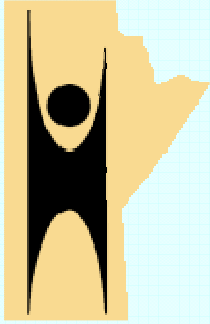


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Contents:

The Baha'i Faith	2
Richard Dawkins Road Trip	3
Getting to Know Helen Friesen	4
Author! Author!	5

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Humanist Association of Manitoba

Upcoming events

Monthly Meeting Saturday, April 11, 2009

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: Prof. Arthur Schafer

Director, The Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics,
University of Manitoba

**Topic: "End of Life Decision-Making: What
can we learn from the case of Samuel Golobchuk?"**

(Check out the advance information on page 4)

Don't Miss It!

Monthly Meeting Saturday, May 9, 2009

Guest Speaker: Dan Falk

Science writer and author of "Universe on a T-Shirt"
and "In Search of Time: Journeys Along a Curious
Dimension"



Topic: In Search of Time

The Baha'i Faith

At HAM's March meeting, Azin Nasserli spoke to us about the Baha'i faith. In particular, Azin pointed out the values and beliefs that the faith holds which are humanist in nature,

In the Bahai' faith, non-discrimination and unity of peoples is a strong value, with global unity being a central goal. The Baha'i faith certainly has many values and teachings that may sound familiar to many of us. These include:

- Life dedicated to the service of humanity
- Fellowship with the followers of all religions
- Independent investigation of truth
- Equality of men and women
- Realization of universal education
- Prohibition against cruelty to animals
- The elimination of extremes of poverty and wealth
- The belief that religion is in harmony with reason and the pursuit of scientific knowledge.

Where the Bahai's differ from humanism is in their faith in a God, and in their belief in a revelatory prophet.

Bahá'u'lláh, a Persian by birth, announced in 1863 that he was God's Messenger for this age. His teachings and sacred writing are the basis of the Baha'i Faith. Bahá'u'lláh taught that humanity is one single race and that the age has come for its unification in a global society.

Here are a few of the other beliefs and practices of the Baha'i:

- The human soul is created at the moment of conception, and is destined by God to reach the

afterlife

- Sexuality may only legitimately be expressed within marriage. The Baha'i Faith encourages interracial marriage as a concrete expression of the oneness of humanity. Marriages are not pre-arranged, but once a partner is chosen, both sets of parents are required to grant consent to the marriage, based on the understanding that the marriage should be a source of unity.
- The taking of intoxicating drugs and alcohol; gambling; carrying arms unnecessarily; and homosexuality are all forbidden.

It's always interesting to learn more about a group of people or a belief system that may not be as familiar to us as some others are, and we certainly appreciate the time and effort that Azin put into his presentation.

- Donna Harris

Information on the Baha'i faith was obtained from the U.S. website. For lots more details, visit www.bahai.us.



Azin and his wife, Shelley

Field Trip to see Richard Dawkins



Richard Dawkins

When the rumour started that Richard Dawkins would be coming to Minneapolis to deliver a public lecture, I was alert for any further word. My patience was finally rewarded by the news that he would be speaking at the University of Minnesota, and the title of his talk would be "The Purpose of Purpose". Even better, introducing him would be my favourite blogger, atheist and evolutionary biologist, PZ Myers, writer of the blog Pharyngula.

We headed off for the 8-hour trip to Minneapolis, grateful for the good weather and a smooth drive.

Dawkins' lecture was held at a full Northrop Auditorium. I don't believe that my summary of Dawkins' lecture could actually do it justice, so I was fortunate enough to find a description written by the man himself:

"We humans are obsessed with purpose. The question, "What is it for?" comes naturally to a species surrounded by tools, utensils and machines. For such artifacts it is appropriate, but then we go too far. We apply the "What is it for?" question to rocks, mountains, stars or the universe, where it has no place.

How about living things? Unlike rocks and mountains, animals and plants, wings and eyes, webbed feet and leaves, all present a powerful illusion of design. Since Darwin, we have understood that this, too, is an illusion. Nevertheless, it is such a powerful illusion that the language of purpose is almost irresistible. Huge numbers of people are seriously misled by it, and biologists in practice use it as a shorthand. I shall develop two meanings of "purpose". Archi-purpose is the ancient illusion of purpose, a pseudo-purpose fashioned by natural selection over billions of years. Neo-purpose is true, deliberate, intentional purpose, which is a product of brains.

My thesis is that neo-purpose, or the capacity to set up deliberate purposes or goals, is itself a Darwinian adaptation with an archi-purpose.

Neo-purpose really comes into its own in the human brain, but brains capable of neo-purposes have been evolving for a long time. Rudiments of neo-purpose can even be seen in insects. In humans, the capacity to set up neo-purposes has evolved to such an extent that the original archi-purpose can be eclipsed and even reversed. The subversion of purpose can be a curse, but there is some reason to hope that it might become a blessing."

I was especially excited about having the "secret location" of the pub event afterwards, envisioning PZ Myers surrounded by about 15 or 20 like-minded individuals, including myself (of course), imbibing beverages and enjoying some fascinating conversation.

Well, no. There were well over 100 people there when we arrived. Myers and Dawkins arrived about an hour later, and it was obvious that everyone in the room was hoping for just a nano-second of their time.

So, I count myself lucky that I got a picture WITH my man PZ, and we got a good picture of Dawkins (I was at least close enough to admire his red "A(theist)" pin.)

If you're interested, and you're on-line, head over to a blog called austringer.net, written by a man by the name of Wesley R. Elsberry. He has a great, detailed summary of Dawkins' talk.

- Donna Harris



Donna's overjoyed to get a picture with PZ Myers

Getting to Know... Helen Friesen

This is the third episode in a continuing series that will focus on the members of HAM's executive. Helen Friesen has been a member of the HAM executive for many years.



What is your favourite color?
Peach

If you had one word to describe yourself, what would you choose?
Detailed

What is your middle name? *My father didn't think I'd need a first name once I got married, so why in the world would he give me a second name. (:*

Do you have a hero? If so, who and why? *The early suffragettes. They were so incredibly courageous.*

Do you have a favourite meal or dessert? *Vegetarian pizza.*

Were you named after someone?
An aunt.

Who is your favourite author and/or book? *Robert Ingersoll*

Pets. Do you have any? If so, what kind? *Don't have any.*

If you could travel to anywhere in the world, where would it be?
England

What is one thing that really irritates you? *Gum chewing – go ballistic when somebody pops gum or chews with the mouth open. J*

Are you a morning person or a night owl? *Night owl.*

What's the last thing you bought yourself, just for fun? *Earrings*

Do you like to dress up for Halloween? *No.*

Advance Information for the April Meeting

Want to be well informed for our April meeting? Here are links to some articles that discuss last year's controversial Samuel Golobchuk case. The first is written by Arthur Schafer, and the other two quote him.

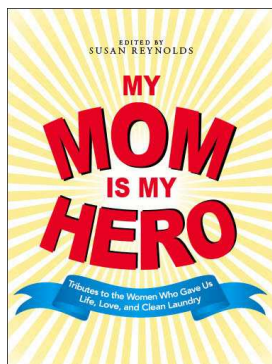
<http://www.ethos.ualberta.ca/?p=27>

http://www.nationalreviewofmedicine.com/issue/2008/07/5_patients_practice_07.html

<http://canadianmedicine.blogspot.com/2008/08/golubchuk-family-drops-end-of-life.html>

Author! Author!

We've always known that many talented, thoughtful and smart people are members of HAM. Recently two of our members became published authors.



SOPHIE SHULMAN

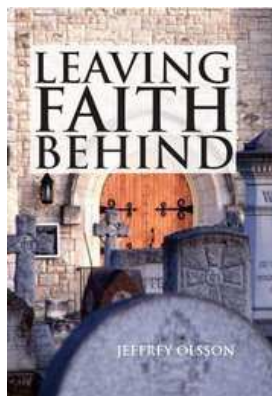
A short story written by our own Sophie Shulman was selected for an anthology of short stories and will appear in the book "My Mom is My Hero" (ed. Susan Reynolds, published by Adams Media).

Sophie is scheduled to sign copies of the book on Sunday, May 3rd, at 2 pm in the Polo Park McNally Robinson, and at the Coles bookstore downtown, in Cityplace on Friday, May 8th at 11:30 am.

Sophie especially wanted to say a huge 'thank you' to all her fellow-humanists who gave her their congratulations.

JEFF OLSSON

Next, we have a fantastic opportunity to get into the mind of someone who, through much questioning and introspection, has broken with religion and become a humanist and atheist, our own Jeff Olsson.



Jeff has finished writing his very own book, entitled "**Leaving Faith Behind**". It's now available on-line, from Xlibris Books. (www.xlibris.com)

Here is the description of Jeff's book, from the publisher's site:

"In the first nine chapters of this book Jeff Olsson answers those who have asked why he would want to leave a faith community such as the Anglican Church of Canada and Christianity. A letter to my curious friends is Jeff's personal story where he explains how faith is not always a virtue when those who choose to believe do so at the expense of others. Chapters ten through twenty eight give a historical perspective on atheism and present a rational world view. Later chapters include a criticism of Augustinian and Papal views on morality and offer humanism as a viable alternative."

The official website for the book is: www.leavingfaithbehind.blogspot.com.

Upcoming Local Events

Thursday, April 16, 2009

Bringing Research to Life Speaker Series
University of Manitoba
Speaker: Dr. John Hanesiak
Topic: A Day in the Life of a Storm Chaser

Monday, April 20, 2009

Café Scientifique
McNally Robinson, Polo Park, 7-9 pm
Topic: What affects your mental health?

Upcoming Events – National /International

June 5-7, 2009

Phoenix, AZ
American Humanist Association
HUMANISM RISING
68th Annual Conference

Oct 3-4, 2009

Blackfriars, London, UK
TAM London
Presented by: The James Randi
Educational Foundation (JREF)

July 9-12, 2009

Las Vegas, NV
The Amaz!ng Meeting 7 (TAM 7)
Presented by : The James Randi
Educational Foundation (JREF)

Executive:
Jeff Olsson
Neil Schipper
Helen Friesen
Heather McDonell

Members at Large:
Myrna Donald
Randy Gibson
Barry Hammond
Donna Harris
Katie Higham
Jake Peters
Dan Roach
Grant Rogerson
Sophie Shulman
Marlene Wallace
Barrie Webster

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*Household Memberships: Please give the names
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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.