



THE SEPARATIONIST

JANUARY 2012

ROY SPECKHARDT AND MAGGIE ARDIENTE: 2020 HUMANISM SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2012, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

The American Humanist Association has stood as the voice of humanism in the United States for over 70 years.

AHA strives to bring about a society where being good without gods is an accepted way to live life. The organization accomplishes this goal by defending civil liberties and secular governance, by reaching out to the growing number of people without traditional religious faith, and through a continued refinement and advancement of the humanist worldview. (SHL is an AHA chapter.)

Roy Speckhardt is executive director of the American Humanist Association where he actively promotes the humanist perspective on progressive political issues. He's appeared on CNN Headline News, Fox News, numerous national radio shows, and has spoken to dozens of local humanist groups across the country. He also serves as a board member of the Humanist Institute and the United Coalition of Reason and as an advisory board member of the Secular Student Alliance. Maggie Ardiente is the director of development and communica-

tions at the American Humanist Association and editor of

the AHA's weekly e-zine Humanist Network News. She graduated with a B.S. in sociology from James Madison University and served as Vice President of the JMU Freethinkers, a student group for atheists, agnostics, and humanists. She is a former board member of the Secular Student Alliance and a board member of The Humanist Institute.

On January 15, 2012, at our first meeting of the new year, Roy and Maggie will be our guest speakers. Maggie will give a brief update on AHA's national programs and activities.

Roy's talk, 2020 Humanism: Achieving a Vision that Matches Our Aspirations, will explore how we can learn from the successes of the other movements, explaining how we best serve our humanist demographic by learning from history and working toward greater unity, community and identity.

We'll meet at 4:00 pm in Gage Hall, located at 4 Archdale Street in downtown Charleston. The meeting runs until 5:30 pm, and we'll go out to dinner afterward.



FIND US ONLINE! WE'RE (VIRTUALLY) 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)

FAMILY OUTING

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2012, 11 AM
OLD EXCHANGE AND PROVOST DUNGEON
122 EAST BAY STREET, CHARLESTON**

We're going to start off the new year by going back in time! This month we'll be going to the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon in historic downtown Charleston. Adults and children alike will enjoy the Colonial Lifestyles program which includes a one-hour guided tour.

Throughout our tour, we will learn about the lives of children during colonial times by sitting in a colonial classroom, inspecting colonial tools and crafts, and playing with colonial toys. We'll also learn about manners, family life, and entertainment. After the program, we'll head to a nearby restaurant or the Waterfront Park for lunch and socializing.

The building is stroller and wheelchair accessible. The program starts promptly at 11am, so please plan on being there 10-15 minutes early. Parking options include metered parking behind the OE&PD and on Broad Street, free parking at the Battery, and a parking garage a couple of blocks away. To get a educational program group rate we need to pay with one payment, so please bring cash or check payable to Amy Monsky. (\$6.50 each for adults and children 4 and up. Free for 3 and under.) RSVPs to SecularCharlestonMom@gmail.com are strongly encouraged so we have a good idea of how many to expect at the door, though please still come if you didn't RSVP.

SHL HAPPY HOUR

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012, 6 PM
LIBERTY TAP ROOM
1028 JOHNNIE DODDS BLVD, MT. PLEASANT**



The next SHL Happy Hour will be on Tuesday, January 17, 6pm - 8pm(ish) at Liberty Tap Room, 1028 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard in Mt. Pleasant (near Publix).

Come relax among old and new friends and enjoy a drink and friendly conversation. Everyone is welcome—alcohol is optional and no

topic is ever taboo. Please join us!

MOVIE CLUB

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 2012

The SHL Movie Club meets once a month, usually on the first Saturday, to view a film and discuss it over dinner. The movie is announced a few days in advance by email, on our website (<http://bit.ly/shlevents>), and on our information line (843-277-0948). To add yourself to the Movie Club email list, please visit <http://bit.ly/shllist>.

BOOK GROUP

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2012, 4 PM
WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE
1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

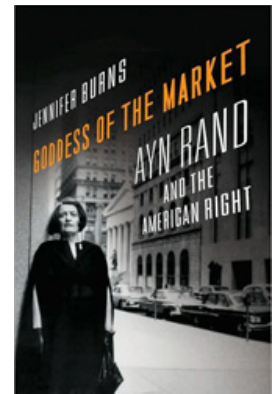
The Book Group will meet on January 22, 2012, to discuss *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, by Jennifer Burns.

Ayn Rand's most famous books, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, continue to sell in the hundreds of thousands every year, decades after they were issued. Rand was a significant influence on Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales and Craigslist's Craig Newman. Since her death in 1982, she remains many things to many people, as she did throughout her prickly, anxiety-laced, amphetamine- and nicotine-fueled life.

Jennifer Burns, a University of Virginia historian, explicates the evolution of Rand's individualist worldview, placing her within the context of American conservative and libertarian thought: from H.L. Mencken to William Buckley to the Vietnam War. (Rand's opposition to the conflict drove most conservatives crazy.)

The book was recently issued in paperback. Amazon sells it for \$12.89 with used copies available for \$6 to \$10. Prices on bn.com are slightly higher. The Charleston Public Library has three copies of the book.

As always, we'll meet at the West Ashley Barnes & Noble, located at 1812 Sam Rittenberg Boulevard. The discussion (which promises to be a particularly lively one this time) runs from 4:00 pm till 5:30 pm, and we usually go out to dinner afterward.



CHARITY OF THE QUARTER SOUTH CAROLINA STRONG

In 2011 we raised over \$2,300 for four worthwhile causes: Charleston Animal Society, Crisis Ministries, Walk 4 Autism, and the Sea Turtle Hospital. (We showed the sea turtles a lot of love, raising \$750.)



In January and February we are pooling donations for a local organization called South Carolina STRONG: Sustaining, Teaching, Rebuilding Our New Generation. SC STRONG works to rehabilitate criminals and substance abusers and move them into economic self-sufficiency. They provide a self-governed residential community where residents learn and teach academic and vocational skills, interpersonal skills, along with the attitudes and values necessary to live a drug- and crime-free life in mainstream society. All participants come to SC STRONG voluntarily, either as an alternative to incarceration, reentry to society after prison, or referred by social service agencies or homeless shelters.

We're hoping to see wider participation from SHL members this year. Keep in mind that most of the donations are less than \$50, so every little bit helps. Our goal is \$600 by the end of February, so bring your cash or check donation to our January or February meeting. You also have the option of donating on our website via credit or debit card (visit <http://bit.ly/shldonate>).

Thank you for your support of charitable causes in the name of Secular Humanism.

HOW ARE WE DOING? MEMBER SURVEY

We want to hear from you! Our new member survey is designed to help us better serve the needs and interests of our members.

Please visit <http://bit.ly/shlsurvey> to take the survey.

If you prefer a paper survey, call 843-277-0948 or email shl@lowcountryhumanists.org. And feel free to email or call with comments or questions.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY LOWCOUNTRY FOOD BANK

Our next group volunteer activity will be working a three-hour shift at the Lowcountry Food Bank warehouse on January 7 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon.



The warehouse has the following age and clothing requirements: The age limit is 14 years and up. For those who are not 18 they must be accompanied by an adult at least 21 years of age. Please wear close-toed shoes (such as tennis shoes) and weather appropriate clothing, as the warehouse is NOT climate controlled. Flip flops, sandals, high heels, or flats are not permitted in the warehouse due to safety requirements. No tank tops please.

If you are interested in volunteering at the Food Bank warehouse, please email or call Kristen Channel by January 4 to let her know you will be participating, as she needs to give an accurate head count to the Food Bank volunteer coordinator.

Kristen's phone number is 860-326-6079, and her email address is kristenchanel@gmail.com.

LEWIS BLACK FEBRUARY 10, 2012, 8 PM N. CHARLESTON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Lewis Black's live performances provide a cathartic release of anger and disillusionment for his audience. Lewis yells so we don't have to. (If you're not familiar with his unique brand of comedy, visit <http://bit.ly/shlid>.)

Lewis brings his "In God We Rust" tour to North Charleston next month. Since his irreverence and skepticism are popular with atheists everywhere, we're getting a group together to attend the show. If you'd like to join us, visit <http://bit.ly/shllewis> to buy tickets. Prices are \$58.50 for orchestra seating and \$42.50 for the mezzanine.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL
GLENN KLEIER, TOR BOOKS

BOOK REVIEW BY JAMES ZIMMERMAN, EDITOR, MINNESOTA ATHEIST NEWSLETTER

Kleier's latest novel takes readers on a globetrotting hunt for answers to life's toughest questions. A lapsed Christian and his skeptical fiancé are trying to uncover the knowledge of good and evil by searching for clues in classic works of art and architecture all while eluding assassination attempts from a secret Catholic order. Clipped, noir-ish sentences and short chapters, meanwhile, move the narrative along at an appropriately hurried pace. If you think this sounds akin to Dan Brown's Robert Langdon Trilogy, you're not alone; a quick look at online reviews shows that most readers, whether they enjoyed Kleier's novel or not, also find the similarities striking.

But while Brown's protagonist travels the world seeking clues for murders and kidnappings, Kleier's story goes further—much further. The knowledge of good and evil, in this case, is that spoken of at Genesis 2:17, one of the verses quoted in entirety prior to the prologue. Ominously, Kleier dedicates his book to “all who confront dark nights of the soul,” and Ian—the main protagonist—certainly leads the way in confronting the ultimate dark night, as he dies no less than four times in the course of the story. Ian's deaths are premeditated and carefully controlled; he is attempting to learn what happens after we die without having to pay the ultimate price.

The book begins with a note explaining that there were to be a number of photos, paintings, and illustrations, but that this idea was nixed in favor of placing all the images on the book's website. Throughout the book—though mainly between pages 100 and 250—readers come across superscript numbers corresponding to images on the website. The publishers recommend not viewing “the images prematurely.” This is frustrating for a number of reasons; primarily that readers are not likely to be within arm's distance of a computer while reading all 416 pages. Also, since the webpage contains small

icons of each image, it's nearly impossible to not view the images prematurely. Don't worry, though, it's perfectly okay if you never visit the website; the images, though they enhance the narrative, are not critical to the story.

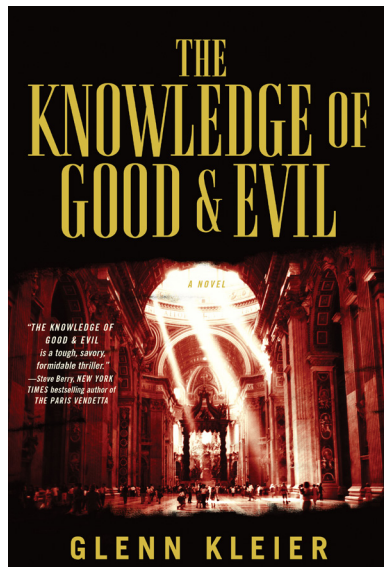
Religion is on display here with all its shadowy secrets and illogical claims. Early in the story, for example, we learn that Ian believes his worst sin was asking a man on death row to appear to him after death as proof of the afterlife. Soon after, while looking across a hilly landscape, Ian asks, “Why does a God who creates the majesty of

nature allow it to be destroyed by a tornado? Why create the miracle of human life, then allow it to be cruelly snuffed out?” His priest responds with typical stupidity: “These are unanswerable questions, best left unasked.” Pressing harder than most parishioners dare, Ian snaps back that such an answer makes no sense: why would God give humans the ability to think critically but then refuse to allow us to even ask our most pressing questions?

Ian's fiancée, Angela, meanwhile, is a lousy non-believer. Along with Ian, she is co-host of a television show that debunks supernatural claims. But when Ian

points out that they've escaped assassination attempts four times, arguing “you have to admit, at some point we cross the line from luck to miracle, right?” Angela pauses, realizing she has no criteria for miracles. Later, Angela reflects on recent events: If the ultimate reality they seek is “truly able to end hatred and strife around the world, it was priceless.” Angela finds herself “Wanting to Believe.” (capitalization Kleier's).

After dozens of brief chapters, it comes as no surprise that Ian finally succeeds in tapping into the secrets of Christianity's heaven and hell. But don't be put off by this validation of Catholicism: Kleier's descriptions are thrilling, edge-of-your seat tales, and he paints the afterlife in all the morbid, monotonous, monstrous ways the

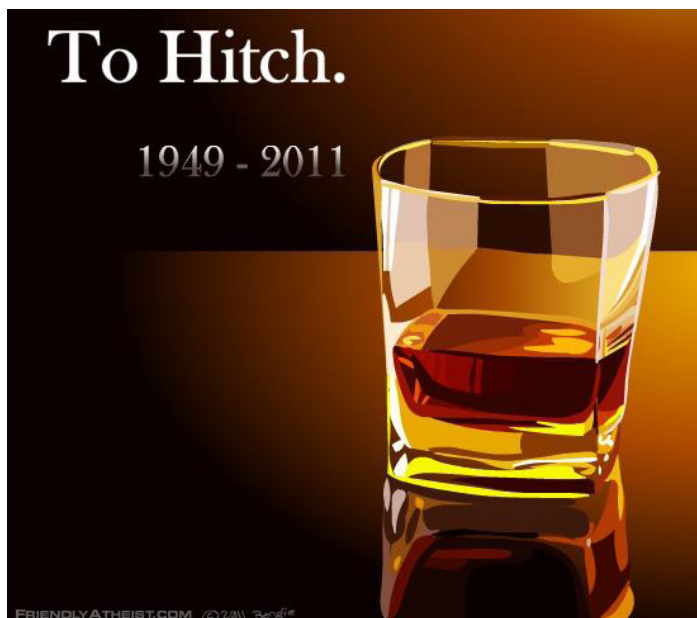


KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL (CONT'D)

Bible and church doctrine suggest. After passing through limbo—where Ian meets up with a former serial murderer—he descends to hell searching for his parents who, we are told, have been consigned to the pits of Hades for having given their lives to save their son (that’s right—sacrificing your life, even if it’s to save the life of your child, is portrayed as the worst possible offense against the sacredness of life).

While entering hell, Ian encounters a former professor of literature, who confesses his sin was that he viewed the bible merely as another piece of literature. He also meets up with a man, condemned for his doubts, who complains, “St. Thomas himself had doubts! An apostle who Knew Christ personally...And here we are, two thousand years removed, nothing to go on but a book of ambiguous, secondhand Scripture?” Ian responds that it was a test of faith, and the professor argues, “which faith? Ten thousand religions in the world, each claiming to be right!” Kleier’s work of fiction thus performs a fascinating feat: it does not assert that religious dogma is false, merely that, if it is true, then we have much, much more to fear when we die than if we believe in nothing at all.

James Zimmerman, editor of the Minnesota Atheist Newsletter, recently interviewed Glenn Kleier: <http://bit.ly/kleierzimmerman>



REASON RALLY MARCH 24, 2012, WASHINGTON, DC

The Reason Rally will be held March 24, 2012, in Washington, DC. The rally will be filled with music, comedy, and addresses by leaders of the secular movement. It’s billed as the largest gathering of the secular movement in history.

DC Rally Bus, a service that supports our First Amendment right to peaceably assemble by providing buses for rallies in Washington, DC, may send a bus to Charleston. Availability depends on demand; we need to sign up 40 riders by January 24, 2012.

To register, visit <http://bit.ly/shl-bus>.

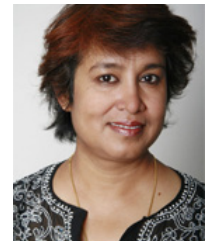
Note that the Annual Convention of American Atheists is scheduled for March 25th and 26th, 2012, in Bethesda, Maryland, and Richard Dawkins will be the keynote speaker. If you prefer to stay in DC for the conference, the DC Rally Bus isn’t your best bet for transportation, but special room rates are available for DC area hotels. See below for a phone number, or visit <http://reasonrally.org/find-a-hotel/>.



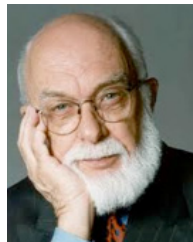
Richard Dawkins



PZ Myers



Taslima Nasrin



James Randi



Jamila Bey



Greta Christina



Fred Edwards



Sean Faircloth



Hemant Mehta

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

CONTACT US

Write:

SHL

Post Office Box 32256

Charleston, SC 29417

Or Call:

24-hour information line: 843-277-0948

Media inquiries: 843-670-0290

OUR OFFICERS

President: Matt Dean

Vice President: Herb Silverman

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>