

Freethought News

Vol. 10 No. 5 May 2021
Jim Peterson, Rick O'Keefe, Editors

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VIRUS: Nina Burleigh on the Hijacking of America's Response to the Pandemic

A few months before the world felt the fury of the coronavirus, global public health experts had declared the United States the country that was most prepared for a possible pandemic. Instead, the world watched as the disease killed half a million Americans and counting and brought a global superpower to its knees. How did it come to this?

Nina Burleigh will reveal some of the shocking answers on **Thursday, May 13 at 7pm ET** on the next Skeptical Inquirer Presents live online event. **Free registration is required** to take part in this live Zoom event.

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast anticipates the possibility of having an open in-person meeting possibly this September, if health developments continue to be optimal and all precautions are met.

Continue to monitor this newsletter for further developments.

In the meantime, please be sure to pay your dues which at this point will be credited for 2022. See page [2](#)

New from Andy Norman:
Mental Immunity
Coming in May

Author | Researcher | Public Philosopher

Atheists of Florida presents May's line-up of Speakers

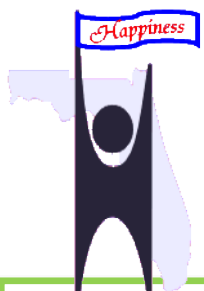
Minds of the highest distinction - Join us, it's free! [Pg. 7](#)

Date	Guest	Topic
5/9/2021	Andrew Norman See above right	What to Do About Mass Irrationality? Applications of the Emerging Science of Mental Immunity
5/16/2021	Dr. Natasha Vita-More, PhD	New Directions in Transhumanism
5/23/2021	Devon Graham	Florida Legislature report
5/30/2021	Dr. Stephen Barrett	Quackwatch

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

An Ending to be Desired

A growing number of us feel that death, when the time is right for us, should be comfortably in our own hands, not in the hands of doctors or lawyers, priests or politicians. We want to be able to end our own lives, in our homes, at a time of our choosing, without society getting its collective knickers in a twist that our considered, personal choice is somehow an affront to—and I stumble here—an affront to what? To how things are *supposed* to be? If we are supposed to be anything, we are supposed to be living in small bands hunting and gathering and dying long before the age of 30. Let us dispense with fanciful imaginings of what is supposed to be and instead consider what makes sense.

Let us also dispense with any romantic notion of a natural death. We have always done everything in our power to wrestle death from the hands of nature. I had severe pneumonia as a newborn and was in an oxygen tent for days. That would have been my natural death. I took another stab at it in my twenties with a climbing accident that, without medical intervention, would have finished me. Whatever road to death I take, it is way too late for it to be natural. At a less philosophical level, is either life or death natural if you have medications supporting your circulation? Or oxygen supplementing your breathing? A pacemaker guiding your heart? A caregiver spooning applesauce into your mouth because you no longer know how to feed yourself?

The vast majority of us come to a point of physical or mental debilitation that we never would have reached had we lived and died naturally. The additional time to live is a wonderful gift of modern medicine, but does it oblige us to suffer past the point of blessing, in indentured servitude to the medical establishment, to pay for that borrowed time? Must we then be cursed to endure exhausted, painful bodies or demented minds as some kind of penance?

Our lives are complex sagas with many a plot twist, but they all must end. As anyone who has turned the final page of an engaging novel knows, the end matters. It matters deeply. No wonder, then, that so many of us want to be able to comfortably and safely end our own lives, on our own terms, without having to turn to professionals of one sort or another who determine if our personal values are worthy by their standards, or if our assessment of our life's remaining quality can be measured by their yardstick, or if our reasoning makes sense to them.

It is an unnecessary tragedy that those who want the option to end their lives must plan in secret, researching furtively behind closed doors, whispering goodbye only to their most trusted loved ones (if to anyone) for fear that their careful consideration of a reasoned, self-honoring choice might result in armed police arriving on their doorstep to haul them off to psychiatric incarceration ... followed by the very future they wanted so desperately to avoid.

It is time for society to provide the tools and the legal protections to support those who want to be able to choose when and how their lives end. It is time for society to create new rituals and new traditions. We need new understandings and a supportive social framework, not only for those who wish to consciously conclude their own lives, but also for those who love them. It is time for proudly and openly planned self-deliverance. Let us make the preparation for life's end a time of coming together. A chosen death is an intimate opportunity to share and celebrate life's final chapter.

Vol. XXXIV No. 5 May, 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)
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- Associate -\$10



*Your membership helps keep Humanism alive & growing in the Tampa Bay area. If you have questions concerning your dues or status, contact our treasurer, **Scott Wilson** scott33761@yahoo.com*

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

*Send check made out to:
“**Scott Wilson**”*

*Memo line: “Humanist Society Dues”
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*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

I don't plan to grow old gracefully. I plan to have face-lifts until my ears meet. Rita Rudner

We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress. Will Rogers

The only reason I would take up jogging is so that I could hear heavy breathing again. Erma Bombeck

Regular naps prevent old age, especially if you take them while driving. Author Unknown

An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have. The older she gets the more interested he is in her. Agatha Christie

Old age is when you resent the swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated because there are fewer articles to read. George Burns

I don't want to achieve immortality through my work...I want to achieve it through not dying. Woody Allen

I've learned that life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes. Andy Rooney

When you are dissatisfied and would like to go back to youth, think of algebra. Will Rogers

I'm at an age when my back goes out more than I do. Phyllis Diller

There is only one cure for gray hair. It was invented by a Frenchman. It is called the guillotine. P.G. Wodehouse

My grandmother was a very tough woman. She buried three husbands and two of them were just napping. Rita Rudner

At my age, flowers scare me. George Burns

I'm at the age where food has taken the place of sex in my life. In fact, I've just had a mirror put over my kitchen table. Rodney Dangerfield

A stockbroker urged me to buy a stock that would triple its value every year. I told him, "At my age, I don't even buy green bananas." Claude Pepper

You know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake. Bob Hope

He's so old that when he orders a three-minute egg, they ask for the money up front. George Burns

So far, this is the oldest I've been. George Carlin

Humanist Society of the Suncoast

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

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Meets Sept., December, April

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Jim Peterson, Editor
 E-Mail us at:

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 321-604-7637



On June 8, 2021, the American Humanist Association and secular organizations throughout the country will come together for **Thomas Paine Day**, hosted by the Freethought Society. Each year this day celebrates the life and work of Thomas Paine and serves as an opportunity to promote the principles of reason, freethinking, and transnational human rights to which Paine dedicated his life.

Paine was an English-American writer, regarded as one of the greatest political propagandists in history. Born in England, Paine emigrated to the British colonies with help from Benjamin Franklin. He arrived in Philadelphia just as the conflict between the colonists and Great Britain was at its height. His experiences inspired him to write his infamous 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*. It advocated for independence from Britain and claimed that “in America, law is king.” It was a bestselling work, and is largely thought to have instilled sentiments among the populace that led to the Revolutionary War.

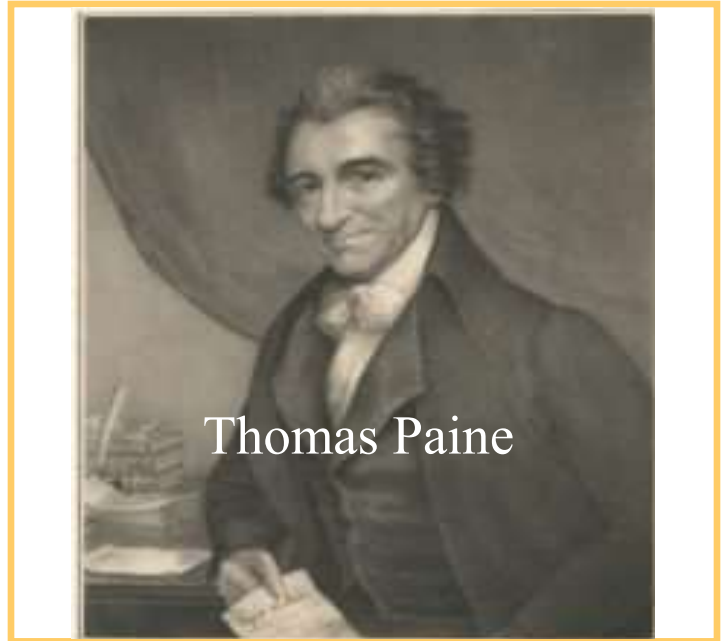
Years later, Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*. One of his most famous works, it critiqued institutionalized religion and the Bible. It exposed corruption in the Church and its attempts to gain political influence, promoted reason over revelation, and suggested that the Bible was a work of fiction, rather than divinely inspired. In fear of its potentially revolutionary ideas, the British government prosecuted those who tried to print or distribute it.

Paine authored many more influential books and pamphlets, but it was *The Age of Reason* that ultimately ostracized him. By the time of his death, he was abandoned by friends and alienated from society for his ridicule of Christianity. Now, over two hundred years later, he is remembered as a political activist and one of the “founding fathers” of the United States. To this day, his works inspire many to strive for political, economic, and social advancement.

If you're a fan of Paine's writings and life, or are just interested in learning more, join us for **Thomas Paine Day** on June 8th. Celebrations kick off at 3:45 PM PDT/6:45 PM EDT with a Thomas Paine-themed concert. **Congressman Jamie Raskin** (D-MD) will open the evening with a short speech after which representatives from your favorite freethought organizations will share their thoughts on the life and work of Thomas Paine. Attendees can also expect an update on the Thomas Paine statue project from the sculptor himself. There will be opportunities to ask questions and participate in discussions, and of course, toasts and favorite Paine quotations are welcome.



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 survivors. Recent recovery giving campaigns have helped relief efforts with The Texas snow disaster, Hurricanes Harvey & Irma, famine in East Africa, flooding in Louisiana, earthquakes in Ecuador & Nepal, and much more. **Learn more at:** foundationbeyondbelief.org/disaster-recovery



Humanist Quotes

As it is useful that while mankind are imperfect there should be different opinions; so it is that there should be different experiments in living.”

– **John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 1859**

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. ...But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

– **Mahatma Gandhi, (1869 -1948)**

“Humanism is about the world, not about humanism.”

– **Harold Blackham**

“Wear a smile and have friends; wear a scowl and have wrinkles. What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other?”

– **Attributed to George Eliot**

“Reason, Observation and Experience – the Holy Trinity of Science – have taught us that happiness is the only good; that the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make others so.”

– **Robert Green Ingersoll, *The Gods*, 1876**

“Whenever you have a mishap, remember to ask yourself how you can make use of it.”

– **Epictetus (1 st Century CE)**

“Of all the means by which wisdom ensures happiness throughout life, by far the most important is the possession of friendship.”

– **Epicurus, *Principle Doctrines*, C300 BCE**

“Just as the sun does not wait for prayers and incantations to persuade it to rise, but shines anyway and is universally loved, so you should not wait for applause and praise in order to do good; but be a voluntary benefactor and you will be beloved like the sun.”

– **Epictetus, 1 st Century CE**

Click here



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

The rise of Social Power A new book by *Richard Heinberg*

For information about the book and how to join a pre-release reading and discussion group, please go to postcarbon.org/power.

We are all enmeshed in fascinating and often daunting webs of social power. From laws to police and prisons, to armies and weaponry, to fame and high political office, to paychecks and taxes, to debt and credit, to advertising and public relations, to propaganda, to households to food, fighting, and reproduction:

When we speak of social power, we're usually referring to *vertical* power—in which one person, or a group, influences the behavior of others through incentives and disincentives (i.e., bribes and threats). This kind of power evolved in discrete stages starting about 11,000 years ago. More on that in a moment.



Prior to that, however, and for the vast majority of our existence as a species, we lived as hunter-gatherers, among whom power was typically distributed more horizontally. That is, nearly everyone took part in decisions, and authority was situational, based on demonstrated skill or knowledge. Women and men had somewhat different spheres of activity, but they respected each other's contributions to the group. No doubt, groups differed significantly in terms of how people treated one another, largely depending on how they adapted themselves to obtaining local food. But, as far as we can tell, vertical social power was minimal.

Nevertheless, this wasn't a peaceful Eden. The latest archaeological evidence suggests that life in pre-agricultural societies was fairly [violent](#). Within groups,

disagreements over sex or food could occasionally result in a beating or worse (there's abundant proof that, throughout history, the great majority of violent acts have been committed by [men](#) rather than women). However, most casualties came not from family squabbles, but from raids and counter-raids between groups competing for access to the best foraging space. Over time, competition *between* societies resulted in more cooperation *within* societies. Increased cooperation was facilitated by the ongoing development of language, which enabled people to coordinate their behavior, ask questions, and teach complicated sequences of tasks. Increased cooperation provided the means for societies to grow in size and complexity—thereby, again, enabling them to compete more successfully with their neighbors.

Population growth, crowding, and fighting ultimately drove two key, related developments: the adoption of field agriculture based on grain crops, and the formation of the first states (which in turn led to more population growth, crowding, and fighting). Grains permitted more intensive food production; they also could be stored, and could therefore be taxed. Taxation enabled leaders to put surplus aside in case of poor harvests in years to come—while also allowing them to enrich themselves, to pay for palaces and temples, and to hire teams of full-time specialists in violence (i.e., soldiers) to raid other, neighboring societies or to defend against raids. As urban centers grew, some people began to specialize as blacksmiths, accountants, priests, and merchants; but the great bulk of the populace remained tied to the land as farmer-peasants.

The long, slow development of grain agriculture entailed the domestication both of crop varieties and of animals bred for food, traction, and pest control. Gradually, some people began to apply the techniques of animal domestication to other people. Women and children started to be treated essentially as household domesticates, while war captives were pressed into slavery (which was universally practiced in early state societies). As rigid social castes emerged, humanity—a single species—divided itself into groups that acted more predator-like or more prey-like with respect to other groups. This was vertical social power in its rawest form.

old and workplace gender dynamics, to organizational chains of command, to extremes of wealth and poverty, people have found endless ways of modifying one another's behavior to suit their wants and needs.

These proliferating abilities to influence others are rooted in nature. All social animals have hierarchies (like the pecking order in my backyard flock of hens), and some animals are territorial, excluding others of their kind from access to mating opportunities or food. Some creatures (like ants) have even evolved a clearly defined division of labor. But we humans have managed to take social organization to extremes, empowering some and disempowering others in ways that are sometimes brutal beyond comprehension. How and why have we done this?

Continued on [page 6](#)

Power Continued from [Page 5](#)

As a result of decades of work by anthropologists, archaeologists, psychologists, and biologists, answers are falling into place. It turns out that the chief initial players in the drama of evolving social power were language. Because farmers tended to stay in one place, rather than following the seasonal movements of game animals like many of their hunter-gatherer forebears, they started to divide and fence land. As the notion of land ownership emerged, exclusionary power (also seen in the territorial behavior of animals like badgers, spiders, and hummingbirds) took strange new forms, with some people claiming ownership of other people, and kings claiming ownership of the entire state.

With people living closer together, it became easier to share new ideas and teach new skills. Key inventions included improved weapons (e.g., swords and armor), farming tools (notably, the plow), money, and writing. Money served as a storable, transferrable token of social power; while communication technologies (starting with writing) enabled a few to influence the minds of many.

Cities offered opportunities for invention and wealth creation, but they were places of disease and high mortality rates. Therefore, they had to be continually supplied with more human beings from the countryside or from military conquest. Women in early state societies were tasked with birthing and raising as many children as possible.

Money, debt, and taxes created a new social phenomenon: the wealth pump, which continually funneled wealth originating with nature to farmers, miners, and craftspeople, and hence to soldiers, merchants, priests, and kings. Society became a pyramid of economic and political power, a self-regulating system of wealth and poverty. But there was a cost to this sorting process: the ongoing degradation of nature (damage to soil or overharvesting of trees) destabilized the system, as did the continual impoverishment of people at the bottom of the social structure—who could be taxed no further once they were starving. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of people wanted to be at the top of the pyramid; so, in moments of crisis, factions of elite aspirants sought to sway the masses in different directions, leading to coups and revolutions.

In sum, vertical social power evolved together with population growth, war, communication technology, and food production. It came with obvious drawbacks (who would want to be a slave or even a peasant, and who would want to live through a period of grave societal instability or collapse?), but such societies survived and proliferated because they were collectively powerful in relation to other societies.

But that's not the end of the story of social power's evolution. Two big turning points came later, when everything changed. The first occurred about 3,000 years ago, when animal-herding tribes of the great Eurasian Steppe, stretching from modern Ukraine to Manchuria, began using the horse (domesticated around 5,500 years

ago) in warfare. Using horse-drawn chariots and saddle-seated cavalry, the Steppe dwellers swooped down on early kingdoms, toppling one after another. The latter needed to do something to respond and survive, and their solution involved even greater social complexity. Empires emerged, with larger land areas and populations. Having more citizens gave them a bigger tax base, so they could afford to build long, high walls and hire bigger armies, with chariots and cavalry of their own. But empires faced an internal problem: their citizenry was drawn from peoples with differing customs, religions, and languages. How to keep everyone on the same page?

Social evolution provided a solution: Big God moralizing religions. Previously, religion had little to do with morality; it served a range of other social and psychological functions. Big God religions implanted a moral watcher in each person's head, which proved to be an effective and economical means of social control. Knowing that others worshipped the same moralizing deity increased trust and cooperation, thereby facilitating trade and public order. The idea of heaven made these religions attractive to non-believers, while the idea of hell discouraged backsliders. You could easily identify whom you could count on, because all adherents to the religion were required to perform personally costly public demonstrations of loyalty, such as church attendance, tithing, and pilgrimages. Unfortunately, dispensing torture and death to nonbelievers was another way of showing commitment to the Big God. These religions also reinforced women's burden of producing as many offspring as possible: population growth was seen as a source of social power to be wielded by each religion's adherents against all competing religious groups.

The second turning point came much later, just a couple of centuries ago, with the advent of fossil fuels. Energy is what empowers us to do anything whatsoever; with more energy, we can do more things. Fossil fuels represented millions of years of stored ancient sunlight, available cheaply and in seemingly endless quantities. Over the last 200 years, humanity's annual energy usage has grown by a staggering 4,000 percent, with some societies and individuals using far more than others. Suddenly it became possible to do everything faster and on a bigger scale—including farming, mining, manufacturing, transporting, and fighting. Applied to agriculture, fossil fuels plus technology reduced the number of full-time farm laborers to a tiny fraction of the populace. People left the countryside and moved to cities, creating a new middle class of employees jostling for jobs in manufacturing, sales, advertising, and dozens of industries that had barely existed a century or two earlier. With more available food, and fossil-fuel-based medicines and sanitation chemicals, cities became safer, and the human population exploded from 1 billion in 1820 to nearly 8 billion in 2021. Whereas agricultural life favored a division of labor between women and men, the overwhelming majority of urban factory and office work could be done equally well by people of any gender. Hence came organizing efforts to obtain voting rights and equal pay for women.

Continued on [Page 8](#)

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



Be sure to come on in for AoF's regular Sunday evening Zoom sessions starting at 5:00 PM. See our listings below, or on the TB-CoR Meetup for topics, For linking information, see our notices on the Coalition of Reason Meetup page, or on www.aof.ngo.

Date	Guest	Topic
5/9/2021	Andrew Norman	What to Do About Mass Irrationality? Applications of the Emerging Science of Mental Immunity
5/16/2021	Dr. Natasha Vita-More, PhD	Transhumanism
5/23/2021	Devon Graham	Florida Legislature What have they done now?
5/30/2021	Stephen Barrett MD.	Quackwatch Don't take that pill! Find out more here.

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>

(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

The first Freedom...

www.Freethought.news

A new web service to the entire community providing an aggregate of events around the nation and world, significant to people who care deeply about freedom. It will be updated continuously. *Let us know how you like it.*

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 Reinhardt and distinguished guests supply fresh insights on the world we face.

Contact us: info@atheistsoffloridainc.org



The initial phase of the fossil-fuel energy transition centered on coal. For the first time in history, coal “energy slaves” could supplant the forced labor of millions of human beings. This development (plus the multi-racial, morally-based abolitionist movement and a Civil War) led to the end of state-sanctioned slavery. Unlike the previous agricultural economy, the new coal-powered industrial system employed specialized workers at key nodes along society’s energy supply routes, and these workers were frequently abused, underpaid, and subjected to dangerous and unhealthy conditions. The coal economy thus became the perfect breeding ground for a new kind of political power characterized by trade unions, strikes, and the spread of both democracy and progressive economic reforms. At the same time, however, in international relations coal led to steamboat colonialism and more deadly wars for control of sources of raw materials.

The next phase of the fossil energy transition flowed from oil, which was more energy-dense and portable than coal. Petroleum introduced transportation via automobiles and trucks; as a consequence, cities were redesigned around highway systems. Meanwhile, petroleum-fueled aviation, which started as a dangerous hobby, quickly became a routine mode of long-distance mass travel.

Because oil was easily moved via pipeline and tanker, petroleum revenue streams were often global in nature. Further, while the United States was the world’s superpower of oil production during the first half of the 20th century, pumping over half the world’s petroleum in most years, even larger amounts of oil and gas happened to be located in poor nations in the Middle East. Thus, the unfolding story of oil would hinge on US geopolitics, which itself depended largely on the maintenance of the dollar as the world’s reserve currency and as the currency of account for the international oil trade.

Oil-age weapons led to industrial-scale killing. World War II—which was fought with oil, and, to a large extent, for access to oil—took roughly 60 million lives and incentivized the development of weapons capable of destroying entire cities in an instant.

Fossil fuels enabled so much resource extraction and manufacturing as to provoke a new kind of economic problem—the overproduction of goods, which was one of the causes of the Great Depression. Industrial and government managers came up with a solution that combined advertising, planned obsolescence, and consumer credit. It amounted to a new kind of economy—the *consumer* economy—which is managed via interest rates and measured by GDP. Its primary goal is *growth*, on which jobs, government revenues, and investor profits all depend.

By the late 20th century, global trade and communications had created a kind, and a level, of species-wide economic integration never before seen. Humanity had become a [Superorganism](#) with a global metabolism: minerals extracted on one continent are now processed on another, integrated into a manufactured product on another, sold to an end user on still another, then eventually shipped across

an ocean to be recycled or dumped in a waste heap.

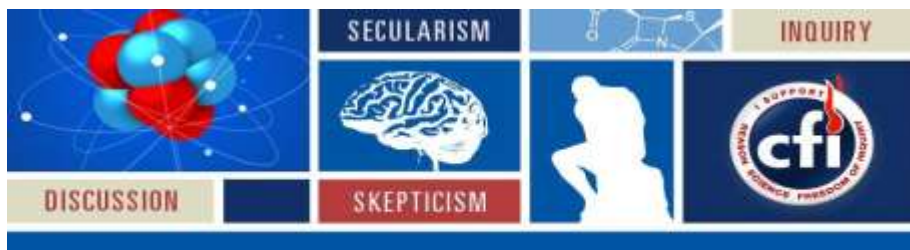
By 2007, for the first time in history, more people lived within cities rather than outside them. Among other things, the trend toward urbanization resulted in a subtle disconnection of people’s lives and thoughts from land and nature. People’s immediate welfare now depends more on paychecks, investment returns, and government programs; their deeper dependency on natural systems and cycles is simply taken for granted and unexamined. We are obsessed with economic gyrations and political intrigues, as well as proliferating entertainment options; thus, few people notice as other species disappear, the climate changes, and the oceans die.

Fossil fuels gave the wealth pump the capacity to transfer value from nature to industrialists, bankers, and investors in unprecedented amounts, producing unimaginable fortunes. Without brakes on that process, inequality quickly grew to dangerous extremes. During the 20th century, policy makers instituted graduated taxation (which partially reversed the action of the wealth pump by taxing the rich at higher rates) and redistributive government programs (education, health care, food coupons) in order to keep inequality from generating social and political crises. In some countries, the consequence was a Big Government that replaced key functions of Big God religions, thereby contributing to the secularization of society.

Domestically, economic growth served as a social pacifier: business-friendly policy makers argued that, as long as the whole economic pie is growing, it doesn’t really matter if some people are taking disproportionate slices—as long as those people are seen to be responsible for growth. Internationally, “development” was sold as a process whereby poor nations would increasingly become industrialized and richer. In most cases, however, it amounted to an empty promise. In reality, international bankers convinced leaders of low-GDP nations to borrow immense sums to pay for bloated infrastructure projects; then bankers and policy makers in wealthy nations used that debt to force those nations to “develop” (i.e., privatize, extract, and cheaply sell) their natural resources. As [Jason Hickel](#) points out, low-GDP nations contribute about 80 percent of the global economy’s labor and resources, but receive about five percent of the income generated.

Throughout the evolution of social power, human values have changed to fit the eco-social energy context. Hunter-gatherers had politically and economically egalitarian values, gender inequality was variable but generally low, and levels of interpersonal violence were high. People in agrarian state societies ardently believed that political and economic hierarchies were justified, gender inequality was extreme, and (outside of warfare) levels of interpersonal violence were lower. Fossil-fueled societies have politically and economically egalitarian values, gender inequality is low, and interpersonal violence is lower still.

Continued on [Page 17](#)



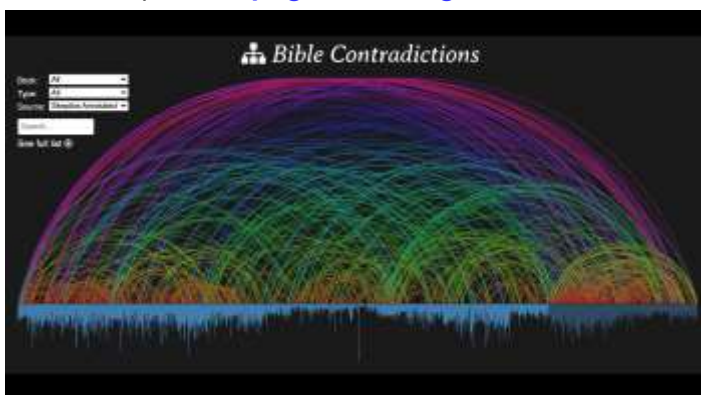
Incorporated in Florida on October 3, 2002. Only with *your support* can we succeed.

Check Out This Massive (Resurrected) Interactive Chart of Bible Contradictions

BY HEMANT MEHTA

Nearly a decade ago, a computer programmer used data from the [Skeptics Annotated Bible](#) and available information about Bible verses that cross-referenced the same topics to create a visual masterpiece called [BibViz](#) (Bible Visualization). The site allowed visitors to hover over different arcs to discover *biblical contradictions*.

Unfortunately, the site atrophied over the years — the old URL now redirects to one with a lot of broken links — but the [source code](#) was always available online under a Creative Commons license... and now an enterprising atheist named **Randy** has resurrected the graphics and fixed the broken parts at [LyingForJesus.org](#).



Go there and just start playing around. Each arc lights up when you hover over it and tells you which verses are being linked together. Click on an arc and it'll take you to those contradictions *specifically* with citations so you can check them out for yourself. As Randy told me, it's just a wonderful counter-apologetics resource for anyone interested.

Show your fundamentalist friends and watch them squirm. There's just no plausible way anyone can take the Bible literally after going through all these unless they're closing their eyes, sticking their fingers in their ears, and refusing to think about any of the errors in their worldview. Some items can be rationalized, but not all of them.

The site also shows you where in the Bible you'll find all the biblical passages featuring Cruelty & Violence, Discrimination against Homosexuals, Scientific Absurdities & Historical Inaccuracies, or (below) Misogyny/Violence/Discrimination against Women. You can also scroll all the way down to see a list of every contradiction in the supposedly infallible Holy Book.



May,
2021

Science-Based Medicine:
[Ivermectin is the new Hydroxychloroquine](#)

Federal Trade Commission: Consumer Information Blog:
[FTC and DOJ bring first case](#) under new COVID-19 consumer protection law

Ars Technica: 99.992% of fully vaccinated people have dodged COVID, [CDC data shows](#)

Politifact: [Tucker Carlson](#) falsely claims COVID-19 vaccines might not work



The Center for Inquiry (CFI) is a nonprofit educational, advocacy, and research organization headquartered in Amherst, New York, with executive offices in Washington, D.C. It is also home to the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science, the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, and the Council for Secular Humanism. The Center for Inquiry strives to foster a secular society based on reason, science, freedom of inquiry, and humanist values. Visit us on the web at CFITampaBay.org.



Just 3% of world's ecosystems remain intact, study suggests

By Damian Carrington Environment editor, *The Guardian*

Just 3% of the world's land remains ecologically intact with healthy populations of all its original animals and undisturbed habitat, a study suggests.

These fragments of wilderness undamaged by human activities are mainly in parts of the Amazon and Congo tropical forests, east Siberian and northern Canadian forests and tundra, and the Sahara. Invasive alien species including cats, foxes, rabbits, goats and camels have had a major impact on native species in Australia, with the study finding no intact areas left.

The researchers suggest reintroducing a small number of important species to some damaged areas, such as elephants or wolves – a move that could restore up to 20% of the world's land to ecological intactness.

Previous analyses have identified wilderness areas based largely on satellite images and estimated that 20-40% of the Earth's surface is little affected by humans. However, the scientists behind the new study argue that forests, savannah and tundra can appear intact from above but that, on the ground, vital species are missing. Elephants, for example, spread seeds and create important clearings in forests, while wolves can control populations of deer and elk.

The new assessment combines maps of human damage to habitat with maps showing where animals have disappeared from their original ranges or are too few in number to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Some scientists said the new analysis underestimates the intact areas, because the ranges of animals centuries ago are poorly known and the new maps do not take account of the impacts of the climate crisis, which is changing the ranges of species.

It is widely accepted that the world is in a biodiversity

crisis, with many [wildlife populations](#) – from lions to insects – [plunging](#), mainly due to the destruction of habitat for farming and building. Some scientists think a [sixth mass extinction of life on Earth](#) is beginning, with serious consequences for the food, and clean water and air that humanity depends upon.

“Much of what we consider as intact habitat is missing species that have been hunted [and poached] by people, or lost because of invasive species or disease,” said Dr Andrew Plumptre, the lead author of the study, from the Key [Biodiversity](#) Areas Secretariat in Cambridge, UK. “It’s fairly scary, because it shows how unique places like the Serengeti are, which actually have functioning and fully intact ecosystems.

“We’re in the [UN decade of ecosystem restoration](#) now, but it is focusing on degraded habitat,” he said. “Let’s also think about restoring species so that we can try and build up these areas where we’ve got ecologically intact ecosystems.”

The research, [published in the journal Frontiers in Forests and Global Change](#), used maps of the ranges of 7,000 species in 1,500 and today from the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s [Red List](#). Most of the data was for mammals, but it also included some birds, fish, plants, reptiles and amphibians. Many of the intact areas identified were in [territories managed by indigenous communities](#). The analysis did not include Antarctica. READ the rest & see the charts here: <https://bitly.co/6ObV>

Meetup is the place to go so you can find online & [if ever] in-person activities listed, ready for your

RSVP: http://bit.ly/2qEQuH4_TBCoR-Meetup

May Holidays

National Day of Reason (US) - First Thursday

A much needed alternative to the popular Day of Prayer currently celebrated within the United States – a day of reason and rational thought helps to convey the message that thinking is a far more fruitful activity to participate in, in order to affect change and improvement within our world, and to solve the problems that plague our societies. For further information on how you can celebrate, click on the title link.



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!](#)



Spain's homeopathy backlash

France and Germany have also stepped up pressure on homeopathy, despite its widespread popularity.

By [CARMEN PAUN](#), *Politico*, <https://bitly.co/6OeO>

Spain wants medicines that are not proven as such to stop being called “medicines.”

A recent backlash against homeopathy is sweeping the European countries that are its biggest users — and that may give Spain's efforts extra momentum.

The Spanish health ministry has been campaigning for a change in a 2001 EU law that classifies homeopathic products as medicines. The European Commission is cool to that idea, amid resistance by the French, Germans and even Spaniards themselves. But with France deciding to [stop paying for the products](#) and [German doctors calling for the same](#) in their country, the tide could turn in Spain's favor.

At present, the EU has different requirements for homeopathic products, Spanish Health Minister María Luisa Carcedo said recently [in El País](#). But it would be “sensible” if the same standard applied to them as the tougher one that’s applied to conventional medicines, she added.

The backlash in Spain seems to have been triggered by reports of people refusing or abandoning regular treatment in favor of homeopathic products to treat serious diseases like cancer. One of them was Rosa Morillo, who died of breast cancer in 2017, after she refused chemotherapy and sought homeopathic treatments instead, according to [El País](#).

“The problem is the damage that can be done by opting for an alternative therapy that has not demonstrated scientific evidence,” Carcedo said.

In a [national plan](#) against pseudotherapies, Spain's health ministry cites studies showing that alternative medicines increase the risk of death in patients with serious diseases, either because standard treatment is rejected or delayed, or because using alternative medicines together with regular treatments can increase the latter’s side effects.

SCIENCE: THE GOLD STANDARD OF TRUTH

By [Richard Dawkins](#), From: *Skeptical Inquirer*, [V. 45, #2](#)

What is truth? You can speak of moral truths and aesthetic truths, but I’m not concerned with those here, important as they may be. By *truth* I shall mean the kind of truth that a commission of inquiry or a jury trial is designed to establish. I hold the view that scientific truth is of this commonsense kind, although the methods of science may depart from common sense, & its truths may even offend it.

Commissions of inquiry may fail, but we assume a truth is lurking there even if we don’t have enough evidence. Juries sometimes get it wrong, and falsehoods are often sincerely believed. Scientists, too, can make mistakes and publish erroneous conclusions. That’s all regrettable but not deeply sinister. What is profoundly troubling, however, is any wanton attack on truth itself: the value of truth, the very existence of truth. This is what concerns me here.

George Orwell’s O’Brien held that two plus two equals five if the Party decrees it so. The “Ministry of Truth” existed for the purpose of disseminating lies. In the past four years, the U.S. government has moved in that direction. World-weary cynics sigh that all politicians lie; it goes with the territory. But normal politicians lie as a last resort and try to cover it up. Donald Trump is in a class of his own. For him, lying is not a last resort. It never occurs to him to do anything else. And far from covering up a lie, his well-named “base” will love him the more for it and will believe the lie, however far-fetched and shamelessly self-serving. Fortunately, Trump is too incompetent to fulfil Orwell’s nightmare, and anyway he is on the way out—albeit kicking and screaming and trying to pull the house down with him as he goes.

A more insidious threat to truth comes from certain schools of academic philosophy. There is no objective truth, they say, no natural reality, only social constructs. Extreme exponents attack logic and reason themselves, as tools of manipulation or “patriarchal” weapons of domination.

READ the rest here: <https://skepticalinquirer.org/volume/vol-45/>



By **Norm R. Allen Jr.**
Paul Kurtz Institute

WHAT WHITE SUPREMACY REALLY MEANS

In his excellent book, *The Ethnic Myth*, scholar Stephen Steinberg demonstrated that throughout history, poor and working-class Whites in the U.S. often kicked their best interests to the curb if it meant maintaining their status above Black people. Indeed, White supremacy is largely about identity and *psychology*.

Some of President Donald Trump's most loyal supporters are poor, White, uneducated paranoid conspiracy theorists. They believe that making America great again largely means bringing a White man back to the White House. (Even a White billionaire.)

These are the same people that bought into the birther notion that Obama was not a U.S. citizen. They believed he was a secret Muslim with ties to extremist Muslims. They made all kinds of racist remarks about him and his wife.

What is truly remarkable is that many of these Trump supporters are *dependent* upon Obamacare. However, in pursuit of White privilege, they are willing to jeopardize their health and their lives.

It is this kind of attitude that led the Black clinical psychologist Bobby E. Wright to suggest that racism is a mental illness. Not surprisingly, most White psychologists did not accept his proposal. Still, it raises the question of why it is that so many Whites are willing to sabotage their lives just to keep others on the bottom. That simply does not seem to be sane behavior.

For most African Americans, the accumulation of wealth has been a colossal failure. For example, according to a story dated September 28, 2017 on the website of the *Washington Post*, White families have about 10 times the net worth of Black families. However, what is especially frightening is that, according to a story dated September 13, 2017 on the website of the *Guardian*, the median wealth of Black Americans will fall to zero by 2053!

White supremacists are delighted by news of this kind. No matter how poor they might be, they can always identify themselves as belonging to the dominant group. They can feel better about themselves knowing that, regardless of how badly they might have it, there are many others that are suffering even more than they are.

For White supremacists, race trumps everything, including economics and patriotism. This was made especially clear when Trump rallied White bigots by disparaging the family of an American Muslim that died fighting on behalf of the U.S.

During the 2016 Presidential campaign, Trump verbally attacked a Muslim Gold Star family. He antagonized Khizar Khan and Ghazala Khan, parents of Humayun Khan, who, at age 27, died in Iraq in 2004 as he tried to save other soldiers in a car bombing.

It is hard to imagine what more one would have to do to earn the title "hero." Yet, here was Trump suggesting that Ms. Khan was subservient to Mr. Khan and afraid to speak up about her son's tragic death. At no point was it clear that Trump and his minions were willing to applaud the fallen soldier's sacrifice. On the contrary, they seemed to view Captain Khan as just another Muslim undeserving of any special credit. What should have been obvious evidence of Trump's disrespect for military members, instead fired up his rabid base.

With the exception of Crispus Attucks, the first person to die in the American Revolution, Black patriots have never counted much in the eyes of White supremacists. For example, after W.W. I, many U.S. soldiers returning to the States were victimized by racist abuse, including killings.

White supremacists consider themselves to be *more* American and more patriotic than non-White Americans. They consider non-White Americans to simply be along for the ride as Whites drive the nation to its proper destiny.

Trump has shown that there is now no need for dog-whistle racism in which White supremacists speak to one another in code. In fact, that is why Trump left his Republican competitors in the dust. They were unwilling or unable to descend to Trump's racist depths.

Trump's most loyal supporters – White evangelicals – are those that have the greatest objections to the browning of America. Many of them believe that it is bad for the U.S. that Whites are expected to become a minority during the 21st Century. They are running scared and they will continue to support Trump and his ilk.

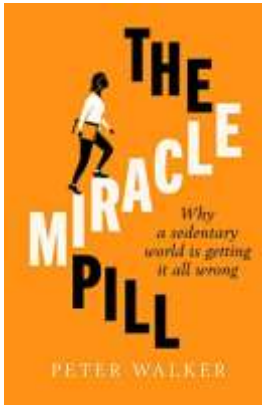
White supremacists are not the only ones that feel a need to look down upon others. For instance, extremist Muslim males feel culturally and psychologically obligated to oppress women, even though there is much evidence that equal opportunity for women translates into better societies for all. Many, if not most, sexist Muslims would rather suffer in poverty than bring about equal opportunity for women.

As long as many Whites feel the need to look down upon non-White people, White supremacy will be a problem. It is not primarily about economics. It is primarily about psychology and self-worth by any means necessary.

Norm R. Allen, Jr. is the editor of two ground-breaking books: *African-American Humanism: An Anthology*, and *The Black Humanist Experience: An Alternative to Religion*. He is currently writing a third book, *Secular, Successful, and Black: 25 Profiles*. For 21 years, Allen had been the first and only full-time African American secular humanist to travel the world promoting secular humanism. He has spoken on numerous radio and television shows including National Public Radio and to 72 humanist groups in 30 African nations. His writings have appeared in numerous books and encyclopedias, including *Voices for Evolution*, published by the National Center for Science Education.

Recommended Reading

Click on the book's image for more info



The Matt Cooper

Humanist Lending Library

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



TITLE AUTHOR

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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 Wallgasper
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
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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
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72. Sex & God Darrel Ray, ED.D
73. Best American Non required Reading Dave Eagers
74. Reporting at Wit's End St. Clair McKelway
75. Corporations are not People Clements

The Miracle Pill: Four in ten British adults, & 80% of children, are so sedentary they don't meet even the minimum recommended levels for movement. What's going on?

The answer is simple: activity became exercise. What for centuries was universal & everyday has become the fetishised pursuit of a minority, whether the superhuman feats of elite athletes, or a chore slotted into busy schedules. Yes, most people know physical activity is good for us. And yet 1.5 billion people around the world are so inactive they are at greater risk of everything from heart disease to diabetes, cancer, arthritis & depression, even dementia. Sedentary living now kills more people than obesity, despite receiving much less attention, & is causing a pandemic of chronic ill health many experts predict could soon bankrupt the NHS. How did we get here?

Mysteries and Secrets Revealed uncovers the reality behind mysteries of nature and secrets of frauds that eluded common understanding. The journey begins in the ancient Greek city of Delphi, where priests claimed the gift of a priceless gold lion was an acknowledgement of their clairvoyant powers. But their concocted story concealed an embarrassing blunder. Those sufficiently savvy to catch the lie became aware of even deeper problems.

Clairvoyants in a mesmeric trance claimed they could visit distant planets and endure brutal surgical procedures. If any of this was real, how was it possible? The surprising manifestations of modern spiritualism quickly escalated into a psychic arms race that included mysterious tipping and turning of tables. Scientist Michael Faraday devised ingenious experiments to show how subtle muscle reactions outside of awareness created these manifestations. On the other hand, explanations for table levitations and mysterious writing on slates could only be solved by individuals with acute observational skills and acquainted with the methods of trickery. Each story in **Mysteries and Secrets Revealed** captures the tension of conflict, the thrill of discovery, and the strategies of science that unmasked frauds, fakes, false belief, and the enigmas of our natural world.

Holy Smoke: Breaching the Founders' "Wall of Separation" Since the first English Christian fundamentalists arrived in the 1600s on the shores of what would become the United States, Christianity has become increasingly embedded in the nation's social and cultural fabric. This is completely contrary to the Founding Fathers' original vision of America; it was designed by them to be a secular democratic republic built on evidence-based Enlightenment values, emphatically not religious faith. Indeed, the Founders purposefully intended that a high, strong "wall of separation" keep church and state apart in the new nation, while allowing individual religious freedom untrammelled by government—and vice versa. But Christians with theocratic dreams keep trying to breach the wall. Through their efforts, God is now in evidence everywhere in the country—on our money, in our schools, even in high-level-government officials' speeches. Freedom of — and from — religion is the American promise to all its people whatever their belief—or disbelief. This is how the Founding Fathers wanted it to be, not the undemocratic theocracy zealous evangelicals are trying to force on American society.



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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 May 8th online at 7 PM



Topic: (Click on the link below for more information.)

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

Utopia, Dystopia, or Something Else - What Does The Future Hold?



Saturday Afternoon 3 PM, May 15th 3PM 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



Humanists of Sarasota Bay, Inc.
Sarasota, Florida

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 movement.

Hear a secular point of view on local radio.

Listen to:

The Voice of Reason

on WTAN Radio Network AM1340 from Clearwater. Thursdays at 10 AM



University of South Florida Humanities Institute !

"The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life."

Every semester the humanities department offers numerous opportunities to enlarge your understanding of our fast developing culture. The next calendar will appear soon.

[Register Here](#)

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

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



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 2021

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 – May, 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



CFI in BRANDON – Sunday Freethought Social & Godless Friday Nights	Skeptical interests with critical thinkers. Details & RSVP: http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
TRI-COUNTY – Atheists of Florida, Inc.	Details & RSVP: http://bit.ly/AOF-Meetup	
West Central Florida & beyond – Tampa Bay Skeptics, Inc.	Details & RSVP: http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
DUNEDIN – Humanist Soc. of the Suncoast, see Pg. 2	Details & RSVP http://bit.ly/Suncoast-Humanists Zoom on the 2nd Saturday at 2 PM !	
E. CLEARWATER– UU Clearwater Humanists	Details: http://bit.ly/UUC-Humanists	
E. TAMPA– Museum Astronomical Resource Society (MARS) at MOSI	Details & RSVP: http://bit.ly/1Psc2Pi Other events: http://bit.ly/MARS-home	
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.	
N. PINELLAS AREA – CFI Freethought Supper	Not meeting pending resumption of “normal life” , Seating is limited to 25! <i>For CFI & TBS paid members only + one time guest.</i> http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
New TAMPA – Tampa Humanist Assoc.	Details & RSVP: No program until life resumes! http://bit.ly/TPA-Humanists	
ZOOM – 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	
ZOOM – Tampa Bay Thinkers	Lively monthly discussions. Know the topic or get laughed at. RSVP here: http://bit.ly/2DVtwCd	
ST. PETERSBURG– Astronomy Club	For several dates monthly, locations, & details: http://bit.ly/StPete-Astronomy-Home http://bit.ly/StPete-Astronomy-Calendar	
TAMPA BAY REGION– Center for Inquiry Tampa Bay	Local & national Zooms until Covid is dealt with. Details & RSVP : http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l	
TAMPA BAY REGION– Humanist Families	For families only! Family outings & other monthly activities. Details & RSVP: http://bit.ly/1Ps9MaN	

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Thus, in terms of human values, history traces an arc that nearly completes a full circle: the values of hunter-gatherers and fossil fuelers have some surprising things in common. Agrarian societies were the outlier, because their processes of energy capture favored rigid political hierarchies and division of labor by gender. History teaches us that human values are mutable, but it also suggests they are closely tied to energy and food systems.

Vertical power is certainly alive and well today. Despite all efforts in recent decades at economic “leveling” (via unions, progressive taxation, and government redistribution programs), inequality has grown to extremes. One example is emblematic in this regard. In the 1960s, military competition prompted the development of early computer networks, the antecedents of the internet; when the latter emerged full-blown as the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s, fast electronic communication created a blizzard of business opportunities, which eventually led to more effective manipulation of opinion and the accumulation of unprecedented fortunes by digital entrepreneurs. While the web is often thought of as empowering everyone who uses it, in fact it has contributed to widening inequity. And, once again, war, communication technologies, and increasing economic inequality were bound up together in a social evolutionary process.

During the past century, specialists have begun studying the social and psychological impacts of vertical power. Their findings are unsurprising but disturbing. Power makes us literally crazy, and can turn perfectly normal people into monsters. People with a little power want more. People with low self-esteem often abuse what little power they have. And people whose power is threatened often lash out. Those who crave power often prop themselves up by putting others down. Those with more power rationalize reprehensible behavior toward those with less by assuming or asserting that the powerless are lazy, corrupt, incapable, unintelligent, or otherwise undeserving. Experiments organized by Solomon Asch in the 1950s showed that ordinary people will agree to ridiculously incorrect assertions by authority figures in order to conform. And Stanley Milgram’s famous and troubling studies on obedience to perceived authority, carried out in the 1960s, showed that ordinary people look to those with power for direction, even when asked to do things that are morally questionable.

We also know now that inequality hurts us all. Anthropologists and historians have developed a new field informally known as “collapse studies,” in which they’ve probed data from hundreds of societies for patterns, revealing “secular cycles” of wealth accumulation and societal instability. However, we can also see inequality’s perils all around us in the present: in the coronavirus pandemic, the rush by wealthy nations to secure as many vaccines as possible has the unintended effect of minimizing vaccination rates in poor nations, thereby greatly reducing the likelihood of

eliminating the disease from *any* country any time soon. Similarly, the failure by wealthy nations to pay for climate change adaptation in poor nations will likely lead to massive waves of refugees overwhelming the borders of the rich.

Vertical power worked well for us humans in some ways, increasing our collective power and enabling some of us to enjoy great conveniences. But the costs have been incalculable. Moreover, the inadvertent environmental damage caused by the recent evolution of human physical and social power may be unsurvivable.

In recent years, social inequality has been contested by Occupy Wall Street, Arab Spring revolutions, and Black Lives Matter protests, to name just three prominent instances. But insufficient informed public attention has been directed toward the structural causes of power inequality in the modern world: the wealth pump, food and energy systems, weapons, communication technologies, and debt.

As we’ve seen, the evolution of social power was primarily tied to growth in usable energy—first as a result of the development of farming, and then through the introduction of fossil fuels. In measurable terms (growth of population, per capita energy usage, and per capita wealth), fossil fuels were actually a bigger deal in human social evolution than the invention of agriculture or the advent of empire. But fossil fuels are finite and depleting, and burning them causes climate change. For reasons I have explored at length in [other publications](#), the proposed replacements (solar, wind, and nuclear power) probably won’t be able to supply as much energy as we currently use, much less permit further growth. As our collective physical power is poised to wane, here are just a few of the big, interrelated questions about social power that we probably should be thinking about:

- Will the human Superorganism be able to maintain itself as a collective entity? What are the implications if it doesn’t? If it survives, could it “mature” by somehow becoming aware of natural and social limits and adapting itself to them?
- Can we recover the horizontal power enjoyed by our hunter-gatherer forebears? Or would doing so ultimately require giving up farming and all that goes with it?
- Is universal gardening a realistic alternative to centralized food systems based on grain agriculture?
- Will urbanization reverse itself, so that re-ruralization becomes a dominant demographic trend later this century?

Overflow for May

The Rise And/Or Fall Of Civilization: 'Free Inquiry' On Humanity's Possible Futures

by Paul Fidalgo , *Free Inquiry*



Depending who you ask, human civilization seems always to be just on the cusp of unfathomable technological breakthroughs that will “change everything,” or a snowballing decline and collapse of our own making. What’s to become of us in the decades and centuries to come? The latest issue of *Free Inquiry*, America’s bimonthly magazine of humanist ideas, takes the long view with three explorations of humanity’s possible futures.

Encompassing both utopian and dystopian views, Paul Fidalgo of the Center for Inquiry delves deeply into the prophecies of two opposing camps; transhumanists, who promise salvation by merging with our technology, and “collapsitarians,” whose Dark Mountain movement wrestles with what they see as the inevitable end of human dominance of the planet. Fidalgo posits that both schools of thought have something valuable to offer, yet to accept either of them, one must make some leaps of faith.

Read “[Post-Humans on a Sterile Promontory: The New Myths of Transhumanism and the Dark Mountain](#)” free online now.

As we grapple with what *we* want out of artificial intelligence, we will also need to consider what *it* wants. Henry Grynnssten considers the implications of constructing conscious machines, suggesting that the entire enterprise may be too ethically muddy to be worth the effort. [Subscribe now to read “How to Build a Conscious Robot.”](#)

It may be that intelligence, artificial or otherwise, has a ceiling. Computer scientist and entrepreneur Paul Bassett marshals compelling evidence that intelligence creates the conditions for eventual collapse, “until a subtle interconnection among them enables a chain reaction of cascading catastrophes.” [Read “Is Intelligence Toxic?” free online now.](#)

Some articles in this issue:

⇒The disgrace of Scientology: [Read now.](#)

⇒Dang it, you didn’t vote enough. [Subscribe to read.](#)

⇒Mister President, don’t forget us! [Read now.](#)

There’s much more in the April/May 2021 issue of *Free Inquiry*. [Subscribe to *Free Inquiry* today](#), in print or digital.

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- implications if it doesn’t? If it survives, could it “mature” by somehow becoming aware of natural and social limits and adapting itself to them?
- • Can we recover the horizontal power enjoyed by our hunter-gatherer forebears? Or would doing so ultimately require giving up farming and all that goes with it?
- • Is universal gardening a realistic alternative to centralized food systems based on grain agriculture?
- • Will urbanization reverse itself, so that re-ruralization becomes a dominant demographic trend later this century?
- • How can women maintain and expand their hard-won equality in a post-fossil-fuel world?
- • How can we prevent slavery from making a comeback, while continuing to address that terrible historical institution’s reverberating impacts?
- • Can we reduce inequality without reining in communication technologies?
- • If the rapid population growth of the past two centuries depended on the benefits of cheap, abundant energy, what are the population implications of energy decline?
- • How can we manage energy decline without war?
- • Do we need a new religion to reconnect us to nature?
- • Can we get along without debt?
- • How can we more effectively limit the proliferation of weapons?

That’s a lot to contemplate. We shouldn’t expect to have all the answers right away, given the fact that most people, including most world leaders, haven’t even arrived at the questions yet. But we’ll need some answers soon. Finding ones that we can live with, and weaving them into the fabric of our social relationships, will require more than careful thought; work and sacrifice will be needed, too.

