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**10:00 a.m.– Noon
 Saturday
 October 17, 2009**

**Monthly
 Chapter Meeting**

**Nokomis Recreation
 Center
 2401 E. Minnehaha Pkwy.
 Minneapolis**

HUMANISM:

A better life for all through education, democracy, free speech, reason and science, without reliance on arbitrary dogmas, revelations and faith.

Humanists of Minnesota Chapter Meeting

“Maximizing Humanist Efforts and Effects”

***Robert Tapp, Professor Emeritus
 University of Minnesota
 Saturday, October 17***

There are so few of us, and so many things that need doing to humanize our world. How much of our time on necessary ethical pioneering? How much on acceptable alliances? Which causes already have sufficient support? How do we balance depth and breadth? How do we move from yesterday to tomorrow?

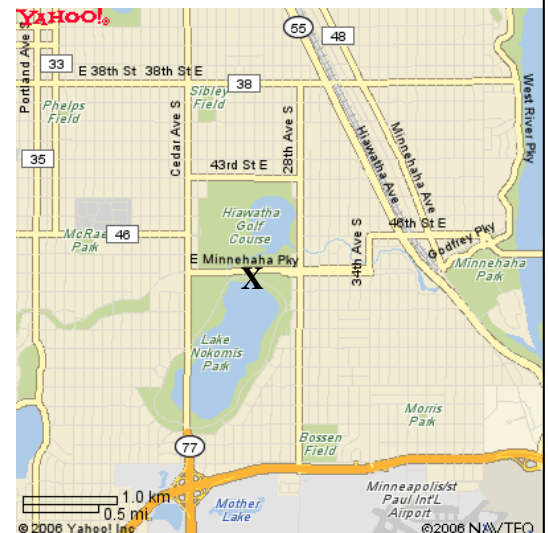
On Saturday, October 17, Professor Robert Tapp will discuss these questions with you. So come prepared!



Robert Tapp is Professor Emeritus of Humanities, Religious Studies, South Asian Studies at the University of Minnesota. He is also Dean Emeritus of The Humanist Institute in New York. Currently he is on the faculty of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Minnesota. He has also taught at the University of Chicago, University of California, Scripps College and St. Lawrence University.

Dr. Tapp is a Distinguished Fellow of the Center For Inquiry. In 2005 he received the Horace Mann Humanist Education Award from the American Humanist Association.

Chapter meeting location: Here is a map to the Nokomis Recreation Center. Easiest access is north on 77 (Cedar Ave.) from Hwy. 62.





From the Editor:

On My Mind

In the August/September issue of Free Inquiry, Lawrence Rifkin wrote a wonderful little essay that really struck a chord with me. He was discussing the awe that many humanists feel when we experience the many wonders and joys of the natural world and the difficulty many of us have in assigning a name to that feeling.

One of the issues, of course, is that like many feelings that humans have, the wonder and joy we feel when we see a glorious sunset or landscape or Huble picture etc. have been co-opted by the religious. Rifkin recalls being approached by a bible-carrying gentleman while on vacation who used that ploy to “prove” that God must exist. This he called the “argument from profound beauty,” noting that was as fallacious as the well-known “argument from design.” He argued that this perceived link between awe and religious sentiment can and should be broken.

To capture the emotional response that many humanists feel to naturalism, he proposes the term Sublime Naturalism. This is defined as “the experience or expression of a profound emotional response toward naturalism and its manifestations.” He favors the term “sublime” because it does not carry the strong connotations to the supernatural or transcendent (as something like “religious humanism” might). He pointed out that a problem with using religious words to describe awesome experiences is that instead of being taken as the metaphor that they are intended to be, they may be taken as the religious meaning more commonly assigned to them.

This got me to thinking about how words have over time had their meanings turned against what was originally intended. “Spiritual” did not always have a religious connotation, but it would be difficult to argue that today. Secularists are perfectly familiar with the difficulty of semantics being turned against them. Why have the terms “secular humanist” or “atheist” become derogatory? Why have terms like Rationalism or Naturalism fallen into disrepute? So if Sublime catches it on, will be co-opted by the religious?

Only time will tell. But, in the interim embrace the term: Sublime Naturalists of the World, Unite! ■

Nathan Curland

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E-mail us at president@humanistsofmn.org or visit our web site: www.humanistsofmn.org

Announcements

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Richard Dick Memorial Happy Hours, Ol' Mexico Restaurant, 1754 Lexington Ave., Roseville (just north of Larpenteur). Tables on terrace level. Call Paul Craven, (763) 788-8918.

1st and 3rd Mondays, 6:00 p.m., Freethought Toastmasters Club, Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave. W., St. Paul. Call George Kane, (651) 488-8225.

1st Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-noon, Lake Superior Freethinkers monthly meeting. Radisson Hotel Duluth, Viking Room. For information contact Bill van Druten, (218) 724-4176).

2nd Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-noon, Critical Thinking Club St. Paul, Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94. Contact George Kane, lhutt@comcast.net. (\$10 brunch, \$3 coffee/speaker only)

2nd & 4th Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Happy Hour South, Davanni's, 66th St. & Penn Ave. S., Richfield. Call Bob/Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

2nd Thursday, evening, Rochester Area Freethinkers. Downtown Rochester Public Library, Meeting Room A. Contact Bill Kass, wjkhahk@charter.net or (507) 259-4237.

3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., Freethought Lunch, Dragon House, 3950 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights. Call Bill Volna, (612) 781-4273.

4th Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-noon, West Metro Critical Thinking Club, Ridge Point Apts. Bldg. meeting room, Minnetonka. Contact Mark Paquette at think-rsvp@markpaquette.com. (contributions accepted)

Sundays, Freethought Brunch, 10:30 a.m.-noon, Q Cumbers Restaurant, 7465 France Ave S., Edina.

OTHER EVENTS

2nd Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Board of Directors meeting. Open to all members. Contact Scott Lohman.

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., Campus Atheists, Skeptics and Humanists (CASH) general meeting. 3rd floor Coffman Memorial Union, 300 Washington Ave. SE, Minneapolis. Contact cash@cashumn.org.

"Humanist Perspectives," a weekly program produced by the Council for Secular Humanism, airs at **8:30 p.m. Wednesdays** on MTN Channel 16.



Fall Highway Cleanup!

October 10

The fall highway cleanup will begin at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 10. We meet at the gas station located in the southeast corner at the intersection of Interstate 35W and Highway 23 (right turn from 35W northbound). This is the last exit on 35W going north before it joins 35E, and is about nine miles north of 35W and I-694. I will bring the trash bags and orange vests, so all you need is appropriate clothing and shoes and possibly sunscreen and insect repellent. We are usually finished by noon and most of us get together for lunch and good conversation at a nearby restaurant.

A big turnout means we finish sooner and have more chance to socialize, so I hope many of you will be able to join us. This is a great opportunity to show Humanists at work on behalf of the community. If you have questions, call me at (952) 927-4193 or email me at dbeardsley@belleplaine.k12.mn.us.

David Beardsley

'Humanist Views' Goes on the Net!

"Humanist Views," the TV interview program produced by Humanists of Minnesota, is converting to podcasts and videos available on our website: humanistsofmn.org. However, to maintain our production capability at MSN studios, it is still broadcast in Minneapolis on Channel 17 at 9:30 p.m. Fridays.

Is Your Membership Up to Date?

If you are receiving a paper copy of this newsletter, check your address label for the expiration date on your subscription.

Please renew when due, using the form on the back.

Or, if you prefer, go on-line at humanistsofmn.org and renew via Paypal.



The Freethought Follies Are Coming - We Are Looking for Singers and Actors!

by Jerry Rauser

The Freethought Winter Solstice Celebration is on December 20 this year (hosted by Humanists of Minnesota) and planning is underway for the highlight of the evening, the Freethought Follies!



Actors and Singers Wanted!

We have some great wacky comedy skits and opportunities to sing with a vocal ensemble and professional backup band. We are looking for actors and singers of any skill level who are members of the Freethought Community and would like to participate. Please contact Jerry Rauser at jrauser@comcast.net or (763) 535-7637.





Humanists of MN Website Relunched with Major Facelift!

By Ryan Sutter, Webmaster

Our website at humanistsofmn.org has been re-launched! After a long and occasionally tedious road, Humanists of Minnesota is ready to put the Internet to effective use.

I took over the webmaster duties for the organization several months ago and for a while there was no clear difference on the website. This, however, was a bit of an illusion. Quite a bit of work was taking place behind the scenes to allow Humanists of MN to make better use of the Internet as a tool not just to organize our activities, but to promote humanism, grow the organization and engage people in the community who may not even know we exist. The wraps came off the new site on September 1, and here's a little report on what we've done and what you'll find at the brand new humanistsofmn.org.

My first recommendation as webmaster was that we move our site from the server it was running on to a professional dedicated host. The expense was negligible and the benefits really large so the Board agreed and an account was set up with a commercial hosting provider to provide us with the bandwidth, disk space, reliability and backups we needed to grow into the web presence we envisioned. Once the new server space was acquired, there was the task of transferring all the existing data, images, text, etc., over to it. Think of renting a new apartment and having to move all your stuff over.

The transfer to the new host accomplished, the next step was to see what could be done with the existing site, to figure out exactly what we wanted to do, and to figure out a plan to make that happen. Podcasting, PayPal, streaming video episodes of "Humanist Views," PDF newsletters, and integration with our Facebook and Meetup Groups were all on the agenda, as well as a refresh of the look and feel. The existing software presented a few obstacles to accomplishing these goals and so a fresh start seemed a good idea.

A completely new site was developed based on a different software platform (Wordpress instead of Drupal, for you geeks in the audience), and Scott Lohman and I spent some quality time hanging out and encoding episodes of "Humanist Views" television programs into podcastable and uploadable for-

mat. A new Humanists of MN Twitter account was established, as well as a Veoh video account; feeds and podcasts and the like were created and configured, and there was much rejoicing. On September 1, it went live, a brand new site with a brand new mission. If you've never spent much time at our website before, I sincerely hope you'll find more to engage you there from here on out as new episodes of "Humanist Views" appear, new editorials get posted, comments and discussions take place, interesting links to humanism-related articles and events appear in the Twitter feed, and the site starts taking on a life of its own.

If you have suggestions, comments, problems, anything at all that you want to say about the new website, you can email me at webmaster@humanistsofmn.org. I'd love to hear from you. The new site is going to grow and may experience some growing pains and I'll be doing my best to make it work for us, so I hope to hear your comments and suggestions. Enjoy the new humanistsofmn.org; it's your site! ■



Letter to the Editor

(The following was published in the Brainerd Dispatch on 9-16-09)

Liberals & Conservatives in History

The most difficult thing, indeed the nearly impossible thing, most people have to do in their entire life is to acknowledge and adopt new knowledge that absolutely refutes their pet ideas that they were taught were absolutely true. This has been the history of humankind.

Liberal, open minded people who live comfortably with contradiction, ambiguity, inconsistency, and paradox find it relatively easy to accommodate new knowledge and change. Liberals revel in experimentation, exploration and innovation which they find exciting.

Conservatives are terrified of impending change suggested by experimentation, exploration and innovation. Conservatives regard contradiction, ambiguity, inconsistency and paradox as anathema.

Liberals thrive on thinking that is "outside the box." All conservative thought is prescribed and thus "inside the box."

Conservatives love the status quo, but Liberals recognize the status quo as a cultural cancer that strangles cultural evolution. Conservatives kept us in caves, chipping stone tools, and trembling in fear for over 100,000 years.

(Continued on page 7)



Camp Quest Gets Noticed!

(Camp Quest is starting to get a lot attention around the world ... some not necessarily positive. Here are some examples—Ed.)

The following is in response to an opinion piece in the St Paul Pioneer Press. Here is a quote from the piece: "It's hard to see the pleasure of sitting around the campfire, learning from grown-ups that the world is disenchanted after all. (No ghost stories for you, lad!)"

What fundamentalism?

As a co-founder and member of the board of directors of Camp Quest of Minnesota, I would like to make Rod Dreher ("It doesn't take religion to make a fundamentalist," Aug. 23) aware of the following:

Our stated purpose is to: (1) Promote a sense of belonging to a large free-thought community among the youth participants; (2) Encourage critical thinking in young people to enable them to draw their own conclusions; (3) Promote respect for others with different viewpoints, values and beliefs; (4) Provide a safe and fun environment for personal and social development.

Does this sound like "fundamentalism" of any sort? We don't spend much time talking about gods – an increasing number of young people disbelieve in them anyway. Instead, we teach critical thinking, ethics, cooperation, tolerance and how to learn, grow, take responsibility and have fun in the real world.

Speaking of having fun, we invite Dreher to join the campers in trying to prove that the invisible dragon that we claim exists at Camp Quest of Minnesota doesn't exist.

August Berkshire,
Minneapolis

The Economist and Camp Quest

The July 18 issue of The Economist has a very positive article (p. 32) about Camp Quest. It describes the activities of the campers and offers some commentary on the status of atheists in America. Despite the fact that atheists are broadly disliked, there has been some improvement, according to the writer, who reports that "the proportion who say they might vote for

an atheist has doubled in the past half-century." Although five percent admitted they would not vote for a qualified black candidate in a recent poll, 53 percent still say they would "shun" a qualified atheist candidate. The poll source was not cited.

We must express our gratitude to the members of Humanists of Minnesota and Minnesota Atheists who volunteered their time and talent to making Camp Quest a success this past summer. Reading this article in such a prestigious paper does make one proud to be a member of both organizations.

On the another page (p. 31) of this issue of The Economist you will find a scary article on the influence of Latino Charismatics in the United States, particularly on American Catholicism. The article is entitled "Separated Brothers" with the subtitle, "Latinos are changing the nature of American religion." It concludes that they are becoming a "powerful force as demographic changes turn America ever more Hispanic, and increasingly different from secular Europe."

To read these articles go to Economist.com/blogs/lexington, and access the July 18 issue.

Bob Schmitz
Board Member
Humanists of Minnesota

Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

West Metro Chapter. Saturday, October 24, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Non-Violence: A Force More Powerful," by Tamra Falk of the Belgium-based International Non-Violent Peaceforce. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Ln. W., Minnetonka. Contributions appreciated. RSVP think-rsvp@mark-paquete.com.

St. Paul Chapter. Sunday, October 10, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "The Problem of Evil," by August Berkshire. Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94, St. Paul. Breakfast \$10, lecture only \$3. RSVP criticalthinkingclub@gmail.com

Stillwater Chapter. Monday, October 11, 7:00 p.m. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

For additional information, visit CriticalThinkingClub.org.



September Chapter Meeting

World Population Balance

Summarized by Nathan Curland

The first Humanists of Minnesota chapter meeting for the new “season” featured David Paxson, Director and founder of World Population Balance (formerly Zero Population Growth). Thirty-one members and non-members showed up on September 19 to hear a very passionate and knowledgeable crusader. Paxson started by noting that the mission statement of his organization has been updated. Rather than highlighting the importance of slowing population growth, it now directly confronts the need to *reduce* the world population so that size of the population is balanced by the sustainability of that population and, furthermore, to do so in a humane manner. That means we need to focus on making the world population aware of the issue, since most people ignore it (or don’t want to know about it). This, of course, makes them easy prey to those who want to politicize the issue for their own gain by denying there is a problem.

The clear message I walked away with was, “No matter what your cause, it’s a dead (no-win) issue unless we stop and reverse population growth.”

Paxson jammed a plethora of facts into his talk. With the world population approaching 7 billion people, at least 1.4 billion are now classified as being in Absolute Poverty – not having enough resources to sustain themselves. The world, on average, is consuming resources 30 percent faster than what is sustainable. This “overshoot” of consumption started in about 1985 and has increased every year since. What is a sustainable world population? The figures vary from 1-4 billion depending on how much per capita allotment one uses ... but certainly much less than our current level.

Paxson noted that “sustainability” includes a myriad of factors. Every act of extracting resources from the earth involves the use of more resources. Every act of increasing the productivity of the land leads to overuse and the need to use chemical fertilizers and/or pesticides, as the natural balance is disrupted. Wildlife habitats are rapidly decreasing: currently the world has a wildlife bio-capacity of 15 percent. Most experts think it needs to have 30-50 percent capacity. The oceans are being overfished. And

on and on.

Paxson noted that he has been trying to get to talk to a Roman Catholic group for a decade and hasn’t been able to get in the door ... until now! He will be part of a panel in a few weeks. It should be interesting.

Afterwards a group of us, included Paxson, went to Carbone’s for lunch and shared much more information about the politics of trying to control world population growth (guess who are the biggest opponents!). The population issue is certainly sobering and makes us realize that the reason we have all these ethnic conflicts in the world is the battle over resources ... if you have finite resources you want to be part of the “group” that wins them. ■

(Continued from page 5)

The liberals finally succeeded in grabbing the Conservatives by the throat and dragged them kicking and screaming, NO! NO! NO! into a more modern cultural milieu, or Zeitgeist.

Today the Liberal/Progressives call themselves Democrats, and the Conservative/Regressives call themselves Republicans.

Which of these do you want to run our government?

Rodney Sheffer

HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

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Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: editor@humanistsofmin.org with the word “newsletter” in the subject line, or to P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. (E-mail submissions are preferred.) All submissions must include the writer’s full name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. All submissions become the property of this newsletter and cannot be returned. Submission deadline is the 22nd of the prior month.

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October 2009

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