

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

November, 2012

Politics, again. We peer into conservative minds, shenanigans on Staten Island, and the politics of greed, both contemporary and 16th century. We offer some heretical thoughts about the upcoming annual turkeyfest, visit the Dalai Lama, and enjoy some centuries-long lunches. We are gobsmacked by dumbth in Florida, denial in Georgia, and insanity in Arkansas. We celebrate our Freethought Day celebration and freethinking scientists ... but first we mourn our greatest. – JR

PAUL KURTZ

December 21, 1925 - October 20, 2012

The meaning of life is not to be discovered only after death in some hidden, mysterious realm; on the contrary, it can be found by eating the succulent fruit of the Tree of Life and by living in the here and now as fully and creatively as we can.

The “father of secular humanism” was Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, who published over 800 articles or reviews and authored and edited over 50 books.

Secular humanism is avowedly non-religious. It is a eupraxsophy (good practical wisdom), which draws its basic principles and ethical values from science, ethics, and philosophy. – “What is Secular Humanism?”

Paul founded the Council for Secular Humanism (with which SHSNY has been allied since our own founding), and led that national organization for over three decades. He also founded the publishing house Prometheus Books, was the founder and past chairman of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (formerly the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP)), and of the Center for Inquiry. After resigning from all those positions in 2010, he founded The Institute for Science and Human Values, wrote its manifesto, a *Neo-Humanist Statement of Secular Principles and Values*, and founded its quarterly, *The Human Prospect*.

The beginning of wisdom is the awareness that there is insufficient evidence that a god or gods have created us and the recognition that we are responsible in part for our own destiny. Human beings can achieve this good life, but it is by the cultivation of the virtues of

intelligence and courage, not faith and obedience, that we will most likely be able to do so.

– “*The Transcendental Temptation*”

At different times in his amazing career, Paul was editor of The American Humanist Association’s magazine, *The Humanist*, and later editor in chief of the Council for Secular Humanism’s magazine, *Free Inquiry*. At one time or another he was co-chair of the International Humanist and



Ethical Union (IHEU), a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Humanist Laureate, president of the International Academy of Humanism, and Honorary Associate of Rationalist International. As a leading member of the American Humanist Association he was co-author of *Humanist Manifesto II*. The asteroid (6629) Kurtz is named in his honor.

Human life has no meaning independent of itself. There is no cosmic force or deity to give it meaning or significance. There is no ultimate destiny for man. Such a belief is an illusion of humankind’s infancy. The meaning of life is what we choose to give it. Meaning grows out of human purposes alone. Nature provides us with an infinite range of opportunities, but it is only our vision and our actions that select and realize those that we desire. ... Thus the good life is achieved, invented, fashioned in an active life of enterprise and endeavor. But whether or not an individual chooses to enter into the arena depends upon him alone. Those who do can find it energizing, exhilarating, full of triumph and satisfaction. In spite of failures, setbacks, suffering, and pain, life can be fun. – “Exuberance: A Philosophy of Happiness”

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SHSNY is an Affiliated Local Group of the Council for Secular Humanism, and a Charter Chapter of the American Humanist Association.

THANKSGIVING THOUGHTS ON PLYMOUTH ROCK, BEER, AND A CURE FOR CLAP

Tony Horowitz

(From *A Voyage Long and Strange*, excerpted on delanceyplace.com, 11/23/2011)

(Author Tony Horowitz heard from a Plymouth Rock tour guide named Claire that the most common question from tourists was why the date etched on the rock was 1620 instead of 1492.

"People think Columbus dropped off the Pilgrims and sailed home." Claire had to patiently explain that Columbus's landing and the Pilgrims' arrival occurred a thousand miles and 128 years apart.)

By the time the first English settled, other Europeans had already reached half of the forty-eight states that today make up the continental United States. One of the earliest arrivals was Giovanni da Verrazano, who toured the Eastern Seaboard in 1524, almost a full century before the Pilgrims arrived. ... Even less remembered are the Portuguese pilots who steered Spanish ships along both coasts of the continent in the sixteenth century, probing upriver to Bangor Maine and all the way to Oregon. ... In 1542 Spanish conquistadors completed a reconnaissance of the continent's interior: scaling the Appalachians, rafting the Mississippi, peering down the Grand Canyon, and galloping as far inland as central Kansas. ...

The Spanish didn't just explore: they settled from the Rio Grande to the Atlantic. Upon founding St. Augustine, the first European city on U.S. soil, the Spanish gave thanks and dined with Indians — fifty-six years before the Pilgrim Thanksgiving at Plymouth. ... Plymouth, it turned out, wasn't even the first English colony in New England. That distinction belonged to Fort St. George in Popham, Maine. Nor were the Pilgrims the first to settle Massachusetts. In 1602 a band of English built a fort on the island of Cuttyhunk. They came not for religious freedom but to get rich from digging sassafras, a commodity prized in Europe as a cure for the clap. ...

The Pilgrims and later the Americans who pushed west from the Atlantic didn't pioneer a virgin wilderness. They occupied a land long since transformed by European contact. ... Samoset, the first Indian the Pilgrims met at Plymouth, greeted the settlers in English. The first thing he asked for was beer.

JON STEWART ON AN OLD-FASHIONED THANKSGIVING

I celebrated Thanksgiving in an old-fashioned way. I invited everyone in my neighborhood to my house, we had an enormous feast ... and then I killed them and took their land.

BART SIMPSON SAYS GRACE AT THANKSGIVING

Dear God: We paid for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing.

THANKSGIVING Philip Appleman

O let us give thanks for the glorious spasm that spurted atoms on an endless quest for the far edge of everything, let's praise the ancient heave and buckle, the burn, blister, and boil that birthed our blue-green planet, be grateful for the lucky spark that seasoned our primal soup, and honor the ultimate sacrifice of the creeping pioneers who dragged us up onto dry land. Let's be thankful for the heroism of all those fallen fathers who bequeathed to us these novelties, our clever arms and legs, thankful too for the company of moles and manatees, sloths and seals, horses and hedgehogs — and thankful for the monkeys, gibbons, and gorillas who once upon a time set off on gambles of their own, aping our long, long saga: vines choking trees to reach the sun, predators lurking at water holes ... Now, somewhere out there, the atoms race on, still searching for the edge of everything, but here, snug in our tundra and grassland, our forest and savanna, let us thank the furry ancestors who brought us along this way, and now stay at our side as we press on to some great adventure just beyond our dreams.

THE HOUSE CONSERVATIVE OF *THE TIMES* CONSIDERS THE CONSERVATIVE MIND

David Brooks

(Excerpted from "The Conservative Mind", on the OpEd page of The New York Times, 9/24/2012)

When I joined the staff of *National Review* as a lowly associate in 1984, the magazine, and the conservative movement itself, was a fusion of two different mentalities.

On the one side, there were the economic conservatives. These were people that anybody following contemporary Republican politics would be familiar with. They spent a lot of time worrying about the way government intrudes upon economic liberty. They upheld freedom as their highest political value. They admired risk-takers. They worried that excessive government would create a sclerotic nation with a dependent populace.

But there was another sort of conservative, who would be less familiar now. This was the traditional conservative, intellectual heir to Edmund Burke, Russell Kirk, Clinton Rossiter and Catholic social teaching. This

sort of conservative didn't see society as a battleground between government and the private sector. Instead, the traditionalist wanted to preserve a society that functioned as a harmonious ecosystem, in which the different layers were nestled upon each other: individual, family, company, neighborhood, religion, city government and national government.

Because they were conservative, they tended to believe that power should be devolved down to the lower levels of this chain. They believed that people should lead disciplined, orderly lives, but doubted that individuals have the ability to do this alone, unaided by social custom and by God. So they were intensely interested in creating the sort of social, economic and political order that would encourage people to work hard, finish school and postpone childbearing until marriage. ...

This kind of conservative cherishes custom, believing that the individual is foolish but the species is wise. It is usually best to be guided by precedent. This conservative believes in prudence on the grounds that society is complicated and it's generally best to reform it steadily but cautiously. Providence moves slowly but the devil hurries.

The two conservative tendencies lived in tension. But together they embodied a truth that was put into words by the child psychologist John Bowlby, that life is best organized as a series of daring ventures from a secure base.

The economic conservatives were in charge of the daring ventures that produced economic growth. The traditionalists were in charge of establishing the secure base — a society in which families are intact, self-discipline is the rule, children are secure and government provides a subtle hand. Ronald Reagan embodied both sides of this fusion, and George W. Bush tried to recreate it with his compassionate conservatism. But that effort was doomed because in the ensuing years, conservatism changed.

In the polarized political conflict with liberalism, shrinking government has become the organizing conservative principle. Economic conservatives have the money and the institutions. They have taken control. Traditional conservatism has gone into eclipse. These days, speakers at Republican gatherings almost always use the language of market conservatism — getting government off our backs, enhancing economic freedom. Even Mitt Romney, who subscribes to a faith that knows a lot about social capital, relies exclusively on the language of market conservatism.

It's not so much that today's Republican politicians reject traditional, one-nation conservatism. They don't even know it exists. There are few people on the conservative side who'd be willing to raise taxes on the affluent to fund mobility programs for the working class. There are very few willing to use government to actively intervene in chaotic neighborhoods, even when 40 percent of American kids are born out of wedlock. There are very few Republicans who protest against a House Republican budget proposal that cuts domestic discretionary spending to absurdly low levels.

The results have been unfortunate. Since they no longer speak in the language of social order, Republicans

have very little to offer the less educated half of this country. Republicans have very little to say to Hispanic voters, who often come from cultures that place high value on communal solidarity.

Republicans repeat formulas—government support equals dependency—that make sense according to free-market ideology, but oversimplify the real world. Republicans like Romney often rely on an economic language that seems corporate and alien to people who do not define themselves in economic terms. No wonder Romney has trouble relating.

Some people blame bad campaign managers for Romney's underperforming campaign, but the problem is deeper. Conservatism has lost the balance between economic and traditional conservatism. The Republican Party has abandoned half of its intellectual ammunition. It appeals to people as potential business owners, but not as parents, neighbors and citizens.

Comment: I'm a liberal, but I have no real, gut-level quarrel with the "traditional conservatives" described by Mr. Brooks — I could (and did) live with them. I voted for Jake Javits and Nelson Rockefeller (first time only), for Louis Lefkowitz (every time), John Lindsay twice, and even, Zeus forgive me, for Rudy Giuliani once. But I cannot stomach the "social conservatives" (really reactionaries) who took over the Republican Party in a "deal with the devil" after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

For the first half of the 20th century, the Democratic Party was a shameless coalition of Northern liberals and Southern segregationists. Progressive ideas inched forward only if Senatorial grandees from Alabama and Mississippi—elected-for-life in their one-party, poll-taxed states—were allowed to maintain "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!" That changed when Lyndon Johnson signed the landmark legislation in 1964—passed by Democrats and "moderate" Republicans (remember them?)—and famously predicted that the Democrats had "lost the South for a generation".

More than a generation. Richard Nixon seized the opportunity, won the presidency in 1968 with the Republicans' new "Southern strategy", and the party of Dwight Eisenhower turned to the likes of Strom Thurmond, scooping up the followers of George Wallace along the way. And now, just as the racist satraps had a stranglehold on the Democratic Party for half a century, their inheritors—the Bible-banging anti-evolution, anti-gay, anti-choice, anti-women, anti-science, anti-21st century Neanderthals (and still-racist "birthers") of the Stupid States—own the Republican Party. — JR

JAMES LIPTON TYPE-CASTS MITT ROMNEY

Talking to Chris Mathews on MSNBC's "Hardball" show, James Lipton, Dean Emeritus of the Actors Studio Drama School and host of "Inside the Actors Studio" on Bravo, confessed that it had been hard for him to figure out when Mitt Romney was acting, "because he acts so many different roles, and keeps changing". But, he said, he finally got a handle on the real Romney character.

"He's a boss. He's the boss who tells lame jokes in meetings and waits for everyone to laugh. Or else."

CONGRESS ... UM, I MEAN PARLIAMENT REJECTS THE 1536 STIMULUS PACKAGE

Hilary Mantel

(Thomas Cromwell, a blacksmith's son who has risen to become Secretary to the King and Master of the Rolls under Henry VIII in Ms. Mantel's Booker Prize-winning novels of history, Wolf Hall and Bring Up the Bodies, muses in the latter on government and greed. – JR)

In March, [1536] Parliament knocks back his new poor law. It was too much for the Commons to digest, that rich men might have some duty to the poor; that if you get fat, as gentlemen of England do, on the wool trade, you have some responsibility to the men turned off the land, the laborers without labor, the sowers without a field. England needs roads, forts, harbors, bridges. Men need work. It's a shame to see them begging their bread, when honest labor could keep the realm secure. Can we not put them together, the hands and the task?

But Parliament cannot see how it is the state's job to create work. Are not these matters in God's hands, and is not poverty and dereliction part of his eternal order? To everything there is a season: a time to starve and a time to thrive. If rain falls for six months solid and rots the grain in the fields, there must be providence in it; for God knows his trade. It is an outrage to the rich and enterprising, to suggest that they should pay an income tax, only to put bread in the mouths of the workshy. And if Secretary Cromwell argues that famine provokes criminality: well, are there not hangmen enough?

2012 ELECTORAL ECONOMICS

Wiley Miller

*(Transcribed from the cartoon "Non Sequitur", 10/11/2012)
(Two fat cats in a club room. One looks up from his newspaper to speak.)*

I think the two-party system is working just fine. Besides, buying a third one would be a bookkeeping nightmare."

THE MAN WHO SAW A "VAST WASTELAND" ON TV TAKES ANOTHER LOOK

Newton H. Minow

(Excerpted from "A Glimmer in the Vast Wasteland", on the Op-Ed page of The New York Times, 10/3/2012)

Sadly, the marriage of television and politics in our country has been mostly a history of disappointment. In 1952, television stations—which are licensed by the F.C.C. to serve the public interest—began selling commercials to political campaigns. Other democracies have rejected this idea, and instead provide public service time to candidates during campaign periods. Over the next 60 years, more and more political commercials flooded the airwaves, forcing candidates to raise more and more money. Many of the slurs and slogans in these commercials—which are often truth-free—are now paid for by "super PACs" and secretive 501(c)(4) groups.

I believe it is unconscionable that candidates for public

office have to buy access to the airwaves—which the public itself owns—to talk to the public.

Comment: Me, too. And what's stopping us from fixing the problem of money and politics? Money and politics. – JR

THE SECULAR SECRET TO LIFE

Lori Rothman-Alee

On October 14th my inquisitive nature brought me – along with about a thousand others – to the Boston Marriot Copley Place to attend the symposium, "Beyond Religion: Ethics, Values & Well Being".

The symposium began with the question, "Do you think the word 'secular' invokes a negative connotation?" A question one might expect to hear Rachel Maddow ask perhaps John Rafferty, not the Dalai Lama to ask of Father John Keating, a Trappist monk and priest, or Brother David Steindl-Rast a Catholic Benedictine monk. These three men are dedicated to inspiring their own religious communities to embrace the need for secular ethics, and that opening question set the tone for what was quite an open-minded discourse between these three elder leaders.

The symposium was elaborating on the concepts in the Dalai Lama's latest book, *Beyond Religion*. Although he is adorned in the traditional Tibetan monkish attire that dates back thousands of years, the Buddhist leader is a man of the 21st century. And, as he has told his four million Facebook followers:

"The reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate. That is why I am increasingly convinced that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics beyond religion altogether."

Two hours were spent encouraging the audience, a mix of Buddhists, Christians and, indeed, secular humanists, to transcend the religious wars that are damaging our societies. The three discussed evolution – Yes, scientific evolution. Father Keating said he believes the biological evolution of man has ended, but that the evolution of our mind and its perception of religion and spirituality is evolving.

Hearing these religious leaders promote the need to outline a system of ethics for humanity based on understanding and mutual respect, not on one sect's need to "prove" its beliefs and rituals, gave me hope for future. It is only through tolerance and removal of the ego that we can move forward and begin to end the religious wars that have plagued our planet for so long.

So kudos to the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics & Transformative Values for having such an important conversation. The center was founded with the hope of promoting the idea of secular ethics and values, which would facilitate the development of a sustainable and peaceful society, independent of religious orientation.

Oh and thanks for beginning the event with the musical talents of James Taylor, who reminded us "that the secret to life is enjoying the passage of time". I must say I enjoyed the passage of time that day.

FREETHOUGHT DAY WAS ANOTHER FILL-THE-ROOM SUCCESS

Nearly fifty SHSNY members, friends, and fellow-travelers crowded into the upstairs room (Bring in extra tables!) at Pete's Tavern October 7 for the Fourth Annual SHSNY Freethought Day Celebration.

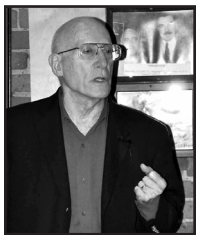
Freethought Day, which in a saner America would be a holiday, commemorates the date (actually October 12) in 1692 that Governor William Phips ended the Salem Witch Trials and declared that "spectral evidence"—you know, "voices" from "angels" and "devils"—would no longer be admissible in Massachusetts courts. So raise a glass every October 12 to Bill Phips, and think freely all day long.

Raise a toast, too, to our 2012 guest speaker, Dr. Charles Debrovner, Past President of the Humanist Institute, Co-Founder and President of the Global Bioethics Initiative, and Clinical Professor at NYU's School of Medicine.

A long, long-time member of SHSNY, too, Chuck's lecture, "Taking Control: Our Lives, Our Deaths", on one of the most important ethical questions of our time—the individual right to die—was enlivened (pun intended) by a very appropriate reading of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy by professional actress Pat Debrovner, and followed by a lively Q&A session that would have gone on all afternoon if we didn't have to give up the room.

LIFE, DEATH, AND SLIPPERY SLOPES

Chuck Debrovner



In my recent, very pleasant, visit with you at Pete's Tavern, to discuss Right to Die issues, I expressed my opinion that it was unfortunate that only Oregon, Washington and Montana had adopted "Death With Dignity" legislation giving patients who are terminally ill the right to enlist medical aid in ending their lives at a time of their choosing.

I urged fellow Humanists to work to have more states do the same. In the stimulating discussion that followed, I proposed that this right be given as well to those who were not terminally ill, when circumstances brought them to the point where they had fully considered their life situation and chose to die.

The difficulties in crafting appropriate legislation that would assure that the person was making assisted suicide the last, and not the first, option were expressed in our group discussion that followed my talk. One of the issues was the danger that such legislation would be the start of a "slippery slope". It is quite a timely one as our presidential candidates debate the economics of health care.

Medical ethicist Dr. Arthur Caplan has said:

"You have forty million people with no health insurance, you have a long term health system that is non-existent. We have no way to pay for



chronic care of people with disability in this country. The only way you are going to pay for it is to spend down to poverty. You have to impoverish yourself to get into the nursing home or the long term health facility. We've spent very little time in this society thinking about how to deal with disability. We don't like it. We isolate it. We tend to put it off in the periphery. And now, in a society that only wants to talk about rationing health care, to bring forward a disabled woman and say, 'Yes, Medicine has something for you. We will give you suicide on demand, but no long term health care system, no health insurance.'"

Caplan is challenging us and the American health care system: Is "Right to Die" so simple? Is the slope too slippery? What do you think?

HUMANISM 101

SECOND MEETING/DISCUSSION: NOVEMBER 26

The purpose of Humanism 101 is to offer a humanist education program for the membership and friends of SHSNY, for our friends at the Community Church of New York (CCNY), and for the larger NYC freethought community. It is open to all who are interested in studying humanist history, philosophy, ethics, ideas, and ideals.

The program is a course of study, led (not lectured) by me—based on the three-year course I am currently completing at the Humanist Institute—in what I hope will be stimulating Socratic dialog based on readings done by you prior to each session.

While each session is open (and free) to anyone, discussions will be limited to those who have read the materials assigned. If you haven't done the reading, you are welcome to audit the evening – and then, I hope, do the reading for the next month.

Each meeting focuses on one book-length assigned text (an optional second for the motivated), and on short online materials in preparation for the discussions. As we proceed, of course, you may suggest additional reading.

I hope to see you November 26. Just show up at CCNY, books and/or notes in hand, ready to go to work. – JR

Meeting/Discussion #2

Monday, November 26, 2012

6:30-8:30 p.m. at

Community Church of New York

28 East 35 Street (red door)

in the 1st floor rear Lounge

Subject: The Philosophies of Humanism

Required Reading:

Online at www.americanhumanist.org/humanism

Humanist Manifestos I, II and III

IHEU Minimum Statement on Humanism

Fred Edwords: *The Humanist Philosophy in Perspective* Book(s)

Paul Kurtz (Ed.): *The Humanist Alternative* (Scan it and select three or four essays that most interest you)

and/or

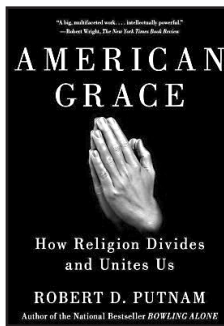
Louise Antony (Ed): *Philosophers without Gods* (Essays 1 and 17 mainly; skim the rest, focusing on what interests you)

SHSNY CALENDAR: NOVEMBER 2012 - JANUARY 2013

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURSDAY, NOV 1, 6:30 pm
 in the front room of
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK
 28 East 35 St. (Park-Mad)
 (3 doors West of the church - red door)

We'll discuss
AMERICAN GRACE:
How Religion Divides
and Unites Us
by Robert D. Putnam
and David E. Campbell

Unique among nations, America is deeply religious, religiously diverse, and remarkably tolerant. In recent decades, however, the nation's religious landscape has undergone



several seismic shocks. *American Grace* is an authoritative, fascinating examination of what precipitated these changes and the role that religion plays in contemporary American society.

Yes, polarization is growing between religious conservatives and secular liberals today, but personal interfaith ties are strengthening. Interfaith marriage has increased, and religious identities have become more fluid.

More people than ever are friendly with someone of a different faith or no faith at all. Putnam and Campbell show how this denser web of personal ties brings greater tolerance, despite the so-called "culture wars".

Paperback and Kindle available.

Join us even if you haven't finished reading.

The SHSNY Book Club is open to all ... and free!

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURSDAY, DEC. 6, 6:30 pm
 at Community Church of NY
 28 East 35 Street (Park-Mad)
THE BEST AMERICAN
SCIENCE WRITING - 2012
Ed. Michio Kaku

The latest edition of the popular annual series dedicated to collecting the most crucial, thought-provoking, and engaging science writing of the year. From climate change to public health, the origins of the universe to the wiring of the human brain, parallel universes to artificial intelligence, these selections cover the full spectrum of scientific inquiry, all brought together by cofounder of string field theory, theoretical physicist, and *New York Times* bestselling author Michio Kaku.

Paperback

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURSDAY, JAN 3, 6:30 pm
 at Community Church of NY
 28 East 35 Street (Park-Mad)
THE SEPARATION OF
CHURCH AND STATE:
Writings on a
Fundamental Freedom by
America's Founders
Forrest Church, Ed.

This concise primer gets past the rhetoric that surrounds the never-ending debate about the founders' intentions, placing their vivid writings on religious liberty in historical perspective. Among other questions it considers: to what degree was "separation" the result of anti-Catholic sentiment?

With running commentary by Forrest Church, this collection informs anyone curious about the original blueprint for our country and its government. — *Paperback*

MONDAY, NOV 12, 7:00 pm
SHSNY MOVIE NIGHT
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St (Lex-3rd Aves)
"BEING THERE"

In director Hal Ashby's 1979 satire, child-like and illiterate gardener Chance (Peter Sellers) is run over by wealthy Eve (Shirley MacLaine), and suddenly becomes gentleman Chauncey Gardiner, thanks to Eve's misunderstanding of his mumbles. Taken in by Eve's family, Chance answers their questions by simply regurgitating what he's heard on TV ("I like to watch.") — from gardening instructions to economic predictions — and soon D.C.'s political elite hail him as a genius.



In an all-star cast, Melvyn Douglas, as a political kingmaker who thinks Chance's bewildered silences are brilliance, won the supporting actor Oscar.

Stay for the hilarious outtakes that run with the closing credits.

SHSNY Movie Night is FREE.
 Check out the menu and prices at www.stonecreeknyc.com

PLANNING AHEAD
Book Club: First Thursday
 at the Community Church of NY
Movie Night: Second Monday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.
Brunch: Third Sunday
 at BXL East Bistro.
Great Lectures: 4th Wednesday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.
Humanism 101: Last Monday
 at the Community Church of NY
 More info: www.shsny.org,
 at humanism.meetup.com/515,
 and 212-308-2165

SHSNY CALENDAR: NOVEMBER 2012 - JANUARY 2013

BRUNCH!

SUNDAY, NOV 18, 12 NOON

We'll gather for our
MONTHLY CASUAL BRUNCH
at **BXL East, 210 East 51 St.**

We'll meet at Noon just east of 3rd Avenue for outstanding Belgian fare, with dishes ranging from waffles and crepes to big burgers, cheese-y onion soup, and pots of lots of mussels — \$7 to \$16, plus a prix-fixe Sunday Brunch (including a drink) for \$18.

Everyone interested in getting together with 15-20 or more like-minded humanists and rationalists for good grub (huge selection of beers!) and lively talk is welcome.

Bring friends!

FRIDAY, NOV 9, 7:00 pm

CFI-NYC &

SCIENCE & THE CITY

**The Strange Science of Sleep
and Dreams**

NY Academy of Sciences

250 Greenwich St. (40th floor)

In collaboration with the 5th Annual Imagine Science Film Festival, Science & the City presents a panel that will explore dream worlds and the subconscious. What is the mind doing while we sleep and what do animals dream about?

Panelists — a neuroscientist, a filmmaker, an artist, and David Randall, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Dreamland: Adventures in the Strange Science of Sleep* — will not only discuss scientific findings, but also tales of sleeping and dreaming from film and literature. In addition, the audience will experience a live demonstration of "The Dream Machine".

Wine/cheese reception following.

CFI members: \$15; Others \$25.

More info: www.nyas.org/Events

GREAT LECTURES ON DVD

WED, NOV 28, 7:00 pm

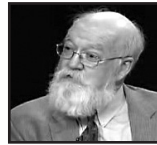
BILL MOYERS INTERVIEWS

DANIEL DENNETT

Author of "*Breaking the Spell*"

Stone Creek Bar & Lounge

140 East 27 St. (Lex-3rd Aves)



As guest host of the "Charlie Rose" show, Bill Moyers talks to philosopher Daniel C. Dennett, the Director of the Center for Cognitive Studies and the Austin B. Fletcher Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University. Dennett discusses his book, *Breaking The Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, that explores the evolution of religion among humans, and his life as an atheist. (Dennett's other books include *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, *Freedom Evolves*, and *Consciousness Explained*.)

It's a fascinating hour, and a delight to see and hear Dennett — gently — disabuse Baptist minister Moyers of the notion that humans have an inherent need for a god.

Great Lectures Night is FREE

WED, NOV 28, 6:30 pm

CFI-NYC &

NY Academy of Sciences

250 Greenwich St. (40th floor)

**Pride: Flying Cars and Other
Broken Promises**

Explore the world that never was, the world that may someday be, and what scientists can do to better manage our expectations of the future.

Reception/book signing follows.

CFI members: \$15; Others \$25.

More info: www.nyas.org/Events

OTHER REASONABLE

NEW YORK EVENTS

Check them out at their websites or www.reasonablenewyork.org
NY Society for Ethical Culture:

Fri., Nov 2, 7 pm - Ethics in Film: "*Hotel Rwanda*". Snacks & Bevs, \$5.

Mon., Nov 9, 7 pm - Ethics & the Theater, "*Tim Stands Still*" by David Margulies. \$5.

Sun., Nov 12, 1:00 pm, Advocacy Forum: Massimo Pigliucci

CFI-NYC. Mon., Nov 12, 10 pm.

Googie's Lounge (Upstairs at the Living Room), 154 Ludlow St.

"Skeptics on the Mic Karaoke".

New York Philosophy. Tue, Dec 4, 6-10 pm, Harley's Smokehouse, 356 W. 44 St.: "*Roulette: Member-led discussions*". RSVP: nyphilosophy.com

Drinking With Atheists: Every Friday, fun and conversation. Details www.meetup.com/RichiesList/

PLUS

Agnostic A.A.: Nine weekly AA-endorsed meetings in Manhattan, Brooklyn, The Bronx. Schedules: agnosticAAnyc.org/meetings.html

Manhattan History Buffs: Every 3d Tues, 6:30, dinner and talk at Lili's (Chinese) restaurant, Third Ave., 83-84th. Nov 20: "*Medical Improvements in the mid-19th Century*". 212-802-7427.

Atheism History Week — With SHSNY's John Rafferty, 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays, MNN Ch. 67 and RNN Ch. 110 in Manhattan, and live streaming at www.mnn.org.

Religion on the Line: Sundays, 6-9:00 a.m. WMCA, 770AM

Equal Time for Freethought: Sundays 6:30 p.m., WBAI-NY 99.5FM

Religion & Ethics Newsweekly:

Sundays, 6:30 p.m., Channel 13

Socrates Cafe: Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., NY Society for Ethical Culture

EIGHT ATHEIST AND AGNOSTIC SCIENTISTS WHO CHANGED THE WORLD – Part 2

Greta Christina

(Excerpted from *Alternet.org*, 8/17/2012)

(It's common knowledge, Ms. Christina said in Part 1 of this essay (*PIQUE*, September) that atheists are among the most reviled groups in America. But it's also the case that certain individual atheists and other non-believers are among our most respected and beloved heroes. And scientists are among the most admired of those heroes. She then wrote brief essays on Stephen Hawking, Alan Turing, and Rosalind Franklin. Here are her evaluations of five more non-believing or agnostic scientists, whose work and lives and stories can inspire anyone -- atheist, religious, or other.)

Neil deGrasse Tyson (#4). I was a little reluctant to include Tyson in this list. Tyson doesn't call himself an atheist, he calls himself an agnostic, since he associates the word "atheist" with "activist atheist", and generally resists being identified with the atheist movement or any other "ism". (For the record: I think his definition of atheism is ... overly narrow.) But this isn't a list of inspiring atheist scientists. It's a list of inspiring non-believing scientists. Tyson is definitely a non-believer.

In fact, his agnosticism, as he describes it, is pretty much indistinguishable from most atheists' atheism. And he's definitely inspiring. The fact that he's director of the Hayden Planetarium – and that this is among the least well-known of his accomplishments – is a good sign of just how awesome he is. He may be the best science communicator of our generation. He is extraordinary at explaining science to non-scientists, in a way that isn't patronizing or dumbing-down. He makes science seem exciting, fun, important, moving, joyful. All of which it is. And he communicates this joy to millions.

5) **Alfred Kinsey**. In the face of vehement hostility and vilification—including a congressional investigation that resulted in loss of funding for his research—biologist Alfred Kinsey dedicated his life to a scientific, evidence-based understanding of human sexuality. With its frank discussion of the realities and prevalence of homosexuality, bisexuality, premarital sex, extramarital sex, masturbation, and more, his research radically changed the way we understand and experience our sex lives. And it both broke the ground and laid the groundwork for every scientific study of human sexuality since.

Kinsey's passionate pursuit of truth, even when it defied convention; his passionate commitment to the advancement of knowledge that could demolish toxic misinformation about sex; his passionate devotion to the promotion of human happiness in some of the most pragmatic, down-to-earth ways imaginable ... this can inspire us all.

6) **Eugenie Scott**. This woman kicks ass and takes names. Specifically, she kicks the asses and takes the names of people who are trying to teach religious creationism in the public schools. An anthropologist by training and trade, since 1987 she has been executive director of the National Center for Science Education – the leading organization

working to keep evolution and climate science in public school science education, and working to keep creationism and climate change denial out of it. If you have kids in the public schools, she has dedicated her life to ensuring they get an actual, evidence-based science education – and to ensuring that their religious training is left up to you, and isn't in the hands of the government.

Like Tyson, Scott doesn't call herself an atheist. Instead, she calls herself a non-theist and humanist, and has said, "I believe there is nothing beyond matter and energy". That's plenty good enough for this list. Another non-believer who works like crazy to make this world a better place – and who can inspire anyone to do the same.

7) **Andrei Sakharov**. Sakharov was a Soviet nuclear physicist, and one of the developers of the Soviet atomic bomb. I know, less than inspiring. But he is far better known as a Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights activist, free speech advocate, courageous dissident against Soviet repression, and tireless opponent of human rights violations everywhere. As a result of his writing and activism, he was stripped of his job, publicly denounced by the government, robbed of manuscripts by the KGB, arrested, internally exiled to Gorky, and force-fed during a hunger strike. He continued with his activism nonetheless, literally until the day he died.

And oh, yeah, atheist. The child of a pious mother and a passionately atheist father, Sakharov became an atheist at age 14, and remained one for the rest of his life. In 1988 he was given the International Humanist Award by the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

8) **Thomas Edison**. Betcha didn't know this one was a non-believer! Well, he was. Some quotes ...

"I have never seen the slightest scientific proof of the religious ideas of heaven and hell, of future life for individuals, or of a personal God."

"So far as religion of the day is concerned, it is a damned fake. ... Religion is all bunk."

"I cannot believe in the immortality of the soul I am an aggregate of cells, as New York City is an aggregate of individuals. Will New York City go to heaven? No; nature made us – nature did it all – not the gods of the religions."

I assume I don't have to explain why Thomas Edison is inspiring. So the next time someone tells you atheists have no morality, tell them about Andrei Sakharov. The next time someone tells you atheists have no meaning in their lives, tell them about Stephen Hawking. The next time someone tells you atheists don't care about anyone but themselves, tell them about Eugenie Scott and Alfred Kinsey. The next time someone tells you atheists have no reason to work for the greater good, tell them about Alan Turing and Neil deGrasse Tyson. The next time someone tells you atheists can't change the world for the better, tell them about Rosalind Franklin and Thomas Edison.

Atheists aren't just your neighbors and colleagues. We're not just your friends and family. Atheists are your heroes. And whether you're religious or not, atheists can inspire anyone.

RUSH LIMBAUGH MAKES HIS STUPIDEST BID YET FOR THE DUMBTH AWARD



You just can't keep a good man down. Or in this case, a stupid one. In spite of several past disappointments, bloviator Limbaugh is determined to win SHSNY's Silver Horse's Ass Award, and this year he has a real shot.

Start with a report on an obscure website, *chacha.com* (really, *chacha*), that went viral in September.

Unidentified "Italian researchers", the site said, found that the size of male genitalia has decreased over the past fifty years.

Then add genuine dumbth.

"The study's leaders", our contender contends, "claim to have bona fide research that says the average size of a penis is roughly 10 percent smaller than it was 50 years ago. And the researchers say air pollution is why." But Rush added that he didn't believe the explanation.

"I don't buy this. I think it's feminism. I think if it's tied to the last 50 years, the average size of a member is 10 percent smaller ... it has to be the feminazis."

WAY BEYOND DUMBTH: INSANITY IN ARKANSAS

John Rafferty

Meet State Rep. Jon Hubbard, R-Jonesboro, of the Arkansas House, a busy lawmaker who has found time to write a book, *Letters to the Editor: Confessions of a Frustrated Conservative*. Here's a sample of Rep. Hubbard's "conservative" philosophy, as reported by *The Arkansas Times*:



"... the institution of slavery that the black race has long believed to be an abomination upon its people may actually have been a blessing in disguise. The blacks who could endure those conditions and circumstances would someday be rewarded with citizenship in the greatest nation ever established upon the face of the Earth."

Fascinated by this idiocy, I researched a little further, and found that this closet birther (On his website: [he will] "guarantee that candidates appearing on Arkansas election ballots for political office are Constitutionally qualified to hold the office they are seeking" - wink-wink, guess who?) is also engaged in an Armageddon-like battle against "Nazis" - the Democratic Governor and state Attorney General who are trying to destroy his career and those of two other Arkansas "conservatives".

How? By campaigning against them.

And who are those other two innocent victims of "Nazi-style political intimidation"?



Say hello to Charlie Fuqua, another "conservative" Republican candidate for the Arkansas legislature, and one-time recipient of the "Friend of the Family" Award of the Arkansas Christian Coalition. Charlie has also written a book. His is pure Christian Reconstructionism (i.e.: replacing democracy with a Biblical theocracy), is titled *God's Law: The Only Political Solution*, and recommends not only "solving the Muslim problem" by deporting them—all of them—but instituting the death penalty for rebellious children. To wit:

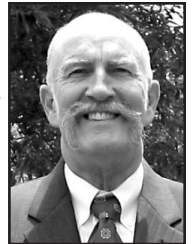
"... a child who disrespects his parents must be permanently removed from society in a way that gives an example to all other children of the importance of respect for parents. The death penalty for rebellious children is not something to be taken lightly."

To be fair to real conservatives, *The Arkansas Times* reports that some GOP candidates have backed away from Fuqua, "but no party official has demanded money back or urged Fuqua to withdraw from the race". And the paper also reports that the national Republican Party — specifically, the House Republican Leadership PAC — has donated money to Fuqua's campaign.

Okay, one more.

Here's Loy Mauch, member of the Arkansas House (R-Bismark), a secessionist and self-described "neo-Confederate" who calls the "sacred" Confederate flag "a symbol of Jesus Christ" and who is on the Southern Poverty Law Center's watch list. He has not written a book—yet—only a series of letters to the editorial section of the *Democrat-Gazette* newspaper defending slavery and comparing Lincoln (a "Marxist criminal") and Civil War Union generals to Nazis. His best-known?

"If slavery were [sic] so God-awful, why didn't Jesus or Paul condemn it, why was it in the Constitution and why wasn't there a war before 1861? It's a valid question. If slavery is so bad, why would the wealthy white male drafters of the Constitution have put it in there?"



That these three could be elected to the same state legislature at the same time — that's way beyond the fun we have in these pages with "Dumbth", way past "Why We Live in New York". What the hell is wrong with Arkansas?

What the hell is wrong with America?

WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' SMART PEOPLE!

(Excerpted from Harper's Weekly Review, 9/18/2012)

A poll of Ohio Republicans found that 15 percent believe Mitt Romney deserves more credit for killing Osama Bin Laden than does Barack Obama, and former senator Rick Santorum told a like-minded gathering, "We will never have the elite, smart people on our side."

Comment: You think it's possible, Rick, just possible, that one of those things might have something to do with the other? - JR

WHY WE LIVE IN NEW YORK #88

Just imagine being represented in Congress by Rep. Paul Broun—birther and Tea Party Caucus member—who, mercifully for us, represents a district in Georgia. You can see him on YouTube at the September 27 Liberty Baptist Church Sportsman's Banquet in Hartwell, GA, pacing back and forth in front of a wall display of dozens and dozens of dead deer heads, and announcing:

God's word is true. I've come to understand that all this stuff I was taught about evolution, embryology, and big bang theory – all that is lies straight from the pit of Hell. It is lies to try to keep me and all the folks who were taught that from understanding that they need a Savior. You see there are a lot of scientific data, that I found out as a scientist, that actually show that this is really a young Earth. I don't believe that the Earth is but nine thousand years old. I believe it was created in six days, as we know them – that's what the Bible says. And what I've come to learn is that it's the manufacturer's handbook – that's what I call it. It teaches us how to run our lives individually, how to run our families, how to run our churches. It teaches us how to run our public policy and everything in society. (Applause)

Broun is a medical doctor who doesn't believe in evolution or geology – a doctor who doesn't believe in embryology – and sits on the House Science, Space and Technology Committee.

SAUDI SCHOLARS DISCOVER THE CAUSE OF HOMOSEXUALITY AND, WELL, EVERYTHING

(Excerpted from "Allowing Women To Drive Would Mean No More Virgins, Saudi Arabia Religious Council Says", on HuffingtonPost.com, 2/12/2012)

Allowing women to drive in Saudi Arabia would mean no more virgins and an increase in homosexuality, according to academics at Saudi Arabia's highest religious council, Majlis al-Ifta' al-A'ala. More pornography would be used if women were allowed on the roads and rates of prostitution and divorce would also rise.

The report was produced in conjunction with Kamal Subhi, a former professor at the King Fahd University. He described sitting in a coffee shop in an Arab state where "all the women were looking at me. One made a gesture that made it clear that she was available," he said. "This is what happens when women are allowed to drive."

Saudi Arabia is currently considering a law for women to cover up their eyes if they are deemed too "tempting".

Q: WHERE AND WHEN WAS THIS SAID?

(Forwarded by Gretchen Robinson)

"Women must embrace modesty in dress and behavior." Women in church dressed immodestly are "an insult to a Holy God".

A: September 15, 2012, at the Values Voters Summit, in Washington, D.C., in the United States of America.

ARAB SPRING

Arthur Harris

The Arab Spring seems to skip summer and fall and head right into winter. They overthrow authoritarian secular states and then democratically elect authoritarian Islamic states, exchanging political repression for religious oppression.

As a non-believer, the exchange makes no sense to me, but then again they should be given credit for very slowing emerging into the 19th century

Economically, men don't seem to any better off, which was the spark setting off the change. And women, who experienced some improvement in their choices under some of the old regimes, must now revert to 12th-century Islamic standards of dress and education, and must fear government sponsored thugs who enforce religious law.

I am opposed to any further US government military involvement in the region. The whole Arab world is in turmoil: Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, the list runs on. We aided and abetted the overthrow of Kadafi and other leaders. Assad is just one of the many SOBs in that quagmire. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, "our allies" have proven to be very slender reeds to lean on. As for the rest, if they don't like their leaders, let them overthrow them without our help. At most, let's send relief aid.

Let's not put another American boot on the ground to help pull any of them down. The results aren't worth a pitcher of warm piss. We don't get anything but problems interfering in tribal and sectarian quarrels that have gone on for centuries and will continue as long as weapons are available. Let us spend our money on those who overturn and don't go Islamic.

I normally try to stay out political stuff in regard to SHSNY, but this is so deeply tied up with religion and we're sacrificing our people and money trying to solve their tribal, sectarian and religious problems, something they haven't made a dent in in 900 years.

Like most other Americans I am descended from immigrants, and I am not anti-immigration. But just a few years ago the Muslim population in the US was about 250,000, and now the number is more than 2,000,000. Our immigration quotas have been changed, leading to potential problems.

Just look at Europe, where Muslim immigration has worked so well.

I do not believe that all those immigrants to the US are a potential fifth column, but I do eagerly await some American Muslims to join in openly denouncing the excesses perpetrated by their co-religionists abroad.

Comment: Many have, Art, but their professions of peace are buried in the last couple of paragraphs of atrocity stories in the newspapers, and not even mentioned on "if-it-bleeds-it-leads" TV, whose viewers have no patience for complexity .

What's more, they are, as you say, "American Muslims" – so why should those Americans have to prove their loyalty any more or more often than, say, Irish Americans? – JR

GRIMM'S FAIRY TALE

(Based on and excerpted from "Congressman's Campaign Office Vandalized", by Alison Leigh Cowan and William K. Rashbaum in The New York Times, September 24, and "Rabbi Linked to Campaign Inquiry is Questioned In Israeli Bribe Case", by Ms. Cowan, in The Times, October 13.)

Rationalist—and especially skeptic—voters on Staten Island have a chance to apply their critical thinking skills in the voting booth this week.

The campaign headquarters of Congressman Michael G. Grimm on Staten Island claim that its office was broken into over the weekend, and a computer server containing "confidential campaign files and polling data" erased.

Mr. Grimm, a Republican, labeled it a "politically motivated crime" and an "assault on democracy".

But police experts who examined the computer systems concluded that nothing had been erased or tampered with. A police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that while windows at the headquarters had been shattered by pieces of a roadway barrier, there was no evidence that an intruder had been in the office. ... Because the incident involved a congressman, the Capitol Police in Washington were notified and are now assisting the NYPD in its investigation. ...

Mr. Grimm's campaign finances are under investigation by federal prosecutors who are attempting to determine whether he accepted illegal donations in his successful 2010 race. The allegations involve a fund-raiser for the 2010 campaign who was charged in August with immigration fraud. Both the fund-raiser, Ofer Biton, and Mr. Grimm have denied any wrongdoing.

Update October 13: A prominent rabbi [Yoshiyahu Pinto] who is a figure in the federal inquiry into the campaign of Representative Michael G. Grimm of Staten Island has been put under house arrest in Israel in a bribery and money-laundering investigation there. ...

Rabbi Pinto's followers donated more than \$500,000 to Mr. Grimm's campaign. Some of the rabbi's followers later said that Mr. Grimm and a campaign fund-raiser, Ofer Biton, told them that the campaign would accept donations over the legal limit, given in cash or made by foreigners without green cards.

Comment: Gee, one can only wonder if anything important disappeared in that "assault on democracy" burglary. - JR

MADONNA STANDS UP FOR FREE SPEECH

(Thanks to CDHS Happenings, September, 2012)

Two of the three members of the Russian feminist band Pussy Riot are still in prison, serving two years for "sacrilegious hooliganism", i.e., mocking the Orthodox Church and President-for-Forever Putin.

But not to fear. During a sold-out concert in Moscow, multi-millionaire Madonna electrified the crowd by promising to make everything better by praying for the girls.



THE BARMAID ASKS JESUS & MO A QUESTION ABOUT DIVINE GUIDANCE

(Transcribed from jesusandmo.net/2012/10/03/moral/)

Jesus: If you don't have God's word to light the way, how can you negotiate an ethical path through life?

Mohammed: Without divine guidance, confusion reigns.

Barmaid: Is it moral to take one innocent life in order to save ten?

(At home in bed, Jesus reads the Bible, Mo the Quran.)

Jesus: Found anything in yours yet?

Mo: Sort of - it's a bit confusing.

THE BARMAID ONE-UPS JESUS AGAIN

(Transcribed from jesusandmo.net/2012/10/10/again2/)

(The boys are sitting on the favorite park bench.)

Jesus: I tried to tell her that she should respect our religious beliefs.

Mohammed: Again? You don't give up easily, do you?

Jesus: When those beliefs are held deeply and sincerely they become an integral part of you - so mocking the belief is the same as mocking the person.

Mo: Did she say "So what?" again?

Jesus: Not this time. She said she was a person who believed deeply and sincerely that religion should be mocked.

Mo: You gotta respect that.

AFTERLIFE LUNCH

Last month I invited PIQUE readers who don't believe in an afterlife to imagine one, and to consider how and with whom they would spend it. Leaving aside the obvious sexual fantasies, I suggested lunch and conversation with three companions - four people around a table being the great M.F.K. Fisher's ideal for stimulating discussion.

My own tablemates? *Christopher Hitchens*, *Gore Vidal*, and *George Carlin*. Here's who some readers chose, and I want very much to eavesdrop on Dennis Middlebrooks' table in my second century. - JR

DONNA MARXER

My beachfront venue will be in the palmy shade at Mary's Boon, on the Dutch side of St. Maarten. My guests will be the noted Irish writer *Elizabeth Bowen*, a major influence on my favorite living writer, Ian McEwan. And, of course, the great humanist *Bertrand Russell*, whom I admire with all my heart. The two Brits will love the sun.

As a career painter, I must invite the genius *Claude Monet*. I want his take on the Caribbean landscape, and will invite him over to St. Bart's after lunch. Maybe he'll start Giverny West?

DENNIS MIDDLEBROOKS

My three choices for eternal afterlife conversation lunch guests would be *Robert Ingersoll* (for his eloquence and courage), *Isaac Asimov* (for his wit, knowledge, and congeniality honed with Brooklyn street savvy), and *Dorothy Parker* (for her brutal and hilarious irreverence and the fact that high class female company would enliven

any social occasion, especially one lasting for eternity).

The venue for this long lunch would be Peter Luger's Steakhouse in Brooklyn. I like mine medium rare, with a dry vodka martini to start and an Irish Coffee with dessert.

No hangovers in heaven, of course.

STAN FRIEDLAND

Three people to lunch with in Butchard Gardens, Victoria, British Columbia (*tres gorgeous!*): *Thomas Jefferson*, no explanation needed; *Abraham Lincoln*, also self-explanatory; and *Teddy Roosevelt*, great balls of fire!

Individually, they'd be fascinating; collectively, they'd be good through dinner and a midnight repast.

Good challenge, as usual.

FLASH LIGHT

Blaise Pascal, to ask if he would still make his famous wager, now that advances in science make it possible for an atheist to win his bet. *Dr. Chic Schissel*, the first modern human to volunteer to be raised from the dead by genetic engineering and art rehabilitation [PIQUE, November, 2009, "A Date That Will Live in SomeDamnThing or Other"], and *Chris Twomey*, the next to do so.

What I'd want to discuss is why the three of us were still in the afterlife when we had declared our intention to return to real life by means of art and science.

Obstruction by religious fundamentalists, most likely.

BRAD WHEELER

Well, you got me thinking about your afterlife lunch idea – a really enjoyable diversion! So here goes:

Benjamin Franklin, *Samuel Clemens*, *Richard Feynman*: three brilliant Americans whose lives encompassed three

centuries. I think they would be fascinated with one another and would enjoy matching wits. All traveled widely and all were somehow involved in technology, government, and literature. Each man had a fine streak of nonconformity and had honed his humor and appreciation of irony. As the dwarf among giants, I'd just fill in bits of what's happened since Feynman dispersed his atoms.

Of course, after this intense and hilarious hundred-year lunch, I'd be quite ready for a loooooong private dinner with Ingrid Bergman.

REMO COSENTINO

At the center of my family life, until they started to die off, conversation around the table at holidays, 20 or more, was not unusual, so that's the setting.

Since I can't have the 24 philosophers, musicians, and artists I originally requested (your 3-only rule), here are one from each column for my table.

Albert Camus, author: reason is the way to salvation, not religion.

Giusseppe Verdi, composer and humanitarian: men create their destinies, not God.

Ingmar Bergman, film director and doubter: if there is a God why is he so cruel?

DAVID RAFFERTY

At a picnic in the park: polar explorer *Ernest Shackleton*; and Civil War accidental hero (Gettysburg, the Little Round Top) and college president *Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain*. Plus either *Adam or Eve*, and if neither shows up then we have answered one big question.

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with Beer & STDs

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1925 – 2012

Paul Kurtz

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