

THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

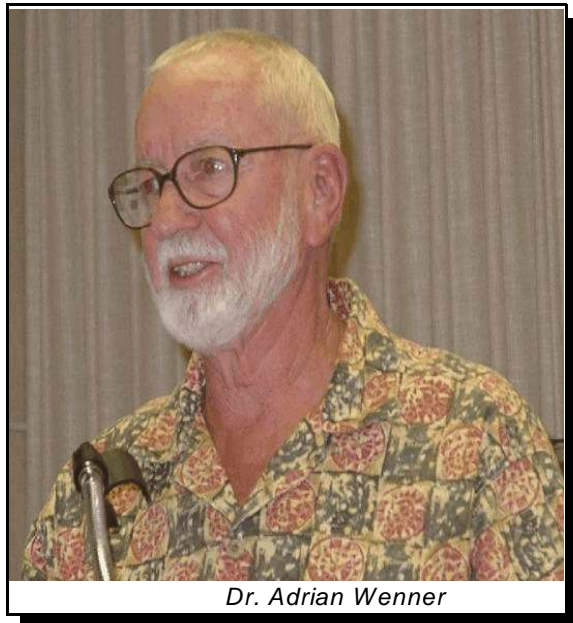
September, 2004

Scientific Process and Honey Bee Language?

By Adrian Wenner

Despite the image scientists like to portray of themselves, many may hold onto pet hypotheses in their line of research – even after evidence continues to accumulate that counters their belief system(s). A lack of instruction in scientific philosophy, methodology, psychology, and sociology contributes to this basic reluctance to entertain novel ideas and conclusions.

The controversy about whether honey bees



Dr. Adrian Wenner

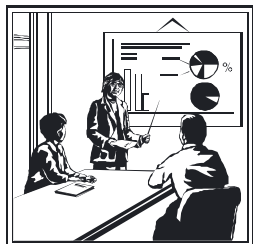
have a "language" serves as a case history of the conflict between a hypothesis which has become dogma against conflicting evidence that honey bees are more insect than human in

their behavior.

As background, in the mid-1930s Karl von Frisch proposed the equivalent of an odor-search hypothesis for honey bee recruitment to food sources. A decade later he switched to the equivalent of a "dance language" hypothesis (though he apparently didn't consider his conclusions as hypotheses in either case). The more exotic language hypothesis rapidly gained near-universal acceptance, but it failed its first experimental tests in the mid-1960s; searching recruits did not behave as von Frisch believed they should. The earlier and simpler odor-search hypothesis meshed better with many of the results obtained in the test experiments.

Language advocates then ignored basic precepts of scientific process, rejected and/or ignored results not in accord with their favored hypothesis, and instead repeatedly sought additional supportive evidence. While so doing, they inadvertently accumulated yet more evidence counter to von Frisch's original intent. By invoking various ad hoc modifications and qualifications, advocates inadvertently weakened, rather than strengthened, the hypothesis they continued to embrace. Consequently, the millions of dollars spent on research efforts during the last half century have still failed to benefit either beekeepers or growers. See the following site for more info.

<http://www.beesource.com/pov/wenner/index.htm>

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Board meetings are scheduled on the Monday preceding the Saturday general monthly meeting of the Society and are usually held at the home of one of the board members. HSSB members are welcome to attend these meetings. Contact any board member for more information.

Membership Notes
by Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are 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 site 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 \$2.00 from members and \$5.00 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.

It is with regret that we report the death on August 11, 2004 of one of our long-time members, Barbara Caplow. She was a loyal participant in our society for almost seven years.

September Meeting by Marian Shapiro

We will show a PBS documentary entitled "The Jesus Factor" which will be followed by a lively panel discussion. The topic of this documentary is religiosity in the Bush administration and the declining separation of church and state.

We will have two panel members leading a discussion of this documentary. One panelist will be Dr. Peter Haslund, Political Science professor at Santa Barbara City College. The second panelist will be Jane Prettyman, formerly of Esquire Magazine, who has written eloquently on this and other political topics.

This promises to be a stimulating, topical program in this very intense political season. Don't miss it.

Activities Report by Anne H. Rojas

We had a wonderful turn out at the Ming Dynasty after our August meeting. The new Mongolian barbeque was open and the management was very nice about giving us separate checks. This is a definite favorite location for the many reasons we all know.

A location for our September dining out has

not been chosen yet. It will be announced at the meeting. Send me an e-mail if you have suggestions. Remember we need easy parking, reasonable prices, good acoustics and food, and separate checks.

Our Last Sunday Brunch was lovely. We had 12 participants for Citronelle. A few people were unhappy about the seating (we had 2 tables) but it was necessary for us all to have the wonderful ocean view. We will probably be returning on another occasion.

Note: Please do not commit to attend if you may not come. I had to turn people away and then the cancellations came too late to accommodate those who wanted to come. When we are planning a special outing, it behooves you to make your reservations ASAP so you won't be disappointed.

We still need volunteers to bring cookies and punch to the meetings. For those of you who never have brought anything, why not? It doesn't seem to prevent you from enjoying the offerings of others. Please call Diane (452-4762) or Parkie (965-8333) to volunteer to do your part.

Thanks.

— Millions long for immortality who do not know what to do with themselves on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

Susan Ertz

Chairman's Chat by Dick Cousineau

[Ed. Note: Unfortunately, Dick had urgent, last-minute family matters that prevented him from submitting his monthly column. In his stead, I will touch on the topic Dick was planning to write about, then add my own thoughts on a different topic.]

Knowing Dick's enthusiasm and energy, I think his column title this month would have something like, "Hey, the tenth anniversary of the HSSB is coming up and we're gonna have a bang-up party and you'd be a damn fool to miss out on the festivities."

OK, ok, maybe I added a word or two, but you get the idea. In fact, the tenth anniversary of the HSSB will be celebrated at our usual May, 2005 meeting date and time. But this meeting will be anything but "usual" if the Decade Planning Committee has its way. We'll have special speakers (including Bill Edelen!), fine food and wine, and special entertainment.

Mark the date on your calendar and look for more information here in the newsletter and on the web site as our plans get finalized.



Switching to a totally different topic, I'd like to use Dick's Chat space to raise a political issue that I think is vitally important to the future of our nation. That may sound extreme, but I have never seen an issue of this importance in my lifetime. And I am not alone; other observers across the political spectrum agree that this is a **big big** deal.

The issue centers on Article III, Section 2, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the United States of America which reads, "In all Cases

affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all the other Cases before mentioned, the supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, **and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.** [*Emphasis added*]

Here is how this clause comes into play. In 1996, Congress passed the federal Defense of Marriage Act which provides, in part, that no state shall be required to recognize the law of any other state with respect to same-sex marriage. This act only deals with *interstate* legal issues and so did not impede local governmental entities from enacting statues recognizing same-sex marriages.

Subsequently, Massachusetts and San Francisco among others recognized such unions. This did not sit well with the more socially conservative agenda of the Bush Administration so the Federal Marriage Amendment, which was an attempt to amend the Constitution, was introduced. As you know, it suffered an overwhelming defeat.

End of story? Nope. Even worse, it is only a weak prelude to subsequent congressional action that has the potential to upset our basic federal system of "checks and balances."

Reacting to the defeat of the Federal Marriage Amendment Act the House voted 233-194 to pass the Marriage Protection Act (H.R. 3313), a bill which will prevent the Supreme Court from considering the constitutionality of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. In addition lawmakers introduced the Constitutional Restoration Act of 2004 which also says that the Supreme Court has no jurisdiction over

"any matter" regarding public officials who acknowledge "God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government."

What? The Congress can rule on what the Supremes can adjudicate? Surely not, you say. But, yes, it is true. See the emphasized quote from the Constitution at the start of this article.

The implications are clearly and chillingly spelled out by the words of Jay Bookman of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution:

"If Congress has the authority to tell the Supreme Court that certain issues are off-limits, it would give legislators a free hand to do whatever they wished, without worrying about whether it violated the Constitution. The whole idea of a separation of powers could be rendered null and void if that happened.

"Theoretically, that allows Congress to pass a law – say, making it a felony to criticize members of Congress – and then forbid the courts to review such a law. It could pass a law making Christianity the national religion, and bar the courts from hearing a challenge. It could allow government to tap our phones without a warrant, or toss dissidents into prison without trial, and refuse to allow the courts to intervene.

"That's why the provision has remained obscure and largely untested. Previous generations of politicians, even in the heat of intense battle, have understood and respected the potential damage it could do. They saw it as a Pandora's box that once opened could threaten not just our constitutional liberties but the whole concept of a balance of powers among the judicial, legislative and executive branches."

Now let me bring this home to Humanists by quoting former Rep. William E. Dannemeyer, who advocated that: "Congress should use Article III, Section 2, clause of the U.S. Constitution to recover what has been stolen," he wrote, listing egregious acts such as: "Enacting a wall of separation between church and state; Banning nondenominational prayer from public schools; Removing the Ten Commandments from public school walls; and Removing God from the Pledge of Allegiance"

You can judge how such actions would be viewed by Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's Biblically-inspired contention that "government. . . derives its moral authority from God,"

I know I have hogged a lot of newsletter space with this material, but I think it is justified by the potential impact of these legislative acts. **Please, please** write your representatives at all levels about these issues.

Roger



September Book Club by Art Brody

The September Humanist book discussion is *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* by Michael Lewis. The discussion will take place on Wednesday, September 22nd at, 1:30 pm at the home of Elaine and Art Brody. All are welcome. Phone 692-8898 to reserve your place.

Web Site of the Month by Colin Gordon

This month, at the suggestion of Roger Schlueter, we visit a local web site:

<http://www.cappscenter.ucsb.edu/>

From 1963 to 1996, Walter H. Capps was a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at UCSB. In 1996, he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he served from January, 1997, until his untimely death in October of that year. The Capps Center was established in January, 2002 to honor and further the legacy of Walter Capps, the first public event, an Inaugural Lecture, occurring on October 6 of that year.

Because of the Center's location on the West Coast, issues arising out of, or influenced by, this highly globalized region receive special attention, among them: the challenges of pluralism; the transnational movement of peoples, cultures, and belief systems; war, violence, and the possibilities of peace; environmental ethics; indigenous populations, religion and politics; moral and ethical debates, civic engagement, and the role of religious influences generally in society.

The site is full of interesting comparative data. If you go to the Capps Forum page and then "see New Survey" you find: "the greatest increase in absolute as well as in percentage terms has been among those adults who do not subscribe to any religious identification; their number has more than doubled from 14.3 million in 1990 to 29.4 million in 2001; their proportion has grown from just eight percent of the total in 1990 to over fourteen percent in 2001." And best of all, the number of Humanists has more than doubled in that

period from 29,000 to 49,000.

HSSB Board Items by Hope Smith

[Ed. Note: This is the first of what I hope will be regular reports from the Board Secretary on noteworthy Board actions or items of interest.]

- Barry Lynn will be speaking at a free event on October 19 at Victoria Hall, on "God in Government - Unholy Matrimony?" He is being brought to Santa Barbara by the Walter Capps Center for Ethics, Religion and Public Life of UCSB.
- Reining in Corporate Power will be holding its 5th presentation on Thursday, September 9th, from 7 - 9 pm in the Faulkner Gallery of the SB main library. The subject will be "Corporate Health Care for Some vs. Comprehensive Health Care for All" and will feature Don McCanne, M.D., past president of Physicians For A National Health Program, and Peter Conn, health care reform advocate, who spoke to us some time ago as a representative of Health Care For All - California. We are among many groups who have endorsed Senator Sheila Kuehl's SB 921, which will be discussed at the meeting as well as ballot prop. 72.



If devotion to truth is the hallmark of morality, then there is not greater, nobler, more heroic form of devotion than the act of a man who assumes the responsibility of thinking. The alleged shortcut to knowledge, which is faith, is only a short-circuit destroying the mind.

– Ayn Rand

Letter to the Editor

By John Coppejans

Why is it that a large portion of the population in this Country think it is necessary for anyone to be elected for public office, the belief in a supreme Being is a necessary prerequisite. Is it the general feeling that in order to be a good human being, one has to be religious? This is absurd.

Going back through history, the record of organized religion has not exactly been one filled with peace and goodwill. Thousands have been killed and tortured because they did not adhere to the teachings of the religion that was in power. Great minds have been burned at the stake or killed otherwise for writing or orating against different religious dogmas.

One can be a freethinker or atheist and be a person with high moral standards, not because there is the fear of hellfire but because to make this world a healthy place for all life, we have to find better ways of dealing with life's problems and use an open mind that is not burdened by the pressure of religious dogmas and enables us to look at life objectively.

Organized religion and fanatical nationalism have been and still are the major obstacles on the road to a more peaceful and saner world. I would welcome a person in the high office of this country who would base his or her decisions on intelligent reasoning, instead of praying to a mythical Deity.

Credo

by Bill Sheehan

I write today to turn my hand
to free me thoughts from Mental Taliban
I'm tired of cluttering my mind
with war and politics.
I'm tired of heinous preaching of religious terrorists
who entice suicide bombers with pious lies
that they will be welcomed into Paradise.
I'm tired of Christian fundamentalists
who preach apocalypse is near
and use religious blackmail
to install superstitious fear.
I'm annoyed by pompous preachers
who pound pulpits hard
and claim to preach the word of God,
they say God told them what they know
my logic tells me that it isn't so.
The brain that I was born with
that I am meant to use
tells me this is not the way
god would share sacred truths.
Nor would god require that people choose
from among conflicting sects
of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews.
All this creates miasma
that leaves the world confused.

If there is a god, I doubt that it would be
one whose ego demands fealty
and praise
concerned more with adoration than
that we correct our ways.

As I think about it
my mind comes to this.
I have just expressed the reasons
I'm a Secular Humanist.

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Our Country by John Coppejans

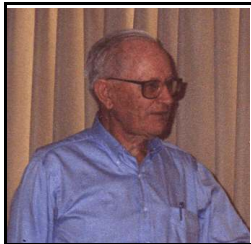
We love our Country, but we can see
that this is not a democracy.

The two parties here that set the rule
are either the Elephant or the Mule,
but both have to answer in the end
to the powers that do set the trend.
No matter what, they have to dance
to the business tune of high finance.
It is sad to say, but it is the case
big money put them in their place,
so this will influence their vote
and they'll avoid to rock the boat.

Another player in the action
is the ultra right religious faction.

They do not want to see a diction
that is not based on mythical fiction.
They want a chance to set their sights
to chop away at the Bill of Rights
and then remove that what they hate,
the separation of Church and State.

I hope that we all will realize
that to reason is not dumb but wise
and if we ant to set the pace
to do what's right for the Human Race,
we to change our course of action
and have a different kind of election,
where one with no church affiliations
and does not depend on big donations
can be elected and lead our land
into a future that's really grand.



Founder Keith Bailey

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