



Cincinnati Skeptic

Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought

Vol. 11 No. 3

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Nothing has an uglier look to us than reason, when it is not on our side.

—Edward Fredrick Lindley Wood, Earl of Halifax (1881-1959)



With this new decree, I declare the Law of Gravity Abolished!

(@ by Costa Rican artist Oki)

November Meeting

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. as Skeptic

Dr. William B. Jensen, Oesper Professor of the History of Chemistry at the University of Cincinnati, talked to ART at its November meeting on the activities of the poet and medical doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. as a sceptic.

Dr. Jensen began with an outline of Holmes' life and career, detailing his medical education at Harvard and Paris; the publication of his seminal essay on childbed or puerperal fever in 1843, which anticipated the work of the Hungarian physician Semmelweis; and his eventual appointment as Professor of Anatomy and Physiology (as well as Dean) at the Harvard Medical School in 1847. Though Holmes had begun writing humorous poetry while still a student at Harvard, it was really not until the founding of the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine* in 1857 that his career as a literary figure took off. By the time of his death in 1894, his collected writings would occupy 15 volumes, the most important of which were his four "Breakfast Series" collections - humorous and often satirical comments on the current events of his day in the form of breakfast conversations among

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October Meeting

From Samhain to Halloween

Edgar Slotkin, PhD, Professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, was the guest speaker at the A.R.T. membership meeting at the Dubliner Restaurant on October 13, 2001. He began his presentation by noting that the setting was appropriate for the subject: Samhain, a Celtic celebration, and that he could use the salt and pepper on his restaurant table/lectern to spice up his talk. Also, the timing of his talk in October, the month of Halloween, was similarly appropriate since many papers claim that the origin of Halloween can be directly traced to Samhain.

Dr. Slotkin explained that the word *Samhain* may have originated from the Irish word *samh* and the Welsh word *haf*. Both words mean "summer." Or it may have been derived from the Welsh words *sam* for "summer" and *fuinn* for "setting." Since Samhain was a Celtic celebration at the end of summer, this origin seems to have some validity. However, the Sanskrit word *samana* which

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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 1st.

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**Comments Corner.....****Lucky Frog**

A man takes the day off work and decides to go out golfing. He is on the second hole when he notices a frog sitting next to the green. He thinks nothing of it and is about to shoot when he hears, "Ribbit 9 Iron." The man looks around and doesn't see anyone. Again, he hears, "Ribbit 9 Iron." He looks at the frog and decides to prove the frog wrong, puts the club away, and grabs a 9 iron.

Boom!

He hits it 10 inches from the cup. He is shocked. He says to the frog, "Wow that's amazing. You must be a lucky frog, eh?" The frog replies, "Ribbit Lucky frog." The man decides to take the frog with him to the next hole. "What do you think frog?" the man asks. "Ribbit 3 wood." The guy takes out a 3 wood and, Boom! Hole in one. The man is befuddled and doesn't know what to say. By the end of the day, the man golfed the best game of golf in his life and asks the frog, "OK where to next?" The frog replies, "Ribbit Las Vegas."

They go to Las Vegas and the guy says, "OK frog, now what?" The frog says, "Ribbit Roulette." Upon approaching the roulette table, the man asks, "What do you think I should bet?" The frog replies, "Ribbit \$3000, black 6."

Now, this is a million-to-one shot to win, but after the golf game the man figures what the heck. Boom! Tons of cash comes sliding back across the table. The man takes his winnings and buys the best room in the hotel. He sits the frog down and says, "Frog, I don't know how to repay you. You've won me all this money and I am forever grateful." The frog replies, "Ribbit Kiss Me." He figures why not, since after all the frog did for him, he deserves it. With a kiss, the frog turns into a gorgeous 15-year-old girl.

"And that, your honor, is how the girl ended up in my room. So help me God or my name is not William Jefferson Clinton."

— thanks to member L. Charles Hughes

**Gnawing Problem in National Park**

Addicts are wreaking havoc in the Mineral King area of California's Sequoia National Park. For the last two decades, they've been congregating in the visitor parking lot during the summer months, hanging out for a day or two, getting their fix, then returning whence they came. In the process of feeding their habit, the addicts damage numerous automobiles, which they often camp underneath four or five at a time. Strangest of all is that more of them haven't died, considering that their fix is antifreeze.

The perpetrators are yellow-bellied marmots who chew through hoses on automobile engines. They then lap up the minerals that collect on the rubber and imbibe the antifreeze, which contains alcoholic ethylene glycol. (It gives them a high.)

— Sierra (Nov/Dec. 2001) p. 21

The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal

Local Group Leaders Meeting: 11 November 2001, at Atlanta, Georgia
by Bryan Sellers

Some twenty representatives from skeptical groups around the country and world came together for an all day meeting on November 11, 2001, in Atlanta, Georgia, during the Center for Inquiry (CFI) *International Conference on the Compatibility of Science and Religion*. The represented groups spanned the continent from the west coast to the east coast with two representatives from Brazil and two from Canada. The CFI staff gathered a list of the group representatives attending the meeting but has not yet distributed it so I cannot include a comprehensive listing of attendees and their groups in this report.

Bela Scheiber, head of the Rocky Mountain Skeptics and on the Executive Committee of CSICOP, led the discussion. Several staff members of the Center for Inquiry (CFI) spoke and answered questions, including Paul Kurtz, chairman, Kevin Christopher, media director, Amanda Chesworth, director of the Youth Skeptics Program, and Barry Karr, executive director. There was no set agenda and discussions touched on a wide range of issues. It was more of a forum for communication and to find out what is going on in local groups and at CSICOP headquarters. Each representative introduced him- or herself and all spoke briefly about the situations of their local groups. They told about how their groups were organized, number or paying members, number attending the meetings, format and topics of the

meetings, what seemed to work or not work, and problems and issues with their groups. Two individuals at the meeting had no group affiliation but came to the meeting because they shared an interest in skepticism.

Groups suffered from similar problems but with distinct variations. Many groups expressed concerns about their aging membership and the shortage of influx of younger members to replace them. But as one representative commented, this is a problem with many organizations and not exclusive to skeptical groups. A couple of groups have established a presence in their communities by conducting investigations of local paranormal activities and have been contacted by the media and given a voice on the news whenever any kind of extraordinary claim about the supernatural or religion or UFOs was reported. Some groups have remained stable over the years. Some have dwindled to a few individuals. Typical are around a hundred members with an average attendance at monthly meetings of about twenty. Most distributed newsletters. So in this regard our ART group is somewhere above the median range but not in the top tier.

Paul Kurtz spoke briefly about CSICOP's relationship to the local groups and answered questions. He said CSICOP is no longer so concerned with the possibility of law suits and wants to develop

closer ties with local groups but was as yet uncertain about what form they should take. One benefit of such affiliation is that the groups would obtain automatic 501C3 nonprofit status through the national office. But this would require submitting annual financial statements.

Later in the meeting, the group representatives

Poem In a Box!

Auf Meiner Herzliebsten Äugelein

On my darlings eyes

Upon my darling's beaming eyes
I plied my rhyming trade;
Upon my darling's cherry lips
An epigram I made;
My darling has a blooming cheek,
I penn'd a song upon it;
And if she had but had a heart,
Her heart had had a sonnet.

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)
trans. Henry W. Longfellow
(1807-1882)

and CFI staff members discussed the benefits and drawbacks of such an affiliation. Concerns were expressed that the local groups may have to pay an annual fee for affiliation and further to become involved in promotion and fund raising for the national organization. Many groups were concerned about maintaining their autonomy and feared the effect affiliation would have on attracting and retaining new members. A suggestion was made to list local groups in the back of the *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine in separate categories as either affiliated or not affiliated with the national organization.

Amanda Chesworth discussed websites and the internet as means of sharing resources and strengthening local groups. This is an inexpensive and easy way of forming closer ties between groups and with CSICOP that benefits everyone involved. Local groups would have access to CSICOP online resources and could upload their newsletters to a central site for sharing information and experiences with all the other groups. Many issues of editing and format have to be resolved before such uploading can occur.

Bela Scheiber explained to be effective and more than just a social gathering, each local group needs set goals and objectives and find a strategy for reaching them. Also, groups should set some boundaries and remain focused to avoid being sidetracked by issues outside the scope of skepticism. He recommended avoiding any religious issues that are faith based because these would be divisive and more appropriate for the local humanist groups. One group reported avoiding this limited focus and, in contrast, to promote diverse discussions on highly controversial issues in both politics and religion.

We spent extensive time discussing the religion issue. Devout believers who make significant contributions of time, effort, and thought are members in several groups. Avoiding religious issues can expand membership and strengthen group unity. This raised the issue whether to publicize meetings as unrevealing nonpartisan topics so that believers are attracted to meetings under the misapprehension the speaker will support a supernatural approach rather than a solely skeptical perspective. It was the general consensus that skeptical groups should not involve themselves in faith-based issues that cannot be decided by science. It is fair to tackle any religious claims open to scientific analysis and empirical testing, such as creationism, near death experiences, and the effects of prayer on health.

We Remember Kenneth C. Matthews

18 August 1924 - 28 September 2001

Ken Matthews died quite unexpectedly in September. Though never active in a leadership position, Ken was a charter member of ART and a steadfast supporter. As such, he's one of the reasons Cincinnati succeeded in developing a dynamic local skeptical organization.

A busy man who resisted retirement, Ken always managed to attend a couple of ART meetings and lunches each year. And when KASES brought James Randi to Lexington, KY in November 1997, Ken and some of his family members made the trek. He'd have been a "sure bet" for attending the Randi program that's coming up in January 2002.

Those of us who got to know Ken through these activities will miss his twinkling intelligence, his kind nature and the bemused look that would slip into place when talk turned to the antics and pursuits of non-skeptics. We extend our sympathies to his friends and family.



How come we believe so much odd stuff?

According to the new Census report, 84.1 percent of Americans age 25 and older have at least a High School diploma, a new record. In this age group, 25.6 percent have graduated from College, also a new high. The state with the highest percentage of HS graduates was South Dakota with 91.8 percent. The lowest was West Virginia at 77.1 percent. Ohio came in with 87.0 percent.

-- Associated Press (19 December 2000)



I do think people get caught up in superstitions. As for myself I don't put much stock in them — cross your fingers and knock on wood.

— bio-astrologer Esmeralda von Löwenzahn-Dentdelion



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

*The Riddle of the Compass:
The Invention that Changed the
World*

by Amir D. Aczel
(New York: Harcourt, Inc. 2001)

There's good reason this book about the invention of the magnetic compass is titled a "riddle." The putative Italian inventor of the compass, didn't invent it and may not even have existed, the author doesn't know who did, and seemingly neither does anyone else. It is interesting that the inventor of an instrument of considerable importance remains unknown to history.

The compass first appeared in Europe in the twelfth century to become a major tool of navigation during the age of discovery.. Appeared is the correct term, for none of the early writers mention whence they learned about the instrument. But how did mariners navigate before they had the compass? Well, they hugged the coast, was the answer I was taught more than a half century ago in Latin class. Wrong! Says the author. Sailors in classical times no more sailed all around the Mediterranean when they wanted to cross than moderns would. Directions have always been easy to locate. South is where the sun is highest, north is the opposite direction and always can be found by looking for the North Star. East and west are where the sun rises and sets, or approximately so. Wind directions are quite reliable in the Mediterranean and helped the sailor find his way. To this day we may refer to a compass image as a windrose. The maritime world was not waiting for the compass, and it found acceptance only gradually. Venturing out into the stormy and cloudy Atlantic made the compass a tool of choice.

The author goes at some length into the history of the purported "inventor" of the compass, one Flavio Gioia. His statue graces the center of Amalfi, a small town south of Naples, but in the late Middle Ages a major shipping port. In 1902 they celebrated the six-hundred anniversary of the event. The trouble is, as the author shows fairly clearly, there never was a Flavio

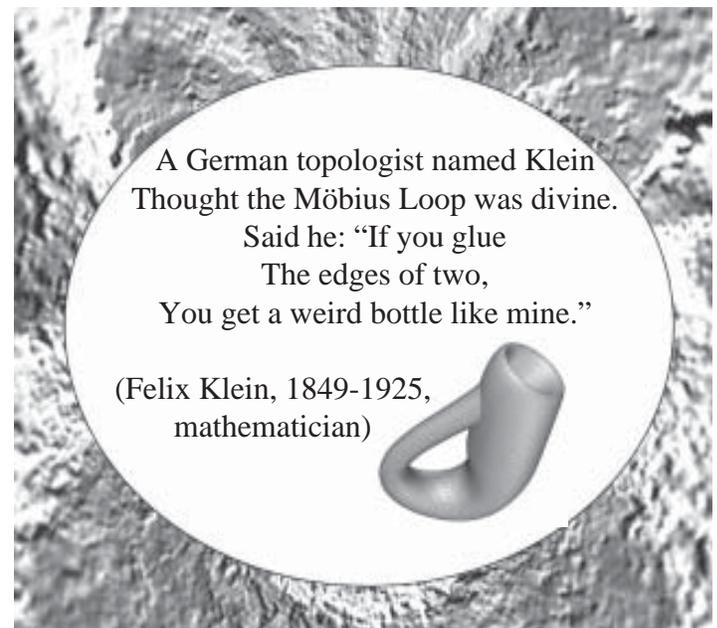
Gioia and it is doubtful that anyone in Amalfi or elsewhere in Europe invented the magnetic needle. By the chance of a misplaced comma, the writer of an earlier report on the use of the compass, gave his name to the imaginary inventor.

Then who did invent the compass. Aczel accepts that the lodestone, a naturally magnetic ore of iron, and its characteristics were known to the Chinese as early as 806 BCE, the very beginning of the iron age in China. The south pointing needle, often in the shape of a fish or a ladle was perfected, but the knowledge was mainly used in divination, to indicate the correct direction to face while praying, and in *feng shui* place magic. Marco Polo seems to have learned about these devices, but neither he nor the Chinese realized their use in navigation.

To the best of the author's research, the idea of a free floating magnet pointing to the cardinal direction was originally transmitted to the eastern Mediterranean and the Arab world sometime during the Dark Ages. Europeans learned of the magnetic needle during the crusades, and at first also applied the compass to magic, witchcraft, and divination. Only gradually did the floating needle find application in navigation. Eventually, so it appears, it was in Amalfi that the navigation instrument was perfected in the form of a freely rotating compass card placed into a box. Hence the Italian word for compass — *bussola*, a box.

It is a fun book, an easy read, better than a detective novel, and not totally unlike a whodunit.

— Wolf Roder



A German topologist named Klein
Thought the Möbius Loop was divine.
Said he: "If you glue
The edges of two,
You get a weird bottle like mine."

(Felix Klein, 1849-1925,
mathematician)



*Nine Crazy Ideas in Science:
A Few Might Even Be True*

by Robert Ehrlich
(Princeton University Press, 2001)

I would warn sceptic organizations away from the attacking or defending the subjects of this book. Skeptical organizations best consider ideas that are clearly and without doubts pseudoscience and quackery, not scientific ideas however dubious. Ehrlich examines several specific scientific propositions on the rational fringe. All of these are proposed and defended by scientists, whose writings conform to the canons of evidence. I don't think we, as a skeptical organizations should mix into that debate, yet I highly recommend reading this book to every skeptic. Ehrlich provides a first rate demonstration of scientific reasoning, a practice from which we all may benefit. He shows us how to evaluate evidence and how to examine statistical claims.

Ehrlich starts with the more human questions and gradually proceeds to the more abstruse and hard physics issues, to end with the hypothesis that "There was no Big Bang." Each of his questions has well regarded, credentialed scientific defenders who have provided rational evidence for their hypotheses. In some cases they have considerable support within the scientific community, though none is part of the accepted wisdom or established theoretical framework.

His first question asks whether more guns in the hands of citizens mean a decrease in criminal activity. As in most sociological theories, the evidence for this proposition is epidemiological and rests on statistics gathered by governments. John Lott, the defender of *More Guns, Less Crime* (1998) has examined the decrease in reported crime for each State before and after "carry concealed guns" laws were passed. Lott also took account of a large variety of other possible confounding variables (age, sex, income, unemployment, etc) to construct a "multiple linear regression." Among the public there are many true believers that Lott is right, but he has few supporters in the scientific community.

Consider how today we are warned about excessive exposure to sunshine, the ozone hole, ultraviolet radiation, and the dangers of skin cancer. It is difficult to credit that the 1903 Nobel prize for medicine was awarded to Niels R. Finsen for the demonstration of the healing benefits of sunshine, and particularly for the insight that ultraviolet radiation played a major

therapeutic role in curing tuberculosis. Ehrlich tries to sort out whether sunshine is on balance more beneficial than harmful, and especially whether it is beneficial to prevention of coronary heart disease. Again, an epidemiological problem with plenty of confounding variables.

Other questions examined in this book are whether AIDS is after all not caused by the HIV, human immunodeficiency virus? Does our solar system have two suns? Are oil, coal, and gas truly "fossil" fuels or perhaps have a non-biological origin? Is time travel of any kind possible, and are there particles which move faster than light?

Everybody knows nuclear radiation is bad for you. Thus the question whether some ionizing radiation in small doses may be beneficial and lead to a longer life is particularly controversial. Ehrlich looks at the evidence. Particularly striking is a study by Bernard Cohen, in which the average levels of radon gas seepage into homes in 1729 counties were compared with the incidences of lung cancer in these places. The relationship proved negative, i.e. the more local radon gas the lower the death rate from lung cancer. Radon gas is a nuclear decay product of uranium, and a known cause of lung cancer in uranium miners, who received however 250 times the very low radon level in residences.

For each of the nine scientific fringe ideas Ehrlich covered, he does give us his personal assessment of their probable reality. I shall not reveal his judgements. In the epilogue Ehrlich reports he may write a second book taking up fringe ideas. He invites us to suggest questions to take up at rehrllich@gmu.edu; but only genuine defensible scientific ideas are asked, not nutty pseudo stuff.

— Wolf Roder



Good for Something.

During an argument outside a Tampa, Florida, strip-club, a 75 year old man shot nude dancer Dora Oberling, 30 in the chest. Paramedics claimed that her silicone breast implants may have saved her life by deflecting the bullet aimed at her heart.

— John J. Kohut and Roland Sweet *Real Sex* (2000)

The New Creationism.

Dembski's law of conservation of information and the rest of *Intelligent Design* are not just pseudoscience, they are wrong pseudoscience.

Victor Stenger in *Skeptical Briefs* 10 (Dec. 2000) p. 10

Samhain..... from page 1

means “reunion, assembly, feast,” and the Gothic word *samana* and the Old Norse word *saman*, both of which mean together, also could be possible origins.

The earliest evidence of Samhain celebrations among the Celtic people has been obtained from the *Coligny Calendar* in the first century A.D. Although different interpretations have been given for certain features of the calendar and much more research needs to be done, several conclusions can be made. The calendar divided the year into two seasons, summer and winter. The days were counted from sundown to sundown and the year possibly ran from winter to winter. The end of the Celtic summer and the beginning of the Celtic winter was at the end of the month of October of the Gregorian calendar being used today. Samhain was celebrated at this time which may have also corresponded to the end of the old year and the beginning of the new.

The only literature about the Celtic culture before Christian influence is obtained from Roman and Greek writers. The information contained in this literature was secondhand, that is, it describes legends and myths instead of observations. One source relates that the first-



born was sacrificed at Samhain celebrations. More likely, the celebrations included only animal sacrifices. Other sources describe an assembly of people taken place three days before and three days after Samhain. During this time feasts were prepared and eaten, games

were played, and stories of otherworldly creatures and forces were told.

After the fifth century A.D., more reliable information was written about the early Samhain celebrations which included feasting, tribal assemblies, and games with natural and supernatural dangers lurking. Additional writings in the Modern period, after 1500, describes Samhain as a time when livestock were moved to locations for winter, all foodstuffs were collected, large family feasts were prepared, and games were played. The celebrants also believed that the dead arose around Samhain and that it was good time to spend indoors away from the supernatural beings outdoors. It

was also a time when the milestones of life within the group were marked in rites of passage and when the awakening of the dead was believed to occur.

After describing what is known about the history of Samhain, Dr. Slotkin emphasized that in early Irish society, the grid hierarchy based upon professional or class distinctions was more forceful than group hierarchy based upon tribal distinctions. Thus people could move within their class among the tribes. This movement may have kept Samhain celebrations similar among the tribes.

Different cultures around the world have many celebrations with similar themes. Any direct connection between Samhain and Halloween is extremely tenuous. A Chinese celebration on the fifth day of the fifth month includes costume wearing, fire lighting, and making lanterns from pumpkins also has superficial similarities to Halloween. Dr. Slotkin concludes that there are as many or more differences as similarities between Samhain and Halloween and that Samhain should not be credited or blamed for Halloween as celebrated in the United States today.



-- Reported by Bob Streifthau

ALERT!



We have been notified by Building Security that there have been four suspected terrorists working in the office building. Three of the four have been apprehended. Bin Sleepin, Bin Loafin and Bin Drinkin are now in custody. Security advised us that they could not locate anyone fitting the description of the fourth cell member, Bin Workin. Police are confident that anyone who looks like he's Bin Workin will be quite easy to spot.



Holmes.....from page 1

the occupants of a typical Boston boarding house, and his three “psychological” novels: *Elsie Venner* (1861), *The Guardian Angel* (1867) and *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885).

Holmes’ involvement with scepticism was a result of his becoming a lyceum lecturer in 1837. Among the various talks which he gave on the lecture circuit were several dealing with the subject of medical quackery and pseudoscience, including “The Natural Diet of Man” (1840), “Astrology and Alchemy,” (1842), “Medical Delusions of the Past,” (1842) and “Homeopathy” (1842). The first two lectures were never published. However, the last two were combined into a long essay entitled *Homeopathy and Its Kindred Delusions* and were printed in the volume of his collected medical essays published in 1883. Dr. Jensen summarized the latter essay, using many humorous quotes from Holmes, and showed that Holmes was well aware of the placebo effect, the law of probabilities, and the power of suggestion.

After his appointment at Harvard in 1847, Holmes’ activities as a lyceum lecturer and debunker gradually ceased. However, in 1860 he again returned to the subject in the form of a humorous “lecture” on phrenology delivered to the occupants of the breakfast table in the second volume of his breakfast series collections, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*. Dr. Jensen performed this lecture for the audience and pointed out that in the course of this lecture Holmes makes the point that, when it comes to

extraordinary claims, it is the claimant rather than the sceptic who is responsible for providing the necessary proof.

Finally, Dr. Jensen pointed out that, over the course of time, Holmes’ attitude toward pseudoscience evolved. He gradually came to believe that psychological and sociological factors, rather than

rationalism and empirical evidence, had a far more important role to play, not only in the generation and propagation of pseudoscience, but also in combating it. Indeed, in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, Holmes also presented what Dr. Jensen called his “retribution” theory of pseudoscience. In this the appearance of pseudosciences acts as an indicator of the presence of abuse and shoddy standards within the legitimate sciences - a theme which Holmes illustrated for his day using both Homeopathy and Spiritualism.

The Mysterious Toast of Danny MacGilvery.

Here’s to it, from it, and to it again.

If you won’t do it,
you should be tied to it, strapped to it,
and made to do it.

If you still won’t do it let me do it,
‘cause I’m used to it.

From member L. Charles Hughes

**The Skeptic**

Father tells little Karli that the Stork has brought him a baby sister. “Would you like to see her?” he asks. Karli isn’t interested. “Later maybe — first show me the stork,” he says.

**How much money would your friends require?**

Police in Winter Haven, Florida, wanted Randall K. Adcock on kidnaping charges. A reward was offered, but police got no tips until the reward was raised. “Around the \$1,000 mark he probably still had some friends,” said Polk County Sheriff L. Crow. “But at \$5,000, I don’t think the friendship was affordable. We had more than one call. We had multiple calls.” The callers provided sufficient information for Adcock to be captured.

(Tampa Tribune)



HAPPY NEW YEAR

Science Book Club

The Science Book Club discussion is held between 2:30 pm and 5:00 pm in Room 3A at the Cincinnati Main Library located on the northeast corner of Eighth and Vine Streets. Everyone is invited to attend and to join the discussion.

Topic for November 18, 2001: ***Voodoo Science: The Road from Foolishness to Fraud*** by Robert Park. The book includes discussions of perpetual motion machines, the International Space Station and cold fusion. Discussion leader is Rick Davis. All are welcome. (Having read the book is never a requirement.)

Topic for December 16, 2001: ***Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything*** by James Gleick, Pantheon Books, 1999, 324 pages. From the dust jacket: "In *Faster*, James Gleick explores nothing less than the human condition at the turn of the millennium. We have become a quick-flexed, multi-tasking, channel-flipping, fast-forwarding species. We don't completely understand it, and we're not altogether happy about it. *Faster* is a mirror held up to our times--and a mordant reminder of why some things take time."

Never in the history of the human race have so many had so much to do in so little time. That, anyway, is the impression most of us have of civilized life at the end of the millennium, and *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* only sharpens it. Elegantly composed and insightfully researched, *Faster* delivers a brisk volley of observations on how microchips, media, and economics, among other things, have accelerated the pace of everyday experience over the course of the manic 20th century.

-- Amazon Booksellers Review

The books for the year 2002 have not been selected at the time this announcement is being written, but the list should be available soon after their selection on November 18, 2001. The book club normally meets on the fourth Sunday of each month, but because Thanksgiving and Christmas are so close to the fourth Sunday, we decided to meet on the third Sunday in these two months. We also shall probably meet on the third Monday in February at UC.



A Puzzle for Thinkers The Marble in the Wine glass.

Years and years ago in a math class at Withrow High School; I think it was in tenth grade, about 1935, the teacher offered us this problem as a bonus. Just for fun, to see how smart we were, he had us try to do this. "Take it home, work on it as long as you feel so inclined. Do it just for fun and the enjoyment of geometry. We'll consider your answers tomorrow."

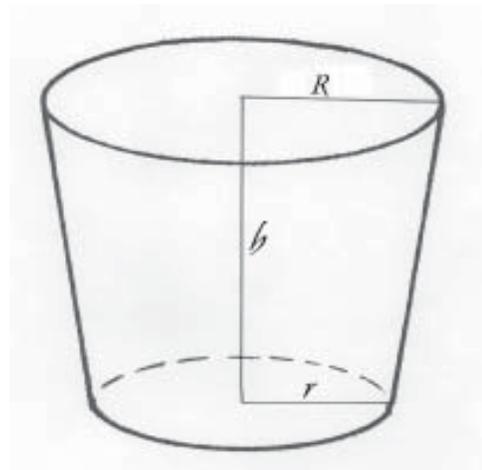
A conical wine glass three inches in diameter at the rim, and three inches deep, is filled with wine to the brim. A two inch diameter ball is gently lowered into the glass. How much wine will spill out?

-- contributed by member Everett DeJager

Solution to last issue's puzzle:

This shape, a truncated circular pyramid, is the shape of many simple drinking glasses. Its volume is given by $V = h(R^2 + r^2 + Rr)/3$, where $h = 35$ inches, $V = 39$ gallons or 9009 cubic inches, and R and r the larger and smaller radii of the vessel. R is of course $15/9$ of r or $1.6667r$. I get the larger diameter as, $2R = 22.3972$ and smaller $2r = 13.4382$ inches. (My source provides: "The greater diameter would be 24.7460 inches, the lesser 14.8476." I think they used imperial gallons.)

Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806) was an African-American man, an astronomer and mathematician, and one of the experts who surveyed the District of Columbia with Andrew Ellicott. He tried to convince Thomas Jefferson that African-Americans could reason, but the President wasn't convinced.





*Details
of*

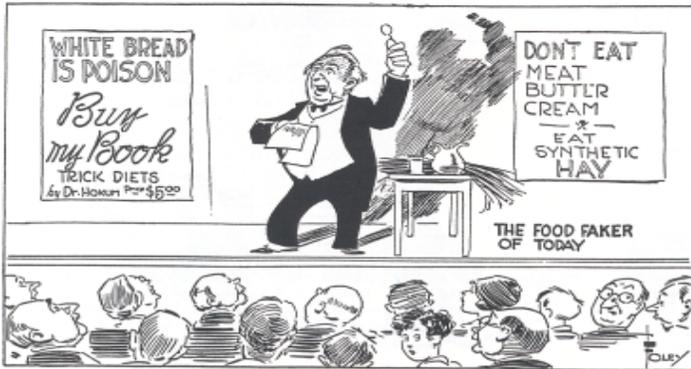


Upcoming Events...

Saturday, 8 December 2001

Topic: A Skeptic in the Pantry

Speaker: William J. Tyznik, PhD,
Professor Emeritus Department of Animal Science,
The Ohio State University



Assertions abound regarding the merits or risks of organic foods, “conventional” foods and GMO (genetically modified organism) foods. Throughout a career in teaching and research, Bill challenged students to cast a skeptical eye on such claims, be they aimed at humans, livestock or pets. Join us for a lively program as Bill shares observations of what’s old, what’s new and what’s on the horizon regarding pantry proclamations.

Saturday, 12 January 2002

Topic: Evolution in the Chapel

Speaker: Rev. Mendel Adams

St. Peter’s United Church of Christ, Cincinnati



Creationists aside, how do Christians of various persuasion view evolution? And what role can, or should, mainstream churches take in the war creationists have declared on public school science curricula? Mendel’s observations on these topics are not just academic — when *Answers in Genesis* initiated their activities in northern Kentucky, he stepped up to the plate and helped shape the debate.

Membership Duration

And Dues.....

All memberships start in August, coordinated with our fiscal year, from 1 August to 31 July of the next year. This will allow us to mail renewal requests only once a year in the Fall.

**REMINDER....
IF YOU HAVE
NOT PAID YOUR
DUES THEY ARE
LATE!!!!
PLEASE PAY/SEND
IN YOUR
MEMBERSHIP DUES
NOW!**

SEE THE FORM ON PAGE 11.....



The Association for Rational Thought is an independent, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization. We share the ideas and philosophies of CSICOP, the Skeptics Society, and JREF.

CSICOP: the *Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal* publishes the *Skeptical Inquirer*, a journal of investigations of paranormal claims. P.O. Box 703, Amherst, NY 14226-0703, phone: 800-634-1610, fax: 716-636-1733, www.scicop.org

The Skeptics Society, publishes *The Skeptic Magazine*. PO Box 338, Altadena, CA 91001; phone: 626-794-3119; fax 626-794-1300; skepticismag@aol.com and www.skeptic.com,.

JREF: the James Randi Educational Foundation publishes the *Swift Newsletter*. 201 SE Davie Blvd. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316-1815. phone: (954) 467-1112, fax: (954)467-1660, www.randi.org

A.R.T. meets on the second Saturday of each month September through June, 10:00 AM and publishes *Cincinnati Skeptic* bi-monthly. 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 Lance Moody (513) 336-9834 or visit our website. **Address Changes and Corrections, Membership Questions:** Nurit Bowman (513) 731-0642 E-mail: nuritb@netscape.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:

New Member

Renewing Member

Contribution

Gift membership for/by:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Work: _____ Home: _____ E-mail: _____

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 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; other ways to reach us; and how to send sample copies of the newsletter to potential members.

—David Wall, Web Site Manager

Web: <http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org>

E-mail: darkon@one.net



Association for Rational Thought
 P.O. Box 12896
 Cincinnati, OH 45212

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What is a skeptic?

Modern skepticism is a response to the torrent of paranormal and pseudoscientific claims that pervade our lives. The stories of ghosts, flying saucers, miracle cures, lake monsters and many other fringe beliefs often go unchallenged. Skeptics provide the challenge.

While many of us are not scientists, we embrace the scientific method as mankind's best invention for seeking knowledge. Skeptics are not cynics. We don't simply reject every unusual idea. We do know extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence. We insist on the evidence.

Cincinnati Skeptics, The Association for Rational Thought, meet to discuss such claims. We debate the merits; we skewer dogmatism. We have fun.

The truth is out there. And skeptics are looking for it.

Preview Of Coming Attractions...



Third Meeting of the 2001-2002 Season!

Date and Day: Sat. December 8, 2001

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program -->12:15PM - 2:00 PM Lunch

Fourth Meeting of the 2001-2002 Season!

Date and Day: Sat. January 13, 2002

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program -->12:15PM - 2:00 PM Lunch



Mark your Calendars,

Watch your mail & See Inside (p. 10) for Details!