

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

August 25, 2020

Back-to-School time? Not on your life – literally. We're still locked down, but we reveal our most hopeful post-covid desires (with a wake-up slap from Alexa). We could escape to Scotland or via a Pink Drink (rather than a Blue Pill), but instead look first at the simple reason why religion is on the decline in America. We continue following the ancient Israelites, parse present-day paranoia, the sadism of the WEPs and your right-wing relatives' news sources, assign Kamal Harris a job, applaud a flag-burning, and conclude with two pictures worth way more than a thousand words. —JR

WHY AMERICA IS SLIP-SLIDIN' DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO NON-BELIEF

James Haught

(Excerpted from "Why the U.S. is heading toward nonbelief", at Freedom from Religion Foundation, 7/22/2020, and reprinted from Humanist Monthly, newsletter of the Capital (Albany) District Humanist Society, August, 2020)

The Secular Age is snowballing in America, as in other Western democracies. Year after year, reports show church membership and attendance slip-slidin' away. Church leaders agonize over this ominous erosion. Endlessly, they call for more prayer, more proselytizing and other tactics to entice believers. They ask why the relentless loss is happening.

Sociologists too analyze the cultural shift and offer various explanations. Many concur that Western life is becoming more prosperous and secure, so people no longer feel an urge to pray for divine help. That makes sense.

While experts search for answers, I want to employ Occam's Razor, the philosophical axiom that says the simplest, most straightforward explanation is the best. Tens of millions of Americans have turned away from supernatural religion for an obvious reason, in my view: They see that it's untrue. Intelligent, educated, modern people perceive that magical dogmas are a bunch of hokey – just fairy tales with no factual reality. Gods and devils, heavens and hells, angels and demons, miracles and messiahs, prophecies and divine visitations, visions and other such stuff, are fiction.

Researchers generally accept the Flynn Effect, which says average IQs have been continuously rising over the past many decades. Better-educated Americans are smarter than they were in the 1960s. They can detect nonsense more easily. Further, researchers find that doubters have higher IQ than believers do. As the West grows more intelligent,

the brightest reject supernatural claims. Ever since Ancient Greece, brave thinkers have doubted holy hokum. Among the wildest was the late comedian George Carlin, who proclaimed:

"When it comes to bullshit, big-time, major league bullshit, you have to stand in awe of the all-time champion of false promises and exaggerated claims: religion. No contest. Religion easily has the greatest bullshit story ever told. Think about it. Religion has actually convinced people that there's an invisible man living in the sky who watches everything you do, every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a special list of 10 things he does not want you to do. And if you do any of these 10 things, he has a special place, full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish, where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry forever and ever 'til the end of time! But He loves you. He loves you, and He needs money! He always needs money! He's all-powerful, all-perfect, all-knowing, and all-wise, somehow just can't handle money! Religion takes in billions of dollars, they pay no taxes, and they always need a little more. Now, you talk about a good bullshit story. Holy Shit! ... There is no God. None, not one, no God, never was."

Right before our eyes, supernatural faith is dying in America. Using Occam's Razor, we can conclude that it is happening because magical dogmas no longer are believable.

According to a new article in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, atheists are more likely than churchgoers to own cats. (And the more you go to church, the less likely you are to own one.) That might mean, atheists and humanists, that cats are your replacement for a god.

Which is, in fact, what the cat intends.

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Individual membership \$40 per year; Family membership \$65; Subscription only: \$30; Student: \$20.

Articles published in PIQUE are archived at www.shsnny.org. Original-to-PIQUE articles may be reprinted, in full or in part.

SHSNY is a Charter Chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA), an Affiliate Member of Atheist Alliance International (AAI), an Affiliated Local Group of the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) program of the Center for Inquiry (CFI), and an Endorsing Group in the Secular Coalition for New York (SCNY).

POST-COVID DAYDREAMS

Jonathan Engel

The question has been raised by my colleague John Rafferty (Online PIQUE, Aug 18): “What do you most look forward to doing when we are able to get back to living our lives as we did before Covid?” I like this question because I take courage from its optimistic assumption that emancipation will indeed come to us one day. But limit myself to one activity? That’s not my style. So here are a few.

First off, I want to see and hear live music. Before Covid my wife and I went to about a dozen live music events a year, which I found essential to my mental health. Restorative, nourishing. So I want to go back to Jazz at Lincoln Center to hear Wynton Marsalis play his horn. I want to go back to the Beacon Theater for what was our annual sojourns in October and November to hear the Tedeschi Trucks Band and the Fab Faux.

I want to go to a Yankee game. There’s something calming about baseball. I want to put my arms around my sons as we sway to the music and sing “Take Me Out To the Ballgame”. And speaking of sports, I want to put on my Tottenham Hotspur jersey and argue soccer with people I cross paths with on the street wearing Arsenal jerseys.

And one more very important thing. I want to take off my mask and smile at people. I’m reminded of the first lines of the song “Wooden Ships”: “If you smile at me I will understand, ‘cause that is something everybody everywhere does in the same language.” A smile tells a stranger they are welcome. That you’re happy to see them, even if you’ve never met. That you come in peace and love. And there’s nothing quite so sweet as smiling at a small child and getting a smile in return. I really miss that, and I want it back.

I want people to come to my apartment or I to theirs. I cannot bear too many more Zoom meetings. In fact, I’m leaving almost every organizational meeting on my schedule. — *Nancy Adelman*

Go dancing. Mind you, I am a terrible dancer. But damn it, I want to go dancing! — *David Orenstein*

I want community. I want to dance in a field or enclosed space with other people as rhythms take over our bodies and cause them to gyrate and flex in ways both familiar and new. I want the sounds of joy to ripple through the crowd as one song transitions seamlessly into the next, bringing the moving throng to an emotional climax as waves of sounds float over our heads. I want to weave my way through the crowd, sharing breath and sweat and space. And then I want to do it again tomorrow. — *Brian Rafferty*

To go fishing again in the Florida Keys. — *Adrienne Karp*

Contrary to me normally, I now want to go to a loud crowded party where we can dance and laugh and hug. Next, a quirky month-long road trip, where I explore places that claim to be “World Famous”. — *Kathleen Morris*

Tango at the end of the Christopher Street pier on a warm Sunday evening (probably not this year). — *Cheryl Payer*

The first thing I want to do is, after a decent restaurant meal, sit in a crowded theater watching a revival of a classic American musical or a Gilbert and Sullivan. — *Chic Schissel*

When restaurants open I will visit lots of them. Especially my favorite sushi restaurant. — *Peter Flom*

I would like to go to a movie in a theatre. Dolby Atmos sound and HFR- High frame rate projection. I can’t get that at home. Unfortunately, it looks like Landmark 57 theaters have moved out of their space on West 57th. All the tables and chairs are gone in the lobby, replaced by about a dozen aluminum beer kegs (pickup-ready). The LED screen facing Riverside Drive is also gone. The era of big film premieres and festivals may be over permanently. — *Carl Marxer*

When Covid is in my rear view mirror, I look forward to walking the streets of Manhattan, especially the monthly walk from Penn Station (having arrived from Midland Park, NJ) down Seventh Avenue to the High School of Fashion Industries for a meeting of the Advisory Board. On this walk I see every age, color and gender of the human race, the latest clothes that women are wearing, and FIT (where they always have new and surprising officially-sanctioned graffiti), many streets-wise dogs, food stands where I can get a real buttered hard roll, and many unpredictable sights and sounds that are just as rewarding. What’s great about this walk is that I get to do it going the other way after the meeting. — *Jack Herschlag*

I look forward to teaching in person rather than online. It is so hard to see if you are being understood and interact with students on a computer. — *John Wagner*

I have had my groceries delivered since mid-March. I want to go pick out my own vegetables. — *Elizabeth Morris*

There’s a sailing club that sails from the marina near the Newport-Pavonia PATH station in Jersey City. And a club that sails from the North Cove marina near the World Trade Center. I just might join one of those. I last sailed four or five years ago. — *Brian Lemaire*

I look forward to actually meeting face to face with my fellow SHSNY members. That is always supposing that we can find a place to meet. — *Dorothy Kahn*

I want to speak with people in person without internally judging them for the company they keep and their potential exposure levels. I can then get back to judging them for their politics. — *David Rafferty*

Us: Alexa, What’s the weather like?

Alexa: Why? Where do you think you’re going?

GARRISON KEILLOR HAS A PLAN TO ESCAPE THE LOCKDOWN

(Excerpted from "In mid-June, we look ahead and think big" on his blog at garrisonkeillor.com, 6/17/2020)

I've now spent three months in a Manhattan apartment with my wife and daughter, a life that is not so different from, say, living in a lighthouse in the Orkneys. ...

Locked up for three months, I've lost interest in the big city. The Orkneys have sandstone cliffs, seal colonies, and the electricity is wind-generated. Exports include beef, whiskey, cheese, and seafood. The climate is mild, thanks to the Gulf Stream. There are sheep and many lighthouses. Surely there would be one that would welcome a lightkeeper.

It sounds wonderful to me, sleeping in a room under the glass dome, the light sweeping over the North Sea, the sense of public service, warning fishermen from the rocks. Being the only novelist on the island. And I'd escape from the heavy burden of being an American, which has become onerous lately. In my Orknitude, I would only be an old man in a tower and a provider of light.

Now all I need to do is convince my wife.

IT'S OKAY ... SHH, SHH ... EVERYTHING'S OKAY, HAVE SOMETHING PINK TO DRINK

Greta Moran

(Copied from "Dream Control" on Inverse Daily, 7/30/2020)

I'm not sure exactly when it happened, but at some point, the drink section of my grocery store took on a new color palette: lilac, soft yellow, gentle pink, and mint-colored labels of soothing concoctions began occupying shelf space. It happened slowly — in fact, so slowly that I didn't fully realize it until I read an excellent essay in Eater examining how "entire display cases are now devoted to beverages created in the wake of the so-called anxiety economy that has blossomed in recent years". ...

While health beverages have been around for a while, the essay distinguishes this new selection of beverages as selling "mental peace and clarity with buzzwords used to describe ingredients that supposedly make your brain work better and help your body adapt to stress". They are geared toward millennials, like myself, who are persuaded by the promise of an antidote to what is, ultimately, a problem with a world that in many ways failed to give us the securer lives of our parents.

The coronavirus has made everything more crumbling, which also makes the promise of these drinks and the entire wellness economy even more alluring. Every day I receive emails that begin "in these unprecedented times" before selling me a face roller or other calming ailment. A recent essay in *The New Republic* captures how the wellness industry has been capitalizing on our more intensified stress as of late while selling us the idea that the pandemic should be a time of individualistic self-improvement.

At this point in my newsletter, I think I am supposed to offer a solution, an easy exit, but I don't have one.

Perhaps that's the point.

HOW THE JEWS INVENTED GOD

Part 2

Ariel David

(Excerpted from "How the Jews Invented God, and Made Him Great" on haaretz.com, 6/13/2016)

(Ed: Part 1 examined how the name of the god of the Jews (Yhwh) came about through contact with other tribes, other gods.)

"It is profoundly difficult to sort through the haze of later layers in the Bible, but insofar as we can, this remains the most plausible hypothesis for the encounter of Israelites with the Yhwh cult," says David Carr, professor of Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

The many faces of god

How exactly the Shasu merged with the Israelites or introduced them to the cult of Yhwh is not known, but by the early centuries of the first millennium, he was clearly being worshipped in both the northern kingdom of Israel and its smaller, southern neighbor, the kingdom of Judah.

His name appears for the first time outside the Bible nearly 400 years after Merneptah, in the 9th-century BCE stele of Mesha, a Moabite king who boasts of defeating the king of Israel and "taking the vessels of Yhwh".

While Yhwh's cult was certainly important in the early First Temple period, it was not exclusive.

"Jeremiah speaks about the many gods of Judah, which are as numerous as the streets of a town. There was certainly worship of a female deity, Asherah, or the Queen of Heaven," [Hebrew Bible expert Thomas] Römer told Haaretz. "There was certainly also the worship of the northern storm god Hadad (Baal)."

The plurality of deities was such that in an inscription by Sargon II, who completed the conquest of the kingdom of Israel in the late 8th century BCE, the Assyrian king mentioned that after capturing the capital Samaria, his troops brought back "the (statues of) gods in which (the Israelites) had put their trust".

As the Yhwh cult evolved and spread, he was worshipped in temples across the land. Early 8th-century inscriptions found at Kuntillet Ajrud probably refer to different gods and cultic centers by invoking "Yhwh of Samaria and his Asherah" and "Yhwh of Teman and his Asherah". Only later, under the reign of King Josiah at the end of the 7th century BCE, would the Yhwh cult centralize worship at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Nor, in ancient Israel, was Yhwh the invisible deity that Jews have refrained from depicting for the last two millennia or so.

In the kingdom of Israel, as Hosea 8 and 1 Kings 12:26-29 relate, he was often worshipped in the form of a calf, as the god Baal was. (1 Kings 12:26-29 explains that Jeroboam made two calves, for the sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan, so the people could worship Yhwh there and wouldn't have to go all the way to Jerusalem. Ergo, in northern Israel at least, the calves were meant to represent Yhwh.)

In Jerusalem and Judah, Römer says, Yhwh more

frequently took the form of a sun god or a seated deity. Such depictions may have even continued after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile: a coin minted in Jerusalem during the Persian period shows a deity sitting on a wheeled throne and has been interpreted by some as a late anthropomorphic representation of Yhwh.

Römer even suspects that the Holy of Holies in the First Temple of Jerusalem, and other Judahite sanctuaries, hosted a statue of the god, based on Psalms and prophetic texts in the Bible that speak of being admitted in the presence of “the face of Yhwh”.

Not all scholars agree that the iconography of Yhwh was so pronounced in Judah. The evidence for anthropomorphic depiction “is not strong”, says Saul Olyan, professor of Judaic studies and religious studies at Brown University. “It may be that anthropomorphic images of Yhwh were avoided early on.”

Ed: Part 3 will conclude this essay in the next PIQUE.

PARANOIA Marvin Schissel

Paranoia was a strong survival mechanism for early man, but today paranoia has seriously negative consequences for humanity, and is exploited by religious and political leaders who point to scapegoats as an explanation of societal difficulties. “You are dissatisfied because the scapegoat minority is taking over your options and your privileges,” goes their intimation.

This reasoning focuses on the changing nature of racism. From the days of slavery through Jim Crow and until recently, a Black man “knew his place”, could be “a credit to his race”, wasn’t a competitor for the social and economic options that the mainline privileged (whites) enjoyed. But lately things have changed. Blacks are coming up in society and demanding their place and their options. And the right wing is responding by subtly promoting racist and minority scapegoating to explain constituent dissatisfaction.

Recently, a friend shocked me by saying she was supporting Trump because, “I don’t want my hard-earned money used to support lazy good-for-nothings.” I’m sure she was aware that I knew what that meant in translation: “Let’s return to the days when ‘they’ knew their place.”

Worldwide events seem to be getting more and more out of hand. Weapons now have the ability to destroy civilization. And the paranoia of the increasingly dissatisfied is supporting incompetent leadership who have hands on the nuclear button.

THE SADISM OF THE WEPS John Stoehr

(Excerpted from “Sadism Is Still The Point For Most White Evangelicals”, at religiondispatches.org, 8/17/2020)

There’s still too much confusion over the president’s bond with white evangelical Protestants (WEPs). I suppose there will always be as long as outsiders presume that Donald Trump’s strongest supporters believe

in loving thy neighbor as thyself. Once you see that WEPs do not apply the Golden Rule universally and unconditionally, things become clearer. Once this Christian concept is removed from the discussion, “paradoxes” melt into the air. What’s left is a natural alignment of political interests.

How do I know WEPs don’t truly believe in the Golden Rule? From life experience. I know what I’m talking about. All you have to do is listen carefully, however, and know what to listen for. Elizabeth Dias wrote a big piece in the *Times* last week trying to clear up the “contradiction” of WEPs standing by Trump “when he shut out Muslim refugees. When he separated children from their parents at the border. When he issued brash insults over social media. When he uttered falsehoods as if they were true. When he was impeached.” A source explains helpfully that there’s no contradiction at all.

“The years of the Obama presidency were confusing to her,” Dias wrote of her source. “She said she heard talk of giving freedoms to gay people and members of minority groups. But to her it felt like her freedoms were being taken away. And that she was turning into the minority.” The source: “I do not love Trump. I think Trump is good for America as a country. I think Trump is going to restore our freedoms, where we spent eight years, if not more, with our freedoms slowly being taken away under the guise of giving freedoms to all. Caucasian-Americans are becoming a minority. Rapidly.”

This makes no sense to outsiders. Freedom for “gay people and members of minority groups” is not taking anything away from anybody. This makes no sense, because outsiders do not generally accept a worldview in which power is ordered. First God, then man, then woman, then child. White over nonwhite. Heterosexual over LGBTQ. Christian over non-Christian. When you believe with your whole being that power is ordered according to God’s will, “giving freedoms to gay people and members of minority groups” is not political *equality*, as outsiders often see it. It’s knocking you out of the order of power. It’s taking something away. Equality is literally *theft*.

When political equality is theft, you cannot apply the Golden Rule universally and unconditionally. If you did, you’d be complicit in a crime. The Golden Rule demands white people share power with nonwhite people. It demands husbands share power with their wives. Neither can *ever* be done. A wife, according to the same source in Dias’ reporting, must “submit” to her husband in accordance with God’s law. If she does not, she’s trying “to rule over him”. Same for whites and nonwhites. If white people are not at the top of the order, they are being ruled over. This is why Dias’ source says that, “Caucasian-Americans are becoming a minority. Rapidly.” The more for “them”, the less for “us”. They believe Trump prevents that from happening.

They believe Trump is “restoring their freedom”. Utter nonsense. What they’re really saying is that the president will prevent people lower down the order of power from achieving more freedom and equality, “violating” their “freedom”. He must do that by any means, even if he

confiscates kids from their mothers, bans a world religion, or commits treason. None of that matters as much as maintaining the supremacy of a religious identity built on sand. And make no mistake: this is a religious identity. These are very real anti-democratic Christians hostile to critical thinking, modernity, pluralism, and all forms of equality. "It's almost like it is a reverse intolerance," a WEP source told Dias. "If you have somebody that's maybe on the liberal side, they say that we are intolerant of them. But it is inverse intolerant if we can't live out our faith."

If WEPs believed in the Golden Rule, they'd never tolerate other people's pain. They *do* tolerate it, however. Indeed, they like it. It feels good to see the president "restoring their freedom". When WEPs say they want to "live out our faith", what they mean is that sadism is and should be a natural consequence of the natural order of things in which God's people are chosen to rule in God's name. "Evangelicals did not support Mr. Trump in spite of who he is," Dias wrote. "They supported him *because* of who he is, and because of who they are."

That's correct, but take that to its logical conclusion. His enemies are their enemies. His pleasures, their pleasures. Their bond is far from a contradiction. It's an alignment of political interests in which sadism is the point.

WHERE DO THEY GET THEIR "NEWS"?

John Rafferty via The Daily Mash

(Copied, updated and Americanized from "Where are your retired parents getting their fake news from?" at thedailymash.co.uk, 8/11/2020)

Have you ever wondered where your second-cousins-once-removed find their batshit right-wing talking points? Well, Fox News, obviously, but also from these sources:

Facebook: No widely shared post is too idiotic for the idiots, who hotly deny that sources like "The White Progressive Front" or "RealLockHerUp" have an agenda. They seem confident that a big committee of academics, historians and lawyers make sure everything on Facebook is strictly factual.

NPR: The NPR obsession with balance means that every story about rising mouse deaths has to feature the president of the National Cat's Association saying that actually cats are the real victims, just look at Tom & Jerry.

Phone-in Talk Radio: They like to have something on in the background while they clean and oil their guns, so why not uncritically listen to Bigot FM? If Jerry from Jersey City thinks there are mind-control drugs in veggieburgers, he must have a point or they wouldn't let him on, right?

Their Other Dickhead Relatives: Every family has at least a couple of utter morons who will repeat any drivel. Your uncle Fred will claim that Cincinnati is now 90 per cent Korean, and your Aunt Phyllis's carefully reasoned response will be, "Ooh, I heard they put dogs in Chow Mein."

Not "Fake News": Cowed by Trump, Hannity, Limbaugh & Co., liberal newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* now prove they're "balanced" by

running borderline alt-right OpEd pieces. So cousin Emily, who used to enthrall you at Thanksgiving with stories of her adorable kitties, now explains in exacting detail how either George Soros, the global warming hoax, or the trans lobby is responsible for the lack of parking spaces at Walmart.

WHY BIDEN CHOSE HARRIS

"The VP's job is to distract the refs and maybe throw a chair at Jesus while Biden is hurting God."

– Jeopardy winner Ken Jennings

ARE YOU TOO LEFT, TOO PROGRESSIVE, TOO REVOLUTIONARY TO VOTE FOR BIDEN?

Angela Davis is voting for Joe Biden.

AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

(An Aug 17 Facebook post by old friend Doug Sheer. – JR)

My neighbor had been flying a Trump flag ever since I moved into the neighborhood in July, 2018. This weekend I noticed that it was gone. I saw him outside and we waved to each other. He came across the street and stood in my driveway to chat. I asked him if he was still a Republican and what happened to the Trump flag. He said his 13-year-old grandson Brady asked him why he supports a racist and someone who pees on the Constitution (Brady is studying civics). My neighbor said he had no answer for that. After self-reflecting for over a week he took the flag down and burned it. His exact quote to me was: "If you lose the respect of your grandkids you've got nothing."

COMPARE AND CONTRAST



SHSNY CALENDAR: AUGUST – NOVEMBER 2020

FICTION BOOK CLUB ONLINE

The SHSNY Fiction Book Club meets online via Zoom, and will continue so for the duration of our enforced isolation.

To be included and notified of each meeting's link and password, email your address to Sharon Krutzel at sharonkrutzel@rcn.com

TUESDAY, SEPT 8, 7:00 pm
ALOYSIUS THE GREAT

John Maxwell O'Brien

By Joyce scholar, author of *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy*, and PIQUE subscriber O'Brien, *Aloysius* is now available in paper and e-formats at Amazon.

It's a romp of a novel of sex, ambition, pub crawls and whip-smart dialogue – what the Irish call *craic* (say "crack"), conversation as art, for the sheer fun of it.

TUESDAY, OCT 13, 7:00 pm
AMERICAN DIRT
Jeanine Cummins

Stephen King calls it "extraordinary", and this *NYTimes* best-selling story of a comfortable, middle-class Mexican family caught up in the flight to *el Norte* and away from drug violence has been called "the international story of our times". *Hardcover, Kindle.*

TUESDAY, NOV 10, 7:00 pm
THE THIRST
Jo Nesbo

Harry Hole is one of crime fiction's greatest cops ever, but after promising the woman he loves he's through, something about the killer who targets his victims on Tinder pulls Harry back to the chase in this eleventh novel in the series. *Paperback, Kindle.*

HUMANIST BOOK CLUB ONLINE

We continue online for the duration of our social distancing. Harry French will send the linking codes for the Zoom meetings. Send your address to:

htfrench46@gmail.com
Meanwhile, do the reading ...

THURS, SEPT 3, 7:00 pm
SURVIVING AUTOCRACY
Masha Gessen

As seen on MSNBC Morning Joe and heard on NPR All Things Considered: the bestselling, National Book Award-winning journalist offers an essential guide to understanding, resisting, and recovering from Trump and the ravages of our tumultuous times.

"When Gessen speaks about autocracy, you listen."
– *The New York Times*

THURS, OCTOBER 1, 7:00 pm
TWILIGHT OF DEMOCRACY:
The Seductive Lure of
Authoritarianism
Anne Applebaum

Thought-provoking and gracefully written, this is the book – by a Pulitzer-Prize winning historian – to read for "insight into what Trump's rise and rule really mean – here and abroad – for democracy in our time".

– Ron Elving, NPR

THIRD THURSDAY GROUP
Temporarily on hold

Our Secular Humanist Political Support Group via Zoom ... for lively discussion of whatever is currently of interest to us, is temporarily on hold due to family emergencies.

Stay tuned right here.

HUMANIST HAPPY HOUR ONLINE

SUNDAY, AUG 23, 5:00 pm

Let's get together even when we can't get together, via Zoom. Get comfortable at your computer with your beverage and/or snack of choice – and join 15, 20, or more of your fellow humanists in our Humanist Happy Hour!

Zoom in at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9806344432?pwd=c0NrNUoweDVGWHo2ditvYmJlVjVlVGVz09>
Meeting ID: 980 634 4432

Passcode: SHSny

Join by Skype for Business

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9806344432>

MONDAY MOVIES

MONDAY, AUG 31, 8:00 pm

We'll discuss Hal Ashby's

BEING THERE

Satire at its most trenchant when simple-minded gardener Chance (the brilliant Peter Sellers), whose only interest is television ("I like to watch"), becomes "Gardner", the toast of high-society Washington.

With Melvyn Douglas and Shirley Maclaine, this 1979 comedy is based on a Jerzy Kosinski novel and rentable for \$3.99 at Amazon. Rent, watch (don't miss the outtakes over the credits), and then ...

Zoom in August 31 at 8:00 at:

<https://zoom.us/j/98249657436?pwd=NVhpSGRQNk5qbNRRRFdhNG9PYk1pUT09>

Meeting ID: 982 4965 7436

Passcode: 519614

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