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November 18, 2011: The Duquesne Secular Society

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Title: The Duquesne Secular Society

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11/18/2011—Today's Tribune Review continues a story that I first read about in the Duquesne Duke. The Student Government Association denied formal recognition to a group calling itself the Duquesne Secular Society, a decision the University supported. The reason given by a University spokesperson was that "formally recognizing a student group whose main purpose is opposition to belief in God is not aligned with our mission". The reason actually seemed reasonable to me, but that did not seem like a fair description of such a group. I wrote to Nick Shadowen and suggested that if the group made it clear that its concern is not with religious believers but with students who are not believers and that the group's purpose is to explore the resources of depth and meaning for people who are not religious believers, I thought the University would be happy to recognize the group. Nick wrote back that the purpose of the group is "open discussion on the existence of god". So, the university did not mischaracterize the purpose of the group. I'm sorry that once again, secularists think they are the truth and religion is the problem. Maybe we secularists should look at ourselves for a change. [Readers of this blog will be aware that I have edited it to remove a reference to an email exchange between Nick Shadowen and me that he felt both misrepresented the purposes of the group and made public an exchange that he considered private. I apologize for that and unlike the rest of the Internet, I'm pretty sure that this quiet corner will allow matters to disappear. I have also removed his comment in case it was prompted by the offending quotations. Of course Mr. Shadowen is free to comment again and I hope he will. I hope he does not consider his comment on the purpose of the group to be private and in any event it is consistent with public statements in the media. That said, I repeat my main point. The purpose and thrust of all these secular organizations, including the one at Duquesne, is, as some secularists see it, to expose the fallacies of religion to the light of reason. When called on it, these secularists insist they are not attacking religion, but all they mean is that the discussion should be fair and open. There will not be a genuine secular society until religion is not in its mind at all. There will not be a secular society until its focus is entirely on the nature and potential of a secular society.]