

I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments by those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.

James Madison
(1751 - 1836)

Phactum

The Newsletter of the
Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking
May/June 2009

editor: Ray Haupt email: phactpublicity@aol.com
Webmaster: Wes Powers www.phact.org

Saturday, May 30, 2009 at Noon PhACT Fund-Raising Banquet

Our annual the PhACT Banquet will be at Edibles Restaurant in Horsham, PA starting at 12:00 noon. Our speaker will be Faye Flam who will discuss her latest book and whatever is on her mind. Her book, called *The Score - How the Quest for Sex has Shaped the Modern Man*, will be available, so get your very own signed copy. Faye has long been the Science writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer and switched to a science-sex column called "Carnal Knowledge". In the course of her research, she investigated a training class where men supposedly learned how to be more successful getting action. Come to the luncheon and get some advice, guys!

Come and hear about some of her many adventures - including free fall.

Check out Faye's website: <http://www.fayeflam.com>

Seats are limited at this event and cost \$30. To reserve a seat, contact Becky Strickland at quasar@snip.net. See the last page of this Phactum for more reservation information and a map and directions to Edibles Restaurant on page 27.

This event will be PhACT's last intellectual activity for the

(Continued on page 4)



Faye Flam experiencing free fall scientifically testing zero gravity hair styles.

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river. - Nikita Khrushchev (1894 - 1971)

PHACT CALENDAR

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, 17th and Spring Garden Streets, in room S2-03 of the Winnet Student Life Building, the round building on 17th Street just south of Spring Garden Street. **Meetings are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.** **Parking is free** at all PhACT events at CCP. Enter the college parking lot on 17th Street which is one way south bound. At the meeting be sure to get a free parking voucher from Dr. Cattell. This meeting site is handicap accessible.



Saturday, May 30, 2009 - Annual luncheon meeting/fundraiser at *Edibles* restaurant in Horsham, PA from noon on. Our speaker will be **Faye Flam** with a talk and a book signing for her latest book called "*The Score - how the quest for sex has shaped the modern man*". Faye has long been the Science writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer and switched to a science-sex column called "Carnal Knowledge". In the course of her research, she investigated a training class where men supposedly learned how to be more successful getting action. See last page of Phactum to make reservations. Reservations are a must.

Sunday July 19, 2009 - annual PhACT Picnic.

Saturday September 19, 2009 - **Dr. Alan Mann**, Professor of Anthropology at Princeton University will discuss **The Origins of our Humanness**. Just who are we humans, and how did we get to be the way we are? Come to this lecture with an open mind and leave fascinated by the slowly unfolding tale of Human Evolution.



Delaware Valley Mensa General Membership Meeting.

The General Membership Meeting is held at the Police Administration Building, 750 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA. This meeting is DVM's only activity specifically open to the public and is always on the second Friday of each month and discussions begin at 8 PM sharp. Feel free to invite your friends and relatives. Free. <http://dvm.us.mensa.org/>.

Friday, June 12th, 2009 How to Survive a Layoff Since last fall, it seems as though the news has been filled with stories of one company or another, laying off major portions of their work force. Chrysler has just announced bankruptcy, what does that translate into for their work force? Is General Motors far behind? Closer to home, Mayor Nutter just recently announced a proposal to reduce the District Attorney's Office by one third, which would require the layoff of 100 attorneys. Personally I know quiet a few people that have lost or are threatened to lost their job. Is anyone in this tri-state area unaffected by such turns of personal fortune?

Gary McConnell and his partner, William Mayer, (a 15 year veteran as a Career Coach) will address this topic from a proactive approach. They bring tips and insight into this dark subject with the concept of each of us, and especially anyone currently laid off, being able to survive these uncertain times

Upcoming meetings

- ♣ Friday, July 10 - TBA
- ♣ Friday, Aug. 14 - TBA

Thursday, May 21, 2009, 8:00 AM –

2:00 PM, School of Nursing Auditorium, 418 Curie Boulevard, Philadelphia, PA 19104. **The University of Pennsylvania's Twelfth Annual Spirituality Research Symposium - *Spiritual & Religious Dimensions of Aging: Insights from Research.***

Harold Koenig, M.D., M.H.Sc., Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine at Duke University, is founding Co-Director of the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Duke University Medical Center. Dr. Koenig has published extensively in the fields of mental health, geriatrics, and religion, with 40 books in print or in preparation including *The Handbook of Religion & Health; Faith and Mental Health; Spirituality in Patient Care*, 2nd edition; and *Spirituality & Medicine*. For Information and registration (free), call 215-573-7219 or e-mail natasha.charles@uphs.upenn.edu Sponsored by: The Penn Center for Spirituality and the Mind, with a Templeton Research Lectureship Grant, The Penn Medicine Department of Pastoral Care and the Penn Geriatric Education Center.

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.

PHACT CALENDAR



Science on Tap, A Science Cafe

Science on Tap is a monthly gathering in Philadelphia for anyone who is interested in

getting together with other people to discuss a range of engaging science topics.

Held at National Mechanics, a relaxed, convivial bar in Old City, *Science on Tap* features a brief, informal presentation by a scientist or other expert followed by lively conversation. The goal is to promote enthusiasm for science in a fun, spirited, and accessible way, while also meeting new people. Please come join the conversation! On the second Monday of each month at 6:00 PM.

What's on tap: Monday, June 8 at 6 pm

Janet Monge, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and the Wagner Free Institute of Science

"The Unknown Skeleton – Forensic Anthropology and the Unsolvable Case" - Sticky bits, bones, rotting flesh, mummified tissues – the stuff of forensic anthropology. The science behind forensic anthropology is explored using a series of case studies. Most people do not know that the probability of success in these cases is very low and the identity of virtually every one of these individuals remains unknown. The CSI catchphrase "There is Always a Clue" certainly does not apply. Presented by the Wagner Free Institute of Science.

Upcoming speakers

- July 13: Dr. Ted Daeschler, vertebrate paleontologist and Associate Curator and Chair of Vertebrate Biology at the Academy of Natural Sciences
- August 10 - TBA

Science on Tap is sponsored by a consortium of four Philadelphia institutions: the Academy of Natural Sciences, the American Philosophical Society (APS) Museum, Chemical Heritage Foundation, and the Wagner Free Institute of Science.

National Mechanics

22 South Third St.
Philadelphia PA 19106
215-701-4883

Open to the public (age 21+)

Every Monday, except holidays, at 7:00 PM. **Socrates Cafe** is moderated by PhACT member Sam Frederick at the Springfield Township Library at 1600 Paper Mill Road, Wyndmoor, PA 19038. This discussion group is free and open to the public. Bring an open mind and positive attitude.



Wagner Free Institute of Science

1700 West Montgomery Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19121
ph 215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

The Library

The Institute has an extensive library of primarily scientific works collected by the founder, and over the course of its history. Dating from the late 17th to the early 20th century, the collection covers the natural and physical sciences, education, medicine, archaeology and anthropology, the pseudo-sciences, instrument building, and engineering. The Library contains monographs, serials, archives, manuscripts, maps, prints, photographs, drawings, and glass lantern slides. The collection reflects the Institute's curriculum as well as the research interests of its faculty, fellows, and museum staff.

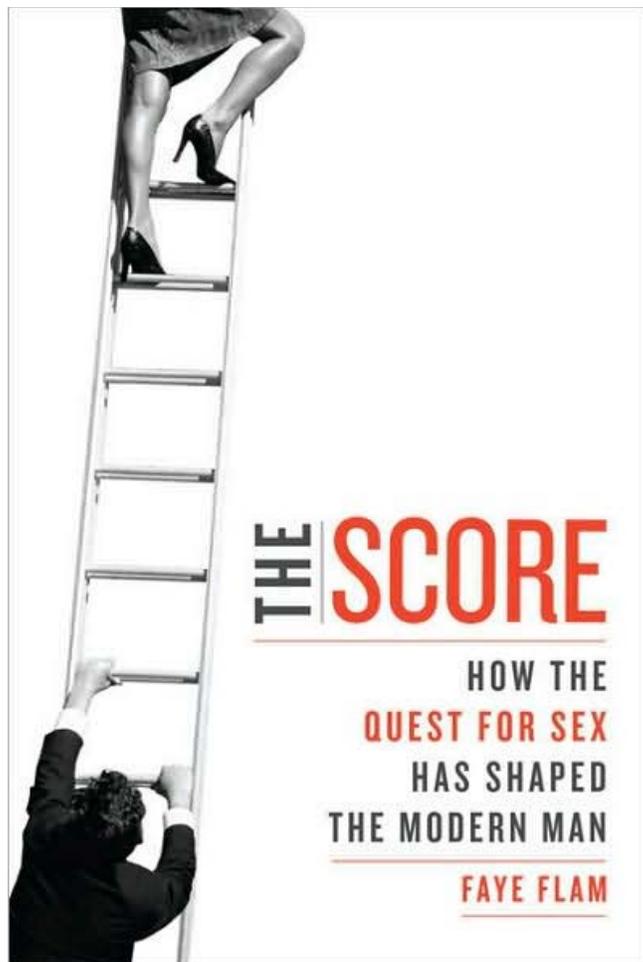
The Library is especially rich in early 19th century English and American works devoted to the history and teaching of science and technology. The extensive journal collection includes research done by most major European and Asian scientific societies and many publications from smaller (and for the most part defunct) scientific societies. The scientific revolution, intellectual and social history, and the history of science can be explored through material on philosophy, religion, science, and educational reform.

The archives and manuscripts collection includes the personal and business records of the founder William Wagner (1796-1885) dating from 1810 and the records of the Institute from its inception in 1855. These include records pertaining to the establishment and administration of the First Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia called the Wagner Branch (1890-1962), and records and documentation of the Institute's participation in the national and local University Extension movement. Research papers and correspondence of many of the Institute's distinguished faculty and staff, including Joseph Leidy, Edward Drinker Cope, and William Berryman Scott are also part of the archives, as well as drawings, teaching charts, and over 3500 glass lantern slides used to illustrate lectures.

In keeping with Wagner's mission, the Library remains in active use today supporting scholarly research and public education programs for children and adults. The Library, a member of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCSL) and the Philadelphia Area Center for the History of Science (PACHS), has a growing on-line catalog and participates in OCLC's interlibrary loan program.

2008/2009 year. Members are invited to the PhACT picnic on Sunday, July 19, 2008. at Mondauk Commons Park in Upper Dublin. This event is free but is for members and their guests only.

On Saturday, September 19, 2009 the PhACT 2009/2010 lecture series at Community College of Philadelphia will resume when Dr. Alan Mann, a Professor of Paleontology at Princeton University, will address PhACT discussing the **Origins of Humanness**. We hope to see you there.



The Score

By Faye Flam

Hardcover: 224 pages \$24.95

Publisher: Avery (June 12, 2008)

ISBN-10: 1583333126 **ISBN-13:** 978-1583333129

A smart, witty, and fresh look at the male side of the male-female relationship from a science writer and sex columnist at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Beginning with a “boot camp” for wannabe pickup artists—where men pay thousands of dollars for three days of classroom seminars on how to get women into bed—Faye Flam’s quest for a deeper understanding of men takes her back through the evolutionary history of the human male.

Sweeping from the birth of the first male and female organisms to the sexual foibles of twenty-first-century humans, Flam shows how a small difference in the size of the first sperm and eggs set off a war between the sexes that we’re still fighting today. Since this primordial split, a consistent pattern of behavior has emerged: males use a stunning variety of strategies to make themselves attractive to females, and females put them through the wringer.

By placing the human male in the context of the natural world, Flam highlights some intriguing resemblances among males of all species, but also the unique challenges that men face when courting women—whether for a lifelong partnership or a one-night stand. Flam ultimately reveals that millions of years of evolution have left the love lives of humans suspended somewhere between monogamy and promiscuity, and that it is this eons-old tension between males and females that has created the modern man.

John Allen Paulos, a past Phact speaker, writes about *The Score*:

“Offering a fascinating look at everything from transsexual snakes and the long corkscrew penises of ducks to club pickup techniques and the connection between male scum and scum that is male, Faye Flam ranges broadly over many disciplines to show how sexual strivings and strategies have shaped not only us, but virtually the whole animal kingdom. Whether you’re interested in cads or cod, *The Score* will provide you with scores of compelling, often counterintuitive insights.” - (John Allen Paulos is professor of mathematics at Temple University, and author of many books. If you have not read any of Dr. Paulos books, you should.)

Speak Out!!!

PhACT members and other readers are invited to submit letters and articles to be published in Phactum.

If you have a point of view on some matter in Phactum, whether in agreement or opposed, why not write it down and send it in? Do not hesitate to comment on matters that have not been in Phactum since we constantly wish to present information of interest to Critical



Thinkers. We try not to get into religion bashing or partisan politics, but the rest of the Universe is fair game for civil discussion. You need not be in agreement with the editor of this propaganda sheet. Diverse opinions make for good discussion and let your voice counter the lunatic ravings of the editor. Speak out!

Send more clerihews!!

Suggestions to improve Phactum are very appreciated. Send submissions by email if you can since my scanner is not working. Hand written notes are OK if they are very short.

Phactpublicity@AOL.com

Errors

Shiver me timbers!!!!

In the April Phactum in Don Nigrone's article about Captain Kidd ... aaarrrrrr ... in the table of Places and Guardians of Captain Kidd's loot, the editor did most foully insert crewmen instead of crewman, and to compound the sin did declare the loot was guarded by six goats instead of six ghosts. aaarrrrrr ... I shall Swab the Deck!



Cartoon by Dave Lowe
<http://www.paraabnormalthecomix.com>
 Used by Permission

Letters

Editor: Thanks so much for an advanced copy of the High School Science Fair article by Eric Krieg. (*Editors note: see page 14*) As you thought, I found it extremely interesting since I live among thousands of fellow convicts, a large quantity of whom stand convicted largely on the weight of "eyewitness testimony" and identification in particular.

Erin H. and Holly M. from Holicong Middle School (Mr. Testa's class) showed uncommon courage even producing such a study, when many in our society believe those suspected should be convicted at any cost, regardless of the true weight of evidence.

In the March 6, 2009 issue of The Week, a study by Yale psychiatrist C. Andrew Morgan revealed that "human memories are often faulty, and are highly susceptible to influence by authority figures ... 85 percent of the soldiers [studied] wound up identifying the wrong man." Another study by University of California psychologist Elizabeth Loftus (go ahead and Google her; she's quite well known) has shown that she can plant false memories into the minds of study subjects. Loftus has told Wired.com, "Eyewitness identification should carry little weight in court ... especially when they are the sole source of evidence that someone committed a crime."

I think the work of these young students would be very welcome if it were displayed in the Pennsylvania Innocence Project, at Temple University's School of Law (Richard Glazer, Executive Director), and also at the offices of the Pennsylvania Prison Society (245 N. Broad Street in Philadelphia, William DiMascio, Executive Director). Both organizations are major participants in trying to improve the fairness and integrity of the judicial system, and I think they'd be just as impressed as I am to see that these young women have pursued this question as a science fair project. Great work, ladies!

Paul Schlueter III
 Penna. Life Sentenced Inmate
 Dallas, PA

Editor: A book no self-respecting PhACTor will ever read!

This is not a book review, it's more of a challenge to my worthy opponents in PhACT. If my diabolical plan works as I hope, some of you will write actual reviews of the book for me, for Phactum, and for the author (a Ph.D., Full Member of SSE, a personal friend, and shooting buddy.) Of course, your reviews may be a tad different in perspective than mine would be.

I say that because, years ago, Eric Hamell borrowed a book from me entitled "Best Evidence" by Michael Scmicker. It is a book written by an SSE member, generally about the pioneering work of SSE researchers. I had written a largely complimentary review of the book for JSE. I thought the book was an excellent, easy-to-read primer for average

folk to get their arms around most of the subjects studied by SSE researchers. As I remember, Eric was generally overwhelmed by it. But Eric is a really bright guy, whose occasional submissions to Phactum always reflect that brightness. In fact, if memory serves, Eric has referred to himself, and some like-minded colleagues, as "brights", who meet on a regular basis. It would seem to be a fitting descriptor.

There's another PhACT member who may have a decidedly more emotional reaction to the book. That would be Greg Lester, who once mentioned on the original "PhACT Board" something to the effect that, when he saw the words "quantum mechanics" and "the paranormal" in the same context, he suffered a severe bout of "twisted shorts", also a current problem on Wall Street (pun intended!)

Enough light-hearted banter! The book's title is "*Entangled Minds, Extrasensory Experiences in a Quantum Reality*", by Dean Radin. This book is a larger, significantly enhanced extension of his previous book, "The Conscious Universe, The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena", an award-winning best-seller, published over a decade ago. The current book's title and sub-title should not be interpreted as making it a barrier for the general reader. Radin's works of of this type (for



general readership) are readily readable and lightly sprinkled with his well-known subtle humor (which long ago endeared him to SSE's membership!)

The book has two key themes: First is the extensive explanation and tabulation of the mountain of rock-solid scientific experimental data on the subject of Psi" (Radin defines that word quite clearly early in the book). The second is his highly-researched listing of theories of Psi (Skeptics always seem to need a substantial theory before they'll accept any data on the paranormal, which has always seemed to me to be a bass-ackward approach to scientific investigation. What's wrong with initial detection of an apparent phenomenon, experiments to investigate it's nature, and then a preliminary hypothesis as an attempt to explain its nature, and so on, in the not-so-orderly process we call science.

Radin concludes with a chapter entitled "Next", that reflects his interpretation of what the future holds for science, as related to the book's subject. Lastly, Radin provides extensive endnotes and references for the strongly interested reader. Also, I can remember no spelling or grammatical errors in the book, always a welcome gift to the reader from a careful author and editorial team.

On a somewhat related subject, I read with interest an article in April's Phactum entitled "What Makes a Skeptic --..." by Ed Gracely. Ed, if we've met at any PhACT gatherings, my apologies, because I don't remember you. I wish I could agree with your article's conclusion, but I'm afraid we're

worlds apart on that subject. I'll stick with my own published analyses (two in succession) of what makes skeptics, published in the "Journal of Scientific Exploration" several years ago. Ray Haupt can give you my e-mail address (with my permission hereby), if you wish to discuss the matter further outside of these pages.

Dave Leiter
Willow Grove, PA

Editor: Nova's program Judgement Day: Intelligent Design on Trial, examining the Dover, PA trial challenging the teaching of Intelligent Design in biology classrooms, appears in full on Google Video:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-404729062613200911&hl=en>

Don Baldino
Willow Grove, PA

Editor: I am on the mailing list for a local Philadelphia herbal and nutritional supplement purveyor. I recently received a postcard advertising their new "Foot Detox Therapy" program. A 30 minute detox session costs \$75, but the introductory special is \$59.95, so with the \$20.00 postcard coupon I can pay only \$39.95 to experience complete detoxification via my feet. The postcard claims that "Foot detox therapy removes the body's toxins by generating a mix of positive and negative ions. Ions are able to attach themselves to impurities that are oppositely charged. These toxins are then eliminated through the reflex points of the feet by the way of osmosis." Of course, the disclaimers at the bottom of the postcard revealing that the product has not been evaluated by the F.D.A. and is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any disease is written in about **6 point typeface**.

For a complete scientific explanation and debunking of "Foot Detox Scams", readers can consult the following webpage by Stephen Lower, former Chemistry professor at Simon Fraser University of Vancouver, Canada:

<http://www.chem1.com/CQ/FootBathBunk.html>

As Lower says, "all that really gets cleaned out [by those scams] is your wallet".

My next letter on this issue is going to the Better Business Bureau.

Doreva Belfiore
Philadelphia

Editors note: **12 point typeface**, **10 point**, **8 point**, **6 point**

Ω Ω Ω



Various Ruminations

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

Russia holds first Top Shaman elections

Get a load of this from Mosnews.com on April 14, 2009.

“Russia will stage the first ever ‘Top Shaman’ elections this year, with 188 candidates currently listed from all over the country, online shamanist magazine Shamanstvo reports.

The elections will be held in two stages, with only 12 short listed shamans participating in the second stage. Each of the stages will last three months, probably to allow the most far-off regions to cast their ballots.

The list of candidates currently contains all shamans registered in the Shamans Register of Russia, but any people who consider themselves shamans are also welcome to submit their applications. A special commission will decide whether they are qualified to run in the elections.

The Novy Region news agency cites the curious biographies of several

candidates. For instance, Oyun Batyr is a hereditary shaman from Tuva, a shamanist region in Russia’s Siberia. According to his biography, he has several thousand kettles, five wives and three sons. Batyr doesn’t drink and smokes dried herbs instead of tobacco.”

I am so deliriously happy that Oyun Batyr has several thousand kettles. He is the kind of man we need in the US Senate. Might be an improvement. The Senate needs a good

kettleman anyway.

<http://www.mosnews.com/weird/2009/04/10/shamans/>

Steve

Glenn Branch, Deputy Director, National Center for Science Education, Inc. has informed me that as of April 10, 2009 the count was 1.08 KS (kilosteves). Can it be 2001 KS by Darwin Day 2010? Sir Arthur C. Clarke would love it!! We will be watching.

Lunacy in Texas?

PhACT’s March 2009 speaker, Lauri Lebo, has an article in an online magazine called Religion Dispatches. In the article Lauri relates how the Texas Board of Education has exerted its considerable financial muscle to pressure text book publishers to insert junk science into their educational materials.

This is a major problem since Texas is the second largest buyer of text books in the United States. The influence can reach across the country. The Discovery Institute has hailed the school board decisions as a great victory.

Discovery’s Wedge Document outlines the ultimate goal: To use intelligent design to “reverse the stifling materialist worldview and replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.”

<http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive> and using the scan facility search for “Lebo”.

PhACT name change?

PhACT member Elaine Brody has suggested that our organization might plausibly change its name from Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking to Philadelphia Association for Rational Thinking. We offer no further comment on this proposal.

London suffering rise in rare 'Victorian' diseases

The Daily Mail, April 15, 2009, reported:

“London is suffering a startling rise in diseases associated with Victorian times, official figures reveal today.

Rare infectious illnesses including typhoid, whooping cough and scarlet fever have soared by 166 per cent in the



Siberian shaman

The way to deal with superstition is not to be polite to it, but to tackle it with all arms, and so rout it, cripple it, and make it forever infamous and ridiculous. Is it, perchance, cherished by persons who should know better? Then their folly should be brought out into the light of day, and exhibited there in all its hideousness until they flee from it, hiding their heads in shame.

True enough, even a superstitious man has certain inalienable rights. He has a right to harbor and indulge his imbecilities as long as he pleases, provided only he does not try to inflict them upon other men by force. He has a right to argue for them as eloquently as he can, in season and out of season. He has a right to teach them to his children. But certainly he has no right to be protected against the free criticism of those who do not hold them. He has no right to demand that they be treated as sacred. He has no right to preach them without challenge. Did Darrow, in the course of his dreadful bombardment of Bryan, drop a few shells, incidentally, into measurably cleaner camps? Then let the garrisons of those camps look to their defenses. They are free to shoot back. But they can't disarm their enemy.

- **H.L. Mencken (1880 - 1956)**



past two years, with the number of cases of mumps - a disease easily prevented with vaccine - rising from 125 in 2007 to 393 last year - an increase of 214 per cent.

Justine Greening, the shadow minister for London, said infection rates in the capital are markedly higher than the national averages.

The rise could be a result of parents refusing the MMR jab after now-debunked claims in 2001 that it might be linked to autism.

Mumps can lead to hearing loss and damage the nervous system in adults.

The figures also showed cases of the highly-contagious whooping cough have quadrupled in the five years to 2007, from 63 to 252.

Symptoms include choking spells and vomiting and can cause death, especially in young infants.

Meanwhile cases of scarlet fever, which causes high fevers, rashes, and severe damage to internal organs, are up 153 per cent since 2005, with 501 infected in London last year.

Typhoid, which is associated with poor sanitation and hygiene, has risen steadily since 2004, from 45 to 127 cases per year."

No doubt the Tories blame the Conservatives who blame the Liberals who blame the Tories. Meanwhile kids are getting sick and uninformed people, including some celebrities and mass media, are peddling fear and superstition in the UK, the USA, and the rest of the world.

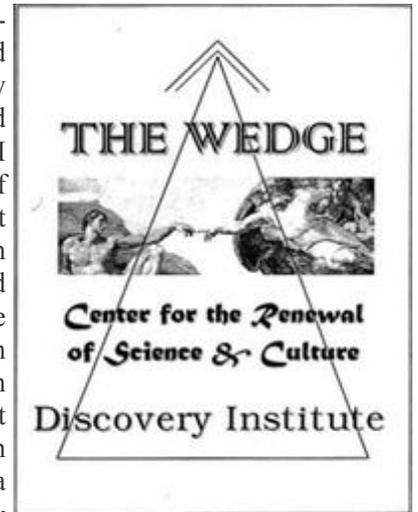
We encourage Phactum readers, who are informed bunch on this matter, to tell others to view the **Sense About Science** website for inoculation against the toxins of pseudoscience and quackery. **SAS** articles are written to be understood by the general public. <http://www.senseaboutscience.org>

The Wedge Document of Intelligent Design

There are few editions of Phactum, and most other skeptic newsletters, that do not at least mention the Evolution vs Creation "controversy", and now and again the "Wedge Document" is discussed. Who among us, however, has actually read the Wedge Document? I certainly have not, until now, and it can be found on page 20 of this Phactum. If we are going to be critical of the Discovery Institute and other Intelli-

gent Design and Creation oriented folks, isn't it only fair to read one of their foundation documents other than the Holy Bible? I think it is fair and it gives some insight into the "sturm und drang" that characterizes this endless squabble.

The document can also be found on the NCSE website at NCSE.org and a few other sites on the internet. Oddly, I noticed that there are a considerable number of typographical errors and misspellings in the two versions of the document that I had inspected. The NCSE version was a bit cleaner than the first, which I had discarded. I did use the spelling checker to clean up the document. The folks at Discovery Institute may have some odd ideas about scientific matters as assessed by skeptics, but they surely are a well educated and literate bunch, and I find the large number of errors in the document very strange indeed. I am skeptical that they had originally produced the Wedge Document in such a seemingly slapdash manner. Of course, it may have been a rough draft transcribed by a novice typist. Any thoughts on that matter?



Cover of the Wedge Document

Indigo Children

In the April 2009 Phactum, in a short discussion about the celebrities in the anti-vaccination movement, I asked, "what is an Indigo Mom and a Crystal Child?"

Gary Goldberg, a member of the Capital Area Skeptics, responded with an article about Indigo Children, written by Yevgeniya Krasina, that he had translated from Russian. The article is posted in the web site of the **Saint Petersburg Branch of the Russian Humanist Society** which has about 800 articles, 80 of which are translated to English. It can be found on page 24 of this Phactum and on the internet at:

<http://humanism.su/en>

Another interesting article about Indigo Children was written by Joe Nickell and may be found at:

<http://www.csicop.org/sb/2008-12/nickell.html>

The "Rapture of Space"?

On April 20, 2009 astronaut Edgar Mitchell declared that life exists in outer space and the governments of the world are concealing the truth. He delivered his remarks at the National Press Club following a meeting of UFO activists and "researchers".

Interestingly, Mitchell who was born in 1930 grew up near Roswell, New Mexico where it is thought by UFO buffs that an alien space ship crashed in 1947. No doubt they were coming to get Edgar who was a teenager at the time

and of course must have been an Indigo Child who would eventually go to the Moon.

I had found this news item on AOL which also had a non-scientific poll asking:

- Do you think extraterrestrials have visited Earth?
72% of 256,000 respondents said YES.
- Do you think the government is trying to cover up the existence of extraterrestrial life?
76% of respondents said YES
- Have you ever seen a UFO?
76% of respondents answered NO.

A distressing set of answers, even the last, meaning that 24% of respondents claim they had seen a UFO.

I must confess, however, that I saw a UFO. Of course, I was about 10 years old at the time in the early 1950's when such reports were rampant. I went screaming into the neighborhood pharmacy. Doc Pritzger and an elderly neighbor, Mr. Trout, calmed me down explaining it was a



Cartoon by Dave Lowe

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

Used by Permission

spotlight from a nearby movie theatre reflecting on a cloud ... which it was.

National Rehabilitation Councilors Appreciation Day

On April 22 I happened to be watching House of Representatives proceedings on C-SPAN. The House had just commenced discussion on the breathless topic of National Rehabilitation Councilors Appreciation Day (HR 247) and how valuable this work is. Each side had 20 minutes to speak. It was very amiable, both sides agreeing, and both using less than half their allotted time. It was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed upon, then it was discovered there was not a quorum. So ... back into the hopper for further consideration.

The House then moved on to another resolution, the weighty matter of the merits of the golden ideals of National Library Week. I turned off the TV at that point but there is no doubt about the outcome.

Perhaps America needs another branch of government, a House of Platitudes, empowered to generate birthday greetings to centenarians, declare National Waffle Day, to fulminate against dandruff, and officially dub Tiktaalik as National Devonian Fossil. The House then could, theoretically, devote its time to serious matters ... such as college football playoff rules as recently debated in televised House sub-committee hearings.

Expansion of the Universe

In case you are interested in how universe expansion works you might wish to view this Youtube video, supplied by NCSE, of the Texas School Board discussing the matter. It... uhhh... well...it ummmm...it...ahhh.....explains things.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5YWJAgJm2Q>

Kurt Donsbach arrested again.

Dr. Stephen Barrett has reported in Consumer Health Digest, April 9, 2009 that:

Kurt Donsbach, 73, whose dubious health-related activities have spanned more than 50 years, is facing 11 felony counts including treating patients without a license, misbranding drugs for sale, grand theft, unlawfully dispensing drugs as a cure for cancer, and falsely representing a cure for cancer.

<http://www.casewatch.org/crim/donsbach/declaration.shtml>

- ♣ *The declaration in support of his arrest warrant states: In literature and his weekly online radio broadcast, Donsbach identified himself as a chiropractor and a naturopathic doctor. He has no license to practice any health profession in the United States.*
- ♣ *In 2001, Donsbach's Mexican clinic advised one patient to inject herself with "neuropeptides" to treat arthritis, saying it would "re-program" her body's T-cells. FDA tests revealed the "neuropeptide" contained a steroid not disclosed on the packaging or labels. The patient paid thousands of dollars for the drugs and injected herself for six years, leading to severe bone-density loss.*
- ♣ *Donsbach advertised that he had a 60% success rate with pancreatic cancer and sold an undercover agent a home treatment protocol that included a product that contained nimesulide, a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory not approved by the FDA. Marketing of the product (Leppin*

Miradin, a/k/a Fortodol) has been suspended in Sweden because of high rates of liver failure that resulted in deaths and liver transplants.

The investigation leading to Donsbach's arrest was conducted by the FBI, the FDA, and the San Diego District Attorney's Office. For a detailed report on Donsbach's shady history, see <http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/donsbach.html>

In the October 2006 Phactum, an article by Dr. Raymond Richards, a New Zealand skeptic and US History lecturer at University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand, reported that Dr. Donsbach was the operator of Hospital Santa Monica at Rosarito Beach, Mexico about 25 miles south of San Diego. Dr. Richards tells a sordid tale about Donsbach who had been in previous legal trouble for practicing medicine without a license, etc. He did graduate from a school for Chiropractic. Coretta Scott King was one of his victims, and there are countless others.

Donsbach also operates a Hospital Santa Monica in Poland. His website is <http://www.donsbach.com> and is worth a visit to view the marketing strategies of a dingy business.

In contrast to Hospital Santa Monica see the next page for a very brief history of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and biographical information about Alfred P. Sloan and Charles F. Kettering.

Ω Ω Ω

Quackwatch and Dr. Barrett need your help. If you haven't already done so, please read <http://www.ncahf.org/digest07/07-48.html> and send a contribution to support his work.

Soundbites

Compiled By Becky Strickland

► "It's a warning about the pitfalls of our unshakable belief in the limitless promise of our endeavors, regardless of reality's constraints. It is a lesson about the dangers of our love affair with progress" Eduardo Porter in *The New York Times* reflects on the 20th anniversary of claims for cold fusion. *New Scientist*, April 11, 2009

► "In the spirit of compromise, I propose the following. First, let the school debating societies restage the wonderful set-piece real life dramas of Oxford and Dayton, Tenn. Let time be set aside, in our increasingly multiethnic and multicultural school system, for children to be taught the huge variety of creation stories, from the Hindu to the Muslim to the Australian Aboriginal. This is always interesting, and it can't be, can it, that the Texas board holdouts think that only Genesis should be so honored? Second, we can surely demand that the principle of 'strengths and weakness' will be applied evenly. If any church in Texas receives a tax exemption, or if any religious institution is the beneficiary of any subvention from the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, we must be assured it will devote a portion of its time to laying bare the 'strengths and weaknesses' of the religious world view, and also to teaching the works of Voltaire, Davie Hume, Benedict de Spinoza, Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. This is America. Let a hundred flowers bloom and a thousand schools of thought contend."

Christopher Hitchens on letting the creationists get their way. *Newsweek*, April 6, 2009.

Ω Ω Ω



Where Are We, What Are We, Why Are We?

by Christopher Madden

Paperback: 320 pages **Publisher:** Incline Press (April 16, 2009)

Price: \$15.95 **ISBN-10:** 0954855140 **ISBN-13:** 978-0954855147

An exploration of the possible reasons why people feel the urge to give meaning to life. The book approaches its task by looking at the nature of the universe and our perception of our place in it, and it speculates on how this perception may give rise to spiritual and religious sensibilities. The book is divided into three parts. **Part 1** (Where Are We?) deals with aspects of the nature of the universe and the way that we perceive it through the distorting lens of our own senses and preoccupations. **Part 2** (What Are We?) covers the subject of the nature of life, from its beginnings to the emergence of homo sapiens, and how the development of life has conditioned us to react to our environment in specific ways. **Part 3** (Why Are We?) explores our attitudes to mental states such as consciousness and mind, and explores the implications of these attitudes. The author's attitude to the nature of the universe can be summed up in the quote on the book's cover. "We only tend to think that reality is weird when we contemplate its extremes, such as the core of the atom or the edge of the universe - but the place is actually weird all the way through."

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center - some history

The world's oldest and largest private cancer center, **Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center** (MSKCC) has devoted more than a century to patient care as well as to innovative research, making significant contributions to new and better therapies for the treatment of cancer.

Founded in 1884 as the New York Cancer Hospital by a group that included John J. Astor and his wife, Charlotte, the original building on the Upper West Side of Manhattan began its move to its present location on York Avenue in 1936 when John D. Rockefeller, Jr. donated the land upon which, in 1939, Memorial Hospital was constructed. Between 1970 and 1973, a new Memorial Hospital was constructed and this building stands on the site today.

In the 1940s, two former General Motors executives, Alfred P. Sloan and Charles F. Kettering, joined forces to establish the Sloan-Kettering Institute (SKI). SKI has since become one of the nation's premier biomedical research institutions. Built adjacent to Memorial Hospital, SKI was formally dedicated in 1948. In 1960, SKI and Memorial Hospital were unified into a single entity, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. The MSKCC website is <http://mskcc.org>

About Alfred P. Sloan and Charles F. Kettering

Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., was born on May 23, 1875, in New Haven, Conn., the son of a prosperous businessman. In New York City he attended the Brooklyn public schools and the Polytechnic Institute, where he passed the exams to enter the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and matriculated there at age 17, receiving a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1895.



Sloan obtained a position in the Hyatt Rolling Bearing Company at Harrison, N.J. At the age of 26 he became president and general manager of the rapidly failing firm when his father and one other man bought control. Sloan quickly resuscitated the firm by moving into the manufacture of steel roller bearings for the mushrooming automobile industry.

While Olds Motor Company was Sloan's first customer, Ford Motor Company became the largest. Hyatt profits ran as high as \$4 million annually, but Sloan grew concerned with rumors that General Motors (GM) might produce its own bearings. Instead, William C. Durant, the energetic builder of GM, bought Sloan's firm for \$13,500,000 and merged it as part of the United Motors Corporation, with Sloan as president. In 1918 he became a vice president and member of the GM executive committee.

Durant lost control of GM in 1920 to the Du Ponts, but Pierre Samuel du Pont, the new president, knew nothing about automobiles and made Sloan vice president in charge of operations. Three years later Sloan became president of GM and a director of the Du Pont Company.

Sloan made a great philanthropic contribution in 1937, when he endowed the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation with \$10 million; to 1966, his gifts totaled over \$305 million. Major recipients were the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He died Feb. 17, 1966, in New York City.

Charles F. Kettering was born August 29, 1876 near Loudonville, Ohio. After high school graduation Kettering taught three years in small-town schools. Entering Ohio State University at age twenty-two, he dropped out in his sophomore year because of poor eyesight. Kettering worked for two years as a telephone lineman and then returned to Ohio State, graduating at age twenty-eight.



After Kettering received his degree he took a job as an experimental engineer with National Cash Register Company (in Dayton, Ohio). During his five years there he created a low-cost printing cash register; created an electric cash register, doing away with the hand crank; developed a system that tied charge phones to cash registers; and developed an accounting machine for banks.

Having developed a better ignition system for autos while working "on the side" for NCR, Kettering, with the help of NCR's general manager Colonel Edward A. Deeds, organized Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (Delco) in 1909. That year an order from Cadillac for eight thousand ignition systems led to the creation of an electric starter, first offered on Cadillac cars in 1912.

In 1916 Delco became a branch of United Motors Corporation, an automotive parts and accessories company. General Motors acquired United Motors in 1918. Kettering was invited to organize and direct the new GM Research Corporation.

As head of GM research for 27 years, Kettering helped bring about the improvement of many products, acquiring 140 patents in his name. Kettering, in addition to his success as a scientist and engineer, was highly regarded as a public speaker and social philosopher"

Kettering retired from GM in 1947 but continued to serve as a director and research adviser until his death in Dayton on November 25, 1958. He received more than three dozen honorary doctor's degrees and dozens of awards, honors, and medals. His name lives on in the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, which he organized for medical research in 1927, and the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research, founded by GM chairman Alfred P. Sloan Jr. in 1945.

April 2009 Meeting Report

Cabrini College professors Sharon Schwarze and Harvey Lape were the speakers for our April meeting, discussing critical thinking as a philosophical process, not a destination. Critical thinking is an open rational dialogue between friends (or enemies) who are reasoning from something, rather than to something. Beliefs are justified by other beliefs and are either warranted or unwarranted. Beliefs should make our lives easier with no unpleasant surprises.

Attitudes that interfere with critical thinking are 'truthiness' (the idea that some beliefs are immune from needing support), that critical thinking is wheel spinning because people will believe what they want, and the assertion that values are different from facts.

They urged us all to be critical thinkers, not critical people.

Thinking Socratically: Critical Thinking About Everyday Issues by Sharon Schwarze and Harvey Lape

**Paperback: 384 pages \$76.00 Publisher: Prentice Hall; 2 edition (September 8, 2000)
ISBN-10: 0130281638 ISBN-13: 978-0130281630**

Thinking Socratically: Critical Thinking About Everyday Issues, Second Edition encourages students in a user-friendly way to improve their own natural reasoning skills. An enjoyable collection of readings presents students with real-life situations that raise questions about the basic assumptions of rationality, naturally engaging them in open dialogue—the hallmark of the rational person. The situations range from the problem of evidence at a trial to the absence of an explanation of why two children died in the same day-care center on the same day.

The text is distinctively different, both conceptually and pedagogically in its approach and critical thinking.

- Teaches critical thinking in contexts of ordinary life issues
- Shows how to be a critical thinker using Socrates as a model
- Emphasizes open rational dialogue, especially among friends, but even among enemies
- Is organized in short packets for ease of assignment and retention
- Includes puzzles of rationality as well as standard items

Socrates on Gossip



In ancient Greece (469 - 399 BC), Socrates was widely lauded for his wisdom.

One day the great philosopher came upon an acquaintance who ran up to him excitedly and said, "Socrates, do you know what I just heard about one of your students?"

"Wait a moment," Socrates replied.

"Before you tell me I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Triple Filter Test."

"Triple filter?"

"That's right," Socrates continued.

"Before you talk to me about my student let's take a moment to filter what you're going to say. The first filter is TRUTH. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second filter, the filter of GOODNESS. Is what you are about to tell me about my student something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, even though you're not certain it's true?"

The man shrugged, a little embarrassed.

Socrates continued. "You may still pass the test though, because there is a third filter - the filter of USEFULNESS. Is what you want to tell me about my student going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really..."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither True nor Good nor even Useful, Why tell it to me at all?"

The man was defeated and ashamed.

The Blue Hole

By Don Nigroni

Juan Ponce de Leon looked for the Fountain of Youth in Florida in 1513 in order to obtain eternal youth and the Knucker Hole, located at Lyminster, England, is purportedly a bottomless pool that never freezes over and in which a dragon once lurked long, long ago. I visited Lyminster in July 2003 and saw the Slayer's Stone in the nearby church, but the Knucker Hole itself was fenced off and you couldn't actually see the water from beyond the fence. There are strange and wondrous pools of water all over the world and some of them may bestow eternal life while others might bring instant death. And South Jersey has its own mysterious pool, the Blue Hole.

Henry Charlton Beck in *More Forgotten Towns of Southern New Jersey* (1937) told of this eerie place. The pool was supposedly a bottomless pit with bluish water that was icy cold in some spots, even in summer, and warm in other places which never froze over, even in winter. Within the pool the Devil, namely, Beelzebub, was said to lurk and he would grab onto swimmers and pull them down into its depths. A later version of this tale, which appeared in *Phantom of the Pines* (1998) by James F. McCloy and Ray Miller, Jr., identified the nefarious monster as being an offspring of the Devil, namely, the infamous Jersey Devil.

On Saturday, March 7, 2009, my cousin and I visited the Blue Hole in the Winslow Wildlife Management Area. I drove down East Piney Hollow Road and parked in the Shotgun Training Area parking lot. Following the blue dot inside a white rectangle markers, which were painted on trees, we hiked down the adjacent sand road for about 10 minutes until the markers indicated that we should make a right turn onto

another sand road. We then hiked for about 5 more minutes until we reached the Blue Hole on our right with the Great Egg Harbor River 60 paces ahead of us. The river was then about a foot deep near its bank and probably several feet deep at its deepest. The Blue Hole, which allegedly is bottomless, was only about a foot deep as far out as my arm could reach while measuring its depth with my walking stick. Its water was cold and clear, whereas the nearby river was even colder and tea colored. While there, the eerie silence of the Pine Barrens was periodically broken by the sounds of gunfire from the distant outdoor firing range.

Apparently the Blue Hole was a tempting swimming hole for the local kids and their parents long ago told them that the Devil lurked within in order to discourage them from taking a dip there. Its bottom seemed mucky and evidently becomes very deep at some point away from the rim. Hence, the local parents presumably created a boogeyman to protect their children



The author at Blue Hole
Photo by Bruce Clark

from harm, in this case, the Devil!

Don Nigroni received a BS in economics in 1971 from St. Joseph's University and a MA in philosophy from Notre Dame in 1973. He retired in 2007 after working for 32 years as an economist with the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. He now spends much more time hiking, mountain biking, kayaking and bird watching.

Ω Ω Ω

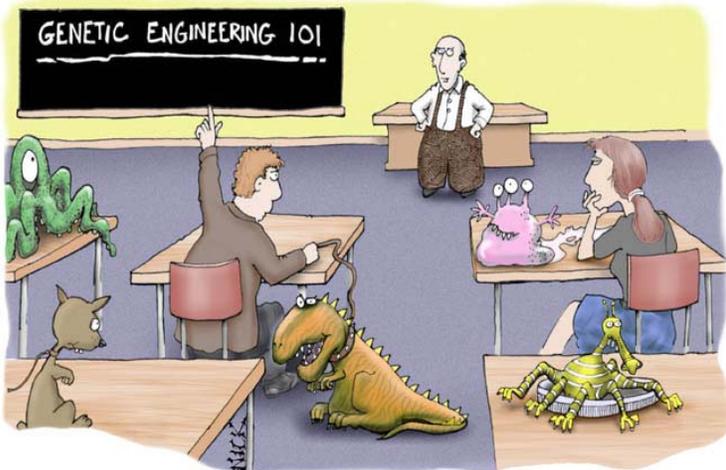
PhACT Participates in High School Science Fair

By Eric Krieg

After years of planning to finally do this - On March 17th, I was a science fair judge for the Delaware Valley Science fair contest held at Del Val College in Doylestown. While going through judge orientation, I was glad to meet up with PhACT founding member, Craig Olson who was judging the Botany category. I was assigned to the "team" category - which was 2 person teams for mostly 6th - 8th grade students. What struck me early was the quality of work for these middle school students.



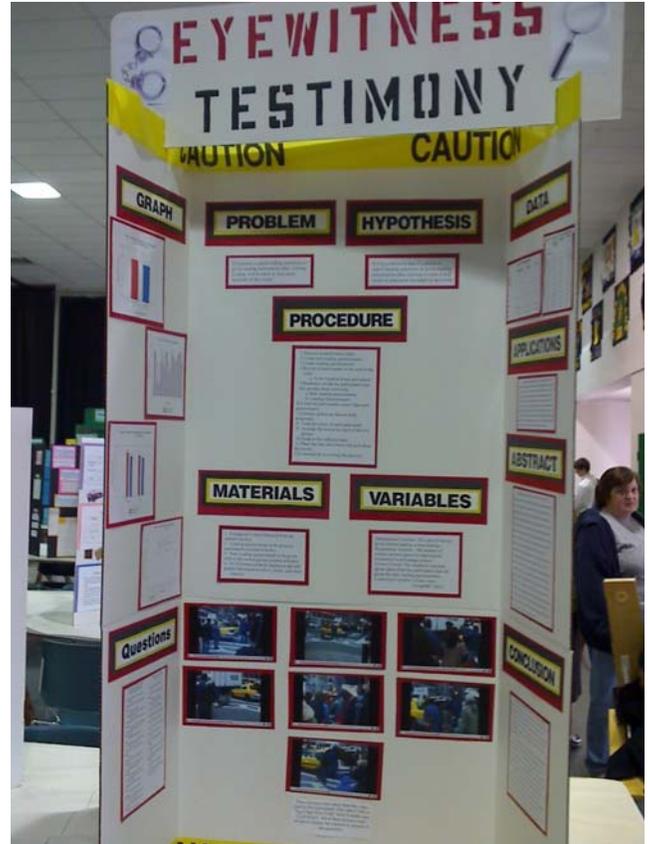
I was impressed by their understanding of the scientific method and their general good ability to respond to questions. The other judges and I thought that we could have felt good awarding 1st prize to more than half of our contestants, but our difficult job was to find the best. In the interview session, I was looking for their response to questions like, "what was the independent variable you tried to isolate", "ever heard of 'double blind' studies?", "what steps did you take to try to correct for error in your data?" and "if you had it all over to do with unlimited budget, what would you have done better?"



"Okay—is there anybody ELSE whose homework ate their dog?"

Cartoon by Nick D. Kim, <http://www.lab-initio.com>
Used by permission.

It warmed my heart that the majority of these kids really "got" the scientific method. My only sadness was seeing my own gender very poorly represented. I was busy acting as a general judge and also looking for a recipient of the 100\$ PhACT special category award for application of "critical



thinking". Many would of have earned it, but I settled on an entry from Erin H. and Holly M. of Mr. Testa's class from Holicong Middle School in central Bucks. Their project studied the ease of biasing witness conclusions from crime scene pictures. They conducted a not quite double blinded test, but a well controlled test of people's memory and interpretation of a series of pictures. The upshot was that people give quite different responses based on how questions are posed. They hit upon a common yet little known human weakness related to truth which skeptics try to draw attention to.

At the end of the show, with just the tri folds remaining, I wandered up and down the now silent isles letting the work around me wash out the sense of impending doom we get from world news. Catching the eye of another awed lingering judge, - they smiled back a deep affirmation to my quote "we are looking at hope for the future".

Please contact Eric at erickrieg@verizon.net if you can contribute to next year's PhACT prize, sponsor your own special category prize or if you want to join in the fun and be a judge too.

Objectivism: a philosophy for skeptics?

By Tom Napier



It's easy to poke fun at Ayn Rand as Eric Hamell does in the March Phactum. Even Michael Shermer did so in his essay, "The unlikeliest cult." (Most easily found in his book, "Why people believe weird things.") Poking holes in Rand's philosophy, Objectivism, is harder.

Ayn Rand (1905-1982) was apparently the first, albeit amateur, philosopher since Immanuel Kant to take seriously



the proposition that morality can and should be derived by reason alone. Unfortunately, she was her own worst proponent. Her ideas may have been clear but her writing style rambles. Her outrage with those who disagree with her comes through; too often her message does not.

In 1971 I picked up a paperback in a Amsterdam bookstore. I was intrigued by its title, "The Virtue of Selfishness." It turned

out to be a collection of essays about Objectivism by Rand and others. My first reaction on dipping into it was that the philosophy it presented was at odds with all that I had been brought up to believe. I continued reading and, some six months later, found myself saying, "This is so obvious, why doesn't everyone behave this way."

In my period of enthusiasm for Objectivism I read all three of Rand's major novels and dozens of her essays. Apart from her famous eight-word "essence" (quoted by Shermer) Rand never saw fit to put the tenets of Objectivism into a compact, closely-reasoned form; one must distill them from her novels and essays. (I can't resist comparing her works to the Bible where, apart from the Ten Commandments, any message must be disentangled from a jumble of fact and fiction.)

In 1975 I tried to put the gist of Rand's ideas into coherent form and even lectured on them to a Mensa audience. What follows is extracted from that attempt at codification.

Two ideas lie at Objectivism's core. One is that only reasoning beings need a moral code. This code can be derived from the nature of such beings. One has a choice between dying or continuing to live. If one chooses to live, one has

both a right and an obligation to take the actions necessary to support oneself. (This one-to-one relationship between rights and obligations runs throughout Objectivism.)

The other core idea is that people should act in their own rational self-interest. The unit of morality is the individual: "Society" has no rights and cannot be used to justify an action. As everyone's are the same, no one's rights conflict. Rand's idealized moral man never desires what he cannot achieve by his own work. He esteems his own achievements and admires others only for theirs. Much of Objectivism can be reduced to, "Competence should be admired and rewarded."

If you want others to act to your advantage you must offer mutually agreed compensation. Since only force or the threat of force can infringe on a person's rights, its use is forbidden except in defense of those rights. One of the few legitimate purposes of government is to suppress the use of force. (Another is to enforce contracts.)

By the mid-1970s I'd realized that some of Rand's assumptions were flawed. Objectivism would work in a land of open frontiers and unlimited resources where what one achieves is proportional to one's work. Farmland and miner-

als are free for the taking and bring wealth to those who exploit them. New inventions are made by isolated, self-funded individuals to whom the sole benefit accrues. Although set in the 1950s, Rand's novels belong in spirit to the America of

Ayn Rand and her sisters



From left to right: Natasha, two-and-a-half years younger than Ayn; Nora, five years younger than Ayn; and Ayn, circa 1911

the 1850s.

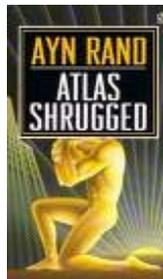
In her 1957 novel, "Atlas Shrugged," Rand explores the idea that a country's prosperity derives from a handful of innovative thinkers. They don't receive the credit they deserve even though the economy would collapse without them. Ironically, when Rand depicts an Objectivist utopia, we find it is powered by what we now call a "free energy" machine. Objectivism, the philosophy, ultimately morphed into Libertarianism, the political movement. Both demand minimum governmental interference in the behavior and finances of the individual, a view with which the Founding Fathers would probably have concurred.

Physics places objective limits on what one can or cannot do, whatever one might wish. A truly objective morality would place similar limits on what one ought or ought not to do; one's feelings would be irrelevant. For example, by any objective standard of remuneration there are many people unable to support themselves. While a pure Objectivist would merely shrug his or her shoulders, a practical Objectivist consents to some degree of governmental transfer of wealth, if only to avoid having to step over the bodies of the destitute every time one goes outdoors. Only when the destitute demand support by others as a right has Objectivism lost and Rand's bogey-man, Collectivism, won.

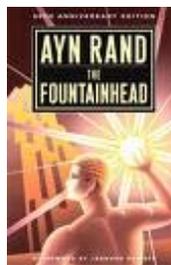
By the late 1970s even this "second-order" version of Objectivism was conflicting with my support for the nascent conservation movement. Only years later did I read just how odd Rand's own application of her principles had been. (See Shermer's essay for the details.)

I have long since ceased to regard myself as a Rand devotee but many of her concepts still underlie my thinking. Her brave attempt to derive morality from first principles deserves either fuller exploitation or a formal refutation. The alternative is having an arbitrary morality imposed by political or religious fiat. I doubt if many skeptics would prefer that.

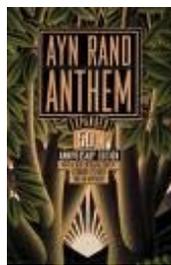
Tom Napier has been a stalwart skeptic and member of PhACT for many years and delights in exposing the outlandish claims of pseudo-scientists and charlatans. Tom made his living as a physicist, writer, and scientific consultant. After coming to Pennsylvania he worked mainly in electronic design and management. He is now retired although still doing occasional consulting jobs.



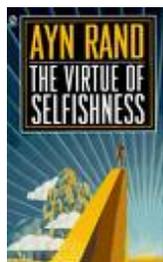
"Did you really think we want those laws observed?" said Dr. Ferris. "We want them to be broken. You'd better get it straight that it's not a bunch of boy scouts you're up against... We're after power and we mean it... There's no way to rule innocent men. The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws. Who wants a nation of law-abiding citizens? What's there in that for anyone? But just pass the kind of laws that can neither be observed nor enforced or objectively interpreted – and you create a nation of law-breakers – and then you cash in on guilt. Now that's the system, Mr. Reardon, that's the game, and once you understand it, you'll be much easier to deal with."
(*'Atlas Shrugged'* 1957)



"Civilization is the progress toward a society of privacy. The savage's whole existence is public, ruled by the laws of his tribe. Civilization is the process of setting man free from men."
(*'The Fountainhead'* 1943)



"But what is freedom? Freedom from what? There is nothing to take a man's freedom away from him, save other men. To be free, a man must be free of his brothers. That is freedom. That and nothing else."
(*'Anthem'* 1946)



"Happiness is a state of non-contradictory joy ... Happiness is possible only to a rational man, the man who desires nothing but rational goals, seeks nothing but rational values and finds his joy in nothing but rational actions."
(*'The Virtue of Selfishness'* 1964)

"The [U.S.] Constitution is a limitation on the government, not on private individuals ... it does not prescribe the conduct of private individuals, only the conduct of the government ... it is not a charter for government power, but a charter of the citizen's protection against the government." - Ayn Rand

Science & Religion

By Albert Z. Conner

In his article on Science and Religion (Phactum, March 2009), Dr. Libby first makes a rather compelling case for the irrelevance of religion and then justifies the coexistence of these two conflicting areas because religion "gives support, joy, happiness and meaning" to billions of believers. He bases this conclusion on the fact that the major religions pay lip-service to various versions of the Golden Rule which implies a philosophy of peace and tolerance. He chooses to ignore thousands of years of blood-drenched history attributable to religious conflicts and to ignore the unrelenting attempts of religion to subvert science.

According to mythical biblical history, the ancient Jews were very intolerant of any tribe that opposed them and perpetrated many massacres of whole communities of men, women, and children. Muslims attempted to convert the world to Islam by the sword and almost succeeded until driven out of most of Europe by the Christians. This led to a long series of battles between Crusaders and Muslims for control of Jerusalem. Later the Christian church turned its attention to the Jews and other unbelievers leading to the Inquisition and the infamous witchcraft trials. The Jews were once more targeted in the pogroms in Russia, Poland, Hungary, etc. and Christian Germany generated Hitler and the slaughter of 6 million Jews and other "undesirables". Since that time Islam has become the most destructive element in society. The Hindu/Muslim wars killed untold thousands and the Christians and Muslims destroyed each other in the Balkans and various African nations. Despite the prohibitions of the Qur'an against Muslims killing Muslims we have witnessed the Iran/Iraq war, the Sunni/Shia conflicts, the Kuwait invasion, and the predatory activities of the Taliban. Added to this, consider the appalling civil rights violations practiced in virtually all countries governed by Islamic law. Love thy neighbor??? Do unto others---???

In the conflict between science and religion, two major religions have consistently opposed scientific progress, i.e. Christianity and Islam. Over the centuries the Christian church has fought against ideas such as the age of the Earth and man, evolution, the heliocentric theory of the solar system, the source of comets, meteors, and eclipses, and the shape of the Earth. They fostered belief in supernatural intervention, miracle healing, Satanic causes of disease, demonic possession, and

exorcism. They opposed inoculation, vaccination, the use of anesthetics, and anatomical studies. The list goes on. Opposition to evolution, contraception, and stem cell research continues to this day.

Between the 9th and 13th centuries, Islam led the world in the areas of science, philosophy, and medicine. For the next several centuries they preserved ancient learning and contributed additional innovations and ideas. However, around the 12th century Muslim orthodoxy reawakened and Islam rejected Western science and technology in favor of total reliance on the teachings of Mohammed and the Qur'an. Despite the fact that their current state of power and influence is entirely due to Western technology, they cling to their

ancient tribal beliefs. The great majority of Muslim schools are still devoted to the teaching of religion, memorization of passages from the Qur'an and more recently denial of the Holocaust, further demonization of the Jews and hatred of America. Their universities are third rate, they build palaces and mosques instead of libraries and they have made no significant contribution to science or technology for centuries.

While Judaism does not actively oppose science, it continues to foster belief in the supernatural, and Jewish orthodoxy hinders secular government and progress in Israel. One would think that a people who have given birth to many of the world's greatest scientists would begin to see the light.

The conflict between science and religion continues. Religion continues to be the most divisive and destructive force in the world today.

The Third Crusade (1189—1192)



Archrivals

Salāh ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb (c. 1138 - 1193), better known in the Western world as **Saladin**, was a Kurdish Muslim who became the Sultan of Egypt and Syria.

Richard the First of England (1157 - 1199) was known as **Richard the Lionheart**, or **Cœur de Lion**.

References:

Andrew D. White, "A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology"

John W. Draper, "The Conflict Between Science and Religion"

Pervez Amirzli, "Science in the Islamic World", Free Inquiry, Feb./March 2008

Harold Evans, "Poisoning Minds in Bethlehem", U.S. News & World Report, 2008

Albert Z. Conner is a retired analytical chemist with more than 20 years experience in the fields of epidemiology, toxicology, statistics, and government regulatory practices.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

By Don Nigroni

For centuries, illustrious men had sought the Philosopher's Stone. The greatest 17th century scientist, Sir Isaac Newton, devoted a lot of time and energy to alchemy. The greatest 20th century economist, Lord John Maynard Keynes, famously asserted that "Newton was not the first of the age of reason. He was the last of the magicians". Nonetheless, by the time of the 18th century Enlightenment, alchemy was mainly a discredited endeavor.

According to a famous 17th century American alchemist, Eirenaeus Philalethes, the Philosopher's Stone referred to: 1.) the Vegetable Tinctures used to make the sick healthy, namely, the White Tincture or the more potent Yellow Tincture, 2.) the Metallic Tinctures used to transmute metals, namely, the White Tincture used to change base metals into silver or the more valuable Red Tincture used to change base metals into gold, and 3.) the inestimable *Panacea* or Universal Remedy which was supposedly capable of curing all disorders and thereby prolonging life indefinitely. Alchemists used observation and laboratory experiments in hopes of affecting their wondrous transmutations. For example, an alchemist might put a pile of lead into his vessel, add a few grains of gold and a few grains scraped from his Philosopher's Stone while properly heating the contents, along with performing numerous other arcane operations, until the lead would, hopefully, change into gold.

Below, I'll review some thoughts of Benjamin Franklin (1706 – 1790) on the Philosopher's Stone which he expressed to: 1.) Samuel Danforth in 1773, 2.) Ezra Stiles around 1777 and 3.) Joseph Priestley in 1777.

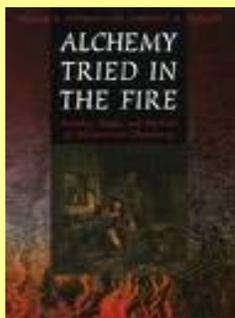
In replying to Samuel Danforth in a letter dated from London on July 25, 1773, Franklin wrote,

though living on in one's children, as we both may do, is a good thing, I cannot but fancy it might be better to continue living ourselves at the same

time. I rejoice, therefore, in your kind intentions of including me in the benefits of that inestimable stone, which, curing all diseases (even old age itself), will enable us to see the future glorious state of our America, enjoying in full security her own liberties....

Eirenaeus Philalethes (peaceful lover of truth), was the pen name for an obscure American scientist named **George Starkey** (1628 -1665). Starkey worked with and had much influence on Robert Boyle, the English scientist known as the father of chemistry. Starkey also touched the lives of other important scientists, among them Isaac Newton, whose interest in alchemy has recently come to light. In 1665, in London, Starkey flouted the dangers of the Plague epidemic, convinced that his medical knowledge would protect him. His remedy, a preparation called "xeneton", which involved hanging a dried toad around the neck, did not work.

Much of what is known about Eirenaeus Philalethes is the result of work by William R. Newman, professor of the history and philosophy of science at Indiana University. He received the History of Science Society's Pfizer Prize for an outstanding scholarly publication. His award-winning book, *Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry*, published by the University of Chicago Press (2002), was co-written with Lawrence M. Principe, professor of the history of science, medicine and technology and of chemistry at Johns Hopkins University.



Franklin goes on, in a similar teasing manner, to envision Danforth, himself and twenty of their friends having a "jolly conversation" on this subject a hundred years later. Needless to say, after such a reply, Franklin apparently never received the Philosopher's Stone from Danforth. And one might well feel that Franklin's death 17 years later in 1790 at the age of 84, instead of him still being alive and kicking in 1873, served him right. Nonetheless, it should also be noted that Danforth died four years later in 1777 at the age of 81.

According to *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth: Alchemical Regeneration in the Works of Taylor, Poe, Hawthorne, and Fuller* (2000) by Randall A. Clack, Franklin told Ezra Stiles sometime around 1777 that "*there were several [alchemists] at Philad[elphia] & c. who were loosing their Time in chemical Experiments to no Effect.*" It's interesting that at this late date, laboratory alchemists were apparently working in Philadelphia, albeit, without success.

In his letter from Paris dated January 27, 1777 to Joseph Priestley entitled *Philosopher's Stone. – State of Affairs in America.*, Franklin wrote of "*The hint you gave me jocularly, that you did not quite despair of the **philosopher's stone***" and he goes on to request, tongue in cheek, that after Priestley finds it, he should lose it, since it would allow mankind to finance even more slaughter. Franklin here is referring to the transmutation of base into precious metals.

Then there is Franklin's letter to George Whately from Passy dated May 23, 1785, where he wrote,

I say that when I see nothing annihilated, and not even a drop of water wasted, I cannot suspect the annihilation of souls, or believe that he will suffer the daily waste of millions of minds ready made that now exist, and put himself to the continual trouble of making new ones. Thus finding myself to exist in the world, I believe I shall, in some shape or other, always exist; and, with all the inconveniences human life is liable to, I shall not object to a new edition of mine; hoping, however, that the errata of the last may be corrected.

Franklin believed in personal immortality and hoped that, after he died, his next, perhaps reincarnated, form might be an even better one.

In conclusion, Franklin did not want to be immortal only through his progeny or his fame. And, like the alchemists, he not only wanted real immortality, but he also would have liked to have been able to cheat death. Nonetheless, Franklin, who mingled with the 18th century Enlightenment intelligentsia, made fun of the claims that alchemists could transmute base metals into precious ones and cure all ills and thereby prolong life indefinitely. And, furthermore, he might have ridiculed the alchemists on these matters because the only ones who ever got rich from practicing the art of transmuting metals were swindlers and due to the stark reality that all of the adepts died just like the rest of us.

Ω Ω Ω

A salamander lives in the fire, which imparts to it a most glorious hue.



This is the reiteration, gradation, and amelioration of the Tincture, or Philosopher's Stone; and the whole is called its Augmentation.

Joseph Priestley (1733 – 1804) was an 18th-century British theologian, Dissenting clergyman, natural philosopher, educator, and political theorist who published over 150 works. He is usually credited with the discovery of oxygen, having isolated it in its gaseous state, although Carl Wilhelm Scheele and Antoine Lavoisier also have a claim to the discovery.

During his lifetime, Priestley's considerable scientific reputation rested on his invention of soda water, his writings on electricity, and his discovery of several "airs" (gases), the most famous being what Priestley dubbed "**dephlogisticated air**" (oxygen). However, Priestley's determination to defend phlogiston theory and to reject what would become the Chemical Revolution eventually left him isolated within the scientific community.



Painting by
Rembrandt Peale

Priestley was a founder of Unitarianism in England. The controversial nature of Priestley's publications combined with his outspoken support of the French Revolution aroused public and governmental suspicion; he was eventually forced to flee to the United States after a mob burned down his home and church in 1791.

In 1794, Priestley and his family came to Philadelphia where he helped found the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia. He turned down an offer to teach chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania opting to live in the country. In 1795 Priestley's son Henry died of malaria. A year later his wife Mary died.

Priestley exchanged letters regarding the proper structure of a university with Thomas Jefferson, who used this advice when founding the University of Virginia. Jefferson and Priestley became close and when he had completed his *General History of the Christian Church*, he dedicated it to President Jefferson, writing that "it is now only that I can say I see nothing to fear from the hand of power, the government under which I live being for the first time truly favourable to me."

Priestley continued his scientific work in America with the support of the American Philosophical Association. He was hampered by lack of news from Europe; unaware of the latest scientific developments, Priestley was no longer on the forefront of discovery. Although the majority of his publications focused on defending phlogiston theory, he also did some original work on spontaneous generation and dreams. Despite Priestley's reduced scientific output, his presence stimulated American interest in chemistry.

On December 6, 1804 Priestley died and was buried in Northumberland, Pennsylvania. His epitaph reads:

**Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the
Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.
I will lay me down in peace and sleep till
I awake in the morning of the resurrection.**

The Wedge Document

The following document was taken from the NCSE website. This is the text of the Discovery Institute's "Wedge Document," prepared in 1998. It lays out "the Wedge strategy" by which the newly-formed Center for Renewal of Science and Culture would promote "intelligent design" creationism.

THE WEDGE CENTER FOR THE RENEWAL OF SCIENCE & CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

The proposition that human beings are created in the image of God is one of the bedrock principles on which Western civilization was built. Its influence can be detected in most, if not all, of the West's greatest achievements, including representative democracy, human rights, free enterprise, and progress in the arts and sciences.

Yet a little over a century ago, this cardinal idea came under wholesale attack by intellectuals drawing on the discoveries of modern science. Debunking the traditional conceptions of both God and man, thinkers such as Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud portrayed humans not as moral and spiritual beings, but as animals or machines who inhabited a universe ruled by purely impersonal forces and whose behavior and very thoughts were dictated by the unbending forces of biology, chemistry, and environment. This materialistic conception of reality eventually infected virtually every area of our culture, from politics and economics to literature and art.

The cultural consequences of this triumph of materialism were devastating. Materialists denied the existence of objective moral standards, claiming that environment dictates our behavior and beliefs. Such moral relativism was uncritically adopted by much of the social sciences, and it still undergirds much of modern economics, political science, psychology and sociology.

Materialists also undermined personal responsibility by asserting that human thoughts and behaviors are dictated by our biology and environment. The results can be seen in modern approaches to criminal justice, product liability, and welfare. In the materialist scheme of things, everyone is a victim and no one can be held accountable for his or her actions.

Finally, materialism spawned a virulent strain of utopianism. Thinking they could engineer the perfect society through the application of scientific knowledge, materialist reformers advocated coercive government programs that falsely promised to create heaven on earth.

Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science

and Culture seeks nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies. Bringing together leading scholars from the natural sciences and those from the humanities and social sciences, the Center explores how new developments in biology, physics and cognitive science raise serious doubts about scientific materialism and have re-opened the case for a broadly theistic understanding of nature. The Center awards fellowships for original research, holds conferences, and briefs policymakers about the opportunities for life after materialism.

The Center is directed by Discovery Senior Fellow Dr. Stephen Meyer. An Associate Professor of Philosophy at Whitworth College, Dr. Meyer holds a Ph.D. in the History and Philosophy of Science from Cambridge University. He formerly worked as a geophysicist for the Atlantic Richfield Company.

THE WEDGE STRATEGY

Phase I.

- Scientific Research, Writing & Publicity

Phase II.

- Publicity & Opinion-making

Phase III.

- Cultural Confrontation & Renewal

THE WEDGE PROJECTS

Phase I. Scientific Research, Writing & Publication

- Individual Research Fellowship Program
- Paleontology Research program (Dr. Paul Chien et al.)
- Molecular Biology Research Program (Dr. Douglas Axe et al.)

Phase II. Publicity & Opinion-making

- Book Publicity
- Opinion-Maker Conferences
- Apologetics Seminars
- Teacher Training Program
- Op-ed Fellow
- PBS (or other TV) Co-production
- Publicity Materials / Publications

Phase III. Cultural Confrontation & Renewal

- Academic and Scientific Challenge Conferences
- Potential Legal Action for Teacher Training

- Research Fellowship Program: shift to social sciences and humanities

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

The social consequences of materialism have been devastating. As symptoms, those consequences are certainly worth treating. However, we are convinced that in order to defeat materialism, we must cut it off at its source. That source is scientific materialism. This is precisely our strategy. If we view the predominant materialistic science as a giant tree, our strategy is intended to function as a "wedge" that, while relatively small, can split the trunk when applied at its weakest points. The very beginning of this strategy, the "thin edge of the wedge," was Phillip Johnson's critique of Darwinism begun in 1991 in *Darwinism on Trial*, and continued in *Reason in the Balance* and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*. Michael Behe's highly successful *Darwin's Black Box* followed Johnson's work. We are building on this momentum, broadening the wedge with a positive scientific alternative to materialistic scientific theories, which has come to be called the theory of intelligent design (ID). Design theory promises to reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.

The Wedge strategy can be divided into three distinct but interdependent phases, which are roughly but not strictly chronological. We believe that, with adequate support, we can accomplish many of the objectives of Phases I and II in the next five years (1999-2003), and begin Phase III (See "Goals/ Five Year Objectives/Activities").

Phase I: Research, Writing and Publication

Phase II: Publicity and Opinion-making

Phase III: Cultural Confrontation and Renewal

Phase I is the essential component of everything that comes afterward. Without solid scholarship, research and argument, the project would be just another attempt to indoctrinate instead of persuade. A lesson we have learned from the history of science is that it is unnecessary to outnumber the opposing establishment. Scientific revolutions are usually staged by an initially small and relatively young group of scientists who are not blinded by the prevailing prejudices and who are able to do creative work at the pressure points, that is, on those critical issues upon which whole systems of thought hinge. So, in Phase I we are supporting vital writing and research at the sites most likely to crack the materialist edifice.

Phase II. The primary purpose of Phase II is to prepare the popular reception of our ideas. The best and truest research can languish unread and unused unless it is properly publicized. For this reason we seek to cultivate and convince influential individuals in print and broadcast media, as well as think tank leaders, scientists and academics, congressional staff, talk show hosts, college and seminary presidents and

faculty, future talent and potential academic allies. Because of his long tenure in politics, journalism and public policy, Discovery President Bruce Chapman brings to the project rare knowledge and acquaintance of key op-ed writers, journalists, and political leaders. This combination of scientific and scholarly expertise and media and political connections makes the Wedge unique, and also prevents it from being "merely academic." Other activities include production of a PBS documentary on intelligent design and its implications, and popular op-ed publishing. Alongside a focus on influential opinion-makers, we also seek to build up a popular base of support among our natural constituency, namely, Christians. We will do this primarily through apologetics seminars. We intend these to encourage and equip believers with new scientific evidence's that support the faith, as well as to "popularize" our ideas in the broader culture.

Phase III. Once our research and writing have had time to mature, and the public prepared for the reception of design theory, we will move toward direct confrontation with the advocates of materialist science through challenge conferences in significant academic settings. We will also pursue possible legal assistance in response to resistance to the integration of design theory into public school science curricula. The attention, publicity, and influence of design theory should draw scientific materialists into open debate with design theorists, and we will be ready. With an added emphasis to the social sciences and humanities, we will begin to address the specific social consequences of materialism and the Darwinist theory that supports it in the sciences.

GOALS

Governing Goals

- To defeat scientific materialism and its destructive moral, cultural and political legacies.
- To replace materialistic explanations with the theistic understanding that nature and human beings are created by God.

Five Year Goals

- To see intelligent design theory as an accepted *alternative* in the sciences and scientific research being done from the perspective of design theory.
- To see the beginning of the influence of design theory in spheres other than natural science.
- To see major new debates in education, life issues, legal and personal responsibility pushed to the front of the national agenda.

Twenty Year Goals

- To see intelligent design theory as the dominant perspective in science.
- To see design theory application in specific fields, including molecular biology, biochemistry, paleon-

tology, physics and cosmology in the natural sciences, psychology, ethics, politics, theology and philosophy in the humanities; to see its influence in the fine arts.

- To see design theory permeate our religious, cultural, moral and political life.

FIVE YEAR OBJECTIVES

1. A major public debate between design theorists and Darwinists (by 2003)
 2. Thirty published books on design and its cultural implications (sex, gender issues, medicine, law, and religion)
 3. One hundred scientific, academic and technical articles by our fellows
 4. Significant coverage in national media:
 - Cover story on major news magazine such as *Time* or *Newsweek*
 - PBS show such as *Nova* treating design theory fairly
 - Regular press coverage on developments in design theory
 - Favorable op-ed pieces and columns on the design movement by 3rd party media
 5. Spiritual & cultural renewal:
 - Mainline renewal movements begin to appropriate insights from design theory, and to repudiate theologies influenced by materialism
 - Major Christian denomination(s) defend(s) traditional doctrine of creation & repudiate(s)
 - Darwinism Seminars increasingly recognize & repudiate naturalistic presuppositions
 - Positive uptake in public opinion polls on issues such as sexuality, abortion and belief in God
 6. Ten states begin to rectify ideological imbalance in their science curricula & include design theory
 7. Scientific achievements:
 - An active design movement in Israel, the UK and other influential countries outside the US
 - Ten CRSC Fellows teaching at major universities
 - Two universities where design theory has become the dominant view
 - Design becomes a key concept in the social sciences
- Legal reform movements base legislative proposals on design theory

ACTIVITIES

- (1) Research Fellowship Program (for writing and publishing)
- (2) Front line research funding at the "pressure points" (e.g., Daul Chien's Chengjiang Cambrian Fossil Find in paleontology, and Doug Axe's research laboratory in molecular biology)
- (3) Teacher training

- (4) Academic Conferences
- (5) Opinion-maker Events & Conferences
- (6) Alliance-building, recruitment of future scientists and leaders, and strategic partnerships with think tanks, social advocacy groups, educational organizations and institutions, churches, religious groups, foundations and media outlets
- (7) Apologetics seminars and public speaking
- (8) Op-ed and popular writing
- (9) Documentaries and other media productions
- (10) Academic debates
- (11) Fund Raising and Development
- (12) General Administrative support

THE WEDGE STRATEGY PROGRESS SUMMARY

Books

William Dembski and Paul Nelson, two CRSC Fellows, will very soon have books published by major secular university publishers, Cambridge University Press and The University of Chicago Press, respectively. (One critiques Darwinian materialism; the other offers a powerful alternative.)

Nelson's book, *On Common Descent*, is the seventeenth book in the prestigious University of Chicago "Evolutionary Monographs" series and the first to critique neo-Darwinism. Dembski's book, *The Design Inference*, was back-ordered in June, two months prior to its release date.

These books follow hard on the heels of Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* (The Free Press) which is now in paperback after nine print runs in hard cover. So far it has been translated into six foreign languages. The success of his book has led to other secular publishers such as McGraw Hill requesting future titles from us. This is a breakthrough.

InterVarsity will publish our large anthology, *Mere Creation* (based upon the Mere Creation conference) this fall, and Zondervan is publishing *Maker of Heaven and Earth: Three Views of the Creation-Evolution Controversy*, edited by fellows John Mark Reynolds and J.P. Moreland.

McGraw Hill solicited an expedited proposal from Meyer, Dembski and Nelson on their book *Uncommon Descent*. Finally, Discovery Fellow Ed Larson has won the Pulitzer Prize for *Summer for the Gods*, his retelling of the Scopes Trial, and InterVarsity has just published his co-authored attack on assisted suicide, *A Different Death*.

Academic Articles

Our fellows recently have been featured or published articles in major scientific and academic journals in *The Proceedings to the National Academy of Sciences*, *Nature*, *The Scientist*, *The American Biology Teacher*, *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications*, *Biochemistry*, *Philosophy and Biology*, *Faith & Philosophy*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, *Analysis*, *Book & Culture*, *Ethics & Medicine*, *Zygon*, *Perspectives on Science and the Christian Faith*, *Religious Studies*, *Christian*

Scholars' Review, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, and the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. Many more such articles are now in press or awaiting review at major secular journals as a result of our first round of research fellowships.

Our own journal, *Origins & Design*, continues to feature scholarly contributions from CRSC Fellows and other scientists.

Television and Radio Appearances

During 1997 our fellows appeared on numerous radio programs (both Christian and secular) and five nationally televised programs, *TechnoPolitics*, *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, *Inside the Law*, *Freedom Speaks*, and *Firing Line*. The special edition of *TechnoPolitics* that we produced with PBS in November elicited such an unprecedented audience response that the producer Neil Freeman decided to air a second episode from the "out takes." His enthusiasm for our intellectual agenda helped stimulate a special edition of William F. Buckley's *Firing Line*, featuring Phillip Johnson and two of our fellows, Michael Behe and David Berlinski. At Ed Atsinger's invitation, Phil Johnson and Steve Meyer addressed Salem Communications' Talk Show Host conference in Dallas last November. As a result, Phil and Steve have been interviewed several times on Salem talk shows across the country. For example, in July Steve Meyer and Mike Behe were interviewed for two hours on the nationally broadcast radio show *Janet Parshall's America*. Canadian Public Radio (CBC) recently featured Steve Meyer on their *Tapestry* program. The episode, "God & the Scientists," has aired all across Canada. And in April, William Craig debated Oxford atheist Peter Atkins in Atlanta before a large audience (moderated by William F. Buckley), which was broadcast live via satellite link, local radio, and internet "webcast."

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

The *Firing Line* debate generated positive press coverage for our movement in, of all places, *The New York Times*, as well as a column by Bill Buckley. In addition, our fellows have published recent articles & op-eds in both the secular and Christian press, including, for example, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Times*, *National Review*, *Commentary*, *Touchstone*, *The Detroit News*, *The Boston Review*, *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *Christianity Today*, *Cosmic Pursuits* and *World*. An op-ed piece by Jonathan Wells and Steve Meyer is awaiting publication in the *Washington Post*. Their article criticizes the National Academy of Science book *Teaching about Evolution* for its selective and ideological presentation of scientific evidence. Similar articles are in the works.

EVENTS OF RELEVANCE IN THE LAST THREE WEEKS

- Newsweek Magazine has published a cover story, "Science finds God," discussing among other things evidence for God from cosmology.

- McGraw Hill publishers have solicited an expedited proposal from CRSC fellows Steve Meyer, Paul Nelson, and Bill Dembski for their book on design in DNA.
- Steve Meyer and Mike Behe were interviewed for two hours on the nationally broadcast radio show *Janet Parshall's America*.
- Bill Dembski's book *The Design Inference* has already been back-ordered from Cambridge University Press in advance of its release.
- Fellow Paul Chien has been asked by the leading Chinese paleontologist to co-author a book with him on the Cambrian Explosion (which has profoundly anti-Darwinian implications).
- The Society for the Study of Evolution, the oldest and largest professional association of evolutionary biologists, announced a special teacher training program to combat design theory.
- Steve Meyer has been asked to testify before the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights concerning anti-religious discrimination in public education.

Ω Ω Ω

A True Test of Faith



September 13, 1923. Washington, D.C. "W.H. Murphy of the Protective Garment Corp. of New York stood less than ten feet from [Frederick County, Md.] Deputy Sheriff Charles W. Smith in police headquarters and let the deputy fire a .38 caliber revolver straight at his chest. When the bullet hit, Murphy never batted an eye. Inventors of the bulletproof vest, which weighs about 11 pounds, have put it on the market for the protection of police and other officers in emergency cases. The bullet which Deputy Smith fired into the vest Wednesday was presented to him for a souvenir."

Indigo Children as a Social Barometer

By Yevgeniya Krasina

Translated from Russian by Gary Goldberg



I visited the Secular Humanism website a few days ago and saw an article there about pseudoscience written by our academicians. In particular, it talked about children with paranormal abilities (the X-ray girl). The academicians were outraged that our mass media was once again propagandizing pseudoscience, which is especially cynical in a situation with children because experiments have been conducted in other countries and the obvious trickery around this "sensational phenomenon" was detected.

I would probably not have paid special attention to this article inasmuch in our country now only a lazy person does not earn money from human stupidity and superstitions if in the news on TV the next day I had not heard approximately the following: "Every third child in the world is born with unusual abilities. The number of indigo children grows by the hour, not by the day. Scientists are horrified inasmuch as it is clear that this is not normal". They show a girl who supposedly sees through people like an X-ray machine. Then a woman (a teacher) speaks: "When I go on the Metro I already see these children. They do not look at you as children should, in an ingratiating manner and they do not hide their eyes modestly. They look right at you as an equal and it seems as if they see right through you". And the horror in the eyes.

Yes, I think, alright. Why do they publicize a fear of so-called indigo children on TV (which in our times is a reflection of the ideology of the government)? Who are these indigo children? Surfing the Net I see a mass of esoteric nonsense beginning with these are children with a dark blue aura, that they are space aliens, that these are children of Light sent with a certain mission, and ending with these are computerized children who think with their head and not their heart. (It is a terrible thing when a person thinks with his head and not his heart. Imagine how he'll vote). And, finally, I find 10 signs by which one can identify an indigo child: <http://indigo.e-puzzle.ru>

[Copied from <http://skepdic.com/indigo.html>., not translated from this article]

1. They come into the world with a feeling of royalty (and often act like it).
2. They have a feeling of "deserving to be here," and are surprised when others don't share that.

3. Self-worth is not a big issue. They often tell the parents "who they are."
4. They have difficulty with absolute authority (authority without explanation or choice).
5. They simply will not do certain things; for example, waiting in line is difficult for them.
6. They get frustrated with systems that are ritually oriented and don't require creative thought.
7. They often see better ways of doing things, both at home and in school, which makes them seem like "system busters" (nonconforming to any system).
8. They seem antisocial unless they are with their own kind. If there are no others of like consciousness around them, they often turn inward, feeling like no other human understands them. School is often extremely difficult for them socially.
9. They will not respond to "guilt" discipline ("Wait till your father gets home and finds out what you did").
10. They are not shy in letting you know what they need.

I look at all this and I do not understand what the specific problem is. All 10 signs correspond to simply NORMAL children. Children who have self-worth, who have creative ability and intellect, who have no complexes, and who easily ignore the taboos and superstitions which are widespread in society.

Why then is the appearance of normal children in large numbers so threatening to grown uncles and aunts? I recall a recent conversation I had with a former teacher of my child's elementary school:

I: You complained about our class and called them "child hooligans" but is the new class better?

Teacher: No, unfortunately. Now the children are all worse with every year.

I: Why worse?

Teacher: They've become completely unmanageable. Earlier it was one or two such children in the class, but now it's almost all of them.

And here is the main word was named: UNMANAGEABLE. Now the reason for the fear is clear. A generation of unmanageable children is growing up. Children whose brains are no longer washed by Communist ideology and still have not

been washed by a religious-patriotic ideology. These children have piety neither toward adults, nor authorities, nor the government. These children have intellect, creative ability, and a pragmatic view of the world. These children are better than adults: they are able to find and use information. (They often feel at home in the Internet). So, what will happen when these children become adults?

Impressions from shooting the film "Gadkie Lebedi [Nasty Swans]" (http://www.newizv.ru/news/?id_news=52872&inset=cinema&date=2006-09-01):

"Filmmakers notice that the most difficult aspects in filming are working with animals and children, for they are unpredictable. The creators of Gadkie Lebedi were also afraid. Children who were to portray the concepts of "constitution" and "aphorism" were sought for a long time but when they were found, everyone became a bit terrified. 'I had the impression that I was not testing them, but they were [testing] me', recalls the director".

Rather, not only the filmmakers became a bit terrified, but also all those who are part of a dying system of government based on a primitive manipulation of people. What will happen with this system and at the same time to its representatives when an unmanageable person comes to replace a member of the mob? You get three guesses.

Can the representatives of the system still do anything to avoid the consequences of the advent of a new generation of unmanageable people? They think they can. And they are already trying.

First, the system can try to ideologize (brainwash) them anyway. There is such an attempt: the introduction of religion into kindergartens and schools, NVP [Basic Military Training], and the creation of national patriotic youth movements.

Second, if they do not manage to brainwash [children] with the aid of ideology they can try to drum obedience into them with the aid of the Army and law enforcement bodies. In peacetime this would hardly work but if a war were to begin somehow then all of them can be shaved [SIC] together.

Third, the indigo children can be declared witches and wizards and a hunt for them begun. But a certain public opinion needs to be created to do this. A fear of unusual children "who see through everyone" needs to be evoked among the quite numerous duped portion of the country's inhabitants. Especially since this is not a first for a mass media which represents the government to whip up the horror amongst the population against something unusual: evil Western imperialists, people "of Caucasian ethnicity", and awful sect members of all stripes (Jehovah's Witnesses, Hara Krishnas, Scientologists, Satanists, witches, and occultists).

Not long ago I heard a joke: if there were no America the government would begin to fear space aliens. The joke turned out to be prophetic. But I did not read about space aliens there in some esoteric community and not in the yellow press but an interview in Komsomol'skaya Pravda with Yevgeniy Litvinov, the Chairman of the RAN Committee to Study Anomalous Phenomena (<http://spb.kp.ru/2006/10/10/doc141355/>):

"In the words of Yevgeniy Litvinov (an RAN scientist) there are hundreds of space aliens on Earth every year, or even thousands of aliens. It turns out that ours is such a popular planet. Where does this attention come from? The scientist has developed a whole system of rationales in that regard:

1. The Earth serves as a resort for them.
2. A site for experiments.
3. We will soon disappear. The aliens are collecting specimens as a memento.
4. An interplanetary criminal "gang".
5. We have a transfer point".



Then a guide is given: "How to tell an alien among people". It is restrained in the style of "The Witch's Hammer", the well-known 17th century masterpiece. I will cite several excerpts. I did not restrain myself and gave my comments in parentheses.

"External appearance. Height from 1.7 to 2 meters. They are well-built. The head is of somewhat increased size with clearly expressed hemispheres, a large forehead, and a small, expressionless mouth. The eyes are round, prominent or almond-shaped". (Be careful, any passerby might be an alien!). "How do they behave? They avoid handshakes and direct gazes. They avoid questions about [their] childhood and parents. They do not like to go to doctors and stores and are absolutely ambivalent toward card games and popular entertainment". (Someone who doesn't like TV series is unambiguously an alien).

"Character. Unquestionably punctual and accurate. Unemo-

tional". (A responsible person is an alien. Well, obviously he's not one of ours!)

"Paranormal abilities. They have a phenomenal memory, total recall, and a colossal amount of knowledge, especially about the universe, esoteric things, and ancient Earth history." They deal easily with computers and anything else electronic but are completely unable to operate an ax and other construction instruments". (Our man does not understand computers and knowledge. But this is with an ax, if you please). "How to tell these aliens? Pets recognize them best. When encountering them the latter's fur bristles and the tail is like a pipe". (This is especially apparent in aquarium fish). "These people also do not show up on photographs: some parts are constantly fogged or completely missing from the picture. And some humanoid aliens are almost invisible to night vision instruments" (Especially if the camera and night vision instrument are Russian-made; anyone can seem an alien here).

Now about the main thing:

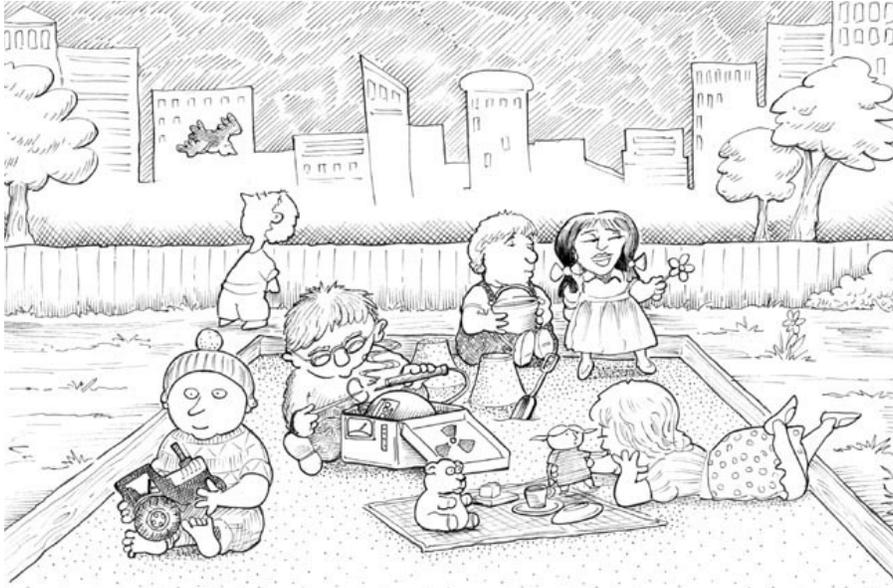
"THEIR CHILDREN (INDIGO). Unlike their parents they know of their extraplanetary origin. As some of them have admitted they have flown to us to save the world. In the opinion UFOlogists indigo is a generation of new people who were actively inserted into our planet by aliens" (second-generation spies, there it is, an enemy force).

"External appearance. In appearance, the most average children. Sometimes they surpass their contemporaries in physical development. But they are not mature in years; they are very intelligent. They are distinguished by a high self-regard. These children have high immunity: they are practically never sick. They sleep and eat just enough to maintain the organism". (Our child ought to be stupid and sick, which also distinguishes him from the children of aliens).

"Character. Often difficult. They only do what is necessary, desiring to see the results of their work right away. They do not respond to reprimands and do not experience a feeling of guilt, but at the same time they have well-developed compassion. They are open and honest, defend freedom of choice, and do not recognize authority. They like it when they are treated like adults. Their IQ is always above 130. They have

a phenomenal memory. By age 1? or 2 they have formed an opinion about everything". (Strange people, born enemies of the State). "How does one tell them? These children already begin to show themselves in school..."

Then, in accordance with the idea there should have been a section "what to do with them", but the great scientist Litvinov apparently decided that this was outside his competence. His cause is to beat the alarm, but the [security] organs will be looking into it.



If all children are natural-born scientists, society might be wise to at least quarantine the subset of these scientist-infants who are the atomic weapons specialists, before they kill us all with their crazy little lunchbox nukes.

**Cartoon by Nick D. Kim, <http://www.lab-initio.com>
Used by permission.**

It is understood that for the crooked Russian government the ideal child is a student at some military school, like the Suvorov type. He gets up at the command "reveille", tucks in his bed with a straightedge, and goes into the yard to form up. He keeps only the correct books in [his] bedside table and only the correct thoughts in his head. Such a child can be fed any kind of crap (as recently happened at the Mozhaysky School in St. Petersburg) and he will swallow it. When he grows up he can be sent into any war you want. If he is killed there, well

the hell with him, "the women will bear others".

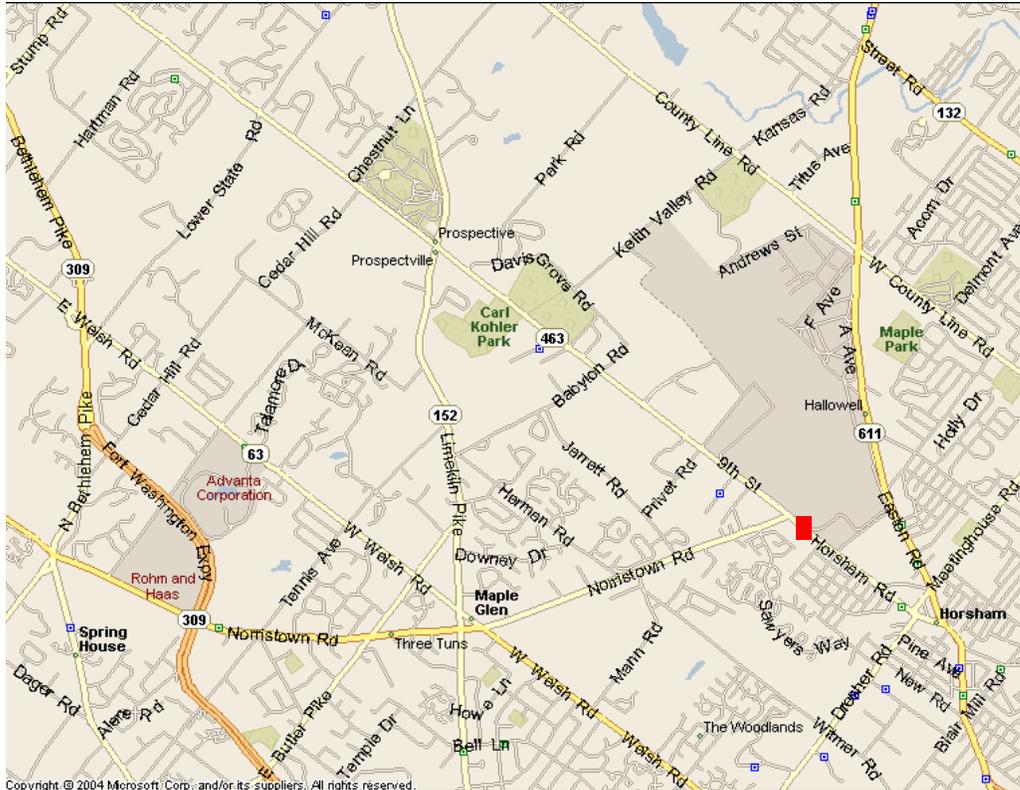
But indigo children or, to put it more simply, the normal children of our "people's power" are not needed.

This is what I think: is it correct to mold children to the State or maybe to mold the State to the children? As justly noted in Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes", a child is always in the right place, but the government is not always.

Ω Ω Ω

"It is especially important to encourage unorthodox thinking when the situation is critical: At such moments every new word and fresh thought is more precious than gold. Indeed, people must not be deprived of the right to think their own thoughts."

**- Boris Yeltsin, Former President of Russia
Against the Grain, 1990**



PhACT Luncheon May 30, 2009 at 12 Noon

Edibles Restaurant is located at 561 Horsham Road, Horsham PA. Near the intersection of Horsham and Norristown Roads. See the red dot on the map. Restaurant telephone is 215-682-7070

If you drive by way of the Pennsylvania Turnpike exit at Willow Grove and go north on Route 611 then west on Horsham Road which borders the south side of the Willow Grove Naval Air Station.

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.

The PhACT Council 2009

Eric Krieg, President
Bob Glickman, Secretary
Ray Haupt, Treasurer
Wes Powers, Webmaster
Mike Caro
Dr. David Cattell
Dr. David Cragin
Tom Napier
Harry Rothwell
Becky Strickland

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.

Policy For Article Use

Except where otherwise noted all materials originating in Phactum may be reprinted by groups recognized in CSI's international network of skeptics organizations as published in Skeptical Inquirer. The author and Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking must be credited. All other publications must obtain permission from PhACT before using any item.

Permission to use articles originating from other sources must be granted by the original publisher.

Contact the editor, Ray Haupt, at phactpublicity@aol.com

The PhACT website is: www.phact.org

