



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

July, 2007

<http://www.sbhumanists.org/>

GOD –The Failed Hypothesis

By Andrew Hankin

"God: The Failed Hypothesis."

According to Professor Victor J. Stenger, empirical science now makes a strong case against the existence of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic God.

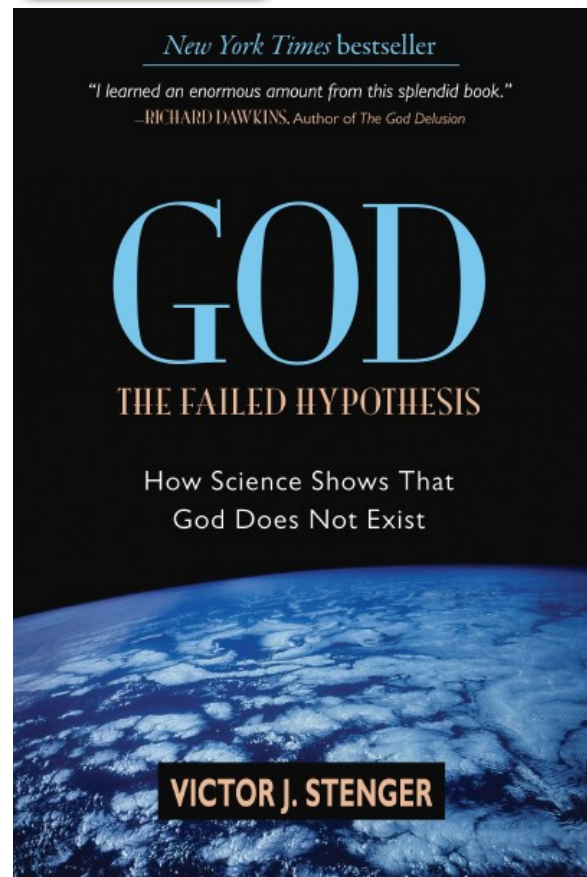
Also, not only does the universe show no evidence for God, it looks exactly as it would be expected to look if there is no God.

Victor Stenger received his Ph.D. in 1963 from UCLA. He is Professor Emeritus of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Hawaii, and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at the University of Colorado.

His lecture will be followed by a question and answer session for you to challenge his beliefs - and your own. He will also sign copies of his book.

NOTE: Professor Stenger's presentation will be Saturday, July 14th (not July 21), at 3 PM,

The presentation will be at the Fe Bland Auditorium, Santa Barbara City College West Campus, Cliff Drive, Santa Barbara.



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Membership Notes by Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are usually held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 3 pm in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara, CA. More information is available at our web site:

www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org

or by contacting any of the board members listed in the left-hand column of this page.

If you would like a copy of this newsletter mailed to a friend or someone who might be interested in our Society, please send their contact information to PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130 or call Mary Wilk. Alternatively, all of our newsletters are available at the web address shown above.

If you are not already a member, we encourage you to join our Society. Annual membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) for a sponsor. Members receive the monthly newsletter and have the option of attending meetings, outings and special events sponsored by the society.

Those unable to attend our monthly meetings may subscribe to our newsletter for an annual fee of \$20 but are not entitled to other membership privileges. When attending our meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First or second-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. For more information, please contact Mary Wilk or any member of our Society.

News About Members

by Hope Smith and Andrew Hankin

Welcome this month to two new members:

Mareth Lynch
336 Santa Rosalia Way
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
455-7373

Janet Servatius
520 Alegria Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
682-2828

On Saturday, June 23rd, Robert Bernstein rode his unicycle in the Solstice Parade.

On Sunday, June 24th, Judy Freeman played clarinet with the Prime Time Band in the San Marcos school auditorium. Highlights of the show included 11 Hollywood theme songs in 11 minutes, and a Blues Brothers musical revue. Dick Cousineau was part of the Band-Aide support team, welcoming the audience and selling CD's. The Prime Time Band is a group of musicians all 50 years and older. <http://www.ptband.org>

On June 7th, at least fourteen of our members attended the Health Care for All march and rally in Santa Barbara. About 200 participants met in De La Guerra Plaza, marched up State Street with banners, signs, police escort, and assembled in the County Courthouse Sunken Garden for speeches by local dignitaries in support of Senate Bill 840 for a single-payer, universal healthcare plan for California.

During the weekend of Friday, June 29th to Sunday, July 1st, Andrew Hankin, other humanists and activists staged a series of fun demonstrations outside the Arlington Theatre, promoting SB840, Universal Healthcare for all Californians, between screenings of the new documentary film *Sicko*. California Senate Bill 840 was reintroduced in 2007 after being vetoed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in 2006.

Member Nancy Walker Koppelman is pictured, with other "A&L Ambassadors", in the UCSB Arts & Lectures 2007-2008 program.

On June 15th, some sixteen members were among the many friends of George Delury who attended the memorial service for him at the Unitarian Society. Among those who spoke in his memory during the service were Dick Cousineau and Ron Kronenberg.

Carol Palladini, representing the Women's Fund of Santa Barbara, was pictured in the June 17th News-Press receiving a Shining Star Award from the board president of the Rape Crisis Center.

The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God.

-Thomas Jefferson

Notes from the President by Adrian Wenner

No, not the "W" you know. Instead, our Humanist Society now has a person dubbed president instead of chair. A recent change in the By-Laws replaced the title, "Chairman" with "President." By some mysterious (to me) process, I have been chosen to replace former chair, Ron Kronenberg, who wishes to spend much of this next year traveling with Wilma, his wife, instead of remaining at the helm of our society. Some notes seem appropriate by way of introduction.

Some 14 years ago I "retired" as Professor of Natural History from UCSB, having served the last few years as Provost of the College of Creative Studies. (Another name change there; the new person in that college is now called "dean"). President is not exactly a new job for me, having served a one-year term recently as President of the Western Apicultural Society (a scientist/beekeeper organization).

In that last connection, some of you may recall a talk I gave to our local society ("Scientific Process & Human Behavior") three years ago. That talk outlined what I consider a futile attempt to prove that honey bees have a "language," supposedly a communication in some ways equivalent to that of human beings. Specifically, a half century ago, the bee language hypothesis had become a religious-like belief system, and a great many researchers did their best to lock in that dogma. That faith persists even today in the presence of much negative evidence, including many facts that

supported an odor-search hypothesis much better. Last fall researchers completed an analysis of the DNA in the honey bee genome. They found no genes for "bee language" but 170 odor receptor sites in the genome. (Any humanists interested can go to beesource.com/pov/wenner/index.htm for detailed information.)

During the next few months I hope to serve our society well. For the past few years I have worked with board members (including, at the time, those of us labeled "at-large"), editor of the Secular Circular, several committees and their chairs, media artists, and (to be) our handbook editor. In the July Secular Circular you will see the new organizational lineup of officers as modified by changes in our by-laws.

It already looks as if we have a good year ahead, with at least one speaker even lined up for next spring.

A minister arrived in a small midwestern town to assume his new duties as the church leader.

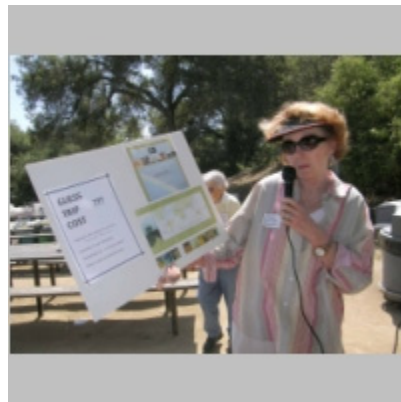
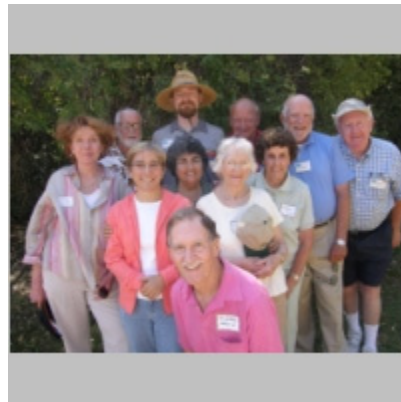
Wanting to mail a letter, he asked a young boy where the post office was. When the boy told him, the minister thanked him and said, "If you'll come by the church this evening, you can hear me telling everyone how to get to Heaven."

"I don't think I'll be there," the boy said. "You don't even know your way to the post office."

Scenes from a Summer Solstice Picnic

Photos by Robert Bernstein

HSSB Summer Solstice Picnic, June 14th, 2007

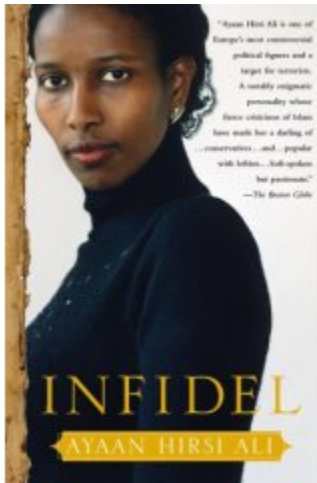


August Program by Andrew Hankin

Our August program is scheduled for 3 PM on Saturday, August 18th at the Vista Del Monte Patio Room. We will be shown the Richard Dawkins film, *The Root of All Evil*. Richard Dawkins is the author of the NY Times best-selling, *The God Delusion*.

The Oxford University evolutionary biologist presents his view of religion as a cultural virus, that once it is "downloaded" into a society, corrupts many of the programs it encounters. After the screening we will have a general open discussion of his apparent pervasive arguments and examples.

Come prepared to enter your views into the discussion!



Infidel author Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Book Club News By Marty Shapiro

The Book: *Infidel* is the powerful autobiography of outspoken Non-believer Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who evolved from her Muslim childhood in Somalia to a position of leadership in The Netherlands, where she was witness to the assassination of her political ally Theo van Gogh.

When: Wednesday, July 20, 2007 at 1:30 PM.

Where:

Art and Elaine Brody

1125 Camino del Rio

(off Cathedral Oaks, between Tuckers Grove and Highway 154)

692-8898

brodybiz@cox.net

Thanks again, Art and Elaine

Here's a brief review of *Infidel* taken from Amazon.com

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Readers with an eye on European politics will recognize Ali as the Somali-born member of the Dutch parliament who faced death threats after collaborating on a film about domestic violence against Muslim women with controversial director Theo van Gogh (who was himself assassinated). Even before then, her attacks on Islamic culture as "brutal, bigoted, [and] fixated on controlling women" had generated much controversy. In this suspenseful account of her life and her internal struggle with her Muslim faith, she discusses how these views were shaped by her experiences amid the political chaos of Somalia and other African nations...

Social Justice Committee

By Marian Shapiro

What is the Social Justice Committee?

Seven members of the Humanist Society volunteered to form the Social Justice Committee and others are welcome to join. For us on this committee, being Humanists means more than not believing in the supernatural. It means caring about people (and all living things), health care, education, poverty, choice, and taking care of the planet, as well as the separation of church and state.

Currently our members are Helen Conly, Hope Smith, Micki Stern, Carol Paladini, Bob Perry, Marcia Sherman and myself. To start us off, we had two meetings in which we decided how we would operate. We take suggestions from any member who thinks we should educate our members about a social justice issue. Since none of us has a tremendous amount of time, we have limited our activity to notifying members of the Humanist Society when we think that our members may want to join in and take some action such as writing our elected officials or signing a petition online.

An example of such an issue was when Health Care for All California needed volunteers for a demonstration of support. We sent an email to our membership and some members volunteered. No one, of course, is obligated to respond.

Another example of action taken by the Social Justice Committee was to recommend

to the board something we think the HSSB board might want to endorse or put their name on. We learned that several organizations in Santa Barbara were encouraging the establishment of an ombudsman for juvenile offenders and people in detention. Along with the ACLU, PUEBLO, the Mental Health Association, Fund for Santa Barbara, Pacific Pride and many others, the HSSB board voted to add our name in support of the ombudsman proposal.

We poll the Social Justice Committee members by email so that we know if our committee is in agreement that action should be taken. It can be either something the Social Justice Committee does or something we suggest that the HSSB board does. Anything that would be done in the name of the Society must be approved by the board. Notifying members of an issue can be done by agreement of the Social Justice Committee. Anyone who cares about social justice issues is welcome to join our committee. Call me. 968-0478

If God has spoken, why is the world not convinced.

It is easier to suppose that the universe has existed for all eternity than to conceive a being beyond its limits capable of creating it.

-Percy Bysshe Shelley

In Rememberance: George Delury

By Marian Shapiro

On June 4th, the Humanist Society lost one of its dearest, most respected members, George Delury. George's health had been deteriorating over the past months, and those who were close to him knew that he was having trouble breathing, had very little energy, and was "exhausted after doing ONE thing!"

He had some pain, and he felt that his quality of life was severely compromised. George was a strong believer in our right to make choices about how and when we die. He was not afraid of death, but was afraid of being trapped in an intolerable and deteriorating life.

George was a most caring, spiritual, and intelligent man, a humanist and Unitarian. He studied history and religion and was the author of a book about his wife's death and how she asked for his help to end her struggle with multiple sclerosis. He paid for this compassionate help with time in prison. He has since been a relentless advocate for our right to have control over the time and manner of our death. His talk in April to the Humanist Society was extremely informative and very well received by our members.

We, who knew and loved George, are very sad that we can't enjoy his warmth, intelligence and humor anymore, but none of us should be sad that he took control of his dying process when he still could. A real danger for those of us who want this choice

is that we may wait too long and then find ourselves unable to use the recommended means to end our suffering. That is the trap that George knew he had to avoid. He could not wait until he was not strong enough or capable enough to do what he needed to do without help. Help from a friend would have jeopardized the freedom of that friend. George had studied the options for years and knew more than anyone else how crucial the timing was to be successful and not endanger any of his friends who would have been willing to help.

In his final week of life, he came to my house twice, and I believe that he was totally at peace with his decision. We should celebrate his life and his admirable leadership, and not mourn his choice to end his life on his own terms. I'm sad for his friends, but happy for him. Thank you, George, for all you gave us!

[Ed. Note: The Santa Barbara Newsroom online news also had an article about George Delury. You can read the article at: <http://www.santabarbaranewsroom.com/news/general/assisted-suicide-advocate-i-have-lived-long-enough.html>

But I don't have to know an answer. I don't feel frightened by not knowing things, by being lost in the mysterious universe without having any purpose — which is the way it really is, as far as I can tell, possibly. It doesn't frighten me.

- Richard Feynman

Celebrating Roger Schlueter

(Note: Roger Schlueter was presented with a special plaque at the Solstice picnic, in recognition of his contributions to the HSSB. The following is the wording that appears on the plaque):

The Humanist Society of Santa Barbara acknowledges one of its most talented and generous members, Roger Schlueter. The Society would not be what it is today without his hard work and steady guidance over the last nine years.

Roger brought vision and leadership to this organization. Most remarkably, during Roger's tenure as Chairman of the Society, membership more than doubled!

Roger made HSSB into a 501(c)(3) organization, another significant accomplishment which involved months of research. This is what has enabled HSSB to accept tax deductible donations not only for us, but for the First Amendment Defense Fund as well.

Roger has done a superb job as editor of the Secular Circular. Much bigger humanist organizations say they wish they had such a professional looking newsletter! Editing involves days of work each month, and we have been so fortunate to have a board member willing to do that much work and who has done such a stellar job of it.

Roger has excellently represented us speaking in public forums and debates throughout the community. His close

friends in the Society often refer to Roger as the BRAINS of the Society. We are proud when we see him on TV or on a public platform representing us.

Most recently, Roger has taken charge of and finished the thankless but important task of revising the **Society's By-laws**, strengthening the Humanist Society for the future.

We greatly appreciate Roger's tremendous contributions to the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara.

His incomparable generosity, energy and talent are greatly appreciated.

With respect, affection and admiration, we say:

THANK YOU, Roger!!!





The Humanist Society of
Santa Barbara
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