

HUMANISTS TO CELEBRATE WINTER SOLSTICE WITH DEC. 14 DINNER

Humanists of Fort Worth will be marking the winter solstice with a dinner at the Szechuan Restaurant on December 14. In the spirit of communal sharing, each person will be ordering for all other participants as well as for him- or herself. Toasts for the successes of the year and impromptu speeches will be in order. The Szechuan is located on Bryant Irvin Road south of I-20. We will be seated in an upstairs private room.

A PERENNIAL COMPLAINT: THE FAILURES OF THE YOUNG

Through the ages older generations have castigated the young for not measuring up to the standards, both moral and manly (this seems to have been pretty much of a male thing at least up to the 20th century), of their own and predecessor generations. Western civilization's oldest work of literature, *The Iliad*, is laced with the old warrior Nestor's laments of how far the young Greek soldiers at Troy fell short of the accomplishments of his own generation. Not without some justification, to be sure, since the Greeks had been unable to conquer a far smaller number of Trojans after a ten-year siege. (N.B.: I am of an age to see some merit in older generation complaints.) So it has gone throughout the ages: from a golden age to a silver age to a brass age to an iron age we are forever ebbing our way downward.

Our own Jeff Rodriguez addressed these complaints in a November 20 sermon at West Side. For those who were not there, I urge as many as have a bit of spare time on their hands to obtain the full text from Jeff. It's worth thinking about. Below is a highly edited rendition of the sermon:

It appears we've got trouble, big trouble. Our kids, it would seem, are facing even greater peril. They have no values. They're growing up too quickly. And they sure don't respect their elders anymore. I'm sure you've heard people say something like this. Heck, you might have said it yourself.

And you know, you're not alone. Some very important people have voiced this very sentiment. A few years back, Republican commentator William Bennett became so distressed about how few kids were being taught core values that he decided to teach them himself. He wrote, as you may recall, *The Book of Virtues*. Another prominent conservative, social scientist James Q. Wilson, is equally distressed. Young people today, Wilson said, "have embraced an ethos that values self-expression over self-control." And just last month, Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* columnist Alan Saxe mused, "I wonder whether more money would make for better education, or whether there is something fundamentally wrong in our family and cultural life that no amount of money will rectify the problem."

But it's not just the conservatives who are fretting. Former president Jimmy Carter is sounding the alarm, too. He's just released his own book on the subject, entitled: *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis*. And earlier this year, another Democrat, Senator Hillary Clinton, introduced legislation aimed at the content of video games. Explaining her rationale, the senator said: "People are experiencing deep concerns about losing control over the raising of their own children. Parents worry that their children will not grow up with the same values that they did, because of the overwhelming presence of the media." So finally, here is an issue that liberals and conservatives can fully agree upon.

No wonder, then, that a national survey done just this year found that only 51 percent of adults think the country's best years are still ahead of us.

Yes, we've got trouble, too. Our nation is going to hell in a hand basket, and the delivery truck is being taken for a joyride by our teenagers.

All of which I politely respond to with: Bunk.

Now I admit, I'm not the most qualified person to voice dissent. I'm not a politician, a pundit or a social scientist. Heck, I'm not even a parent. But I do work with kids—"tough kids," as they say—every day. To paraphrase Dr. Marcus Welby, I'm not a teenager, but I play one in the classroom.

But even with those minimal qualifications, I'm here today to tell you: We are shrinking our kids' potential. Young people today are no worse than they have ever been.

First, I would ask you to consider the historic perspective. The simple truth is that adults have ALWAYS been concerned about the kids. It's been going on literally since recorded history. Here, for example, are some of the grievances of parents from earlier times:

--Hesiod, 8th century BCE: "I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words."

--Socrates, 5th century BCE: "The children now love luxury; they show disrespect for elders; and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are tyrants, not the servants of their households."

--And in the 11th century CE, Peter the Hermit lamented: "The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for their parents or old age. ...They talk as if they alone know everything, and what passes for wisdom in us is foolishness to them."

These ancients sound eerily similar to what parents might say today. (Although I do have to wonder how Peter could claim to know so much about the kids; after all, he was a hermit.)

And in our youthful country, there have been just as many warnings of impending doom. For example, a prominent colonial official complained that the younger generation was causing parents "the greatest trouble and grief."

Further, historian Carl Degler notes that in the 1800s, a common topic of letters written by foreign visitors to the U.S. was the "undisciplined behavior of American children and their lackadaisical parents."

Nor, apparently, have our youth improved with time. A 1954 *Newsweek* cover blared: "Let's Face It: Our Teenagers Are Out of Control." This theme was echoed in several popular movies, as Elvis rocked the Jailhouse, Brando became a "wild one" and James Dean rebelled without a cause. And don't forget that our introductory theme, "Ya Got Trouble" is from the Broadway show "The Music Man" that debuted in 1957.

And then there were the '60s. If parents of the '50s were concerned, parents of this decade were absolutely distraught. Both *Newsweek* and *Time* weighed in on the 'moral revolution' among teens, while scholarly accounts of the decade are even more grim, bearing titles like *Coming Apart*, *The Unraveling of America*, *The Civil War of the 1960s* and *The End of Modern America*. Perhaps this is what Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young meant when they said: "Your father's hell will slowwwwwwwly go by."

But I don't want you to think I'm picking on any of our Baby Boomer members; you guys really weren't so bad. And besides, your grandparents were even worse.

The 1920s, it turns out, produced some of the worst kids in the nation's history. As one prominent historian has written: "Innumerable families were torn with dissension, and fathers and mothers lay awake asking themselves whether their children were not utterly lost."

This conclusion is supported by several contemporary sources. In 1922, for example, *The New Republic* declared: "There is no doubt that boys and girls have a greater freedom and frankness which their elders have never experienced." In 1925, a highly respected judge named Benjamin Barr Lindsey published a book entitled: *The Revolt of Modern Youth*. And another prominent judge in New York bluntly concluded: "This generation is sex-mad."

Another thing to consider is that if we're really looking for someone to blame for our moral decline, we should start with the adults; as Pogo discovered, the real enemy is us—and our arthritis.

For example, each year, some 500,000 unmarried teen girls give birth. However, that's only 30 percent of all unwed births; the other 70 percent occur among *adults*. Similarly, there are about five times as many adults as teens who get a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) each year.

Adults also account for about 84 percent of all illicit drug use, and commit roughly 88 percent of all violent crimes. Of course, considering how many of us have an unintended pregnancy or get surprised with an STD, perhaps a little violence is to be expected.

I also want you to know that, despite everything we seem to hear to the contrary, kids today really aren't doing so bad. And don't you know, I've got the data to prove it.

--Underage drinking? For the year 2002, the rate was the lowest it had been since 1987.

--Teen drug use? It's gone down, too. The number of drug-related Emergency Room visits for kids actually is about half what it was in 1994.

--Teen violence? In 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for violent offenses declined for the *ninth* consecutive year. In fact, the arrest rate for juvenile homicides in 2000 was the lowest it has been since 1966.

Kids also are doing better in school than we've been led to believe. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the average scores in both math and reading were *higher* in 2004 than they were in the early 1970s.

Okay, you say, but what about—teen sex? Well, once again, the reality is very different: Since 1991, the birth rate for girls ages 15-19 has declined by one-third. In fact, the teen pregnancy rate today is the lowest it has been in any decade since they started keeping statistics—including the 1950s. Back then, of course, we had a word to describe unmarried pregnant girls: They were called "brides."

So I hope what you *won't* do is get too down on our young people today. As I've tried to point out, there has never been a time when adults weren't certain that our moral fabric was coming apart at the seams.

The fact is, the average kid today is more worldly, more savvy and more tolerant than any of his predecessors. He's heard about Terri Schiavo, AIDS, pedophile priests and Iraq, and what he doesn't know about them, he can Google.

He's more likely to be a vegetarian, and less likely to believe in free love and free drugs. And he's much less likely to be a racist, a sexist or a homophobe. He's probably a better dancer, too; if you don't believe that, just watch a rerun from the early days of *American Bandstand*.

Try, also, not to get too worried about the future of our country. Remember that previous generations of Americans happily embraced practices such as slavery, segregation, spousal abuse and genocide. And yet we're still here, slowly outgrowing these bad habits—all because some young people decided to reject their parents' values. As Helen Keller observed: "It is not possible for civilization to flow backward while there is youth in the world." I think she had it right.

And this, I think, is another part of what Mark Twain was trying to say with his classic story of *Huckleberry Finn*: Kids will always be kids, and adults will always be worried about them. So to conclude, I would like you to leave with one more passage from Mr. Twain. Twain wrote: "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.

My friends, the kids are alright—and they're getting better every day.

HoFW NEWS AND VIEWS

NOVEMBER MEETING: Our featured speaker of the evening delivered what we promised: a talented raconteur drew on a formidable acquaintance of Texas and Southern folklore both to enrich and to delight the 27 humanists present at the meeting. Attendance at our sessions has been on the rise. So has our membership. Hats off to those who have diligently proselytized on behalf of our values.

DECEMBER MEETING: We will celebrate the winter solstice again this year, this time with dinner at the Szechuan Restaurant, 4750 Bryant Irvin Road (about a block south of I-20/820 on the west side of the street). Those who wish to practice their oratorical skills will be given (almost) free play. Short stories, no longer than three minutes please, and anecdotes will be welcomed. In the Roman tradition each participant will be asked to order as if for all.

JANUARY MEETING: Fellow humanist Mary Hunter will speak to us on January 11 at Friends of the Fort Worth Public Library, our usual meeting place. Time: 7:00 p.m. Her talk will be entitled: Intelligent Design: Creationism in a Paper Lab Coat.

TREASURER'S REPORT: The Association had income of \$36 and outlays of \$71.13 for the reporting month. Our balance stood at \$877.02 as of November 9.

REMINDER: Dolores will be collecting food for the needy at the restaurant. No, not in doggie bags, but from our donations. Don't forget to bring a can.

You will also have an opportunity to catch up on your dues if you are still owing for the 2005/2006 membership year.

COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER ARE APPRECIATED. They don't need to be academic tomes. Anything you deem to be edifying to our membership will be considered.

TOO MANY BOOKS? If your bookshelves are overloaded from excessive bibliophilism, consider a donation to our usual hosts. Friends of the Fort Worth Public Library will be happy to take any books of marketable value that you no longer need. Also, the bookshop provides a pleasant and relaxing ambience to search for those reading jewels you've never gotten around to purchasing.

OUR MEMBERSHIP INCREASED BY ONE: *Texas Humanist* James Ward Lee, after regaling us with what were, at times, rather spicy tales, decided to join us. We proffer him a hearty welcome!

YOUR OFFICERS AND HOW TO REACH THEM

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SOME NEWS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

AN IDEA UNINTELLIGIBLE TO MANY RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES: After President Bush endorsed equal billing to Intelligent Design in America's classrooms, it seemed the controversial "theory" was about to win equal status with Darwinian theory in public secondary schools. Thereafter, the Kansas Board of Education approved the teaching of ID along with Darwinian theory in Kansas classrooms, the Dover, PA, school board brought several leading lights of ID "theory" to argue their case in a U.S. district court and Pope Benedict backtracked on Pope John Paul's endorsement of evolution. "Teach the controversy" was a mantra that resonated in a democracy not especially well-tutored in evolutionary theory.

However, ID as a field of inquiry is failing to gain the traction in academic quarters, even at conservative seminaries, that its supporters had hoped for. And if ID proponents lose the case in Dover, where eight school board supporters of ID were recently voted out of office, there could be serious consequences for the movement's credibility. On college campuses, the movement's theorists are academic pariahs, publicly denounced by their own colleagues. Design proponents have published few papers in peer reviewed scientific journals. The Templeton Foundation, which initially supported conferences and courses to debate ID, has become disillusioned and has reportedly ceased financial support.

It has also failed to find a warm embrace at many evangelical colleges. Scholars and theologians even at many conservative schools have come to find its arguments unconvincing and insufficient substantively in comparison to evolutionary theory. "It can function as one of those ambiguous signs in the world that point to an intelligent creator and help support the faith of the faithful, but it just doesn't have the compelling or explanatory power to have much of an impact on the academy," said Frank D. Macchia, a professor of Christian theology at Vanguard University, which is affiliated with the Assemblies of God, the nation's largest Pentecostal denomination. The only university where it has gained a major institutional foothold is the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, which created a Center for Science and Theology for William Dembski, after he left Baylor amid protests by faculty members opposed to teaching it.

If the judge in the Dover case rules against intelligent design, the decision would be likely to dissuade other school boards from incorporating it into their curriculums. The Discovery Institute, ID's chief financial backer, has already backed away from the case arguing that the matter should not be politicized. Apparently, they have sensed the direction the wind is blowing. (NYT)

TEXAS GETS AN "F" ON SCIENCE EDUCATION: The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, a nonprofit organization engaged in assessing primary and secondary education, has just released a report on the status of science education in our public schools. Texas was among the fifteen states rating an "F". Some consolation can be gotten from the fact that Kansas got an "F-". Only fifteen states, including New York and California, rated an "A". Overall, the nation, the study found, is doing poorly in giving its students an adequate education in the sciences in grades 1-12. (Google "Thomas B. Fordham Foundation" for the summary.)

NO KID GLOVES' TREATMENT FOR ALITO: The Senate Judiciary Committee will demand that Supreme Court nominee Samuel A. Alito, Jr., answer more questions than did Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., and it may subject him to extra hours of grilling to do so, the panel's chairman, Senator Arlen Specter, said December 7. Specter said he sees little enthusiasm among Democrats for a filibuster and he believes the nominee's fate will turn largely on "how credible he is" at the panel's confirmation hearing, which begins January 9. (WP)

AMERICANS UNITED SUES IOWA FOR PROSELYTIZING PROGRAM AT PRISONS

Americans United for Separation of Church and State has brought a suit against the state of Iowa for instituting a Charles Colson-backed rehabilitation program at its Newton Correctional Facility. Participants in the program are being told that the Bible ordains men to run households; that homosexuality is a sin, that non-Christian religions are "of Satan" and that only persons baptized as adults can get into Heaven. Participants live in a special wing where they are immersed in an evangelical worldview 24 hours a day. "It's both unconstitutional and morally wrong for the government to pressure inmates to convert to evangelical Christianity as the price of obtaining rehabilitation services," argues AU's Executive Director,

Barry W. Lynn. "It is in the public interest for inmates to receive the best rehabilitation possible, so that they can make a contribution to society when they leave prison. But no American should be strong-armed by the government to adopt a particular religious viewpoint." (C&S)

NO LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL: Readers having a particular interest in the Iraq mess may want to take a look at Seymour M. Hersh's piece in the 12/5 edition of the *New Yorker* concerning the administration's plans for waging the war for the next four years. In his recent speech to naval cadets, Bush laid out the long called for "Plan for Victory." He was obviously responding to political pressure since he and other administration spokesmen have been insisting all along that the war, now 32 months old, was going swimmingly and as recently as six months ago Cheney insisted that the insurgency was on its last legs. The inconsistency of coming up with a plan when an unplanned war was going so well has of course received no explanation.

Based on numerous interviews with former White House officials and current Pentagon brass, the scenario that emerges is a gradual reduction of the U.S. role to air strikes in support of Iraqi troops. What has the Pentagon sweating in this scenario is loss of control over who gets bombed: the prospect that the Iraqi military will use U.S. air strikes to settle old scores having nothing to do with the insurgency. A second concern is the prospect of still larger civilian casualties. According to human rights group calculations, upwards of 30,000 noncombatants have lost their lives since April 2003. (Our military keeps no tab on civilian casualties.) How many died as the result of insurgency strikes and how many died as "collateral damage" is impossible to know. The many reports from Iraqi doctors, nurses, hospital administrators and other observers suggest that the toll from the latter has nonetheless been very significant. If the war comes to be perceived as a war against Sunnis, who constitute 80 percent of the Muslim world, won't Bush's vision of Iraq as a beacon of democracy in the Arab world turn into a public relations nightmare? Besides, is there any reason that air war in Iraq, where most insurgency activity is in heavily populated areas, succeed any better than in Viet Nam, where most of the combat took place away from urban centers and where, presumably aerial bombing can be employed more effectively?

Especially interesting in the Hersh essay, to Humanists anyway, is the religious fervor Bush has invested into his war on terror. I quote Hersh in the following:

Bush's closest advisors have long been aware of the religious nature of his policy commitments. In recent interviews, one former senior official, who served in Bush's first term, spoke extensively about the connection between the President's religious faith and his view of the war in Iraq. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, he was told that Bush felt that "God put me here" to deal with the war on terror. The President's belief was fortified by the Republican sweep in the 2002 congressional election; Bush saw the victory as a purposeful message from God that "he's the man," the former official said. Publicly, Bush depicted his reelection as a referendum on the war; privately, he spoke of it as another manifestation of divine purpose. ... "Bush is a believer in the adage: People may suffer and die but the Church advances. ... They [Cheney and Rove, who have reportedly taken over still more of the presidential duties] keep him in the gray world of religious idealism where he wants to be anyway."

WHITE HOUSE/ SENATE GOP COMPROMISE ON PATRIOT ACT REPORTEDLY REACHED

The deal, which would extend most provisions of the Act for four years, would curb FBI subpoena power and require the Justice Department to more fully report its requests for information from banks, businesses, libraries and individuals. The ACLU argues that the new bill would nonetheless leave the privacy of Americans subject to invasion by federal agents, agents who would not need to establish any connection between the records they sought and a suspected terrorist. Democrats are dissatisfied with the terms of the

agreement and may have enough Republican support to block passage of the current draft version. (WP, AP, ACLU Blog)

A WEAK DEFENSE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON TORTURE OF DETAINEES

In an attempt to quell a growing storm in Europe over the CIA's secret prisons, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday [Dec. 5] issued a defense based on the same legalistic jujitsu and morally obtuse double talk that led the Bush administration into a swamp of human rights abuses in the first place. Ms. Rice insisted that the U.S. government "does not authorize or condone torture of detainees. What she didn't say is that President Bush's political appointees have redefined the term "torture" so that it does not cover practices, such as simulated drowning, mock execution and "cold cells", that have long been considered abusive by authorities such as her own State Department.

Ms. Rice said: "It is also U.S. policy that authorized interrogation will be consistent with U.S. obligations under the Convention Against Torture, which prohibits inhuman or degrading treatment. What she didn't explain is that, under the administration's eccentric definition of "U.S. obligations", cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment is *not* prohibited as long as it does not occur on U.S. territory. That is the reason for the secret prisons that the CIA has established in European countries and other locations around the world, and for the "renditions" of detainees to countries such as Egypt, and Jordan' so that the administration can violate the very treaty that Ms. Rice claims it is upholding. (WP editorial)

Meantime, the administration reportedly is still negotiating with Senator McCain over a bill that would prohibit torture by any U.S. government entity, including the CIA, while Cheney has been lobbying the House to exclude the CIA from any such provision. McCain recently told Nightly News' Report's Jim Lehrer that he would not accept any exception for the CIA.

TEXAS SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES BUOYED BY NOVEMBER 8 ELECTION

Texas social conservatives want to translate their resounding victory on a gay marriage ban into broader results: reducing the state's divorce rate and passing a nationwide constitutional amendment to prevent same-sex marriage. Representative Warren Chishum of Pampa, who wrote the amendment, wants the state to consider repealing or modifying its no-fault divorce law. According to Chishum, Texas' divorce rate exceeds that of New York. Texas became the 19th state to place a gay marriage ban in its constitution. Just one of Texas' 254 counties (Travis) voted against it. (Dallas Morning News)

Meanwhile, gay marriage in Britain will become legal in Britain as of December 20. The Economist magazine writes that the British are much more secularist than their American cousins, not necessarily more tolerant. The religious dimension is largely absent. Even the Conservative Party supports it. Among those first in line is Sir Elton John.

On December 6 arguments were heard by the Supreme Court concerning whether the government has the right to cut off aid to schools whose law faculties, rejecting the military's discriminatory policies toward gays, deny access to their students by military recruiters. News reports suggest the government will probably win this one. Open acceptance of gays in the British military has worked smoothly, according to the Economist. Apparently the same is true in other European countries where an open acceptance policy has been instituted. Again, more secularism and less religion seem to make the difference.

LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN SEEK ABORTION RIGHTS. Latin America holds some of the world's most stringent abortion laws, yet it still has the developing world's highest rate of abortion—a rate that is far higher even than in Western Europe, where abortion is widely and legally available. Increasingly, however, women's rights groups are mounting challenges in the courts and on the streets to liberalize laws that in some countries ban abortion under any circumstance. Spurred by the high mortality among women, some governments have begun to loosen once ironclad restrictions and opened the door to more changes.

Today, abortion in the region is readily available only in Cuba and a few other Caribbean nations. In Brazil, the world's largest Catholic country, rape victims cannot get an abortion without providing a police report. A presidential commission, however, has recommended legalizing abortion up to the third month of pregnancy. The Brazilian Congress is debating the plan. Uruguay almost legalized abortion last year setting the stage for a renewed push soon. A court case in Columbia, if successful, would legalize abortion when the mother's life is in danger, when the fetus is expected to die of abnormalities, or when the pregnancy resulted from rape. The central argument is that current law violates international treaty obligations to ensure a woman's right to life and health.

The abortion rights campaigns in these countries come on the heels of falling birth rates, a growing female presence in the workforce and liberalized divorce laws. Emboldened women's rights groups have taken to the streets in Buenos Aires, Santiago and Bogota to demand action by the authorities. Regional health officials argue that tough anti-abortion laws have had little effect in curbing abortion. The rate of abortion in Latin America is 37 per 1,000 women of childbearing age, the highest outside Eastern Europe, according to UN figures. Four million abortions take place in Latin America annually and up to 5,000 women are believed to die each year from complications from abortion. As is to be expected, the Catholic Church is vigorously opposing any liberalizing of current laws. (NYT)

U.S. REP TO THE GLOBAL WARMING TALKS A LONG-TIME FAVORITE OF EXXON MOBIL

A memo that recently became available to the media indicates that the U.S. leader to the global warming talks in Montreal has enjoyed the support of Exxon Mobil since 2001. Exxon Mobil in 2001 approached House Speaker Hastert about giving Harlan Watson, a then House Science Committee staffer, and other prominent critics of global warming, a larger role in setting U.S. environmental policy. The oil giant's friendly persuasion bore fruit. Bush appointed Watson to head the State Department's top environmental post and he is now leading the U.S. delegation to the Montreal conference. Environmental groups complain Watson is doing what he was appointed to do: see that nothing much is agreed upon at Montreal. The Bush administration, opposed to any more regulation, want the emphasis to shift to "voluntary" curbs by polluters and technological fixes for environmental degradation. Exxon Mobil has been the oil industry's most vocal critic of studies showing a link between global warming and manmade pollution of the atmosphere. (var.)

CHIEF EXECUTIVES' PAY STILL RISING; MEDIAN INCOME STILL FALLING

America's top executives had plenty to celebrate as they tucked in their turkey this Thanksgiving—a resurgent stock market, record profits and, above all, their own ever-expanding pay packets. In 2004 the ratio of chief executives' compensation to the pay of the average production worker jumped to 432 to one from 302 to one in 2003. In 1990 the ratio was 107 to one and in 1982 a mere 42 to one. This year's numbers seem certain to show the gap widening. (Economist)

Though the economy grew 4.2 percent in 2004, real median household income—the income of households in the middle of the income distribution, adjusted for inflation—fell for the fifth year in a row. The number

of Americans without health insurance continued to rise. It's pretty clear the figures moved in the same direction in 2005. (Paul Krugman, NYT columnist)

The December/January edition of *Free Inquiry* carries several very topical articles. Especially recommended are:

“The Republican War on Science,” by Chris Mooney. The author argues that the Bush Administration has bent over backwards to appease two of its core constituencies: 1) Industry, which is happy to bend science to halt and rollback regulation; 2) The religious right, which would use science to bolster its moralistic agenda.

“The Suicide Bomber and the Leap of Faith,” by Stephen Gallagher. The chief inspiration for modern “jihadism” came from Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian cleric, who was hanged several decades ago for his role in the Muslim Brotherhood uprising in his native country. Qutb spent a lot of time in the west, including a spell as a student at Colorado State University. Gallagher argues that Qutb absorbed a lot of western philosophy, particularly from Nietzsche, Heidegger and, especially, Kierkegaard, during his residence in the West and that these philosophers, not the Koran, are the principal inspiration of Islamic radicalism.

“Morality without Morality,” by Marc Hauser and Peter Singer. Empirical studies indicate that we are endowed with a moral faculty that guide the development of an intuitive sense of right and wrong and is an outcome of the millions of years that our ancestors lived as social mammals. This is incompatible with the story of divine creation, argue Hauser and Singer.