



# Willamette Freethinker



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Corvallis Secular Society (CSS) is a Humanist and  
Freethought society for all nontheists of good will.

CSS is affiliated with the American Humanist Association (AHA)  
and the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH).

## From the Editor:

Once upon a time, Truth was considered impartial. Whether you were Democrat or Republican, atheist or Christian, everybody could be thought to be seeking the Truth in their own way. Because of this, even if you strongly disagreed with a person, there could be a certain level of civility and respect. After all, you usually shared many of the same goals, even if you disagreed on how to achieve them.

This is no longer the case. As radical right-wing Christians and Republicans have "taken over", in their respective circles, and merged into the dominant force in modern politics, they have made an enemy of Truth, and declared active war upon it. And the bitter hatred that has split this country into "Red America" and "Blue America" is a direct result.

People and places that put a high premium on Truth — such as scientists, and universities — tend to be less conservative, and less religious.

The Bush administration is the most secretive in U.S. History — this would not be the case if Truth were on their side.

In a New York Times Magazine column ("Without a Doubt", 10/17/2004), Ron Suskind wrote about an encounter with a senior Bush advisor in 2002:

The aide said that guys like me were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

With people such as this, there can be no compromise, no civility, no respect. For these people no longer seek Truth. They've declared themselves above that sort of thing.

*Reed Byers*  
Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

## CSS Meetings and Events

### Special Event:

It's time for the Winter Solstice potluck! Bring a dish to share, and get ready to have some fun! Remember to come an hour earlier than our regular meeting time...

### Calendar:

Saturday, Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 1:00-4:00 CSS potluck  
Saturday, Jan 15<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting  
Saturday, Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting

For the Feb 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, we will have a guest speaker! Sunday School Teacher John Gilman will explain his views on "Christianity, God and the Supernatural". There will be time afterwards for questions and discussion. ☺

### Regular meeting time:

Third Saturday of each month, from 2:00-4:00 pm.

### Regular meeting location:

Corl House (3975 NW Witham Hill Dr, Corvallis).

There are now  
three ways you can financially  
support CSS online! See back page for  
more details...



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# From the President:

## Attacks on Teaching Evolution are Growing

Attacks by religious conservatives against the teaching of evolution in public schools have been occurring for decades in this country. The recent election kept the darling of the religious right in the White House, and put more of their people into Congress than were there before. This has emboldened those who want creationism (or "intelligent design," or whatever euphemism they favor at any given time) taught in public school science classes, either alongside evolution, or in place of it.

A *CBS News* November 22 poll, "Creationism Trumps Evolution," is discouraging to those who believe only science should be taught in science classes. It reports that 55% of Americans believe that God created humans in their present form! Twenty-seven percent believe that humans evolved but that God guided the process. Only 13% believe that humans evolved without the intervention of God. Overall, about two-thirds of Americans want creationism taught along with evolution; 37% want evolutionism replaced outright. (Fifty percent of those who attend religious services every week favor replacing evolution with creationism in schools; 60% of Evangelical Christians favor this.)

According to *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (Nov. 5), the rural northwest Wisconsin "Grantsburg School District has passed a motion permitting 'various theories/models of origins' to be incorporated into its science curriculum." This resulted in a letter being sent to them, signed by 43 of the University of Wisconsin System's deans, urging the board to reverse this policy. "Wisconsin law mandates that evolution be taught. But the Grantsburg School Board felt the law was too restrictive, said Joni Burgin, the school superintendent." A line was therefore added to their science curriculum, calling for 'various models/theories' of origin to be incorporated. Joseph Donovan of the state Dept. of Public Instruction says that the change is perfectly legal. The article reports that "The new motion will potentially allow a theory (sic) known as intelligent design into Grantsburg biology classes." Burgin favors the board's action, saying that "the way science is taught...should not be totally inclusive of just one scientific theory." Greg Stager, who teaches physics, chemistry, and environmental science at Grantsburg High School, is quoted as saying, "Evolution is a theory, just as much as creationism is a theory. There is contradictory evidence for both."

A *Reuters* article dated November 19, "Pennsylvania School District Retreats from Evolution," reports a similar action in that state. Dover Area School District has specifically approved the teaching of "intelligent design." A statement on the district's website states: "Because Darwin's theory is a theory, it is still being tested as new evidence is discovered. Gaps in the theory exist for which there is no evidence."

A *Christian Science Monitor* article ([http://www.beliefnet.com/story/156/story\\_15684\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/156/story_15684_1.html)) states that, in Cobb County, Georgia, the local school board is calling for stickers to be placed inside the front cover of middle and high school science books. They read in part: "Evolution is a theory, not a fact."

The article reports: "...proponents of intelligent design see the guiding hand of some greater wisdom. For example, natural selection is not enough to explain the 'eerie perfection' of the genetic code, says John Calvert of the *Intelligent Design Network*, an advocacy group in Shawnee Mission, Kan. Something so flawlessly 'designed' could not be the product of random actions, he says. Proponents of intelligent design make no claim to knowing the source of this order. No scientist 'can use science to get to what that intelligence is,' says John West of the *Discovery Institute* in Seattle, which backs intelligent-design research.

"But for much of middle America, it's easy enough to fill in the blank. 'The book's going to be a good resource for children and parents who try to believe in God and be religious,' says John Workman, whose daughter is a sophomore at Dover High. 'God should always be in the country, and in the schools.' To critics, his words provoke a collective 'I told you so.' Intelligent design, they say, is merely creationism in a lab coat. Dr. Scott [Eugenie Scott, director of the *National Center for Science Education* in Oakland, CA] calls it the evolution of creationism: 'They're trying to find a strategy that will stand up in court, and they only have a chance if it is something as far away from religion as possible.'"

As mentioned above, opposition to the teaching of evolution in public schools is nothing new. The following is the text of a letter I sent to *The Oregonian* on April 12, 1975:

I see Tennessee is trying to restrict the teaching of evolution in schools by banning biology texts not proclaiming that evolution is "not a scientific fact".

There's probably no scientific hypothesis with a greater body of evidence behind it than the Theory of Organic Evolution. Anyone who has even a smattering of knowledge in the life sciences knows that the concept of evolution binds every aspect of biology today: genetics, embryology, anatomy, physiology – they all would be only a collection of isolated facts, without the integrating idea of evolution. I dare say you can find more evidence for evolution than for the Theory of Flight.

So why all this tenacious opposition to evolution, anyway? If religionists are presuming to lecture rationalists about the need to realize that all theories, no matter how preponderant the evidence in their

favor, are not certain beyond all doubt, then they should certainly be willing to proclaim that Biblical Creation is, after all, just a theory, also.

In all fairness, however, I am willing to concede the Creationists a point – all theories of our origin should be presented in biology texts – in proportion to the evidence in support of each view!

On August 9, 1992, I wrote the *Daily Astorian*:

The proposal to teach the “scientific creation” theory alongside the evolution theory in Astoria School District schools is misguided. Creationism is a religious dogma, not a theory.... Evolution is the unifying principle of biology. Creation “science” is superstitious nonsense that begins with its conclusions!

Creationists and other orthodox religionists view the purpose of education to be indoctrination. In contrast, Rationalists consider the aim of education to be learning how to think independently.

Science teachers should teach science. Students don’t have to believe all they’re taught, but they must understand the major principles of scientific thought. The teaching of creationism in our public schools is damaging to society and to the possibility of teaching science properly in our colleges. Far too many students come to college loaded with prejudices, precluding the possibility they might become scientists, or even that they might gain a decent understanding of the scientific method.

Everyone should pay attention to creationism and other anti-intellectual movements that aim at substituting nonsense for science in the public realm. Fight for the right for our children to have free minds: they’re worth it!

On February 7, 1998, I wrote *The Democrat-Herald*:

“Evolution is just a theory”, according to Theo Wilson (Jan. 27), and “is no more plausible, or implausible, than the creation theory”, writes Teresa Neumann (Jan. 28). They are misusing the term “theory”: in science, a theory is an explanation or model based on observation, experimentation, and reasoning that has been tested and confirmed as a general principle helping to explain and predict natural phenomena. The Theory of Evolution is our explanation of how the fact of evolution works, just as the Theory of Flight is our explanation of how flight works.

Evidence demonstrates that biological changes have occurred during the course of geologic history; this evolution is an observation that the theory of evolution by means of natural selection explains. The evidence for evolution is easy to comprehend. First there’s the principal of “superposition”: newer geological layers occur atop older layers. Then observation shows that the oldest fossil-containing layers hold traces of organisms that are different from

those of today. If one follows individual species of fossils, evolution is observed. Species come into existence and eventually go extinct, as newer species appear. These simple observations show that change has occurred, and this is “evolution”.

Creationism is not a theory, it is a religious doctrine. Genesis is a myth, just as the creation stories of other cultures are myths. If we are to survive “our greatest enemy: our own human nature” (in Ms. Neumann’s words), it will require a scientific, Humanistic understanding of human nature, not the obscurantism of religion.

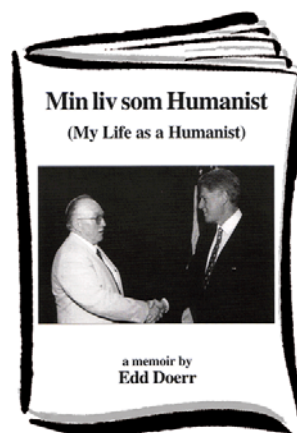
With the dramatic rise in the political power of Christian fundamentalists in our country, one of the many unfortunate changes we may see is a weakening of public education in general, and of science education in particular. Humanists, Freethinkers, scientists, educators, and all other fair-minded people need to watch for and fight attempts to have public school science classes teach religious beliefs to our children.

*John Dearing*  
President of CSS

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## New Book by Edd Doerr

### President, Americans for Religious Liberty



“When I refer to Edd Doerr as ‘that wonderful wizard of ours,’ I intend the phrase to remain in present tense. A memoir, once written and dated, might be taken as a farewell. Edd’s memoir was written in response to an invitation from the Humanist Heritage Program of the Humanist Foundation of the American Humanist Association. Edd will continue his work for Humanism, religious liberty, church-state separation, and

women’s right to choose. In time he may add a future record to this memoir. One thing I know...Edd’s not finished yet, not by a long shot.”

— Bette Chambers, President Emerita,  
American Humanist Association

Edd Doerr was president of the *American Humanist Association* from 1995 to 2003, serving previously as vice-president and board chair under Isaac Asimov from 1985 to 1991. He has been executive director and then president of Americans for Religious Liberty since 1982. A former teacher of history and Spanish, he is the author, co-author, editor, or translator of twenty books, mostly on religious liberty and reproductive rights.

His new book *Min liv som Humanist (My Life as a Humanist)*, a *Memoir* is available for \$10 from:

Rocinante Press  
P.O. Box 6656  
Silver Spings MD 20916

# Voice of an Angel

## War of the Words

Ever since the election, I am becoming more and more disturbed when I read or watch the news. The problem is what I can only refer to as “Newspeak”. In George Orwell’s novel 1984, information was rewritten over and over in efforts to present a more positive spin on the government.

One of the more irritating examples of this for me is calling the Iraq rebels “insurgents”. Dictionary.com defines the word as “rising in revolt against established authority, especially a government”. The key word here is ESTABLISHED – there hasn’t yet been any real established authority in Iraq since the war. In reality aren’t WE the real “insurgents” since it was US who revolted against the established Iraq government?!

Now, I admit I have seen a good deal of newspeak since Bush took office, but it seems to have been ramped up lately. Some examples from this week alone:

- **“War Fighters”** — In the latest budget for the Iraq war the Republicans in Congress insisted on changing the word “Soldier” to “War Fighter”. When one thinks of a soldier they think of someone who serves in the military. Until recently I often thought that soldiers are those who try to keep order and peace. We see this during national disasters. Soldiers are deployed to protect property and to bring food and water to needy people. Calling them “War Fighters” completely changes what these people are suppose to do. No longer are they “keepers of the peace” they are now “fighters of war”. Such a fundamental change is VERY important in this society. We are no longer thinking of ourselves as trying to instill peace, we are fighting wars.
- **“Dissidents”** — I read a CNN article where those who are challenging the Ohio election are called “dissidents”. Yes, the simple definition from Dictionary.com says “one who disagrees”, but this word had been used to mean much more than that. Dissidents are often referred to as violent people who are on the “wrong” side. Calling them dissidents further instills the idea that these people are just a bunch of left wing radicals. Heck, we can start calling anyone who disagrees with the Right-Wing agenda a “dissident”!
- **“Food Insecurity”** — This is perhaps the most outrageous one I have heard this week. During the holiday season people begin to think of those less fortunate, and many places start “food drives”. I was watching the local news and someone from one of these food drive organizations began referring to children that

went to bed hungry as having “Food Insecurity”. My first reaction was something like: “FOOD INSECURITY?? WHAT THE F\*CK IS WRONG WITH PEOPLE???!?” – and that’s pretty much how I still feel about this issue. We no longer use that “awful” word STARVING! These people aren’t insecure about their food – they don’t have any food to be insecure about!! Dictionary.com defines “insecure” as “not sure or certain”. “Food Insecurity” sounds like they have some mental health issue regarding food! I guarantee you these people are pretty damn sure they aren’t going to have enough food to eat! Let’s stop sugar coating the issue – they are starving children, not children with insecurities.

The first thing that popped into my head regarding this was how when during the 2000 election campaign G.W. Bush, after hearing that Texas had the #1 poverty rate in the country (BTW – just barely surpassing Oregon), denied that there were any hungry people in Texas. He insisted this was all “made up” in efforts to embarrass him. At first I thought he was flat out lying, but now I think he is so out of touch that he simply can’t imagine how “real people” live. He can not fathom that people in this country are starving, so instead let’s just give it a more “pleasant” name!

I guess the real problem behind all this is people just don’t think for themselves. The news reporters conform to what the government tells them – after all the government knows what’s best don’t they??!

I’ve been listening to a lot of Air America talk radio lately and I am pleased to hear at least they are speaking out about this “newspeak” crap. Yet I still find that people just don’t seem care enough to get involved. I heard caller after caller on shows ask the same question over and over “Why aren’t people protesting the election in the streets in the USA like they are in the Ukraine?” My response to them is “Yes! Why aren’t YOU protesting in the streets?!” Are we just too lazy as Americans? Don’t enough of us care? I would like this think that’s not the case – especially after seeing people wait 8+ hours in line to vote in the last election. Perhaps they have given up? I just don’t know.

What I do know is if no one speaks out against this “newspeak” garbage, then we are truly so apathetic that we will let the media spoon feed us what the government wants us to hear. Well, this is one person who won’t let that happen!

*Angela Byers*

CSS Treasurer & Webmaster

# The Copernican Revolution

## The First Nail In God's Coffin

by Louis W. Cable

On the 24<sup>th</sup> day of May in the year 1543 a man named Necholi Koppernigk, known to us by his Latinized name, Nicholas Copernicus, lay on his deathbed in Fraunberg, Poland. He had been born in nearby Torun, Poland on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of February exactly 70 years earlier. He had been educated abroad and was awarded a doctorate in canon law from the University of Ferrara in Italy. However, he held a lifelong interest in the science of astronomy as well as in mathematics and remained at the cutting edge of both disciplines.

As Copernicus lay dying a newly printed copy of his masterwork was brought to him. It is titled **On The Revolutions Of The Heavenly Spheres**. This astounding work would topple in one fell swoop the cosmological beliefs that had been taught as fact for more than fourteen centuries. The book was delivered none too soon, as it turned out, because Copernicus' first sight of it was almost his last sight of anything. Some days earlier he had suffered a stroke causing him to lose his memory and mental vigor. He saw his completed work almost at his last breath on the day he died. This was a good thing for him because his work contradicted holy scripture thereby committing what in those days was a capital offense. It presented mathematical proof that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system. According to Copernicus, the earth, as well as the other planets, were spherical in shape and revolved around the sun while at the same time spinning about a polar axis.

Known as the **heliocentric theory**, this great scientific breakthrough is often referred to as the **Copernican Revolution**, and a revolution it surely was. It is difficult to imagine a similar challenge to our accustomed beliefs, to conceive of such a sudden and tremendous jolt to our imagination, such a reversal of what had been taken to be immutable truth. The academic community was left stunned and bewildered. The churches' reaction was predictable. The heliocentric theory was declared heresy in direct conflict with established church doctrine. We must remember that this was an age when the church was at the zenith of its power. The atrocities of the Catholic Inquisition and Protestant witch burnings struck fear into the hearts of the bravest of men.

Recognizing the Bible as essentially a flat-earth book in which a stationary earth sits motionless at the center of a simple three-layered universe, Church leaders joined in a vicious attack on this "blasphemy." Martin Luther reacted by flatly rejecting the heliocentric theory as, "The over-witty notions of a fool, for does not Joshua 10 plainly say that the sun, not the earth, stood still?" John Calvin quoted Psalm 93:1, "The earth is set firmly in place and cannot be moved," and he exclaimed, "Who will dare to place the authority of

this man Copernicus above holy scripture?" Cardinal Bellarmine, one of the chief enforcers of the Inquisition, declared, "This pretended discovery debases the whole Christian plan of salvation."

To their credit, these theologians correctly perceived the contradiction and rightly foresaw that the long held misconception of Bible infallibility was unmasked. If the new astronomy should prevail, their oppressive hold on the minds of men was doomed.

The heliocentric theory for the first time brought into serious question the credibility of the Bible. Copernicus had delivered the first in what was to be over the next several centuries a series of devastating blows from which the

Christian religion would never completely recover. The long night of the Dark Age was at last over. The Renaissance was in full bloom. Try as they might the church leaders were unable to stop it. Copernicus had not only toppled conventional astronomy of his day, he had, in effect, driven the first nail into God's coffin. When the earth ceases to be flat and no longer sits serenely at the center of the

universe with heaven above and hell below, Christianity makes no sense. Modern astronomy has completely destroyed the limited and circumscribed geocentric conception of the universe so essential to Christian rationale. The unvarnished truth is that the Christian belief system functions only in terms of a geocentric premise. The same could no doubt be said for Judaism and Islam.

In the generation following Copernicus the heliocentric theory found wide acceptance throughout the academic world, but not without risk. The church redoubled its opposition. Those imprudent enough to openly advocate the work of Copernicus were pronounced heretics by the Inquisition and given the dreaded choice — recant or die. Many of the accused, including the great Galileo Galilei, wisely chose to recant and were thus spared the ultimate humiliation and hideous torture of being burnt alive at the stake. However, others, including the renowned scientist and philosopher Giordano Bruno, stuck steadfastly by their convictions, an act of bravery and courage for which they paid with their lives.

Today, the heliocentric theory is not only accepted, it is taken for granted. But, the genius of Copernicus stands out as one of the great watersheds of human history. He is considered the father of modern astronomy, and his work led directly to the discoveries of Brahe, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Huygens, Newton. and Einstein. Today, as we stand at the frontier of space exploration, it is fitting and proper that we take a moment to reflect on the important contribution of Nicholas Copernicus, the man who changed forever our understanding of the universe and our place in it.

**The long night of the Dark Age was at last over. The Renaissance was in full bloom.**

# When Fundamentalism and Political Hackery Trump Science

by Randolph T. Holhut, 12/9/04

<http://www.smirkingchimp.com/article.php?sid=19020>

DUMMERSTON, Vt. — Can a country where more people believe in the devil than in evolution maintain its leadership in the sciences?

That's a question that David Baltimore, Nobel laureate and president of the California Institute of Technology, asked in a recent op-ed piece in the Los Angeles Times.

Baltimore believes that "Asia has the potential to blow us out of the water" because their scientists and engineers "are as good as ours, as imaginative as ours — they work longer hours and are more dedicated."

The numbers bear him out. India's colleges and universities are turning out more than 40,000 computer science graduates each year, and the enrollments in those programs are rising while U.S. colleges struggle to fill their science programs. And China produces more 325,000 engineers each year, or five times more than the United States.

By contrast, Baltimore wrote that our nation has a "lack of federal leadership in funding schooling that emphasizes math and science" with a "fragmented educational system that leaves much to local control" and an attitude of "general anti-intellectualism."

China is not a paradise politically, but it isn't having arguments over whether Darwin's theories are correct. It isn't rewriting science textbooks to give the Biblical version of creation equal weight with evolution. It isn't letting narrow political agendas or special interests trump scientific or medical facts.

Anti-intellectualism has always been a powerful force in America. Combine that with religious fundamentalism and you have a recipe for economic, scientific and political disaster. Because scientists in secular societies like Asia and Europe aren't fighting fundamentalist dogma and political hackery at every turn, they are now poised to kick our collective butts. And when this happens, most Americans will never know what hit them.

Why are we still arguing about Darwin? Why are more schools around the country forcing teachers to treat "intelligent design" (the new euphemism for creationism) as something as valid as evolution? Why do two-thirds of Americans (according to a CBS News poll taken last month) favor teaching creationism and evolution side-by-side in public schools?

This is happening because America is now a post-literate, post-logical society where truth and reason no longer matter. Fundamentalism appears to be gaining on modernism and what's become known as the "reality-based community" is treated with total contempt by people willing to distort science (and facts in general) for political gain. All you have to do is look at the way the Bush administration — that perfect nexus of religious fundamentalism and cynical politics — treats science.

Take the issue of global warming. There is little doubt in reputable scientific circles that the earth's climate is changing and that those changes — mainly brought on by the burning of fossil fuels — will ultimately cause major environmental problems.

The rest of the world's reaction to this is to work on ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Europe has taken the lead in this area, developing new technologies to reduce energy use and pollution. The United States lags behind because it has been decided by the Bush administration that global warming is a myth. The United States — the nation that consumes about a quarter of the world's energy and natural resources — has rejected the Kyoto Protocol and any other steps toward reducing energy use.

This sort of willful blindness infects every bit of the Bush administration's treatment of science. If the facts conflict with their beliefs or the ability of their corporate patrons to make more money, they either ignore the facts or fund studies that give them the version of the facts they want.

The anti-intellectual, anti-reason myopia that now infects America will come back to haunt us. As this nation turns into a religious cult with nuclear weapons, scientific innovation will migrate to places where radical clerics and corrupt politicians aren't calling the tune. Just as our manufacturing base has migrated overseas, our scientific and intellectual base will travel the same path.

Baltimore wrote in his piece for the Times that the thousands of international students who once filled our math and science programs are now staying home because the schooling in China and India is as good as America's and the Bush administration has made it increasingly difficult for international students to study here. Both China and India have poured huge sums of money into education, while American schools are falling behind.

**America is now a post-literate, post-logical society where truth and reason no longer matter.**

(continued on page 10)

# Why Academia Shuns Republicans

by Jonathan Chait, *Los Angeles Times*, 12/10/04

A few weeks ago, a pair of studies found that Democrats vastly outnumbered Republicans among professors at leading universities. Conservatives gleefully seized upon this to once again flagellate academia for its liberal bias.

Am I the only person who fails to understand why conservatives see this finding as vindication? After all, these studies show that some of the best-educated, most-informed people in the country overwhelmingly reject the GOP. Why is this seen as an indictment of academia, rather than as an indictment of the Republican Party?

Conservatives have a ready answer. The only reason faculties lean so far to the left is that deans, administrators and entire university cultures systematically discriminate against conservatives.

They don't, however, have much evidence to back this up. Mostly, they assume that the leftward tilt is *prima facie* evidence of anti-conservative discrimination. (Yet, when liberals hold up minority underrepresentation at some institutions as proof of discrimination, conservatives are justifiably skeptical.)

Conservative pundit George Will recently tied the dearth of conservative professors to the quasi-Marxist outlook in African American studies, women's studies and cultural studies. And at many campuses, those departments certainly don't amount to much more than left-wing propaganda factories. It's also true that radical multiculturalist theory — which sees white male oppression as the key to everything — has taken root in plenty of more mainstream disciplines.

This no doubt makes things hard on prospective conservative academics, not to mention mainstream liberal ones. A historian I know (a liberal) used to complain that history departments showed little interest in the traditional research he did, only caring about subjects like "buggery in the British navy."

But the rise of fashionable left-wing scholarship can be blamed for only a tiny part of the GOP's problem. The studies showing that academics prefer Democrats to Republicans also show that this preference holds in hard sciences as well as social sciences. Are we to believe that higher education has fallen prey to trendy multiculturalist engineering, or that physics departments everywhere suppress conservative quantum theorists?

The main causes of the partisan disparity on campus have little to do with anything so nefarious as discrimination. First, Republicans don't particularly want to be professors.

To go into academia — a highly competitive field that does not offer great riches — you have to believe that living the life of the mind is more valuable than making a Wall Street salary. On most issues that offer a choice between having more money in your pocket and having something else — a cleaner environment, universal health insurance, etc. — conservatives tend to prefer the money and liberals tend to prefer the something else. It's not so surprising that the same thinking would extend to career choices.

Second, professors don't particularly want to be Republicans. In recent years, and especially under George W. Bush, Republicans have cultivated anti-intellectualism. Remember how Bush in 2000 ridiculed Al Gore for using all them big numbers?

That's not just a campaign ploy. It's how Republicans govern these days. Last summer, my colleague Frank Foer wrote a cover story in the *New Republic* detailing the way the Bush administration had disdained the advice of

experts. And not liberal experts, either. These were Republican-appointed wonks whose know-how on topics such as global warming, the national debt and occupying Iraq were systematically ignored. Bush prefers to follow his gut.

In the world of academia, that's about the nastiest thing you can say about somebody. Bush's supporters consider it a

compliment. "Republicans, from Reagan to Bush, admire leaders who are straight-talking men of faith. The Republican leader doesn't have to be book smart," wrote conservative *New York Times* columnist David Brooks a week before the election. "Democrats, on the other hand, are more apt to emphasize ... being knowledgeable and thoughtful. They value leaders who see complexities, who possess the virtues of the well-educated."

It so happens that, in other columns, Brooks has blamed the dearth of conservative professors on ideological discrimination. In fact, the GOP is just being rejected by those who not only prefer their leaders to think complexly but are complex thinkers themselves. There's a problem with this picture, all right, but it doesn't lie with academia.

**On most issues that offer a choice between having more money in your pocket and having something else — a cleaner environment, universal health insurance, etc. — conservatives tend to prefer the money and liberals tend to prefer the something else.**

**Final Reminder:  
Time to renew subscriptions  
and CSS membership for 2004!  
See back page for details.**

# Home Cooking: Feasting on the Fruits of Torture

by Chris Floyd, *Moscow Times*, 12/10/2004

When the devil comes knocking on your front door, looking for a way to spread his evil inside, he won't be sporting horns and a tail. He's going to come dressed as your sweetest dream, clean as a whistle, pious, sincere. He's going to speak your lingo, ape your ways — and when he opens up his little box of poison, it's going to look like the heaven your mama sang about when she rocked you to sleep in your cradle.

Then one day, when the mind-fog lifts, you see him sitting at the head of the table, the walls of the room smeared with filth, dead bodies swelling on the blood-mucked floor, the still-living victims hog-tied and naked, screaming for mercy as the whips strike. He beckons you forward with a welcoming smile. You pause for a moment. It seems so strange: All this horror — it would have once made you sick, but now it just feels like... home. You shrug, you grin, you take your place beside him at the feast.

In just this way, while Americans were finishing their Thanksgiving dinners and preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, a series of stories exposed — once again — the torture chamber at the heart of their feast: a government gone insane, embracing terror, atrocity and tyranny. Yet there was no public outcry against these desecrations. Few even noticed; fewer still cared.

Last week, the minions of George W. Bush announced, in open court, that he has the power to seize anyone on earth — even “little old ladies in Switzerland” — and imprison them forever if he so chooses, *The New York Times* reports. The minions said that anyone Bush declared “an enemy combatant” — even if they never took up arms against America, even if they didn't know their actions were related to terrorism in any way — could be abducted from any nation, friend or foe, or in the Homeland itself, and held indefinitely, “at the president's discretion,” stripped of all rights under the U.S. Constitution or the Geneva Conventions.

Assistant Attorney General Brian Boyle said Bush's captives were entitled only to a single hearing, alone before a military tribunal, without legal counsel or access to the evidence against them — evidence which Boyle cheerfully admitted could be obtained by torture in foreign countries, *The Associated Press* reports. Overturning centuries of Anglo-American jurisprudence, Boyle said there were no restrictions whatsoever on using torture evidence, as long as the president or his military agents arbitrarily decide it is “credible.”

**When the devil comes knocking on your front door, looking for a way to spread his evil inside, he won't be sporting horns and a tail...**

Days earlier, *The Sunday Times* tracked down the “private” planes of CIA front companies that Bush uses to carry victims of his lawless abductions to torture chambers in Jordan, Egypt, Libya and Uzbekistan, where “credible” evidence can be obtained with fists, cattle prods, rape, drugs and starvation. For example, witnesses told of hooded American agents grabbing captives in Sweden, stripping them, jamming drugs up their rectums, putting them in diapers and chains, and bundling them off to Egypt's hellhole prisons — whose tortures have already produced generations of violent extremists.

But outsourcing is only one aspect of Bush's Torture, Incorporated; he has plenty of domestic production as well. Last week, the Pentagon released a report — completed long before the election — confessing that the “aberrations” of Abu Ghraib were in fact part of a broad system of state terror spread throughout Iraq, *The Washington Post* reports. Elite squads of “Special Operations” officers and CIA agents beat and abused prisoners across the country, the Pentagon said, while regular troops committed “technically illegal acts” by rounding up thousands of innocent people at random and holding them for months in crowded prisons, where they were often turned over to those same “elite” squads for “special handling.” Some of this blood-soaked “intelligence” was “sent directly to the White House,” interrogators noted. The report also admitted that American forces had taken innocent people hostage — especially “female family members” — in an effort to pressure wanted men to surrender: a clear war crime, as if such things mattered anymore.

Meanwhile, the International Red Cross revealed that Bush has even perverted the healing professions at his concentration camp in Guantanamo Bay, using doctors and nurses to help “set the conditions for interrogation” by withholding medical treatment and using their diagnostic skills to determine captives' “vulnerabilities” to various physical and psychological torments — “a flagrant violation of medical ethics,” said the Red Cross. Its investigators also found that the Guantanamo regime — “an intentional system of cruel, unusual and degrading treatment, and a form of torture” — was growing worse over time, *Salon.com* reports.

In such a moral sink, it was hardly even news that more photos of prisoner abuse — taken months before the Abu Ghraib atrocities — were uncovered last weekend, *Reuters*

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# Is this American?

## Ongoing Guantanamo torture has nation in denial

by Molly Ivins, *Creators Syndicate*, 12/2/04

AUSTIN — It is both peculiar and chilling to find oneself discussing the problem of American torture. I have considered support of basic human rights and dignity so much a part of our national identity that this feels as strange as though I'd suddenly become Chinese or found Fidel Castro in the refrigerator.

One's first response to the report by the International Red Cross about torture at our prison at Guantanamo is denial. "I don't want to think about it; I don't want to hear about it; we're the good guys, they're the bad guys; shut up. And besides, they attacked us first."

But our country has opposed torture since its founding. One of our founding principles is that cruel and unusual punishment is both illegal and wrong. Every year, our State Department issues a report grading other countries on their support for or violations of human rights.

The first requirement here is that we look at what we are doing — and not blink, not use euphemisms. Despite the Red Cross' polite language, this is not "tantamount to torture." It's torture. It is not "detainee abuse." It's torture. If they were doing it to you, you would know it was torture. It must be hidden away, because it's happening in Cuba or elsewhere abroad.

Yes, it's true, we did sort of know this already. It was clear when the Abu Ghraib scandal broke in Iraq that the infection had come from Guantanamo. The infamous memos by Alberto Gonzales, our next attorney general, and by John Ashcroft's "Justice" Department pretty well laid it out.

In a way, Abu Ghraib, as bizarrely sadistic as it was, is easier to understand than this cold, relentless and apparently endless procedure at Gitmo. At least Abu Ghraib took place in the context of war. At Guantanamo, there is no threat to anyone — Americans are not being killed or hurt there.

The Red Cross report says, "The construction of such a system, whose stated purpose is the production of intelligence, cannot be considered other than an intentional system of cruel, unusual and degrading treatment, and a form of torture."

Our country, the one you and I are responsible for, has imprisoned these "illegal combatants" for three years now. What the hell else do we expect to get out of them? We don't even release their names or say what they're charged with — whether they're Taliban, Al Qaeda or just some farmers who happened to get in the way (in Afghanistan, farmers and soldiers are apt to be the same).

If this hasn't been established in three years, when will it be? How long are they to be subjected to "humiliating acts, solitary confinement, temperature extremes, use of forced positions"?

In the name of Jesus Christ Almighty, why are people representing our government, paid by us, writing filth on the Korans of helpless prisoners? Is this American? Is it Christian? What are our moral values? Where are the clergymen on this? Speak out, speak up.

The creepiest aspect of the Red Cross report is the involvement of doctors and psychiatrists in something called "Biscuit" teams. Get used to that acronym: It stands for Behavioral Science Consultation Team and will end up in the same category of national shame as Wounded Knee. According to The New York Times, Biscuit teams are "composed of psychologists and psychological workers who advise the interrogators." Shades of Dr. Mengele.

An earlier Red Cross report questioned whether "psychological torture" was taking place. I guess that's what you call sleep deprivation and prolonged exposure to extremely loud noises while shackled to a chair. The beatings reported would not be psychological torture. I pass over the apparently abandoned practice of sexual taunting. The Red Cross also reports a far greater incidence of mental illness caused by stress.

If you have neither the imagination nor the empathy to envision yourself in such circumstances, please consider why the senior commanders in the military are so horrified by this. It's very simple. Because, if we do this, if we break international law and the conventions of warfare, then the same thing can be done to American soldiers who are captured abroad. Any country can use exactly the same lame rationale about "enemy combatants" to torture American troops in any kind of conflict. Then we would protest to the Red Cross, of course.

I suppose one could argue that we're fighting people who chop off the heads of their prisoners, so there. Since when have we taken up Abu al-Zarqawi as a role model? In the famous hypothetical example, you might consider torture justified if you had a terrorist who knew where a bomb was planted that was about to go off. But three years later? Some people have got to be held accountable for this, and that would include Congress.

My question is: What are you going to do about this? It's your country, your money, your government. You own it, you run it, you are the board of directors. They are doing this in your name. The people we elect to public office do what you want them to. Perhaps you should get in touch with them.

# Hackery Trumps Science...

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The countries not held hostage by fundamentalism will ultimately overtake the United States. The technological lead the United States once had will vanish. We will become an industrialized nation without industry, a technologically advanced society without technologists.

The future belongs to those who aren't slaves to dogma and are willing to innovate. It belongs to societies where intelligence and hard work are rewarded and excellence is celebrated. Sadly, these qualities are not in great supply in the United States today.

# Home Cooking...

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reports. This time it was "elite" teams of Navy SEALs mugging for the cameras with bloodied captives — some with guns to their heads. Nor did anyone blink when Bush military brass announced plans last week to create forced labor camps for all male citizens in "liberated" Fallujah, the Boston Globe reports.

This Satan's Rout of blood and abandon comes directly from the White House, where Bush's legal counsel, Al Gonzales, engineered memos "justifying" torture and exalting unrestricted presidential power, beyond the reach of any law, foreign or domestic. As a reward for this violent outrage of American honor, Gonzales — sweet-talking, pious and sincere, just like his boss — will soon become the chief law officer of the land.

And the American people, what do they do about all the horror being wrought in their name? They shrug. They grin. They sit down to the feast.

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