

New York City Atheists Inc.

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

April 2005

Vol. II Issue No. 4

WEB: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG

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

212-330-6794

FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

APRIL

April 1	Friday 7:45P.M.	NYC Atheists Social Nite Out (See Page 3)
April 7*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
April 10**	Sunday 12:30P.M.	NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch and Library
April 13	Wednesday 7P.M.	NYCA Madalyn O'Hair Birthday Event (See Page 3)
April 14*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
April 19***	Tuesday 7P.M.	NYC Atheists Meet-Up
April 21*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
April 24****	Sunday 12:30P.M.	NYC Atheists Monthly Meeting (See Page 3)
April 28*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show

MAY

May 5*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
May 5	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Movie Nite (See Page 3)
May 8**	Sunday 12:30P.M.	NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch and Library
May 12*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
May 17***	Tuesday 7P.M.	NYC Atheists Meet-Up
May 19*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
May 26*	Thursday 8P.M.	NYC Atheists Cable Show
May 29****	Sunday 1P.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).

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NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit, non-partisan educational association. Our meetings and membership are open and all are welcome (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

MEMBERSHIP

Each month, every NYC Atheist member should try to bring at least one potential membership candidate to one of our events.

Remember — our membership is open to both non-believers and believers.

Ken Bronstein

religious groups.

Describe that our activism includes letters to the media and contact of elected officials at all levels of government (local, state and national), demonstrations (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) and at the Republican National Convention.

Give them a copy of our newsletter and discuss both our current and future activities and events. Make sure they visit our Website: *NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG*

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.

PAST EVENTS

**Mar. 2, (Wednesday) 9A.M.
U.S. Supreme Court
Demonstration**
(See photo — page 8)

Four NYCA members: Pat Berger, Ken Bronstein, Suzy Lanza and Peter Kramer participated in the U. S. Supreme Court Demonstration in Washington, D.C., joining the group which was supporting the elimination of any and all displays of the Ten Commandments in public spaces. (The U.S. Supreme Court was hearing oral arguments on this issue).

After the demonstration, our group had lunch and discussion in an restaurant in the restored Union Station Railroad Station.

We met fellow Atheists from throughout the United States.

**Mar. 3, (Thursday) 8P.M. NYCA
Cable Show #3 (Manhattan
Cable Ch. 67) Guest: Lyle Stuart**

**Mar. 10, (Thursday) 8P.M.
NYCA Cable Show # 3
(Manhattan Cable Ch. 67)
Guest: Lyle Stuart**

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

We had our Sunday Brunch and Book Club at the Palace Restaurant, which is located at 122 East 57th St. We all enjoyed our new brunch location and hope that it will be available to us in the future. Our April Brunch is again scheduled at the Palace Restaurant.

**Mar. 15, (Tuesday) 7P.M.
NYCA Meetup**

We meet at our usual location; the Manhattan Lounge — 1270 Second Avenue — (89/90). Good discussion.

**Mar. 17, (Thursday) 8P.M.
NYCA Cable Show #3
(Manhattan Cable Ch. 67)
Guest: Lyle Stuart**

**Mar. 24, (Thursday) 8P.M. NYCA
Cable Show #3 (Manhattan
Cable Ch. 67) Guest: Lyle Stuart**



LYLE STUART

**Mar. 24, (Thursday) 8P.M.
NYCA Monthly Meeting**

We all enjoyed Lyle Stuart, our monthly guest speaker, describe how authors contacted him when their books were too objectionable or too controversial for most publishers.

Stuart, the 82-year-old president of maverick publisher Barricade Books Inc., is an old hand at testing the limits of free speech and believes people should not be told what they can read. Stuart believes that “The strength of this nation is its First Amendment, its freedom to express all kinds of ideas, and that the public has to make their own determination,”

Barricade’s titles are far from mass-market and bestseller fare. While some have recorded substantial sales from online and mainstream outlets, they remain largely unknown to the general public, and the firm is driven more by principle than profit.

For example, Barricade Books published in 2000, *Who’s Who in Hell* by Warren Allen Smith.

This book is an encyclopedic A to Z listing of several thousand individuals who have been agnostics, atheists, deists, humanists, non-theists, rationalists, secularists, or unbelievers. The 2-volume set is the first such of its kind since Pierre Sylvain Maréchal’s *Dictionnaire des athées* (1798).

March 25-27 (Friday–Sunday) American Atheists Convention Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Will discuss in our May Newsletter

**THEOCRACY GETS ITS AUTHORITY FROM GOD
DEMOCRACY GETS ITS AUTHORITY FROM THE PEOPLE.**

**DEMOCRACY NOT
THEOCRACY**

UPCOMING EVENTS

NYCA Social Night-Out

Date: Friday, April 1, 7:45P.M.

Where: Alegrias Flamenco Theater
239 W. 14th Street, 2nd Floor
(Between 7th & 8th Avenue)
Cost: \$10.00 for the Flamenco Performance.

Food/Drinks: Individual Checks

RSVP: 212-535-7425

NYC Atheist’s Madalyn O’Hair Birthday Event

Date: Wed., April 13, 7P.M.

Where: 101 West 85th Street
(NE corner: W 85th and Columbus)
Ring buzzer 119 (Apt 4-3)
We plan to have a presentation about Madalyn O’Hair and show some videos of her TV appearances.

April Monthly Meeting

Date: Sunday, April 24, 1P.M.

Where: 352 Seventh Ave.
(16th floor)

Speaker: Dennis Paul Himes
Connecticut State Director,
American Atheists, Inc.

NYC Atheist’s Movie Nite

Date: Thursday, May 5, 8 P.M.

Where: Southbridge Towers Complex—66 Frankfort Building.
The complex is located between Water/Pearl and Fulton Street near the South Street Seaport.

Beginning in May, NYC Atheists will have on the first Thursday of each month — NYC Atheist’s Movie Nite.

Movie: TBA

ATHEISM IS A CONCLUSION

May Monthly Meeting

Date: Sunday, May 24, 1P.M.

Where: 352 Seventh Ave.
(16th floor)

Speaker: Janice Rael President of the Delaware Valley Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

THE UNITED STATES LEGAL FOUNDATION

America’s laws are based not on religious laws but on John Locke’s notion of a “social contract.” Governments and the governed have a reciprocal relationship and when the government violates its role, the governed can overthrow and restructure the government according to the State of Nature, a secular principle. This basis is obvious in the borrowing and changing of “life, liberty and property” by Thomas Jefferson from Locke and that the Declaration of Independence is a fancy list of grievances and breaching of the said social contract. Our laws also have a basis in British Common Law, which is derived from religion but Pre-Christian Pagan beliefs as Jefferson himself noted in a letter to Major John Cartwright and noted in Works, Vol. iv., pp. 397, 398.

A founding father once said that all humans are born “natural atheists.” However, the father was John Wesley, and what he was founding was Methodism. He went on to say that, while atheism is the “natural” state of humans, it is like a “birth defect” that must be corrected by breaking the will of the child and replacing it with obedience and dogma.

**MAKE THEM PROVE
THE THEORY OF GOD**



Ellen Birch (atheist) at U.S. Supreme Court, Mar. 2, 2005 Demonstration

Hi, my name is Ellen Birch. I am descended from many generations of Virginians. I am DAR, and I am related to Thomas Jefferson. To be exact, I am his 3rd cousin 7 times removed. So I guess I share about 2 genes with him. Since today is about the First Amendment, I thought it was important to remember what my cousin thought and wrote about religion and government.

First of all, he wanted to be remembered for three achievements in his life. He was governor of Virginia, minister to France, secretary of state, vice-president, and president of the United States. However, the inscription on his tombstone, which he wrote, reads that he was “author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia.”

My cousin said that religious institutions or individuals using government power to force their views on those with other faiths, or no faith, undermine all our civil rights. He strongly felt that state

support of a religion leads to corruption within both government and religion. He stated that the “wall of separation between church and state” was absolutely essential in a free society.

In the Virginia Statute for religious freedom (predating the Bill of Rights), he said “our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry” and that “the constitutional freedom of religion is the most inalienable of all human rights.”

A favorite claim of fundamentalists is that we are indebted to the Bible and Christianity for our laws (even though this would obviously be state support of an established religion). Mr. Jefferson exposed this claim as a sham, saying “the proof of the contrary is incontrovertible; that the common law existed while the Anglo-Saxons were yet Pagans, at a time when they had never yet heard the name of Christ pronounced, or knew that such a character had ever existed.” Mr. Jefferson was most definitely not a Christian.

Quick quiz – how many of these founding fathers – Jefferson, Madison, Adams, Franklin, Washington - were Christian? Answer: none. How many of our first seven presidents were Christian? Answer: none. So much for the Christian foundation of our country!

In responding to those who say “what’s the harm in having the Ten Commandments on display?” I point to my cousin’s grave concerns about the tyranny of the religious majority. He said, “I

doubt whether the people of this country would suffer an execution for heresy. But is the spirit of the people infallible? Besides, the spirit of the times may alter

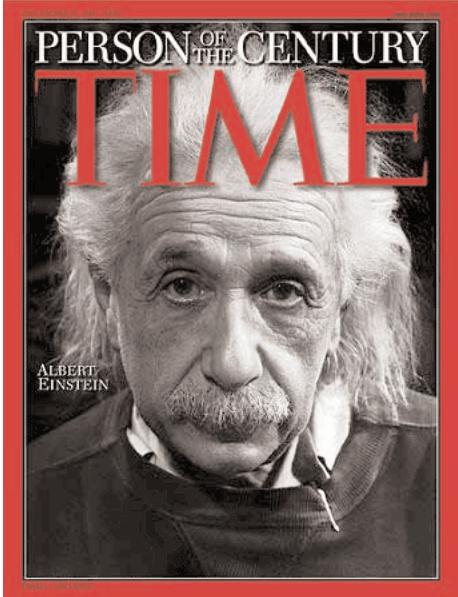
will alter. Our rulers will become corrupt, our people careless. A single zealot may become persecutor, and better men become his victims.” Sound like anyone you know?

Mr. Jefferson wanted absolutely no religion in government, saying “if government were a subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical power, I would consider it as desperate for long years to come. Their steady habits will exclude the advances of information. And there the clergy will always keep them if they can. They will follow the bark of liberty only by the help of a tow-rope.”

Without Thomas Jefferson, there would have been no Virginia Statute for religious freedom, no Bill of Rights, and, most importantly, no First Amendment. Don’t forget, in his time, people were arrested, lost jobs, had their children taken from them, and much worse, for their religious opinions. Yes, some of this still happens, but without Thomas Jefferson, we wouldn’t even be allowed to be here today.

I may have a few genes in common with Thomas Jefferson, but we all, in a way, share his blood. It is our obligation to continue his legacy and the noble cause he began at the dawn of our country. Thank you.

JOIN NYC ATHEISTS



Time magazine's Person of the century — Albert Einstein

FROM AMERICAN UNITED'S RATIONAL ALTERNATIVE

Einstein's Views on Religion

by Al Seckel and John Edwards

Einstein was one of the greatest scientists to probe the universe; naturally, his thoughts regarding god and religion are often sought out. There is, unfortunately, much confusion about his views. This stems from the unorthodox way he used the words "Religion" and "god," and also from a systematic campaign by the religious community to claim him as a believer.

Einstein was quite clearly an unbeliever. His unbelief is substantiated in the quotations and references which follow the Historical Notes.

Historical Notes

Einstein's family was of Jewish descent, but his father regarded the customs of the Jewish faith as "an ancient superstition." At an early age, after reading some science books, Einstein

abandoned revealed religion and turned to the laws of nature.

In 1911 Einstein was offered a professorship in Prague, but was denied the post because he put "unaffiliated" for his religion. To get the job he asked the officials to change the entry.

At a prayer breakfast in 1929, Cardinal O'Connell charged that behind Relativity stood the "ghastly apparition of Atheism." A Rabbi immediately sent a letter to Einstein asking him if he believed in god. Einstein replied that he believed in the god of Spinoza. His definition of god was just another word for Nature and its laws. Einstein did not believe in a superintelligence, the existence of the Trinity, the miracles of Jesus, the immortality of the soul, astrology, or the existence of the supernatural.

When Einstein made the often quoted (and misused) remark "god does not play dice with the Universe" he meant that there are no random motions in the Universe; all Nature conforms to mathematical laws.

Einstein also used the word "Religion" in a different sense. For him it meant the human wish to understand and to be moral, whether associated with a god or not. In that sense only he regarded religion as necessary. This is why he remarked, "In this materialistic age of ours the serious scientific workers are the only profoundly religious people." [3, p. 40]

Einstein remained an unbeliever. After his death in 1955 he was cremated without a religious ceremony.

His Thoughts About god

"It was, of course, a lie which you read about my religious convictions, a lie which is being systematically repeated. I do not believe in a personal god and I have never denied this but have expressed it clearly. If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as science can reveal it." [2, p. 38]

"I cannot imagine a god who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own a god, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty." [4, p.6]

"I have never imputed to Nature a purpose or a goal, or anything that could be understood as anthropomorphic." [2, p. 43]

"It seems to me that the idea of a personal god is an anthropological concept which I cannot take seriously. I also cannot imagine some will or goal outside the human sphere. My views are near those of Spinoza: admiration for the beauty of and belief in the logical simplicity of the order and harmony of the universe which we can grasp humbly and only imperfectly. I believe that we have to content ourselves with our imperfect knowledge and understanding and treat values and moral obligations as a purely human problem the most important of all human problems." [7, p. 95]

"The main source of the present-day conflicts between the spheres of religion and science lies in the concept of a personal god." [5, p.27]

"I cannot accept any concept of a god based on the fear of death or blind faith. I cannot prove to you that there is no personal god, but if I were to speak of him I would be a liar." [1, p. 622]

"In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have stature to give up the doctrine of a personal god, that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests." [5, p. 28]

"The man who is thoroughly convinced of the universal operation of the law of causation cannot for a moment entertain the idea of a being who interferes in the course of events...He has no use for the religion of fear and equally little of social or moral religion." [6]

The Soul and Immortality

"I do not believe in the immortality of the individual, and I consider ethics to be an exclusively human concern with no superhuman authority behind it." [2, p. 34]

"Since our inner experiences consist of reproductions and combinations of sensory impressions, the concept of a soul without a body seems to me to be empty and devoid of meaning." [2, p. 35]

"Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotism." [4, p. 6]

Prayer

A child in the sixth grade in a Sunday school in New York City, with the encouragement of her

teacher, wrote to Einstein asking him whether scientists pray, and if so what they pray for. His reply:

"Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by the laws of nature...For this reason, a research scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by prayer, i.e. by a wish addressed to a supernatural being." [2, p. 27] The Bible "Through the reading of popular scientific books I soon reached the conviction that much of the stories in the Bible could not be true." [1, p. 17] Mysticism "The mystical trend of our time, which shows itself particularly in the rampant growth of the so-called Theosophy and Spiritualism, is for me no more than a symptom of weakness and confusion." [2, p. 35]

"What I see in nature is a magnificent structure that we can comprehend only very imperfectly, and that must fill a thinking person with a feeling of humility. This is a genuinely religious feeling that has nothing to do with mysticism." [2, p. 34]

Morality

"Science has therefore been charged with undermining morality, but the charge is unjust. A man's ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties and needs; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death." [3, p. 39]

References

1. Clark, Ronald, *The Life and Times of Einstein*, New York,

- World Publishing Co., 1971.
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4. Einstein, Albert, *Living Philosophies*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1931.
5. Einstein, Albert, *Out of My Later Years*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1950.
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7. Hoffmann, Banesh, *Albert Einstein: Creator and Rebel*, New York, Viking Press, 1972.

I AM CONFUSED

If Adam and Eve had children and then their children had children why wasn't it considered incest since Adam and Eve's children would have had to marry each other?

How did Cain have descendants?

What was Cain's choice?

Atheists Are Beyond Belief

LIFE: THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

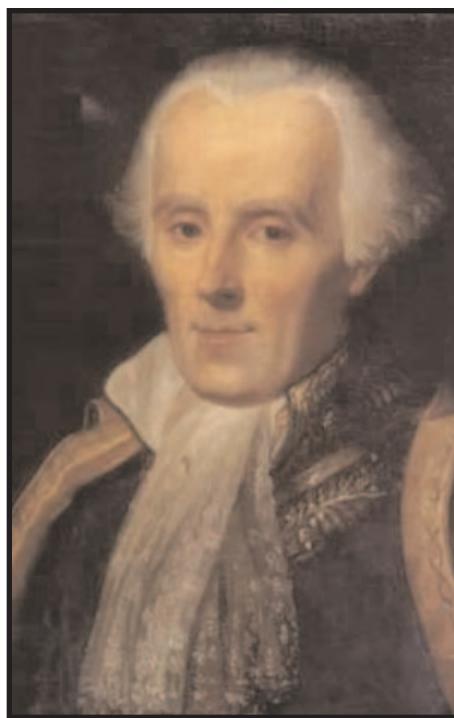
By Ron Widelec

A fifteen year battle over the circumstances surrounding Terri Schiavo may finally be at an end. Terri Schiavo has been in what doctors describe as a "persistent vegetative state", more commonly referred to as brain dead. Fifteen years ago Terri Schiavo's heart stopped causing her brain to go without air for about five minutes. Since then she has remained in a hospital with her body being kept

'alive' through feeding tubes. In 1998 her husband, Michael, petitioned the court to remove the tubes.

Since then there has been an ongoing battle between the parents of Terri Schiavo, who refuse to accept the 'brain death' of their daughter, and her husband. It has erupted into a huge battle between interest groups, state legislatures, governors, courts, and even the U.S Congress. In the most recent actions the U.S. House of Representatives issued a subpoena with a purpose of forcing the doctors to leave the feeding tubes in place. The courts later refused to recognize this blatant misuse of congressional power to issue subpoenas.

The questions revolved more around biology and beliefs than it does the law. The main supporters of the parents of Terri Schiavo are the religious right wing and the Republican Party they control. As much as these right-wingers would like us to believe that they are here purely for the 'life' of Terri Schiavo, their motives are on a much larger scale. The religious right wing fights not for Terri Schiavo, but instead for the larger questions it brings up; is our consciousness made up of the mere firing of synapses or is there some 'other' essence or soul? Is there a divine essence? This is about the fight over soul. If a person is brain dead, but her heart and lungs still function, is she alive? The Religious Right will not (and can not) give up this battle because in doing so they forfeit another key battle between the explanations of science and of religion; in this case, the battle over whether we are more than the sum of our parts.



Pierre-Simon Laplace

FREE WILL

Free will is the philosophical doctrine that our choices are, ultimately, "up to us." Consequently, an unfree action must be somehow "up to" something else. The phrase "up to us" is vague and, just like free will itself, admits of a variety of interpretations. Determinism holds that each state of affairs is necessitated (determined) by the states of affairs that preceded it. Indeterminism holds that determinism is false, and that there are events which are not entirely determined by previous states of affairs. The idea of determinism is sometimes illustrated by the story of Laplace's demon, who knows all the facts about the past and present and all the natural laws that govern our world, and uses this knowledge to foresee the future, down to every detail. Some philosophers hold that determinism is at odds with free will, a doctrine known as incompatibilism.



Napoleon Bonaparte, French emperor

"Religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet."

"Religion is what keeps the poor from murdering the rich."

"All religions have been made by men."

A few Genesis questions

1. Vs3. god made night and day on the first day.
2. Vs. 11. god made all plant life (herbs, trees, fruit) on the third day.
3. Vs. 16 (14-19) made sun and moon and all lights in the on the fourth day.

Question? Why did god make the plants before the sun?

NYC Atheists High School And College Essay Contests

NYC Atheists announces a high school and a college essay contest.

The essay subject is separation of church and state.

Students do not have to be Atheists (both non-believers and believers are eligible)

See our website: www.nycatheists.org for details or call 212-330-6794 and request essay groundrules.

NYC-ATHEIST ACTIVITIES



February 3 — U.S. Supreme Court Demonstration

L to R: NYCA Members – Ken Bronstein, Suzy Lanza, Peter Kramer, Pat Berger.



February 27 – NYCA Monthly Meeting

L to R: Dennis Horvitz (NYCA Host) and Massimo Pigliucci (guest speaker).



February 12 — Cable Show Guest

Janice Rael, President of the Delaware Valley Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.



March 15 – NYCA Meetup

NYCA members and Meetup guests enjoying good conversation.

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**
