therefore soluble tasks. (The problem might be that too few are willing to engage.)

Rationality and Religion: Religion is, indeed, the main problem of our time. The “leading culture” of “Enlightenment” is its opponent – and solution.

I recall once again what I described above as the “humanist circle” which is a danger of any committed secular humanism: The imperfectness of human society leads to the belief that people have to be convinced of humanism, the lack of convinced humanists leads to the belief that this is the reason of the imperfectness of human society. I almost do not have to say it anymore: Schmidt-Salomon's “evolutionary humanism” is a perfect example for being stuck in this circle. For outsiders this may seem like a tragic intellectual situation, but for those who are arguing from within it can turn out to be quite comfortable: one has a simple solution for global problems where others need complex theorems, one is right where others are only able to articulate suggestions, finally, one is always able to blame the ignorance of others. Presumably, such circular logic is also an evolutionary constant, but thank God one that can be avoided.

Results

The differences between the two approaches seem to make it obvious that one can be a humanist in very different ways today. Starting from the statement that a scientific conception of the world is superior to any religious interpretation, both authors come to quite dissimilar ways to deal with this fact: While Norman wants to offer a noncommittal interpretation of the world, showing that values, ethical norms and meaningful narrations do not vanish without religion, Schmidt-Salomon sees religion as the cause of most of mankind's current problem and therefore presents its elimination as a definite solution. Norman stresses that religion has in fact inspired “some of the best human achievements” and sharply rejects the “naive optimism” striving for “the triumph of happiness and virtue” which has its root in the nineteenth

century “ideology of ‘progress’”; Schmidt-Salomon is in fact a late disciple of this optimism, and he clearly shows that every ideology of progress is based on the construction of an opponent. That may also be a reason for the fact that Norman’s book is especially popular in countries like the UK, Norway and Iceland, where the process of secularization has already progressed so far that a strong antireligious polemic in the name of humanism would seem rather unreasonable, while Schmidt-Salomon’s “manifesto” is selling well in Germany and Poland, where there are (in Germany at least partly) still areas with a strong religious orientation that seems worth fighting.

I hardly have to mention that I am more gravitated to Norman’s approach because he keeps the door open for a theistic-atheistic dialogue about the foundation of values, the nature of meaning and the question of how to live a good life. (For example, I tend to agree his thesis that values *precede* any particular belief or divine command,⁸¹ but this is already a special debate that I cannot further develop here.) Norman points out something obvious, which nevertheless repeatedly has to be remembered: there is a fine line between the justified defense of validity claims and the ever-threatening danger of intolerance. Every theist, as well as every secular humanist, should therefore be aware of the fact that “enlightenment” also includes the critical questioning of one’s own truths; it therefore also means being able to endure and accept that others may take a completely different stance than I do. In this broader sense, “humanism” implies that people only in the totality of their different religious and ideological attitudes are able to stand for human diversity. In times like ours, with political populism and aggression towards people from other cultures perceptibly increasing in the western countries, there should be neither lack of theists nor humanists willing to stand up for this simple insight.

Notes

1 Those and much more current statistics can be found in two comprehensive empirical studies: Detlef Pollack, *Gergely Rosta, Religion and Modernity. An International Comparison*, trans. D. West (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Pew Research Center, *Being Christian in Western Europe* (2018), <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe>.

2 Bert Gasenbeek, “Het Humanistisch Verbond,” in *Vrijdenken en humanisme in Nederland. 40 plekken van herrening* (Bussum: Thoth, 2016), 203-207, 207. The numbers were presented by Ineke de Vries, the former Director of the Humanistisch Verbond, in an interview dating from 2012: Maaïke van Houten, “Zo humanistisch mogelijk stemmen,” in *Trouw* (August 28th 2012), <https://www.trouw.nl/home/zo-humanistisch-mogelijk-stemmen~af1a371a>.

3 According to the public statistics of the Human-Etisk Forbund: <https://human.no/nyheter/2018/august/over-10-000-pameldte-konfirmanter>.

4 <https://humanism.org.uk/about/our-people>.

5 Severin Carrell, “What God has not joined together: the rise of the humanist wedding,” in *The Guardian* (August 14th 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/14/what-god-has-not-joined-together-the-rise-of-the-humanist-wedding>.

6 Information dating back from 2013: <http://www.humanismus.de/20-jahre-humanistischer-verband-deutschlands>.

7 <https://iheu.org/about/humanism>.

8 <https://iheu.org/about/humanism/the-amsterdam-declaration>.

9 <https://humanism.org.uk/humanism>.

10 Even Gran, "Referanseverk om humanisme ute på norsk," in *Fri tanke* (February 14th 2007), https://fritanke.no/index.php?page=vis_nyhet&NyhetID=7659. In the article, a representative of the HEF is cited with the words: „HEF has chosen to support this book because it is simply the best presentation of humanism that I and the others who have been involved in this from HEF's side have ever read.”

11 Richard Norman, *On Humanism*, 2d rev. ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 192.

12 Norman, *On Humanism*, 7-8.

13 Norman, *On Humanism*, 14-15.

14 Norman, *On Humanism*, 17.

15 Norman, *On Humanism*, 19-20

16 Norman, *On Humanism*, 24.

17 Norman, *On Humanism*, 39.

18 Norman, *On Humanism*, 39, 42.

19 Norman, *On Humanism*, 57.

20 Norman, *On Humanism*, 58.

21 Norman, *On Humanism*, 61.

22 Norman, *On Humanism*, 69.

23 Norman, *On Humanism*, 82.

24 Norman, *On Humanism*, 85-86.

25 Norman, *On Humanism*, 88.

26 Norman, *On Humanism*, 88.

27 Norman, *On Humanism*, 89-91.

28 Norman, *On Humanism*, 92.

29 Norman, *On Humanism*, 95.

30 Norman, *On Humanism*, 96.

31 Norman, *On Humanism*, 99.

32 Norman, *On Humanism*, 113.

33 Norman, *On Humanism*, 119-120.

34 Norman, *On Humanism*, 136-137.

35 Norman, *On Humanism*, 138-139.

36 Norman, *On Humanism*, 140-141.

37 Norman, *On Humanism*, 142-143.

38 Norman, *On Humanism*, 145-146.

39 Norman, *On Humanism*, 146.

40 Norman, *On Humanism*, 152.

41 Norman, *On Humanism*, 160.

42 Norman, *On Humanism*, 162.

43 Norman, *On Humanism*, 168.

44 Norman, *On Humanism*, 185.

45 Norman, *On Humanism*, 191.

46 Michael Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifest des evolutionären Humanismus. Plädoyer für eine zeitgemäße Leitkultur*, 2d rev. ed. (Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 2006). This formulation can be read in the book's blurb.

47 <https://www.giordano-bruno-stiftung.de/buecher/manifest-des-evolutionaeren-humanismus>.

48 Michael Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto of Evolutionary Humanism. Plea for a Mainstream Culture Appropriate to our Times*, trans. F. Lorenz (Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 2014), 7.

49 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 7-8.

50 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 9-10.

51 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 13.

52 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 13-14.

53 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 16-17.

54 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 17-19.

55 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 22.

56 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 23-24.

57 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 28, 31.

58 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 32.

59 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 34-35.

60 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 36-37.

- 61 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 37.
- 62 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 38.
- 63 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 39.
- 64 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 39-40.
- 65 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 40.
- 66 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 42.
- 67 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 78.
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- 69 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 80-81.
- 70 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 108.
- 71 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 110.
- 72 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 112.
- 73 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 116.
- 74 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 118.
- 75 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 121.
- 76 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 123.
- 77 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 127.
- 78 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 129-130.
- 79 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 130-131.
- 80 Schmidt-Salomon, *Manifesto*, 134-135.

81 A readable presentation of this argument can be found in the last book written by Ronald Dworkin, *Religion without God* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2013).

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