

October Meeting

Title: What is Genomics?

Speaker: Scott Keely, UC Postdoctoral Scholar at The Department of Molecular Genetics, Biochemistry, and Microbiology, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine

Abstract: In a certain sense we are experiencing a paradigm shift in biology driven by genomics and bioinformatics. The paradigm is data driven and offers many opportunities to apply a systems approach to biological questions as well as to understand evolution. In addition, as the paradigm matures, data rich foundations will anchor hypothesis-driven research. A coherent transition from genomics to integrated biological knowledge is a desired goal for biology and medicine.

Speaker's Background: PhD from The Department of Molecular Genetics, Biochemistry, and Microbiology, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine - Thesis title: Molecular epidemiology of *Pneumocystis carinii*. Thesis Advisor: Professor James Stringer, Ph.D.

Currently: Postdoctoral scholar studying the genome of *Pneumocystis carinii*. *Pneumocystis carinii* is an opportunistic fungus that infects the lungs of AIDS patients. If untreated, AIDS patients will likely die from *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP). We are currently sequencing the genome of *Pneumocystis carinii*. The discovery of new drug targets is one benefit of the *Pneumocystis carinii* genome project.

Personal vignettes: I have lived in Cincinnati for about a dozen years. I am a scientist, philosopher, and musician.

My dad is a retired United Methodist Pastor. I don't understand Christianity so I guess that makes me a Christian (a joke). The fundamentalist sect, Answers in Genesis, is an abomination (I think this is in Leviticus).

The country singer, Johnny Cash, made a movie using my apartment.

Shopping for Camp Quest

If you plan on making any purchases from Amazon.com, you can help make money for Camp Quest. Simply go to the Camp Quest Home Page (<http://www.edwinkagin.com/campquest/>) and go straight to the book store. You can then click on Amazon.com and any purchase you make will benefit Camp Quest! It's easy, it won't cost you a penny extra, and it's a good cause! Thank you Steve Schafersman for coming up with this great idea and implementing it!

Inside

Boy Scouts Page 2

Rationally Speaking
Massimo Pigliucci Page 3

Fig Leaflets Page 5

Letters to the Editor Page 7

Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit
Book Review Page 8

The Cold War: An International History
Book Review Page 9

Geek Love
Book Review Page 10

USA: Report About Racial Discrimination Page 11

Quotes from Percy Bysshe Shelley Page 11

Events

October Meeting
October 24 7:00 p.m.
Geier Center
at the corner of Gilbert and
Elsinore Avenues

October Potluck Dinner
November 14, at 6:30

Boy Scouts Update...

Humanists Call to Action

"In response to the continuing attacks on the Boy Scouts by homosexual activists and sympathizers at every level of government, Congressman Tom Tancredo of Colorado has introduced counter-legislation, currently being referred to as the Scouts Honor Act (H.B. 5306). The bill was introduced along with twenty-three co-sponsors, on Tuesday, September 26, 2000.

According to AFA Director of Governmental Affairs Patrick Trueman, 'AFA supports Colorado Rep. Tancredo's, Scouts Honor Act, which prohibits the use of federal funds to discriminate against, investigate, or deny access to public property or facilities to the Boy Scouts of America. In addition, the bill says that no entity that accepts federal funds can compel the Boy Scouts to accept members who do not share their beliefs.'"

"It will be difficult to get a vote in the time remaining on the Congressional calendar. However, Rep. Tancredo feels that if he can get many more sponsors on the bill, the House leadership may bring it to the floor for a vote." (Lets hope it doesn't get that far, but just in case we should write!)

ACTION NEEDED: Contact your Representative (with your zip code) by pointing your browser to - <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> -or House Members by name - <http://www.capweb.net/classic/Index.morph?pagename=Housealpha> or House Members by state - <http://www.visi.com/juan/congress/> or by calling the capitol switchboard at (202) 225-3121.

They also included contact info for the sponsor of the bill, Rep. Tancredo - tom.tancredo@mail.house.gov

Don't support intolerance

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) at the College of Charleston in South Carolina unanimously passed the following resolution, requesting the administration to withdraw the college from the United Way campaign:

"The Boy Scouts of America has taken a public stance of discrimination against homosexuals and atheists, prohibiting them from participating in the organization. The AAUP both condemns the Boy Scouts' position, and requests the College of Charleston to withdraw from participation in the United Way campaign until such time as the United Way either withdraws support from the Boy Scouts, or the Boy Scouts of America changes its discriminatory policy."

Though the Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America may continue to discriminate against gays and atheists because it is a private organization, I don't think public institutions should accommodate or actively encourage support for private discriminatory organizations. Just as the United Way would never assist the Ku Klux Klan or any other organization that openly discriminates against African-Americans, Catholics or Jews, I feel it should also not endorse discrimination against gays and atheists.

I hope the Boy Scouts eventually will become as tolerant as the Girl Scouts, who treat as equals lesbian and atheist girls. Who among you is willing to say that the Girl Scouts are not as morally straight as the Boy Scouts?

Herb Silverman
Professor of Mathematics
College of Charleston
Charleston, S.C.

From *U.S. Today*, Oct. 12, 2000, Page 24A

FIG Leaves Volume 9, Issue 10, October 2000 - Editors welcome thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons. Submit in electronic format via Internet to figeditors@fuse.net or on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 8128, Cincinnati OH 45208. Contributions received before the first Tuesday of the month will be considered for publication that month. All material printed in FIG Leaves may be reproduced in similar publications of non-profit groups which grant FIG Leaves reciprocal reprinting rights as long as proper credit is clearly attributed to FIG Leaves and the author. Opinions expressed in FIG Leaves are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect opinions of the editor or the Free Inquiry Group, Inc., its board, or officers. © 2000 The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. FIG Board of Directors: President Bob Riehemann, Vice President Edwin Kagin, Secretary Philip Ferguson, Treasurer Joe Levee, Members: Nurit Bowman, Michele Grinoch, Lyse Hurd, Helen Kagin, Tim Kelly,





Rationally Speaking

N. 3, October 2000 - "Whence Natural Rights? - A Dialogue"

This column can be posted for free on any appropriate web site. If you are interested in receiving the html code, please send an e-mail

Further reading:

The Cambridge Companion to Hume

HYPATIA: Hello, Simplicia, where are you going in such a hurry so early in the morning?

SIMPLICIA: Hello, my friend! I am to join a demonstration in favor of our fundamental rights we hold as human beings.

H: Oh, and what rights could anybody possibly have that are so indisputable?

S: Surely you are jesting. Have you not heard of the Declaration of Independence? Do you not recall that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness?"

H: I also recall that the man who uttered those words made plenty of exceptions for women and men of colors other than his own when it was most convenient for him.

S: Fair enough, but the purity of the principle is more important than the faulty actuation of the same.

H: Let me concede that for a moment. Nevertheless, just because somebody said it, or because it appeals to our sense of poetry, it does not follow that it is true. What arguments can you possibly adduce for the existence of natural rights?

S: As I mentioned a minute ago, are they not self-evident?

H: Not to me, they are not. On the contrary, it is self-evident that people have to struggle everywhere to even approach what you consider obvious. Would it not be the case that if rights were universal and incontestable facts of life, few if any human beings would contest them, in principle, if not in practice? Doesn't everybody agree on the fact that people have to feed themselves in order to survive? That is because it indeed is a fact of life.

S: Ah, my dear Hypatia, but you know very well of people who allow others to starve, either through inaction or by

pernicious withdrawal of the necessary goods.

H: True enough, Simplicia, but not even those people would deny the fact that people have to eat. They will only deny that it is their right to do so, if you see the difference.

S: I do indeed. So, you are saying that universal rights cannot be justified by appeal to agreement among human beings, because such agreement is lacking.

H: My point exactly.

S: But what about other sources of natural rights? Is it not conceivable that they could come from things other than human societies? After all, humans did not invent the necessity of food; it is a thing that comes from nature herself.

H: That is indeed a possibility. However, it seems logical that if one wants to derive rights from nature one should dispassionately observe what happens in nature and then use such observations as guidance to establish an independent foundation for rights, is it not so?

S: That does seem like the logical course of action.

H: And yet, if we were to do so in practice, we would probably come up with a set of principles that do not reflect at all the kinds of rights you seem to have in mind!

S: How so, Hypatia?

H: Because if one looks at nature one can see that animals and plants are certainly not created equal. On the contrary, it is precisely their differences that make it possible for natural selection to shape the face of the organic world, as Mr. Darwin has shown long ago. The negation of the so-called right to life is at the very basis of the struggle for existence that makes evolution possible; as for liberty, it is guaranteed only insofar one animal can defend it against intrusion from competitors or predators; and happiness is too vague of a word to even consider as the proper object of a serious philosophical discussion.

S: Shall I then conclude that you subscribe to the simple notion that nature is red in tooth and claws or that, as Mr. Hobbes put it, life in nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short?"

H: I am much too much of an optimist to agree to that, my dear Simplicia. However, I would conclude from even a cursory observation of nature that she is neither moral nor immoral, neither good nor bad, but simply is. I believe it was David Hume who warned against the logical jump from what is to what ought to be, and it seems to me that therefore one cannot defend natural rights by appealing to nature; a rather uncomfortable situation for the promoters of such rights.

S: Even if I grant you that neither humans nor nature can be the sources of universal rights, most people would not be faced in the least by these difficulties, and would

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3)

simply retort that there are higher authorities than both.

H: Ah, you mean some gods or goddesses!

S: Precisely: wouldn't a divinity be the ultimate source and guarantor of universal rights?

H: It surely would, if not for any other reason than such divinity would presumably have the power to impose her will on us mere mortals.

S: There, then, do I see your skepticism about the possibility of natural rights beginning to wane?

H: No so fast, my dear friend. Your latest answer to our conundrum begs the question in two ways: how do you know there is such a divinity and, even if we should accept her existence as a matter of hypothesis, how do you know what kinds of rights does she endorse?

S: My dear Hypatia, you know very well that such a line of inquiry would bring us far into an altogether new direction of conversation, and that would definitely mean that I would be late to my protest march.

H: Indeed it would. But it is no matter to brush aside. You might agree at least to the observation that there are many people who have spent a great deal of time thinking about the existence of god and the nature of god's will, without reaching even a minimal form of agreement. Furthermore, you know that many cogent doubts have been raised and objections construed against all the major arguments in favor of the existence of a deity.

S: Alas, this is all very true.

H: Then you cannot rest your defense of natural rights on the assumption of the existence of a god, because that would be the substitution of one mystery with an even greater mystery.

S: But, Hypatia, surely you see that by rejecting all possible sources of universal rights you are forced in the position that anything goes and that we have no rational motive to fight for anything that is dear to us.

H: Not at all. You seem to assume, Simplicia, that there are only two options: either rights are universal, or they don't exist.

S: Is there a compromise somewhere that I have missed?

H: Most definitely! Let me explain my position with an example. I know you love the work of the painter Picasso. Surely you will agree that a painting by him cannot last forever, no matter how carefully preserved.

S: Yes, but I don't see where you could possibly be going with this.

H: Even though you know that one day the painting will be gone forever, you still love to look at it now, to go to the museum every time you can, and even to contribute to its preservation by donating funds to the museum.

S: Yes, and...?

H: Well, Simplicia, is not this an example of something that is not universal, and yet is very precious? If you were

to apply your nihilism to art, you wouldn't care a bit about what happens to Picasso's work for the simple reason that it is not a universal thing, it won't last forever.

S: So you are saying that even though there may be no guarantor of universal rights, we are nevertheless justified in defending and caring for them with all our energies because they matter to us!

H: Precisely. It matters not that you cannot justify, for example, your right to freedom by universal laws. Freedom is still something that most human beings want, and we are bound to fight for a society that grants such right simply because we think it is a better society than any other alternative.

S: Thanks, Hypatia. I am not sure that I agree with all your points, but this conversation did throw some interesting light on what I am doing and why. I have to run to the demonstration, now!

H: Until the next time, then, my friend.

Next Month: "Intelligent Design, the Classical Argument"

© by Massimo Pigliucci, 2000

Further reading:

The Rights of Man
by Thomas Paine

The Cambridge Companion to Hume, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy Ser.

Web links:

This dialogue was inspired by an article by Michael Birshan which appeared in *Philosophy Now* (<http://www.philosophynow.demon.co.uk/main.htm>).

Check out "natural law" on the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/n/natlaw.htm>).

Explore the complex character of Thomas Jefferson, the author of the US Declaration of Independence. (<http://www.pbs.org/jefferson/>)

Visit Massimo's Skeptic & Humanist Web (<http://fp.bio.utk.edu/skeptic>)
Massimo's latest book is *Tales of the Rational: Essays About Nature and Science*.

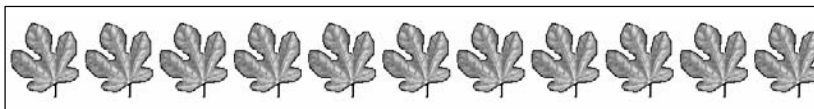


FIG Leaflets

KUWAIT (Reuters) - An Islamist politician says Sydney's Olympic games contain more sex than sports and wants some events banned on Kuwait's state television. "Some events, especially women's contests, have flagrant scenes which are unacceptable," parliamentarian Waleed al-Tabtabaie said in a complaint addressed to the information ministry and published in Kuwaiti newspapers Wednesday.

"Women's beach volleyball games, diving and synchronized swimming contests are not acceptable ... they reflect Western norms that do not give a woman's body any of the respect, honor or protection which Islam and Sharia (Islamic law) have granted her," added Tabtabaie.

The controversial MP has in the past protested against the staging of music concerts in the conservative state as well as celebrating St. Valentine's Day.

Life at the Olympics

Every athlete competing in the Sydney Olympics was given an allotment of 51 condoms in their welcome package. Assuming they stay all 17 days, that gives each three condoms per day. (Reuters)

The Last Czar now a "Saint"

The last Czar of the Russian empire, Nicholas, an autocrat who repressed his nation, has been declared martyr and saint by the Russian Orthodox Church in a recent ceremony. His family including Empress Alexandra, Tsarevitch (Crown Prince) Alexei and Princesses Olga, Tatyana, Maria, and Anastasia were also declared martyrs and saints. The church council decided a week ago to canonize the family and hundreds of others who it said had died for their belief in the church. Independent historians criticize the Czar for overseeing the 1905 "Bloody Sunday" massacre by Imperial Guards, who opened fire on peaceful strikers carrying his portrait, an event contributing to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. Nicholas and his family were shot by Bolshevik revolutionaries in 1918.

How does the average Russian view the last Czar now? A recent poll showed that many Russians continue to view the Czar with hostility for his autocratic rule. A survey showed 46 per cent disapproved of his canonization while 31 per cent backed it and 23 per cent were uncertain.

-- SOURCE: Rationalist International Bulletin # 45

Priest Drives Into Abortion Clinic

Rage over the approval of the new abortion pill may have been the motive for a Catholic priest who smashed his car into an abortion clinic Saturday morning (just a day and a half after FDA approval of the pill), then chopped at the building with an ax until the owner fired two shotgun blasts as warnings to stop him, police said.

Fortunately, the clinic was not open and nobody was injured in the attack. The cleric drove through a door at the Abortion Access Northern Illinois Women's Center around 8:15 a.m. He was swinging an ax when the clinic's owner fired a 12-gauge shotgun twice. He did not hit the priest. The Rev. John Earl, 32, was arrested and charged with burglary and felony criminal damage to property, said Deputy Police Chief Dominic Iasparro. Earl was being held in lieu of \$10,000 bail.

The clinic houses the office of Dr. Richard Ragsdale. Ragsdale said there have been vocal protests outside the clinic during the past four or five months, but he said he had not noticed Earl. "I'm not surprised that something happened on the heels of the RU-486 announcement," he said. "But this is a little more violent than we were expecting."

CSH Newsletter, October 2

Leaving the Fold

In my desire to help people, I took courses in counseling. Early on, I thought that secular psychology had something to offer Christians, particularly in the skill of good listening. Christians don't tend to concern themselves with this. And as I learned the art of facilitating a person's personal change, I couldn't help developing a respect for natural, intuitive growth processes. People are for the most part well-intentioned, I realized. A good therapist provides loving support the way a gardener tends her plants. A humanistic view of humans made sense to me. It seemed to work in practical ways, and it felt good to me emotionally.

Like a lost child, I have had to reconstruct reality. I have had to examine and recreate a great many assumptions — about the meaning of life, the world, myself, others, the past, present, and future. Automatic thoughts and behaviors are difficult to change, and I continue to wrestle with old beliefs that are powerful and often unconscious.

Leaving the Fold by Marlene Winell

Walk Away, <http://www.berkshire.net/~ifas/wa/>



Rationalists of East Tennessee

At a yet to be determined date in the near future Edwin and Helen Kagin of Union, Kentucky, will speak to the Rationalists of East Tennessee on the origins and development of Camp Quest, the nation's first residential summer camp for the children of secular humanists and others who believe life can be lived in fullness without a belief in, or reliance upon, a supernatural world that exists apart from the natural world.

Edwin, an Eagle Scout and the son of a Presbyterian minister, will discuss how he conceived and introduced the idea for such a camp as a response to the Boy Scout's exclusion of atheist boys from membership. The first five years of Camp Quest, and the realization of this vision by the Free Inquiry Group, Inc. (FIG) of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, will be reviewed in a photographically illustrated history of Camp Quest.

In 1996 & 1997, Camp Quest's first and second year, the camp was held in a campground rented from the Southern Baptists. The Kagins will recount how, in the 2000 session of the Kentucky Legislature, this fact was used to pass into law, over the veto of the Governor of Kentucky, HB 70. This law, that they call "The Camp Quest Law," exempts churches from the civil rights laws of the state, by permitting churches to discriminate against those who do not share their beliefs, and lets churches legally refuse to rent to such persons or groups their church facilities, like campgrounds, that are otherwise generally available to the public for rent.

The Kagins will discuss, and answer questions on, the subject of how other groups can create their own Camp Quest program, and they will explain some of the many details such an effort involves.

This interactive talk is titled, "Protecting Our Children's Future While Exposing Christian Bigotry: Camp Quest."

Edwin

World Wide Web

Rationalists of East Tennessee:
<http://www.kornet.org/reality/index.html>

Do Not Taunt Happy Fun Cult (Scientology):
<http://www.fadetoblack.com/happyfuncult/index.html>

USA: HUSH MONEY TO SILENCE SEX CHARGE AGAINST PRIEST

Celibacy does not seem to be working. The case of Rev. Maurice Grammond from Portland, Oregon, is just another example for the dirty and inhuman acts of sexual exploitation, abuse and violence that it causes since centuries. Grammond is accused of having abused 23 young boys during the sixties and seventies, while he was working in parishes in Portland and several other cities in Oregon. The story took long to come to light. The victims, meanwhile aged 40 to 60, have sued the retired priest for two million Dollar each. The Archdiocese of Portland has offered to pay an undisclosed sum to settle the case without further public attention.

[Rationalist International] Bulletin # 51, Oct. 13, 2000

The Skeptic Tank is a BBS which maintains extensive archives on destructive groups, individuals, and ideologies with special focus on religion's impact upon history as well as religion's impact upon rights, liberties, health, and safety of the world's populace in contemporary times. Newspaper articles and information about various groups and individuals and their destructive ideology-drive activities are provided upon request free of charge to serve the community.

<http://www.skeptictank.org/>

Secular Humanist Writes Tell-All Book on Anti-Choice Radicals

Jerry Reiter (editor of this alert) is author of "Live from the Gates of Hell: An Insider's Look at the Anti-Abortion Underground" which is hitting stores this week. The Prometheus book reads like a murder mystery novel, but is all true about the murderous intentions of a group of radicals in Pensacola, Florida led by Paul Hill, the man now awaiting execution in Starke Prison's death row (for opening fire on three unarmed senior citizens, one of whom was an abortion doctor).

Reiter used his past ties with the Christian Coalition and Operation Rescue to figure out the bloodthirsty plot and to derail the plans by Hill and his cohorts. Later Reiter became an FBI informant traveling to some of the most dangerous radical group meetings in the nation. The book is available from Amazon.com or any major bookstore, including Barnes & Noble. Reiter is currently in negotiations with a major Hollywood film company to turn the book into a film.

CSH Newsletter, October 2, 2000





Letters to the Editor

We welcome comments.
Our e-mail address is:
figeditors@fuse.net
The mail address is:
Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 8128,
Cincinnati, OH 45208

To the editor:

I've long thought the war on drugs has become a parasite on blacks. Just as a bluebird will raise a cowbird blithely unaware the young cowbird has killed its stepsiblings, so do blacks march on drugs and cheer D.A.R.E., etc.

Is the war on drugs somehow an offshoot of blue laws? However it got started, many whites are smug and happy with its success at being an "invisible" parasite on blacks. I recently had a letter published in the Enquirer making the point that the Founding Fathers made the most prominent of the Bill of Rights the right to put whatever garbage we choose into our heads. They knew that would be our most dangerous right.

If they had had any inkling bluenoses would someday be able to limit whatever garbage we choose to put into our bodies, then the Second Amendment would have addressed that instead of guns.

David E. Gallaher
Over-the-Rhine
deugallaher@earthlink.net

To the Editor:

I have been missing the mischievous mumbling of that maverick and mad maven, Ed Kagin. Whence have gone those humanist panegyrics, that lovely loquacious legalese and 19th century style of our most ardent lover of Mark Twain? I need Kagin's Column to vicariously express my anger against those who oppress my rights of expression and my right to think independently.

Bob Riehemann

To the Editor:

National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" had a great story on T 26 SEP 00 about investigating a claim and finding an ordinary explanation. A circle of stones found in Massachusetts caused great excitement about a mini-"stonehenge" being found in North America--until investigation revealed that it was the remains of stone benches from a demolished Dairy Queen. This deserves mention in newsletters.

Respectfully Yours,
Mr. Andrew O. Lutes

Birth Control Double Standard in America?

Time it took for FDA approval:
26 years for the birth control pill for women
12 years for the abortion pill for women
6 months for Viagra for men

CSH Newsletter, October 2, 2000

My common sense tells me that the authoritative power of the Bible as interpreted by the fundamentalists is broken for me. I have caught them in a mistake. And if there's one mistake, the door is open to more. My process of thinking has discarded a central tenet of fundamentalism regarding women. What I know deep within myself to be the case, i.e. the equality of both sexes, I can see also within the central tenets of Christianity. I can see it in verses that the fundamentalists don't apply regarding women. What freedom this gives me from them! It restores my trust that God is, after all, fair, that the Eternal One doesn't set illogical rules in concrete and then expect us to carry them out. This applies whether those illogical rules relate to women or to the Middle East. We ex-fundamentalists don't ever again have to be hit over the head by the black book.

The Bible: An ex-fundamentalist's perspective,
May E. Dooley,

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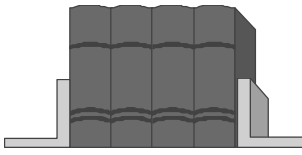
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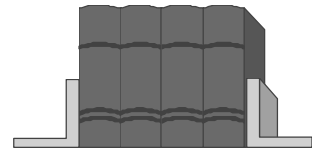
October 2000



7 FIG Leaves



Book Reviews



***Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit*
by Garry Will
(New York: Doubleday, 2000)**

The sins are not the greed and corruption of the medieval popes, nor the sexual activities of the Renaissance rulers, but the shortcomings of the modern popes of the 19th and 20th centuries. The papal sin is a fundamental dishonesty, a greed for sole power over the church and the consciences of the congregation. Wills, a historian and Catholic lay person, lays out the history of the past two hundred years, essentially since the Popes lost their role as secular rulers over parts of central Italy.

Every Pope since Pius IX (1846-78) has endeavored to make himself the sole ruler of the Catholic church, to be the single arbiter of what is or is not the correct doctrine, to amass the only right to appoint bishops and cardinals, and to say who can or can not be, become or remain a priest. To achieve these ends the Popes have lied, connived, subverted, excommunicated and otherwise punished devoted believers. Wills makes an exception only for John XXIII (1958-63) who initiated the Second Vatican Council to set the Church back on a path of truth. After John died, Paul VI (1963-78) subverted his predecessor's and liberal bishops' efforts. Wills indicates that the present Pope, John Paul II (since 1978) is no exception.

Wills recounts how Pius IX defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854 over the objections of his own theologians. He also issued a long list of modern errors, essentially condemning most of nineteenth century science. In 1870 the same Pope rammed through a declaration of papal infallibility over the doubts and objections of the church dignitaries assembled in the First Vatican Council. Once having become infallible, no Pope could back down or overrule findings of his predecessors. By any lie or dishonesty successive Popes had to uphold existing church doctrine.

One corner the papacy has painted itself into is contraception. Popes have to reassert, against all evidence, that sex-for-propagation-only has always been the doctrine of the Church. Meanwhile Catholics around the world are turning from the papal dictatorship to obey their own consciences. In fact,

the Church continues to keep the whole subject of sex in a darkness where women are considered inferior and love bestial. That of course makes it impossible to consider women for the priesthood.

Insistence on a celibate priesthood may be destroying the Church itself. Few young men are willing to commit themselves to a lifetime of sexual frustration. In consequence the priesthood, at least in the United States, is an aging profession. Another consequence is a disproportionate number of gay men among priests, and a pronounced problem with pedophiles and other predators. Even though all the apostles were married, and the early leaders of the church included married men and women, and that many Priests married well into the eleventh century, for the present Pope a male, celibate priesthood is holy writ which can't be altered.

Denial of the right to separate spouses has made annulment the rapidly rising Catholic equivalent of divorce. But annulment means arguing the marriage was never consummated, sometimes despite the presence of children, or was wrongfully contracted in the first place. It has made a growing multitude of Catholics and priests into liars pretending to a reality which does not exist. Young boys are taught that every act of masturbation is a deadly sin which can send him straight to hell if not confessed. This represents a view not countered by nineteenth century medicine. It is out of tune with today's clinical insights.

In many ways the papacy is cut-off from reality. It is surrounded by aging, hard line counselors who have little understanding of the needs and requirements of their congregation. Wills would like to see a major turn-around of his church, a return to the original message of the Christ. He would like to see more freedom for Catholics to follow their consciences, not the dictates of this or any other Pope.

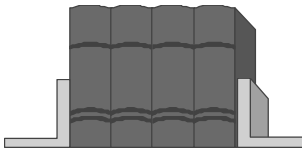
Wolf Roder

***The Cold War: An International History*
by David S. Painter**

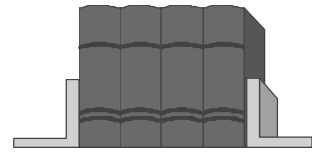
"In matters of religion, it is very easy to deceive a man, and very hard to undeceive him."

—Pierre Bayle, (1467-1706), French philosopher and critic, *Dictionnaire historique*, 1697
from *2000 Years of Disbelief*, James A. Haught





Book Reviews



(London: Routledge, 1999)

It is my firm conviction there never was such a thing as the "cold war." Having lived through three wars, and in addition served during the Korean War, nothing will convince me that what went on between the United States and the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1991 deserves the appellation "war." What is more, I don't think there existed any serious dispute between the two super powers, or between China and the US. The Russians were accused of trying to turn the entire world to Communism in somewhat the same way the Pope is willing to turn the world to Catholicism. During the entire period the secular faith of Communism continued to wane. Increasingly fewer of the young could subscribe to the ideas of Marx and Engels as "true science." Eventually, the generation of Gorbachov and Yeltsin abandoned the pretense in favor of more pragmatic economies.

The USSR was never prepared to use force to achieve its ends. The US allowed an economically vastly inferior country to frighten us into spending billions for armaments. We further surrounded Asia and European Russia with allies, armies, and missile batteries. When the Russians tried the same on us in Cuba we took a hysterically dim view of this quid pro quo.

A concept of "anti-communism" provided an explanation for a complicated world, an excuse for our foreign policy, and justifications for US actions. Communism was taken as an ideological and economic threat to private property and to free market capitalism, concepts that many Americans saw closely linked to political freedom. By painting the USSR as a "relentlessly expansionist adversary" we were able to quickly re-arm Germany and western Europe, and defend Greece, Iran, Berlin, and South Korea against internal subversion. When the Russians similarly intervened in Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia to preserve Communist Party control, we confined ourselves to diplomatic protests, thus proving our "liberation rhetoric" hollow.

Throughout the 45 year period of the so-called "cold war" the United States and the Soviet Union probed around the edges of each others spheres of influence, from Berlin to

Korea without ever coming to blows. Painter discusses the diplomatic maneuverings, the skirmishes, the armaments race, and the summit meetings. The book is much too short to be comprehensive, but it is an excellent review of the history we lived through. His bibliography of longer works is worth consulting.

In a replay of nineteenth century colonialism, much of the great power rivalry was played out in the lands of the third world. And the third world was seen mostly in terms of rivalry with the Soviet Union. Yet, local turmoil was not a communist plot; the poor countries usually had their own agenda, tribal rivalries, and racial hatreds. By the mid-sixties we had 375 military bases in foreign countries, and some three thousand additional facilities (p. 41). In searching for support and allies we might have preferred democratic leaders, but in practice found military dictators and authoritarian rulers congenial as long as they at least claimed to be anti-communist. Eventually we abandoned any pretense of favoring social and political reform in favor of regimes we saw as bulwarks against instability and revolution. In a variety of instances we did not hesitate to intervene against radical regimes using clandestine means or military force, often with disastrous consequences for local populations.

The so called "cold war" was not decided by military conflict, diplomatic maneuverings, or political ideology, rather by economic competition. The communist system simply could not deliver the economic growth and well being for the majority in any way comparable to the free markets of the US and some of its allies. In 1990, in a turn around unprecedented in history, the Soviet Union attempted to shift its economic system from socialism to capitalism. The immediate result was a decline of output to about half of what it had been in the last year of the old regime. By 1999, only Poland of all the former communist states has significantly exceeded that production standard.

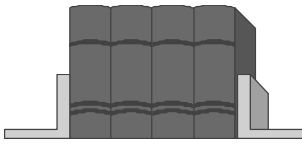
By and large the "cold war" was a waste.

Wolf Roder

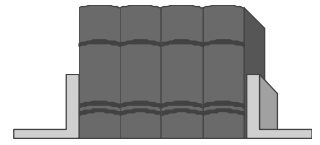
Geek Love
by Katherine Dunn
Warner Books, 1983

355 pages





Book Reviews



People are fascinated by physical variation in the human form. On Tuesday 12 September 2000, the Cincinnati Post ran a front page story about African twins, conjoined at their lower backs, who were separated at the Columbus Ohio Children's Hospital. In recent years Oprah has interviewed the Hensel twins, who have also appeared in Life magazine and on 20/20. The Hensel twins cannot be separated. They have separate necks, heads, hearts, stomachs and spinal cords. They share a blood stream and all organs below the waist. Each child controls one side of the body. Their thinking is independent, though they can coordinate so well that they walk and swim. Perhaps a religious person believes that God either has a sense of humor or is punishing the parents in some way. Conjoined twins are born live about 40 times a year in the USA; about 26 others are stillborn. Confronted with such profound variations in our body plans causes one to reflect on the nature of persons. Using such unusual characters as protagonists in her novel, Katherine Dunn has created a cult classic which comments on the human condition from this point of view.

Geek Love centers on the life of the Binewski family and their traveling carnival, the Binewski Carnival Fabulon. In order to stave off failure, the father and mother decide to experiment with drugs, radiation, and anything else which places a normal birth in jeopardy in order to create a set of freaks. They succeed admirably. The five children are, in birth order: the hunchbacked dwarf, Olympia; Arty, whose limbs are flippers; conjoined twins, Elly and lphy, with separate torsos but sharing bodies from the waist down; and a boy with telekinetic powers named Chick. The many failures are preserved in bottles and displayed as part of the carnival.

The story is told by Olympia in flashbacks. She is middle aged and secretly caring for her daughter and mother. All three of them live in the same apartment building. The mother, almost totally withdrawn and incoherent from her drug dependence, is the apartment manager; she does not recognize her daughter. The child, Miranda, fabulously beautiful and sexy by norm standards, is an art student with special interest in medical illustration who was raised in a Catholic orphanage. This is because Arty would not permit such a normal child to be part of the

family, even though she has a tail. Miss Lick, a fabulously wealthy, unlovely, woman has offered to pay Miranda handsomely to cut off her tail and become a productive part of society. Miranda makes some money by exhibiting herself in an high class sexual freak show. Miss Lick embodies the Protestant ethic in its most austere and pure form. Miss Lick regularly pays women to disfigure themselves, or otherwise remove themselves from the game of the sexes, so that they may become productive.

Neither Olympia nor any of her siblings ever expresses a desire to be a "norm." Norms are just folks who visit the carnival and are to be manipulated. The primary manipulator is Arty, whose desire to control everything leads him to take over the carnival from his father and to create a cult religion making him the main attraction. The essence of this religion is to become like Arty: limbless and wheeled about with 24 hour care. Initiates do the caring and as a believer progresses various limbs are chopped off, starting with toes, then fingers, and finally progressing to arms, legs, and hands. Along the way, there is much commentary about the ways in which norms hate their lives and strive to avoid dealing with it. None of the Binewskis approach life in this way.

The twins literally embody both the struggle of conflicting desires and the clash of two persons. Elly almost hates Arty and is aggressive; lphy loves him and is much more peaceable. During adolescence they discover sex and begin to sell their body to those with enough money. Eventually they become pregnant by a man whose face has been blown off and who had earlier tried to murder them. Arty, in an attempt to extend his control, has Elly lobotomized while the twins are pregnant. When born, the child is a gargantuan blimp who consumes everything. He is named Mumpo. Olympia becomes pregnant with Miranda by having the youngest boy, Chick, steal sperm from Arty using his telekinetic powers.

Chick is the character who strives to reconcile everyone with his magical powers. He performs painless surgery and cures ills. He constantly attempts to please all people and eventually fails. Even magic is not enough. By slowly causing Elly to

(Continued on page 11)



(Continued from page 10)

recover, he unleashes her wrath on Arty. Ultimately Elly kills Mumpo and then everyone in the family except for the mother, Miranda, and Olympia. Elly is the voice of independence who fights to her death when she realizes that she cannot have it. The others, having caved in to Arty's manipulations, are consumed in the battle. The story then returns to Olympia and the issue of Miranda's tail and chance to be a norm. Olympia moves to protect her daughter by murdering Lick and committing suicide. The book is Olympia's testament to her child.

These characters, with their lusts, ambitions, fears, and loves, are human. Their personalities---their behaviors---are intimately related to their bodies and the perception of those bodies by themselves and others. The key value seems to be self-respect. As we find in Hamlet: "...to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man...". This book denies most collective norms and celebrates the individual. A kind of "Fellini movie in ink", it follows traditions set by Mary Shelly in *Frankenstein*, Stevenson in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* by imagining changes to the physical as a way to consider the philosophical aspects of our common humanity.

Bob Riehemann

USA: Report About Racial Discrimination

It is nothing new for Human Rights watchers, but now it is official: In a report to the UN, the US Government has admitted that "persistent racial discrimination and de facto segregation" are rampant in the USA. Prepared by the US state department and the White House, the 100-page report acknowledges that "notorious incidents" of race related brutality and bias continue to exist, though officially sanctioned segregation has been eliminated. It cites some infamous cases which have provoked public outcry during the last decade: the merciless beating of Rodney King by two Los Angeles policemen in 1991, which was recorded on video, the death of Amadou Diallo in the hands of New York law enforcement officials, and the brutal killing of James Byrd in Texas, who was dragged behind a truck. "The forms of discriminatory practices have changed and adapted over time", the report says, "but racial and ethnic discrimination continue to restrict and limit equal opportunities in the USA".

How deep rooted the tendency for racial discrimination still is, reveals the fact that the majority of the Whites, according to recent surveys quoted in the report, does just not realize its existence. Especially alarming is that there are not only single, individual cases of racial discrimination, but that it has become an integral part of the system influencing state organs like police and courts: The report states for example that nearly 90 per cent of offenders convicted for crack cocaine distribution are African Americans - while the majority of crack cocaine users is White. It also says that Blacks are disproportionately more likely to be sentenced to death and executed than any other racial and ethical group in USA.

How long will USA take to get ready for a Black president?

QUOTES FROM PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

"Mounting from cause to cause, mortal man has ended by seeing nothing; it is in this darksome abyss that this uneasy imagination has always labored to fabricate chimeras.... It was on this debris of nature that man raised the imaginary colossus of the Divinity."
—*The Necessity of Atheism*, 1811

"The crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgiven."
—*A Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, 1812

"It is easier to suppose that the universe has existed from all eternity than to conceive of a Being beyond its limits capable of creating it."

—Shelley's notes to *Queen Mab*
"Every time we say that God is the author of some phenomenon, that signified that we are ignorant of how such a phenomenon was caused by the forces of nature."

—Shelley's notes to *Queen Mab*
Christianity peoples earth with demons, hell with men, and heaven with slaves."
—*Views of Religion*, Rufus K. Noyes

2000 Years of Disbelief: Famous People with the Courage to Doubt, James A. Haught

October 2000



11 FIG Leaves