

Manitoba Humanist

This is what an atheist looks like.



Dr. Peter Boghossian, philosophy instructor, Portland

Freedom From Religion Foundation

frrf.org

**At our April meeting: "The Reason Whisperer"
Don't miss it!**

Spring into Atheist Activism with Dr. Peter Boghossian

CanadInns Polo Park
1405 St Matthews Ave
Saturday, April 12

Philosophy professor Peter Boghossian is an up-and-coming author and speaker who recently hosted Richard Dawkins at Portland State University. He believes that it's possible to talk people out of faith and into reason, as he explained in his recent book, **A Manual for Creating Atheists**. Now he is proposing a reality TV program, called the **Reason Whisperer**, to demonstrate how his methods work. Dr. Boghossian intends to go into the community and engage a wide variety of people in conversations designed to disabuse them of faith, superstition, and irrationality, and help them embrace reason. His 'interventions' will be recorded and analyzed. Then, post-production, he will guide viewers through a step-by-step breakdown of the techniques he employs. Will this really be effective? Come to the meeting and ask him about it!

Dr. Boghossian will be joining us via the web to speak about the problems of faith in general, but is hoping you will read his book and come with questions. Don't miss this exciting opportunity to chat with this dynamic and ambitious speaker!

Meet and greet starts at 5:30 pm
Announcements and brief meeting at 6:00, followed by dinner (optional).
Guest speaker at 7:00

Published by and
for the Humanists,
Atheists, and
Agnostics of
Manitoba



HAM

www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca

Another Round Table is coming
up! See page 2



The comment cards from the
Multi-faith Panel are finally in!
See page 3



COMING SOON!

All events are subject to change. Some details are TBA. Watch future newsletters, our website, Facebook page, or join us on Meetup for more information as it becomes available.

For meetings held at CanadInns Polo Park, check the digital notice board in the lobby to find our room.

Note that some events are for members only. Memberships are always available at the door at all our events. Membership fees are affordable and are used for community outreach as well as toward our own events and activities. Join us! Get involved! Make new friends!

Contact and membership info is on page 6.

April

Sunday 27th. Round Table Discussion – Defending non-belief: Why we don't believe in gods, Sir William Stephenson Library, 765 Keewatin St, 1:30 – 4:30. Host is Pat Morrow.



Atheist, humanist, nonbeliever or agnostic—however you identify, when the discussion comes around to god, there are the inevitable questions from the religious. Questions like: “So you believe in nothing? So science is your god? But where did it all come from? What happens after you die?”

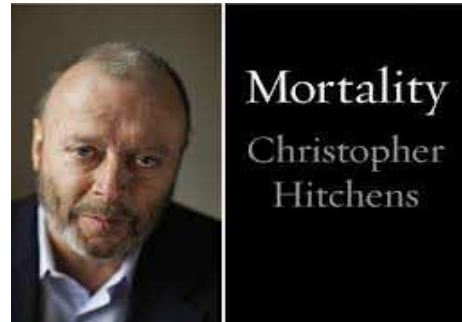
Many of us don't believe in god simply because it makes no sense. Very often we find the religious arguments for our existence confusing and incompatible with reality. Offering clear, well thought out answers to the religious helps us better understand our position as nonbelievers and, we hope, give the religious a moment of pause to re-evaluate what they believe.

At our next round table, we will be discussing these questions and many more in an effort to bring a better understanding of why we don't believe in gods. We will discuss the reasons and arguments for nonbelief, talk about burden of proof, and maybe dip our toes in the pool of

apologetics and counter-apologetics. Members only.

May

Tuesday 13th. Book Club, Cornish Library, 20 West Gate, 6:15 PM.



Our book will be *Mortality* by Christopher Hitchens (the posthumous memoir of his dying days). Hitchens approached his death the same way he approached everything else – with brutal honesty and insight. This book is short (just over 100 pages) and available for free at the Winnipeg Public Library in print, audio, and eBook versions. Note that the Cornish Library is NOT wheelchair accessible. Members only.

Saturday 10th. Monthly meeting, CanadInns Polo Park. 5:30 PM, details TBA – Please save the date!

June

Sunday 1st. Annual Pride Parade, 12 noon at the Legislature.

Thousands of people are expected to join in the annual Pride Parade through downtown Winnipeg to show off their Pride! Watch as floats and groups show off our city's rainbow colors! HAAM is making it a tradition to march as a walking group to show solidarity and support for our LGBTQ community. Everyone is welcome to join us – just wear rainbow colours and show up.



Saturday 21st. Solstice Party and BBQ,
Assiniboine Park, picnic site #3 (on Assiniboine
Park Drive, just west of the zoo near the river;
easiest to access via Roblin Blvd), 5:00 pm.



Bring a food item, chair, blanket, Frisbee, kids, pets... or just bring yourself! Join us to celebrate the end of another wonderful year at HAAM. Non-members and guests welcome; come and go as you please. HAAM will provide hot dogs, hamburgers, buns, and expert BBQ cooks!

RECENT HAPPENINGS

In January, our own Diana Goods participated in a **multi-faith debate** hosted by Ravi Zacharias International Ministries on the subject: What is your greatest hope for the future and what is your greatest fear? (Reported in the February newsletter, archived on the HAAM website). In mid-March, we finally received the comment cards from the audience. Of the 97 who responded, 74 indicated that they were Christians. Nonetheless, a number of people requested information from HAAM, including 5 Christians and one Muslim attendee, so the discussion must have sparked some curiosity. Our outreach coordinator, Pat Morrow, is in the process of contacting them. Well done, Diana!

March was a very busy month. Thousands of people, including many of our members, waited up to 2 hours in line for the rare opportunity to hear astrophysicist and Humanist **Neil deGrasse Tyson** in person at the U of M. His awesome and inspiring talk, entitled The Sky is Not the Limit, was totally worth the wait. General (Retired) Walter Natynczyk, president of the Canadian Space Agency, opened by discussing why Canada needs the space program and why we need to inspire young people to study science. Tyson began his talk with a series of fun factoids about science and astronomy,

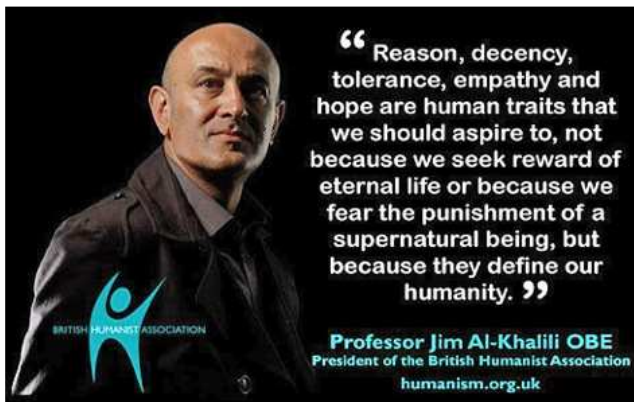
designed to generate interest and awareness of the impact of science on our lives. He then segued to the concerns that society needs to address in the future, such as climate change and potential asteroid collisions. He emphasized the need for more scientists to work to solve our problems rather than focusing on past achievements and worrying about dire predictions. He concluded with an impassioned plea for society to recognize the importance of scientific literacy and to encourage critical thinking in schools.

Our **book clubs** are attracting small groups and generating some interesting discussion (sometimes meandering away from the actual book). The 7 members who came out to discuss A Manual for Creating Atheists in early March will be well prepared to chat with the author at our April meeting. Book Clubs and Round Table discussions are also a good way to get to know each other in a relaxed setting. There is no expectation that you need to be a scholar to attend. Great for newcomers!

GODLESS IN GRUNTHAL

Early in March, HAAM received a request from a high school teacher in Grunthal, MB, to speak to his class on the subject of relativistic morality. Pat Morrow and I, both veterans of outreach in our Bible Belt communities, were more than happy to take this opportunity. So on a cold and windy morning, bolstered equally by Tim Horton's coffee and our own enthusiasm, we headed south.

The class was a grade 11 elective called Modern Life Issues. The teacher had explained in the email request that the students were learning about various ethical systems and had recently received a presentation on objective morality by a Christian presenter. We had concerns about secular morality being referred to as relativistic morality, as we've had plenty of experience talking with religious people who seem to think that without a moral lawgiver, we'd all be living in a dystopian nightmare, where people wouldn't be able to discern the difference between strangling their grandmothers or snuggling their kittens. With this in mind, and knowing that we would likely have to dispel some myths about our Godless belief system, we aimed to present a coherent case for secular morality.



Pat began the presentation with an excellent and concise summary of humanistic thoughts on morality, a brief history lesson to illustrate how moral values have changed over time, and how rather than morality being completely relative to an individual's thoughts and feelings, humanists understand that morality is subject to human values, circumstances and intent. He emphasized that for humanists, morality must measure up to our human values of reason, empathy and compassion.

For my part, I attempted to introduce the students to evaluating why we believe some things are good. I presented the Euthyphro dilemma as an example when discussing the nature of goodness. This dilemma, which conveys the philosophical conundrum of defining goodness as something commanded by the gods, makes the concept of goodness circular and arbitrary. For humanists, we need to look elsewhere to understand it, and given that it is a human concept, it is reasonable to look to human values for this.

As humanists, we value using the scientific method to help us discover the world, and so it is to the knowledge gained from science that we look for understanding of why we humans value what we do. We are biological, sentient, social organisms with needs that can place us in conflict with the others in our group. I see morality as an emergent property of our sentient social selves. Science has helped us to understand the function of traits like empathy, which are useful for our co-existence. It is literally built into us to care. Sociology can help us evaluate what types of societies we get when we value fairness, equity, and compassion.

After our presentation, the students began to ask questions and we had a very fruitful, respectful dialogue. The conversation went so well that the teacher asked us to stay and speak with the Comparative Religion class scheduled

for the next period. For many of these students, it was their first opportunity to knowingly interact with someone outside of their worldview. We tried to answer their questions as honestly and openly as we could, emphasizing that we are not professional philosophers, just ordinary people trying to make sure that we have good reasons for our actions. We may never know the best course of action in any given situation, but as humans equipped with reason, empathy and compassion, we do our best to navigate what it means to live a moral life.

- Diana Goods

ON THE WEB

The Winnipeg Skeptics is a community organisation that aims to promote science and to advance critical thinking with regard to pseudoscientific, supernatural, or paranormal claims. There is some overlap between their membership and ours, because generally, people who think critically about religion think skeptically about other claims as well, and vice versa - but not always!



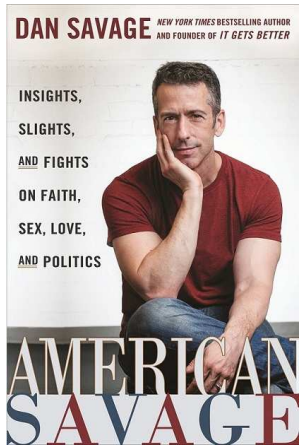
If you would like to expand your horizons, check out their podcast, called Life, the Universe, and Everything Else, which examines the evidence for many of the extraordinary claims commonly circulating in the news and social media. There are over 75 episodes in the archive, exploring a wide range of subjects including climate change, nutritional supplements, creationism, vaccinations, sexism, homeopathy, Frankenfoods (GMO's), psychics, the 'atheist agenda', and just about 'Everything Else'.

<http://luepodcast.wordpress.com/>

IN THE LIBRARY

Did you know? HAAM has a library of almost 200 books and about 15 DVD's, on a variety of topics related to religion, science, and critical thinking. Our librarian, Diana Goods, brings a selection to each monthly meeting for members to borrow. These are some of our newer books. We've had about 30 donated in the last year.

Here is just a sampling:



American Savage - Dan Savage
(interesting insights - he's the guy that started the It Gets Better campaign)

- Disproving Christianity* - David G McAfee
- Dire Predictions* - Michael Mann and Lee Kump (illustrated primer on climate change by prominent scientists)
- In Search of Time* - Dan Falk (history, physics, and philosophy of time)
- Salt, Sugar, Fat* - Michael Moss
- Deconverted: A Journey from Religion to Reason* - Seth Andrews (The Thinking Atheist)
- An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural* - James Randi
- I Am Hutterite* - Mary-Ann Kirby

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

Food Matters Manitoba works on projects helping newcomers, northerners, farmers, and families to grow, share, and prepare good food.

Their goal is to work toward healthy communities, access to nutritious food for all, and an economically viable, diverse, and ecologically sustainable food system.



Food Matters programs span across the province to find long-term solutions from plant to plate, and include working with newcomers on community gardens, assisting families in northern communities to build greenhouses out of recycled trampolines, facilitating cooking classes for youth in Winnipeg's North End, hosting food skill workshops for workplaces, implementing local food into Manitoba institutions, engaging with youth on traditional food skills, and finding solutions to community food needs.

More info at: <http://www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca/>

Donations to our Charity of the Month may be made at the meeting, or by mail or website if you can't make it to the meeting (include a message that the donation is for the Charity of the Month). Tax receipts are available from HAAM for donations of \$10 or more.

PARTNERS FOR LIFE



HAAM is part of the Canadian Blood Services' Partners for Life program. If you donate blood, let the staff know that you wish your donation to count towards the Humanist Association of Manitoba's yearly pledge of just 10 donations. Our ID number is **HUMA008484**.

Call 1 888 2DONATE to make an appointment.

Executive:

Donna Harris, President
Heather McDonell, Vice President
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Cheri Frazer, Secretary

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Scott Burton
Todd De Ryck
Chad Froese
Gloria Froese
Diana Goods – Librarian
Pat Morrow – Outreach
Bob Russell
Dorothy Stephens – Newsletter



Contact us at:

mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com

or Phone 204-612-0601



Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics of Manitoba



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@MBHumanists



Yes, I would like to **BECOME A MEMBER** of Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Province: _____

Postal Code _____

Phone #: _____

Cell #: _____

Email: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$30.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$50.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00

* After July 1st, pay just ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year. After October 31st, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HA²M of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
- Other: _____

Please DO NOT send cash in the mail. Make cheque payable to: **Humanist Association of Manitoba** and mail to: *Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane, Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Memberships are also available by credit card on our website, or by cash or cheque at any HA²M meeting or HA²M event.

March 2014