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Contents:

Puppy Mills	2
Café Scientifique	3
New Library Books	3
Pascal's Wager	4
Happy Thanksgiving	5
Humour Corner	6

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Humanist Association of Manitoba

Upcoming events

Humanist Association of Manitoba

Monthly Meeting

Saturday, October 11, 2008

Viscount Gort Hotel, 1670 Portage Ave. at Route 90

Meet and Greet: 5:30 pm

Meeting / Presentation: 6:15 pm

Dinner (may be ordered from the Coffee Shop menu): 7:00 pm

Guest Speaker: Professor Colin Salter

Topic: Faith in Science: examining the 'black box'

Prof. Salter has lectured in engineering and the social sciences at the University of Wollongong in Australia and at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. He will pose reflective questions on the notion of science as objective and value free, citing contemporary examples that illustrate gendered, racial and socially unjust implications, etc.

Everyone is welcome!

Next Monthly Meeting

Saturday, November 8, 2008

Viscount Gort Hotel, 1670 Portage Ave. at Route 90

Guest Speaker: TBA

Reminder: HAM Goes to see "Religulous"

Monday, October 6, 2008

Silver City Polo Park, 7:40 p.m. showing
Meet at 7:10 pm at the Guest Service desk

Pennsylvania Puppy Mills

I'm still stunned.

Only because I was home sick this past week, I caught an episode of Oprah about dogs. On the show, she praised the work of a man called Bill Smith, who started an organization called Main Line Animal Rescue (www.mlar.org), and has now helped save thousands of dogs and puppies from puppy mills in several U.S. states.

By catching Oprah's attention, and receiving the national exposure, his organization's actions led to the shutting down of several of these kennels. On the show they did, however, mention a terrible event – the shooting of 80 dogs by the animals' own owners. The owners destroyed the animals after an animal inspector told them they had 72 hours to either get the dogs treated for flea and fly bites, or face fines of up to \$300 per dog. The bullets were obviously cheaper.

In this week's People magazine were further revelations. Not only were the owners' actions completely legal (in Pennsylvania, where this occurred, kennel owners are allowed to put down animals with firearms), but the kennel owners were, of all things, Amish!

According to the People magazine's article (entitled "The Puppy Saver", 29Sep08), "the Amish see their involvement in puppy mills sanctioned by a higher authority... They interpret the Bible as giving them dominion over animals. "That's in Genesis," says one Amish kennel owner, who asked he not be named. "They are not people;

they're animals. So they can be kept in cages."

These large puppy mills are apparently very lucrative, and the industry in that region is dominated by Amish and Mennonite farmers. So, the money generated by this "cash crop" is their primary motivation.

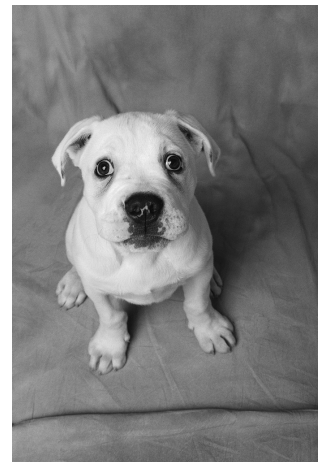
I freely admit that I'm nowhere near being a card-carrying PETA member. I eat meat. I own a few leather and suede products, and I've had several pet cats over the years.

But my cats were all rescued from shelters, I try to safely release any spiders I find in the house and I would never intentionally harm an animal. I don't understand how some can be so cruel to animals with feelings and emotions. Especially when it's justified by their religion.

That is one of the basic – and best - tenets of humanism, in my opinion. That we homo sapiens are just one more species amongst all the others that we share this world with. Not better, not worse, just different. We all evolved from common ancestors in a process that did not consider any living being more "special" than any other.

While I'd never suggest that a mosquito has the same rights as a dolphin or a gorilla, mosquitoes still have a purpose and a right to be here. Right now, I'm not so sure about some Amish farmers in Pennsylvania.

- Donna Harris



Café Scientifique at McNally Robinson

I've always been a little jealous of a small town in Minnesota, by the name of Morris. They're just a small town, but they host a regular Café Scientifique during the winter months. A Café Scientifique is a gathering where people gather to discuss topics of interest in science and technology. It might be at a bar or restaurant, but always outside of an academic context.

Well, our local McNally Robinson is starting a Café Scientifique lecture evening of our very own. McNally's presents a discussion on What is Age-Friendly? on **Monday, October 27, 2008 at 7:00 pm**. The location is the Events Alcove in their Polo Park store.

Here's a description of the discussion from McNally's website:

This new panel discussion series, offered by the Canadian Institute of Health Research and the University of Manitoba, explores the ways that society and its perception of age

may need to be altered in order to ensure that our aging baby boomer population are cared for. The panel is comprised of Dr. Verena Menec, Dr. Michelle Porter, and Vivian Stunden with Dr. Juliette Cooper facilitating the discussion. October is Seniors' Month. This is the perfect time to talk about the Age-Friendly Communities research project, an older population behind the wheel, and bring the seniors' perspective to the discussion.

McNally's is also planning at least 2 more Café Scientifiques this fall/winter. Right now, the second one is being planned for March 4th, with the proposed topic being asthma, allergies and chronic diseases, following by one more in May, 2009.

If you'd like to see more of this type of local programming, please consider supporting this event.

"A biophysicist talks physics to the biologists and biology to the physicists, but when he meets another biophysicist, they just discuss women."

- Author Unknown

New HAM Library Books

Just arrived in the HAM library:

- **The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11**, by Lawrence Wright
- **The Translator: A Tribesman's Memoir of Darfur**, by Daoud Hari
- **Farewell to God: My reasons for rejecting the Christian**

faith, by Charles Templeton

- **Nothing to be frightened of**, by Julian Barnes

These books will be available at our next regular meeting. Or, to request a specific book from the library just email the librarian.



Pascal's Wager

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was a scientist, mathematician and economist who spent much of his adult life producing written works that influenced France greatly. In 1654 he had a spiritual awakening and devoted the rest of his life to matters of theology. He died at the age of 39, having lived only a short but brilliant life.

Pascal's wager works like this; We can know nothing for certain, including the existence of god. Even so, Pascal asserted that we should live our life like a wager, or bet, and live as if god exists in order to get the best possible outcome in the afterlife. Avoid the uncertainty of a hell (punishment) and gain the uncertainty of Heaven (reward).

It is important to note a few things about his assertion, in his statement. He clearly stated that knowledge of god cannot be achieved through reason, even though he advocated that we should assume god exists in his wager.

So how do you defeat his assertion that we should bet on the existence of god?

Richard Dawkins made a few very interesting points about this wager in his book *The God Delusion*. He asks if it is at all possible to fake your faith? You can go to church, or synagogue or

temple, but you cannot force your own mind to accept what is not reasonable. Secondly he asks why it is so important to god that we believe in him. How do we know that this even matters? We don't. Dawkins then goes on to ask, "Isn't it just as likely that god would reward kindness, generosity, or humility? Or Sincerity? What if god is a scientist who regards honest seeking after truth as the supreme virtue?"

Dawkins makes his point well, we just don't know. We can never know. How would we ever really know which god is out there? What if we spend our entire lives preparing for one god only to go to the afterlife and find another that we did not believe in? There have been thousands of gods named by mankind over the millennia. No matter which god you choose, the odds are thousands to one that you are wrong.

So what is the safe bet? Which god do you choose? The real odds go against Pascal, and his wager. You'd think a mathematician would have realized this.

I choose the Dawkins option: Don't fake it, be sincere, kind and generous. Go for truth!

- Jeff Olsson
www.jeffolsson.com

HAM Annual General Meeting in January 2009

Just a reminder that we will be voting for new executives at our Annual General Meeting in January 2009.

Our current slate of executives must change, as our current president & vice-president, Barrie Webster and Barry Hammond, respectively, will no longer be running for office.

So, if you're interested in becoming more involved in HAM, please think now about volunteering for one of the "members at large" positions on the executive.

We meet once a month, and you can be as much or as little involved as you like.

Happy Thanksgiving

I wasn't surprised to learn that the first Thanksgiving observed in North America was probably the ceremony held by Martin Frobisher in 1578, or that Canadian Thanksgiving has been observed regularly from 1879 onwards, or that the day of the year moved around until 1957.

I was most surprised to learn the wording of the exact Canadian parliament proclamation:

"A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed ... to be observed on the 2nd Monday in October."

Well, no matter who you're thanking, it's probably a good idea to take a moment or two at this time of year to give thanks for all the good things that we have.

So, in honour of Thanksgiving, here is a selection of Thanksgiving quotations, to enjoy and ponder.

Thanksgiving dinners take eighteen hours to prepare. They are consumed in twelve minutes. Half-times take twelve minutes. This is not coincidence. -- *Erma Bombeck*

It is literally true, as the thankless say, that they have nothing to be thankful for. He who sits by the fire, thankless for the fire, is just as if he had no fire. Nothing is possessed save in appreciation, of which thankfulness is the indispensable ingredient. But a thankful heart hath a continual feast. -- *W.J.*

Cameron

Coexistence: what the farmer does with the turkey - until Thanksgiving. -- *Mike Connolly*

Stand up, on this Thanksgiving Day, stand upon your feet. Believe in man. Soberly and with clear eyes, believe in your own time and place. There is not, and there never has been a better time, or a better place to live in. -- *Phillips Brooks*

Turkey: A large bird whose flesh, when eaten on certain religious anniversaries has the peculiar property of attesting piety and gratitude. -- *Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary*

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow. -- *Melody Beattie*



Humour Corner – Wrong Email Address

Typing in the wrong e-mail address could cause some serious harm. Consider the case of the Illinois man who left the snow-filled streets of Chicago for a vacation in Florida.

His wife was on a business trip and was planning to meet him there the next day. When he reached his hotel, he decided to send his wife a quick e-mail. Unable to find the scrap of paper on which he had written her e-mail address, he did his best to type it in from memory. Unfortunately, he missed one letter, and his note was directed instead to an elderly preacher's wife, whose husband had passed away only the day before.

When the grieving widow checked her e-mail, she took one look at the monitor, let out a piercing scream, and fell to the floor in a dead faint. At the sound, her family rushed into the room and saw this note on the screen:

"Dearest Wife,
Just got checked in. Everything prepared for your arrival tomorrow.

Signed,
Your eternally loving husband.
P.S. Sure is hot down here."

Executive

- Barrie Webster
- Barry Hammond
- Helen Friesen
- Heather McDonell

Members at Large:

- Randy Gibson
- Donna Harris
- Brian Latour
- Jeff Olsson
- Grant Rogerson
- Neil Schipper
- Sophie Shulman

We're on the Web!

See us at:

mb.humanists.ca

Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanist Association of Manitoba

New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$25.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$45.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone#: _____ Cell #: _____

Email address: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
- Other: _____

PAYMENT: Cheque Money Order
 Visa Mastercard Amex

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. _____

Expiry Date: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to: **Humanist Association of Manitoba** and mail to: *Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane, Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.