



Cincinnati Skeptic

Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought

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Mephistopheles:

Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft,
Des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft,
Laß nur in Blend- und Zauberwerken
Dich von dem Lügengeist bestärken,
So hab' ich dich schon unbeding't.

Johann W. Goethe, *Faust*, pt. I (1808)

Mephistopheles:

Scoff at all knowledge and despise
reason and science, those flowers of mankind.
Let the father of all lies
with dazzling necromancy make you blind,
then I'll have you unconditionally.

trans. Carlyle F. MacIntyre

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December Meeting

Are Religious Belief and Scientific Literacy Linked?

George Bishop Looks at Survey Data

The December meeting's speaker was George Bishop, professor of political science at the University of Cincinnati. George's major research interest has long been the methodology of survey research, ferreting out inconsistencies in results caused by the order or wording of questions on survey questionnaires. Recently he has turned his attention to the analysis of responses to survey questions that might help explain whether religious belief and scientific literacy are related.

One source for survey data is a study by J. H. Leuba (1914). Leuba sampled and mailed questionnaires to scientists listed at that time in *American Men of Science*. He found that 42% reported a belief in God, and 51% a belief in immortality. In 1996, Larson and

Witham replicated Leuba's study and found that scientists' beliefs had not varied much since 1914. They found that 39% of their respondents drawn from the current *American Men and Women of Science* reported a belief in God, and 38% a belief in immortality. They interpreted this finding to mean that scientists today are about as religious as scientists in 1914. They even titled the article in which they reported their findings, "Scientists are still keeping the faith" (*Nature* 386:435-436 1997)

Investigating this finding, George discovered that the story was a good deal more complicated than Larson and Witham had concluded. Larson and Witham had for unknown reasons failed to include in their work the results of a second survey done by Leuba. In 1933, Leuba repeated his earlier study, and found that belief in God among scientists was 30%, down from his earlier finding, and lower than Larson and Witham's 1996 finding. Leuba found that reported belief in immortality in 1933 was also down from 1914: 33% of scientists reported a belief in immortality. This left Larson and Witham in the awkward position of trying to explain why religious beliefs among scientists declined from 1914 to 1933 and then increased from 1933 to 1996.

Rather than leave his fellow researchers in this bind, George offered this explanation. Larson and Witham had not been able to replicate Leuba's study exactly. They used exactly the same questions, but were not able to ask a comparable sample of scientists. In 1914, "eminent" scientists were noted in *American*
(Cont. Pg 8)

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The By-Laws require that officers for the following year be elected annually at the May meeting. They begin their duties on following July 1.

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Letters to the Editor.....

Re: Wright-Patterson Air Force Base: Underground Vaults, Alien Bodies and UFO's?

On these subjects one can only wonder: where there is smoke, can there be fire? I was very interested in "the alien autopsy" for a number of reasons. One, of course, is my interest in UFOs generally, the other is that my father worked in the wind tunnels in Area B of WPAFB. I know that those vertical Missile-shaped things may have been the giant underground compressors they had to generate supersonic wind speeds. Those "cryogenic" tanks may also be a part of the wind tunnel system, since I remember Dad referring often to the "brine tanks" and such that were part of the cooling system. When you generate winds in excess of Mach 2, you get a lot of heat. Those cryogenic things were probably part of this cooling system.

In fact, I would suspect that the entire underground system the UFO buffs are referring to is part of the maintenance system, not only for the wind tunnels, but for all the labs they have in that area.

By the way, Dad mentioned a time or two that they would on rare occasion end up with the bodies of jet pilots who had been killed in flight "mishaps," probably for some kind of post-mortem studies on minimizing injury in crashes. This may account for all the stories of bodies being taken to WPAFB. It may even be explain the badly mutilated body in the report.

-- Mary Pacinda



The tenacity of superstition in an age of science and rationalism may surprise at first, but insofar as it aims at controlling fate, it beats fatalism. It is a resort of the hapless and incapable in the pursuit of good fortune and the avoidance of bad; also a psychological support for the insecure. Hence persistent recourse to horoscopic readings and fortune telling, even in our own day. Still, one does not expect to find magic used as a tool of business, to learn for example that exploration of coal deposits along the French northern border (the Hainaut) and in the center of the country (Rive-de-Gier) in the eighteenth century was misguided and delayed by reliance on dowzers (*tourneurs de baguettes*).

— Marcel Gillet,

Les charbonnages du nord de la France au XIX^e siècle
(Paris: Mouton, 1973) p. 29

From the Un-Easy Chair....



Just another piece of quackery?

The Science and Technology section of the current issue of *Newsweek* (25 January 1999, pp. 66-68) carries a story about "Unmasking Sybil: A re-examination of the most famous psychiatric patient in history." The occasion is the death of the real life protagonist of the 1973 book *Sybil* by Flora R. Schreiber, about a woman who had sixteen separate personalities in a case of Multiple Personality Disorder. The book was a best seller and was made into a TV movie starring Sally Fields in 1976. A rare diagnosis before *Sybil*, the book and movie initiated a flood of some forty thousand MPD diagnoses since.

A quarter century later, ..., many experts were disputing the validity of the multiple-personality diagnosis and blaming the book for spawning a bogus industry of therapists who specialize in hidden abuse. (pg 67)

Historians have examined the real life of "Sybil" and found among other realities, that her mother likely was a schizophrenic, as perhaps was the daughter. Yet, they could find no direct evidence of the extreme abuse recorded in the book. The real Sybil met her psychiatrist in 1950, followed her to New York and formed a life long relationship. Far from the book's happy ending of a cured patient after more than a decade of treatment, she followed her psychiatrist out of New York, and remained dependent on her throughout her life. She never married, nor did she have children.

Newsweek cites evidence Sybil did not spontaneously develop multiple personalities. She was a brilliant hysteric, highly hypnotizable and extremely suggestible according to one doctor. "She didn't start out a spontaneous multiple, but she took on the clinical characteristics of one through the interaction with her therapist."

Sybil's illness was not merely iatrogenic. There can be no doubt she was a truly troubled human being, who experienced a number of breakdowns and collapses which lead her to the psychiatrist to whom she forged a life bond. To me the disturbing aspect is that she does not seem to have benefitted from the diagnosis, long treatment, or mutual delusion of doctor and patient. Rather the help she received was not from the psychiatrist as doctor, but from the woman as friend, much of it after the treatment was supposedly completed.

-- editor

A Puzzle for Thinkers



Would you like your pay to increase exponentially?

Two young persons are hired after completion of their education at age thirty by the same company. Both start at a \$18,000 annual salary.

This is an old line corporation with very formal advancement procedures. New hires are given a choice between an annual straight line increase in salary of \$950, or an annual exponential increase of three percent. The first newcomer realizes he would receive a $5\frac{1}{4}$ percent increase the first year ($950/18,000$) and so opts for the \$950; the other takes the exponential increase.

Which is the better choice in the long run?

Solution to last month's puzzle. Find a cube with the same surface area as a sphere.

To find the side of the cube we have to set the side equal to x , and equate it to the surface of the sphere, thus: $4\pi r^2 = 6x^2$, and then solve for x . Which is $1.4472 r$ meaning that the side of a cube with the same surface area as a sphere has a side only about 72.4 percent of the sphere's diameter. Would you now like to try for a cube with the same volume as a sphere? Also challenging is finding the largest cube which will fit inside a sphere.

As for the surface area of a hot dog, this surprisingly turns out to be equal to the sides of a cylinder of the same length. Measure the hot dog through the center from tip to tip, and multiply by the circumference, i.e. $2\pi rh$, where h is the length of the hot dog.



***Too Many Books....
Too Little Time....***

Hitler's Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators
by Brigitte Hamann
(München: Piper, 1996)

For an American of German heritage a key question about the Shoah, the murder of five to six million Jews, is "how could the Germans ever do this?" or "what did they think they were doing?" The ideas were primarily those of Adolf Hitler. Although he probably never physically hurt anyone himself, he had many willing helpers to carry out the actual murders and their complex administration. Yet, without Hitler and his ideas there would not have been a Shoah. This book addresses what these ideas were and where they came from.

Literally translated the title says: Hitler's Vienna: the learning years of a dictator. The years in question span the time Hitler lived in Vienna, from February 1906 until May 1913, from the time he turned seventeen until he left for Munich at the age of 24 to avoid military service. Hitler himself wrote he acquired his ideas in Vienna, and there is no evidence to the contrary. Hamann can not trace any anti-Jewish doctrine from his growing up in Linz and Passau.

Brigitte Hamann, a historian specializing in Vienna, examines this period in excruciating detail in a slow read tome of 650 pages. She puts together Vienna history, --events and thought,-- with everything known about Hitler's life in the city. She also relates this history to virtually every word the dictator ever wrote, and every recorded word he uttered. This goes as far as commenting that Hitler attended school with Ludwig Wittgenstein, and was a guest in the home of the family of the sociologist Marie Jahoda. The end result is about as definitive an understanding we shall ever get about whence Hitler's derived his ideas.

Vienna at the time was the capital of a large empire with some dozen ethnic groups and using nine official languages. Germans saw themselves as the ruling "race" in Austria. This concept, as used at the

time, did not clearly distinguish between biological subspecies and acquired culture. Politics, both in city government and in the Federal Parliament, was a constant struggle among peoples, the Slavic, Magyar, and Latin groups arguing for equal rights and the Germans trying to maintain their ascendancy.

The early part of this century was a highpoint of racist thinking. Race was thought important not only in the Austrian Empire, but also in the colonies and in the United States. It has sometimes been called "scientific" racism. This is the period of major Eugenics congresses, attended by major scientists, by Churchill, by the Huxleys, by physical anthropologists, biologists, medical people, and all participated in racist thought. Anyone who suggested at the time that race did not matter, or that races might be equal would have been laughed out of court.

Hitler supported himself during this period primarily by painting water colors of Vienna scenes from photographs, and selling these to frame makers. He lived for much of these years in shelters for poor and homeless men. This man who can not to be said to ever have had friends, did have Jewish acquaintances, and many business dealings with Jews. No personal animosities against Jews have been recorded.

Hitler was neither very bright, nor very educated. In fact he had dropped out of school after the eighth grade because of failure to be promoted. He read a great deal in the Vienna period, but the evidence points mainly to newspapers, political and partisan pamphlets, and adherence to the most scurrilous "all-German" parties and thought. Thus it is clear Hitler picked up nothing other than the going racist ideas of the period. But he did not acquire them as an educated, "scientific", perhaps revisable body of thought. Rather his sources provided unshakable quack doctrines, a semi-mythological, quasi-religious world view in which "race" explained literally everything.

— Wolf Roder

Why People Believe Weird Things

by Michael Shermer

(New York: W. H. Freeman and Co. 1997)

Michael Shermer has written a good book, a clear book, and an interesting book. He was able to do this in part because he confesses to having believed at one time or another in just about every religious, new

age, or pseudo-scientific nostrum going. Well, not all, but his description of an out of body hallucination is by itself worth the effort to read this book. He explains rationally, however, how he experienced such an overwhelming event. As a cross country, cross United States bicycle racer he went without sleep long enough to go, — temporarily, — off his rocker.

Since becoming a true believer in skepticism, Shermer has founded the Skeptic Society and their magazine, *The Skeptic*, on the west coast. He has also presented the rational and scientific viewpoint, however briefly, on the Oprah Winfrey show and other TV and radio venues. All in all a man who knows what he is talking about, most of the time anyway. He also gives us rich descriptions of his meetings with the defenders of the irrational viewpoint and true believers.

Shermer starts with a description of science and an attempt to define, or at least explain, the concept of paradigm, model, theory, or hypothesis in science. This is a testable body of knowledge, which in principle remains open to rejection, confirmation, or alteration. He also uses David Hume's general maxim to test claims: "That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish." (p. 45). Or, as Hume also put it: "A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence." It is of course the evidence for the paranormal which is so often missing.

In a series of early chapters Shermer takes on some well worn topics. The psychic, the paranormal, Edgar Cayce, and ESP. NDE's and OBE's are discussed as part of the search for immortality. Encounters with aliens from UFO's are considered hallucinations. The medieval spread of witch crazes are compared to the modern Satanic Ritual Panic and the Recovered Memory Movement, which has put a number of teachers and parents in prisons. A more astonishing description is the assessment of Ayn Rand's objectivism movement as a cult. Shermer shows how both Rand and some of her followers turned her thought into an absolute belief system.

A major part of the book is devoted to a consideration of Creationism. Shermer gives us a lively description of his debate with Duane Gish. He also provides a clear account of the recent court cases and the Supreme Court consideration of "equal time for creation science and evolution science."

Part Four is devoted to an often overlooked topic, pseudohistory, although nations have gone to war over different claims to historic territory. Here Shermer examines the people usually referred to as "holocaust deniers," that is writers who claim the Germans did not deliberately murder several million Jews. This is history so recent that not only documents and pictures exist, but that human witnesses to the shoah are still alive. Shermer examines what the deniers assert in some detail, and also shows why they are wrong.

Why then do we insist on believing "weird things?" Essentially, because we want to believe, especially those things that make us feel good, console us, and comfort us. Some things, astrology, games of chance, psychic hot lines may give us immediate gratification. Some weird things are believed because they are simple. God made it, is less taxing than trying to follow a complex argument in cosmology. And some things finally are believed because they are considered moral, because they give meaning to an impersonal universe, or because God said so. Hope, Shermer concludes, springs eternal.

— Wolf Roder

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News From Science....

Warp Drive: Breakthrough Propulsion Sought

If the laws of physics are standing in the way of progress, it's time to change the laws. NASA's Breakthrough Propulsion Physics Program has just released its first call for research proposals. It's an exciting concept. The plan is to achieve at least one of the following: 1) eliminate the need for propellant; 2) overcome the limitation of the speed of light; or 3) produce unlimited energy on-board. The proposal acknowledges that these challenges may be "far from fruition, and perhaps even impossible." The impossible is presumably harder to achieve.

Patent Office Hires "Original" Thinker

Ever since evangelical inventor Joe Newman failed to get his energy machine patented — those annoying laws of physics got in the way again — there's been pressure to get deeper thinkers into the US Patent Office. In its recent newsletter, the Office profiled the newest patent examiner, an expert on the "luminous and deadly Galactic center, the meaning of the ancient Minoan bull leaping sport, and the correct interpretation of Atlantis." You can read all about them in his handbook on surviving the apocalypse. And if he can survive an apocalypse, just about anything is possible.

The Undead: Review of "Nuclear Transmutation."

The subtitle of this thin volume by Tadahiko Mizuno is *The Reality of Cold Fusion*. The publisher is Infinite Energy Press, which probably tells you everything you need to know. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the announcement by the University of Utah that Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann had achieved deuterium fusion in a simple electrolytic cell. Within a matter of weeks, a DOE panel officially pronounced cold fusion dead, amidst revelations of altered data and suppression of evidence. But the corpse does not rest peacefully. This personal account by one of a small corps who have not given up on cold fusion is wonderfully revealing — but not for what it tells us about science. "If you limit your goal to finding fusion products," Mizuno snorts, "anyone can see you will not learn much. This is why the focus is now on transmutation." He says of his fellow believers, "They have been treated like heretics by the rest of the

scientific community. This has formed a bond of solidarity between them. Working with practically no funding against a tide of opposition ...they have slowly but surely brought about a new discovery." It is an eloquent statement of how pathological science survives. In the final chapter Mizuno asks rhetorically, "What sort of reaction is cold fusion? As you have seen in this account we still have no clear idea." After ten years, nothing has changed.

SOURCE: *What's New* by Robert L. Park (Friday, 1 Jan 98)



A person may be born under the best, or any, astrological sign, but he, she, or it can not escape their responsibility as human beings — which means paying the price for the bad deeds one has done and looking out for one's own fate. So any damn thing may happen.

— bio-astrologer Esmeralda von Löwenzahn-Dentdelion, misquoting Colonel Kitikorn Methathip, (a famous astrologer in Thailand.)

Magnetic Therapy Study and Alternative Statistics.

According to an Associated Press story, a new study reports that magnetic insoles lessen foot pain of diabetics. The author was identified as a neurologist at New York Medical College, but NYMC says he's "a volunteer" at the College. His office says they're flooded with calls, but have no copies of the paper and didn't expect to for "weeks." We'll update you when we get a copy, but here's what we've learned so far: There were 24 patients with chronic foot pain from various causes in the study — except 5 dropped out. Of the 19, 12 (half the original group) reported some reduction in pain. We don't know how many reported an increase. Ten of the 19 were diabetics. Of these, nine reported some pain reduction — uhh, at the end of four months. The only other serious study of pain reduction from magnets claimed relief came in minutes. Take a group of 19, break it into subgroups, and wait long enough, something's bound to show up. WN awaits word on whether the insoles had alternating poles.

SOURCE: *What's New* by Robert L. Park (18 December 1998)

European English. (Dedicated to George Bernard Shaw who thought “ghoti” spelled fish.)

The Commissioners of the European Union have announced that an agreement has been reached to adopt English as the preferred language for European communication. As part of the considerations it has been conceded that English spelling has some room for improvement and a five-year phased plan for what will be known as EuroEnglish has been accepted.

In the **first** year “s” will be used instead of the soft “c”. Certainly, sivil servants will reseive this news with joy. Also, the hard “c” will be replaced by “k”. Not only will this klear up konfursion but keyboards can have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the **sekond** year, when the troublesome “ph” will be replaced by “f”. This will make words like fotograf twenty persent shorter.

In the **third** year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double leters, which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horrible mes of silent “e” in the languag is disgrasful, and they wil go.

By the **fourth** year, peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing “th” with “z” and “w” by “v”.

During ze **fifz** year, ze unesesary “o” can be dropd from vords kontaining “ou”, and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters.

After zis **fifz** yer, ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer wil be no mor trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech ozer.

Ze drem vil finali kum tru.

“Hey, they did it with money, so why not with English.”

Source: *The Funnel*, (Fall 1998)

It's Back Up!!!

The Skeptical Area Network Effort (SANE) list has been moved to a new site, One List, which offers list service in exchange for a four line ad at the end of each message.

**For current news and exchange
of ideas and information
with other like minded people:**
Sign up now by going to our web site at
< www.cincinnati-skeptics.org >

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Great New Insights from Social Science Research:



Oxford University Professor Michael Argyle discovered what makes people happy after eleven years of study. Riches does not do it: “Satisfaction and happiness do not increase with income or wealth” he

commented. Rather, the key to happiness is marriage. He did not say what kind of marriage though. The least happy are the divorced and separated. He warns against adultery: that can ruin a marriage. “Having two people who give you support could be a good thing in theory, but it rarely works,” Argyle cautioned.

He found one alternative to marriage, though: persons addicted soap operas also tend to be happy. “These results from television watching are most perplexing,” he held forth. “I can only hypothesize that through this pursuit they are making imaginary friends.” (Reuters)



How many cents-off to buy a Kalashnikov rifle?

A private investigator has advised the Senate Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information of a major threat facing the country: cents-off supermarket coupons. “Terror organizations hiding in our communities use the coupon inserts as a means of financing” claims Ben Jacobson. His contention is that terror groups are clipping coupons from newspapers and fraudulently redeeming them to help buy weapons to finance terrorist operations. It is imperative for the country to toughen laws about coupon fraud. (UPI)

Why two Kay?

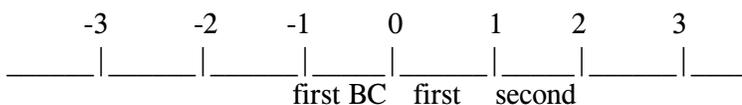
The millenium means a thousand years, from the latin mille (thousand) and annus (year). In a year or two we are supposed to complete the second millenium since the birth of Christ. But since we don't know when He was born, and most likely was born before 4 BCE the year King Herod died, the millenium has probably come and gone.

Nature, -- the Earth,-- does not care for round numbers or the decimal system. She doesn't even make her orbit around the Sun a whole number of rotations about her axis. Thus the year is 365.2422 days long. Since we don't want to start a new year at .2422 day (about 6 am in the morning), we have to slip an extra day in every four years, which makes the year a little too long. Which means we have to leave off the leap year every century (1800 and 1900 were no leap years) which leaves us a little short, so we make every millenium a leap year again. 2000 AD will be one. The system is crude but effective.

For those who are inordinately fearful of the year 2000 or otherwise handicapped we have decided as a public service to give the frightful number to you in every base up to twenty. You may use these numbers as a talisman, to conjure with, or place them around your house to ward off witches. Various bases are said to be particularly effective to conjure computers with.

binary or base 2	11111010000	computers talk this way.
base 3	2202002	
base four	133100	used by DNA and other body functions
base 5	31000	used on the abacus, or should we say on most abaci
base 6	13132	invented by the Sumerians, also 60 and 360 degrees of the circle
7 (Esmeralda's favorite)	5555	
base eight	3720	only used by older computers
base nine	2662	
base ten=decimal	2000	most people have difficulty with numbers in this base
base 11	1559	
duodecimal base	11A8	(the A stands for ten=10) used in ancient Babylonia and modern commerce
13	<i>BAB</i>	or (11)(10)(11) said to be the special of witches and warlocks
14	A2C	or (10)2(12)
15	8D5	or 8(13)5
hexadecimal	7D0	this is the computer nerds delight.
17	6FB	or 6(15)(11)
18	632	
19	5A5	or 5(10)5
base twenty	500	used by the ancient Maya of the Yucatan, also by those who count on their fingers and toes.

I feel compelled to explain why the third millenium begins with the year 2001, why there is no year zero, and why there can't be a year zero. Think of the years stretched out along a line, the famous number line of mathematicians:



the first year goes from zero to one, half-way there is the first half year. The year before that is the first negative year (or BCE as we call it). The tenth year completes the first decade, just as your tenth finger is on your hand, eleven starts the toes. The one-hundredth year, 100, ends the first century, the second starts with the year 101. So on to the millenia.

Zero on the number line is simply the point where plus and minus trade places, it is not a number itself. Imagine there were a zeroeth year, what would be the endpoints of that year? What would be half-way? Half of zero? There is good reason it took humankind millenia to invent the concept of zero, and why it was such a great achievement.

A collegiate damsel named Breeze,
 Weighed down by BA's and Litt. D's,
 Collapsed from the strain.
 Alas it was plain
 She was killing herself by degrees.

Religion/Scientific (from pg 1)

Men of Science with an asterisk. Leuba drew his sample from this group. That practice had been dropped by 1996, so Larson and Witham were forced to draw their sample from all the scientists listed, eminent and not so eminent alike. Leuba's data show that "eminent" scientists, presumably the most scientifically literate of all, were less likely to report religious belief than non-eminent scientists.

Thus Larson and Witham's sample could be expected to show more religious belief, because it included eminent and non-eminent scientists. George speculates that it is likely that had Larson and Witham been able to draw a comparable sample including only eminent scientists, they would have found that religious belief had dropped off even lower than the levels found by Leuba in 1933. Clearly, if Larson and Witham had used both of Leuba's studies with their own data, they would have been unable to title their article as optimistically as they did.

Unfortunately, all of this is not merely a quarrel among survey researchers. Larson and Witham's article in *Nature* was reported widely and with great surprise in highly reputable newspapers. As often happens, George's more comprehensive and temperate view of the findings has gone largely unnoticed. ("Scientists still keeping the faith: fact or artifact")

The Gallup Poll began asking questions about beliefs about human evolution in the 70's, and included the question regularly beginning in 1982. George Gallup, Jr., who now runs the organization, is a devout Christian. George Bishop does not doubt his integrity or methodology, but believes he may be biased in his choice of subject matter and angle of approach due to his desire to promote religion.

Gallup's questions about evolution permit three responses: a creationist response (God created man pretty much in his present form within the last 10,000 years.); a theistic position (Man developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, a process guided or begun by a god); and a Darwinist response (Man developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, a process unguided by a god.). The respondent is given a card with the three responses on it, and then asked, "Which of the statements on this card come closest to describing your views about the origin and development of man?"

When Gallup posed this question in 1982, about

45% chose the creationist alternative, about 40% the theistic alternative and about 10% the Darwinist alternative, with about 7-9% undecided. The responses to this question remained remarkably stable from 1982 through 1997, with little change. During that period, the number of Americans with only a high school diploma has decreased, and the number with college experience has increased.

Because responses varied so little between 1982 and 1997, our speaker was able to combine the responses to 1982, 1991, 1993, and 1997 surveys, providing him with sample large enough to analyze by age, race, sex, region, education, religious preference, importance of religion, beliefs about the Bible, church attendance, party identification and political ideology.

He found that education varies directly with belief in evolution: the more educated a respondent was, the more likely she or he was to choose the Darwinist response. Only six percent of those with less than a high school education chose the Darwinist response. Eight percent of high school graduates and 12 percent of respondents with some college chose the Darwinist response. Seventeen percent of college graduates chose the Darwinist response.

The less educated a respondent, the more likely he or she was to choose the most religious alternative, the creationist response. This suggests that education (part of which is scientific literacy) is linked with religion, and that the link is inverse: the greater a respondent's education, the less likely he or she was to believe in creationism. Among college graduates 30% reported a belief in creationism. Among those with less than a high school education, more than twice as many, 62% believed in creationism.

Belief in creationism varies also by religious preference. Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Jews are more likely to choose the Darwinist position than are Roman Catholics or other Protestant denominations. But those whose religious preference was "No religion" were most likely to choose the Darwinist position. Among those whose religious preference was "No religion," 22% chose the creationist position, 35% the theistic position, and 42% chose the Darwinist position.

Belief that religion is important also is related to belief in creationism. the responses to this question were Very Important, Fairly Important and Not Very

Important. Among those who responded that religion is very important, 63% chose the creationist alternative and 3% chose the Darwinist position. Among those who responded that religion is not very important, 13% believed in creationism, and 47% in the Darwinist position.

Similarly, among those who believed that the Bible is the "actual word of God," 77% chose the creationist response and 3% chose the Darwinist position. Among those who believed that the Bible consists of "fables, legends, history," 16% chose the creationist alternative, and 41% chose the Darwinist position.

Those who labeled themselves Independents were more likely to believe in the Darwinist position (16%) than were either Republicans (10%) or Democrats (10%). Similarly, those who labeled their political ideology "Liberal" were more likely to choose the Darwinist alternative (23%) than were those who chose the "Conservative" label, 8%.

Cross-Cultural Variation Argues Against Genetic Origins of Religious Belief.

Since 1991, the International Social Survey has included questions about religion. This survey's question about belief in a deity is better than the Gallup survey, which just asks whether you believe in God. The International Social Survey offers more detailed alternatives, for example, "I know that God exists and I have no doubts about it." Increasing numbers of countries have been included in this survey over the years.

The International Social Survey is useful for comparing religious belief in the United States with religious belief in many other countries. George's major finding is that religious belief varies greatly by country, undermining the claim by some American students of religious belief who claim that religious belief is nearly universal, and therefore is likely to reflect a biological propensity to believe in a deity. He also finds that regardless of the question asked, the United States reports the highest or next to highest level of religious belief.

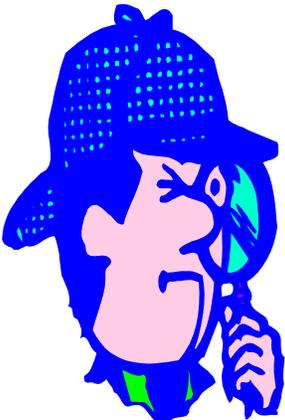
A recent International Social Survey found that 95% of respondents in the United States responded that they "knew God exists and had no doubts about it", a proportion of the population exceeded only by the Philippines and Poland. Great Britain, East Germany,

Hungary, Israel, Russia, and Slovenia were at the other end of the scale, with many fewer people claiming to believe in God.

Other questions reflected the same diversity of belief. For example, the United States, Northern Ireland, and Ireland show very high belief in a life after death. In Israel, Russia, Slovenia, Hungary, and East Germany, few believe in a life after death.

Belief in the devil was similar. Forty-five percent of respondents in the United States claimed to believe in the devil, with Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the Philippines at a similar level. Belief in the devil was lowest in East Germany, at 3.6%. Belief in hell showed a similar variation from country to country. The United States showed the highest belief in hell, at 49.6%. Northern Ireland, Ireland, and the Philippines reported similar levels of belief. Other countries varied widely from the United States, with East Germany at the bottom with 2.6%.

Differences in religious belief are contingent on differences in national history and culture, and are also related to differences in levels of scientific literacy. Several studies have concluded that scientific literacy is lower in the United States than in European countries.



WATCH OUT!

BEWARE!!!

**BE ON THE
LOOK OUT!!!**

Investigations arise from the membership's desire to investigate something in the light of reason and truth. Consequently, **every** member is invited to submit to the Investigations Officer any proposal or item that could be studied together. So far, most investigations have been done by individuals within the Association.

If you are doing such now, the whole membership would be delighted to hear from on your research! Please contact the Investigations Officer, Dick McGrath, (606) 334-3395, and let him know what you wish to investigate.

The Association for Rational Thought is an independent, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization. We share the philosophy of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), an international organization which investigates allegedly paranormal events, sponsors workshops and publishes *Skeptical Inquirer*, a journal of investigations of paranormal claims.

A.R.T. meets on the second Saturday of each month September through June, 10:00 AM at James Tavern in Blue Ash and publishes *Cincinnati Skeptic* each month. A.R.T. meetings are open to the public. A.R.T. also maintains a database of information on paranormal claims for local new media to consult and investigates local paranormal claims. A.R.T. was founded by Cincinnati area skeptics in 1991. Annual dues are \$15.00 and include a subscription to the *Cincinnati Skeptic*.

For more information call: President Roy Auerbach (513)731-2774 or Nurit Bowman, (513) 731-0642 or visit our website. **Address Changes and Corrections, Membership Questions:** Roy Auerbach (513) 731-2774 E-mail: raa@one.net

Mailing Label Information: "00/00/00 Member": You are a member in good standing; your membership will expire on the date on the label. "Lapsed": (*highlighted*) - your membership has expired. Please send your dues as soon as possible.

Yes! — I want to support the important work of **The Association for Rational Thought** and receive *Cincinnati Skeptic* and meeting notices. I have enclosed funds for:

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We have kept dues low and will continue to do so in spite of rising costs. However, if you are able to, your additional contributions are very much appreciated. Please give generously, if possible. Thank you very much!

I would like to make a contribution in addition to my dues to further the important work of the Association:

Contribution Amount: \$ _____ Dues: \$ _____ Total Enclosed: _____

Make your check payable to the **Association for Rational Thought** and mail to A.R.T., P.O. Box 12896, Cincinnati OH 45212. *Contributions are not at present tax deductible, but we are working on it.*

Request subjects for future meetings _____

Please do *not* include my name and address in mailing lists exchanged with other groups.



Skepticism and ART on the Electronic Media

For the latest in skeptical news via e-mail, join SANE, the Skeptical Area Network Effort. You will find cheerful, rational messages from CSICOP, James "The Amazing" Randi, your fellow local skeptics and ART in your e-mail box every week. This is our means of staying in touch between issues of the *Cincinnati Skeptic*.

Be sure to check out our **NEW & IMPROVED** skeptical website at <http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org> --- It contains: our **BLURBS** on various subjects; lots of nifty links to skeptical thinking around the world; the information for joining SANE; the basic definition of who we are, what we do, and our bylaws. In addition, you'll find such things as how to get to our meetings held at James Tavern; other ways to reach us; and how to send sample copies of the newsletter to potential members.

—David Wall, Web Site Manager

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The Association for Rational Thought is an organization committed to encouraging rational, well-informed evaluation of fringe-science, pseudoscience, and paranormal claims. A.R.T. encourages the investigation of paranormal and pseudoscientific claims from a responsible, scientific viewpoint and the distribution of the results of such investigations to the public. You are cordially invited to become a member of A.R.T. Membership information is included elsewhere in this issue.

Preview Of Coming Attractions....

Place: James Tavern at Cooper Road and Reed Hartman Highway. It is a great place to gather and then have the lunch/social portion of each meeting. This location is very accessible for folks wielding walkers, wheel-chairs and the like. Coffee is available with a small donation during the meeting.

Sixth Meeting of the 1998-1999 Season! Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Date and Day: 13 February 1998 -- Saturday **Time:** 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program
 12:00PM - 20:00 PM -- lunch

Last month's meeting was canceled due to the icy, snowy, rainy, slushy, freezing (take your pick) weather.

Our speaker from last month will return for February's meeting.

Topic: ***ESP**...or....**Intuition?***

Speaker: a representative from Klein Associates, Inc., Fairborn, OH

Intuition or expertise? Rational or not? Classic, laboratory-bound studies of decision-making had no place for gut feelings. Seeing a gap between the lab and real-life, Gary Klein, PhD began probing and demystifying intuition nearly 30 years ago. He (and others) have since established the powerful role it plays when experts make decisions under emergency or high-stakes settings (including masters-level chess). Klein Associates now provides consulting services to military, corporate, health care and other clients seeking to redesign their organizations around these newer models of decision-making (including some here in Cincinnati).

Seventh Meeting of the 1998-1999 Season! Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Date and Day: 13 March 1999 -- Saturday **Time:** 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program
 12:00PM - 20:00 PM -- lunch

Topic & Speaker: Watch your mail for an announcement of the exciting, interesting meeting for March!!!