

If my life is fruitless, it
doesn't matter who
praises me;
And if my life is fruitful,
it doesn't matter who
criticizes me.

~ John Bunyan
(1628 - 1688)

Phactum

The Newsletter and Propaganda Organ of the
Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking

February 2012

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Webmaster: Wes Powers <http://phact.org/>

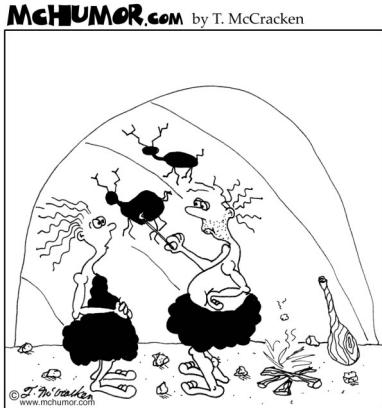
PhACT Meeting - Saturday, February 18, 2012

at Community College of Philadelphia in Lecture Room C2-28 in the Center for Business and Industry
at the corner of 18th and Callowhill Streets. At 2:00 PM.

All are Welcome. This event is Free and Open to the Public. Handicap accessible.

Dr. David Cattell, Chairman of the Physics Department of Philadelphia Community College, will host
Stacey Ake, a Professor at Drexel University, who will discuss

"Bioethics and the Evolution of Consciousness"



Cartoon by T. McCracken
<http://www.mchumor.com/>
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We look forward to Feb 18th when Drexel Professor Stacy Ake speak on "**Bioethics and the Evolution of Consciousness**". Dr. Ake's interests in biology include population genetics, evolutionary theory, and the co-evolution of bacterial pathogenicity. She is presently an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Drexel. Previously, she was the Editor of Metanexus: The Online Forum for Science and Religion at the Philadelphia Center for Religion and Science. She has a PhD in Biology as well as an MA and a PhD in Philosophy from the Pennsylvania State University. Her Biology PhD was on the population dynamics and genetics of *E. coli* among several villages of Mexico.

Her Philosophy PhD was on the evolution of human consciousness -both phylogenetically and ontogenically. And she has taught philosophy courses such as Aesthetics, Bioethics, Existentialism, Epistemology, Ethics, Philosophy of Film, and Philosophy of Science, Anatomy and Introductory Neuroscience.

"The aim of public education is not to spread enlightenment at all; it is simply to reduce as many individuals as possible to the same safe level, to breed a standard citizenry, to put down dissent and originality"

~ H. L. Mencken

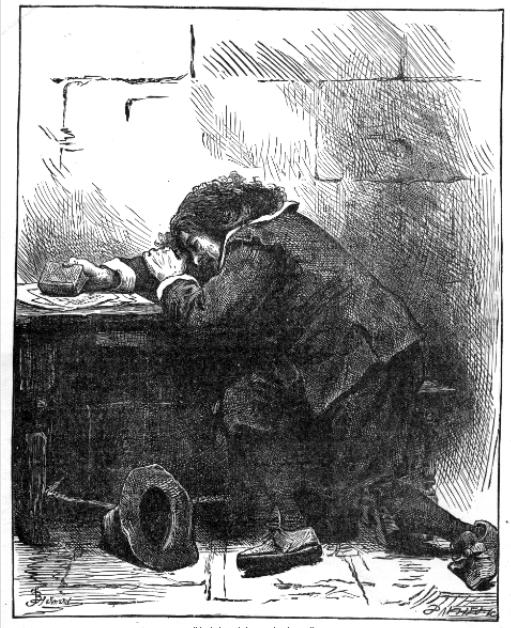
Don't be shy about writing,

but don't go to Gaol for 12 years like
17th Century Christian writer John Bunyan.

Thoughtful Letters to the Editor and other Correspondence are highly valued for inclusion in Phactum. If you have thoughts on some matter that bugs you, why just stew on them? Write down those thoughts and share with other Phactum readers? Writing is a great way to hone and refine critical thinking skills and perhaps enlighten others.

Articles, poetry, Letters and Rants to the Editor, spelling corrections, suggestions to improve Phactum, items for the calendar, and other matters of interest are wanted for Phactum. Almost all topics are welcome, but please, no partisan politics.

[Send submissions to phactpublicity@aol.com](mailto:phactpublicity@aol.com)



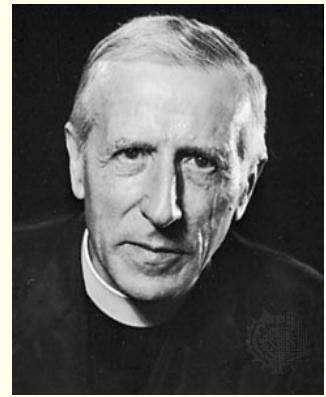
John Bunyan in Bedford Gaol

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"There is almost a sensual longing for communion with others who have a large vision. The immense fulfillment of the friendship between those engaged in furthering the evolution of consciousness has a quality impossible to describe."

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881 - 1955) was a French philosopher and Jesuit priest who trained as a paleontologist and geologist and took part in the discovery of both Piltdown Man and Peking Man. Teilhard spent most of his life trying to reconcile religion and science and especially Christian theology with the Theory of Evolution despite heavy resistance from the Catholic hierarchy.



Letters to the Editor

Editor: My compliments to you for correctly spelling "complementary" incorrectly as "complimentary" on page 6 of the January 2012 issue. I checked the sourced website, and you're right, they've got it wrong.

Howard J. Wilk
Philadelphia, PA

Editor's note: Thank you, Howard. Good eye! I would not have spotted that misuse of the word in 100 years. A rather appropriate blunder however. See more on [Page 4](#) about Complimentary vs Complementary.



Editor: I'm glad to see that Tom Medero has embarked on a regular column with "**What's On Your Mind?**" (Phactum, January 2012). His description of "blindsight" is quite remarkable; I haven't read of such a phenomenon before.

As for the topic of free will, and its clear association with legal responsibility for one's actions, I'd like to recommend that interested readers find a nearby Law Library (or go online for one) and research a bit about the legal concept of "intent." For most crimes, the law recognizes difference between acts which are intentional, and acts which lack deliberate intent. The recognition of the difference is commendable, yet where the issue becomes really interesting is where one side or the other attempts to "prove" an actor's intent, or lack thereof. Very often, the decision rests on the "credibility" of a single claimant or witness; it is extraordinarily difficult to specify and/or quantify objective evidence regarding a person's intent. As in many areas of law, to read the cases published in the reference books is to find many excellent examples of a judicial standard of which one can be proud. On the other hand, the admirable findings and rationales are carefully selected, and what are NOT often obvious are the exam-

ples of poorer reason, biased findings, or other problems that sometimes arise during the everyday practice of law.

The law holds that "intent" does not necessarily require planning beforehand or lengthy deliberation; "intent" may simply involve an unplanned, instantaneous "snap decision" to act. It may be mitigated by blinding rage, by intoxication, or by other factors. The act may sometimes be justified by specific circumstances, in which case a certain degree of deliberation would serve to support the justification defense. There is no clear and binding statute that requires that one even be necessarily aware of (or remember) an action for intent to be present or absent. It's a very complex and substantial area of law which anyone with serious interest in the ramifications of "free will" would find very intriguing. In many ways, the study of a culture's laws provides insights into its values, including its reliance on reason and/or scientific evidence in reaching judgements.

Returning to Medero's topic of "free will," it is becoming quite apparent that our actions are influenced by our subconscious inclinations (which, incidentally, CAN be affected by "training"), but I think that the application of the skills of Critical Thinking (or our refusal to apply those skills) has the potential to carry even greater weight where our actual decisions and actions are concerned. The more we understand the sort of issues that Medero raises, the more we can truly claim to be the masters of our own deeds.

-Paul Schlueter III,
Dallas, PA

Editor: Paul Schlueter's essay "Are We Aborting Abortion?" covers an awful lot of ground, but necessary ground nonetheless. On just the very first issue, legislators should absolutely never be legislating personhood. They are in government, not philosophers working on normative ethics. You don't hire a plumber to fix your car, you don't look to a State Legislature for logic. If contraception in the form of preventing implantation is made illegal, then 1) why is it not a person a few days before if the egg is actually fertilized in the fallopian tube, or 2) why not go back further to when they are separate gametes before they meet? I could make the argument that gametes are still cells with as much potential to come together and create a child as any two gametes which, using their logic, would make masturbation equivalent with terminating a pregnancy. How ridiculous is that? A couple's autonomous right to come to this decision is based on very personal and private reasons. This is simply not government's job.

Tom Medero
Philadelphia

Editor: Late in the day on January 23, 2012, my cousin, Bruce Clark, informed me of a news article stating that a dead whale, which turned out to be a 62 foot long adult male fin whale, was stranded in the surf off Ocean City, NJ. The cetacean had apparently been killed by a collision with a ship. By the time I arrived there the next day it had washed



Dead fin whale on Ocean City, NJ beach on January 24, 2012. - Photograph by Don Nigroni.

ashore and staff from the Brigantine based Marine Mammal Stranding Center were on the scene examining the carcass (see photo).

As reported in the March 2, 1907 issue of The New York Times, it seems that a similar incident occurred "fifteen miles off Ocean City" when the "auxiliary fishing smack Goldie Budd" hit an obstruction the day before. Captain Hyland Parker saw "a huge creature that was not unlike a whale lashing the sea into fury." In addition, it had a "monster head, resembling that of a horse" which was "spouting blood as the creature drew away from the sloop." The beast "was at least seventy-five feet long and probably ten feet in diameter." The paper quoted the captain as saying, "I never took much stock in sea serpents, but I have met sea Captains who described to me just such creatures as that we struck this afternoon." Evidently the Goldie Budd did hit an enormous sea creature which resembled a whale simply because it apparently was a whale, perhaps even a fin whale, albeit one who also happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Don Nigroni
Glenolden, PA

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Various Ruminations

**Collected/Written by Ray Haupt
(with help from others)**

Complimentary vs Complementary

Complimentary and Complementary are commonly misused words in our sometimes baffling English Language, and the editor of this publication did indeed bungle the usage in the January 2012 Phactum.

From Webster's New World College Dictionary, 4th Ed.

- ◆ Complimentary (adj) - (1) something that is free or included in a larger cost (2) something that is flattering or shows admiration
- ◆ Complementary (adj) - someone or something that completes or makes someone or something better.

*After she left her **complimentary** remarks about the concierge with the hotel manager, Sonja found **complimentary** scones outside her door each morning with **complementary** clotted cream and jam.*

"What can be asserted without proof can be dismissed without proof".
~ Christopher Hitchens (1949 - 2011)

10:23

10:23 you ask? What is 10:23?

It is not a date.

It is not a Bible verse.

It is not the secret code to the vault at Fort Knox.

10:23 may also be expressed as 10^{23} and to a chemist is a significant number.

It so happens in this case that **10:23** is the rally cry for an anti-homeopathy campaign led by the **Merseyside Skeptics Society** located in the northwest region of England and includes Liverpool. The campaign is intended to raise awareness of the follies and foibles associated with homeopathy.

See <http://www.1023.org.uk/>

The Merseyside Skeptics Society website is:

<http://www.merseysideskeptics.org.uk/>

Other skeptics organizations are participating in homeopathy awareness campaigns including the New Zealand Skeptics who now have an annual homeopathic medicine overdose event. The Merseyside Skeptics are planning such an event directed at Boots, a large pharmacy chain in the UK that stocks homeopathic remedies.

As part of the 10:23 campaign the Merseyside Skeptics have produced a short video on the breathless matter of producing Homeopathic Vodka, a practice that bar tenders in cowboy saloons are best to avoid, even in its first dilution.

<http://www.1023.org.uk/videos.php>

10:23 in Philadelphia??

The Merseyside Skeptics Society will be approaching Boots pharmacy stores in the UK on the matter of homeopathic products. In Philadelphia, and all across the United States, we have a similar situation in large and small pharmacies where useless remedies are sold as medicine. James Randi has been active in exposing homeopathy and no doubt other skeptics in the United States have been involved. A most valuable resource for skeptics on the matter of homeopathy is Dr. Stephen Barrett's website Homeowatch:

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

Perhaps PhACT can organize a similar campaign, even if on a small scale to ratchet up resistance to what is in fact snake

oil medicine.

Accordingly, out of curiosity, I did examine the over the counter medicine section of a local CVS pharmacy expecting to find a considerable number of homeopathic remedies. My search was brief but I did manage to find eight such products clearly labeled as homeopathic. There probably are others.

- ◆ **Cold-Eeze** and **Zicam** are homeopathic cold remedies based on Zinc Gluconate and are dispensed in tablets containing measurable amounts of the substance. Homeopathic remedies rarely have side effects or any effect whatsoever but a disturbing side effect of these remedies is adverse affects upon the senses of taste and smell. There have been lawsuits about that problem, but the products are still on the shelves. See Phactum, February 2011, p. 5 for information on Zicam.
- ◆ **CharcoCaps** is a remedy for intestinal gas labeled as homeopathic. The main ingredient in this remedy is not a dilution of some mother tincture but is 260 mg of activated charcoal. CharcoCaps is an unusual homeopathic product in that it might actually work. It is recommended on the Mayo Clinic website as a useful over the counter product for gas and gas pain control. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/gas-and-gas-pains/DS00080>
- ◆ **Airborne** and **Air Shield** are dietary supplement products marketed as common cold cures. Airborne was the original product and Air Shield is the CVS generic equivalent. Airborne had been fined by the FDA for deceptive advertising and has been involved in various class action lawsuits and settlements. There is as yet no scientific study that supports Airborne's claims of effectiveness. Nonetheless, Airborne and Air Shield remain on store shelves.
- ◆ **ColdCalm** and **Chestal** are cold remedies marketed by Boiron Corporation. Both products contain various ingredients diluted to 3C and 6C strengths and both are subjects of class action suit for misrepresentation of claimed health benefits. The deception, the lawsuit alleges, lies in the fact that the natural ingredients in Children's Coldcalm are so diluted that they are "not detectable even through the use of sensitive chemical analysis." The homeopathic ingredients in Children's Coldcalm -- which include various flowers, vegetables, insects and metals -- must be diluted in order to avoid poisoning the user, but they're diluted to the extent that

Homeopathy Quotes We Can Do Without

Paul McCartney - I can't manage without homeopathy. In fact, I never go anywhere without homeopathic remedies. I often make use of them.

Yehudi Menuhin - Homeopathy is the safest and most reliable approach to ailments and has withstood the assaults of established medical practice for over 100 years.

Mahatma Gandhi - Homeopathy cures a greater percentage of cases than any other method of treatment. Homeopathy is the latest and refined method of treating patients economically and non-violently.

Lindsay Wagner - If I was not an actress, I would be a homeopathic doctor.

there is no trace of the original ingredient in the solution.

- ♦ **Oscillococcinum** is a homeopathic remedy claimed to relieve the symptoms of influenza. It is manufactured by Boiron Corporation which has been engaged in a class action lawsuit claiming that the product has no medicinal value. Oscillococcinum's active ingredient is an extraction of the liver and heart of a Muscovy Duck diluted to an astounding and meaningless 200C. Yet this remedy can be found on pharmacy shelves and an internet search will easily find an abundance of enthusiast for this product.

Weed Warriors

Are you a Weed Warrior? Probably not, but you can be. PhACT member Don Nigroni is an enthusiast for the John Heintz National Wildlife Refuge which is a wetland located near Philadelphia International Airport. Unfortunately, the refuge is plagued with various invasive species of non-native plants that threaten local species of plants and animals.

The Refuge will be sponsoring a training program for motivated volunteers to participate in a weed eradication program. It could well be a constructive and sociable project for some local skeptics to get into the outdoors and accomplish a needed conservation task. Help Don pick weeds. See [page 15](#) for more details.

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is an invasive perennial plant that is spreading rapidly in North American wetlands, shorelines, and roadside ditches. Thick stands of



purple loosestrife crowd out native plants and reduce food, shelter, and nesting sites for wildlife, birds, turtles, and frogs. After multiple introductions in the

1800s for bee keeping, as an ornamental plant, and in discarded soil used as ballast on ships, this European species has invaded nearly every U.S. state and at least six Canadian provinces.

The REAL TRUTH about Global Warming and Disappearing Glaciers.

It seems that the Jorge Montt glacier at Bernardo O'Higgins National Park in Patagonia has been retreating at the startling rate of a half mile per year. Officials in Chile now know why and have arrested a man for stealing 5 tonnes of glacial ice destined for bars in Santiago.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/feb/01/glacier-thief-arrested-ice-cubes>

Darwin/Lincoln, Darwin, Charles, Lincoln, Abraham by bob killian (Bob Killian)



*Eighteen-nine, second month, the twelfth day,
He was born. We may no longer say
That our thinking's enslaved.
By his mind we've been saved:
Fear and ignorance have to give way.*



Charles Darwin (1809–1882), **Abraham Lincoln** (1809–1865): a great and revolutionary figure of the 19th century, born on February 12, 1809. His life and work liberated people's thinking (well, educated people, anyway) about the nature of humankind.

Meridian Tapping

Meridian Tapping is a part of a New Age healing technique that has achieved some degree of faddish popularity. It is a subset of EFT, Emotional Freedom Technique, which is designed to direct invisible and undetectable energy forces within our bodies to perform healing and wellness and to harmonize our inner being, etc.

From the website's explanation - Meridian Tapping is:

The basic technique requires you to focus on the negative emotion at hand: a fear or anxiety, a bad memory, an unresolved problem, or anything that's bothering you. While maintaining your mental focus on this issue, use your fingertips to tap 5-7 times each on 12 of the body's meridian points. Tapping on these meridian points – while concentrating on accepting and resolving the negative emotion – will access your body's energy, restoring it to a balanced state.



Quantum Baloney Detector

Website: <http://www.thetappingsolution.com/index1.php>

You Tubes:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oM95G-C7D54>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=478SkKh2e4>

Lo and Behold, apparently there is "Science and Theory" behind this nonsense, even invoking Quantum Mechanics.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1Tt0yGMm8&feature=related>

Have fun, don't tap too hard, and be Skeptical.

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2ND ANNUAL PHILADELPHIA SCIENCE FESTIVAL

NAME THAT BEER!

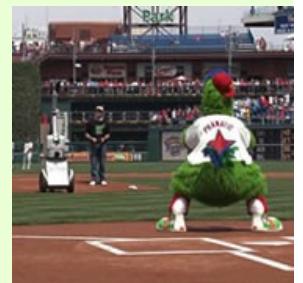
The brewmasters at Yards are again crafting a special batch of beer for the Philadelphia Science Festival. Last year it was a pale ale called "E=MC Beered." This year it's a nice bold Weizenbock. Want to help us name it? Cast your vote at Philly.com/food. Go ahead, um, "hop" to it.



BRAINS AND BRAWN

Tickets for our Signature Events won't go on sale until March - with one notable exception: Science Day at the Ballpark with the Phillies. This was the first event to sell-out last year, so visit here to get yours today.

Science Day at the Ballpark: Saturday, April 28 - 7:05PM (\$20 - \$30)



IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES.

The Festival again kicks off with an enormous outdoor carnival around Logan Circle on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Science comes to life through hands-on interactives, exhibits, live performances, and demonstrations.

Science Carnival on the Parkway: Saturday, April 21 - 11:00AM-4:00PM (Free all day)

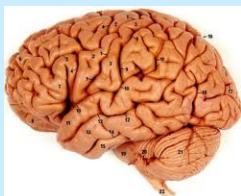


75+ PROGRAMS COMING SOON

Explore with your taste buds, meet science superheroes, see beauty in biomechanics and hear the science behind your favorite music. The 2nd Annual Philadelphia Science Festival will have something to excite every sense. Watch for a complete list of immersive, interactive programs - more than 75 in all! - coming to your inbox in mid-February. This year, we'll be requiring reservations to many of the events (even the free ones), so you'll want to register early.

In the meantime, join us on:

- ◆ Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/PHLScienceFest>)
- ◆ Twitter (<http://twitter.com/phlsciencefest>)
- ◆ Foursquare (<https://foursquare.com/phlsciencefest>)
- ◆ YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/PHLScienceFest>), where you can check out some great program recaps from 2011!



WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

The Importance of Belief

By Tom Medero

Beliefs are a fundamental aspect of our personalities; they define who we are as a person. Forming and developing beliefs engage all critical areas of our brain working together in a search for truth and balance. Like endless bricks in the walls of a skyscraper, our beliefs give us strength and conviction, perhaps aesthetic pleasure to others, and the definite shape of who we are. So individual and personal are our beliefs to us, the greatest of care should be taken to ensure their integrity. They are the lens through which the world comes to know us. It is my own belief that we would want that view to represent a coherent, well-reasoned approach to life in dealing with the many uncertainties presented us. Not, of course, out of fear of looking silly, but to achieve for ourselves and our loved ones the best life possible.

We accumulate beliefs continuously throughout our lifetime. They may stay constant and unchanged for years, but should never be written so indelibly that they not be subject to thoughtful reconsideration when new and relevant information is encountered. Over the course of a lifetime we are bombarded with this “remarkable finding” or that “newest research” which have to be critically evaluated. A few things would require a rethinking of our positions such as keeping our sources under thoughtful evaluation, and sometimes a great deal of it gets thrown into the trash heap. Advertising, arguably the worst source of information, has latched onto the word “clinic” and its variations to the point of rendering it meaningless. Ads constantly tout products that are “clinically tested”, “clinical strength”, or “clinically proven,” and I wonder just how many unwary people are picking items up in the local shops simply because the tag “clinical” has been etched into their subconscious.

But I will tell anyone who'll listen unless you hear the word “clinical” from a trusted health professional run the other way. I say trusted here because I've even seen an ad

for, if I can remember this drivel correctly, a “hormone precursor” promised to make middle aged men feel like they're in their 20s again. Great. This ad is also touted by a health professional (a doctor) who is “a graduate of Johns-Hopkins Medical School”, a statement obviously made solely to add to his credibility. The caveat is that credible does not mean ethical. The trouble I have with this is that this doctor is a neurosurgeon by specialty, not an endocrinologist. They even have the gall to mention this in his credentials,

betting on the chance that most people will think “Well, a doctor's a doctor, no?” No. And as unfortunate as it is, they will probably think along these lines, if it's thought about at all. Professionals have specialties for a reason as I'm quite certain this audience knows. And when questioned about something outside of their realm of expertise, an ethical specialist will tell you “That's not my area. Let me refer you to...”

Aside from the few instincts we are born with, we are essentially tabula rasa, a blank slate when we

come into this world. Endowed with bare instinctive knowledge compared to other species, we are truly helpless for longer than most. We know how to find and suckle our mother's breast, we recognize her voice from hearing its inflections inside the womb for 9 months, but that is about it. Most species can be left to their own devices after a few short weeks or days. Not so with the species with big brains at the top of the food chain - we are utterly dependent for years. And it is here that it becomes clear just how important beliefs are not only to our survival but also to our fulfillment in life. The reason that beliefs are so critical to our development is that without valid information on which to rely, our chances at living a good life become precarious at best. Additionally, the ability to critically evaluate a matter and determine if it is worth our adopting as a belief gives us an edge in the struggle for survival. It is not until this skill is sufficiently developed that we stand a chance to do well on

A civilization is a heritage of beliefs, customs, and knowledge slowly accumulated in the course of centuries, elements difficult at times to justify by logic, but justifying themselves as paths when they lead somewhere, since they open up for man his inner distance.

~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery
(1900 - 1944),
French novelist

our own in this world.

As children we are instructed what to believe, and it is taken at face value and usually not questioned until some later time in adolescence. However during this stage of the brain's hyper-development kids also begin to develop their own sense of self. Upon arriving at adolescence

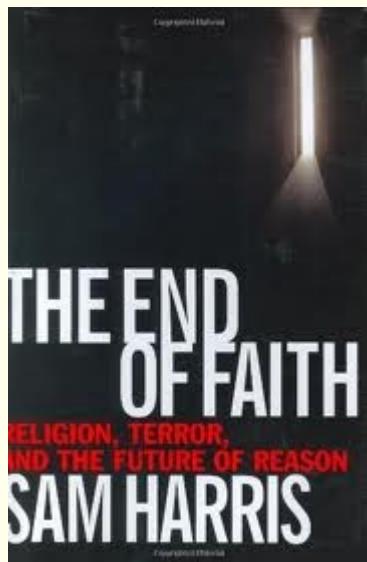
and self- identity already with a great many beliefs in mind, a critically important question youngsters can ask themselves is how do I know for certain? Am I sure? Their rapidly developing cognitive skills now insist on questioning if what they have been told along the way is, in fact, the truth. Of course this is not to say that parents would intentionally mislead their children; that would be ridiculous. It may simply be that being preoccupied with raising a family the best they can, they were innocently not aware of newer information and I am sure they believed that they were giving their children the best available. But for a skeptical youngster, this is a major step in developing the ability to reason well and contributes immensely to their own formation as individuals. This stage can be a double-edged sword in adolescence. On the one hand, it lays the groundwork for the necessary and continual mental growth and social development. But being an adolescent and not having their judgment fully formed, together with the

If I err in belief that the souls of men are immortal, I gladly err, nor do I wish this error which gives me pleasure to be wrested from me while I live.

~ Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 - 42 BC),
Roman philosopher, statesman, lawyer,
orator, political theorist

novelty of questioning authority, can also place them in dangerous situations thinking they know better. They must learn to question in order to grow, but parents can only hope their newfound skepticism combined with a sense of novelty doesn't lead down troubling paths.

I want to take a moment here to talk about a different kind of belief that finds its validation not in empiricism, but in faith. Finding one's own individual spiritual truth is a unique experience and can be an area of great importance to people in general. If possible, it is a good thing that it be pursued with the open mindedness that it requires to be meaningful. Matters of faith are unique in that they can carry just as much conviction and force as matters of fact, yet without out a factual basis. I suspect that this power is supplied by an emotional component in faith. Emotions are powerful tools in shaping the mind and capable of overriding reason given the chance. This is not to say matters of the spirit are less valid, or not as important as what we arrive at through reason. I simply want to suggest a bit of caution is in order, as we have all witnessed the perversion of religious faith with horrifying results. Belief as faith and belief in truth are two different animals, which is simply my personal epistemic position. When the two are confused to be one and the same, disastrous results can and do occur. I don't



The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason By Sam Harris

Publisher: W.W. Norton & Company; First Edition (August 2004)

ISBN-10: 0393035158 ISBN-13: 978-0393035155

Hardcover: 336 pages \$26.95 Available at Amazon.com

An impassioned plea for reason in a world divided by faith.

This important and timely book delivers a startling analysis of the clash of faith and reason in today's world. Harris offers a vivid historical tour of mankind's willingness to suspend reason in favor of religious beliefs, even when those beliefs are used to justify harmful behavior and sometimes heinous crimes. He asserts that in the shadow of weapons of mass

destruction, we can no longer tolerate views that pit one true god against another. Most controversially, he argues that we cannot afford moderate lip service to religion—an accommodation that only blinds us to the real perils of fundamentalism. While warning against the encroachment of organized religion into world politics, Harris also draws on new evidence from neuroscience and insights from philosophy to explore spirituality as a biological, brain-based need. He calls on us to invoke that need in taking a secular humanistic approach to solving the problems of this world.

want to go too far into this, but if you're interested to see just how and why this can come about, I recommend you pick up philosopher Sam Harris' bestseller "*The End of Faith*". He takes a frightening, (mostly) unbiased look at what faith run amuck can lead to.

Getting back to this world, parents grounded in "traditional" religious beliefs may hold their heads and run for the aspirin when their young son or daughter announces cavalierly during dinner that they're running off to Tibet to find themselves. And, eventually, find they will (but most likely not in Tibet). No one wants to live dishonestly pretending to believe something they don't agree with. So it is only natural for them to find out what is the truth for them. They may feel somewhat guilty for possibly disavowing their parent's devotion to a particular deity, or not being able to conclude yet they are not certain if it is right for them. Spirituality need not require a deity or deities at all. When beliefs of faith are dictated, there is no happy ending.

As young adults become more rational, critical thinkers they gradually take on the truly monumental but necessary task of re-evaluating all of the beliefs that they acquired during their short lives and may have accepted at face value without further examination. For some of us, this re-examination process can take a lifetime, but the effort is more than worth it. Taken on one by one, we come to the realization that in our youth a good deal of what we accepted as truth and consequently believed was weak in its reasoning, and possibly fallacious. Certainly this is not done purposely; it is a reflection of the lack of weight put on reason and critical examination by people in general. And that is a shame.

Unfortunately, our school system in the United States does not require courses in basic logic or critical thinking. And it should, without question. If added as part of the core curriculum, at the very latest beginning in high school, we would most certainly be guaranteed to graduate a class of young adults who can think clearly, examine an argument rationally and from differing positions, and be far better equipped to make their way in the world. Such a result would not only benefit not only our society in particular, but the world in general. Consequently, we have a vast population who are unable to put together a cogent argument or even examine an issue critically using rational thought. It is sad commentary when the majority of a population thinks of argument only as two people in a heated exchange of nonsensical invectives.

It is, I am certain, incumbent upon us to continuously re-examination our beliefs, and pursuit of the truths they must depend upon are critical to our advancement as a culture, as a civilization, as a species. Any action taken in this regard cannot be urgent enough in repairing the damages we have caused through creating an ignorant society. I am not

arrogant, or an intellectual elitist, only someone who wants to champion the furtherance of the capability for reasonable, rational thought. Before something should be accepted as belief it must meet certain critical standards. Beliefs should be periodically reviewed, and only be changed after thorough careful examination. There will always be those who don't care or don't know enough to take that first skeptical look at their

beliefs, choosing to live in oblivious ignorance. To them I offer the Socratic maxim "The unexamined life is not worth living". Skepticism is most useful when not kept to oneself, and it is our responsibility to lead the way.

Tom Medero, originally from Long Island, NY, has lived in Philadelphia for 20 years now. He will be graduating from Community College of Philadelphia this Spring taking his Associates Degree in Liberal Arts/Behavioral Science. Tom is continuing his studies at Temple University this fall as a Psychology major.

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I JOTTED DOWN ALL MY THOUGHTS AND IDEAS,
GOT 'DUANEISM' RECOGNIZED AS AN
OFFICIAL RELIGION, AND I'VE FINALLY
FOUND SOMETHING I CAN TOTALLY BELIEVE IN

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Anosognosia

by Paul Schlueter III

David Eagleman wrote a book titled "Incognito," published by Pantheon Books, which was excerpted in The Week, Dec. 30, 2011, as "The Mystery of Expertise." The excerpt described the strange circumstance of how our brains somehow acquire a practiced expertise in performing extremely complex tasks, yet consciously we are all but unable to describe (accurately) the many steps and actions involved*. Take for example the simple act of walking. Easy to do, but can you clearly describe every little muscle movement involved, not only in the locomotion itself, but also the maintenance of balance?

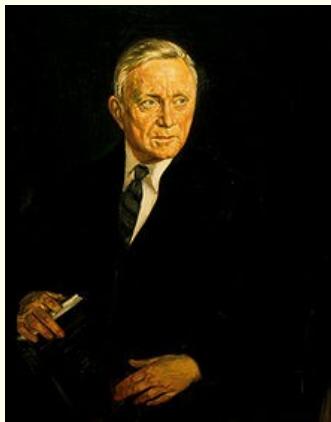
Before you answer, keep in mind that human-like locomotion has been an immensely difficult process for robot engineers to realistically simulate. Cartoonists cannot accurately draw a walk, except with the modern technique of using a computer digitized image filmed from live action, and then drawing the animation over the actor's outlines. When we think too hard about how we walk, we invariably alter our gait, and often end up stumbling. Yet, without conscious attention, we can not only walk, but also chew bubble gum and simultaneously send text messages!

As the excerpt describes, we have both implicit and explicit mental functions, ranging from memory to actions. What is implicit occurs "subconsciously," and what is explicit requires conscious deliberation. We cannot explicitly define the exact distance and location of our own pants pocket, yet we can easily slip our hand into it without looking. "**Anosognosia**" is described in the excerpt with a

reference to former Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, who was partially paralyzed by a stroke in 1974. His body was partially incapable of moving, yet Douglas still believed that he was unimpaired and healthy. Thus, the definition: "**A total lack of awareness about an impairment.**" Douglas was eventually removed from the Court because of his impairment and his total inability to acknowledge its existence. He truly believed that he could still walk, and even kick a football with his paralyzed leg, even when faced with direct challenges to demonstrate the acts.

The technical medical definition of anosognosia may be somewhat different, and may perhaps require a physical impairment be involved. I wonder, however, if we cannot also extend this mental aberration to include COGNITIVE impairments? An obvious one might be the persistent belief in the supernatural, whether ghosts, psychic abilities, possession, or the existence of God. Another might be the irrational insistence on seeing evil conspiracies in everything unpleasant around us. If a person is so cognitively impaired that they honestly cannot recognize the irrationality of their incredible beliefs, wouldn't that be another form of anosognosia?

We can also extend the mental difficulty to ordinary everyday misconceptions. Eagleman's text describes a challenge to describe the steering actions entailed in changing lanes while driving your car. Almost everyone turns the wheel for a moment, then returns it to the center;



**Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas
(1898 - 1980)**

Douglas was the longest serving justice of the United States Supreme Court, having been in that seat for 36 years. In 1939 Justice Louis D. Brandeis resigned from the court and Douglas was nominated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Douglas had a somewhat stormy career on the court having been twice subject to unsuccessful impeachment hearings. In 1974 Douglas suffered a debilitating stroke effecting the right hemisphere of his brain thus leading to his condition of **Anosognosia**. In November 1975 Douglas submitted his resignation to President Gerald Ford. In 1976 John Paul Stevens was appointed by Ford as Douglas' successor.

however, that action TURNS the car, and sends it off in a new direction. To change lanes, the initial turn/recenter must be quickly followed by an opposite turn/recenter action, which then resumes a course parallel to the initial one. We implicitly perform the task with ease, but when we try to explicitly describe it, most of us forget about half of it.

There's a technique involved in steering a motorcycle at speed, which has been an issue of skeptical contention since it was first regularly described in cycle magazines in the '70s. It's called "countersteering." The cycle's front wheel is an effective gyroscope, and as any kid knows, gyroscopes act counterintuitively when their wheel is spinning; yet, science has effectively described the laws of "gyroscopic precession" so thoroughly that they are used for navigation devices and to keep rockets on course! A simple mount can be devised that simulates the action of a cycle's front wheel, the action of the angled fork, and the side-to-side tilting of the cycle in turns. It is called countersteering because one actually applies pressure to the handlebars as if rotating the wheel to the left, causing the bike to lean (and actually turn) to the right. This is definitively counterintuitive. In fact, many experienced car drivers will get on a motorcycle and ride fairly well, until an emergency arises when they must avoid an obstacle. Using the implicit memories of car operation, they turn away from the obstacle; unfortunately, turning a motorcycle bar away from an obstacle both leans and steers the cycle right into that very obstacle!

Thousands of bikers, some with a great many miles of riding experience, absolutely refute the existence of countersteering. It is much like the insistence that humanity did NOT evolve from different, previous forms. Some people simply refuse to accept a demonstrable scientific fact, even when it is proven right before their eyes! Yet, a cyclist who KNOWS about countersteering, and who consciously and repetitively applies the technique in something you might as well call "practice," rapidly develops the implicit skill to wrench the bars in the proper direction to force the bike to turn. Notably (and in direct answer to those who insist they turn their bikes by "leaning to one side"), countersteering is also necessary to right the cycle from a leaned position after turning (how could you lean UPWARD, against gravity, to right the bike?) A rider can slalom in lazy swoops, imagining that he's leaning from side to side, but only a rider using countersteering can explicitly SNAP a cycle back and forth quickly, and to any desired angle, from any starting point.

Look at the motocrosser, mid-jump, performing a classic "cross-up;" his front wheel is wrenched in one direction, while the bike leans in the other, mid-air! Classic countersteering!

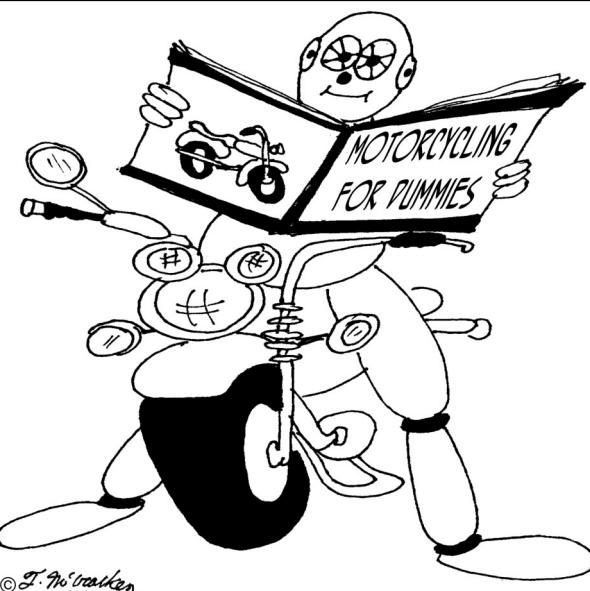
Yet, the anosognosia of failing to acknowledge and apply knowledge of how a cycle is steered is a potentially lethal cognitive impairment. The "schools" at some superbike racetracks teach riders some of the skills used by pro racers, including countersteering (as well as the specialized skill of coordinating the separate front and rear brakes of a bike). Unfortunately, PennDOT does not require that an applicant understand or demonstrate the countersteering technique to obtain a motorcycle license. Too many voters would likely object!

Anosognosia, in my own extended definition, also seems to hold force where auto drivers fail to recognize the impairment in their driving skill that occurs when they send text messages while driving. This controversial problem has recently been discussed in the Press, as lawmakers have tried to make the use of ANY cell phone while driving a violation of the traffic laws. My fellow Ham radio hobbyists enjoy exemption from this ban, as do the legions of truck drivers who have used CB radios for many decades; the difference is that MOST radio operators who are operating while driving are talking to OTHER drivers, and both parties are implicitly aware that driving is the primary task, so pauses in the conversations are accepted. The conversations are also

usually quite cursory (the exceptions led to the coining of the CB term "ratchetjaw"), involve some aspect of the traffic situation being experienced at the moment, and only require the use of a single hand to operate the PTT (push-to-talk) microphone switch. Cyclists who have CB or Ham sets installed on their bikes generally use a thumb button for PTT, so their operating hand remains in place on the handlebar at all times. Not so for car drivers and their cell phones; drivers often make calls because traffic bores them; they have extended, unrelated, and emotion-laden conversations; and they use one hand (or even two!) to handle their device. Some even apply makeup or eat while both driving and talking! But that accident is the other guy's fault, right?

Anosognosia should certainly be applied to the mental non-process that allows a drunk to believe that s/he is truly capable of unimpaired driving. Sure, most people are aware that they shouldn't drive when they're stumbling drunk, but

MCHUMOR.com by T. McCracken



Cartoon by T. McCracken
<http://www.mchumor.com/>
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many of us are completely unaware of the impairment we experience when we have only had a couple of drinks (as described in the recent "buzzed driving" public service announcements). In my youth, I initially believed that smoking pot didn't impair my driving/riding abilities, until one day I happened to realize that I simply couldn't hold "the line" of travel through familiar sweeping, easy curves with my usual precision if I'd been smoking pot. I admit that it was a shocking realization, because before I made the observation and drew the conscious connection between impairment and intoxication, I truly believed that a pot buzz was "safe." I won't lie and say that I never again smoked and rode; I did, at least, refrain from pushing the envelope while riding if I had been high recently, and/or refrain from smoking if I had intentions of "sporting" on the cycle later. I also noticed that I couldn't sing as well after smoking pot, and so I refrained prior to performances on stage, where I wanted to be at my best. "Responsible" partying is, after all, primarily a matter of simply acknowledging the impairment that partying incurs, and ensuring that the circumstances will accommodate your impairment if you choose to imbibe.

Anosognosia, then, is primarily a problem of lacking self-awareness, and/or of failing to accept the realities of life. We cannot avoid ALL impairments, but we can improve our ability to recognize and accommodate them, whether they are effects of our subconscious mentality, limits in our physical abilities, or self-inflicted intoxication (either recreational or medicinal in nature). We CAN consciously choose to reduce and/or avoid SOME forms of impairment. Those we cannot change, we may perhaps find accommodation for, instead. For those impairments we don't recognize, we can learn to

trust and accept the comments and advice of our familiars, who very often clearly see what we cannot (or don't want to) see for ourselves. Our vanities, our prejudices, our annoying habits, and many of our other personal shortcomings might be receptive to improvement, after all, if only we become open to recognizing what anosognosia has kept hidden from each of us so far.

Unless, like certain Presidential candidates, you already think you're PERFECT!

* Japanese martial arts experts use the word "MUSHIN" to describe a learned skill so well-practiced that it has become intuitive, no longer requiring conscious thought or the deliberate application of "technique." Mushin can describe anything from walking to fighting, from cooking to riding a cycle, or even to improvising a musical instrument solo on the fly as you accompany an unfamiliar tune. Mushin, then, would be the functional opposite of anosognosia; it is a competence that does not require the application of conscious awareness.



Paul Schlueter III is serving Life in Prison in NE Pennsylvania. His supporters have created a website about him. www.jaybird.org

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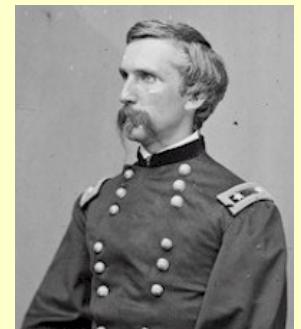
Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (1828-1914)

On Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at 7:30 PM at the Penn State Abington campus, Woodland Building, Room 313 Woodland, 1600 Woodland Rd, Abington the American Association of University Women will host a lecture by **John McNulty** from Penn State Abington, an authority on the Civil War, who will discuss **The Life of Joshua Chamberlain**, a Civil War Union soldier who achieved fame for his heroic leadership at the Battle of Little Roundtop at Gettysburg in July of 1863. This event is open to the public.

In 1862 Bowdoin College professor, Joshua L. Chamberlain went to the Maine state capital to offer his services in the state militia. On August 8 he was appointed lieutenant colonel of the regiment, the 20th Maine. With the regiment Chamberlain took part in the battles of Antietam, Shepherdstown Ford, Fredericksburg where he was wounded, and Chancellorsville.

At the battle of Gettysburg the regiment, now commanded by Chamberlain, held the extreme left flank on Little Round Top. He was wounded in this battle and was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valor. In November 1863 Chamberlain was suffering from malaria and was relieved from field service. Resuming command of the regiment in May 1864, he led it in the battle of Cold Harbor. Assigned to brigade command in June he fell wounded once again in the assault on Petersburg. He was promoted to brigadier general on the spot by General Grant, then carried to the rear, where a surgeon declared that he would certainly die from the wound. Chamberlain did recover and rejoined the army in November. He was forced by his wound to return to Maine, but he came back again during the Petersburg siege during which he was wounded for the fourth time.

Chamberlain took part in the Appomattox Campaign, about which he wrote *The Passing of the Armies*. He was given the honor of commanding the troops that formally accepted the surrender of the Confederate army. He later served as governor of Maine and president of Bowdoin College. Chamberlain died 50 years after his "mortal wound".

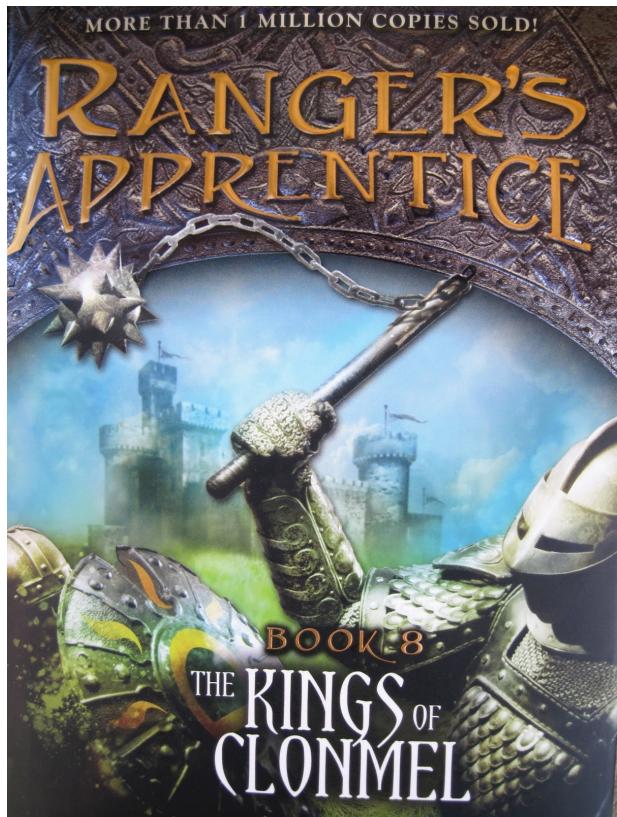


Ranger's Apprentice Book 8: The Kings of Clonmel

by John Flanagan

New York: Philomel Books. 2010.

**ISBN-10: 0399252061; ISBN-13: 978-0399252068 (hardcover),
\$17.99 (\$10.79, Amazon.com). 400 pages.**



A book review by Eric Hamel

John Flanagan is a children's fiction writer living in Australia, with a background in advertising. The central premise of this book, set in a fictionalized medieval Europe, is that a religious group is rapidly gaining influence and converts by covertly orchestrating acts of destruction and lawlessness, while publicly offering its god's protection against these threats. The book is intended for young readers, and my interest as an ex-member was in seeing to what extent it provides them with an improved understanding of how cults work and how one can guard against them.

To a limited degree it does so, illustrating some of the ways perceptions and emotions can be shaped by stagecraft, but not the subtler and more psychologically invasive forms of manipulation. Similarly, it treats cultism as a matter only of deception, not self-deception, depicting the cult leader and his inner circle as conscious charlatans who believe in none of what they're doing. Only the more recent converts are actual believers and, because they've been deceived purely by control of information rather than systematic ego destruction, it's not too hard for the heroes to turn them against the cult once they're in a position to expose its fraudulent practices.

Of course, when even much of the (real-world) adult population has no understanding of cults whatsoever, most juvenile readers will come away from this book with more understanding than they had before. And perhaps a psychologically deeper treatment would go over the heads of many. The most important lesson taught by The Kings of Clonmel may be that expressed by these words of a sage old woman who hasn't gone in with the cult:

"A god who brings you good and bad in equal amounts doesn't ask for much. Maybe a prayer or two. Maybe the odd sacrifice of a beast. But a god who promises only good times? A god like that will always want something of you."

In other words, any offer that seems too good to be true not only probably isn't, but also is likely to end up costing more than one counted on.

This book review has recently been published in **ICSA Today**, the magazine of the International Cultic Studies Association. See http://www.icsahome.com/idx_bookreviews.asp?ID=51439

The ICSA home page is: <http://www.icsahome.com/>

Founded in 1979, the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) is a global network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments. ICSA is tax-exempt, supports civil liberties, and is not affiliated with any religious or commercial organizations.



Wagner Free Institute of Science Adult Education Course Schedule Spring 2012 Courses

Wagner Free Institute of Science courses are open to the general public and are FREE and Open to the General Public, but donations are very appreciated. Courses are taught at the undergraduate level.

Introduction to Pollination Biology, Professor Tatyana Livshultz. 6 Wednesdays, March 21 - April 25, 2012, 6:30 - 7:45 PM. Independence Branch of the Free Library, 18 S. 7th Street (between Market and Chestnut). Pollination evolved 360 million years ago with the evolution of seed plants and is ubiquitous in all landscapes dominated by them. This course will survey the science of pollination biology, including the discovery of plant pollination in the late seventeenth century, plant adaptations to animal pollination and how they evolve, the diversity of pollinating animals, the many ways that plants manipulate animals to achieve pollination, and the importance of pollination to human society. No preregistration required.

Agricultural Science and Policy, Professor David Hewitt. 6 Mondays, March 26 - April 30, 2012, 6:30 - 8:00 PM. Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 100 N. 20th Street (20th and Arch Streets). This course will provide scientific background to understand selected current issues in agricultural and food policy. Subjects will include ecology, physiology (plant and animal), genetics and molecular/cell biology and will be integrated into discussions of topics in fertilizer production and nutrient management and seed production and biotechnology. Other topics will be discussed.

Preregistration is required. You may register online at

<https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07e5atznm93fafb8a5&oseq=>
call (215) 763-6529, ext. 23.

How to Become a Certified Heinz NWR Weed Warrior



The mission of the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge Weed Warriors is to enrich wildlife habitat within the Refuge by participating in the restoration of native plant communities. Weed Warriors recognize that these native plant communities are vital to supporting a rich and diverse population of native wildlife, including more than 300 species of birds. After taking an online training course and attending an in-house workshop and field training, Weed Warriors remove invasive plant species in plots they have adopted or along refuge trails.

Weed Warrior Volunteer Orientation online training can be found at <http://www.friendsofheinzrefuge.org/weedwarriors/intro.html>.

The in-house workshop and field training take place on the refuge. The next scheduled **Weed Warrior In-House Workshop and Field Training Course** will occur on Saturday, **May 26, 2012** from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and this training will be offered again on **June 23** and **July 21**.

To register for training, please call the refuge at **215-365-3118**.

PhACT CALENDAR

PhACT Events

Dr. David Cattell, Chairman of the Physics Department of Community College of Philadelphia hosts meetings of PhACT - at 2:00 PM on the third Saturday of most months at Community College of Philadelphia... Parking is easily available and costs \$4.00 for all day. Enter the college parking lot on 17th Street which is one way south bound. This meeting site is handicap accessible. **PhACT Meetings are Free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.**



Saturday, February 18, 2012 - Drexel Professor Stacy Ake will speak on "Bioethics and the Evolution of Consciousness". In Lecture Room C2-28 in the Center for Business and Industry at the corner of 18th and Callowhill Streets. At 2:00 PM. See page 1 for more details.

Saturday, March 17, 2012 - Physicist Tom Napier, a long time member of PhACT, will discuss "New Developments In Cold Fusion". This lecture is rescheduled because of a snow cancellation in January. It will not snow on March 17. In Lecture Room C2-28 in the Center for Business and Industry at the corner of 18th and Callowhill Streets. At 2:00 PM



Saturday, April 21, 2012 - TBA

Wednesday, February 8, 2012 at 7:30 PM. at Frankford Hall at Frankford and Girard Avenues.

Philadelphia Nerd Nite, an evening of good food, beer, and science lectures, is generally on the second Wednesday of the month.

doors at 7:00, program at 7:30, \$5 cover

◆ "Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite: Evolution and the Modular Mind" by Rob Kurzban, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, and currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of the journal Evolution and Human Behavior.

◆ "Jumping out of planes: the art and sport of skydiving" by Alex Mandel, a licensed skydiver who has been frequently jumping out of airplanes for the past 4 years.

◆ "Chemistry and energy. From alternative fuel to blowing sh*t up" by Mike Zdilla, professor of Inorganic Chemistry at Temple University.

◆ **Comedic storytelling** by Zach Webber and tunes by song knitter Rob Gallo.

Check the website for details at

<http://philadelphia.nerdnite.com/updates/>
Be there and B²



Thursday, February 9, 2012 - 4:00 - 7:00 PM - Lecture at 5:30 PM at the Wagner Free Institute of Science, 1700 West Montgomery Avenue, , Philadelphia, PA 19121

ph 215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

Weeknights at the Wagner

What's Love Got To Do With It?

Fertilization Imagery in the Art of Gustav Klimt, Frida Kahlo, and Diego Rivera

An Illustrated Lecture by Dr. Scott Gilbert, Swarthmore College

Thursday, February 9, 2012 - Doors open at 6:30 pm - at The Academy of Natural Sciences, 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103 www.ansp.org

Mega-Bad Movie Night!

The Lost World: Jurassic Park

Join us at the Academy after hours to watch some "awesomely awful" movies. The Academy's own experts will be onstage to comment on the many scientific absurdities—think Mystery Science Theater 3000!

We're getting started at a new, earlier time so you have a chance to look around before the movie begins at 8 pm! Grab some snacks and a beer, and



The **PhACT Calendar** is open to members and non-members who wish to announce meetings and events of other groups of which they are interested or affiliated. These events should be of some general interest to the Skeptical or Scientific community and should be within a reasonable radius of Philadelphia. Send submissions to the editor at phactpublicity@aol.com. Keep the announcements brief. Space is limited and insertions will be made on a first come-first served basis after the needs of PhACT are accomplished. Phactum does not accept paid advertising.

then check out the many cool things on display at the Academy. We'll unveil some amazing fossils from our Paleontology Collection.

Register: mbmtnthelostworld.eventbrite.com/

Thursday, February 9, 2012 at 7:30PM at Central Library, 1901 Vine Street, 19103, 215-686-5322

Walter Isaacson | Steve Jobs

Bestselling biographer Walter Isaacson is the author of Benjamin Franklin: An American Life, Kissinger: A Biography and Einstein: His Life and Universe. He is the president and CEO of the Aspen Institute for educational and policy studies. The recipient of several awards for his reporting, including the Overseas Press Club Award for foreign news interpretation, Isaacson has served as the Chairman and CEO of CNN and as Editor of Time Magazine. His timely new biography of the late Apple chief executive is a testament to an icon that represented the intersection of creativity and technology. Composed of more than 40 interviews with Jobs himself, as well as with more than 200 friends, colleagues, and adversaries, Steve Jobs traces the unprecedented career and extraordinary life of the beloved pioneer.

Pine Tree Foundation Endowed Lecture

Cost: \$15 General Admission, \$7 Students

<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/calendar/>

Limit of two tickets per person

Friday, February 10, 2012 at 11:00 AM

Annual Lincoln Birthday Celebration Parade and Ceremonies, sponsored by the Union League of Philadelphia.

Civil War military units, civilians, and heritage groups are welcome and encouraged to march in the parade through Philadelphia to Independence Hall to honor President Lincoln on his birthday. Participants will gather in the Meade Room of the Union League, 140 S. Broad St. by 11AM.

Convenient Parking available on a limited basis near the Union League prior to 11am.

Color Guards, Firing Party, music, and wreaths are appreciated. There will be a complimentary lunch for the participants at 12 noon. After the parade ALL are invited to return to the League via coach for refreshments in the historic Meredith Café. To register: Contact: Dr. Andy Waskie. 215-204-5452

andy.waskie@temple.edu

Friday, February 10, 2012 -- Delaware Valley MENSA General Membership is generally on the 2nd Friday of the month. Check the MENSA calendar at: http://dvm.us.mensa.org/calendar.shtml#g_m_meeting

Friday, February 10, 2012 at 7:00 PM in the Greater Plymouth Community Center, 2910 Jolly Rd, Plymouth Meeting, PA.

Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers

Lunabots and the Rocksat Suborbital Mission

Professor John J. Helferty, Temple University Dept. of Engineering.

Free and Open to the General Public

<http://dvaa.org>

SOCRATES CAFE is moderated by: Lewis Mifsud, Ph.D., P.E., a member of PhACT and of The American Academy of Forensic Sciences. At 7:00 PM every Monday evening except holidays (on Tuesdays after a Monday holiday) at the Springfield Township Public Library (215-836-5300) at 1600 Papermill Mill Road, Wyndmoor, PA. 19038. This philosophical discussions group is free and open to the public. Join us and share your critical thinking, questions and opinions.



Saturday, February 11, 2012 at 1:00pm at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA19132. 215-228-8200

<http://www.thelaurelhillcemetery.org>

Til Death Do Us Part: Love Stories of Laurel Hill

Join us for this tour and reception honoring the "spirit" of Valentines' Day. Love and Death: The preferred subjects of poets and philosophers across eras and oceans, subjects intertwined in their great mystery, in their power to inspire, to destroy, and to change our worlds forever. Some may contend that death cannot bring an end to true love, while others deem only love itself to be more unforgiving than death. The love stories of Laurel Hill are as varied as the hearts from which they have sprung...Hearts no longer intact, though perhaps still beating...for someone...somewhere. While many of the stories we'll hear may certainly warm our hearts, the rest of our appendages may be subject to the stone-cold of a cemetery winter; dress appropriately. Red wine, hot chocolate and sultry bites aside a toasty fire will warm your flesh afterwards.

\$20/person; \$18/students and seniors; \$17/members. Advance registration is requested. Tickets can be purchased online, or by calling 215.228.8200.

Monday, February 13, 2012 at 6:00 PM - Science on Tap takes place at 6pm on the second Monday of every month at National Mechanics, 22 South Third St., Philadelphia 19106

Science on Tap is a monthly gathering that features a brief, informal presentation by a scientist or other expert followed by lively conversation.

<http://scienceontapphilly.com>

"Violence in the Laboratory: How Science Changed War and War Changed Science"

M. Susan Lindee, Professor and Associate Dean for the Social Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania

Over the last century both science and war have been transformed in tandem. Science has become more tightly linked to militarization and state power. Today, many forms of scientific research are supported with military funding sources even when the subject matter (e.g. mapping genes, tracking environmental change, or studying the brain) seems remote from any practical application on the battlefield. At the same time, military conflict has become more technically sophisticated in ways that have reshaped the battlefield experience for both soldiers and civilians. We now see remarkable levels of "asymmetrical risk," for example, in which combatants commuting to a center in the American Southwest can guide attacks with drones at sites on the other side of the world. Scientific, high-tech warfare changes the rules of both war and science. In this discussion, Dr. Susan Lindee will raise questions about how science and war have both changed in the 20th century.

This month's Science on Tap is presented by the American Philosophical Society (APS) Museum

Ages 21+ or accompanied by a chaperone 25 years or older. Free.

Wednesday, February 15, 2012 at 12:00n - 1:00PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

http://www.collegephil.org/prog_calendar.htm

Food & Thought: "Who Suicides, and Why?"

Speaker: George M. Wohlreich, MD, FCPP, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia; staff psychiatrist at Pennsylvania Hospital and a Professor of Psychiatry (Adjunct) at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and the Temple University School of Medicine

Suicide, rarely talked about, is the ninth leading cause of death in the United States. There are some age cohorts in which it is one of the top three causes.

This talk will discuss our understanding of common factors associated with suicide, and factors that are unique to certain age, religious, socioeconomic, and ethnic groups. We will also consider why people commit suicide, risk factors, problems of prediction, general preventive and protective mechanisms, and the possibility of treating actively suicidal people.

In this talk, Dr. Wohlreich will try to make this formerly taboo topic more approachable and understandable.

Fee for lunch. To register: <http://wohlreich.eventbrite.com/>

Wednesday, February 15, 2012 Networking Reception: 6:00–6:30 pm

Program: 6:30–8:30 pm at The Academy of Natural Sciences, 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103
www.ansp.org/environmental/
 215-299-1108 cep@ansp.org

An Urban Sustainability Forum**High Tunnels: A Sustainable Solution for Local Urban Agriculture**

At this Urban Sustainability Forum, find out how high tunnels could

help improve access to affordable, nutritious foods in Philadelphia. High tunnels are nonelectric, temporary structures that consist of a layer of plastic over a pipe frame. These structures, however, are not greenhouses. They do not require a permanent heating or ventilation system, ventilation is accomplished manually, and there are no furnaces or fans. High tunnels can extend the growing season and improve the

yield and quality of vegetables, small fruits, and cut flowers.

Urban farming is a fast-growing movement in the United States, especially in Philadelphia. As more than 86 percent of the U.S. population now resides in or around urban areas, the sustained use of urban farming could contribute to food security, food safety, and workforce development. Increased availability of fresh and nutritious food in urban areas could combat the alarming rise of obesity and thus reduce related healthcare costs in the United States. High tunnel projects could help eliminate Philadelphia's "food deserts," or urban areas lacking access to nutritious, affordable food, and provide more fresh and nutritious specialty crops to underserved populations.

Thursday, February 16, 2012 at 7 PM at Center on the Hill in the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, 8855 Germantown Avenue.

Professor Arthur Caplan will discuss: **Ethics, Health Care, and Health Terminology: Where Are We Going and Where Should We Be Going?** Dr. Caplan is the recipient of many awards and honors including the Franklin Award from the City of Philadelphia. He holds seven honorary degrees from colleges and medical schools. In December 2008, Discover Magazine named him one of the ten most influential people in science. A \$10.00 donation is requested to benefit the Chestnut Hill Center for Enrichment, a senior citizens program.

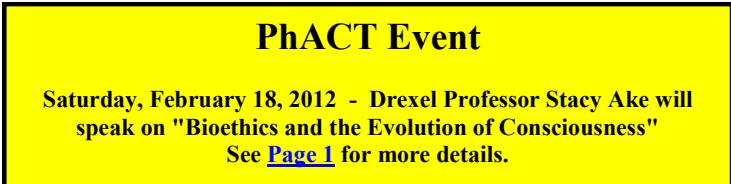
Friday, February 17, 2012 at 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM at the American Philosophical Society, Benjamin Franklin Hall, 427 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

John Barry: An American Hero in the Age of Sail by Tim McGrath

Tim McGrath is a compelling and lucid writer, and is an executive who lives outside of Philadelphia. An avid sailor, he has been published in Naval History magazine. He has served on the board of directors of the Kearsley Retirement Community (founded by Benjamin Franklin's physician) Christ Church Hospital and Fort Mifflin. He has written articles on management, U.S. history, and healthcare issues for various newspapers and magazines.

John Barry has been nominated for the Samuel Eliot Morison Award for Excellence in Naval Literature. Free and open to the public.

<http://www.amphilsoc.org/events/all>



Saturday, February 18, 2012 at 1:00pm at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA19132. 215-228-8200

<http://www.thelaurelhilccemetery.org>

The Victorian Celebration of Death

During the Victorian period, the burial customs and places used by western society changed greatly and for a variety of reasons. Join us for a discussion inside Laurel Hill Cemetery's historic Gatehouse concerning the rituals surrounding the death of a loved one, including clothing, burial processions, monuments and symbolism. Following the presentation, a tour will highlight monuments and gravestones illustrating the mourning symbolism discussed earlier, and focusing on individuals who lived (and died) in this period, such as famed painter Thomas Sully and publisher of Godey's Lady's Book, Louis Antoine Godey. This walking tour will be led by Victorian-era living historians and Friends board members, Ed and Mary Quinn. It will conclude with cookies and refreshments.
 \$12/person; \$10/seniors + students; \$9/members

Tickets can be purchased at the door, or in advance online, or by calling 215.228.8200.

Sunday, February 19, 2012 - 12 Noon – 5PM**14th Annual Meade Society Symposium: "General Meade's Campaigns of 1862"**

Featuring noted historians, speakers, and authors on Philadelphia, General Meade and the Civil War, as well as books, prints and raffles.

Conservatory at West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Bala Cynwyd, PA

<http://www.forever-care.com/contact.php>

Cost: \$30 per person including registration; luncheon & refreshments

Contact: Jerry McCormick 215-848-7753

Jerry McCormick gedwinmc@msn.com

Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at 5:30, movie starts at 6:00 at Norristown Library Community Room, 1001 Powell Street, Norristown, Pennsylvania. The Freethought Society's **"Dinner and a Movie"** event format is back by popular demand. Please bring your own dinner to the on to view **"Bondage and the Bible"**. Attendees are encouraged to arrive between 5:30 and 5:45 PM to socialize and set up their dinner tables. FS will provide bottled water, napkins and paper plates.

"Bondage and the Bible" is a 60 minute independent film by Eric Harmon. This film includes the critical analysis of the Bible's endorsement of slavery and examines the inconsistent message in the New Testament which supports slavery and inequality. View the trailer at:

www.filmbaby.com/films/3052

For information about public transportation please see the following website:

<http://www.septa.org/stations/rail/norristown.html>

Please note that no alcoholic beverages are allowed on library premises.

Donations to offset related expenses are greatly appreciated.

<http://www.FtSociety.org>

Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at 7:30 PM at the Penn State Abington campus, Woodland Building, Room 313 Woodland, 1600 Woodland Rd, Abington. Sponsored by the AAUW, American Association of University Women, **John McNulty** from Penn State Abington, an authority on the Civil War, will discuss **The Life of Joshua Chamberlain**, a Civil War Union soldier who achieved fame for his heroic leadership at the Battle of Little Roundtop at Gettysburg in July of 1863. Chamberlain was wounded in 1864 at the Siege of Petersburg. After the war he went on to become governor of Maine and president of Bowdoin College in Maine. See page 13 for more information.

This event is open to the public.



Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at 12:00 to 1:00 PM at the Chemical Heritage Foundation, 315 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Tel: 215-925-2222 • <http://www.chemheritage.org>

Brown Bag Lecture - A talk by Jeffrey Johnson.

For more than forty years, until 1939, chemical education in Germany

was self-regulated by an organization called the Association of Laboratory Directors at German Universities (Verband der Laboratoriumsvorstände an deutschen Hochschulen), which collectively determined the guidelines for the pre-doctoral qualifying examination and issued unofficial certificates to students who passed. In 1939, however, the Reich Ministry of Education dissolved the Association and issued the first official national guidelines for chemical education, which were further refined during the early years of World War II. Along with this change came the first officially-recognized certifying examination for university chemists, conferring the title "Diplom-Chemiker" (Certified Chemist), an innovation carried over into the postwar era. But this long-desired official recognition of the German chemical profession was by no means an unmixed blessing. This paper will discuss the educational reforms as the final step in the regimentation of the German chemical profession and its integration into the militarized structure of National Socialist technology in preparation for war, a process fraught with negative implications for the quality of German chemical education.

Jeffrey Johnson has taught at the State University of New York at Binghamton and since 1986 at Villanova University, where he is currently a professor of history. His research and publications have focused on the history of chemists, chemical institutions, and the chemical industry in Germany during the period from the late 19th century through World War II. In 2011 he succeeded Christoph Meinel as president of the Commission on the History of Modern Chemistry in the Division of the History of Science and Technology of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science. Johnson received his Ph.D. in modern European history from Princeton University with a dissertation (which became his first book, *The Kaiser's Chemists* (1990)), on the founding of the chemical Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes in pre-World War I Germany.

Free and Open to the Public.

Wednesday, February 22, 2012 at 7:15 p.m. at Brittingham's Irish Pub and Restaurant, 640 East Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania. (610)828-7351.

American Revolution Round Table of Philadelphia (ARRTOP)

<http://www.arrtop.com/>

John Roma will speak on his book "Twas Seeding Time: A Mennonite view of the American Revolution." It will be local picture of events in the neighborhood of the Perkiomen and Skippack Creeks, 1777-1778. A group of members and most of the ARRTOP Advisory Board will meet for dinner at 5:30 p.m. at Brittingham's and we share dinner with our guest speaker and you are cordially invited. Meetings are free and open to the public.

Thursday, February 23, 2012 Networking Reception: 6:00–6:30 pm Program: 6:30–8:30 pm

The Academy of Natural Sciences, 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103 www.ansp.org/environmental/ 215-299-1108 cep@ansp.org

A Town Square Program: Reimagining Urban Highways

After decades of disinvestment, many American cities are rebounding and growing their cultural, economic, and environmental assets. Despite their renewal, cities such as Philadelphia, New York, New Orleans, and St. Louis are saddled with highways located in their increasingly popular downtowns.

How should cities change highways to meet 21st-century needs and contemporary urban lifestyles? This panel discussion will look at successful urban highway removal projects in Milwaukee, New Haven, and Providence and explore ways of mitigating highways in Philadelphia and the Bronx.

Featuring:

Aaron Naparstek (moderator), Loeb Fellow, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University; Streetsblog

Ashwin Balakrishnan, Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance

Thomas Deller, Director of Planning + Development, City of Providence, Rhode Island

Diana Lind, Next American City

Peter Park, Loeb Fellow, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University

Friday, February 24, 2012 at 10:00am at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA19132. 215-228-8200

<http://www.thelaurelhilcemetary.org>

Laurel Hill: The Hot Spots and Storied Plots

Join us for this informative overview of Laurel Hill's long and colorful history, which will include many of the marble masterpieces, stunning views and legendary stories that afford the cemetery its WOW factor. This is the ultimate tour for first-time visitors to Laurel Hill, and anyone else who likes beautiful art, stimulating history, and just enjoying life...even amongst the dead. This walking tour will be led by Friends researcher and board member, Laura Symczyk. NEW Hot Spots and Storied Plots will be presented monthly as part of Laurel Hill Cemetery's Fourth Friday tour series, which take place on the fourth Friday of every month at 10:00am.

\$8/general admission; \$5/members

Tickets can be purchased at the door, or in advance online, or by calling 215.228.8200.



Saturday, February 25, 2012 at 11am

Annual Octavius V. Catto Honor Ceremony



Corner: 6th & Lombard Streets, Philadelphia, PA Honoring the great Black civil rights and military leader. Wreath-Laying ceremony. All military units, period civilians, veterans and heritage groups are encouraged to participate. Colors, wreaths and music encouraged.

PA National Guard Award Ceremony to follow at 12:30 in the Union League for new 'Catto Medal'

Information: Dr. Andy Waskie 215-204-5452 or andy.waskie@temple.edu

Tuesday, February 28, 2012 at 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. at the Chemical Heritage Foundation, 315 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Tel: 215-925-2222 •

<http://www.chemheritage.org>

Brown Bag Lecture

"Trolling for Comments: How Authors, Bloggers, and Trolls Wrangle with the Chemical Literature"

A talk by Michelle Franel. Check website for more information.

Free and Open to the Public.

Wednesday, February 29, 2012 at 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. at Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107 Telephone: 215-732-6200

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

Political Reform in the Gilded Age

TEACHER WORKSHOP / The Gilded Age of the late 1800s is not typically recalled as an age of reform, though the Pendleton Civil Service Act was signed into law in 1883. This action to stem patronage in federal jobs was a response to the dramatic expansion in the size and scope of government. Reformers hoped its passage would initiate an era of civil service reforms at the state and local levels too, but Pennsylvania did not pass a comprehensive civil service reform law until 1941.

This teacher workshop introduces a lesson on the reform efforts using the records of the Civil-Service Reform Association of Philadelphia housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Benjamin Danson, a high school social studies teacher in the Rose Tree Media School District of Pennsylvania who created the lesson for the Fall 2011 issue of Pennsylvania Legacies, will showcase these documents and suggest how teachers can use them in the classroom to explore essential questions about the multiple causations of a historical event, the role of analysis in historical construction, and how individuals and interest groups help government shape policy. Attendees will receive a copy of the Fall 2011 issue of Pennsylvania Legacies. Teachers may receive Act 48 credit. FREE.

Tuesday, March 6, 2012 at 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. at the Chemical Heritage Foundation, 315 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106
Tel: 215-925-2222 •

<http://www.chemheritage.org>

Brown Bag Lecture

A talk by Joe Martin. Check website for more information
Free and Open to the Public.

Wednesday, March 7, 2012 at 12:00n - 1:00PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

http://www.collophyphil.org/prog_calendar.htm

Food & Thought: "This Time It's Different? The Economics and Politics of the Great Recession"

Speaker: Mark Kuperberg, PhD, Professor of Economics, Swarthmore College

Mark Twain said that, "History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme." To what degree are the political and economic events that we are living through similar to the past, and to what degree are they different? In short, are things really getting worse, or does it just feel that way? In this talk, Dr. Kuperberg will explore these questions, focusing on the economic, political and legal issues that shape our collective civic experience.

Fee for lunch. To register: <http://kuperberg.eventbrite.com/>

Friday, March 9, 2012 -- Delaware Valley MENSA General Membership is generally on the 2nd Friday of the month. Check the MENSA calendar at:

http://dvm.us.mensa.org/calendar.shtml#gm_meeting

Friday, March 9, 2012 at 7:00 PM in the Greater Plymouth Community Center, 2910 Jolly Rd, Plymouth Meeting, PA.

Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers

Near-Field Cosmology

Beth Willmann, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Astronomy at Haverford College.

Free and Open to the General Public

<http://dvaa.org>



Sunday, March 11, 2012 at 2:00PM at Central Library, 1901 Vine Street, 19103, 215-686-5322

Cost: FREE

No tickets required. For Info: 215-567-4341.

<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/calendar/>

Alain de Botton | Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion

Alain de Botton's aphoristic first novel, On Love, was a winking dissertation on romantic love, published when he was just 23. It was followed by several books that explored a philosophy of everyday life, including The Architecture of Happiness and How Proust Can Change Your Life, which have achieved bestselling status in 30 countries. He also founded and helps to run The School of Life in London, dedicated to a new vision of education on how to live well. In Religion for Atheists, de Botton offers a practical and provocative argument for religion as a secular resource, boldly encouraging non-believers to borrow from the great wisdoms and beautiful rituals of world religions for everything from building a sense of community to escaping 24-hour media consumption.

Monday, March 12, 2012 at 6:00 PM - Science on Tap takes place at 6pm on the second Monday of every month at

National Mechanics, 22 South Third St., Philadelphia 19106

Science on Tap is a monthly gathering that features a brief, informal presentation by a scientist or other expert followed by lively conversation.

<http://scienceontapphilly.com/>

topic tba - Bonnie Bassler, Squibb Professor in Molecular Biology, Princeton University

This month's Science on Tap is presented by the Wagner Free Institute of Science

Ages 21+ or accompanied by a chaperone 25 years or older

Tuesday, March 13, 2012 at 6:30PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

http://www.collophyphil.org/prog_calendar.htm

The Ethics of Using Prisoners as Sources of Cadaver Organs

Speaker: Arthur L. Caplan, PhD, FCPP

The movement to try and close the ever-widening gap between demand and supply of organs by creative strategies has recently arrived at the prison gate in the USA and other nations. While there is some enthusiasm for using prisoners as sources of organs, there are both practical barriers and moral concerns which make it likely that the use of prisoners will not and ought not contribute in any way to relieving the problem of organ shortage through cadaveric donation. Indeed it is time for the medical community to speak up in protest of the continued practice of retrieving organ parts in China and some other nations.

Sponsored by the College's Section on Medicine, Ethics, and the Law.
Free. To register: <http://cadaver.eventbrite.com/>

Tuesday, March 13, 2012 at 7:30PM at Central Library, 1901 Vine Street, 19103, 215-686-5322

Cost: FREE

No tickets required. For Info: 215-567-4341.

<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/calendar>

George Dyson | Turing's Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe

In the 1940s and 1950s, a group of brilliant engineers led by John von Neumann gathered in Princeton, New Jersey with the joint goal of realizing Alan Turing's theoretical universal machine—a thought experiment that scientists use to understand the limits of mechanical computation. As a result of their fervent work, the crucial advancements that dominated 20th century technology emerged. In Turing's Cathedral, technology historian George Dyson recreates the scenes of focused experimentation, mathematical insight, and creative genius that broke the distinction between numbers that mean things and numbers that do things—giving us computers, digital television, modern genetics, and models of stellar evolution. Also a philosopher of science, Dyson's previous books include Baidarka, Darwin Among the Machines, and Project Orion.

Tuesday, March 13, 2012 at 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. at the Chemical Heritage Foundation, 315 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Tel: 215-925-2222 •

<http://www.chemheritage.org>

Brown Bag Lecture - A talk by Rebecca Laroche

Continuing the work of an exhibition at the Folger Shakespeare Library from last year, this presentation places Robert Boyle's experiment "Of turning the Blew of Violets into a Red by Acid Salts, and to a Green by Alcalizate and the use of it for Investigating the Nature of Salts" in the context of the extensive archive of women's medical receipts. In the experiment, Boyle used the common medicine "Syrup of Violets" and its chemical sensitivity of turning color when introduced to acids and bases in developing an early pH indicator. When viewed next to the hundreds of relevant medical receipts, we discover that Boyle's experiment builds upon knowledge collectively held by women and men, including Alathea Talbot and Hugh Plat, in the making of the medicine.

Rebecca Laroche is professor of English at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. She has published articles on Shakespeare, early modern women's writing, medical history, and ecofeminism. In 2009, her monograph Medical Authority and Englishwomen's Herbal Texts, 1550–1650, appeared in Ashgate's series Literary and Scientific Cultures of the Early Modern World. Last year, she was the guest-curator of the exhibition "Beyond Home Remedy: Women, Medicine, and Science" at the Folger Shakespeare Library. The volume Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity, which she co-edited with Jennifer Munroe, came out with Palgrave Macmillan in November 2011. She is currently working on a monograph on the importance of collective plant knowledge in Shakespeare's oeuvre.

Free and Open to the Public.

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 at 7:30 PM. Philadelphia Nerd Nite, an evening of good food, beer, and science lectures, is generally on the second Wednesday of the month. Check the website for details at <http://philadelphia.nerdnite.com/updates/>



Thursday, March 15, 2012 4:00 - 7:00 PM - Lecture at 5:30 PM at the Wagner Free Institute of Science, 1700 West Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19121
215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

Weeknights at the Wagner

Instructing our Cells to Rebuild our Bodies An illustrated presentation by Dr. James Gearhart, University of Pennsylvania

Few topics have had such a major impact on society as stem cell research - and few discoveries hold such promise for the future of disease treatment. Dr. Gearhart, Director of the Institute for Regenerative Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, led the research team that first identified and isolated human embryonic stem cells. His groundbreaking research has paved the way for the new field of Regenerative Medicine.

Free and Open to the Public.

Thursday, March 15, 2012 at 7:30PM at Central Library, 1901 Vine Street, 19103 215-686-5322

Elaine Pagels | Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation

Elaine Pagels exploded the myth of the early Christian Church as a unified movement in her 1979 book The Gnostic Gospels, which won both the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Book Award, and was chosen by the Modern Library as one of the 100 best books of the 20th century. Known for her work in translating the Nag Hammadi Library, she joined the Princeton faculty in 1982, shortly after receiving a MacArthur Fellowship. Her other books include The Origin of Satan; New York Times bestseller, Beyond Belief; and Reading Judas. In Revelations, Pagels examines the historical origin of the New Testament Book of Revelation and the roots of dissent and violence in the world's religions.

Cost: \$15 General Admission, \$7 Students

<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/calendar>

Tickets on sale January 12, 2012 at 10:00 a.m.

PhACT Event

Saturday, March 17, 2012 - Physicist Tom Napier will discuss "New Developments in Cold Fusion".

Saturday, March 17, 2012 at 1:00pm at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA19132. 215-228-8200

<http://www.thelaurelhillcemetery.org>

St. Patrick's Day Tour, Tastes and Toasts

You don't have to be Irish to be part of this festive St. Patrick's Day tour and reception. Though dead men tell no tales, there are two places that we can learn much about them: the wake-house and Laurel Hill Cemetery. Join us at the latter, as we celebrate the "spirit" of St. Patrick's Day, while honoring the heritage and accomplishments of our proudest Irish souls, now gone to their final reward. 'Tis a festive occasion to be enjoyed by the living, for earth has no sorrows that heaven cannot heal! No St. Patrick's Day would be complete without beer and Irish food; sample both at the after-tour reception in Laurel Hill's historic Gatehouse. The event will be led by Jerry McCormick of Six Counties' descent, and his rebel counterpart of native Irish birth, Bill Doran.

\$20/person; \$18/students and seniors; \$17/members. Advance registration is requested. Tickets can be purchased online, or by calling 215.228.8200.

Wednesday, March 21, 2012 at 6:00pm at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA19132. 215-228-8200
<http://www.thelaurelhillcemetery.org>

Classy Broads and Daring Dames: The Ladies of North Laurel Hill

Laurel Hill Cemetery marks Women's History Month with a program honoring some of their most accomplished broads and dames. What do a Revolutionary War lady patriot, the first burial at Laurel Hill, a great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin, and a famous publisher and anti-suffragette have in common? The easy answer is that they are all buried in North Laurel Hill, the Cemetery's oldest section. Join us as we unearth their stories, along with those of other women whose contributions to science and other disciplines have made life as we know it possible. This inspiring tour appropriately takes place on the first full day of spring, and will conclude with a reception and toast to classy broads and daring dames of past and present. The walking tour will be led by independent researcher and Friends of Laurel Hill board president, Carol Yaster.

\$20/person; in honor of Ladies' Night at the Cemetery, women receive 1/2 off admission!

Advance registration is requested. Tickets can be purchased online, or by calling 215.228.8200.

Wednesday, March 21, 2012 at 12:00n - 1:00 PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

http://www.collegeofphilly.org/prog_calendar.htm

Food & Thought: "Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing"

Speaker: Barry Schwartz, PhD, Professor of Psychology, Swarthmore College

When our social institutions-hospitals, schools, courtrooms, or banks-are not giving us what we need, we reach for two tools to make them work better-more and stricter rules, and smarter incentives. In this talk Dr. Schwartz will argue that neither rules, no matter how strict, nor incentives, no matter how smart, can get us what we need. They are no substitute for virtue, and for the particular virtue that Aristotle called "practical wisdom." Indeed rules and incentives typically make the problem worse. Rules prevent people from developing the skill they need to do the right thing, and incentives undermine people's will to do the right thing. The argument will draw on examples from a variety of different social institutions, including medicine.

Fee for lunch. To register: <http://bschwartz.eventbrite.com/>

Friday, March 23, 2012 at 10:00am at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA19132. 215-228-8200

<http://www.thelaurelhillcemetery.org>

Laurel Hill: The Hot Spots and Storyed Plots

Join us for this informative overview of Laurel Hill's long and colorful history, which will include many of the marble masterpieces, stunning views and legendary stories that afford the cemetery its WOW factor. This is the ultimate tour for first-time visitors to Laurel Hill, and anyone else

Calling All Astronomers! Rittenhouse Astronomical Society

Monthly Meetings! Bring all of your out-of this-world questions! Join The Rittenhouse Astronomical Society the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Fels Planetarium at the Franklin Institute. The society offers all persons an opportunity to participate in the activities of an astronomical group at the laymen's level. They aim to spread knowledge, awareness and enjoyment of astronomy and astronomical issues. It is a popular science club that keeps its members up-to-date on the latest developments. No experience is necessary to attend the FREE meetings. Come with your astronomy questions!

www.rittenhouseastronomicalsociety.org

who likes beautiful art, stimulating history, and just enjoying life...even amongst the dead. This walking tour will be led by artist and teacher, Terri Greenberg. NEW Hot Spots and Storied Plots will be presented monthly as part of Laurel Hill Cemetery's Fourth Friday tour series, which take place on the fourth Friday of every month at 10:00am.

\$8/general admission; \$5/members

Tickets can be purchased at the door, or in advance online, or by calling 215.228.8200.

Friday, March 23, 2012 at 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM at the American Philosophical Society, Benjamin Franklin Hall, 427 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

To Free a Family: The Journey of Mary Walker by Sydney Nathans

Sydney Nathans is Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University.

The book explores the story of Mary Walker, an enslaved woman from North Carolina who in 1848 fled the Bennehan/Cameron family for refuge in the North—first in Philadelphia, then to Boston—and spent the next seventeen years trying to recover her family. Mary Walker was not reunited with her family until the end of the Civil War. What was it like for a mother to flee slavery, leaving her children behind? This story is anchored in two extraordinary collections of letters and diaries, that of her former North Carolina slaveholders and that of the northern family — Susan and Peter Lesley — who protected and employed her. Sydney Nathans' sensitive and penetrating narrative reveals Mary Walker's remarkable persistence as well as the sustained collaboration of black and white abolitionists who assisted her. Mary Walker and the Lesleys ventured half a dozen attempts at liberation, from ransom to ruse to rescue, until the end of the Civil War reunited Mary Walker with her son and daughter. The book is based in part on letters at the APS, where Peter Lesley was Secretary of the American Philosophical Society in the 1850s and 1860s, and on thousands of letters and diaries in the possession of Lesley descendants.

Unlike her more famous counterparts — Harriet Tubman, Harriet Jacobs, and Sojourner Truth — who wrote their own narratives and whose public defiance made them heroines, Mary Walker's efforts were wrenching and private. Her odyssey was more representative of women refugees from bondage who labored secretly and behind the scenes to reclaim their families from the South. In recreating Mary Walker's journey, To Free a Family gives voice to their hidden epic of emancipation and to an untold story of the Civil War era.

Free and open to the public.

<http://www.amphilsoc.org/events/all>

Wednesday, March 28, 2012 at 7:15 p.m. at Brittingham's Irish Pub and Restaurant, 640 East Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania. (610)828-7351.

American Revolution Round Table of Philadelphia (ARRTOP)

<http://www.arrrtop.com/>

Michael S. Adelberg will speak on his book The American Revolution in Monmouth County (NJ): The Theatre of Spoil and Destruction

A group of members and most of the ARRTOP Advisory Board will meet for dinner at 5:30 p.m. at Brittingham's and we share dinner with our guest speaker and you are cordially invited.

Meetings are free and open to the public.

Saturday, March 31, at 1:00pm at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA19132. 215-228-8200

<http://www.thelaurelhillcemetery.org>

Designing for the Dead: Art and Architecture of Laurel Hill

Noted architects like John Notman, William Strickland, Frank Furness, John J. McArthur, C.C. Zantzinger, Horace Trumbauer and Napoleon LeBrun competed fiercely for the chance to design for the dead. Join us on a walking tour of Laurel Hill Cemetery, where we will see monuments created by these early architects, as well as artists such as Alexander Milne Calder, his son Alexander Stirling Calder, and sculptress Harriet Frishmuth, whose works grace many of Laurel Hill's memorials. Tour stops will also include the gravesites of portraitist Thomas Sully and watercolorist William Trost Richards. The tour will examine changing tastes and fashions in grave markers over the past two centuries, from the

classical obelisks and urns of the Federal period, to the richly decorated crosses of the Gothic Revival, to the massive mausoleums of the Gilded Age. This walking tour will be led by Tom Keels, noted author of such books as Philadelphia Graveyards and Cemeteries, Forgotten Philadelphia: Lost Architecture of the Quaker City, and Wicked Philadelphia.

\$12/person; \$10/seniors + students; \$9/members

Tickets can be purchased at the door, or in advance online, or by calling 215.228.8200.

Saturday, March 31 at Lecture at 1:00 PM. Museum is open 12:00 to 4:00 PM - at the Wagner Free Institute of Science, 1700 West Montgomery Avenue, , Philadelphia, PA 19121

215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

Westbrook Free Lectureship 2012

The Sky is Falling: Whitenose Syndrome in Bats

Dr. Hazel Barton

University of Akron

Dr. Hazel Barton of the University of Akron will discuss *Whitenose Syndrome*, a disease threatening North American bat species with extinction. An expert on microbial life in caves, Dr. Barton is conducting research to find a cure.

Dr. Richard B. Westbrook, Trustee of the Institute from 1884 until his death in 1899, established the Westbrook Free Lectureship as a means to encourage open discourse on scientific subjects, especially "disputed questions in science and the theories of Evolution." Since 1912 when the series began, Westbrook lecturers have included some of the most distinguished scientists and scholars of the past 100 years, among them John Dewey, George Gaylord Simpson, and Margaret Mead.

Free and open to the General Public.

Wednesday, April 4 , 2012 at 6:30PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

http://www.collphyphil.org/prog_calendar.htm

Merger Games

Speaker: Judith P. Swazey, independent scholar and an Adjunct Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Boston University Schools of Medicine and Public Health

Merger Games: The Medical College of Pennsylvania, Hahnemann University, and the Rise and Fall of the Allegheny Healthcare System by Judith P. Swazey (Temple University Press, 2011) is the riveting story of the ill-fated merger between Allegheny Healthcare System and Medical College of Pennsylvania and Hahnemann University. The case remains a controversial and highly-debated landmark in academic medicine mergers to this day. Join us as we host the author discussing her book and sharing her insight on this historic event.

Sponsored by the College and its Section on Medical History.

Free. To register: <http://mergergames.eventbrite.com/>

Friday, April 6, 2012 at 7:00 PM in the Greater Plymouth Community Center, 2910 Jolly Rd, Plymouth Meeting, PA.

Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers

Rehab and Update of Franklin Institute'S 10-Inch Zeiss

Frederick Orthlieb, Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering, Swarthmore.

Free and Open to the General Public

<http://dvaa.org>

Monday, April 9, 2012 at 6:00 PM - Science on Tap takes place at 6pm on the second Monday of every month at

National Mechanics, 22 South Third St., Philadelphia 19106

<http://scienceontapphilly.com/>

"Mongolian Fish Hunt"

Mark Sabaj Pérez, Ichthyology Collection Manager at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University

Join Dr. Mark Sabaj Pérez as he shares tales of the Academy's ichthyological adventures in northern Mongolia. In 2006 Pérez led a team of American and Mongolian scientists that set out from Ulaanbataar to find the Amur catfish, the world's most northern catfish and smaller cousin to

the giant Wels catfish made famous in many anglers' prized photographs. The challenges of Mongolian fieldwork ranged from outsmarting difficult transportation and fishing in icy rivers to enduring freak summer hailstorms and the endless drone of the Eagles' "Hotel California." Follow the explorers' adventures as they traverse northern Mongolia on roads that don't exist and traipse through infinite herds of goats and sheep without the help of navigational aids...all to find one of nature's most elusive fish.

This month's Science on Tap is presented by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University

Ages 21+ or accompanied by a chaperone 25 years or older. Free.

Tuesday, April 10, 2012 at 6:30PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

http://www.collyphyphil.org/prog_calendar.htm

Viewing of I Remember Better When I Paint

Speakers:

Anjan Chatterjee, MD, FAAN, FCPP, Professor of Neurology, and a member of the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, and the Center for Neuroscience and Society at the University of Pennsylvania

Berna G. Huebner, President, Chair and Founder of the Hilgos Foundation
Join us for a viewing of I Remember Better When I Paint (French Connection Films and the Hilgos Foundation), an exceptional internationally noted documentary highlighting the positive impacts of the creative arts on Alzheimer's patients. Following the film, there will be a discussion with Berna G. Huebner, one of the film's writers and directors, and Anjan Chatterjee, MD, FAAN, FCPP, Professor of Neurology, and a member of the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, and the Center for Neuroscience and Society at the University of Pennsylvania. The evening promises to be a dynamic exploration of the intersection between the creative arts and medicine. The film is narrated by Hollywood legend Olivia de Havilland.

Free. To register: <http://better.eventbrite.com/>

Friday, April 13, 2012 -- Delaware Valley MENSA General Membership is generally on the 2nd Friday of the month. Check the MENSA calendar at:

http://dvm.us.mensa.org/calendar.shtml#gm_meeting

Saturday, April 14, 2012 at Cannstatter Volksfest Verein, 9130 Academy Rd. Philadelphia, PA 19114 - (215) 332-0121

Annual Grand Army Museum Preservation Dinner

Cost: \$40 per person - \$75 per couple. Choice of Beef, Chicken, or Salmon
11am open for book browsing, and signings; 12 noon cocktails; 1pm luncheon

2pm presentation: "Lincoln and the Civil War" by noted historian: Matthew Pinsker

Presentation of the 'Grand Army Award' for preservation efforts; Fundraiser raffle of prints; door prizes; books; sutlers; entertainment; fun!

To reserve contact: garmuslib@verizon.net; or call: 215-289-6484

Deadline: April 2, 2012

Tuesday, April 17, 2012 at 6:30PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

http://www.collyphyphil.org/prog_calendar.htm

The Robert L. Sadoff, MD, FCPP Lecture: A Prosecutor Takes a Hard Look at Ethical Issues

Speaker: Honorable Lynne Abraham, partner in Archer & Greiner, PC

In this year's annual Sadoff Lecture, Lynne Abraham will discuss the ethical issues she believes are essential for prosecutors to embrace and practice. Ms. Abraham will call on her many years of service as both Common Pleas Judge and District Attorney of Philadelphia to illustrate her concerns.

Sponsored by the College's Section on Medicine, Ethics, and the Law.

Free. To register: <http://sadoff.eventbrite.com/>

PhACT Event

Saturday, April 21, 2012 - TBA

Wednesday, April 25, 2012 at 7:15 p.m. at Brittingham's Irish Pub and Restaurant, 640 East Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania. (610)828-7351.

American Revolution Round Table of Philadelphia (ARRTOP)

<http://www.arrtop.com/>

Bill Ochester will appear as Dr. Benjamin Franklin.

<http://www.bfranklinprinter.com/>

A group of members and most of the ARRTOP Advisory Board will meet for dinner at 5:30 p.m. at Brittingham's and we share dinner with our guest speaker and you are cordially invited.

Meetings are free and open to the public.

Thursday, April 26, 2012 at 7:30 PM. **Philadelphia Nerd Nite**, an evening of good food, beer, and science lectures, is generally on the second Wednesday of the month, but this time is late in April as part of the Philadelphia Science Festival.



All Things Nerdular!

Check the website for details at

<http://philadelphia.nerdnite.com/updates/>

Friday, April 27, 2012 at 6:00PM - 10:00PM at College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South Twenty-Second Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 563-3737 x304

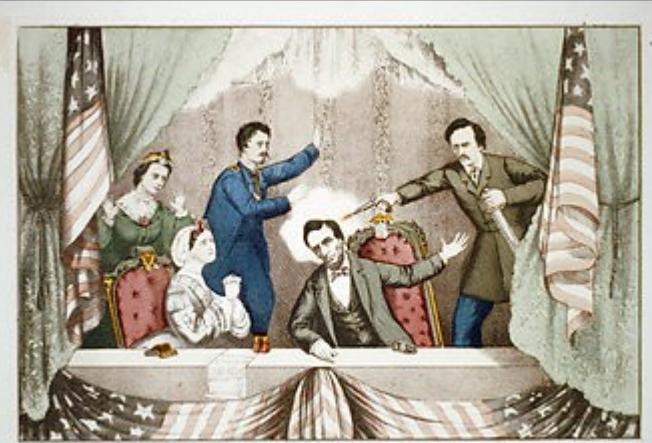
http://www.collyphyphil.org/prog_calendar.htm

Murder at the Mütter™: President Lincoln Is Shot!

Join us for an interactive night of fun as we explore the forensics behind the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln! Following a live re-enactment of the assassination, there will be a two-part investigation of the crime. In the first portion, guests will participate in the examination of the crime scene using forensic methods of the 1860s; in the second portion, guests will hear from a roster of contemporary forensic experts covering everything from ballistics, crime scene investigation, and blood analysis. The activities will be followed by a reception.

Sponsored by The College of Physicians of Philadelphia for the Philadelphia Science Festival. You must be 21 years-old or older to attend this event.

Admission fee. To register: <http://murderatmutter.eventbrite.com/>



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I support the aims of PhACT and would like to join/rejoin for the next year. The annual membership is \$15 and \$10 for students which includes e-mail delivery of Phactum.

If you wish **US Mail delivery annual membership is \$25**. Checks should be payable to **PhACT**.

Membership dues of \$ _____ enclosed to pay for _____ years of membership.

Donation of \$ _____ enclosed for additional support
Donation of \$ _____ dedicated for High School Science Fair prizes

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E_mail _____

Mail checks to:
PhACT
653 Garden Road
Glenside, PA 19038

The Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking is grateful for the hospitality extended by Community College of Philadelphia and especially Dr. David Cattell, Chair of the Physics Department, for hosting PhACT and giving us access to such excellent facilities. Part of CCP's mission is to serve Philadelphia as a premiere learning institution and PhACT is pleased to support this goal by having talks on wide ranging, engaging, and educational topics.

Phactum is, in theory, distributed 6 times a year and is the main propaganda organ for the Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking.

If you are not a supporting member/subscriber we invite you to become one. \$15 for a one year membership to PhACT with email Phactum subscription. \$25 for US Mail subscription. \$10 for students, email only. Donations are welcome.

Send letters of rebuttal, ideas, short essays, poetry, opinion pieces, complaints, and lavish praise to Ray Haupt, Phactum editor, at phactpublicity@aol.com.

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Phactum Editor, Ray Haupt
phactpublicity@aol.com

PhACT's High School Science Fair Student Prize Funds

Prizes awarded in 2010	= \$ 300.00
Prizes awarded in 2011	= \$ 500.00
Total 2012 Prize Fund	= \$ 313.00

Please donate. Small contributions are preferred and donations in excess of the 2012 goal will be applied to the 2013 Prize Fund or some other youth science education project not yet determined.

ALL money collected for this project will be used for student prizes. PhACT members and others are invited to participate as judges. Contact Eric Krieg for more information: erickrieg@verizon.net

The PhACT Council 2011/12

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