

New York City Atheists Inc.

Serving the Tri-State area • An affiliate of American Atheists

March 2005

Vol. II Issue No. 3

WEB: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG

Cooper Station — P.O. Box 93, NY, NY 10276-0093

212-330-6794

FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

MARCH

March 2	Wednesday 9 A.M.	U.S. Supreme Court Demonstration (Washington D.C.)
March 3*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
March 10*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
March 13**	Sunday 12:30 P.M.	NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch and Library
March 15***	Tuesday 7:00 P.M.	NYC Atheists Meet-Up
March 17*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
March 24*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
March 24****	Thursday 6:30 P.M.	NYC Atheists Monthly Meeting
March 25–27	Friday – Sunday	American Atheists Convention (Philadelphia) – www.atheists.org

APRIL

April 7*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
April 10**	Sunday 12:30 P.M.	NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch and Library
April 13*****	Wednesday 7:00 P.M.	NYC Atheists' Madalyn O'Hair Dinner
April 14*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
April 19***	Tuesday 7:00 P.M.	NYC Atheists Meet-Up
April 21*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
April 28*	Thursday 8 P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
April 28****	Thursday 6:30 P.M.	NYC Atheists Monthly Meeting

* Manhattan Cable Channel 67 (RNN Cable Channel 110).

** Palace Diner — 122 East 57th Street (Between Lexington and Park Avenue).
Brunch Cost: Order from Menu — Reservations not required.

*** Meetup Location: Manhattan Lounge 1270 Second Avenue (Between 89th and 90th Street).

**** Meeting Location: 352 7th Avenue, 16th Floor (Between 29 and 30th Street).

***** Location: TBA.

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NYC Atheists Inc. is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational association. Its meetings and membership are open and all are welcomed (both nonbelievers and believers), *i.e.* atheists, agnostics, humanists, free thinkers, skeptics, secularists, separation-of-church/state advocates, and individuals who are questioning and searching beliefs.

SEE PAGE 8 FOR 2005 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



PRESIDENT'S SERMON

ACTIVISM

We have to dramatically ramp up NYC Atheists' activism concerning; separation of church and state issues such as creationism education in public schools, religious displays in public spaces, government funding of faith based initiatives, governmental funding of religious institutions and discrimination exemptions for religious groups.

Ken Bronstein

This will require our involvement in national, state, and local situations and issues.

Specific activism must include letters to the media and the contact of elected officials at all levels of government (local, state and national). We also must support groups that are involved in separation of church and state issues throughout these United States. Our support must include: letter writing, financial, and demonstration (members of New York City Atheists have just returned from demonstrating at the U.S. Supreme Court in support of eliminating the display of the ten commandment in public spaces).

WE MUST PUT ON A FULL COURT PRESS — NOW !

Our activism must also include community social and support outreach programs. I would like your input and suggestions. We have many members who are/were teachers, how about a mentoring problem ?

JOIN/RENEW NYC ATHEISTS MEMBERSHIP. ONLY THROUGH A LARGE AND INVOLVED MEMBERSHIP CAN WE CONTINUE OUR PROGRESS AND HAVE AN IMPACT.

Contact me with your comments: Ken Bronstein at NYCATHEISTS@AOL.COM or 212-535-7425.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

February 3, (Thursday) 8 P.M.
NYCA Cable Show #33
(Manhattan Cable Ch. 67)
Guest: Margie Wait

February 10, (Thursday) 8 P.M.
NYCA Cable Show # 34
(Manhattan Cable Ch. 67)
Guest: Margie Wait

February 10, 11, 12, 8 P.M.
“Darwin Live and in Concert”
Event: NYC Atheists Presented
Charles Darwin: Live & in Concert
Location: *Where Eagles Dare Theatre* at 347 West 36th Street
(Between 8th and 9th Avenue)

This was NYC Atheists' first off-Broadway sponsored production, all three nights were sellouts.

February 13, (Sunday) 12:30 P.M.
NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch

**DO NOT PATRONIZE
SKYLIGHT DINER
402 WEST 34TH ST.**

I learnt that our Sunday brunch diner (Euro) has closed on Tuesday of the week of our brunch. I found a new place; Skylight Diner West 34th Street and 9th Avenue as a replacement.

I met with the manager and arranged for our Sunday Brunch *which included the approval for displaying our banner.*

On Sunday (Feb. 13) as we were setting up, The (Sunday) manager (who claimed that he was the owner) – told me that I could not put up our banner. I informed him that I had an agreement from your manager that I could. He said that I would damage his walls. I proceeded to put up the banner in

such a way as to not damage the walls. He saw what I did and walked away.

About 3-4 Minutes later, The Owner, returned and informed me that *the banner had to come down because it might be offensive to his customers.* I protested, he rejected. I then made the decision to leave the diner and find another place, which we did.

On the way out of the diner, I noticed a cross and picture of Mary on the wall behind the cashier.

**DO NOT PATRONIZE
SKYLIGHT DINER
402 WEST 34TH ST.**

February 15, (Tuesday) 7 P.M.
NYCA Meet-Up
Location: Manhattan Lounge
1270 Second Avenue
(Between 89th and 90th Street)

February 17, (Thursday) 8 P.M.
NYCA Cable Show #35
(Manhattan Cable Ch. 67)
Guest: TBA

February 24, (Thursday) 8 P.M.
NYCA Cable Show #36
(Manhattan Cable Ch. 67)
Guest: TBA

February 27, (Sunday) 1 P.M.
NYCA Monthly Meeting
Location: 352 Seventh Avenue
16th Floor. (Between 29th and
30th Street)
Guest: Massimo Pigliucci

NYC ATHEISTS
MEMBERSHIP

Membership Categories

Basic	\$ 25
Supporter	\$ 100
Fellow	\$ 250
Patron	\$ 500
Life	\$ 1000 – 5000

Membership Privileges

- Mailed copy of the monthly NYCA newsletter
 - The right to nominate and vote for NYCA board members,
 - Library and Resource Center access
 - NYCA Yahooogroup privileges
 - Discounts at special events
 - Official NYC Atheists Cap.
-

ATHEISM
IS A CONCLUSION
NOT A RELIGION

NYCA Library/Resource Center

We meet at the NYC Atheists Library/Resource Center after every second-Sunday brunch.

Our Book List is available on our NYC Atheists Website: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG .

We are always looking for donations to our library. All donations are tax deductible.

MAKE THEM PROVE THE THEORY OF GOD

by Kenneth Bronstein

They claim that evolution is just a theory not scientific fact or truth.

Therefore if they claim the above; they should be able to prove that god is not a theory and can met and satisfy the same requirements as they demand from us.

We should also extend our demand to the proof of the bible.

From now on — we should always state: when referring/discussing god to say the theory of god .



**Bruce Alberts-President
National Academy of Sciences**

In evolution, as in all areas of science, our knowledge is incomplete. But the entire success of the scientific enterprise has depended on an insistence that

these gaps be filled by natural explanations, logically derived from confirmable evidence. Because “intelligent design” theories are based on supernatural explanations, they can have nothing to do with science.

As you know, no citizen can be required to testify by oath, and no government official should ever require the words “so help me God.” Those words are not required by the Constitution and were not required by the official who administered the constitutionally required pledge for office to George Washington.

For example, constitutionally, citizens may affirm the truthfulness of their testimony: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States” (Article 2., Section 1.(8)).

The Constitution’s first religion commandment prohibits all religion tests: “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States” (Article 6., Section 3.). The Constitution’s second religion commandment prohibits “religion” from being established by law or Congress (First Amendment) or government at any level (Fourteenth Amendment).

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SEE PAGE 8**

WHY GOD NEVER GOT A PHD

1. He used a ghost writer
2. He never got his dissertation subject approved.
3. All his notes were destroyed in the Big Bang.
4. He had no references or footnotes.
5. The Scientific community cannot replicate his assumptions/results.
6. He unlawfully performed not only Animal, but Human testing.
7. When one experiment went awry, he tried to cover it by drowning his subjects.
8. When subjects didn't behave as predicted, he deleted them from the sample.
9. There is no record that he ever enrolled or paid any tuition
10. He never showed up for his orals.

TOP 10 GOOD THINGS ABOUT HELL

10. None of that annoying check-in procedure like with St. Peter.
9. Due to recent health code changes, vats of boiling brimstone now use low-fat canola oil.
8. Plenty of legal help available for filing a "wrongful death" lawsuit.
7. Well, sure, it's hot, but it's a dry heat.
6. Everywhere you look, there's a smoking section!
5. No one wants you to be a reference for them.
4. You always have a great tan

3. You are no prayer services
2. No need for recycling — just throw everything in the flame
1. You never need a match

SEE — LIVE THURSDAY — 8:00 PM NYC ATHEISTS CABLE SHOW

The NYC Atheists Cable Show is now available as a live video stream.(see it live as it is being broadcasted)

Thursday nights at 8:00 P.M.

Log on to: MNN.ORG

Then go to:
watch MNN Channel 67
click on Channel 67

Did you hear the one about the dyslexic, insomniac, agnostic? He laid awake all night wondering if there is a dog

TOTAL SEPARATION CHURCH/STATE



**Natalie Angier American
journalist**

Whatever else I might have thought of [President George W.] Bush's call, with its assumption that prayer is some sort of miracle Vicks VapoRub for the national

charley horse, it's clear that his hands were reaching for any hands but mine. — Natalie Angier, "Confessions of a Lonely Atheist," in *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001

So, I'll out myself. I'm an Atheist. I don't believe in God, Gods, Godlets or any sort of higher power beyond the universe itself, which seems quite high and powerful enough to me. I don't believe in life after death, channeled chat rooms with the dead, reincarnation, telekinesis or any miracles but the miracle of life and consciousness, which again strike me as miracles in nearly obscene abundance. I believe that the universe abides by the laws of physics, some of which are known, others of which will surely be discovered, but even if they aren't, that will simply be a result, as my colleague George Johnson put it, of our brains having evolved for life on this one little planet and thus being inevitably limited. I'm convinced that the world as we see it was shaped by the again genuinely miraculous, let's even say transcendent, hand of evolution through natural selection. — Natalie Angier, "Confessions of a Lonely Atheist," in *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001

When I sent out a casual and nonscientific poll of my own to a wide cast of acquaintances, friends and colleagues, I was surprised, but not really, to learn that maybe 60 percent claimed a belief in a God of some sort, including people I would have bet were unregenerate skeptics. Others just shrugged. They don't think about this stuff. It doesn't matter to them. They can't know, they won't beat themselves up trying to know

and for that matter they don't care if their kids believe or not. — Natalie Angier, "Confessions of a Lonely Atheist," in *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001

Still, the current climate of religiosity can be stifling to nonbelievers, and it helps now and then to cry foul. For one thing, some of the numbers surrounding the deep religiousness of America, and the rarity of nonbelief, should be held to the fire of skepticism, as should sweeping statistics of any sort. Yes, Americans are comparatively more religious than Europeans, but while the vast majority of them may say generically that they believe in God, when asked what their religion is, a sizable fraction, 11 percent, report "no religion," a figure that has more than doubled since the early 1970's and that amounts to about 26 million people.

As [The Nation columnist Katha] Pollitt points out, when one starts looking beneath the surface of things and adding together the out-front atheists with the indifferent nonbelievers, you end up with a much larger group of people than Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Unitarians put together. — Natalie Angier, "Confessions of a Lonely Atheist," in *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001

Among the more irritating consequences of our flagrantly religious society is the special dispensation that mainstream religions receive. We all may talk about religion as a powerful social force, but unlike other similarly powerful institutions, religion is not to be questioned, criticized or mocked. — Natalie Angier,

"Confessions of a Lonely Atheist," in *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001

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MY ROAD TO AGNOSTICISM

By Robert Grize

I was born a few blocks from the American Museum of Natural History. I know it is just coincidence but I have always had a great interest in nature and science. Of course having an inquisitive and skeptical way of thinking goes well with any interest in science.

When I was young I received a traditional introduction to Catholicism with Sunday church and Holy Communion and Confirmation. My family members were believers for the most part but were not extreme, fortunately for me. I used to enjoy dragging my mother or one of my aunts to the museum so I could take in the exhibits, especially the dinosaurs and birds. The planetarium wasn't too shabby either.

I did find myself however having some real conflicts even at a very early age, especially regarding the conflict between creationism and Darwinism. Though I believed in the existence of God, I found the accompanying dogma hard to accept. Here was this wonderful museum with this seemingly overwhelming evidence of evolution. Does believing in a supreme being mean I have to categorically reject physical evidence that I see right before my eyes and then accept Genesis without question? The church had been wrong before. For example

the earth is not the center of the universe. They were wrong then so they certainly could be wrong about Genesis too. In the ensuing centuries since Biblical times we have gained vast amounts of knowledge about the physical world around us, knowledge that wasn't available to the writers of the bible.

What was one of the more pleasant surprises of my life was college. I had attended public schools but went to a Jesuit college, St. Peter's in Jersey City. I was expecting dogma but instead found some of the philosophy courses to be real eye-openers. The first year philosophy course included, among other topics, man's attempts to prove the existence of God, all of which naturally fail. Not exactly what I had expected, not that I was complaining.

It is strange that I entered a Catholic college as a believer and exited as a more open minded and inquisitive skeptic leaning heavily toward agnosticism.

An agnostic is how I would have to classify myself today, though an atheist, no. I feel I can totally reject the concept of this fatherly god whom we must worship as well as the traditional dogma however I will still reserve judgment regarding the existence of perhaps some sort of greater power. Believers can't prove that there is a god and atheists can't prove that there isn't. Well who can really say for sure? Maybe agnosticism is the only really valid position anyone can take. We certainly don't lack for opinions on this subject though.

I still find my mind boggled by questions like the beginning and end of time and where did the matter come from that made up the big bang. I'll bet that there are natural explanations that have yet to be discovered. I would certainly hope so and I would love to hear them. In that case perhaps I might even consider myself an atheist. In the meantime though I am not about to say that since science doesn't have all the answers that therefore I have to look to the supernatural just to satisfy my need for certainty now.

I suppose that up until my last days I will still be keeping an open mind and still be wondering about these seemingly unfathomable questions



GOD DID IT, OR DID HE?

Column By Massimo Pigliucci
From *Rationally Speaking*

In 1755 a great earthquake struck the city of Lisbon, in Portugal. As a result, roughly 100,000 people died, in the process sparking a new debate about an old and deep theological dilemma: if (the Christian) God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, how could

this happen? The answer, such as it is, has always been that we simply can't understand how such calamities fit into God's plan, but they do, so we should simply have faith in the supreme being and not be as "arrogant" as constantly questioning His plans.

Of course, any human being who deliberately causes the death of thousands, regardless of the stated motive or "higher" purpose, is branded as a horrible criminal, hunted down and prosecuted to the full extent of human law. Rational people feel rather frustrated by this sort of nonsensical double standard, and one defense against the irrationality of the world is, as Mel Brooks once said, a good sense of humor. If anything good came out of the Lisbon earthquake was that it inspired the French philosopher Voltaire to write what became a classical masterpiece of world literature, *Candide*. In it, Voltaire makes fun of the simplistic attitude that we live "in the best of all possible worlds," as affirmed by one of the main characters, Dr. Pangloss (loosely based on the philosophy of Leibniz), and clearly implied by theological "explanations" of natural disasters.

Recently, I have witnessed two more examples of "Pangloss' syndrome," one in response to an event publicized throughout the world, the other while attending a religious gathering celebrating a rite of passage. The scopes of the two episodes are wildly different, and yet they reflect the same irrational, and highly dangerous, attitude about what happens in the world and why.

The largest event was, of course, the tsunami that caused

200,000 people to die in southeast Asia. For several days after the tragedy there was a serious debate in the media, eerily similar to the one that moved Voltaire's pen: how could God allow such a tragedy to occur? Christian theologians, Jewish rabbis, and Muslim clerics all gave the same answer: we don't know, but it must have been for a higher good. Some of these self-appointed experts about nothing went so far as to claim that perhaps the people who died were in fact somehow undeserving, and that the tsunami was God's punishment for their sins. A colossal and outrageously insulting instance of blaming the victim, if ever there was one! It is hard for me to imagine the degree of mental gymnastics that one must perform in these cases to save one's cherished pet religious views. This sort of events must cause an almost unbearable degree of cognitive dissonance, and one has to be particularly skilled at fooling oneself in order not to perceive the sheer absurdity of the whole plot. And yet, it seems to work for hundreds of millions of people the world over. This attitude "explained" Lisbon, the tsunami, the 9/11 attacks on the United States, and essentially anything else bad that happens in the world: it is either our own fault, or it is for the pursuit of God's inscrutable (but certainly supremely good) plan.

The same bizarre logic applies in reverse, of course: just in the same way as God is never responsible for anything bad happening to us, He takes all (or most) of the credit whenever something good happens. A good gig if you can get it! The second example I witnessed falls into the

category of “God did it (because it’s good).” I was at a religious ceremony celebrating an important rite of passage for a young girl, followed by a feast at which everybody was having a jolly good time. At one point, the father of the girl took the microphone and told us a very poignant story: his daughter had actually been born very prematurely, and both her and her mother had barely survived the ordeal. Moreover, the girl had been in desperate conditions in the hospital after birth, and the doctors had little hope that she would make it. However, some doctor had the daring and brilliant idea of trying a new experimental drug, after having asked the parents’ permission. It worked, and the result was the beautiful young woman that we were now celebrating.

Had the story ended there it would have been a wonderful and moving tale of human compassion and ingenuity. But of course the father had to go on and add that, although he was sure the doctors had some merit for the final outcome, really this was a clear example of a miracle, a direct intervention of God to save his child. There are so many things that are simply wrong with all of this that it is, again, hard to imagine how perfectly normal, functional, people can sincerely embrace this sort of “reasoning.” To begin with, why does God get the credit for solving the problem, but not for creating it in the first place? Second, isn’t such an unwarranted shift of credit insulting for the doctors who did the actual hard work and took on a huge responsibility in case of failure? More generally, if we all (including doctors) adopted such

attitude, wouldn’t that spell the end of any attempt to better humanity’s condition? If it’s all in God’s hands (why does He need hands, anyway?), then why bother? Which is, of course, exactly the attitude of so-called Christian scientists (an oxymoron of grotesque proportions), who leave their children to die because they think that all disease is the result of poor faith and can be cured only by restoring the latter.

I am no Voltaire, and this essay is no *Candide*. Therefore, I will leave it to the great French Enlightenment writer to make a final comment: “Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd.” We would find ourselves in a much better world if more of us lived by such words.

Massimo Pigliucci, Ph.D., is a professor of evolutionary biology at SUNY-Stony Brook.



Johnny Carson

I am not sure if he was an Atheist, but reviewing his TV show interview of Madalyn Murray O’Hair, his body language and his knowledge about Ms. O’Hair and Atheism issues leads me to the conclusion that he might have been an Atheist. He also did not have any memorial service.

MARCH BOOK CLUB

The next meeting of the NYC Atheists Book Club will be right after our March 13 - Sunday Brunch at our NYC Atheists Library/Resource Center. We will continue using the book *Science and Religion* edited by Paul Kurtz — Reading Pages 217-241.

For this book club meeting we will read articles about Examining claims of the “paranatural”-Life after death by Paul Kurtz, After-death communications studies by Richard Wiseman and Ciaran O’keeffe, and Near death experiences by Antony Flew.

Contact:
NYCATHEISTS@AOL.COM or
 Phone: (212) 535-7425. We will be using this book for the next four to five Book Club Meetings

DEMOCRACY NOT THEOCRACY

- Born Again No Bargain
- Evangelist. Evil's Agent
- Jerry Falwell
 Ministry A Fine Try,
 Mr. Jelly
 Swirl!
- Revelations. Satire Novel
 No Relatives
- Religion Leg Iron, I
- Santa. Satan
- Ten
 Commandments . . Ten Damn
 Comments.
 Can't Mend
 Most Men

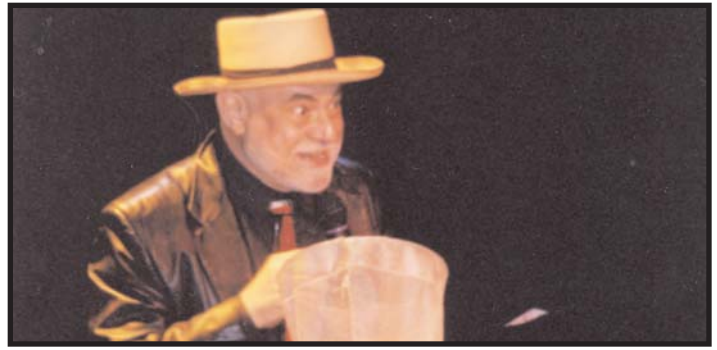
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 NYC ATHEISTS
 SEE PAGE 8**

NYC-ATHEIST ACTIVITIES



January 30 — NYC Atheists Annual Meeting

NYC Atheists' election for Year 2005 of its Board of Directors and revised By-laws.



February 10-12 — Darwin “Live an in concert”

Richard Milner starring as Charles Darwin in NYC Atheists sponsored off-Broadway Production. Three nights of sell-outs.



NYC Atheists Street Tabling

We shall begin our street fair tabling in April. Come by and say Hello.



Taping of a future NYC cable show dinner

L to R: Lyle Stuart (guest) Dennis Horvitz (host).

NYC ATHEISTS — 2005 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

First Name: _____ **Last Name** _____

Street Address: _____ **Apt No.:** _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Email: _____ **@** _____ **Phone:** (____) _____ - _____

NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit (501c), non-partisan, and educational association with the purposes and goals:

1. To promote the total and absolute separation of church and state
2. To educate and inform the public about Atheism
3. To provide a forum for examination and discussion about Atheism
4. To develop and engage in educational, cultural, charitable, and social activities that are beneficial to the members of NYC Atheists Inc., the Atheist community, and the community at large.

YOUR 2005 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

- Basic – \$ 25 Supporter – \$ 100 Founder – \$ 250 Patron – \$ 500 Life – \$ 1000
 Senior (Age 65 or greater) – \$ 20 Full Time Student – \$ 10 Military (Active) – \$ 15

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

**CHECK PAYABLE TO: NYC ATHEISTS INC. — SEND APPLICATION TO:
 NYC ATHEISTS INC. MEMBERSHIP — COOPER STATION P.O. Box 93 NY, NY 10276-0093**