

COWTOWN



HUMANIST

August

2009

The Humanists of Ft Worth meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist building 901 Page Ave at 7 PM

Atheist Bus Campaign rolls into the US Bible belt – after the threat of court action



From the Chair

We are often told here is no such reality as a free lunch. I'm here to say we have one of the greatest free lunches ever bequeathed to a people in history. Completely aside from the advances in science, arts, productivity, standards of living and the freedoms we enjoy to think and express those thoughts, we are living in a time when freedom from religion is expanding, when the number of freethinkers in this country is growing at an ever increasing rate. Wouldn't it be wise, even responsible, of us to play a part in this vital, evolving movement?

One easy contribution one can make is to become a part of the freethinking enlightenment by joining the oldest group of its kind in Tarrant County, the Humanists of Fort Worth. Few people in this world like to be alone. We need and enjoy friends who share common interests. Finding like-minded people free of religious dogma needs all the help it can get. Our HOFW provides that assistance. Where else can one go to share ideas and learn new ones in the field of freethought? There are one of two such other groups in our area besides our own and I encourage their growth as well. But I think we are the largest and oldest, and I would like to see all of us cooperate and grow in numbers. I urge all of you on this mailing list and all your friends to come to our monthly meetings in order to meet, make friends, enjoy the programs and play a part in building a healthier and more positive climate of humanism in our area.

Our speaker for Wednesday, August 12, at 7 p.m. will be Mr. Terry McDonald, the chair of Metroplex Atheists in north Texas.

He'll be talking about the billboards that have gone up in Dallas and Fort Worth that read "Don't believe in God...You're not alone" and the progress of freethought in this country. If you want to read more google "Terry McDonald Atheist."

Hope to see you , , , , , , , , , , Dick Trice, Chair



THE threat of a lawsuit has changed minds over at Bloomington Transit, Indiana.

The bus company was threatened with legal action after refusing to carry an ad – *You Can be Good Without God* – created by local atheists, but capitulated days before a preliminary injunction hearing was scheduled in the US District Court, in the Southern District of Indiana.

Members of the campaign said they are pleased to have reached a settlement with Bloomington Transit, saying:

The terms of the settlement are that BT will accept our ad for posting on as many buses and for as long of a time as we like, for the standard ad rate. They will also be reimbursing the ACLU of Indiana for a significant portion of their legal expenses.

The campaign group added:

Let's be straight here: this is a victory not just for atheism and secularism, but for free speech all around. It's not the end of our campaign, either. We intend to make the most of this victory: look for our message on Bloomington Transit buses in the coming weeks. We also hope the outcome of this suit provides a suitable precedent for the many other atheist bus campaigns around the country trying to get their own ads up.

By advertising on buses across Indiana, the Indiana Atheist Bus Campaign, with its partner the American Humanist Association, hopes to:

Promote a lively and respectful discussion in the community and to counter the stigma against voicing atheist views.

We Humanists are in good, make that great, company

"It appears to me (whether rightly or wrongly) that direct arguments against christianity and theism produce hardly any effect on the public; and freedom of thought is best promoted by the gradual illumination of men's minds which follows from the advance of science." **[Darwin]**

"If we believe absurdities, we shall commit atrocities." **[Voltaire]**

"I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own -- a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotism." **[Einstein]**

"Faith means not wanting to know what is true." **[Nietzsche]**

"I cannot believe in the immortality of the soul.... No, all this talk of an existence for us, as individuals, beyond the grave is wrong. It is born of our tenacity of life – our desire to go on living ... our dread of coming to an end." **[Edison]**

"The Bible is not my book nor Christianity my profession. I could never give assent to the long, complicated statements of Christian dogma." **[Lincoln]**

"Religion is a byproduct of fear. For much of human history, it may have been a necessary evil, but why was it more evil than necessary? Isn't killing people in the name of God a pretty good definition of insanity?" **[Arthur C. Clarke]**

"Religions are all alike – founded upon fables and mythologies." **[Thomas Jefferson]**

"Say what you will about the sweet miracle of unquestioning faith, I consider a capacity for it terrifying and absolutely vile." **[Kurt Vonnegut]**

"Religion is based . . . mainly on fear . . . fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand in hand. . . . My own view on religion is that of Lucretius. I regard it as a disease born of fear and as a source of untold misery to the human race." **[Bertrand Russell]**

Accolades to our very own Russell Elleven:

Dear Russel Elleven,

Please accept my sincere appreciation for your efforts. Because of your work SMART Recovery now has over 500 face to face meetings. This means more access for those who want to use our recovery method. Thanks for your continued support.

Thomas M Litwicki

SMART Recovery

President, board of Directories

Humanist of the Year

The Humanist of the Year award was established in 1953 to recognize a person of national or international reputation who, through the application of humanist values, has made a significant contribution to the improvement of the human condition. Selection of the awardee is based on research derived from biographical data, writings, studies, and contributions to humanity. Nominations are accepted from AHA members. The Awards Committee, with the approval of the Board, makes the selection. A bronze plate bearing an inscription is awarded at the Annual Conference. The awardee's acceptance speech is published in *The Humanist*.

The editor thought the members might like to see previous recipients of this prestigious award:

- PZ Myers - 2009
- Pete Stark - 2008
- Joyce Carol Oates - 2007
- Steven Pinker - 2006
- Murray Gell-Mann - 2005
- Daniel C. Dennett - 2004
- Sherwin T. Wine - 2003
- Steven Weinberg - 2002
- Stephen Jay Gould - 2001
- Bill Schulz - 2000

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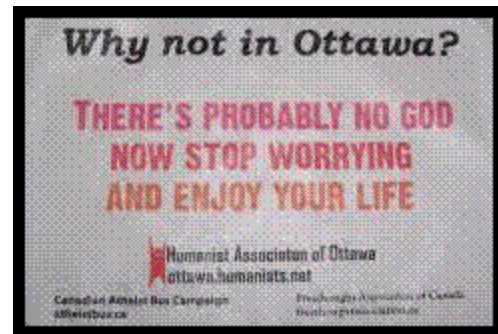
- James P. Warbasse - 1955
- Arthur F. Bendley - 1954
- Anton J. Carlson - 1953 (1st recipient)

One of the sites I frequent is "The Continuum of Humanist of Humanist Education (COHE)

COHE is the Internet's first website offering interactive courses in humanist thought. COHE is a service of the Institute for Humanist Studies, a non-profit U.S. organization promoting nonreligious perspectives on social, political, and ethical issues and serving as a resource for and about the humanist community.

See <http://humanisteducation.com/>

The bus ad campaign has emerged in Canada too:



Renaissance Humanism

Humanism is the term generally applied to the predominant social philosophy and intellectual and literary currents of the period from 1400 to 1650. The return to favor of the pagan classics stimulated the philosophy of secularism, the appreciation of worldly pleasures, and above all intensified the assertion of personal independence and individual expression. Zeal for the classics was a result as well as a cause of the growing secular view of life. Expansion of trade, growth of prosperity and luxury, and widening social contacts generated interest in worldly pleasures, in spite of formal allegiance to ascetic Christian doctrine. Men thus affected -- the humanists -- welcomed classical writers who revealed similar social values and secular attitudes.

Historians are pretty much agreed on the general outlines of those mental attitudes and scholarly interests which are assembled under the rubric of humanism. The most fundamental point of agreement is that the humanist mentality stood at a point midway between medieval supernaturalism and the modern scientific and critical attitude. Medievalists see humanism as the terminal product of the Middle Ages. Modern historians are perhaps more apt to view humanism as the germinal period of modernism.

Perhaps the most we can assume is that the man of the Renaissance lived, as it were, between two worlds.

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As many of you might remember, last year we asked you to participate in a ground-breaking, first-of-its-kind survey of nonbelievers. Thousands of you responded and now we're happy to say **the results are in!**

Luke Galen, associate professor of psychology at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, has released the findings of his study and published an article summarizing the results in the most recent issue of *Free Inquiry* magazine, the flagship publication of CFI's sister organization, the Council for Secular Humanism.

In his article, Galen notes that other researchers have collected mountains of data about the attitudes and characteristics of *believers*, but there's far less information about *nonbelievers*. Even worse, what little data *does* exist has often been collected *accidentally*.

Galen's study is the first to direct a full range of socio-

Self Identification:	Spiritual (n = 117)	Agnostic (N = 608)	Atheist (n = 3296)	Humanist (n = 1386)
Variable				
% Male	48	72	75	73
Age	53	49	47	51
Strength of Group Identification	Medium	Low	High	High
Belief Certainty in No God	Not Sure	Somewhat	Mostly	Mostly
Number Non-Family Confidants	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Life Satisfaction	Lower	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Agreeableness	Higher	Lower	Lower	Moderate
Emotional Stability	Lower	Lower	Higher	Higher

Major distinguishing characteristics as a function of primary self-label.

logical survey questions specifically at our population of "nones" (as nonbelievers have usually been identified by pollsters).

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Edward O. Wilson - 1999

Barbara Ehrenreich - 1998

Alice Walker - 1997

Richard Dawkins - 1996

Ashley Montagu - 1995

Lloyd Morain - 1994

Mary Morain - 1994

Richard D. Lamm - 1993

Kurt Vonnegut - 1992

Lester R. Brown - 1991

Werner Fornos - 1991

Ted Turner - 1990

Gerald A. Larue - 1989

Leo Pfeffer - 1988

Margaret Atwood - 1987

Faye Wattleton - 1986

John Kenneth Galbraith - 1985

Isaac Asimov - 1984

Lester A. Kirkendall - 1983

Helen Caldicott - 1982

Carl Sagan - 1981

Andrei Sakharov - 1980

Edwin H. Wilson - 1979

Corliss Lamont - 1977

Jonas E. Salk - 1976

Betty Friedan - 1975

Henry Morgentaler - 1975

Mary Calderone - 1974

Joseph Fletcher - 1974

Thomas Szasz - 1973

B.F. Skinner - 1972

Albert Ellis - 1971

A. Philip Randolph - 1970

R. Buckminster Fuller - 1969

Benjamin Spock - 1968

Abraham H. Maslow - 1967

Erich Fromm - 1966

Hudson Hoagland - 1965

Carl Rogers - 1964

Hermann J. Muller - 1963

Julian Huxley - 1962

Linus Pauling - 1961

Leo Szilard - 1960

Brock Chisholm - 1959

Oscar Riddle - 1958

Margaret Sanger - 1957

C. Judson Herrick - 1956

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The world of the medieval Christian matrix, in which the significance of every phenomenon was ultimately determined through uniform points of view, no longer existed for him. On the other hand, he had not yet found in a system of scientific concepts and social principles stability and security for his life. In other words, Renaissance man may indeed have found himself suspended between faith and reason.

As the grip of medieval supernaturalism began to diminish, secular and human interests became more prominent. The facts of individual experience in the here and now became more interesting than the shadowy afterlife. Reliance upon faith and God weakened. *Fortuna* (chance) gradually replaced *Providence* as the universal frame of reference. The present world became an end in itself instead of simply preparation of a world to come. Indeed, as the age of Renaissance humanism wore on, the distinction between this world (the City of Man) and the next (the City of God) tended to disappear.

Beauty was believed to afford at least some glimpse of a transcendental existence. This goes far to explain the humanist cult of beauty and makes plain that humanism was, above everything else, fundamentally an aesthetic movement. Human experience, man himself, tended to become the practical measure of all things. The ideal life was no longer a monastic escape from society, but a full participation in rich and varied human relationships.

The dominating element in the finest classical culture was aesthetic rather than supernatural or scientific. In the later Middle Ages urban intellectuals were well on the road to the recovery of an aesthetic and secular view of life even before the full tide of the classical revival was felt. It was only natural, then, that pagan literature, with its emotional and intellectual affinity to the new world view, should accelerate the existing drift toward secularism and stimulate the cult of humanity, the worship of beauty, and especially the aristocratic attitude.

Almost everywhere, humanism began as a rather pious, timid, and conservative drift away from medieval Christianity and ended in bold independence of medieval tradition. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), one of the greatest humanists, occupied a position midway between extreme piety and frank secularism. Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) represented conservative Italian humanism.

Robust secularism and intellectual independence reached its height in Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540). Rudolphus Agricola (1443-1485) may be regarded as the German Petrarch. In England, Rabelais (c.1495-1533). John Colet (c.1467-1519) and Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) were early or conservative humanists, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) represented later or agnostic and skeptical humanism.

In France, pious classicists like Lefèvre d'Étaples (1453-1536) were succeeded by frank, urbane, and devout skeptics like Michel Montaigne (1533-1592) and bold anti-clerical satirists like François

Humanistic contributions to science consisted mainly in the recovery of Greek scientific literature which evinced a more accurate and acceptable body of facts and ideas than most medieval scientific works. However, we should not exaggerate the humanist contribution in this field. Everything of value, for instance, in Galen (c.130-201) had long been incorporated into medieval medicine. The scientific treatises of Aristotle, Euclid, and Ptolemy were translated into Latin and known to scholars before the Renaissance. Moreover, Islamic scholars had already introduced most Attic and Hellenistic science into western Europe, often with vast improvements on the original.

Humanism embodied the mystical and aesthetic temper of a pre-scientific age. It did not free the mind from subservience to ancient authority. If the humanists revered Aristotle less than the Schoolmen did, they worshipped Neoplatonism, the Cabala, and Cicero more. They shifted authorities rather than dismissed them. Even Aristotle, the greatest of Scholastic authorities, did not lack humanist admirers. The great libraries assembled by wealthy patrons of literature like Cosimo de' Medici, Pope Nicholas V, and the Duke of Urbino, devoted much space to the Church Fathers and the Scholastic philosophers. The humanists did, however, read their authorities for aesthetic pleasure as well as moral uplift.

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