

New York City Atheists Inc.

DECEMBER 2006

Serving the Tri-State area • An affiliate of American Atheists & Center For Atheism Vol. III Issue No. 12

WEB: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG COOPER STATION - Box 93, NY, NY 10276-0093 212-330-6794

ATHEISM IS A CONCLUSION NOT A BELIEF

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

DECEMBER

Dec. 7 ****	Thursday	6:30 / 8:20 P.M.	NYCA Movie Nite - First Thursday of Month
Dec. 10*	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Dec. 19**	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Dec. 23*****	Saturday	12:30 P.M.	NYCA Solstice Party

JANUARY

Jan. 4	Thursday	TBA	NYCA Movie Nite - First Thursday of Month
Jan. 14*	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Jan. 16**	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Jan. 25***	Thursday	6:30 P.M.	NYCA Annual Meeting

- =====
- * Garden Restaurant – 145 East 60th St. (Lexington / Third)
Cost: Individual checks plus \$5 suggested donation — Reservations not required
 - ** Stone Creek Lounge – 140 East 27th St. (3rd / Lexington) – Cash bar and food
 - *** Editorial Freelancers Association – Room 1910 - 71 West 23rd Street - (6th Ave.)
 - **** Location: Cinema Village (22 E12th St. (2 Ave.)
 - ***** Les Sans Culottes – 1085 Second Ave. (57th Street)

WEDNESDAYS

CENTER FOR ATHEISM CABLE SHOW
6:30 PM-CH 57 (MANHATTAN CABLE)
LIVE STREAMING: WWW.MNN.ORG

THURSDAYS

NYC ATHEISTS CABLE SHOW
8:00 PM-CH 67 (MANHATTAN CABLE)
STARTING DEC. 21, 2006
NEW TIME: 7:PM
LIVE STREAMING: WWW.MNN.ORG

2007

**NYC ATHEISTS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
SEE PAGE 8**

NYC Atheists Inc. is a 501-C3, non-profit, non-partisan educational association.

Our meetings and membership are open and all are welcome (both non-believers and believers) atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers, skeptics, secularists, separation-of-church/state advocates and individuals who are questioning and searching beliefs.



KENNETH BRONSTEIN

When I became an atheist on my 13th birthday, I chose a life of rationality, reality, reason, science and skepticism. While other kids were renouncing junk food, I disavowed "junk beliefs." I thought of religious myths and legends as the junk food of philosophical thought. As an atheist, I could begin to live the GOOD life, unencumbered by having to make irrational decisions such as who or what is the real god (Christian, Jewish or Muslim?), what are the criteria to get into heaven and did god put you here for a purpose—which, if he did, meant that your life had been predetermined. But what is a good atheist life?

A good life is a life without fear. No fear of Judgment Day for me. No fear of some heavenly spirit who could throw me into everlasting fire and brimstone at his whim. I see no need to supplicate this guy in the sky by falling to my knees as my Catholic friends do or reciting prayers while bobbing as to some of my Jewish friends do. I am not in fear that this omniscient Eye in the Sky is following me around everyday and tallying up my good deeds and bad deeds, and some day, after I'm dead, would confront me with all my mistakes. Knowing my mistakes is useful to me here on earth; I learn from my mistakes.

A good life is a long life. As an atheist, I have the advantage of living life without the fear that some mystical source has decided how and when I will live or die. I will take advantage of medical science and not be restricted by irrational and delusionary dogma. My doctor and I have a contract (my retainer stops upon my death): I keep my lifestyle; Doc uses medical technology to keep me alive. So far, it's worked, as you can see. Is my doctor violating what that Guy in the Sky had pre-planned for me? We'll let the religious gurus fight that one out.

A good life is an innovative, productive and useful life. As an atheist, I call on rationality, reality, reason, science and skepticism to help me live a life full of continuous learning, adventure, discovery and new ideas—and applying what I've learned to benefit myself and others. The believer, encumbered by delusionary and irrational dogma, can't meet this objective.

A good life is an ethical life. My ethical principles are based on civilized contemporary universal morality and rights, not the 2,000-year-old Bronze age concepts of the Bible. I do not need the fear of some imaginary force in order to be a moral person. My sources for my moral philosophy are the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions and Nuremberg Principles, as well as the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

In contrast, the U.S., despite being the most religious country in the industrial world, has the highest prison incarceration rate (in number and per capita rate). Interestingly, the highest concentration of crime in the U.S. is in the "red states"—those that also have the highest rate of religiosity and church attendance.

So join me, folks, in living the good life. Religious people don't have a monopoly on it. Quite the contrary: Travelers note that, today, Europe, which has experienced a profound increase in secularism, has surpassed the U.S. in quality of life and an ethical lifestyle. Maybe they have found the better way.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

WE CAN ONLY DO IT WITH YOUR PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL INVOLVEMENT

I would appreciate your comments. Ken Bronstein at NYCATHEISTS@AOL.COM or 212-535-7425

Dec. 7 Thursday
 NYCA First Thursday of Month Movie Nite

Movie: *Shut Up And Sing*
 Location: Cinema Village (22 E12th St. (2nd)
 Time: 6:30PM (meet in front of theatre
 for pre-movie dinner at local restaurant)
 Time: 8:20PM (meet in front of theatre
 for movie)

Freedom of speech is guaranteed to us in our Constitution, but do we really have it in the U.S. if there are economic reprisals for speaking out? This film travels with the Dixie Chicks, from the peak of their popularity as the national-anthem-singing darlings and top-selling female recording artists of all time, through the now infamous anti-Bush comment made by the group's lead singer in 2003. The film follows the lives and careers of the Dixie Chicks over three years when they were under political attack and received death threats. This film is relevant to atheists because we depend on freedom of speech to state our views, which some would like to silence.

Dec. 10 Sunday 12:00 P.M.
 NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
 Location: Garden Restaurant
 145 East 60th St. (Lexington and Third)
 Reservations: Not required
 Cost: Individual checks plus \$5 donation

After brunch, we go to the NYC Atheists Library on West 48th Street for our book club meeting.

The NYCA library includes approximately 500 books as well as numerous CDs, DVDs, cassettes, videotapes, newsletters and magazines.

Dec. 19 Tuesday 7:00 P.M.
 NYCA Meet-Up

Location: Stone Creek Lounge
 140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lexington)
 Casual conversation and drinks with your fellow freethinkers.
 Cost: Free (cash food and bar)
 Register at <http://atheists.meetup.com>

Dec. 23 Saturday 12:30 P.M.
 NYCA Solstice Party

Location: Les Sans Culottes
 1085 Second Ave. (57th Street)
 Price: \$35 Tax, Tip, Soda and Table Wine
 Reservations: Not required
 Menu
 Appetizer: Sausages, basket of fresh vegetables, chef's pate and house dressing.
 Entrée: Choose one of five dishes
 Le Boeuf Bourguignon (Beef stew),
 Le Poulet l'Estragon (Roast chicken),
 Le Poulet Cordon Bleu (Stuffed chicken breast)
 Le Saumon a' L'aneth (Grilled Salmon with a Dill Sauce),
 Le Canard Montmorency (Duck)
 Dessert: Crème Caramel or Mousse au Chocolat
 Beverage: Soda, wine, coffee, tea

Interview With an Atheist: Part I
 Americanchronicle.com by David Gleeson

Billions believe in god. Only a few don't. So everyone else is wrong and you're right?

In philosophical circles this is called an Argumentum Ad Populum. It's a common logical fallacy and an extremely poor argument. "Many people believe X to be true; therefore, X is true." The shortcomings of this "argument" should be readily apparent. Obviously, the number of people holding to a particular belief is in no way indicative of that belief's validity. The Catholic Church used this argument against Galileo 400 years ago: "The Bible tells us that the earth is the center of the universe. Millions believe this to be true. And yet you say the earth revolves around the sun. So everyone else is wrong and you're right?" Not much of an argument, is it? Still, it didn't stop the Church from forcing Galileo to repent and putting him under house arrest for the rest of his life. (Pope John Paul was nice enough to pardon Galileo in 1992, only four centuries after his death.) Even if only 5% of Earth's inhabitants are atheists, that would equate to roughly 300 million people, or about the present population of the United States. So there are quite a few of us out there. And the true number of atheists is

almost certainly much higher. One recent study in Finland supports this. Young Finns were asked if they believed in god. About two-thirds said “yes,” which might lead you to believe that the other one-third would identify themselves as atheists. Not quite. Only 10% actually did so. In other words, almost one-quarter of the young Finnish population doesn’t believe in god and yet will not admit to being atheist. It’s not much of a leap to think the same thing occurs here in the U.S. and elsewhere around the world.

Popular beliefs are often deserving of increased skepticism. A significant portion of Americans believes in astrology, haunted houses, UFOs, and the literal truth of the Book of Revelation. Clearly, popular beliefs should not be accorded automatic respect just because many gullible people believe in them.

**But how can you seriously claim god doesn’t exist?
How was the universe created if not by god? How were we created?**

This is just an argument from ignorance, a “god of the gaps” fallacy. “I can’t possibly see how X could have come about naturally; therefore, god exists.” Lazy, lazy, lazy. Also, it’s presumptuous to assume the universe was created or that we were created. It is entirely possible that the universe and everything in it evolved naturally over the course of time. (In fact, the evidence is voluminous in support of this.) It is also entirely possible that the universe has always existed, which would obviate the need for a creator. There are countless options, none of which involved an appeal to the supernatural.

The whole of scientific history points to an increased understanding of the natural world. Nothing discovered in the last 400 years confirms the supernatural in any way. The gaps in our knowledge that “god” has filled have become increasingly narrow, to the point where “god,” today, is virtually unnecessary for the scientifically literate.

And even if the “tough” questions remain forever beyond science’s reach (and there’s no reason to think this will be the case), how does “god did it” explain anything? It just replaces one complex question (how did we get here?)

with an even more complex question (how did god get here?) And if you’re just going to punt on that last question by saying god has always existed, why not just say the universe (or life) has always existed? Why introduce an unnecessary level of complexity, especially when you have no desire to explain it? If you’re just going to allow yourself the luxury of postulating unexplained complexity, just postulate life as we know it and be done with it. “god” explains nothing.

Of course, this is just another reason to think that your reliance on “god” is not due to the fact that He/She/It provides any better explanatory power for life’s tough questions, but because He/She/It carries with Him/Her/It a nice little suitcase filled with a lot of comfort-providing goodies, everlasting life being chief among them. You have a stake in believing in Him/Her/It, and it has nothing to do with explaining the universe. It has everything to do with reassuring you that you will live forever.

So what? Everyone needs something to hope for. What’s the point of life if we’re just an accident?

Are you seriously implying that life is devoid of meaning unless there’s an afterlife? Is this really what you believe? You need the promise of an afterlife to find meaning and purpose in this life? That sounds like your problem, not mine. Give this thought experiment a try: If I could prove to you, this minute, that god and heaven were illusions, that this life is all there is, that once you are gone you are gone forever, how would your life change? Would you love your children any less? Would the things that are meaningful to you today – art, music, love, friends, companionship, knowledge, fairness and decency – suddenly lose their meaning tomorrow? Would sunrises be any less beautiful? Would you start slaughtering people on the street or raping children just for the fun of it because you knew there would be no everlasting consequences? (If the answer to that last question is ‘yes,’ I hope my family never meets you on the street.) Would you just kill yourself out of despair? Come on. The meaning you find in your life today wouldn’t suddenly drain away if the plug was pulled on god and heaven – unless you are so attached to them that they are the only meaningful things in your life. In which

case, you need therapy. So why assume that life would be pointless without an afterlife?

In fact, our existence is more meaningful and more precious and each day is more of a gift when you realize that life is fleeting. Life is only worthless if your fanatical reliance on an imaginary, perfect afterlife has sucked the meaning from your less-than-perfect earthly life. (9/11 hijackers, anyone?)

And ‘an accident’ is a terribly inaccurate – and scientifically ignorant – way of describing how we got here. In fact, it is so inaccurate that it’s the complete opposite of the truth. You’ve been duped, I’m sorry to say, by old-school creationists with a Dark Ages agenda. The scientific answers are so much more fascinating and awe-inspiring than you’ve been led to believe. I urge you to seek them out. You may find that the meaning and purpose and awe that comes to you as a trickle from “god” hits you square in the face like a tidal wave once science is in your back pocket.



Bertrand Russell

“There is something feeble and a little contemptible about a man who cannot face the perils of life without the help of comfortable myths. Almost inevitably some part of him is aware that they are myths and that he believes them only because they are comforting. But he dare not face this thought! Moreover, since he is aware, however dimly, that his opinions are not real, he becomes furious when they are disputed.”

This item appeared in the *Colorado Connection*
A Secular Community Forum

There is an excellent news service from the New York atheists called *The Focus* at the Center For Atheism. The weekly e-mail is made up of links to articles, movies, videos, and other things worldwide that would be of specific interest to atheists and other nonbelievers. To get on the list e-mail Suzy Lanza at: thefocusatcfa@aol.com. Well worth it.



Aristotle (384-322 BC) Greek philosopher
Source: *Politics*, 343 B.C.

"A tyrant must put on the appearance of uncommon devotion to religion. Subjects are less apprehensive of illegal treatment from a ruler whom they consider god-fearing and pious."

NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLERS
NOW AT NYC ATHEISTS LIBRARY

Sam Harris
End of Faith
Letter to a Christian Nation

Richard Dawkins
The god Delusion

Daniel Dennett
Breaking The Spell

Contact: Pat Berger – NYCA Librarian
PGBNYC@AOL.COM

Science, Religion, Reason and Survival
Conference - Salk Institute, La Jolla, California
November 5-7, 2006

Quotes:



Richard Dawkins

Evolutionary Biologist, Author

“Religious education is brainwashing and child abuse.”

“The probability of god is less than zero.”



Carolyn C. Porco - Planetary Scientist

“Let’s teach our children from a very young age about the story of the universe and its incredible richness and beauty. It is already so much more glorious and awesome — and even comforting — than anything offered by any scripture or god concept I know.”



Sam Harris - Author

By shying away from questioning people’s deeply felt beliefs, even the skeptics, Mr. Harris said, are providing safe harbor for ideas that are at best mistaken and at worst dangerous. “I don’t know how many more engineers and architects need to fly planes into our buildings before we realize that this is not merely a matter of lack of education or economic despair,” he said.



Steven Weinberg - Nobel Prize in Physics (1979)

“Anything that we scientists can do to weaken the hold of religion should be done and may in the end be our greatest contribution to civilization.”



Neil deGrasse Tyson - Astrophysicist

“Science is a philosophy of discovery; intelligent design is a philosophy of ignorance,”

**TOTAL
SEPARATION
OF
CHURCH / STATE**

**FACTS
VS.
FAITH**

**STOP
FAITH-BASED SUBSIDIES
THAT WILL BECOME
FAITH-BASED
ENTITLEMENTS!**

**Man invented god;
god did not invent man**

**LOOKING FOR PARTICIPANTS
FOR A NEW CABLE SHOW
ATHEISTS BOOK CLUB**

December 21, 2006 (Thursday), we will begin our third cable show.

- (1) NYC Atheists Live on Tape
Wednesday – 6:30 P.M.
Manhattan Cable #57**
- (2) This Week in Atheism
Thursday - 7:00 P.M.
Manhattan Cable #67**
- (3) The Atheist Book Club
Thursday – 7:30 P.M.
Manhattan Cable #67**

We need individuals who enjoy reading and discussing books.

Contact: Ken Bronstein – 212-535-7425

**ASK FOR A
NO SMOKING / NO BIBLE
ROOM**

**POVERTY,
HEALTH CARE
HOMELESSNESS**

ARE MORAL ISSUES

STEM CELL RESEARCH IS PRO-LIFE

**Harvey Osgood
NYC Atheist Member**

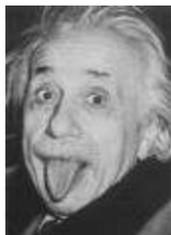
ATHEIST PRAYER

That our reason will rise above our superstition,
that our intelligence will check our illusions, that
we will be able to hold at bay the evil temptation
of faith.



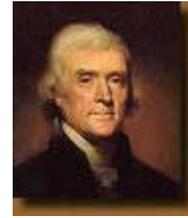
Henny Youngman

**"I once wanted to become an
atheist but I gave up . . . they have
no holidays."**



Albert Einstein - 1921 Nobel Prize for Physics

*"A man's ethical behavior should be based
effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties;
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."*



Thomas Jefferson

*"Question with boldness even the existence of god;
because, if there be one, he must more approve of
the homage of reason than that of blindfolded
fear."*

*"I do not find in orthodox Christianity one
redeeming feature."*

*"Religions are all alike - founded upon fables and
mythologies."*

*"Millions of innocent men, women, and children,
since the introduction of Christianity, have been
burned, tortured, fined, and imprisoned."*

*"The day will come when the mystical generation
of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as His father, in
the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable
of the generation of Minerva in the brain of
Jupiter."*

*"In every country and in every age, the priest has
been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance
with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for
protection to his own."*

*"Christianity is the most perverted system that ever
shone on man."*

*"The authors of the gospels were unlettered and
ignorant men and the teachings of Jesus have
come to us mutilated, misstated and
unintelligible."*

"I am a Materialist."

**CABLE SHOWS
SCHEDULE REVISIONS
BEGINNING WEEK OF DECEMBER 17**

**WEDNESDAY
Center For Atheism – 6:30 PM – Ch. 57**

**THURSDAY
NYC ATHEISTS – 7:00 PM – Ch. 67**

ATHEISTS BOOK CLUB – 7:30 PM – Ch. 67



November 2006 – NYC Halloween Day Parade



NYC Atheists Blood Donation – 11/07/2006
L-R: Judy Sager, Martin Heinsdorf, Jay Gumbiner



NYCA 2006 Halloween Party

L-R: Helen Kusic, Maria Astifidis, Millie Vargas,
Jina Spiraleri.



NYCA Street Tabling

October 28, 2006



NYC ATHEISTS — 2007 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, educational association with these 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 discussion about Atheism
- 4. To develop and engage in educational, cultural, charitable and social activities that are beneficial to the members to the NYC Atheists Inc., the Atheist community and the community at large.

YOUR 2007 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Basic __ \$ 25 Friend __ \$ 100 Sustainer __ \$ 250 Patron __ \$ 500 Benefactor __ \$ 1000

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**