

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A Socratic society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is well worth living.

Member organization of the [Humanists of Florida](#), the [AHA](#), [COR](#), and [CSH](#). Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com

Our Apologies! Somewhere in the vast hall of clinkity clank that is the mechanical closet of the Humanist Society, a cog slipped but one notch, and we found our customary place unavailable to us. Thanks to Dave Dockery for coming to our rescue with the use of his fabulous facility at the Computer Society. At long last we will hear Bob Shepherd's eye-opening presentation.

- New content in this issue -

Skepticism:



You have nothing to lose but your chains.

As freethinkers, we often allow ourselves to be defined in terms of what we are not (e.g., "An atheist is NOT a theist"). And because of the persistence of superstition into the present, books by the new atheists typically concentrate on presenting the negative, or rebuttal, case against superstition rather than on presenting (except by implication) the positive, or constructive, case for skepticism.

In his upcoming presentation to The Humanist Society of the Suncoast (Clearwater East Library, 2:00 PM, **August 6th, 2011**), writer, editor, philosopher, and skeptic **Bob Shepherd** both calls for and attempts to illustrate a new approach to Humanist outreach based upon what people have to gain from adopting skepticism as a way of life.

In a wide-ranging talk entitled "*Perspectivism, Skepticism, and the Art of Living*," Shepherd will explain a) why skepticism as ordinarily conceived isn't nearly skeptical enough, and b) how a profound, thorough-going skepticism can make our lives incalculably richer, more interesting, more creative, and more worth living.

For another sample of Bob's excellent writings, see [page 7](#)

Please support the Humanist Society



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Tampa Bay Harvest Please...

bring as many boxed and canned food items
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With the important help of Glenn Paul and

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TB Harvest delivered 2,765,517 pounds of food to 220 agencies who feed the hungry in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties last year. That's 5,531,000 meals to feed the hungry by TBH's calculations.

**Please join us
for this free and
open discussion.**

**On Saturday,
August 6th**

at 2 PM:

**Clearwater East
Library
2251 Drew St.
Clearwater**

Following our
meeting, many of us
will dine and argue
together at the

**Farmer Boy
Restaurant**

at 2129 Drew St. just 2
blocks west of

Volume 20 No. 8

August, 2011

*Join us in our effort to ignite
critical thinking, and embrace
reason, & compassion in life.*

~ Join or Renew ~

*The Humanist Society
of the Suncoast.*

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Thanks to Bob Byrch!



Humanists work to build a world in which happiness is the enduring criterion of social policy.

What do Humanists Want?

1. To extend a human centered approach to the critical problems of life and society.
2. To encourage attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance and a loving generosity in human relationships, and in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others and encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture and experience.
3. To develop and popularize the skills of creative and critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition and irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
4. To exalt those artistic and imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure and enlightenment, and which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, and other expressions, we embrace the essence of the human spirit.
5. To explore the grounds of ethics and morality within the unfolding history of our evolving culture. Such knowledge will enable us to become effective protagonists for the happiness of the individual person. JP

The moveable feast for August will be held at

Carmelita's Mexican Restaurant

on Sunday August 21st at 5:00PM at located at 7705 Ulmerton Rd. at its intersection with Belcher Rd. in Largo. This restaurant has many fine offerings in the \$10 range. It has been named top Mexican restaurant in the area many times. I Hope to see many of you there.

Note: Look for coupons in your mail for Carmelita's.

Please reserve with Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com by Saturday August 20th.

Laugh Lines From Will Rogers

1. Never slap a man who's chewing tobacco.
2. Never kick a cow chip on a hot day.
3. There are two theories to arguing with a woman. Neither works.
4. Never miss a good chance to shut up.
5. Always drink upstream from the herd.
6. If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.
7. The quickest way to double your money is to fold it and put it back into your pocket.
8. There are three kinds of men:
The ones that learn by reading.
The few who learn by observation.
The rest of them have to pee on the electric fence and find out for themselves.
9. Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.
10. If you're riding' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

Thanks to *Connie Purdom*

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc.
the Association of Secular Humanist Societies

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~*~*~*~*

Jim Butler Publisher.

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Have an Idea, opinion or essay you want to share?

E-Mail us at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Brighten a Day

for a member of our family

As we get older, we get better, but sometimes there's just that little hiccup that might dampen our enthusiasm slightly. Then we need each otherjust a little more.

Brent Yaciw is a little troubled by some eye infection and stroke recovery. He would enjoy talking with his friends.

Brent@aimzoom.com

Bob Collette's wife, **Dot** is having a little trouble with general memory problems. They can use a little support.
dotybob@verizon.net

Ron & Carolyn Frase are still living in Ohio Frasec@aol.com

Please let me know of anyone who would like to be contacted .

Jim Peterson
Jamestp@metrodirect.net

See [page 3](#) for more on the new Caring committee

A Humanist Helping Hand

It has been observed that “charity begins at home.” But there is something more to the notion of charity than merely the socially obligatory motion of making donations and offering support to relatives in times of stress. This is more than just a high falutin intellectual discussion group. We as individuals have long endured the vicissitudes of arrogant criticism for expressing unpopular and unconventional beliefs and ideas.. We come here to seek solace in the company of others with similar experiences. We come to bask in the acceptance we find here and in the unique values we often hear expressed. We find in the lives of others an empathetic resonance with our own lives.

But, as human beings we suffer the same losses, frustrations, setbacks, and triumphs as more conservative people. We have a need to share our collective and individual support to others seeking the refuge, nurturance, warmth, and consolation only we can provide.

A Social Caring Committee has been formed to help with our individual needs in times of distress or discomfort. If you are or know someone who is sick, recovering, hospitalized, going through a life trauma, or just lonely, and who would enjoy talking with other members, please let your editor know so they can be listed in our “Brighten a Day” feature on page 2.

At this point three members have volunteered to participate on the committee:

- ♦ Patricia Walters (soon)
- ♦ Terri Eckstein (813) 891-9399
- ♦ Jerry Moore (727) 455-4973
- ♦ Nan Owens (813) 662-6612

Contact any of them if you feel you or someone in our group may need help.

Humanism is a philosophy with a long history of advocacy for the well being of the human creature. This organization exists largely to provide for the needs of its members.

Our Humanist Society is actively looking for interesting speakers with novel and well thought out ideas on just about any subject of interest to a general audience - even if not from a distinctly Humanist perspective.

Let me know if you would like to recommend a person, idea, or organization.

Call Jim at (813) 531-8138 or

E-mail me at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

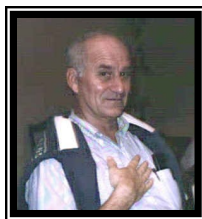
Have an opinion, idea, news, or essay?

This newsletter is your space.

For editorial consideration for the next issue, contact Jim Peterson at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Share your favorite restaurant.



Glenn Paul

has graciously resumed the helm as chair of the of the social committee.

As always, he welcomes your comments and suggestions for future venues for our mid-month dinner. He also serves as assistant treasurer for our group.



Read Humanist Periodicals:

The Humanist, Free Inquiry, Free Mind, Humanist Perspectives, Skeptical Inquirer, Secular Humanist Bulletin, The Florida Humanist Journal, Skeptic, Essays in Humanism, and many others.

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The Tampabay Postcarbon Council

is an autonomous adjunct to the Humanist Society.

Two recent presentations both given by environmental engineer, **Luke Melton** have provided a stimulus that we hope will give new life to the organization.

As we have learned, there are likely to be dramatic changes in the way we live in this century. These will affect all aspects of our lives including housing, transportation, work, the natural environment, and our relations with each other.

This is yet another opportunity to reorder the nature of our species, and the way we interact with our world. The philosophical perspective of humanism can make a significant contribution to that transition. We invite you to become a member of the Council, and make a difference in the quality of our lives. Click below for more info.



Humanist Quotes

The “family unit” retards progress in several ways. First, it limits one’s early learning experiences to a small cultural area. It also allows parent to program their children in one ideology before intuitive thought begins, thereby heavily biasing future reasoning.



Frank Prahl

fprahl@verizon.net



Read...

The insouciantly vexatious thoughts of Steve Brown on **page 5**



HFA E-NEWS

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An Electronic News Update from The Humanists of Florida Association

The Fallacy of Fine Tuning, why the Universe is not designed for us

Bob Zannelli, an HFA board member, is a long-time friend and colleague of Dr. Vic Stenger. He is acknowledged and cited several times in Dr. Stenger's latest book, *The Fallacy of Fine Tuning*. Here is Bob's review of the book:

Dr Vic Stenger takes on the claims by religious apologists that the laws and constants of nature are fine tuned for life, hence evidence that the Universe is intelligently designed. This assertion of fine tuning is the latest version of "the God of the gaps" argument from religious apologists. With a deft hand, using some advanced mathematics, Dr Stenger takes the reader on a tour involving our best, current understanding in the physical sciences to demolish the fine tuning argument. This book accomplishes the difficult task of being both comprehensive and accessible to any intelligent reader. Some might question whether a book that pulls no punches in analyzing the fine tuning question in science could be a page turner, but this book is hard to put down. For those familiar with other books by Dr. Stenger, this will come as no surprise. This book is a must have for the libraries of both scientists and intelligent layperson interested in the nature of the Universe we inhabit.



Bob (L) and Dr. Stenger in the 70s

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View the trailer and purchase tickets NOW for this special one night event at a local movie theater near you!

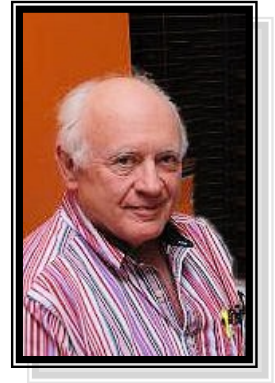
Be a part of the discussion! Submit a question in advance (to be answered by participants on event night) on the *Transcendent Man* **Facebook page** or **Twitter** (hashtag: #tmlive).

Join us on **Facebook** or **Twitter** for more news, resources & specials.

DAVE DOCKERY IS FOLLOWING UP ON HIS RECENT DISCUSSION ON "THE SINGULARITY IS COMING" AT THE TBCS CENTER, WE HAD A GREAT TURNOUT, AND WE WERE GRATIFIED THAT SO MANY PEOPLE WERE INTERESTED IN CONTINUING THE DISCUSSION. WE ARE AT THE THRESHOLD OF PROFOUND TRANSFORMATION THAT GREATLY ACCELERATES OUR LEAP INTO A VERY DIFFERENT FUTURE. RAY KURZWEIL, WHO WAS IN A BRIEF CLIP IN DAVE'S PRESENTATION, LEADS A NATIONAL DISCUSSION OF THIS PHENOMENA

The event will be on **Aug 3rd at 8PM** at **AMC Woodland Square 20** in Oldsmar. It costs \$15 and will be followed by a discussion at a nearby **Steak & Shake** restaurant.

Steve Brown



Good, Better and Best

Is an atheist a “better person” simply because he or she has some way or another avoided or escaped capture by the supernatural notions that have been a salient force in our cultural conditioning? We’re saturated with the language and belief systems of the societies into which we’re born from the moment we arrive, or close to it.

Is it betrayal of integrity for an atheist to call him/herself “spiritual?”

These questions were part of an intellectual melee over at the St. Pete Atheists-Freethought Meet-Up mailing list, a relatively cozy group of 20 or so regular communicators, including yours truly in semi-Luddite resistance to the idea of hundreds or thousands of “friends” apparently awaiting me in larger social network caverns elsewhere.

My answer to the first question is a loud “no.” In a few cases atheists become atheists the way most people become “religious,” day to day interaction with parents who have those respective beliefs. In most cases, we atheists, freethinkers and humanist, have applied critical thinking skills -- some at early ages, some in adolescence, some late in life -- to the patently absurd bronze age and earlier notions our cultures have inherited.

This is not even to say that we are therefore necessarily more “intelligent” (whatever that means) than people who don’t think their way through the various nonsenses, but we’ve arrived at our conclusions, or maybe better put, “working hypotheses,” by an essentially cerebral process.

Indeed, the way atheists have been seen by mainstream society is as a bunch of alienated eggheads who can’t be concerned with everyday trials and tribulations -- as functional “nihilists” who don’t share society’s supposedly religion-derived moral code and sense of moral responsibility.

Well, the crucial fact, as I see it, is that atheists, humanists and everybody else essentially share the same DNA. If we are a hair’s breadth away, so to speak, in DNA, from being chimpanzees, then how different are we, exactly, from those people who buy the nonsense (let alone those who pretend to buy the nonsense because everybody else *seems* to).

Am I a “better” person than M.L. King Jr. or Jimmy Carter or Dorothy Day of the Catholic Workers or even than my Christian fundamentalist niece? As I see myself, clearly not. I think it is a stupid question to ask; that is, it is one that does not come from exercising the cerebrum. (Compared with how they’ve lived in the world around them all I’ve done is try to find a refuge for myself, havens of sanity in the atheist and humanist community, so that I’m not driven mad in some other, probably outrageous, way by the religious madness around me, and, also, merely what little I could to try to make our variety of freethought beliefs clear and attractive to some still burdened by those much discussed cultural religious delusions).

You will find the blue-eyed and flat-footed among both believers and atheists. In terms of moral behavior there will be “good” and “bad” atheists along with “good” and “bad” believers.

I can conceive, I’ve said in this column before, of humanist sectarian battles in the future, and even of humanist societies at war with one another.

We sometimes don’t see ourselves as embedded in a particular culture -- in our case, like it or not -- “Christendom” (hopefully in its waning “days”), and fixed in time. We freethinkers have thrown off one central area of our cultural conditioning (our literal “brainwashing”). With varying differences in pattern (that is, relative impact of one or another area), we share the rest: the music that “speaks to us,” variations in temperament, sociality, sexual interest and activity, actions concerning parenthood, whether we’re good at math or mechanics or homemaking, and the hormones that can lead us to harm or help others. Perhaps it could be said that in some sense we may as a group have “better” minds, in that they are free of the straitjacket of tradition, but where we humans, or even “humanists,” go from there is anybody’s guess since we’re made of the same biological and emotional components as anybody else.

In terms of having our minds fixed in time, I’ve long believed that progression of our own society and humankind in general would be toward some naturalistic, humanistic religion. I don’t think we have a “god gene” or anything like it. We do have a need to find pattern and causation, and we’ve found an efficient way to go about that pursuit in putting a “governor,” scientific method (critical and self-critical thinking) on our natural curiosity. But this is a process that may take centuries, and some of us in the atheist community tend to think it will be the result of an intense, generally localized, but broadening campaign over our lifetimes or perhaps the next generation’s. I’m inclined to believe the latter is wishful thinking, but nevertheless take part in some immediate actions myself.

(Continued on page 6)

Steve Brown's Column...(continued from page 5)

There's a quote attributed to Margaret Mead to the effect that "It takes only a small contingent of dedicated individuals to change the world. Indeed, nothing else has." That has long sounded to me not much short of arrant nonsense. Small contingents (e.g., Lenin and his small cohort) can have an impact. But so can the individual drive of Napoleon or the collective will, continental resources and armed might of the United States. And nothing, it seems, once changed, is changed *forever*.

Some people at the Meet-Up, a minority it seems to me, believe the term "atheist" must be kept pure and simple, and that descriptions such as "spiritual" be repudiated. If being "spiritual," however defined, is a feeling state that human beings are susceptible to, whatever their individual beliefs about the origin and behavior of the universe, then it is clearly as applicable to atheists as to anyone else. That the term may have been applied also to such things as communicating with the dead and fortune telling, or to covering up a real disaffiliation from theism with something that still sounds a little "religious" is beside the point.

For the moment assuming "spirituality" is the quality of expanding one's sense of self to include (in escalating extent) another, others, humankind, the planet or the universe, it's a common experience, sometimes called "awe," "love" or some other descriptive -- not that "awe" and "love" are necessarily synonymous with "spirituality" and can't be defined in other ways. Find a better, equally descriptive and impactful, replacement and I'll gladly take it up.

I would think we would want to expand the community of freethinkers, however atheists want to describe other characteristics, not to shrink it to some cadre of "true believers." It seems the whole point of the "Good Without God" and "Meet Your Local Atheist" ad campaigns, far from defining our community narrowly, is to make it less "strange," more acceptable and possibly even more attractive. Just as other "outcasts" in our society have finally entered it: immigrant groups like "kikes, wops, spics, micks, poloks and hunkies," blacks and gays, getting to know them ultimately helps to integrate them. Perhaps the metaphysical aspects of this last barrier are more difficult to surmount than the previous ethnic and sectarian divides, so my conclusion is that it will happen but not as quickly.

Once accepted, to whatever degree, maybe we'll be "twice elected," hopefully, and then, slowly, church-state separation will finally take place.

Steve Brown



Defending real freedom has a high cost

Atheists of Florida Vice-President/Legal Affairs Coordinator, **EllenBeth Wachs** has courageously acted on several government fronts in Polk County in behalf of her civil rights and, for that matter, the rights of all religious minorities in her community who are expected to quietly accept their status as second class citizens.

To silence her, the sheriff, an outspoken fundamentalist Christian, and other like-minded operatives in the county's law enforcement community have coordinated and retaliated forcibly against her. EllenBeth was arrested and jailed on two bogus felony charges: allegations that no one in U.S. history has ever been arrested, charged, or, let alone, convicted for. This is undeniably religious based persecution and EllenBeth needs your help.

She has hired an experienced legal team and needs financial assistance to fight back against this abuse of power.

Please help EllenBeth by donating to her Legal Fund: www.atheistsofflorida.org

Humanists (surprise!) oppose Stoning

The American Humanist Association stands beside the International Committee Against Stoning and its effort to eradicate the cruel tradition of stoning, an inhumane method of punishment which affects predominantly women and girls in developing countries. Fundamentalist religious zealots around the world are responsible for enacting laws based on stringent and unforgiving moral codes, sometimes punishable by sentences such as stoning to death. Women are stoned for "offenses" such as giving birth out of wedlock, extramarital affairs, and even in response to false accusations of murder.

Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, who has been imprisoned along with her lawyer for four years, was sentenced by the courts of the Islamic Republic of Iran for various charges of being an accessory to murder, public indecency (for appearing in court without the traditional Islamic veil) and adultery. International pressure has resulted in a stay of her execution, but she and her lawyer still remain in prison. This pattern of indicting women on false accusations, and on grounds of violating strict religious requirements, places a heavy burden on women to obey laws set in place by the influence of male clergy and lawmakers.

The American Humanist Association condemns the act of stoning as brutal and inhumane. Humanists worldwide strive to protect the dignity of all and work to protect those accused of crimes based on fundamentalist restrictions on women. We are proud to support the International Committee Against Stoning and the Save Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani Campaign in their efforts to end this practice.

Theories of the Origins of Religion

by Bob Shepherd

1. **Agency Theory.** Religion originated in the attribution of agency to the inanimate. Bob Shepherd has worked out a version of this one that goes something like this: Because of their large brains, humans are born extremely dependent, before their skulls are even fully fused. For the first few months of their lives, they experience only other humans. Naturally, they interpret subsequent experience in human terms. The wind is breath. The rumbling of the volcano is a god at a forge. All religions, according to this theory, go through several stages, beginning in animism (the attribution of agency to inanimate things). These agents in the natural world are then given names and personal histories, and by that means Animism develops into Polytheism. Over time, the spirits become condensed into one master spirit or one leader of the spirits, and thus one gets Monotheism. The agency theory is propounded by Pascal Boyer and Daniel Dennett, among others.
2. **Altered States of Consciousness Theory.** Religions originated because of use of various means, including hallucinogenic plants, asceticism, etc., to experience other ways of being and other realms outside the ordinary. Associated with David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce.
3. **Axial Age Theory, or Let Me the heck Outta Here Theory.** The 6th century BCE, the Axial age, was a lawless, difficult time between empires that gave us Plato (Platonism), Parsva and Mahavira (Jainism), Siddhartha Gautama (Buddhism), Zarathustra (Zoroastrianism), Lao Tsu (Taoism), Isaiah and Jeremiah (millennial Judaism), each of which has as a central concern the problem of suffering—how it comes about and how we can deal with it, overcome it, escape from it. Religion thus originated as a kind of escapism, a way of coping with stresses that would otherwise have been overwhelming. Associated with Karl Jaspers.
4. **Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind Theory.** Humans were originally hardwired. When humans hardwired differently came into contact with one another, these events produced dissonance, and language and religion both developed as internal speech to one's self reinforcing the previous hardwiring. Associated with Julian Jaynes.
5. **Desire to Participate in the Sacred Theory.** Religion originates in a desire to take on special powers, to transcend the mundane and the imperfect. Associated with Mircea Eliade.
6. **Entrepreneurial Theory.** Religion is a racket. Various contemporary theorists, especially ones influenced by rational choice economic theory.
7. **Escape from Personal Freedom Theory.** Unlike letter openers, which are designed for a purpose, people are not. They have no purpose. They are completely free to act however they wish to act. They are afraid of this meaninglessness and of their freedom, so they invent God to give their lives meaning and direction. Associated with Fredrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre.
8. **Group Cohesion and Moral Guidance Theory.** Religion originated as a sacralizing of aspects of clan life necessary to its cohesion and general functioning. So, for example, the totem provides a common ancestry, and totemism formalizes kinship rules; rituals bind the group together; behavior is regulated by divine ordinance. Associated with Emile Durkheim.
9. **Instrument of Repression Theory.** Religion is a means of social control, via prohibitions, and of amelioration of the alienation of, workers by those who exploit them. A very reasonable hypothesis with regard to monotheistic religions of the kinds invented in the first large city states, with their centralized sacred mountain/administrative center/and ruler as deity. Associated with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. (See also Entrepreneurial Model)
10. **Legend Theory.** Religion originated in stories told about actual persons. These stories were then elaborated and gained magical accretions over time. Associated with the ancient Greeks Euhemerus and Socrates.
(*See page 8*)

11. **Monomyth Theory.** Religions all tell one story. The young man sets out. He does service to various entities and receives a boon. He experiences trials. By virtue of the boon, he succeeds in gaining some gift. He brings this gift back to the people. Associated with Joseph Campbell.
12. **Personification and Propitiation Theory.** Religion originated as a personification of powerful forces to which people were subject (death, decay, love, etc) and an attempt to control these. Associated with Gilbert Murray.
13. **Primitive Science Theory.** Religion originated in order to provide explanations of phenomena. The narcissus flower bending over the brook is the vain young man, forever looking at his reflection, turned into a flower by Aphrodite when he rejected the advances of the girl Echo (who herself wasted away to become nothing but a disembodied voice). Associated with Edward Burnett Tylor.
14. **Propitiation and Control Theory.** Religion originated in an attempt to propitiate the Gods or to control natural phenomena by magical or ritual means. So, for example, in the grove at Nemi, a surrogate of the fertility God was killed and replaced, each year, to ensure that the old year would die and the new would be reborn. Associated with James George Frazer. (See also the Personification and Propitiation Theory).
15. **Psychopathology Theory.** Hearing voices, seeing beings who aren't there, having delusions of grandeur, making associations where none exist, experiencing cosmic interconnectedness—these are all symptoms of schizophrenia. Associated with Richard Sapolsky.
16. **Repressed Childhood Wish Fulfillment Model.** Monotheistic, Paternalistic religion derives from the wish to kill the father, which is suppressed, denied, and replaced by a fantasy of subservience to the father. It is a denial presented to others by the Superego (the internalized Self forced upon one by the society) that one has ever had such a fantasy. Associated with Sigmund Freud.
17. **Solar Theory.** Religion originated as a story told about the Earth and the Sky in which they are, respectively, the mother and the father. The father, in particular, is associated with the Sun, with lightning, and with thunder. Thus Zeus originally meant sky, and Gaia, Earth. The rising and setting and rebirth of the son is associated with the changing, death, and rebirth of the seasons. Associated with Max Muller.

18. **Wonderment/Enchantment Theory.** Religion originated in the experience of wonder or awe before that which was not understood. One sees this kind of wonderment or enchantment in nonhuman primates before phenomena such as rain storms, lightning, and fire. It is wonder in the face of the Other. Theory advanced by Ernst Cassirer (kah-seer-ur) and Rudolf Otto.

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Robert D. Shepherd is a writer, editor, graphic designer, consultant to publishers, and a vegan activist. He founded and served as CEO of a publishing house, Advanced Instructional Materials, which he sold to Houghton, Mifflin in 2001. He has worked as Director of Marketing and Communications for The Effectiveness Group, a management consulting firm; as a ghost writer for Tarcher Publishing; as VP for Development at Great Source Education Group; and as a teacher of high-school English, drama, and speech. He is the author of over one hundred textbooks in writing, grammar, literature, music, American history, mathematics, and computer science, including *Grace Abounding: The Core Knowledge Anthology of African-American Literature, Music, and Art* (a critical history and anthology); annotated study editions of the works of Shakespeare; the widely used *Writing Research Papers*; and the college-level textbook *Introduction to Computers and Technology*.

He is currently working on three novels, a collection of essays on Continental philosophy, a collection of his short stories and poetry, and an encyclopedic work on veganism with the working title *Trillions of Universes*. He holds a bachelor's degree from Indiana University and has done graduate studies at the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, and Harvard. His areas of interest include philosophy of mind, epistemology, phenomenology, poetry, syntax, logic, business strategy, and the theory and practice of quality control. His publications list and resume can be found at <http://www.bobshepherdonline.com>.



Compassion & Choices
Choice & Care at the End of Life.

Find out more about end of life issues. Everyone has to face this final question. But there are choices not provided by conventional institutions. For more information see: www.compassionandchoices.org

Be an active Humanist!

At a recent Development Committee meeting, the members present discussed several initiatives to enable members to play more significant roles in the life of our community. The social Caring committee is one such group, but there are others. See page 3. **Join an action committee; make Humanism happen!**

These are times when the most reactionary sectors of society are acting openly to undermine years of social progress to promote policies that enrich and empower only themselves. The multiple dimensions of crises that sweep over us demand that we not only pay attention, but play an active role in shaping a more humanistic response to them.

Being an active agent of social change in many ways defines the practical meaning of Humanism. Despite the vast numbers of us on this planet, too many are in thrall to religious delusion; too few actually are involved in making life better for everyone.

Especially if you are retired, or have leisure, you should consider expanding the range of your positive involvement in the lives of others. In a life free of baseless fears and ignorant superstitions, we can fulfill ourselves in helping others to overcome those same barriers.

As always, we will continue to participate in social service programs. Be sure to contribute! -- - *Jim P.*



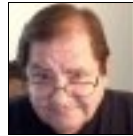
Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists.
Americans.

ACTION ALERT

The new Secular Coalition of Florida is now forming under the leadership of Dr. Richard Golden of Miami. Over 30 groups supporting the fully secular vision of our country's government have lent support to the effort. A new website has been launched at:

<http://www.secularflorida.org>.

According to Dr. Golden, "The Florida Chapter of this group would provide a voice on political issues for our small local non-theist groups. It will allow non-profit organizations to retain their 501 (c) (3) status while giving them a political lobbying force. This organization will function in a manner similar to the moral majority, which thirty years ago united small churches into a powerful national lobby and ultimately elected a president. We, too, believe that by uniting we can become a powerful voice. We clearly have the numbers and just need the organization. In Florida alone there are three million non-theists."



Bob Byrch has agreed to represent our Humanist Society's interest in the council of the coalition. He will be a conduit of information from the Council and bring our issues to them for consideration.



Dear ACLU Supporters,

One of the most dangerous pieces of legislation passed during the 2011 legislative session was a proposal to put on the 2012 ballot an amendment repealing the "no-aid" provision in Florida's Constitution which establishes a firm separation between church and state in Florida.

But what is particularly frightening about how the amendment passed the legislature was how its proponents pushed for it. **They pushed a myth that the 125-year-old protection against state money going to any religious institutions was specifically anti-Catholic.**

The charge is completely bogus - a politically-motivated recent invention used to justify the repeal of the provision, dismantle the wall separating church and state, and to open the floodgates for taxpayer funding of organized religion.

Howard Simon

For more information on Civil liberty in Florida, see: <http://www.aclufl.org>

People
Over Politics

Our Website All newsletters from the past two years
<http://suncoasthumanist.com>