



AHA Chapter

THE NEWSLETTER OF

# The HUMANIST ASSOCIATION of CONNECTICUT

October 2006



CSH Affiliate

## “Moral Realism”

Non-Humanists often ask how and why Humanists behave ethically if they expect neither rewards nor punishments in an afterlife. While most of us are quick to insist that this is not a real problem, very few of us could clearly explain why we believe we should behave ethically when it may not be in our own interest to do so, or what makes us “do the right thing,” even when it may hurt us and nobody is looking.

The speaker at our regular monthly meeting on October 16 will be David Koepsell, who is Executive Director of the Council for Secular Humanism. David (<http://www.davidkoepsell.com>) has a Ph.D. in Philosophy and a J.D. from SUNY Buffalo, and is therefore someone who has given a lot of thought to the foundations (“meta-ethics”) as well as the practical (normative) implications of secular ethics. He has lectured on three continents on ethics, secular humanism, law and philosophy and has authored numerous articles on law, ethics, philosophy, science and technology. It is our good fortune that he is spending this year at Yale as the Visiting Scholar in the Donaghue Initiative for Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

Critical of much that passes as “Humanist ethics,” David proposes in his talk here to “discuss drawbacks in the major schools of non-theistic normative and meta-ethics and offer an alternative.” The alternative he will offer is one form of “moral realism,” the idea that there are moral “truths” or “facts” that can be known objectively, as the facts of physics and chemistry can be known. Moral realism thus contrasts sharply with the well-known view expressed by David Hume that moral judgments cannot be derived from statements of fact alone. Curiously, the particular brand of

## Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are held at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, CT

### OCTOBER, 2006

Mon., 2	Dinner at Pasta Fair, 262 Boston Post Road, Orange. RSVP at <a href="http://humanism.meetup.com">humanism.meetup.com</a> . (203) 799-9601 for directions.	7:00 p.m.
Sat., 7	ACLU of Connecticut Conference	10 a.m.
Sun. 8	Mohawk Trail hike starting at Bill & Kathy Lyon’s home in Cornwall. Raintdate: 10/15	10:30 a.m.
Sat., 14	Humanist Conversations: “Global Warming”	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 16	Monthly meeting Main program: David Koepsell, “Secular Ethical Alternatives: Moral Realism”	7:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
Sun., 22	“Letting Go of God,” Ars Nova Theater, NYC	11:00 a.m.
Sun., 22	Board meeting	2:30 p.m.
Wed., 25	Dinner at Northern Galapagos, 281 Winsted Rd., Torrington. (860) 795-0030 for directions.	7:00 p.m.

### NOVEMBER, 2006

Sat., 4	Humanist Conversations: TBA	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 6	Dinner at Pasta Fair, 262 Boston Post Road, Orange. RSVP at <a href="http://humanism.meetup.com">humanism.meetup.com</a> . (203) 799-9601 for directions.	7:00 p.m.
Mon., 20	Monthly meeting Main program: Steven Novella, “Weird Science”	7:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
Sun., 26	Board meeting	2:30 p.m.

[WWW.CTHUMANIST.ORG](http://WWW.CTHUMANIST.ORG)

## “Letting Go of God” in NYC Oct. 22

You’re invited to join Dan to attend “Letting Go of God” by Julia Sweeney at the Ars Nova Theater, at 10th Avenue and 54th Street in New York City. Dan will catch the 7:21 a.m. Metro-North train from Waterbury (leaves New Haven at 7:57 a.m.). He’ll return on the 4:07 p.m. train after lunch.

The play is a 2+ hour humorous monologue tracing Julia’s acceptance of Roman Catholicism in her youth to her realization that she is a humanist and freethinker. Tickets are \$22 and there are no reserved seats. The website to purchase general admission tickets is: <http://www.smarttix.com/show.aspx?showcode=JUL3>.

If you would like to attend with Dan, please call him at 203-757-5546.

moral realism he will discuss “is based upon some philosophical work done by members of the Vienna Circle between the wars.” “Curiously,” because philosophy students are likely to learn that most members of the Vienna Circle (ca. 1924-1936) were philosophers of science who had

little or no interest in ethics.

This promises to be an especially stimulating evening, with plenty of opportunity for Q&A as well as for disagreement. We’ll begin at 7:30 with a half hour for conversation and refreshments, and the program will start at 8:00. Be sure not to miss this!

[www.cthumanist.org](http://www.cthumanist.org)

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Please include a SASE to have material returned. We welcome letters, articles, photographs, poetry, comic strips, news items, cartoons and other illustrations related to humanism. Approximate circulation: 120 copies. Annual subscription price \$10.00, included in membership.

The editor would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue.

# Coltsfoot Mountain Hike

Those of you who have picnicked at Bill and Kathy Lyon's may or may not have been aware that they live very close to the Mohawk (hiking) Trail and a beautiful view from Coltsfoot Mountain. We are planning a hike to this spot on Sunday, Oct. 8, after meeting at the Lyons' at 10:30 a.m. Since rain cancels the hike, we have set a rain date of Oct. 15. It takes Bill about twenty minutes to get to this spot, but it involves bushwhacking from their place to the trail, and the hike as a whole involves traversing rough ground, sometimes wet and sometimes steep. So waterproof hiking boots and some hiking experience are a plus. As a rough estimate, plan on a hike of at least three miles altogether. Depending on the abilities and inclinations of group members, we certainly have the option of continuing further on the trail before returning to the Lyons'. If you are interested in joining us, give me, Tom Platt, a call at (203) 787-5686 or e-mail to [thomas.s.platt@snet.net](mailto:thomas.s.platt@snet.net) so I can know who plans to participate and possibly to arrange ride sharing. Bring a light lunch either to eat on the trail or afterwards at the Lyon's. Everyone should pack some water for themselves on the trail. Since the Lyons plan to have some beverages for us at their place upon our return, I suggest that participants also bring a small amount of munchies to share.

Bill and Kathy Lyon live at 120 Dudleytown Road in Cornwall, Connecticut. Follow the link to a map of this location from our website at <http://www.cthumanist.org/directions.html#lyons>

Directions to the Lyons' home from the New Haven area:

Take Route 8 north from either I-95 or the Merritt Parkway. Go through Waterbury and get off at exit 38 (Thomaston). Turn left at the end of the exit ramp. Go a short ways until you see signs for Route 254. Turn left onto 254 and head towards Litchfield. Route 254 ends at Route 118 where you turn left and go about 1/2 mile up a hill. Turn right onto Route 63 before you go through Litchfield center. Stay on 63, pass the Goshen Fairgrounds, and turn left onto Route 4 at the rotary in Goshen. In a few miles you will turn left again at an intersection in order to stay on 4. Watch for a sign for Cornwall Village. You will turn left onto Pine Street (a right would take you onto Route 125). At the end of Pine St. turn left onto Valley Road. Follow Valley Road for 2 miles. Continue on Valley Road past the second street on the left (which is Everest Hill Rd.). Go over a small metal bridge, after which the road forks. Take the right fork onto the correct road which is unmarked and a dead end. Climb a mile up the hill. The road turns to dirt about half way to the top. At the end there's a metal gate, beyond which is a dirt path. The Lyons' driveway is on the right. There is no mailbox, but #120 is painted on the telephone pole.

The Lyons' phone is (860) 672-0550.

## Book Group

Join us Sunday, December 10, 3:30 p.m. at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden. We will read *Inheriting the Holy Land: An American's Search for Hope in the Middle East* by Jennifer Miller.

## Conversations: October 14

Please note: the date of conversations has been changed to October 14 at 2:30 p.m. at 700 Hartford Turnpike. As agreed at our last meeting we will discuss global warming and possible approaches to diminishing the contribution of human activities. We have an excellent introduction to the subject. Please bring your contributions for additional study and discussion!

<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>		Name(s): _____
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i Newsletter Only . . . . .	\$10	Telephone: _____
i In cases of financial hardship, the association may waive the membership fee. Please mail checks for annual membership payable to Humanist Association of Connecticut to: Humanist Association of Connecticut, 27 Thornton Street, Hamden, CT 06517-1321.		E-Mail Address: _____
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