



THE SEPARATIONIST

FEBRUARY 2013

MICHAEL WERNER: ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND ETHICAL THEORY SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2013, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

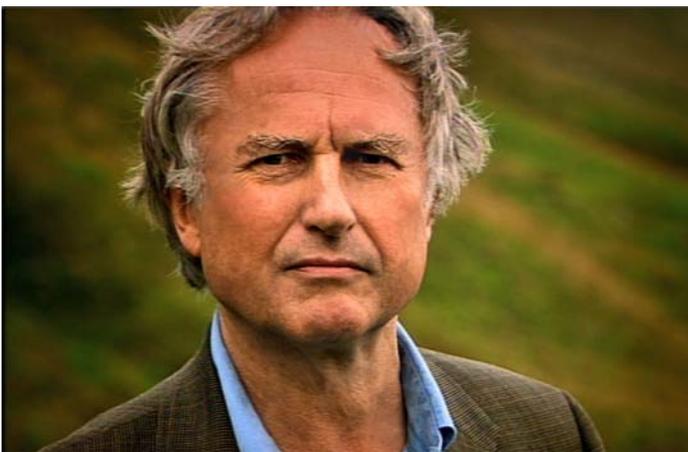
Each of us have faced dilemmas where some of our ethical principles come into radical conflict. How can we understand our choices? What tools do we have to make decisions? At our monthly speaker meeting on Sunday, February 17, Michael Werner will lead us through an overview of Darwinian and modern ethical theory and discuss the ways in which they can help us in real world problems.

Michael Werner has spent much of his life engaged in progressive activism, fighting for civil rights and working with many humanist and free-thinking organizations. He has been President of the American Humanist Association; on the board of the Uni-



tarian Universalist Humanist group, HUUmanists; member of the North American Committee for Humanism; and an adjunct faculty member of the Humanist Institute and the University of Chicago. He has taught widely at major universities. He was one of the founders of SMART Recovery, a Self Management and Recovery Training recovery program for addictions. He was successful in the chemical business while enjoying the love of his partner and now lives in Wilmington, NC, where he has recently written a book on the History of Humanism in the UUA.

As always, we will go to dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting.



RICHARD DAWKINS! MARCH 9, 2013, 7 PM PHYSICIANS AUDITORIUM COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

The event is free and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis, so plan to arrive early. Doors open at 5 p.m. For more information, please visit <http://bit.ly/shldawkins>

FIND US ONLINE! WE'RE (NEARLY) OMNIPRESENT!

 <http://bit.ly/shlmeetup>

 <http://bit.ly/shlhome>

 <http://on.fb.me/shlFB> (main)
<http://on.fb.me/shlfamFB> (family)

 <http://bit.ly/shlyoutube>

 <http://bit.ly/shllist>

 <http://yhoo.it/shlyahoo> (family)

BOOK GROUP

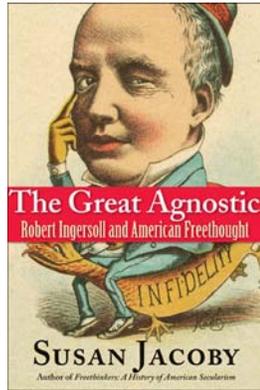
**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2013, 4 PM
WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE
1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

Please join us on February 27, 2013, when our book group discuss *The Great Agnostic*, by Susan Jacoby.

During the Gilded Age, which saw the dawn of America's enduring culture wars, Robert Green Ingersoll was known as "the Great Agnostic." The nation's most famous orator, he raised his voice on behalf of Enlightenment reason, secularism, and the separation of church and state with a vigor unmatched since America's revolutionary generation. When he died in 1899, even his religious enemies acknowledged that he might have aspired to the U.S. presidency had he been willing to mask his opposition to religion. To the question that retains its controversial power today—was the United States founded as a Christian nation?—Ingersoll answered an emphatic no.

In this provocative biography, Susan Jacoby, the author of *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*, restores Ingersoll to his rightful place in an American intellectual tradition extending from Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine to the current generation of "new atheists."

The book group discussion will run from 4 to 5:30, and we'll go out to dinner afterward.



YAPPY HOUR

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2013, 2 PM
PALMETTO ISLANDS COUNTY PARK
444 NEEDLERUSH PKWY, MT. PLEASANT**



Doggies and their humans are invited to play and meet other like-minded canines for a fun and yappy social hour. Meet at the dog park. Admission to the park is \$1 per person, free to Gold Pass holders. Arf arf!

TEAM TRIVIA

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2013, 8 PM
BIGHORN'S SPORTS GRILL
7832 RIVERS AVE, NORTH CHARLESTON**



Can you name the only room in the White House named after a foreign country? Which child actor played the role of TV's Dennis the Menace? New born babies of what animal are six feet tall and weigh almost 200 pounds? If you can answer these questions and more, we need you! Join us for Team Trivia on Tuesday, February 26, at Bighorn's Sports Grill. Our team is "The Happy Humanists."

YOUTH ACTIVITY

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2013, 2/3 PM
SEEWEE VISITOR & ENV. EDUC. CENTER
5821 N HWY 17, AWENDAW**

With a nod to Darwin Day, February's youth activity will be a program about reptiles and amphibians and their adaptations. There will be 2 sessions, each 45-60 minutes. 2:00pm is for elementary school and younger kids and their parents. 3:00pm is for middle and high school kids.

Students will learn about adaptations of reptiles and amphibians as well as their similarities and differences. Live animals will be used to allow for a hands-on, close up look at some of the most common reptiles in the Low-country.

This program takes place at the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center, which showcases the valuable ecosystems of the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and the Francis Marion National Forest and provides educational opportunities for all ages.

There's no charge for this event, but RSVPs are required. Class size is limited to 30 people. Please indicate the number of people participating in the program in your RSVP which you can do by emailing president@lowcountryhumanists.org.

For more information about the Sewee Center, visit <http://www.fws.gov/seweecenter/index.html>

CHARITY OF THE QUARTER RYAN WHITE PROGRAM

A special message from Aaron O'Brien, MPH, Program Analyst with the Ryan White Program at Roper St Francis Healthcare:

Thank you for choosing the Ryan White Program as your charity of the quarter!

The Ryan White Program provides clinical and supportive services to people living with HIV/AIDS. We serve over 600 people each year, and our numbers are steadily growing. Our patients are very diverse, although locally, the disease disproportionately impacts poor African American men and women. We deal with a whole host of issues concerning access to healthcare, public transportation, mental health and substance abuse needs, but most acutely, we deal with stigma and discrimination. Despite that fact that HIV can, and does, infect anyone, HIV has always been associated with sexuality, gender identity, drug use, and other 'moral' or 'immoral' behaviors. A lot of this stems from traditional religious views about sexuality and virtue. People do not seek testing, treatment, or other help because of fear of judgment, exclusion, and hatred. The result is unnecessary illness and death, and the perpetuation of people suffering in silence.

We strive to provide a safe, welcoming, and non-judg-

mental environment for our patients to receive their medical care and supportive services. If they cannot pay for their medical care, we provide it for free. We'll even get them to and from their appointments. Often people have to choose whether to pay for medicine, or pay their light bill, so we will help them with their rent and bills if it means they will stay in care and stay healthy.

Here's how we use our donations: None of the money we raise in the community goes towards our salaries or overhead expenses like rent or computers. Heck, we don't even buy our coffee with it! Your donation will go directly to the people who need assistance. It will pay for life-saving medications that our patients wouldn't be able to afford otherwise. It helps pay for expert medical care that our patients depend on to stay healthy and happy. It helps get people to and from their appointments and support groups. It will help us continue our work to serve one of the most vulnerable and excluded populations in our community with the compassionate, high quality care that they deserve.

Thank you again for putting your humanist principles to work.

To donate to Ryan White, please visit <http://bit.ly/shlcommunity>



CAMP QUEST 2013 REGISTRATION

Registration for the 2013 summer session of Camp Quest South Carolina is open!

Camp Quest South Carolina will be held in Aiken, South Carolina. Camp will run from July 21-27, 2013. Kids must be at least 8 years old on the first day of camp to attend. Campers ages 16 and 17 will be counselors-in-training (CITs).

The early registration fee is \$525 for the first camper and \$500 for each additional camper from the same fam-

ily. The basic registration form and \$100 deposit must be submitted by May 15 to qualify for the early registration rate. Beginning May 16, the registration fee is \$575 for the first camper and \$550 for each additional camper from the same family. Limited financial aid funds (camperships) are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

To register and for more information, please visit <http://CampQuestSC.org>



**DARWIN WEEK IN CHARLESTON
FEBRUARY 7 TO 13, 2013, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON**

Everyone is invited to attend the 13th annual Celebration of Darwin Week in Charleston! All events are free and open to the public.

Courting God: Evolution and Creation in American Public Schools

Friday, February 8 3:00 p.m.
Hawkins Living Learning Center

For the past 90 years, laws regarding the teaching of evolution in public schools have themselves evolved a great deal. This talk will discuss some of those laws, the ways in which those laws have changed, and what the changes mean for today's public school teachers.

Flock of Dodos: the evolution-intelligent design circus

Friday, February 8 at 6 p.m.
School of Science and Math Auditorium

A comic and controversial 2006 feature documentary, *Flock of Dodos: the evolution-intelligent design circus*, is the first feature film to take an even-handed look at the intelligent design vs. evolution clash that appeared on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* in 2005.

Corresponding with Darwin

Sunday, February 10 at 11:00 a.m.
Dr. Jeremy Rutledge

More and more religious people root themselves in a scientific understanding of the natural world. The Sunday morning teaching at Circular Church will consider Darwin's story and our own as we affirm science and religion as partners in the existential search for truth and meaning.

Zombie Ants and Disgusted Humans: Behavior in a World of Parasites

Monday, February 11 at 4:00 p.m.
CofC School of Sciences and Math Auditorium

We, along with all animals, have evolved in a world thick with parasites. Dr. David Hughes will examine some of the most complex results of natural selection, touching on the tenuous concept of free will in the parasitized brain.

Myths of "Modern" Human Origins

Tuesday, February 12 at 4:00 p.m.
CofC School of Sciences and Math Auditorium

For decades paleoanthropologists have distinguished recent "behaviorally-modern" humans from the earliest member of our species. This distinction reflects two longstanding myths in human origins research. Dr. John Shea will challenge both of them.

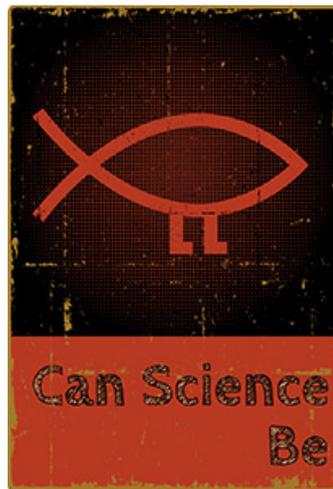
Why The Handaxe's Tale: Stone Tools and Human Evolution

Tuesday, February 12 at 6:30 p.m.
117 Grimsley Hall, The Citadel

Stone tools are the most durable record of human evolution, outnumbering human fossils from the last 2.5 million years by several orders of magnitude. But what do we know about them and how do we know it?

Climate Change and Human Origins: New Discoveries through Scientific Drilling in East Africa's Great Rift Valley

Wednesday, February 13 at 4:00 p.m.
CofC School of Sciences and Math Auditorium



SHOULD DARWIN GET HIS DAY? HERB SILVERMAN

February 12, 1809 must have seemed like an ordinary day to those alive at the time, but we now know it to be the birth day of two giants of humanity: Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin. Lincoln ended slavery in the United States in the 19th century, and Darwin made one of the greatest scientific discoveries of the 19th century. The same types of people vilified both these great men, often for the same reasons.

Slaveholders had economic incentives to maintain their abominable institution, encouraged by the blessing of southern clergy and politicians who biblically justified the morality of human slavery. Rev. Richard Furman, from my hometown of Charleston, was the first president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention and founder of the university that bears his name. Said Furman, “The right of holding slaves is clearly established in the Holy Scriptures, both by precept and example.” Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America, added, “Slavery was established by the decree of Almighty God. It is sanctioned in the Bible, in both testaments, from Genesis to Revelation.” Many northern progressive Christians were abolitionists, they would have lost handily in biblical debates against southern religious literalists.

Today Abraham Lincoln is revered for what he accomplished, and the humanist principle that it is morally wrong for one person to own another is commonly accepted.

Charles Darwin, on the other hand, is far from universally respected in the United States, where too many religious authorities still treat the Bible as a science book. We wouldn’t expect scientifically ignorant biblical writers who lived thousands of years ago in a small corner of the Mediterranean to have described the theory of evolution (or DNA, or any discovery of modern science), and they didn’t. What we do find in the Bible is a flat, unmoving Earth at the center of a 6,000 year-old universe, and

the whole number three as the true value of pi [1 Kings 7:23]. The modern scientific theory of evolution conflicts with Genesis, and describes how natural selection can easily explain our existence without need for a divine creator.



When I was young, public schools were closed on Darwin’s birthday, though the official reason was to commemorate the birth of Abraham Lincoln. Now there is a growing movement to publicly celebrate February 12 as Darwin Day. But instead of closing schools, I’d like to see it become a day for students to study and explore the great scientific discoveries that spring from Darwin’s work.

With encouragement from the American Humanist Association, Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) proposed H. Res. 41 to Congress, expressing support for the designation of February 12, 2013, as Darwin Day and recognizing the importance of science in the betterment of humanity. While I’m thrilled to see this resolution introduced by Rep. Holt and co-sponsors, I’m not optimistic about its passage. Why? Because, for example, one of the members of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee who will consider this House resolution is Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA). He referred to evolution (and the Big Bang) as “lies straight from the pit of hell.”

Religious forces have been trying to water down science education in public schools at least since the time of Darwin. In response, atheists and scientifically minded theists are joining forces to promote science and educate communities about evolution. This includes a number of “friendly” debates between atheists and Darwinian theists.

For example, my academic institution, the College of Charleston, holds an annual “Darwin Week.” Dr. Rob Dillon, who is both an evolutionary biologist and a committed Christian, organizes the yearly event. In 2011, he arranged a debate between Dr. Karl Giberson (physics professor and vice president of the BioLogos forum

SHOULD DARWIN GET HIS DAY? (CONT'D) HERB SILVERMAN

founded by Dr. Francis Collins of the Genome Project) and me. We argued the question “Does science make belief in God harder or easier?” This year’s debate between an atheist and a Christian asks “Are Science and Faith Compatible?”

Both sides in these debates accept the theory of evolution, but dispute its implications. Christian evolutionists try to show the compatibility of evolution and Christianity, fearing that people who are forced to choose between the two will dismiss evolution. Atheists tend to agree with religious fundamentalists that scientific naturalism is incompatible with belief in an intervening deity. In my debate, for instance, Dr. Giberson concurred that science has proven many biblical miracles to be false, but he said Christians should believe in the Resurrection miracle because it’s essential to Christianity. Hmm. That’s not an easy position to hold.

While we can look back with astonishment at the scientifically illiterate geocentric battles of the Middle Ages, most of the western world regards our current evolution battles with equal amazement. The theory of evolution is not controversial within any scientific community. But in this country many religious and political groups have successfully promulgated the view that Darwin’s work is significantly flawed, which explains why about half our populace remain suspicious of evolution.

Moral issues are more easily understood than scientific issues, which helps to explain why so many Americans who reject slavery still cling to a worldview that includes “scientific” creationism. When an unknown Charles Darwin set sail on the Beagle in 1831, he was a firm creationist. Confronted by the evidence unearthed during years of study, he changed his mind. Celebrating Darwin Day on February 12 won’t eliminate all ignorance of and disrespect for the scientific method, but it would be a positive step. Perhaps it will lead to a more enlightened era when even religious conservatives accept evolution, just as they came to accept an earth that revolves around the sun.

See all of Herb’s On Faith posts at <http://bit.ly/herbonfaith>

SHL AND CAMP QUEST SOUTH CAROLINA RAISE FUNDS TO FIGHT CANCER

SHL, along with Camp Quest South Carolina (CQSC), raised \$7400 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) this year through the Light The Night Walk. On January 22, 2013, the SHL/CQSC was named top corporate fundraising team in the Lowcountry.

“We believe we have this one life, and so this cause was very important to us,” said Amy Monsky, SHL president and local Light The Night team leader. “We were very happy to do our part to improve the quality of life for others and to reduce suffering by helping to advance scientific research and education. I am proud of our group and the outpouring of support shown by our members.”

SHL/CQSC was among 140 atheist groups in more than 30 states and 90 cities raising money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) this year through its popular Light The Night Walk fundraising program. SHL chooses four charities a year to support the local community. The organization passes the plate, so to speak, to its members, collecting donations which are then forwarded to the recipient. The Light the Night fundraiser was SHL’s Charity of the Quarter in the fall of 2012.

SHL/CQSC’s local team was part of a nationwide effort organized by Foundation Beyond Belief, a nonprofit that encourages philanthropy among nontheists.

“This is one of the biggest giving efforts of its kind in the history of our movement,” said humanist philanthropist Todd Stiefel, of Raleigh, N.C. “Our goal is to improve the lives of countless cancer patients and their families, while demonstrating that freethinkers are a legitimate force for good in the world.” Stiefel and his family pledged to match dollar-for-dollar the first \$500,000 raised by the Foundation Beyond Belief Light The Night initiative. The effort has raised more than \$400,000 so far. SHL/CQSC’s \$7400 includes the Stiefel match. All proceeds from the Light The Night Walk go to LLS.

“The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society is incredibly appreciative that Foundation Beyond Belief has chosen to support our efforts to beat blood cancer, and has set such a generous goal,” said Nancy L. Klein, LLS chief marketing and revenue officer. “We look forward to having their teams join our walks.”

SHL AND AHA THREATEN LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE YMCA, AND THE YMCA CONCEDES

Following the involvement of the American Humanist Association, the YMCA Flowertown Festival has reversed its decision to exclude SHL from participating. In an email sent today to Amy Monsky, SHL president, the Summerville Family YMCA Festival Coordinator Kimberly Howell informed Monsky that the group has “officially been accepted to the 2013 Flowertown Festival.”

The Festival’s policy permits all types of community groups, including non-profits and civic organizations, to apply for a booth, so long as the group has “inclusive membership” and supports “community building.” Although SHL meets both of these requirements, the YMCA Festival Coordinator originally discouraged the group from applying, stating, “We are a Christian organization.”

“The original decision to use a religious test for inclusion in the festival was misguided,” said American Humanist Association Executive Director Roy Speckhardt. “I am pleased that local humanists are now welcomed to participate in the YMCA Flowertown Festival along with the rest of their community.”

The American Humanist Association’s Appignani Humanist Legal Center sent a letter on Jan. 28, 2013 to the Summerville Valley YMCA asking them to reverse their decision because the refusal to do business with an atheist organization amounts to unlawful discrimination on the basis of religion in violation of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as South Carolina’s public accommodations statute. The legal center also notified the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission of the violation of the South Carolina Public Accommodations statute.

The Festival, which will be held in April, is open to the general public and expects to attract over 200,000 visitors this year.

Excerpts of the Legal Center’s letter are printed below. To read it in its entirety, visit <http://bit.ly/shlflowertown>

On December 10, 2012, Amy Monsky, president of SHL, called you, as the Festival’s Business and Civ-

ic Coordinator, to apply for a community group booth for the Festival. Ms. Monsky had a few questions about booth space and activity restrictions and left you a message. The next day, you returned her call. After Ms. Monsky asked her question about activity restrictions, she asked you if there would be a problem with her group having a booth. She told you her group was the “Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry.” You indicated you were unfamiliar with the group. Monsky then told you SHL is an atheist group. Immediately thereafter, you told her “no.” According to Monsky, you were friendly until that point. Confused, Ms. Monsky asked you to clarify if you meant no, there would not be a problem, and you replied: “No, it wouldn’t be okay. We are a Christian organization.”

Ms. Monsky informed you that her group is both “inclusive in membership and supported community building.” In response, you curtly told her SHL could apply (despite your previous rejection showing discriminatory motive) but that their inclusion would be determined by a jury review. Ms. Monsky then filed an application and submitted the appropriate application fee. On January 16, 2013, Monsky received a rejection letter from the Festival....Ms. Monsky e-mailed you that day, asking, “Why were we rejected?” You never replied to her. It is quite apparent that the reason that you did not reply is that to do so would be to admit (again) that it was because of SHL’s atheist religious views, as you had clearly communicated in your earlier statement refusing to do business with SHL because the YMCA is “a Christian organization.”

Because of the public and commercial nature of the Festival, YMCA cannot refuse to do business with a customer, such as SHL, on the basis of its religious views. It is clear that SHL’s application was rejected because of the group’s atheist religious beliefs. It is no defense that the YMCA calls itself a Christian organization; in fact, your statement to this effect is damning evidence of religion as the motive for your decision. The public accommodations laws forbid just this sort of discrimination.



THE SEPARATIONIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

*Opinions expressed in *The Separationist* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.*

Please contact the editor with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions of short articles, news items, letters to the editor or other information of interest to SHL members are always welcome. Contact the editor at newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org.

THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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OUR OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Jonathan Lamb

Secretary: Laura Kasman

JOIN SHL

SHL is a group of freethinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the greater Charleston, South Carolina, area. SHL is affiliated with American Atheists, American Humanist Association, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Atheist Alliance International, Council for Secular Humanism, and the South Carolina Progressive Network. Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$35 (individual) or \$50 (couple or family). Additional donations are always welcome. To join, visit our website at <http://bit.ly/joinshl>, and for more information about our activities, visit <http://bit.ly/shlevents>