

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

March 2014
Edited by Carl Ledendecker

RET First Sunday Meeting

March 2, 2014

10:30 - 12:30

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

"The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life"

A DVD presentation by Dr. Robert Trivers from the Skeptics Society Distinguished lecture Series

Whether it is in a cockpit at takeoff or the planning of an offensive war, a romantic relationship or a dispute at the office, there are many opportunities to lie and self-deceive — but deceit and self-deception carry the costs of being alienated from reality and can lead to disaster. So why does deception play such a prominent role in our everyday lives? In his bold new work, Rutgers University evolutionary theorist Robert Trivers unflinchingly argues that self-deception evolved in the service of deceit — the better to fool others. We do it for biological reasons—in order to help us survive and procreate. From viruses mimicking host behavior to humans misremembering (sometimes intentionally) the details of a quarrel, science has proven that the deceptive one can always outwit the masses. But we undertake this deception at our own peril.

The RET Skeptic Book Club

March 9, 2014

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Barnes and Noble Booksellers, 8029 Kingston Pike.

**"The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion"
by Jonathan Haidt.**

As America descends deeper into polarization and paralysis, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has done the seemingly impossible—challenged conventional thinking about morality, politics, and religion in a way that speaks to everyone on the political spectrum. Drawing on his twenty five years of groundbreaking research on moral psychology, he shows how moral judgments arise not from reason but from gut feelings. He shows why liberals, conservatives, and libertarians have such different intuitions about right and wrong, and he shows why each side is actually right about many of its central concerns. In this subtle yet accessible book, Haidt gives you the key to understanding the miracle of human cooperation, as well as the curse of our eternal divisions and conflicts. If you're ready to trade in anger for understanding, read *The Righteous Mind*. (Amazon Review)

RET Third Sunday Meeting

March.16 , 2014

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

**Lectures on "Biology and Human Behavior: the Neurobiological Origins of Human Behavior."
Presented by Professor Robert Sapolsky of Stanford University.**

As a result of popular demand we will continue viewing these taped lecture series. These lectures are very informative and interesting to watch. Just ask those who were there the last time.

RET Reflections Meeting

March 23, 2014

1:00 pm– 4.00 pm

Potluck Lunch

Schera Chadwick & Ted Lollis

9219 George Williams Road, 37922;

call 865.690.8742 for directions.

Robert Lee Fulgham's "Conversation Lifeboat" questions:

Did you ever have a great teacher?

What would you be learning/studying today if you had time?

Looking back, what would you like to have learned?

What would you teach if you were asked?

Each person will be asked to select one question and give a five minute answer. Please bring an easily prepared dish or beverage and join us for great conversation. All friends and members of RET are welcome.

Many of you may be familiar with Robert Lee Fulgham, as a UU minister and a well-known author during the last four decades of the twentieth century. (All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten; It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It)

Mr. Fulgham created a list of questions which he calls "Conversation Lifeboats". At this Reflections meeting*, each of you is asked to select ONE of the questions below and invited to discuss it in five minutes. If time allows, we will have a period to respond to each other's thoughts, or for you to tackle a second question you'd like to address.

Men and Women’s Game Day

Sunday, March 30

1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Community Room of EarthFare, Turkey Creek

You can purchase lunch, snacks, a drink, or desert there. No outside food is allowed.

Games will be available or bring one of your choice.

RET/ASK Freethought Forum

Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm

In Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12

Charter Channel 6

Surrounding areas: free streaming on ctvknox.org.

Show topics are subject to change.

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville meet up at Barley’s in Knoxville’s Old Town. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rhodes at larryr@usit.net.

Freethought Quotes

"Anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our cultural and political life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means 'my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.'" --Isaac Asimov

When there is an Atheist column in every paper, when there are Atheist meeting buildings with Atheist signs out front, when Atheists are going door-to-door, when Atheists have a day of the week assigned to us, when we have millions of songs and commercials on TV for the latest Atheist album of inspirational songs, when people constantly say, "Reason bless you" when you sneeze, when we have Atheist representatives for prisoners, and Atheists reps in hospitals for the dying, when children are made to kneel before bed and recite a chapter of "The God Delusion," when "God is Not Great" is read over the P.A system in schools ...etc...then, maybe the religious could complain that we are "shoving our non 'beliefs' down their throats and persecuting them. If all these things were reality, we'd have just reached equality at that point." - Paula McIntyre Whyte

Freethought song

You can listen to the song “From FFRF’s music CD, “Adrift on a Star” Susan Hofer, a talented jazz vocalist in Madison, Wis., performs Dan’s jazz ballad, a love song, “It’s Only Natural,” inspired by Richard Dawkin’s book, Unweaving the Rainbow, which makes a plea to integrate science and art.”

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/20090-its-only-natural>

Excerpts from:

U.S. College Students Evenly Divided Between Religious, Secular and Spiritual, in New ARIS Study

Trinity College/Center for Inquiry Survey Reveals Ideological and Theological Distinctions between Groups

<https://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/articles/3590>

“College-age Americans participating in a new survey of religious identification were evenly divided between three distinct worldviews, Religious, Secular, and Spiritual, according to a groundbreaking report in the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) series from Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., in conjunction with the Center for Inquiry (CFI). The study finds that these three groups have distinctly different positions on political, scientific, and moral questions.”

“Among the students surveyed, 31.8% identified their worldview as Religious, 32.4% as Spiritual, and 28.2% as Secular. Within each group there was a remarkable level of cohesion on answers to questions covering a wide array of issues, including political alignment, acceptance of evolution and climate change, belief in supernatural phenomena such as miracles or ghosts, and trust in alternative practices such as homeopathy and astrology.”

“While the Religious students in this survey were overwhelmingly Christian (70%), a near equal share of the Secular, and one-third of the Spiritual, professed no religion ("Nones"), showing a remarkable degree of indifference to religion.”

“ARIS surveys in 2001 and 2008 noted the rise of the No Religion population, or "Nones," a term often used synonymously with "unaffiliated." However, "two-thirds of the students who self-identified as Nones in this sample preferred the Secular worldview and the remainder chose the Spiritual. Hardly any chose the Religious option," write study authors Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar of Trinity College. "This finding is a challenge to the notion that the Nones are just 'religiously unaffiliated' or religious searchers who have not yet found a religious home. This survey clearly revealed that today's students with a Secular worldview, who are mainly Nones, are not traditional theists."

The survey also better defines what distinguishes those who identify as Spiritual. "The Spiritual category does not appear to be simply a middle ground between the Religious and Secular categories," write the authors. "They are closer to the Religious on many metaphysical issues but closer to the Secular on public policy and social issues. Their political liberalism along with their mysticism is part of the reason they differentiate themselves from the Religious worldview."

“Though the Secular group is predominantly male, it was they who were most likely of all three groups (at 67%) to say that it is ‘very true ‘that women must defend their reproductive rights.’”

“Interestingly, the ‘libertarian’ option attracted almost the same share of students in each group.”

RET Forum (A Benefit for Paid Members)

Don't forget the new RET Forum discussion and more site: <http://rationalists.org/forum/index.php>
There are many uses for this new forum including continued discussions about recent meetings.

Dues

Dues are \$35 for most individuals but students & low-income persons may join at a reduced rate of \$15.

Dues and donations can be sent to "RET, P.O. Box 51634, Knoxville, TN 37950", or via Pay Pal through the link at www.rationalists.org. Direct payment can also be made to RET treasurer, Eliot Specht

Reimbursement

Remember that you can ask for reimbursement for food, supplies, etc. that you provide for RET.

FEEL FREE to Send me information or articles by you.

Anyone who has something to submit for publication in the RET Newsletter please e-mail it to ledendecker@earthlink.net. The decision to include the submission is at the discretion of the current editor (me) but I am not all that picky.