

What's Inside?

Suncoast Humanist Soc	2*
Post Carbon Council	5*
Atheists of Florida	7*
Norm Allen	8
CFI Tampa Bay	9*
Tampa Bay Skeptics	11*
Books/Cooper Library	13
Tampa Bay Thinkers	14
Humanist Families	14*
Military Atheists	14*
Ethical Humanism	14
Socrates Café	14
Hum. Sarasota Bay	14
UU Humanists	14*
USF Humanities Institute	15
Freethinkers@USF	15
Secular Coalition	15
TB Technology Ctr	15
Astronomy clubs	15
TB Coalition of Reason	15
Unified Calendar	16
Dawkins	17
Voltaire	20

Hopes for a revival of the Freethought Community

With the beginning of a new year, we look forward to a time when we can once again meet face to face (masked, of course). As of this moment (Jan. 31) developments on the vaccine front are beginning to look very encouraging despite many and continuing “bumps in the road”.

2020 was a very difficult year in which a great many organizations suffered severe declines in membership and activity. Despite efforts to keep things running via Zoom sessions, participation has fallen off. This seems to be a common experience in many social organizations.

But with the big political change, vaccines, and economic measures, we may see rapid changes afoot. Perhaps by midyear (barring any new challenges) we may see opportunities to launch a resurgence of social and intellectual life.

JTP



As we celebrate

...the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we hope for a peaceful transfer of power. We also celebrate the inauguration of something else: a committed public relationship between secular humanists and people of faith. This newly developing partnership for progress isn't based on agreement about the truth of religious beliefs, but is founded on shared ethical values: racial and economic justice, the preservation of our fragile planet from devastation by climate change, gender equality, the civil and human rights of LGBTQ+ persons, the right of women (not the government) to make decisions about their own reproductive health care, and religious liberty guaranteed by the First Amendment.

While both nonreligious and religious progressives historically worked side-by-side

Continued on Page 12

Please Don't Delay – Get Your Covid 19, Shingle, Flu, & Pneumonia Shots STAT.

Finally the pandemic vaccine we've all been waiting on is filtering in, one qualified group at a time. For **Shingles**, the CDC and Food and Drug administrations have approved, **Shingrix** as the preferred alternative to Zostavax, which was approved in 2006.

If you have already had the first vaccine in a series, be sure to *get the second*. **Also**, don't forget your current **Flu & Pneumonia shots** available now.

Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason
Web site—Jim Peterson
Editors—Jim Peterson & Rick O'Keefe

Back & current issues online at:
<http://www.tampabaycor.net>

Special Projects—Mark Brandt & Bill Norsworthy

See our event websites at:
<http://bit.ly/2vUJoE1>

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the editors, TBCoR, or its member organizations.

Anywhere in this newsletter, **CLICK** on an image or **blue text** for a link.

NB. Until further notice, following best-practices and official medical recommendations, **all group face to face gatherings are postponed** due to the Coronavirus pandemic. We will let you know here when we're go for "Normal."



The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

An Epicurean society dedicated to the proposition that only the fully examined life is worth living.
Associate organization of the the [AHA](#), [COR](#), & [ASHS](#). Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com

Doc digs in deep to bring us a few of the juicer morsels from his collection of curiosities, oddities, and essential information:

A Potpourri of Fascinating Facts

Zoom in for this special treat. Presented by the **Humanist Society of the Suncoast**

Saturday afternoon February 20th at 2 PM.

Go to our Meetup page anytime after February 10th to get a zoom key.

All are welcome: no charge admission.

Humanism
is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good.

Dave “Doc” Dockery



The Humanist Society is a 501c3 organization. As such we can take no position, and do not endorse any candidacy or political party. We will discuss issues and ideas, however. We recommend that you use available resources on the web and media to learn more and critically assess your local candidates and issues.

Our Local Board Meeting

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast will have another board meeting soon. Under consideration are ideas and directions for future programs. Members are invited to contribute ideas: contact jim@suncoasthumanist.com to let us know what you think. Members are also invited to contribute dues, the all important resource that allows us to exist. See the column to the right...

Vol. XXXIV No. 2 February, 2021



The Humanist Society has maintained an enlightened presence on the Florida Suncoast sine 1987.

Please Join or renew
Humanist Society of the Suncoast

Annual Dues

- _ Regular -\$25
- _ Reg. Couple -\$30.
- _ Supporter -\$35/40 (With pin above)
- _ Life -\$200. (Inc. Pin)
- _ Life Couple -\$250 (Pins)
- _ Associate -\$10



Your membership helps keep Humanism alive & growing in the Tampa Bay area A small part of your dues allows us to participate fully as a member organization of the Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason & enables us to support larger & more exciting programs.

*If you have questions concerning your dues or status, contact our treasurer, **Scott Wilson** scott33761@yahoo.com*

If new, please give info below; if renewing just indicate your name & any changes from our previous information Thanks!

Name: Address –if new : City, State, Zip
Phone, E-mail: (Privacy respected)

Send check made out to:
“Scott Wilson”

Memo line: “Humanist Society Dues”
(501c3, tax deductible)

Humanist Society of the Suncoast, AHA
6814 Charlotte Harbor Way
Tampa FL 33625



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

What is the Humanist Way?

- ◆ **To extend** a human centered approach to the critical problems of life & society.
- ◆ **To encourage** attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance & a loving generosity in human relationships, & in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others, & encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture & experience.
- ◆ **To develop** & popularize the skills of creative & critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition & irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
- ◆ **To exalt** those artistic & imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure & enlightenment, & which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, & other expressions, we embrace the essence of what it means to be human.
- ◆ **To explore** the grounds of ethics & 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

Random Appropriations

Some bits of Wisdom from **Rodney Dangerfield**

"The other night a mugger took off his mask and made me wear it."

"For two hours, some guy followed me around with a pooper scooper."

"Last week I was walking by a cemetery, two guys came after me with shovels. It was all about money."

"A travel agent told I could spend seven nights in Hawaii... no days, just nights."

"Last week, my tie caught on fire; some guy tried to put it out with an axe."

Doctors

"I met the surgeon general - he offered me a cigarette."

"I went to the doctor because I'd swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills. My doctor told me to have a few drinks and get some rest."

"My doctor told me to watch my drinking. Now I drink in front of a mirror. And I drink too much, way too much; my doctor drew blood - he ran a tab!"

"I went to see my doctor. 'Doctor, every morning when I get up and look in the mirror... I feel like throwing up. What's wrong with me?' He said, 'I don't know but your eyesight is perfect.'"

"Last week I told my psychiatrist, 'I keep thinking about suicide.' He told me from now on I have to pay in advance."

"I told my psychiatrist that everyone hates me. He said I was being ridiculous... everyone hasn't met you yet."

"Last year my birthday cake looked like a prairie fire."

"At twenty, a man is full of fight and hope. He wants to reform the world. When he is seventy, he still wants to reform the world, but he knows he can't."

"Oh, when I was a kid in show business I was poor. I used to go to orgies to eat the grapes."

"When I was a kid my parents moved a lot, but I always found them."

Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc., Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason, & The Association of Secular Humanist Societies

Board of Directors.

Meets Sept., December, April

Jay Alexander,
Kyle Hicks,
Lois Fries, Secretary
Dave Kovar,
Brad Perryman Vice Pres.
Jim Peterson, President
Scott Wilson, Treasurer
Jordan Williams.

Emeritus members: Terry Eckstein, Dr. Jon Green, Mark Kligman, Dr. Jack Robinson, Dec. Jerry Moore, Anita Garcia, Mark Winterbottom, Sidney Goetz Dec. Bob Collette, Glenn Paul, Kay Paul, Dec. Don Acenbrack Dec., Rob Byrch, Dec. Jackie Jordan, Brent Yaciw, Mike Hubbard, Matt Cooper Dec, Jim Butler, Marios Psomas, Dec, Steve Brown

~*~*~*~*~*~

Jim Peterson, Editor
E-Mail us at:

Need Psychological Counseling?

For a secular therapist,
Click:

[Secular Therapy Org.](#)
[Cognitive Neurosciences](#)
Or call:

Linda Falkner

www.allfloridaonline.com.

813-620-4900.

Linda@cheercounseling.com

Lynda Gurvitz,

[http://fampsy.org/member/](http://fampsy.org/member/lynda-gurvitz/)

[lynda-gurvitz/](http://fampsy.org/member/lynda-gurvitz/)

(727) 725-8820

Or, Joel Schmidt

www.floatoncounseling.com

321-604-7637



There are many challenges facing humanist organizations as they seek more prominence in pushing for progressive [goals](#). Some humanist groups have been criticized for being too white and too male, for example, and some have preferred intellectual conversation and debate over on-the-street activism. There is legitimacy to much of this criticism, but many groups are working hard to address such issues. The AHA recently created a position of [social justice coordinator](#), for example, and many high-profile humanists have been increasingly [calling attention](#) to the link between humanism and social justice.

It will take more than the humanist movement to transform America, but the importance of humanists and humanist groups in promoting a strong progressive agenda (or if you prefer, a "political revolution") should not be underestimated. With neither labor nor liberal religion nearly as influential as they were in their heydays, strong and autonomous organizations that are poised to enunciate a progressive vision, and fight for it as well, are few and far between. If there is any hope of maintaining constant pressure on the political establishment to move toward major, transformative change, humanists surely must play a role.

Check out **David Niose's** latest book, [Fighting Back the Right: Reclaiming America from the Attack on Reason](#).



In 2014, the American Humanist Association and Foundation Beyond Belief announced the merger of their respective charitable programs Humanist Charities and Humanist Crisis Response to encourage humanist giving. [Humanist Disaster Recovery](#), this new joint project of the AHA and FBB, exists to provide financial support to secular organizations working locally to meet the needs of recovering survivors.

Recent recovery giving campaigns have helped relief efforts with Hurricanes Harvey & Irma, famine in East Africa, flooding in Louisiana, earthquakes in Ecuador & Nepal, and much more.

Learn more at: foundationbeyondbelief.org/disaster-recovery

Humanist Quotes

“When economic power became concentrated in a few hands, then political power flowed to those possessors and away from the citizens, ultimately resulting in an oligarchy or tyranny.”

John Adams

“We can have democracy in this country or we can have great concentrated wealth in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both.” **Justice Louis Brandeis**

“An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all Republics.” **Plutarch**

“Of all the potential perils to the new American republic, the prospect of concentrated power . . . troubled the intellectual leaders of the Revolutionary generation. Familiar as the founders were with old Europe . . . they understood why the accumulation of inherited wealth led to inequities and imbalances that inevitably corrupted any system of government.” **Joe Conason**

“I hope we shall . . . crush in [its] birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations.” **Thomas Jefferson**

“Of all forms of tyranny the least attractive and the most vulgar is the tyranny of mere wealth.” **Theodore Roosevelt**

“As a result of the war, corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.”

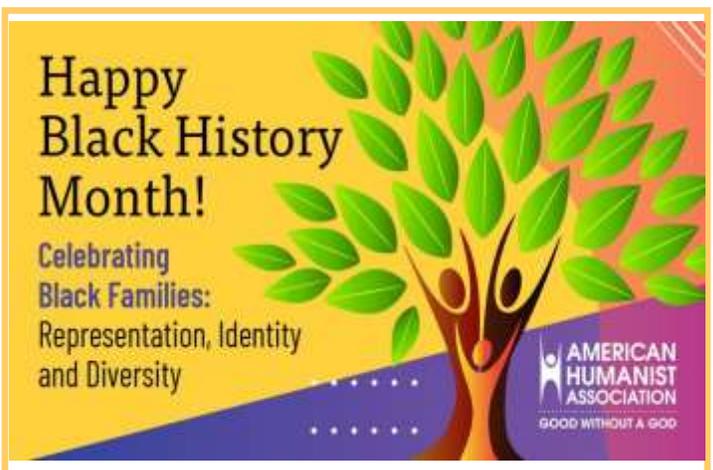
Abraham Lincoln

“It [concentration of wealth and power] has been a menace to . . . American democracy.” **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

“If there are men in this country big enough to own the government of the United States, they are going to own it.”

Woodrow Wilson

“The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism – ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power.” **Franklin D. Roosevelt**



Click here



An autonomous project of the Humanist Society.
Affiliate of the [Post Carbon Institute](#)

INSURRECTION, PANDEMIC, AND CENSORSHIP

by *Richard Heinberg*

On January 6, thousands gathered in Washington, DC to hear an inciteful speech from President Trump, then forcefully breached the US Capitol Building in an effort to disrupt the peaceful transition of presidential power—an institutional foundation of democracy. Some among the mob entering the building were recorded chanting “Hang Mike Pence!” while others beat police with pipes (even though the throngs of rioters included some off-duty police from around the country), with one officer dying of injuries. They demanded to know House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s whereabouts, vandalized property, and erected a makeshift gallows outside. They planted explosive devices at the headquarters of both political parties and stashed guns, pipe bombs, and Molotov cocktails in the vicinity.

The insurrectionists shared a set of delusions and perceived grievances: that whites are being left behind as American transitions to a more densely urbanized, multi-racial society. That Trump is a brilliant political savior (rather than a narcissistic huckster out to line his pockets and inflate his self-image). That the president’s defeat in the recent election was a fraud engineered by a broad conspiracy of liberals, moderate Republicans, the deep state, and the mainstream media. And that glory lies in emulating the “lost cause” of the Confederacy by making a brave, violent stand against perceived tyranny.

Most Americans, including many Republicans, reacted with horror (though, [according to one poll](#), 45 percent of Republicans approved the assault on the Capitol building). The backlash came rather swiftly: Twitter banned Trump permanently and Republican senators and representatives who had spent weeks parroting the

president’s baseless claims of election fraud found themselves on the defensive, some facing calls to resign. Chuck Shumer, who is about to become Senate majority leader, is pushing for a no-fly list to ban insurrectionists from traveling by air to the next rally or riot.

Still, the conspiracy theories continue to proliferate. A few online “experts” have claimed the insurrection was a pre-planned set-up, designed to provide incoming president Biden with the justification for creating a police state, and designating protesters (and vaccine refusers) as “domestic terrorists.”

Right-wing message boards are currently calling for marches to surround and occupy all 50 state capitols, and for a massive action to disrupt the inauguration on January 20. Meanwhile, 10,000 troops are on their way to Washington to supplement the Capitol Police.

All of this is occurring just as the COVID-19 pandemic is reaching its most virulent and deadly stage. On average, the US is seeing 250,000 new case per day and over 3,000 daily fatalities. As has been widely documented, this horrendous state of affairs is largely due to a failure of national leadership, along with widespread misinformation and disinformation about the disease itself, and effective ways to manage it.

The US hadn’t seen a serious pandemic in a century; the current one has come along at just the moment when divisive new communication technologies and platforms are breaking down trust in traditional information sources. If the pandemic itself is literally viral, the conspiracy theories about it are figuratively so. Visit a few of the most popular conspiracy websites and you will learn that the pandemic was planned by global elites (it wasn’t), that the death toll has been greatly exaggerated (it hasn’t been), and that the vaccines are fraudulent means for Bill Gates to inject microchips into everyone on the planet (they aren’t). This eruption of paranoid fantasy is likely just a preview of what we may see as the real challenges of the century begin to bite—including climate change, resource depletion, the deflation of the global debt bubble, and the ending of our decades-long orgy of economic growth.

If, as I argued in a recent essay, the US has entered a new violent phase in its ongoing [breakdown of consensus reality](#), then it is entirely predictable that those most responsible for maintaining the mainstream consensus will react by tamping down free expression—as happened previously during vaguely analogous moments in American history. During the Civil War, citizens in northern states could be imprisoned for singing Confederate songs or giving anti-war speeches. During World War I, authors of writings deemed seditious (including Eugene Debs) were imprisoned; activist Rose Pastor Stokes was prosecuted, in part, for writing to a newspaper: “I am for the people and the government is for the profiteers.”

Communication is the responsibility not just of individuals seeking to be heard, but also the media that spread their



6

views. In the two periods of upheaval just mentioned, the main means of communication were books, magazines, and newspapers. Censorship was a simple, if often brutal, process. Today, most communication occurs via the internet and social media. There are far more voices seeking to be heard, and far more alternate mental “realities” are being created. Maintaining a consensus is becoming difficult to impossible. Is the answer censorship?

China offers the starkest of alternatives: there, the single-party government controls what is allowed. Online content is policed constantly—not just by blocking website and social media content, but by restricting online access. Internet platforms engage in continual self-censorship and face serious penalties if they fail to prohibit problematic content. For dissenters, rights are essentially non-existent.

Democracy requires an informed citizenry and reliably informative media. Now, largely because of the fragmenting impacts of new electronic communication platforms, fewer people trust the media, consensus is harder to achieve, and the citizenry is as much misinformed and disinformed as it is informed. Under these circumstances, censorship may be ineffective or counterproductive. Already, the banning of pro-insurrection users on social media platforms is impacting not only their efforts to organize, but also efforts by authorities to track and pre-empt further violence. Serious insurrectionists are predictably turning to encryption, which is cheaply and widely available.

There are no easy answers, from either a technical or an ethical perspective, to this nexus of problems. It's difficult to justify maintaining free speech for one group (for example, Black Lives Matter protesters) while denying it to another (e.g., the American Freedom Party). Maintaining peace and order would seem to require bolstering the mainstream consensus; but, while that consensus has many admirable goals (democracy, civil liberties, equality of opportunity, etc.), it has generally failed to deliver on those values, especially for certain groups within society. Further, like all consensus realities, it contains blind spots. The particular blind spot onto which my colleagues and I have spent many years shining light is the false assumption that our society can continually deliver more prosperity to more people through an ever-accelerating process of degrading nature and turning it into consumer products and waste. In a capitalist society, that's a subversive claim; is it also seditious?

The best I can suggest is that we as a society draw the line at physical violence and direct calls for harm to others. Prosecute anyone who vandalizes property or injures other people in the process of making their point, along with those who knowingly incite them. Take down message boards used to plan efforts to overthrow elected leaders. Beyond that, as long as we have the internet and social media, we will probably have to live with the cognitive dissonance and fracturing of consensus reality that they facilitate. It's an uncomfortable situation, but the alternatives are worse.

We have individual responsibility for how we shape our

own worldviews based on the news and opinions we “ingest.” Don't assume the worst about individuals who have adopted views you find unhinged or even dangerous; sometimes they're just ordinary people who've fallen into a disinformation echo chamber. Heterodox assertions about reality are worth examining; sometimes they're right. But when you find yourself considering a novel claim or theory about what's happening and why, whether it concerns politics or the pandemic, exercise critical thinking. Has this idea been debunked? By whom? What are the verifiable facts? Be prepared to withhold judgment if the facts are unclear. The mainstream media are getting pummeled these days—sometimes for good reason. But credentialed reporting is the closest thing we have to a science of fact gathering. So, just as you should be careful not to dismiss a heterodox idea just because it's not mainstream, be even more leery to dismiss reportage just because it issues from, say, CNN or the New York Times. If you find yourself thinking, “Of course they'd say that—they're all in it together!”, then think again. If your media diet is making you anxious and angry, take time out. Go for a walk in the woods—and if no woods are available, spend time in as natural an environment as you can find.

Those of us who understand the systemic crises we face have a special responsibility to build our own emotional resilience and to be open-minded so that we can help others in our communities, who don't have that same clarity, to navigate the craziness to come.

It's a crazy world out there, and it's getting crazier. Don't add to the insanity.



Does the world really need 'more power'?



The answer should depend on the result. If the result is more of what's going on and what's going up, like pollution, extinction, and temperature, then no, the world doesn't need more power, and the solution lies elsewhere. If we can stop polluting with particles and gassing out as we consume power, we can defeat catastrophic global warming, and continue to consume more and more power for quite a while. But at some point the absorption of energy for consumption at the surface will once again begin the rise of global temperature to a catastrophic level. Solar panels will absorb the sun's energy where it is transported to the surface for release. Even orbiting solar panels beam warming energy to the surface where it is consumed by society. So there's a theoretical limit. So I'm wondering what that limit looks like. If you could beam clean energy into the lights and toasters, and ovens and dryers and all of industry, how much bigger could a pollution-free powered world get than we are now? Without upsetting the planet?

Atheists of Florida

Inc.



For our Atheists helping the Homeless project -

For all meetings: bring, if you can, small bars of unused soap, small bottles of shampoo, heavy duty socks, any kind of personal care items, or money (for bulk purchase of these items).

Ed Golly, Chair - Judy Adkins, Exec. Dir.
See **AoF Meetup** for details Website: <http://aof.ngo>

AoF is a comfortable & safe place in which to; find rewarding new friendships, discover hidden potentials, & make a positive contribution to your own humanity as well as that of others. We are pleased to offer legal assistance with church state separation issues as an important focus. For many people, atheism represents the most focused & powerful criticism of the philosophical world-view with which most of us were raised. It is liberating for the same reason it attracts the enmity of those who are committed to the closed & changeless narrative of unexamined traditional beliefs. JP



Be sure to come on in for AoF's regular Sunday evening Zoom sessions starting at 5:00 PM. See our listings on the TB-CoR Meetup for topics, For linking information, see our notices on the Coalition of Reason Meetup page, or on www.aof.ngo.

Thomas Westbrook	Holy Koolaid
Jes	with the Satanic Temple
Mark, Dan, Doug	How To Heretic
TBD	
Ben Bergen	The Science of Swearing
Gretchen Cothron	with the ACLU
Chrissy Stroop	Escape from Jesus Land: On Indoctrination, Identity Loss, Self-Discovery, and Learning to Talk Back" Presented with TBCoR
Thomas Bryer	Finding common ground in company of strangers

Do you know what your legislature Is up to?

AoF submitted a short survey on **religious freedom** to candidates for the Florida House of Representatives, the Florida Senate, and the US House of Representatives. We are posting the responses on our website as they are received. You can visit the information at <https://www.atheistsofflorida.org/2020-candidates>. (NOTA BENE: We did this through email, so only those candidates for whom we could find an email address are included.)



JMA

Always Vigilant

Public school prayer events are generally billed as being student-organized in order to *appear* constitutional.

But in reality, school staff are often actively involved, even to the extent that they're the ones organizing the event.

To stop this unconstitutional Christian proselytizing, someone needs to expose the adult organizers. That's where we come in!

Let us know of any church-state violation you may run across - restrictions, prayers, bible readings, etc. We'll take it from there. Thanks, www.aof.ngo

Coming soon...

[www.Freethought.news](http://www.freethought.news)

A service to the entire community providing an aggregate of events around the nation and world, significant to people who care deeply about freedom. It will be updated continuously. Let us know how you like it.

For over 27 years, Atheists of Florida Inc. has attempted to provide much needed information about religion and the alternatives to religion which have proved to be so liberating for so many of us.

We invite you to explore the many written and audio video presentations from our library.

The radio/TV broadcasts are on extended hiatus for now. However, previous programs, most with discussions of timeless interest, are available **on the internet at:** www.youtube.com/atheistforum.



For now, tune in to the **Voice of Reason, Thursday at 10am on WTAN radio** See [page 13!](#) The voice is a private effort led by Ed Golly, who along with Joe Rhinehardt and guests supply fresh insights on the world we face.

Contact us: info@atheistsoffloridainc.org





By **Norm R. Allen Jr.**

Paul Kurtz Institute

WHY DOESN'T WIDESPREAD CHRISTIAN HYPOCRISY LEAD TO MORE DOUBT?

"Christianity is a religion that is ideally suited for hypocrisy." – Gore Vidal

There have always been Christian hypocrites. But they used to be in the minority and easy to write off. I am not writing about Christians that, like all of us, are fallible. I am talking about those that, for the most part, talk the talk but cannot walk the walk. The great writer and debater Melvin B. Tolson used to refer to them as "mouth Christians." (For great examples of Tolson's writings, see my first book *African-American Humanism: An Anthology*, pp. 122-145.)

It is easy to now look at the Religious Right and see hypocrisy of the lowest sort. The die-hard supporters of President Donald Trump excuse the most despicable, un-Christian behavior one can imagine. (Interestingly, their Christian behavior is even worse – bigotry, sexism, intolerance, and so on.) The best, most influential White evangelical *leaders* are supporting Trump. Black Christians are shocked and appalled by this hypocrisy.

But perhaps they should not be too shocked. They are every bit as hypocritical as their White Christian counterparts – only in different ways. For example, Black Christians have just helped Snoop Dogg go to number one on the gospel charts! The hardcore foul-mouthed gangsta rapper has glorified violence, the use of guns, illicit drug use, drunk driving, misogyny, pimping and all kinds of other lowdown behavior. Yet even some established gospel artists have supported his latest musical release. Snoop now has gospel street cred.

White evangelicals have made it clear that they their real God is political power, or at least close proximity to it. Many young Black Christians have demonstrated that their real God is hip-hop culture. There are some Christian sects in which most serious adherents are not hypocrites. They include the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (aka the Mormons.) Most serious members of such sects attempt to follow the dictates of their religion on a consistent basis.

Conversely, most US Catholics seem to be completely out of step with their Church on numerous moral and social issues. They believe in using birth control, for example. They get divorced and remarried in droves and think nothing of it. In fact, they differ with the Church on so many issues it often seems as though they're not Catholics at all.

Today's mainstream Christians engage in all kinds of un-Christian behavior. They drink to excess, use illicit drugs,

engage in premarital and extramarital sex, make and have children out of wedlock, and so on. Yet, in many cases, their church attendance is exceptional, and many of them know their Bible very well. And they are absolutely certain that they are going to Heaven after they die.

Some hypocritical Christians are so pious that they have tattoos of biblical passages on their bodies, even though tattoos are condemned in Leviticus 19:28. Many of today's Christians are so confused I would hardly be surprised to find one with a tattoo with the words from Leviticus 19:28!

Back in the day, elderly people hoping to get into Heaven soon used to strive their best to live good Christian lives. However, today, many elderly mainstream born- again Christians are hard drinkers, curse a lot, engage in extramarital sex, and so forth.

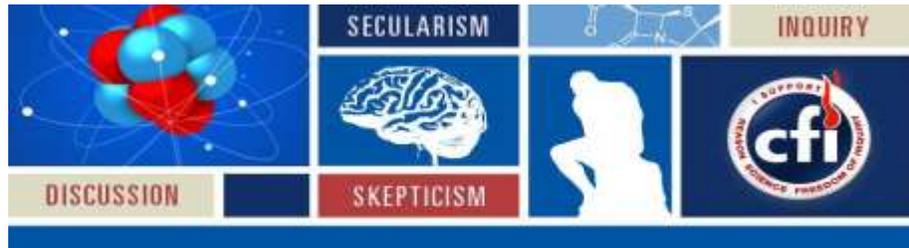
If I were still a born-again Christian, I would have some serious doubts about the Christian faith. Anytime the *majority* of serious practitioners of your faith are hypocrites, something just might be wrong with the faith itself. Perhaps it is outdated. Perhaps its expectations of human beings are hopelessly unrealistic.

Theism is primarily based on faith, not evidence. As the late Christopher Hitchens remarked, "it's called faith because it isn't evidence." Because there are so many hypocrites in the Christian faith, perhaps it is time to give reason a chance.

Perhaps it is even time to cast doubt on theism altogether. (Indeed, could it be that many of the hypocritical Christian *ministers* are closet atheists that know that it is all a religious sham?)

If the majority of serious, self-professed humanists were not even trying to live up to their ideals, I could not help but to suspect that something might be wrong with humanism itself. However, such does not appear to be the case. It is not my contention that humanists are morally superior to Christians. Rather, I maintain that humanists seem to more seriously believe what they profess, and that they strive to live out their beliefs. Regardless of what one thinks of humanist ethics, most serious, self-professed humanists strive to live up to most of their ethical principles. I just wish that more mainstream born-again Christians would once again strive to do the same. Those that don't should certainly begin to doubt the relevance of their faith, and perhaps they should doubt the very existence of God.

Norm R. Allen Jr. is the editor of two ground-breaking books: *African-American Humanism: An Anthology*, and *The Black Humanist Experience: An Alternative to Religion*. He is currently writing a third book, *Secular, Successful, and Black: 25 Profiles*. For 21 years, Allen had been the first and only full-time African American secular humanist to travel the world promoting secular humanism. He has spoken on numerous radio and television shows including National Public Radio and to 72 humanist groups in 30 African nations. His writings have appeared in numerous books and encyclopedias, including *Voices for Evolution*, published by the National Center for Science Education.



Incorporated in Florida on October 3, 2002. Only with *your support* can we succeed.

An editorial comment by Rick O'Keefe.

May I say, as a secular humanist and atheist, I look forward to the next four years as we US citizens join in the hard work of pushing our nation into the progressive ideals of a modern civilization? The past four years have proven that both major political parties have failed us, all American people. Is it too much to expect that we are entering "a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people," shall come to the fore? If we don't constantly monitor and contact our elected and appointed public officials, if we lackadaisically go about our complaining, do nothing, "same ol", "same ol" routines, we will have lost our opportunity to dig out of the miasma we received over the last four years.

"I always thought someone should do something, until, one day I realised I was Someone." ~ John F. Kennedy

I commend someone who has striven alone to provide constant alerts and paths to meaningful action in accomplishing necessary goals. Dedicated atheist activist **Judy Adkins**. It seems that her work mostly fell on deaf ears of disinterested people. Perhaps now we freethinkers will realize the dire necessity for undertaking the hard work of being a citizen. The time for "let's just discuss, again, endlessly, what needs to be done" has long passed. That's the loser's way. Mea culpa. VOLUNTEER.

rok

Euclid: The Man Who Showed Us How to Think, Part I By Asoka Mendis

In this essay, my focus will be on the art of thinking, defined and pursued by Euclid with clarity and vigor in his *Elements*, and the monumental impact that it has had not only on mathematics and science but on numerous other areas of inquiry as well.

Regarding Euclid's life and times, much more is known about the latter than about the former.

Euclid lived in the middle of the period of human history that saw a remarkable awakening of the human intellect (starting around 600 BCE and ending around 300 CE).¹ The epicenter of this intellectual awakening was Greece (which encompassed not only today's Greek mainland and islands, but also parts of present-day Turkey, Egypt, Italy, Sicily, and Cyprus). What characterizes this period was the bold rejection of long-entrenched supernatural myths and their replacement by natural theories ... <http://bit.ly/39MTfvo>

Subscribe to "The Humanist Magazine You Can Trust". Enjoy print or online access to the latest **Free Inquiry** articles on your computer, phone, or tablet! <https://bit.ly/30vOCR>

Subscribe to **Skeptical Inquirer** at Just \$2.80 an Issue! SI promotes scientific inquiry, critical thinking, science education, and the use of reason in examining controversial and extraordinary claims through rigorous reporting and investigation. <https://bit.ly/32G8q7C>



January 19,
2021

Skeptical Raptor: Norway COVID-19 vaccine deaths – another anti-vaxxer myth debunked

CNN: China is hitting back at criticism of its vaccines with a dangerous disinformation campaign

Vox: Natural immunity after Covid-19 could last at least 5 months

NBC News: Covid misinformation takes its toll on British doctors, teachers





The [Center for Inquiry](#) (CFI) leads the charge on promoting science, reason, critical thinking, and humanist values.

CFI's vision is a world in which evidence, science, and compassion—rather than superstition, pseudoscience, or prejudice—guide

More recommended books to read, suggested by CFI colleagues. As ever, simply click on the image to go to the book's URL.:

[Robyn Blumner](#), President and CEO, Center for Inquiry—My favorite book in recent years is Steven Pinker's *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*. It makes the empirical case that the scientific method, critical thinking, the sloughing off of religion and the embrace of humanism, all propagated by Enlightenment thinkers, transformed human outcomes for the better. Our lives are longer, healthier, richer, and more secure than that of our recent ancestors because of this remarkable set of ideas. Pinker calls it "the greatest story seldom told" and he is so very right.

ppppp

[Bertha Vazquez](#), NBCT, Director, The Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Science—*Ohio* by Stephen Markley, "Amazing."

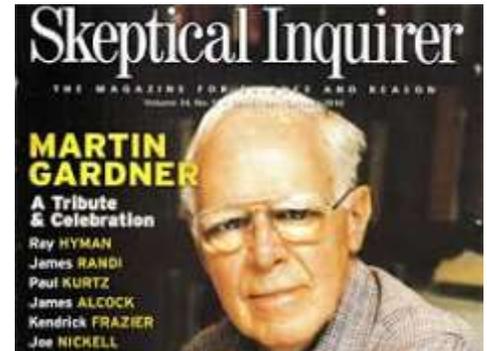
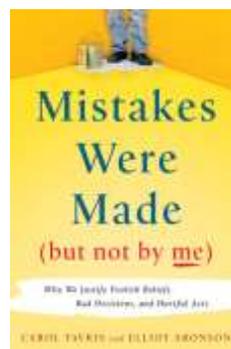
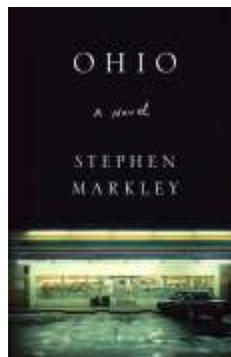
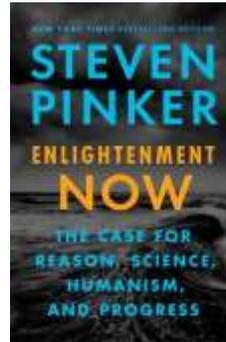
Goodreads: "One sweltering night in 2013, four former high school classmates converge on their hometown in northeastern Ohio. Set over the course of a single evening, *Ohio* toggles between the perspectives of these unforgettable characters as they unearth dark secrets, revisit old regrets and uncover—and compound—bitter betrayals. Before the evening is through, these narratives converge masterfully to reveal a mystery so dark and shocking it will take your breath away."

ppppp

[James Underdown](#), executive director of The Center for Inquiry (CFI) Los Angeles—*Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me...* by Carol Tavris

Why do people dodge responsibility when things fall apart? Why the parade of public figures unable to own up when they screw up? Why the endless marital quarrels over who is right? Why can we see hypocrisy in others but not in ourselves? Are we all liars? Or do we really believe the stories we tell?

Renowned social psychologists Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson take a compelling look into how the brain is wired for self-justification. When we make mistakes, we must calm the cognitive dissonance that jars our feelings of self-worth. And so we create fictions that absolve us of responsibility, restoring our belief that we are smart, moral, and right -- a belief that often keeps us on a course that is dumb, immoral, and wrong.



One of my favorite thinkers and authors is probably familiar to you, especially if you love logic and puzzles. Goodreads say, "Martin Gardner was an American mathematics and science writer specializing in recreational mathematics, but with interests encompassing micromagic, stage magic, literature (especially the writings of Lewis Carroll), philosophy, scientific skepticism, and religion. He wrote the *Mathematical Games* column in *Scientific American* from 1956 to 1981, and published over 70 books."

Martin Gardner's books are listed here: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7105.Martin_Gardner

ppppp

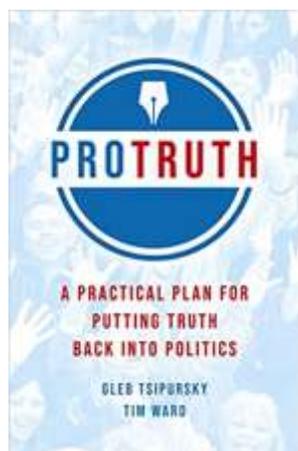


Issac Asimov, who never flew but preferred the train. After all, isn't it obvious that aeroplanes can't possibly fly?

Here is a paean from *Skeptical Inquirer*, [Issue-01-14.pdf](#) (skepticalinquirer.org)



Founded in 1988 by [Gary P. Posner, M.D.](#), [Tampa Bay Skeptics](#) is a nonprofit educational & scientific organization devoted to the critical examination of paranormal & fringe-science claims, & the dissemination of factual information about such claims. [Read More!](#)



Pro Truth: A Practical Plan for Putting Truth Back Into Politics

By [Gleb Tsipursky](#) & [Tim Ward](#)

How can we turn back the tide of post-truth politics, fake news, and misinformation that is damaging

our democracy?

First, by empowering citizens to recognize and resist political lies and deceptions: Using cutting-edge neuroscience research, we show you the tricks post-truth politicians use to exploit our mental blindspots and cognitive biases. We then share with you strategies to protect yourself and others from these threats.

Second, by addressing the damage caused by the spread of fake news on social media: We provide you with effective techniques for fighting digital misinformation.

Third, by exerting pressure on politicians, media, and other public figures: Doing so involves creating new incentives for telling the truth, new penalties for lying, and new ways of communicating across the partisan divide.

To put this plan into action requires the rise of a Pro-Truth Movement - a movement which has already begun, and is making a tangible impact. If you believe truth matters, and want to protect our democracy, please read this book, and join us. Dr. Gleb Tsipursky and Tim Ward have teamed up to help citizens learn to protect themselves from lies, and empower them to put truth back into politics.

Why is Gleb Tsipurski an atheist?

https://youtu.be/CaQX_Ux4_UI

For more videos ... of openly secular freethinkers, visit <https://openlysecular.org>.

The Third Friday in October, we invite you to celebrate Openly Secular Day. Openly Secular Day serves as a call to action for those with a secular identity by encouraging openness and dialogue around one's identity and beliefs. Some common secular identities include atheist, agnostic, secular humanist, freethinker, and secularist, though you are encouraged to identify however

your beliefs are best described.

This year, we invite you to celebrate Openly Secular Day in two main ways:

1. By contacting your representatives to tell them you're a Secular Values Voter.
2. By engaging in interfaith activities that foster mutual understanding across religious and philosophical divides.



Prof. Dr. Wiep van Bunge



Dr. Tim De Mey

The Politics of Skepticism

A [MOOC online course](#) at Erasmus University, Rotterdam

This is a course about the history of Skepticism from the ancient Greeks to today, with special attention to the political ramifications of questioning man's ability to know the world and himself with any certainty. We will discuss the debates raging between Plato and the Sophists, the rise of Christianity in the Roman world, and the so-called 'Skeptical Crisis' of the Renaissance as well as Pierre Bayle's Skepticism and David Hume's. In addition the Natural Law tradition will be explored and the relationship between Skepticism and Conservatism.

In the second part, we will explore the systematic relations between Skepticism and politics. What is skeptical doubt? When is doubt relevant? How does Skepticism relate to tolerance and to freedom of expression? And can it help us to solve political problems not only in a critical, but also in a creative way?

(ODE) "Belief: An acceptance that something exists or is true, especially one without proof." Skepticism is a cure for such irrationality.

Celebrate [continued from page 1](#)

to address many of these issues and concerns, until now there has been no conscious commitment to and clear recognition of each other as mutually supportive participants in a more intentionally inclusive **community of conscience**.

This new shared self-understanding began to take shape for many reasons, but especially as individuals and activists from both groups worked side-by-side in the Biden-Harris campaign. There, with the strong encouragement of faith engagement director Josh Dickson, our groups jointly claimed our common responsibility to help “heal the soul of America.” Working together provided us with the opportunity to see each other as necessary partners in the effort to promote the progressive vision put forward by the Biden-Harris team.

In the context of the campaign, and in our desire to hold candidates accountable when they assume office, religious and nonreligious progressives acquired a better way of understanding and relating to each other with greater mutual respect and by expanding our frame of reference to use more inclusive language when talking to and about one another.

Due to its promise and commitment to bring diverse people together in the midst of a divided America, the Biden-Harris campaign gave many different communities and groups, including secular humanists and people of faith, an opportunity to unite in shared purpose and together seek common goals. But this coming together is also part of a larger trend of more and more people of conscience and good will finding new ways to work together despite differences in belief systems. Thus, with the birth of ecumenism, Christians found common cause across denominational lines. Later, Jews and Christians entered into constructive dialogue and practical cooperation, to be followed by Muslims, with all three traditions stressing their common Abrahamic origins. More recently, other religions joined in the conversations about tolerance, diversity, and shared action, and interfaith cooperation gained traction. Now, with secular humanists and diverse people of faith working with each other in partnership, we can recognize the even broader community of the ethically oriented community of conscience.

Regardless of one’s understanding of the world (how it got here and what it means), all members of this broader progressive partnership understand that we face pressing problems that span our positions on religious and philosophical questions. Expanding knowledge of each other, our shared world, and our

universe present opportunities for new visions of justice and peace that can be fully realized only by overcoming the barriers between us.

Desiring this shared future, we should and will strive together for a just, meaningful, and peaceful world where human rights and humanitarian values become widely accepted as the basis for a world community that is affirming and inclusive, sensitive to environmental concerns, committed to greater equity for all people, and respectful of diversity in all its forms.

It’s past time for religious and nonreligious progressives to join together to bring our common resources and energies to bear on these crucial matters. Thus, whether we have a religious faith in the goodness of a deity or a nonreligious confidence in the possibilities of human goodness, we intend to continue to work more closely together to build the Beloved Community envisioned by Dr. King. In this way, we can and will do our part to make sure that the long arc of the universe bends a little more in the direction of justice for all.



Dr. David I. Orenstein is the AHA's representative to the United Nations in New York.

[Learn more about Dr. Orenstein here.](#)

A call to action that the AHA adopted in 2020:

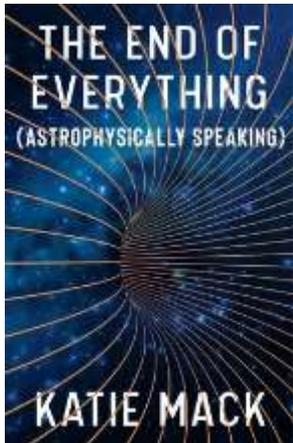
Resolution on Food Insecurity

A lack of access to food poses long term consequences to health and wellbeing, and effects many people in the United States and around the world. Looking ahead, a number of environmental and economic factors will exacerbate food insecurity for years to come. The AHA’s resolution recognizes food security as “a fundamental entitlement to a minimum standard of living” and supports policies and measures that will ensure that attaining food won’t compromise other basic needs, the rights of workers to be financially and medically secure, the continuation of food assistance programs, community control over food production, minimizing food loss and waste, and strengthening environmental agencies to mitigate the effects of climate change on world food production.

The full text of the resolution can be read [here](#).

Recommended Reading

Click on the book's **image** for more info

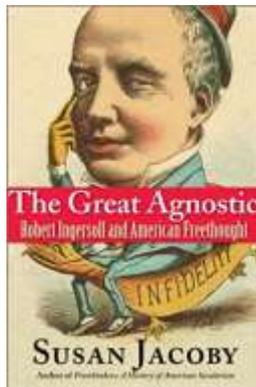


"A light-hearted exploration of the death of the Universe serves as an effective antidote for everyday worries

"All in all, The End of Everything serves as an outstanding, levelheaded guide to a horrific medley of ways the Universe might expire. The book is the perfect antidote to the malaise of mundane worries." By Paul Halpern @ScienceMagazine

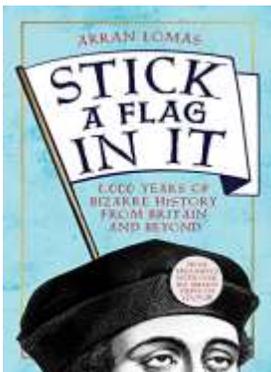
"...like an animated discussion with your favourite quirky and brilliant professor. ... If you need a moment to be distracted from everyday life and journey to the deep cosmic future, I highly recommend 'The End of Everything.'" @newscentist

During the Gilded Age, which saw the dawn of America's enduring culture wars, Robert Green Ingersoll was known as "the Great Agnostic." The nation's most famous orator, he raised his voice on behalf of Enlightenment reason, secularism, and the separation of church and state with a vigor unmatched since America's revolutionary generation. When he died in 1899, even his religious enemies acknowledged that he might have aspired to the U.S. presidency had he been willing to mask his opposition to religion. To the question that retains its controversial power today—was the United States founded as a Christian nation?—Ingersoll answered an emphatic no.



From the Norman Invasion in 1066 to the eve of the First World War, Stick a Flag in It is a thousand-year jocular journey through the history of Britain and its global empire.

The British people have always been eccentric, occasionally ingenious and, sure, sometimes unhinged – from mad monarchs to mass-murdering lepers. Here, Arran Lomas shows us how they harnessed those traits to forge the British nation, and indeed the world, we know today.



Another collection of articles collected from the pages of the Skeptical Inquirer. Some of the authors included in this collection include Ann Druyan, Stephen Pinker, Martin Gardner, Harriet A. Hall, Richard Wiseman, Paul Kurtz, Joe Nickell, and Benjamin Radford.

"We hope you find this collection interesting, entertaining, and informative. Critical thinking, skepticism, and science are different branches of the same tree, and all of us seek the truth. Neither science nor religion has all the answers, but the value is in questioning and being open-minded. As the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote, 'If anyone can show me, and prove to me, that I am wrong in thought or deed, I will gladly change. I seek the truth, which never yet hurt anybody.'" ~ Benjamin Radford



The Matt Cooper Humanist Lending Library

Humanist Society members can select the number of the book you wish to borrow, at any meeting. Then pick it up at the next meeting. **Be sure to return it!** Donations appreciated. **Brad Perryman** is our new librarian.

TITLE AUTHOR

1. The Expanding Circle Peter Singer
2. In Gods we Trust Scott Atran
3. Why Evolution is True Jerry Coyne
4. The Second World Panag Khanna
5. Denialism Michael Specter
6. The Selfish Gene Richard Dawkins
7. Democracy Incorporated Sheldon Wolin
8. The Upside Irrationality Dan Ariely
9. The End of Growth Richard Heinberg
10. The God Delusion Richard Dawkins
11. All That We Share Jay Walljasper
12. Sex, Time, and Power Leonard Shlain
13. Sex at Dawn C. Ryan, & C. Jetha
14. What liberal Media Eric Alderman
15. The End of Faith Sam Harris
16. Plan B Lester Brown
17. The Portable Atheist Christopher Hitchens
18. Open Society George Soros
19. Non Believer Nation David Niose
20. God on Trial Peter Irons
21. Natural Experiments of History Diamond-Robinson
22. The Missionary Position Christopher Hitchens
23. Life Inc Douglas Rushkoff
24. A brief History of Time Stephen Hawking
25. Breaking the Spell Daniel Dennett
26. The Philosophy of Humanism Corliss Lamont
27. The Quotable Atheist Jack Huberman
28. 50 Reasons People Believe In G.G. Harrison
29. Mathematics and Politics Alan Taylor
30. Stealing Elections John Fund
31. The God Virus Darrel Ray
32. What Every American Should Know About World Rossi
33. Imagine There's no Heaven Editors of Free Inquiry
34. Hidden Order David Friedman
35. What the Dog Saw Malcolm Gladwell
36. Sway Ori, Rom Brafman
37. The Better Angels of our Nature Steven Pinker
38. Letter to a Young Contrarian Christopher Hitchens
39. Hot, Flat, and Crowded Thomas Friedman
40. Gaming the Vote William Poundstone
41. Subversion Fable Alexa KcKearing
43. Evolution and the Big Question David Stamos
44. Why People Believe Weird Things Michael Shermer
45. The World is Curved David Snick
46. The Snow Ball Warren Buffett
47. The Moral Landscape Sam Harris
48. How We Believe Michael Shermer
49. Full House Steven Jay Gould
50. The Origins of Political Order Francis Fukuyama
51. Asimov's Guide to the Bible Isaac Asimov
52. Autobiography of Mark Twain Harriet Smith, Editor
53. Science Friction Michael Shermer
54. Genius James Gleick
55. Inevitable Illusions Piatrelli & Palmarini
56. Demon Haunted World Carl Sagan
57. Being Right Is Not Enough Paul Waldman
58. Loser Takes All Mark Crispin Miller
59. Taking Back Politics Cathy Allen
60. Spiritual Common Sense Mark Lindquist (Gift by author)
61. Autobiography of Mark Twain Ed. Harriet Elinor Smith
62. The Skeptics Annotated Bible Various
63. 12 Vol Complete Works Robert Ingersoll
64. On Religious Liberty Roger Williams & Davis
65. The God Makers Baker & Hunt
66. Inevitable Illusions M. Piattelli-Palmarini
67. Ain't Nobody's business If You Do Peter McWilliams
69. Bonk Mary Roach
70. What Money Can't Buy Michael J. Sandel
71. Financial Shenanigans Howard Shilit
72. Sex & God Darrel Ray, ED.D
73. Best American Non required Reading Dave Eagers
74. Reporting at Wit's End St. Clair McKelway
75. Corporations are not People Clements
76. Could I Vote Mormon for president? Cragun – Phillips
77. Culture of Honor Nisbett – Cohen
78. Rot on the Vine Stenes
79. Thoughts of a Freethinker New Kaye * Essential works
80. An Atheist Stranger by Herb Silverman
81. Candidate without a prayer- Herb Silverman



Keep your local bookstore in business. Shop locally. <https://www.indiebound.org/>

Humanist Families of Greater Tampa

Jennifer Hancock started this organization several years ago. It uniquely serves Humanist families with a variety of wonderful programs throughout the year. We strongly emphasize creative childrearing. You can connect with other families dealing with the same problems of living in a society that is still hostile to an explicitly humanist way of life.

Jennifer wrote three books: *The Humanist Handbook*, *The Humanist Approach to Happiness*, & *The Bully Vaccine*.

Humanist Families organizes social outings every month. Come and do something fun, socialize, enjoy each other's company. Sometimes we go to a park, a museum, go swimming, & sometimes we leave the kids at home. We organize Tampa & Manatee/Sarasota area outings every month.

Throughout the year we host parties like *Darwin Day* in February, *World Humanist Day* in June, *Freethought Day at Disney* in October, & *Carl Sagan Day* in November. Among our spin off groups is a *Parenting Beyond Belief* group which gets together to discuss the challenges of raising children without religion. Please join us on [Facebook](#).

Thanks, **Jennifer Hancock**

The Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers (MAAF)

The **MacDill Atheists & Secular Humanists (MASH)** community was created for atheist & secular humanist military personnel stationed at MacDill Air Force Base, their families, & retired military residing in the Tampa Bay area.

MASH provides a valuable & much needed resource in which you will find common ground to socialize, discuss issues, & draw emotional support from like-minded freethinking members.

Local Contact: Chris (ChrisTBrown@yahoo.com)

Tampa Bay Thinkers

Be part of the conversation on Monday February online at 7 PM **Topic:**



See our Meetup page for meeting [link](#)

We meet monthly to escape shallow, petty talk and to ponder broad, complex yet practical subjects. We expect members to proffer evidence and use logic in conclusions, but expect all present to keep the meeting FUN for all. We teach, and don't scold. We expect the conversation to move without getting stuck so sometimes, we are forced to "agree to disagree" and move on.

We arrive and part as friends. There are no personal attacks, but each IDEA goes under the microscope. Members agree, others disagree, often with enthusiasm! We have no gates, and no gatekeepers. All are welcome and we tolerate no personal attacks, sarcasm, or even indirect denigration. IDEAS RULE and stand on their own. Finally, we are "thinkers", not "doers". Come, join us, participate, learn, exercise your brain, but mostly HAVE FUN. Learn more [here](#).

Karen Assel, Leader

The Socrates Cafe

A monthly discussion since 2008.

Hosted by **Brent Hardaway**

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/38mveZH>

Join us to discuss

"Is It Possible To Overcome Our Biases?"



Saturday Afternoon 3 PM, February 13th on Zoom.

Humanistic Jews of Tampa Bay

welcomes all who are interested in Jewish history, culture, and tradition independent of supernatural explanations. We believe human beings are responsible for their own choices and making the world a better place through science and reason. Join us for discussions, lectures, cultural events, and holiday celebrations using a

Ethical Humanism, also called Ethical Culture, is an evolving body of ideas that inspires Ethical Societies. Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity (*Humanist Manifesto III*). For Ethical Humanists, the ultimate religious questions are not about the existence of gods or an afterlife, but rather, "How can we create meaningfulness in this life?" and "How should we treat each other?"

The American Ethical Union was founded in 1877 by Felix Adler in New York, and currently has over 30 member societies.

Organizer **Bart Worden** hopes to get a local Meetup

UU St. Pete Thursday Citizens' Café

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

100 Mirror Lake Dr. N., St. Petersburg



UU Humanists of Clearwater

Usually every 3rd Sunday 12:30 to 1:30 pm,

after UU services,

2470 Nursery Rd., Clearwater. 727-531-7704



UU Humanists of Tampa

Public Discussion, 2nd Thursday eve from 7-9 PM.



HUSBAY is only holding meetings on Wednesdays via Zoom. We don't plan the topics much in advance. People interested in joining us can contact dbhelgager@comcast.net or text to 941-350-0927.

Tampa Bay CoR

TAMPA BAY COALITION OF REASON

Promoting Action & Unity in the Tampa Bay Area

Join the Freethought Organizations of the Tampa Bay Area: groups that promote serious secular discussion & activity about important issues in our area & beyond.

Substantive & exciting new activities are now offered to the Tampa Bay area that were not possible for most organizations before.

Every year we sponsor events such as Darwin Day in February, Solstice day in December, and other activities all year long.

You may recall that UCoR was the major impetus to getting a large number of billboards erected in Tampa Bay & across the nation with such messages as "You can be good without God. Millions are!"

TBCoR is an alliance of West Central Florida groups identified with the secular, freethought, Humanist, Atheist movement.

As this momentum continues to grow, we will keep you informed of developments . JP

Hear a secular point of view on local radio.

Listen to:

The Voice of Reason

on WTAN Radio Network from Clearwater.



University of South Florida Humanities Institute
TUESDAY, FEB. 16, 2021 • 7:00 PM (EST) • ONLINE

THE OCOEE MASSACRE: A DOCUMENTARY FILM VIEWING AND DISCUSSION

This documentary produced by Cox Media Group and WFTV, an ABC affiliate in Orlando, uses oral histories and archival records to tell the story of the massacre of the thriving black community in Ocoee, Florida. When African American citizens of the town insisted on their right to vote in the 1920 election, white supremacist groups stormed the town. Led by deputized members of the KKK, residents were burned alive in their homes, shot while trying to escape, or lynched. The violence resulted in the displacement of hundreds of black residents; their property was then seized and resold without their consent. This powerful film will be screened at 7pm, followed by a group discussion.

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc.

(SPAC), has been meeting continuously since 1927. It was incorporated in 1979 as a nonprofit, tax deductible organization.

For almost 50 years SPAC has provided free educational programs for its members & the public. Questions? send an email to: spaceexaminer@gmail.com.

Meetings are normally held on the fourth Friday of each month (except November & December when it is on the third Friday) at the St. Petersburg College/Gibbs Campus, 6605 5th Ave N, St. Petersburg, FL 33710, at 8:00 P.M. Meetings are open to the public. [Calendar](#)



M.A.R.S. – Tampa Astronomy Club

Come to the [Museum Astronomical Resource Society](#), also known as the M.A.R.S. astronomy club. M.A.R.S. is sponsored by the [Museum of Science & Industry \(MOSI\)](#), in Tampa, Florida. We are also members of both the [Astronomical League & Night Sky Network](#). This site provides club news & astronomical information to our membership & to the public. Whether you are new to astronomy & curious about how to experience it, or a seasoned veteran looking for an active club to spend observation time with. We invite you to attend a meetings as our honored guest. Monthly meetings are normally held on the 3rd floor of MOSI in the Science Works Theater, & take place on the 2nd Friday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Meetings are free & open to the public. Details & RSVP: <https://www.meetup.com/MARS->



USF Freethinkers

Freethinkers@USF is a cosmopolitan collective of USF students promoting critical thinking & pluralism through dialogue & reasonable inquiry. Join the official group and vote on upcoming discussions: Contact: <https://orgsync.com/87429/chapter>



TBCoR Leadership Team 2021

Eileen Stafford,
AoF

Bill Norsworthy,
UUCH

Mark Brandt,
UUCH

Chris Brown,
MASH

Jenn Hancock,
GTBHF

Rick O'Keefe,
CFI

David Vangsness,
TBS

Jim Peterson,
HSS, TBPC, CoR



Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason – **February, 2021** Calendar
Because of CV-19, all gatherings in-person are cancelled pending further notice.
 See our Meetup site for more/ONLINE:
www.meetup.com/Tampa-Bay-Coalition-of-Reason



Various Sundays, 2 PM; & Friday nights	BRANDON–CFI Sunday Freethought Social & Godless Friday Nights	Skeptical interests with critical thinkers. Click to RSVP : http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
TBA – various activities	TRI-COUNTY – Atheists of Florida, Inc.	Details & RSVP : http://bit.ly/AOF-Meetup	
TBA – various activities	S TAMPA– Tampa Bay Skeptics, Inc..	Details & RSVP http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
2nd Saturday, 2 PM 3rd Sunday -Dinner see Pg. 3.	DUNEDIN– Humanist Soc. of the Suncoast see Pg. 2	Details & RSVP http://bit.ly/Suncoast-Humanists On the 2nd Saturday at 2 PM ! All face to face meetings suspended for the duration of the pandemic.	
3rd Sunday, 12:30 PM	E. CLEARWATER– UU Clearwater Humanists	Details: http://bit.ly/UUC-Humanists	
TBA – various astronomy activities at MOSI	E. TAMPA– Museum Astronomical Resource Society (MARS) at MOSI	Details & RSVP : http://bit.ly/1Psc2Pi Other events: http://bit.ly/MARS-home	
TBA - numerous events— this semester	E. TAMPA– Humanities Institute at USF	See Web site for full listing of many events & calendar. http://bit.ly/USF-Humanities Locations vary! Page 12.	
4th Monday, 6 PM	N. PINELLAS AREA– CFI Freethought Supper	RSVP is required. Seating is limited to 25! <i>For CFI & TBS paid members.</i> http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
3rd Saturday, 11 AM	N TAMPA – Tampa Humanist Assoc.	Details & RSVP : No program this month! http://bit.ly/TPA-Humanists	
Various Saturdays	NE CLEARWATER – CFI Readers Book Discussion	Limited to <i>10 paid-up CFI members.</i> RSVP is required. Must have read the book under discussion to attend. http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
3rd Monday, 7 PM	NW HILLSBOROUGH– Tampa Bay Thinkers	Lively discussions. RSVP here: http://bit.ly/2DVtwCd	
4 th Friday, 8 PM general meeting. Many more events monthly.	ST. PETERSBURG– Astronomy Club	For several dates, locations, & details: http://bit.ly/StPete-Astronomy-Home http://bit.ly/StPete-Astronomy-Calendar	
Various Saturdays/ Sundays plus various other times/venues	TAMPA BAY REGION– Center for Inquiry Tampa Bay	Details & RSVP http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
TBA – various activities	TAMPA BAY REGION– Humanist Families	RSVP here: Family outings & other activities. Details & RSVP : http://bit.ly/1Ps9MaN	

Read more on the web at: www.tampabaycor.net

Evolve Fish is a source for freethought paraphernalia: <http://evolvefish.com/>

Richard Dawkins

The insidious attacks on scientific truth

From *The Spectator* magazine, Christmas Special issue: 19 December 2020

What is truth? You can speak of moral truths and aesthetic truths but I'm not concerned with those here, important as they may be. By truth I shall mean the kind of truth that a commission of inquiry or a jury trial is designed to establish. I hold the view that scientific truth is of this commonsense kind, although the methods of science may depart from common sense and its truths may even offend it.

Commissions of inquiry may fail, but we assume a truth lurking there even if we don't have enough evidence. Juries sometimes get it wrong and falsehoods are often sincerely believed. Scientists too can make mistakes and publish erroneous conclusions. That's all regrettable but not deeply sinister. What is profoundly troubling, however, is any wanton attack on truth itself: the value of truth, the very existence of truth. This is what concerns me here.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell's O'Brien held that two plus two equals five if the Party decrees it so. The Ministry of Truth existed for the purpose of disseminating lies. In the past four years, the US government has moved in that direction. World-weary cynics sigh that all politicians lie: it goes with the territory. But normal politicians lie as a last resort and try to cover it up. Donald Trump is in a class of his own. For him, lying is not a last resort. It never occurs to him to do anything else. And far from covering up a lie, he can stick to it: his well-named 'base' will love him the more for it, and will believe the lie, however far-fetched and shamelessly self-serving. Fortunately Trump is too incompetent to fulfil Orwell's nightmare, and anyway he is on the way out, albeit kicking and screaming and trying to pull the house down with him as he goes.

A more insidious threat to truth comes from certain schools of academic philosophy. There is no objective truth, they say, no natural reality, only social constructs. Extreme exponents attack logic and reason themselves, as tools of manipulation or 'patriarchal' weapons of domination. The philosopher and historian of science Noretta Koertge wrote this in *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine in 1995, and things haven't got any better since:

"Instead of exhorting young women to prepare for a variety of technical subjects by studying science, logic, and mathematics, Women's Studies students are now being taught that logic is a tool of domination...the standard norms and methods of scientific inquiry are sexist because they are incompatible with 'women's ways of knowing'. The authors of the prize-winning book with this title report that the majority of the women they interviewed fell into the category of 'subjective knowers', characterised by a 'passionate rejection of science and scientists'. These 'subjectivist' women see the methods of logic, analysis and abstraction as 'alien territory belonging to men' and 'value intuition as a safer and more fruitful approach to truth'.

Logic is logic is logic, no matter if the individual who wields it also happens to wield a penis

That way madness lies. As reported by Barbara Ehrenreich and Janet McIntosh in *The Nation* in 1997, the social psychologist Phoebe Ellsworth, at an interdisciplinary seminar, praised the virtues of the experimental method. Audience members protested that the experimental method was 'the brainchild of white Victorian males'. Ellsworth acknowledged this, but pointed out that the experimental method had led to, for example, the discovery of DNA. This was greeted with disdain: 'You believe in DNA?'

You can't not 'believe in DNA'. DNA is a fact. The DNA molecule is a double helix, a long spiral staircase with exactly four kinds of steps called nucleotides. The one-dimensional sequence of

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

these four nucleotide ‘letters’ is the genetic code which specifies the nature of every animal, plant, fungus, bacterium and archaean. DNA sequences can be compared, letter for letter, between any creature and any other, much as one might compare folios of *Hamlet*. From this we can compute a numerical figure for the closeness of cousinship of any two creatures and hence, eventually, build up a complete family tree of all life.

For, whether we like it or not, it is a true fact that we are cousins of kangaroos, that we share an ancestor with starfish, and that we and the starfish and kangaroo share a more remote ancestor with jellyfish. The DNA code is a digital code, differing from computer codes only in being quaternary instead of binary. We know the precise details of the intermediate stages by which the code is read in our cells, and its four-letter alphabet translated, by molecular assembly-line machines called ribosomes, into a 20-letter alphabet of amino acids, the building blocks of protein chains and so of bodies.

If your philosophy dismisses all that as patriarchal domination, so much the worse for your philosophy. Perhaps you should stay away from doctors with their experimentally tested medicines, and go to a shaman or witch doctor instead. If you need to travel to a conference of like-minded philosophers, you’d better not go by air. Planes fly because a lot of scientifically trained mathematicians and engineers got their sums right. They did not use ‘intuitive ways of knowing’. Whether they happened to be white and male or sky-blue-pink and hermaphrodite is supremely, triumphantly irrelevant. Logic is logic is logic, no matter if the individual who wields it also happens to wield a penis. A mathematical proof reveals a definite truth, no matter whether the mathematician ‘identifies as’ female, male or hippopotamus. If you decide to fly to that conference, Newton’s laws and Bernoulli’s principle will see you safe. And no, Newton’s *Principia* is not a ‘rape manual’, as was ludicrously said by the noted feminist philosopher Sandra Harding. It is a supreme work of genius by one of Homo sapiens’s most sapient specimens — who also happened to be a not very nice man.

It is true that Newton’s laws are approximations which need modifying under extreme circumstances such as when objects travel at near the speed of light. Those philosophers of science who fixate on the case of Newton and Einstein love to say that scientific truths are only ever provisional approximations that have so far resisted falsification. But there are many scientific truths — we share an ancestor with baboons is one example — which are just plain true, in the same sense as ‘New Zealand lies south of the equator’ is not a provisional hypothesis, pending possible falsification.

The physics of the very small also goes beyond Newton. Quantum theory is too weird for most human brains to accommodate intuitively. Yet the accuracy with which its predictions are fulfilled is shattering and beyond all doubt. If I can’t get my head around the weirdness of a theory which is validated by such predictions, that’s just too bad. There’s no law that says truths about nature have to be comprehensible by the human brain. We have to live with the limitations of a brain that was built by Darwinian natural selection of hunter-gatherer ancestors on the African savanna, where medium-sized things like antelopes and potential mates moved at medium speeds. It’s actually remarkable that human brains — even if only a minority of them — are capable of doing modern physics at all. It is an open question whether there remain deep truths about the universe which human brains not only don’t yet understand but can never understand. I find that open question immensely exciting, whatever the answer to it may be.

Theologians love their ‘mysteries’, such as the ‘mystery of the Trinity’ (how can God be both three and one at the same time?) and the ‘mystery of transubstantiation’ (how can the contents of a chalice be simultaneously wine and blood?). When challenged to defend such stuff, they may retort

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

that scientists too have their mysteries. Quantum theory is mysterious to the point of being downright perverse. What's the difference? I'll tell you the difference and it's a big one. Quantum theory is validated by predictions fulfilled to so many decimal places that it's been compared to predicting the width of North America to within one hairsbreadth. Theological theories make no predictions at all, let alone testable ones.

Of course, not all the sciences can boast the formidable accuracy of physics. We biologists stand in awe of the LIGO experiments in which gravitational waves, having travelled a billion light years, are detected by measurements accurate to less than a thousandth the width of a proton. Biological experimenters have to confront problems like the subjective bias of the experimenter — 'intuitive ways of knowing'. Medical scientists have perfected safeguards aimed precisely against intuitive ways of knowing, because these are highly likely to mislead. The double blind control test has become the gold standard for demonstrating the efficacy of a medical treatment. A new drug must be compared with a placebo control and the comparison tested statistically. Neither the patients, nor the doctors running the tests, nor the nurses administering the doses, nor the analysts evaluating the results are allowed to know which patients were given the placebo, which the drug, until all the results are in.

I myself conducted a double blind test of dowsing (water divining). It was pathetically touching to witness the sincere distress of the professional dowsers when they failed — every single one of them — to perform above chance level. The poor things had never before been tested under double blind conditions: never before been deprived of whatever subliminal cues normally inform their 'subjective ways of knowing'. I treasure the remark of a homeopathic doctor who, when his methods failed under double blind testing conditions, said: 'You see. This is why we don't do double blind tests any more. They never work!'

A layperson's version of the pernicious philosophy I mentioned earlier is the familiar bleat of: 'Well it may not be true for you but it is true for me.' No, it's either true or it isn't. For both of us. As somebody once said (authorship multiply attributed), you are entitled to your own opinion but not to your own facts.



Some of what I have claimed here about scientific truth may come across as arrogant. So might my disparagement of certain schools of philosophy. Science really does know a lot about what is true, and we do have methods in place for finding out a lot more. We should not be reticent about that. But science is also humble. We may know what we know, but we also know what we don't know. Scientists love not knowing because they can go to work on it. The history of science's increasing knowledge, especially during the past four centuries, is a spectacular cascade of truths following one on the other. We may choose to call it a cumulative increase in the number of truths that we know. Or we can tip our hat to (a better class of) philosophers and talk of successive approximations towards yet-to-be-falsified provisional truths. Either way, science can properly claim to be the gold standard of truth.

How to Master Fearlessness — Voltaire's Secrets to Greatness

Voltaire, a celebrated philosopher, was vehemently hated for rebelling against religious intolerance and absolute monarchy. He is the symbol of accomplishment through fearlessness.

By Tamara Mitrofanova <https://lkdin.io/3CjX>



Portrait of Voltaire. Public Domain. Google Images.

Once upon a time, there lived a boy who was both clever and willfully stubborn. Born Francois-Marie Arouet, his family nicknamed him Zozo. Little Zozo was not expected to live long, due to his fragile health. The many enemies he made in his life would wish he had died in the cradle.

As a child, Zozo was known as, '*le petit volontaire*', meaning, '*determined little thing*.' He would later call himself Voltaire, taking inspiration from his childhood moniker. This sickly child would grow up to become a celebrated enlightenment philosopher with a strong belief in freedom of speech and civil liberties and a critic of religious prosecution.

This extraordinary man turned the world upside-down and inflamed the mind to think freely in principles of freedom, tolerance, and justice. Voltaire was fearless because he didn't buckle under societal pressures. He believed in free speech for himself and for others.

This is how he mastered fearlessness.

1st Lesson: Stop being afraid of being rejected or hated.

We all know the gut-wrenching feeling of rejection. No human being wants to be a social outcast. We don't want to feel inadequate and this anxiety restricts our lives, imprisoning us. Stop caring what others think!

Voltaire mastered the art of not caring about people's opinions. He began his lucrative writing career by writing satires and epigrams, criticizing and lambasting the king's regent, Philippe D'Orleans. Understandably, the royal regent was furious and had the young twenty-year-old imprisoned in the Bastille for nearly a year. The distress he must've felt inside the cold, stone walls of the Bastille would have made a weaker man terminate their political writing career. But this is Voltaire

(Continued on page 21)

we're talking about.

After his release, he continued to mock the government and the powerful Catholic church. Voltaire's satire became legendary and his name was spoken in every salon (gathering). Before he could be arrested for a second time, Voltaire escaped into exile.

Throughout his life, Voltaire's work would anger many around him. Living in a society where the European monarchs dominated every aspect of life from the government to religion, this was not the best time-period to preach against religious and political oppression. Despite these hardships, Voltaire continued to write philosophical treatises on freedom and tolerance.

Voltaire is the symbol of resolution because he was strong-willed and his arrest by French authorities only made him strong. Mentally strong people understand that rejection hurts but it doesn't have to hold them back. Don't suppress or deny those bitter emotions but acknowledge their presence and embrace the sting of rejection. It is painful. It hurts the soul. But the feeling of prevailing over rejection is heavenly bliss.

It is vital in life to take risks because that is how success blossoms. No one can prosper without daring action and failure. These life risks can be *anything*. It can be in a social setting, at a professional job, dating, among others.

Want a job promotion that you're dying for?

Want to ask that pretty girl from class to go on a date?

Do it! Yes, it makes us vulnerable but taking risks is all about welcoming vulnerability. Accept your shortcomings and your fear of rejection will subside.

Most importantly, don't let your self-worth depend upon other people's opinions of you. Be a Voltaire and take pleasure in offending people in the pursuit of being your true self.

2nd Lesson: Stop trying to control the uncontrollable.

Being unable to control the uncontrollable frightens us. Everyone wants to be successful. We are attracted to those with success and place high expectations on ourselves to flourish. Ultimately, our deep desire to achieve fruitful happiness makes us want to control every aspect of our life: emotions, thoughts, and actions. This process of thinking is dangerous. When high expectations aren't met, people become uncertain and frustrated. That is how motivation is lost.

Just like us, Voltaire grappled with the human need of wanting to control the uncontrollable. Voltaire placed far too high expectations in his philosophical writings. He hoped that his lessons of tolerance and pacifism would bear fruit towards policies of non-violent and humanitarian rule. His aspirations shattered with every stroke of his pen. Voltaire was viewed as immoral and radical due to his hatred of religious intolerance and his objections to autocracy. People were extremely biased. In the end, Voltaire learned an important lesson.

He accepted that his controversial views would always be condemned. The only thing he could control in this world of disorder was his desperate need to be heard. Voltaire refused to be condemned to silence.

Stop getting angry, depressed, or anxious over ungovernable details in your life. It's a waste of time and energy. Throw it all into the trash where it belongs. Accept your limitations and enjoy your reality by not caring about what the future may hold or focusing on past mistakes. There is no point in worrying or stressing about the bad that has happened or could happen.

Decrease your levels of stress and anxiety by accepting the uncontrollable factors in your life and striving for improvement. There are plenty of ways you can take control to improve yourself. Exercising, eating healthy, getting seven to eight hours of sleep, and many more.

In Voltaire's case, he accepted the limitations placed on him. He was not born an heir to an absolute monarchy and therefore, could not implement great changes in a totalitarian society. It is essential to remember that he did not focus on the uncontrollable factors and instead, aimed to open

(Continued from page 21)

the minds of others towards freedom and justice.

Focus on what you can control and improve your beautiful, messy, and very human life.

3rd Lesson: *Don't be afraid of failure. Accept failure as a natural part of life.*

Failure brings disappointment, shame, humiliation, and discomfort. Basically, emotions none of us like. Fear of failure can severely hinder your personal goals, experiencing happiness, and developing a meaningful career. Our greatest enemy is the feeling of disappointment and regret.

Early on in his writing career, Voltaire accepted that failure was a part of the rhythm of life and was simply the effect of making an effort. Throughout his life, Voltaire's longest and hardest crusade was the freedom to communicate. Freedom of speech, he believed, was the root of all freedom because only freedom of speech had the capability to opening someone's eyes to the truth.

"Is there anything more tyrannical than removing the freedom of speech? How can a country say it is free when it is not allowed to write what it thinks?" — Voltaire, 1765.

Pretty deep stuff, eh?

Failure held little interest to him. He knew the danger lurking with each publication but Voltaire valued freedom above all else. When the fear of failure creeps into your mind, remind yourself what you value. Job growth, travel, building relationships, education. Accept the concept that success cannot be achieved without failure. Embrace failure as the natural path to success and don't give that nasty emotion called *fear* power over you.

In conclusion...

So what does it mean to be fearless?

It means reigning in your poisonous thoughts from taking control of your life. Being fearful isn't always bad. Fear can save your life from jay-walking into a busy street and being hit by a car. In many ways, fear is like a double-edged sword: both good and bad. Don't let the fear of failure, rejection, the uncontrollable, or the opinions of others to dictate your life. That is when fear becomes destructive.

Even at death's doorstep, Voltaire displayed his fearlessness and spat upon the opinions of others. When the priest urged him to renounce Satan, he replied, *"This is no time to make new enemies."*

Be a Voltaire.



An early demonstration of electrical principles in the 18th century.

Religious exception for vaccination or religious excuses for avoiding vaccination

By numerous authors, [Croatian Medical Journal](#). 2016 Oct; 57(5): 516–521.

Vaccination is considered to be one of the greatest public health achievements in the 20th century, which has helped to build a society free of vaccine preventable diseases and save lives of millions children across the globe ([1](#)). However, in the 21st century, pediatric practice in the western world witnesses an era of vaccination refusal ([2](#)). Pediatricians, infectious disease experts, and public health professionals ask themselves why and how “the greatest achievement of public health” became a medical procedure that frightens parents across the globe. Many parents are seeking a legal way to avoid vaccinating their children. The legal systems of some countries predict legal vaccination exemptions. One of the most usual reasons for exemption are medical reasons, followed by the religious, social, and philosophical reasons (personal belief, conscience objection) ([3-7](#)).

2013 and 2015 were marked by an outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and pertussis ([2,8-11](#)). These events triggered a worldwide debate regarding vaccination and legal exemption of vaccination and its possible consequences such as social distancing, exclusion from school during a disease outbreak, absence from work, etc ([12,13](#)).

Religion influences decisions on vaccination ([14-16](#)), and religious objection is often used by parents as an excuse to avoid the vaccination of their children ([5,17](#)). Some studies show that the number religious exemptions has been increasing ([18](#)), leading to vaccine preventable disease outbreaks ([10](#)) such as mumps outbreak in a protestant orthodox group in The Netherlands. Shrivastwa et al ([19](#)) found religion as predictive factor of children’s vaccination status in India. Compared to Hindus, Muslim children had greater chance of being under-vaccinated or unvaccinated compared with the vaccinated children.

In this article we would like to explore whether different religious beliefs are, in itself, real exception for vaccination or they are just a parents’ excuse to avoid vaccination.

[To read the rest, please go [here](#). Common religious views of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Japanese are explored, along with many references.]

Concluding remarks

Vaccination refusal among the parents of pediatric population is emerging globally, regardless of religious or political background or geographical location. In many countries legal systems advise how to react to vaccination refusal ([44](#)). For example,

Vaccination is considered to be one of the greatest public health achievements in the 20th century, which has helped to build a society free of vaccine preventable diseases and save lives of millions children across the globe (1). However, in the 21st century, pediatric practice in the western world witnesses an era of vaccination refusal (2). Pediatricians, infectious disease experts, and public health professionals ask themselves why and how “the greatest achievement of public health” became a medical procedure that frightens parents across the globe. Many parents are seeking a legal way to avoid vaccinating their children. The legal systems of some countries predict legal vaccination exemptions. One of the most usual reasons for exemption are medical reasons, followed by the religious, social, and philosophical reasons (personal belief, conscience objection) (3-7).

2013 and 2015 were marked by an outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and pertussis (2,8-11). These events triggered a worldwide debate regarding vaccination and legal exemption of vaccination and its possible consequences such as social distancing, exclusion from school during a disease outbreak, absence from work, etc (12,13).

Religion influences decisions on vaccination (14-16), and religious objection is often used by parents as an excuse to avoid the vaccination of their children (5,17). Some studies show that the number religious exemptions has been increasing (18), leading to vaccine preventable disease outbreaks (10) such as mumps outbreak in a protestant orthodox group in The Netherlands. Shrivastwa et al (19) found religion as predictive factor of children’s vaccination status in India. Compared to Hindus, Muslim children had greater chance of being under-vaccinated or unvaccinated compared with the vaccinated children.

The view of Catholicism

The most morally questionable issue regarding vaccination in Catholicism is using cell lines derived from a voluntary aborted fetus. The Moral Reflection On Vaccines published by the Pontifical Academy for Life (20) suggests that these vaccines should be avoided and proposes a search for alternatives. The examples of such vaccines are cell lines WI-38 (Winstar Institute 38) and MRC-5 (Medical Research council 5), several live vaccines against rubella (Meruvax, Rudivax, M-R-VAX), and vaccines against hepatitis (A-VAQTA and HAVRIX), chicken pox (Varivax), smallpox (AC AM 1000), and poliomyelitis (Polivax) (20,21). In the case where no alternative vaccine is available, the use of the existing vaccine is morally acceptable in order to avoid serious risks for children and for the whole population (especially pregnant women). The moral acceptability of using this vaccine should be comprehended as “passive material cooperation” and “active material cooperation” too, which is cooperation with immoral action without evil intention, permitted only in the case of “*extrema ratio*,” that is in the case of extreme situations such as saving the lives of children. The document also suggests to parents to oppose participation in such medical procedures by their appeal by “objection of conscience” or to seek alternative sources of effective vaccines. Besides this document, the Catholic Church's Magisterium discusses bioethical issues with respect to forbidden sources of human biological materials in two further documents. *Dignitas personae* (22), n. 34-35 speaks of the illicit origin of human sources of biological material, founding its opinions on the dignity of the person, emphasized in the documents *Donum vitae* (23) (I, 4) and *Evangelium Vitae* (24). In the case where ethically acceptable sources of vaccines are not available, it is necessary to weigh the vital importance and the risk of no vaccination. In these cases it becomes also allowed to use, even the, “morally inadvisable” vaccines (21).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (25) does not cover the topic of vaccination directly. Indirectly, there are a few canons that could be applied to vaccination issue. The Church recognizes the ability of human intellect to meet the God (canon 39), which is the foundation for the dialog with other religions, philosophy, and science. The canons 1939-1943 emphasize the virtue of solidarity in the world. By spreading spiritual values, the Church has throughout the centuries helped to create better social and cultural conditions for living among different nations. Catholicism should emphasize the importance of taking the risk of side effects of vaccination to strengthen solidarity with other humans. By taking this risk, people participate in the protection of the entire society, including those who cannot be vaccinated because of medical contraindications or have been vaccinated but without adequate immunogenic response (20).