

Freethought News

Vol. 10 No. 1, January 2021
Jim Peterson, Rick O'Keefe, Editors

What's Inside?

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

The Coalition of Reason looks ahead...

This will be a Year of Growth and Renewal.

Although we face the likely prospect of 5 to 8 months of further lockdowns and disease, and decline, it will be the time we need to consider new ways of presenting the Humanist philosophy as a more satisfying way of life for both individuals and society.



As beings possessing both intelligence and curiosity, we have reached a point in our evolution where we can use the first to satisfy the second... *Continued on Page 15*

The AoF Perspective

As we look forward to 2021, we have much reason for hope. The vaccine is available so we can anticipate life becoming more normal. We have an incoming president who is more open to having a secular government. We continue to see what science can accomplish.

Non-believers agree on only one issue – the non-existence of supernatural beings. As atheists we have often been ostracized, ignored, or worse, persecuted for not believing. There are reasons that it would behoove us to build organizations that people want to join. Studies have found that social connectedness is at least as good for your health as quitting smoking or exercising. Volunteering helps counteract the effects of stress, anger, anxiety, and depression. Being involved in a community like ours can bring fun and fulfillment to your life.

What opportunities do we have for our members? We must continue our work to ensure state church separation. We must let our representatives know that we want our government to respect the civil rights of everyone in society. Non-believers make ... *Continued on Page 7*

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

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

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

If you have already had the first vaccine, *get the second.* It also helps with Covid.

Also, don't forget your current **Flu & Pneumonia shots** available now.

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

Back & current issues online at:
<http://www.tampabaycor.net>
Special Projects–Mark Brandt
& Bill Norsworthy
See our event websites at:
<http://bit.ly/2vUJoE1>

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

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



The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

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



JANUARY 04, 2021 | 10:30AM
— JANUARY 15, 2021 | 11:30AM
JOIN THIS MEDITATION GROUP ON ZOOM

Further Reflection... | Morning Meditation Group

Zoom

This 10-day meditation course is a syncretic, non-theistic approach to mindfulness-seeking awareness of the inner nature of life.

[READ MORE](#)

Jan. 14th at 7:00 PM

Click [HERE](#) for Climate Webinar Series on Energy, Equity, Health, and Solutions in Relation to Climate Change

Zoom



JANUARY 10, 2021 | 6:30PM - 8:30PM
EASTERN TIME | REGISTER FOR THESE SESSIONS ONLINE (MULTIPLE DATES)



Anti-Racism & Anti- Oppression Series

A joint effort of the American Humanist Association's Center for Education and Policy and Social Justice Department.

[READ MORE](#)

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

Our Local Board Meeting

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

Vol. XXXIV No. 1 January, 2021



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

Please Join or renew
Humanist Society of the Suncoast

Annual Dues

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



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

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

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

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

Send check made out to:
“Scott Wilson”

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

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

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



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

What is the Humanist Way?

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

Random Appropriations

What does a dyslexic, agnostic, insomniac do at night? He stays up wondering if there really is a dog.

Schrödinger's cat walks into the bar and doesn't.

Pavlov is at a bar enjoying a pint. The phone rings and he shouts "Oh! I forgot to feed the dog."

C, E-flat, and G walk into a bar. The bartender says, "Sorry, no minors."

A Roman walks into a bar and asks for a martinus. "You mean a martini?" asks the bartender. The Roman replies, "If I wanted a double, I would have asked for it."

Another Roman walks into a bar, holds up two fingers, and says "Five beers please!" Which fingers were they?

Jean-Paul Sartre is sitting in a cafe revising his first draft of *Being and Nothingness*. He says to the waitress, "I would like a cup of coffee please. No cream." the waitress replies, "I'm sorry sir, but we're out of cream. How about with no milk?"

Knock knock. Who's there? Knock knock. Who's there?
Knock knock. Who's there? Knock knock. Who's there?
Philip Glass.

A photon is going through airport security. The TSA agent asks if he has any luggage. The photon says, "No, I'm traveling light."

A Higgs Boson walks into a church. The priest says "We don't allow Higgs Bosons in here." The Higgs Boson replied, "Well, without me, you can't have mass."

A programmer's wife asks him to pick up a loaf of bread and, if they have eggs, get a dozen. The programmer comes home with a dozen loaves of bread.

It's hard to take kleptomaniacs and puns seriously. Why? They take things literally.

Boy I tell ya, entropy ain't what it used to be.

Politically active chemists agree, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the precipitate.

Heisenberg was speeding down the highway. A cop pulls him over and says, "Do you have any idea how fast you were going back there?" Heisenberg says, "No, but I knew where I was."

What do you get when you cross a joke with a rhetorical question?

Humanist Society of the Suncoast

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

Board of Directors.

Meets Sept., December, April

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

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

~*~*~*~*~*~*

Jim Peterson, Editor
E-Mail us at:
jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Need Psychological Counseling?

For a secular therapist,
Click:
[Secular Therapy Org.](http://www.seculartherapy.org)
[Cognitive Neurosciences](http://www.cognitiveneurosciences.org)
Or call:

Linda Falkner
www.allfloridaonline.com.
813-620-4900.
Linda@cheercounseling.com

Lynda Gurvitz,
<http://fampsy.org/member/lynda-gurvitz/>
(727) 725-8820

Or, Joel Schmidt
www.floatoncounseling.com
321-604-7637



Humanist Quotes

“Humanism involves far more than the negation of supernaturalism. It requires an affirmative philosophy . . . translated into a life devoted to one’s own improvement and the service of all mankind.” **Corliss Lamont**

“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.” **Paul Kurtz**

“A good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men.” **Bertrand Russell**

“Do you say that religion is still needed? Then I answer that Work, Study, Health and Love constitute religion. . . . Most formal religions have pronounced the love of man for woman and woman for man an evil thing. . . . They have said that sickness was sent from God. . . . Now we deny it all, and again proclaim that these will bring you all the good there is: Health, Work, Study – Love!” **Elbert Hubbard**



**FOUNDATION
BEYOND BELIEF**
humanism at work

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

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

Learn more at: foundationbeyondbelief.org/disaster-recovery

Which is more important:

Effectiveness or Efficiency?

Effectiveness is more important than efficiency.



Why?

At the end of the day, either the problem gets solved or it doesn't. I don't care how efficient a solution is, if it doesn't solve my problem, I've still got a problem, except that I just wasted time on a solution that didn't work.

To me, it is more efficient to focus on whether something will be effective. If I must solve a problem twice, because my first solution didn't work, that's not an efficient use of my time.

Learn more:

Yes - I do have an online course that can help you learn how to solve problems effectively and efficiently. It's called Reality Based Decision Making for Effective Strategy Development.

<https://humanistlearning.com/realitybaseddecisionmaking/>

Copyright © 2020 www.Jen-Hancock.com, All rights reserved

An end to blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws

[Senate Resolution 458](#), championed by Senator James Lankford (R-OK) and Senator Chris Coons (D-DE), calls upon the president and the U.S. State Department to prioritize the repeal of blasphemy laws in their relationships with countries that have such laws and to release prisoners who have been accused or convicted of blasphemy offenses.

AHA led a diverse coalition of nearly 70 national organizations in support of the resolutions in both chambers.

“The Senate’s adoption of Senate Resolution 458 solidified Congress’s commitment to ending the criminalization of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy around the world,” shared **AHA Director of Policy and Social Justice Rachel Deitch**.

Click here



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

2020: The Year Consensus Reality Fractured

by *Richard Heinberg*

Virtually everyone agrees that 2020 was an abomination. An entire industry of opinion writers is busying itself with end-of-year handwringing, scouring every online thesaurus for adjectives to express just how horrible the last twelve months have been. But what facet of the awfulness to focus on? For the appalled chronicler, the most obvious starting points are the coronavirus pandemic, which has left illness, death, shuttered businesses, and lost jobs trailing in its wake, and the chaotic US presidential election, in which the soundly defeated incumbent has attacked and seriously weakened the very foundations of democracy on his way out the door.

These two baskets of grim news (pandemic and election) have been accompanied by a shift in the national (and, to some extent, global) zeitgeist—a shift that’s been obvious to anyone paying attention, but that’s nevertheless challenging to capture in words. Let’s call it the fracturing of consensus reality. While it won’t be the top story of the year according to most news roundups, it may end up being just as impactful as anything else that’s happened during our latest orbit of the sun. And that’s saying something.

What’s Real? Let’s All Agree

As social and linguistic creatures, we humans—operating in groups—create shared mental worlds. We perceive sensory data, then we verbalize and conceptualize those perceptions, and finally we check our verbalized and conceptualized accounts of reality with other people. Over time, a consensus emerges.

This language-mediated reality-building process is hardly

new; it’s been going on since we all lived by hunting and gathering. Then, everybody within their little groups shared the same stories and the same basic mental map of the world. After we adopted agriculture, social classes and full-time division of labor ensued. With slavery, kings, and a dramatic reduction in the social power of women, consensus reality became more of a Venn diagram, with the king having the final word in defining the overlapping region on the diagram representing consensus. Later, the emergence of writing and Big God religions enabled reality to be codified for empires, and elements of the dominant consensus (e.g., Roman law and Christianity) could be spread among alien cultures. For most Europeans, even as dynasties came and went, reality remained essentially whatever the Bible, the church, and the king or emperor said it was.

Consensus reality was never consistent or complete and never a correct map of what it purported to represent; it was always an approximation skewed by power relations. Some people’s realities were privileged, while other people’s were marginalized, excluded, or intentionally destroyed. And there were always blind spots—actual trends, vulnerabilities, and consequences that nobody noticed or talked about, such as the gradual depletion of natural resources—that only became “real” when they could no longer be ignored.

The modern era (from roughly 1500 on) brought new sources of diversity to the consensus-building process. As Europeans conquered societies around the globe, “reality” began to reflect the sounds and flavors of these diverse cultures; the result was everything from jazz to fusion cuisine. Meanwhile, the power of commerce greatly increased, reducing the influence of church and aristocracy.

Increased diversity and a shift toward commercial primacy were accompanied by new integrative trends in the process of collective reality-building. Principal among these was the emergence of science—a self-correcting method for discovering objective truth. Of course, science had its blind spots, too (for example, it was often subject to commercial influence—witness the long lags in recognizing the nasty side effects of tobacco and pesticides), but it was persuasive: assertions could be tested by controlled experiment. Over the decades, science built formidable structures of knowledge that most people lacked the expertise or temerity to question, but that could be verified by anyone with the necessary resources. Reality became “enlightened.”

Another integrative trend consisted of the development of new communication tools—the printing press, and later radio, movies, and television. Increasingly, through these media, nearly everyone was exposed to common facts, ideas, and images. The wealthy banker and the destitute farmer uprooted by the dust bowl were marinated in the same Hollywood imagery, and the same civics homilies taught in compulsory public schools.

Continued on page 6

Cracks in the Modern Consensus

The emerging global consensus suffered a couple of serious ruptures during the modern era. In Europe, fascism brought more than a new set of political power relations; it created a mental universe so dominated by notions of racial and national superiority that it demanded the rewriting of textbooks. And in Russia, communism built a narrative in which the dictatorship of the proletariat—under constant attack by the forces of capitalism—must ultimately prevail, leading to a workers' paradise. Both fascists and communists used new mass communication tools (radio, movies, and newspapers) to give their consensus realities force and credibility.

Even science could be repurposed to support alternate realities. In the Soviet Union, the state decided to back an alternative to natural selection and science-based agriculture. The originator of this heterodox set of views, Trofim Lysenko, became Director of the Soviet Union's Academy of Agricultural Sciences, where—with Stalin's approving help—he rooted out the study of Mendelian genetics and taught instead the theory that characteristics acquired by parents can be directly transmitted to their offspring. Opponents of Lysenko were accused of “mysticism, obscurantism, and backwardness,” then banished to Siberian work camps. As a result, biological science in the Soviet bloc was set back decades.

After the defeat of fascism in WWII and the fall of the Soviet bloc, the West's consensus—shaped largely by the US—seemed to become reunified and stabilized. Political scientist Francis Fukuyama called it “the end of history.”

But blind spots persisted and grew. Some of these profoundly shaped not just the dominant worldview itself, but the contours of daily life for multitudes. One telling example: the so-called science of economics codified for nearly everyone the false assumption that perpetual growth in industrial activity is possible, and denied all evidence to the contrary. Economics concealed other blind spots as well, as it continually ignored widespread signs that the “free market” does not in fact benefit everyone, and that people do not actually behave like idealized rational self-interest-maximizing robots.

Some persistent and periodically worsening cracks in the consensus ripped along economic, ethnic, or political fault lines: especially during the Jim Crow era, African-Americans and European-Americans in southern US states inhabited sharply different realities, and stark inequities have persisted to the present. Other cracks, fed by suspicions that powerful people were manipulating the consensus to their own benefit, led to what came to be

known as conspiracy theories—including doubts about the official accounts of the JFK assassination and 9/11, as well as misgivings about the safety and “real” purpose of water fluoridation and vaccination.

Meanwhile, communications media were evolving still further. While radio and television had a largely unifying effect during the 20th century, the internet and social media are proving to be disintegrative to consensus in the 21st. Algorithms capture users' interests and prejudices and feed them news and opinion articles that lead them to have ever-more-extreme views. “Do you think the government is suppressing information about space aliens? You don't know the half of it! Read this!”

The radicalizing propensity of social media was a factor in the sudden political ascendancy of Donald Trump, who acted as both symptom and driver of consensus breakdown. As a real estate developer and reality TV personality, he seemed an exceedingly inexperienced and unlikely candidate for the top political office in the country, and arguably the world. His intellect and ethics were widely suspect. But he had the ability to give utterance to the grievances of a sector of the populace that feels left behind—people of mostly European ancestry in low-density towns and rural areas across the nation (in recent decades, most of America's wealth and cultural attention has flowed to high-density, multi-ethnic cities). Even if Trump could not change the material circumstances of small-town families, he could make them feel as though they had a voice. Ironically—and perhaps therefore somehow even more fittingly—it was the voice of a gaudily privileged New Yorker. But it was an angry voice, and it spoke in words of few syllables. He was the first Twitter President. The Trump team's communication strategy, in the immortal words of former top adviser Steve Bannon, was to “[flood the zone with shit](#).” Disruption of consensus reality wasn't a regrettable side effect of their efforts; it was a central goal.

2020: The Dam Breaks

In short, prior to the year now ending, consensus reality in the US was already starting to crumble. But 2020 delivered two sledgehammer blows: a pandemic and a polarizing presidential election.

First, the pandemic. As many observers have pointed out, COVID-19 has greatly varying infection and death rates by nation, and countries with higher levels of social cohesion have generally tended to [do better](#) at combatting the disease. The United States has fared the worst of all countries in raw numbers, with over 17 million total cases so far and over 300,000 deaths (about a dozen smaller countries, including Belgium and San Marino, have suffered higher *per capita* rates of infection and mortality). Currently the US is seeing over 200,000 new cases each day and roughly 2,500 deaths. Unless the trend changes, total mortality for the country may eventually begin to rival that of the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, in which

Atheists of Florida

Inc.



For our Atheists helping the Homeless project -

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

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

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



Perspective *Continued from Page 1*

up a growing percentage of our population, yet religious believers continue to have unwarranted influence over our laws and our lives. By having a united voice, we can let our local, state, and national elected officials know we are aware of how they are running our government. We must consistently let them know when we support or oppose their actions.

We must continue our work to support each other, to build a community for non-believers. Religious groups come together, build a strong group that offers many benefits to its members. We could learn from their success. We can build an association that brings people together and builds a better society for everyone.

We must continue to educate people on atheism, humanism, skepticism, and the value of logical thinking. We know that only in applying the scientific way of thinking does our society progress. It is our duty to help believers and doubters see the benefits of a rational approach to life.

Judy Adkins

Do you know what your legislature Is up to?

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

JMA



Always Vigilant

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

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

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

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

Thanks, www.aof.ngo

Be sure to come on in for AoF's regular Sunday evening Zoom sessions starting at 5:00 PM. See our listings on the TB-CoR Meetup for topics,

Date	Guest	Topic
1/3/2020	Stephen Fry - Vid	How can I be happy?
1/10/2021	Jim Young	From Whence Cometh Hate?
1/24/2021	Dale McGowan	Parenting Beyond Belief
1/31/2021	TBD	TBD

For linking information, see our notices on the Coalition of Reason Meetup page, or on www.aof.ngo.

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

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

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



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

Contact us: info@atheistsoffloridainc.org



Continued from page [6](#)

about 675,000 died (though the *per capita* death rate will almost certainly not be as grim, given today's far larger population).

Why has the US suffered such a horrific outcome? Much of the blame certainly must be borne by President Trump and his political appointees and allies in the federal government. They mounted almost no coordinated national pandemic response; instead, states were left to formulate their own policies and to compete with each other for medical supplies. Messaging from the executive branch was likewise unhelpful or downright counterproductive: in the early weeks, when the virus was largely just a distant menace and preparations could have made a huge difference, the President dismissed the need for concern (on January 22, he told a CNBC interviewer, "We have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's going to be just fine."). Then, when it became clear that sickness was spreading and people were dying, Trump invented the term "China virus," evidently seeking to deflect blame while still failing to forge a national response plan. Later in the year, as economic and political concerns took the spotlight, Trump returned to almost completely ignoring the disease, even omitting attendance, for weeks at a time, at meetings of his coronavirus task force.

With no clear messaging from the President, it was essential that the appropriate federal agencies step in. But here again the response faltered. The Centers for Disease Control at first advised the public against mask wearing, despite clear evidence that masks were effective at stopping the spread of the disease. Only later, once masks became more widely available, did the CDC change its recommendation. But this self-contradiction had undercut the agency's credibility. Many people continued to believe that mask wearing is ineffective, while the President encouraged his followers to see mask mandates as government overreach.

Conspiracy theories immediately filled the vacuum of leadership and consistent government messaging. Millions of people, stuck at home under lockdowns, were spending more time than ever on social media and Google, exploring ideas and opinions about the coronavirus. A pair of YouTube documentaries titled "Plandemic" became instant sensations. Many people adopted the view that there simply is no pandemic, and that the "fake news" media ginned up the story as a way to enable globalist liberal elites to exert more control over citizens and the economy.

Now that vaccines are on the horizon, the conspiracy mill is cranking harder and faster than ever. While the anti-vax movement has been slowly simmering for decades, its current leaders' books are suddenly among the top-sellers on Amazon. [Up to a third](#) of Americans say they will likely refuse to take a vaccine when it is available. While many people hope that the advent of vaccines will halt the pandemic in its tracks, anti-vax fervor, along with the soaring rate of infections, may mean that the disease will continue to spread and kill far into the new year.

If Americans were divided prior to the pandemic, their tribalism only intensified as the decision about whether to wear a mask became an instantly visible expression of group identity. But division was deepened also by the fact that 2020 was a presidential election year.

Elections are always polarizing. That's the point: each voter must choose one candidate or another; "all of the above" is not an option. But this election season pushed the polarization needle far into the danger zone. Democrats steeped themselves in books and articles detailing accusations that Donald Trump presents all the clinical symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder, and that he is an authoritarian, a rapist, a tax cheat, a business fraudster, a Russian puppet, and a traitor. At the same time, followers of QAnon (who is supposedly a patriotic government insider) spread the notion that leading Democrats are Satan-worshiping pedophiles running a global child sex-trafficking ring, while Trump—a messiah sent by God—heads a heroic behind-the-scenes effort to preserve decency, freedom, and Christianity (QAnon believers now occupy seats in Congress and many state houses).

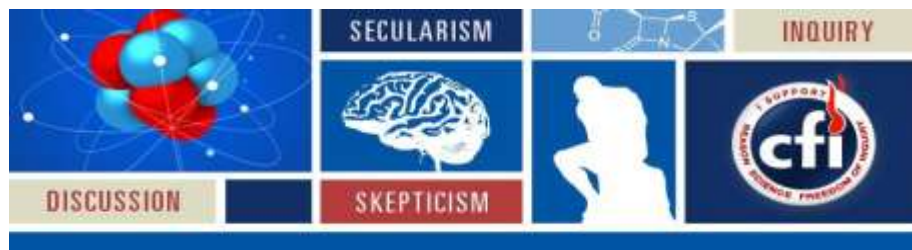
The election outcome was unequivocal. Biden bested Trump by 7 million popular votes, with electoral votes stacked 306 to 232. Even Republican election officials in swing states said the balloting went off with scarcely a hitch. But Trump, evidently unwilling to be seen as a loser (or perhaps wishing to avoid prosecution for financial crimes once he leaves office), claimed that the election was rigged and that he had actually won. A flurry of almost 60 lawsuits followed, two making their way to the Supreme Court; all were dismissed. No convincing evidence of widespread irregularities was produced. Nevertheless, Trump's followers adopted the narrative that millions of dead people had voted for Biden, and that suitcases full of illicit Biden ballots had been surreptitiously delivered to vote tabulators. According to one poll, only a quarter of Republicans think Biden was legitimately elected. A steady drumbeat of evidence-free assertions resounding through right-wing media channels and parroted by Republican elected officials (who fear retribution from Trump's base) has created a formidable alternate reality in which Trump won fair and square, while Biden is being falsely elevated to the highest office.

Consensus Dynamics

Cognitive dissonance—the holding of contradictory thoughts or beliefs—makes people miserable. And when a person's own interpretation of reality runs counter to the consensus reality, some degree of paranoia or depression often results. Alternatively, a person unmoored from the dominant consensus may become a dedicated paradigm warrior intent on converting others to their own views, sometimes even by violence.

The loss of consensus is therefore also problematic for society as a whole. People who have left the consensus behind may disregard or flout norms (such as

Continued on page [12](#)



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

The Pluralism Project

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Humanism in America Today

On a rainy day in March of 2012, roughly 20,000 people from all parts of the Humanist, atheist, and freethinking movements converged on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. They gathered to celebrate secular values, dispel stereotypes about secular people, and support secular equality. Sponsored by twenty of the country's major secular organizations, the Reason Rally featured live music and remarks from academics, bloggers, student activists, media personalities, comedians, and two members of Congress, including Representative Pete Stark (D-CA), the first openly atheistic member of Congress.

The Reason Rally is evidence of a growing energy and excitement among atheists in America. This new visibility of secularism was inspired in part by the "New Atheists"—including authors such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens—who have pushed the discussion of the potentially dangerous aspects of religion to the



A NEW RESOURCE TO INOCULATE AGAINST CORONAVIRUS MISINFORMATION

Visit the [Coronavirus Resource Center](#) and share its content with family and friends so we can slow the spread of misinformation just like we're trying to slow the spread of the virus.

We are here during this crisis to support the reality-based community and give people the informational tools they need to stay safe. **We need those who care about separating truth from quackery to step up as well and help us get the job done.** [Donate now](#), and be a part of the solution.

forefront of the public discussion. More people than ever are turning away from traditional religious faith, with the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reporting that, as of 2014, some 20% of the US population identify as "unaffiliated." This is particularly true of the rising millennial generation, which has increasingly come to view institutional and traditional religion as associated with conservative social views such as opposition to gay marriage, and is therefore much more skeptical of the role of religion in public life than their parents and grandparents. The proportion of unaffiliated millennials is just over one in three.

This new energy and excitement can be found, too, in online communities which increasingly drive Humanist thought and activism. The much-frequented *Freethought Blogs* and the *Friendly Atheist* are but two examples of these vibrant communities. *Atheist Nexus*, an atheist social network with 27,000 members, and the increasing ...

READ the rest here: <https://bityl.co/4uXh>

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

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





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

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

Behavior & Belief from *Skeptical Inquirer*

THE TRAGEDY OF OUR COMMONS

By **Stuart Vyse**

Not long ago, I was scrolling through Instagram when I saw a video of people in Perth, Australia, gathering in small crowds outdoors, no face coverings in sight. From my perspective in the United States, where an average of over 2,000 people a day were dying of COVID-19, it was a somewhat shocking image to see. But these bare-faced people were not attending a political rally or an anti-mask protest; they were at the opening of a [ride/experience called "Flight"](#) that involved "binaural audio" and hydraulic movements inside a large shipping container. The people in the video looked very happy.

A little bit of investigation revealed that, with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia was a very different place. For example, the day before I wrote this sentence (December 10) Australia (population 25.5 million) had six new cases of COVID-19 and no deaths; the United States (population 330 million) led the world with 226,762 new cases and a record 3,260 deaths.¹ Adjusted for population size, Australia's infection rate on that day was equivalent to seventy-eight new cases in the United States. What a dream that would be.

Life in the winter of 2020 was very different in Australia. The pictures below are of a meeting at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia (population 5.2 million) on December 9. You will notice that people are a bit more spaced apart than they might have been before the pandemic, but they are indoors and not wearing masks. The university's COVID-19 instructions advised anyone who was feeling sick to stay home and required that everyone coming to campus check in using a QR code. Smartphone apps and QR codes were commonly used when people entered buildings to facilitate contact tracing should someone be exposed to the virus. But life was going on in Australia with a kind of freedom that was impossible in the United States. Australia is not the only country to get beyond the virus. The epidemic has been over in China (population 1.4 billion) for months, and there have been no deaths since April. Vietnam (population 97 million) had its last death in early September. The success story in New Zealand (population 4.8 million) continues, with three deaths since late May, the last of these in mid-

September.

There are many circumstances that produce the kind of results these countries have enjoyed, but one factor appears to be setting the right goal. In the United States, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that the criterion for opening up states be a fourteen-day decline in the number of cases (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020)—which was not consistently adhered to by all the states. As a result, the country never reached an average infection rate of lower than 20,000 cases per day.

READ the rest here: <https://bitly.co/4uVv>

GORSUCH'S RIGHT DECISION FOR THE WRONG REASONS

By **Gordon Gamm**, from *Free Inquiry*

Justice Neil Gorsuch made the right decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County* in which he applied the civil rights act to prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ citizens. He just did so for the wrong reasons.

Liberals, Democrats, and I rejoiced at the Supreme Court decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, written by Justice Neil Gorsuch, declaring that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in employment against LGBTQ citizens. Title VII is a statute passed by Congress in 1964 outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. This legislation expanded the right of Americans to be served in facilities that are open to the public—hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, real estate, and similar establishments—as well as greater protection for the right to vote. Thus, the question before the court was whether discrimination based on "sex" would apply to "sexual orientation" or "sexual identity," that is, to lesbians, gays, and transgendered individuals. Justice Gorsuch wrote the majority opinion endorsing this application. Justice Samuel Alito wrote an eloquent dissenting opinion.

Justice Alito's fifty-four page dissent makes a compelling argument that Justice Gorsuch could not legitimately base his opinion on a theory of statutory interpretation called "textualism" or "originalism," a theory upon which Justice Gorsuch claimed to rely.

READ the rest here: <https://bitly.co/4uVv>

Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Science

Calling all teachers of **English Language Learners!!**

We are thrilled to offer the TIES student-guided units, along with the student response sheets, rubrics, and exams **in Spanish!!!** We have both middle and high school versions available. Check it out:

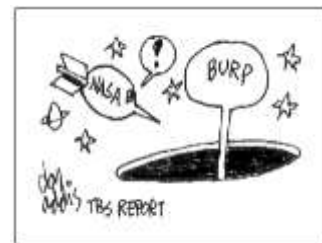
<https://tieseducation.org/teacher-materials/#spanish>

Email if need anything - bvazquez@centerforinquiry.org

Upcoming events: RSVP for admission links! Many regional freethought events are listed in detail with registration instructions on Meetup. *Go here:* <http://bit.ly/2Ktcfke>



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



Not sure about a news item? ... Here's what I suggest you could do

By Edzard Ernst, MD PhD

In so-called alternative medicine ([SCAM](#)) – but certainly not just there – we regularly encounter reports about new research results that sound odd, implausible, too good to be true, or outright fantastic (like borne out of fantasy). What should one do with such news? Keep an open mind, yes sure, but what if the news leads us up the garden path? Here is what I usually do and what I recommend you might do as well:

1. Check who published the story; some sources are clearly more trustworthy than others (think of '[Natural News](#)', or [WDDTY](#), for instance).
2. Try to find other outlets confirming the news; if none can be located, be extra sceptical.
3. Identify the origin of the new research; an academic might be more trustworthy than a [SCAM practitioner](#) or a [commercial firm](#).
4. Find out where the study was originally published; some SCAM journals publish virtually any rubbish (think of [EBCAM](#) or [JCAM](#)).
5. If you are still in doubt and continue to be interested, go on Medline and obtain the original article.
6. If it's behind a pay-wall, email the authors for a copy.
7. Check the validity of the paper; this can be rather a [big task](#) for someone not trained in critical assessment of scientific papers, but there are certain pointers: in case of a clinical trial, for instance, check whether it was large or small, randomised or not, placebo-controlled or not, blind or not.
8. If the findings look suspicious to you, find out more about the researchers: for example, do they have a track record of publishing results that look false-positive (think of [M Frass](#) or other members of the '[ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE HALL OF FAME](#)', for instance)?
9. of interest.
10. If all of this leaves important questions unanswered, don't be shy, write to the authors and ask.

When I have gone through all these steps, I usually have a fairly clear impression whether I can trust the research or not. Obviously keeping an open mind about new discoveries is sensible. But please. do remember that charlatans might (and often do) put a lot of BS in your mind, if you open it too wide for too long.

Forensic science: the tip of the iceberg?

By Ruth Morgan from [The Guardian](#)
This article is more than 2 years old

Forensic science is nowhere near as robust and reliable as many people think. [excerpt]

The technological capabilities to measure and classify trace materials have increased, and the accuracy of the measurements that can be made is greater than ever before. But as the Chief Government Scientific Advisor said in his [annual report](#), "New capabilities create other challenges for our existing systems; in particular, our ability to analyse may outstrip our ability to interpret."

When we find trace evidence, such as explosive residue particulates or a trace DNA profile, at a crime scene or on a suspect, we can often provide good indications about what it is or who it came from. But there are big questions that still need to be answered for us to be able to know what that trace evidence means and how significant it is for a case. There is more on this in my [TED talk](#).

The scale of the problem: the dark figure of misinterpreted forensic science evidence.

READ the rest here:
<https://bitly.co/4uWVv>



A new year is here already. Time never stops, lost moments are gone forever. Be bold and skeptical before you make a serious decision. It makes a big difference in the end. "If everyone used critical thinking, we would all be *Consumer Reports* subscribers."

Continued from page [8](#)

longstanding informal rules with regard to elections and Congressional procedures). Society then becomes less capable of solving problems; and so, if economic, social, or environmental crises materialize, societal collapse of one sort or another becomes a real possibility. As individuals find themselves not just disagreeing on politics or religion,

but living in different and directly conflicting mental universes, they individually experience cognitive pain and [anguish](#). Families are torn apart, friendships severed. But the collective risks of consensus breakdown go deeper, and include the possibility of widespread rage, pushing society toward civil violence, coup, or state failure. If, as is often the case, the fracturing of consensus results in (or is caused by) strong feelings of grievance among one group against another, a cycle of retribution may ensue. [Recent brain research](#) by James Kimmel, Jr. at the Yale University School of Medicine shows that the brain on grievance craves retribution in much the same way a brain addicted to heroin craves more heroin.

Is the fracturing of consensus reality a symptom of societal decline due to other factors (such as economic crisis or limits to vital resources), or is it an independent variable, capable of causing collapse by itself? In my view, the former is more likely the case: if a society is doing well economically, it is usually able to resolve occasional cognitive contradictions over time. A polarizing demagogue (like Joseph McCarthy or George Wallace) may appear, but the status quo eventually reasserts itself. However, if a society is experiencing an economic, political, or social emergency, consensus breakdown may contribute to a self-reinforcing process of collapse.

People's views of reality don't diverge arbitrarily and without cause. They do so because people's self-interests (which may differ by income, status, region, religion, or ethnicity) are becoming further divided. The divergence of worldviews is thus a secondary problem. But once consensus begins to shatter, people's interests are likely to diverge even further as bifurcating worldviews create economic and social islands. People may even separate geographically, moving to be closer to people with whom they share values and views. Further, if an increasing majority people in a given community are espousing a new shared belief, others may feel compelled to alter their previous beliefs in order to belong.

The fragmentation of consensus reality isn't just a war of ideas. It is a more profound and disturbing process both psychologically and socially. People who have abandoned, or who have been abandoned by, the consensus may find dubious new beliefs to cling to; but they may also become keenly aware of cultural blind spots that others continue to ignore. They feel themselves flung into a new universe; the experience can be either terrifying or thrilling, or both.

One of the effects of loss of consensus is the lowering of social trust. Trust is the basis of cooperation, and high levels

of cooperation are required for modern complex societies to function. According to [surveys by Pew Research Center](#), 71 percent of Americans think interpersonal trust has weakened in the past 20 years. There is a strong correlation between low trust and Trump voters—which could be an explanation for why the pre-election 2020 polls were inaccurate: people who are distrustful not only disproportionately voted for Trump but also refused to participate in polling surveys.

Because the costs to society of loss of consensus are obvious and considerable, societies invest heavily in maintaining a shared worldview. But if there are severe and growing flaws in that consensus, keeping it whole may not be an option.

When consensus fractures into two directly competing narratives, some people may seek to resolve cognitive dissonance by claiming that the two narratives are equally valid. But this is a difficult stance to maintain, as the narratives are usually mutually exclusive. Take the current case with regard to the US presidential election: the main competing reality claims are not on equal footing with regard to facts or outcomes. The "Trump really won" claim is simply fantasy; the "Biden really won" claim is backed by clear evidence that will result in the actual inauguration of a new President. But, in a way, facts are beside the point. Over a third of Americans are so alienated from the consensus that they prefer to believe obviously fabricated lies rather than to acknowledge demonstrable proof. The new Republican "reality" is tenable not because it is based on anything physically verifiable, but because it is emotionally satisfying for people who refuse to accept the dominant narrative. In the post-Trump era, traditional Republican ideology (low taxes, states' rights, limited government spending) becomes entirely expendable. Any argument that "owns the Dems" is good, regardless how specious. Democracy itself becomes an impediment to the goal of wrecking the consensus.

Defenders of the dominant worldview can't understand why anyone would be so upset with it. Isn't it based on science and established values and traditions? Doesn't the alternative represent a devolution into pseudoscience, conspiracy theories, and deepening dissension?

To a certain extent, the fervor of the disestablishmentarian faction is traceable to economic and social trends mentioned earlier (the flow of wealth and power to coastal urban centers and the slow demographic shift of the country toward multi-ethnicity). The upholders of the mainstream consensus accept those trends, which their elites use to their own advantage, but they fail to take account of those left behind, or to see the holes and blind spots in the consensus they defend.

Perhaps the deepest blind spot in the current US consensus is that it has no satisfying and unifying vision, no coherent ideology; its main guiding value is simply "more." Its implicit message: we must keep on doing what we're doing (producing more wealth by turning more of nature into waste) because to do otherwise would result in economic

Continued on page [17](#)

Recommended Reading

Click on the book's image for more info



Written by the prolific author Kim Stanley Robinson, "Ministry" centers around a UN agency created in the near-future that is meant to represent the interests of generations not yet born, the generations that have the most at stake on climate change.

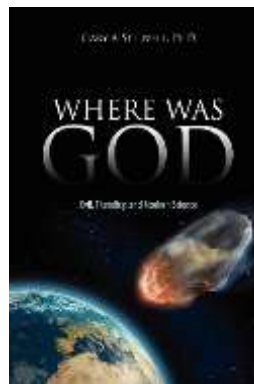
The inciting incident is a horrific heat wave in India, where temperatures and humidity rise so high that human beings can't survive. As a result, millions of people die in a single sweep, kicking off a desperate last-chance effort to slow warming that unfolds over hundreds of pages and a few dozen years in the novel.

Like much of what Robinson describes, such a catastrophic event is all too possible in the years to come.

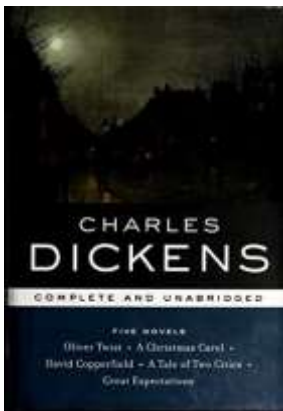
Beyond science, "Ministry" illustrates the knotty political and financial problems that bar the way to effective climate action – and shows how we might solve them.

Why is there evil in a good God's world? Why do bad things happen to good people? Does the fact of evil in the world prove that God does not exist? Can modern science help us answer those questions? These are the subjects of my manuscript, provisionally titled: Where was God: Evil, Theodicy, and Modern Science.

With the advent of modern science (primarily quantum physics, relativity, and chaos theory), we may have a new place to look in order to develop new justifications for the Problem of Evil. In this work, I examine and refute many historical attempts to justify evil in a good God's world and, using insights provided by some of the modern sciences, propose a solution to this theological conundrum with a rational, albeit unorthodox, theodicy that might withstand objective critical scrutiny.

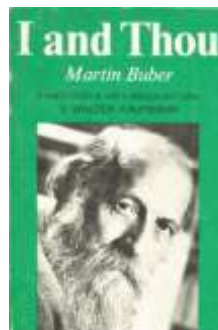


Five Novels,
Complete and
Unabridged:
Oliver Twist,
A Christmas Carol,
David Copperfield,
A Tale of Two Cities,
and
Great Expectations.



It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom,
it was the age of foolishness,
it was the epoch of belief,
it was the epoch of incredulity,
it was the season of Light,
it was the season of Darkness,
it was the spring of hope,
it was the winter of despair,
we had everything before us,
we had nothing before us,
we were all going direct to Heaven,
we were all going direct the other way.

The need for a new English translation had been felt for many years. The old version was marred by many inaccuracies and misunderstandings, and its recurrent use of the archaic "thou" was seriously misleading. Professor Walter Kaufmann, a distinguished writer and philosopher in his own right who was close to Buber, retranslated the work at the request of Buber's family. He added a wealth of informative footnotes to clarify obscurities and bring the reader closer to the original and wrote an extensive prologue that opened up new perspectives on the book and on Buber's thought. This volume provided a new basis for all subsequent discussions of Buber.



The Matt Cooper Humanist Lending Library

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



TITLE AUTHOR

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



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

Humanist Families of Greater Tampa

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

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

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

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

Thanks, Jennifer Hancock

The Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers (MAAF)

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

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

Tampa Bay Thinkers

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



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

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

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

Karen Assel, Leader

The Socrates Cafe

A monthly discussion since 2008.
Hosted by **Brent Hardaway**
Facebook: <http://bit.ly/38mveZH>
Join us to discuss



Saturday Afternoon 3 PM, January 14th on Zoom.

Go to our Meetup page to register your [RSVP](#)

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

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

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

UU St. Pete Thursday Citizens' Café

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
100 Mirror Lake Dr. N., St. Petersburg



UU Humanists of Clearwater

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



UU Humanists of Tampa

Public Discussion, 2nd Thursday eve from 7-9 PM.
11400 Morris Bridge Rd. Tampa



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

Tampa Bay CoR

TAMPA BAY COALITION OF REASON

Promoting Action & Unity in the Tampa Bay Area

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

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

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

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

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

Hear a secular point of view on local radio.

Listen to:

The Voice of Reason

on WTAN Radio Network from Clearwater. Thursdays at 10 AM



Continued from Page 1

...and the second to stimulate the first. Through evolutionary time we have come to understand that as knowledge springs from curiosity, morality emerges as the blinders of religious ignorance drop off and the true nature of social relationships and moral arrangements are understood.

But just as all knowledge, to be useful, must be properly arranged, and the various connections well noted, so too a person will need to organize life and work within the context of the place and time in which we live. Humanism will never be complete so long as there remain unanswered questions. Fortunately this is the most exciting quest of all for we mortal beings. And it helps us become ourselves. Stay with us!

University of South Florida Humanities Institute



Spring 2020 Newsletter
Now Available!

Complete Schedule of Events

Get all the details of our many activities such as the Book Group, Books & Caffeine, lectures. Poetry, Humanities & Hops. *Always something to involve active minds!*

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc.

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

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

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

M.A.R.S. – Tampa Astronomy Club at MOSI

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



USF Freethinkers

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



TBCoR Leadership Team 2020

Eileen Stafford,
AoF

Bill Norsworthy,
UUCH

Mark Brandt,
UUCH

Chris Brown,
MASH

Jenn Hancock,
GTBHF

Rick O'Keefe,
CFI

David Vangsness,
TBS

Jim Peterson,
HSS, TBPC,
CoR Facilitator



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



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

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

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

Continued from page [12](#)

Armageddon. The best we can do is to somehow avert catastrophic climate change and reduce extreme wealth inequality with technical work-arounds, even as we continue to do the very things that cause those problems.

The central lie of the consensus is that the rising tide of economic growth will lift all boats . . . eventually. But eventually never seems to come. As the folly of expecting endless economic growth on a finite planet starts to reveal itself—via the need for ever more drastic measures to maintain the appearance of growth and to prevent

widespread destitution—something has to give. People who feel unfairly treated as the impossible perpetual-growth machine decelerates begin fleeing the consensus, even if doing so leads them to curse imaginary scapegoats and believe obvious fictions.

Can the Old Consensus Be Repaired? Can a New One Be Built?

Joe Biden is central casting's answer to the call for a tried-and-true figurehead to restore the old consensus. Anyone who's not swept up in anti-elite fervor probably finds it easy to sympathize with his exhortation to bring America back together, and his intention to be President of all the people, including those who voted against him.

However, Biden faces daunting if not insurmountable challenges. These arise not just from fervent, defeated, and angry Trumpists, who may attempt to run a "shadow" presidency, countering every action of the new administration. There are also hurdles inherent in the taming of the pandemic and the stabilization of the economy. Less widely acknowledged but perhaps most formidable of all is the challenge of finally coming to terms with the blind spots and lies embedded in the worldview that still runs the machinery of our economy and government. Consumerism—a way of organizing the economy that is fundamentally at odds with nature's limits—is so deeply and implicitly woven into the warp and weft of modern America that only a cathartic collapse and renewal is likely to expunge it. The best Biden can likely do, even if he has the strategic brilliance to propose a [Rural New Deal](#), is to be a competent placeholder.

The perplexing fact is that we don't know what kind of new consensus may emerge, or when. Indeed, it is entirely possible that, in the context of energy and economic decline, the human ideasphere will remain fragmented from now onward.

However, I'd like to think that a new consensus is indeed possible, and that it will comprise the best of what we humans have learned so far. And, though what follows is entirely speculative, it seems appropriate to close this essay with an exploration of what that consensus might

look like.

Science would be an obvious candidate for inclusion, blind spots and all: its self-correcting mechanism tends to deliver improving approximations of truth with regard to physical reality. Of course, in a world with a smaller and slower economy and much less energy available, only comparatively small and simple experiments might be possible, but it's the method that matters.

Science can't tell us much about values and goals. For those, knowledge is less important than wisdom. And wisdom comes from intelligent self-control. As sages have always taught, it is in the taming of selfish urges that we find compassion and contentment. After the environmental and social mayhem that our two-century fossil-fueled consumerist mania will ultimately and undoubtedly unleash, I think we are likely to develop a strong and healthy collective skepticism regarding the aggregation of power for its own sake.

A sustainability-oriented worldview would acknowledge the ongoing need for a low and stable population relative to environmental carrying capacity. And it would prize sufficiency, equity, resilience, and happiness above accumulation and ostentatious display.

Our remarkable human capacities for language and tool making have gotten us into plenty of trouble over the millennia, never more so than now. A healthy consensus worldview would channel those outsized abilities away from geopolitical dominance and the production of wealth for the few, and toward the democratic (rather than just elite) production of beauty in all its possible forms—including poetry, literature, movement, music, art, drama, and architecture. And it would guide aesthetic appreciation toward the enhancement and emulation of nature.

Finally, a future consensus would take account of varying human needs, proclivities, modes of expression, histories, brain chemistry, and more, seeking reconciliation and community rather than exploitation and dominance.

Such a consensus reality, such a culture, is far from where we are now. Between here and there sits a valley we must cross. If we travel together, we have a better chance of arriving safely on the other side. That requires healing the divisions among us, if and when we disagree.

Richard Heinberg



What do you call someone in the White House who is honest, ethical, intellectual, law abiding, and truthful? *A tourist.*