

# Mid Ohio *A*theists

## A Newsletter For Atheists in the Mansfield Ohio Area

Ninth Issue

FEBRUARY 2011

Vol. 1 No. 9

### January Meeting

Our group met at Barnes and Noble again on Sunday the 17th. It was the first regular meeting we had since November.

One item discussed was helping families at the Domestic Violence Shelter. The shelter takes in families who sometimes have no resources due to their circumstances. The shelter needs items mothers and children would need when they are suddenly unable to go back home for anything. We feel this is a very worthwhile cause and something we want to support.

We also discussed getting t-shirts made for our group as an advertisement and also to show who we are when we are having group activities. ♦

**Mid Ohio Atheists Newsletter is published by members of the Mid Ohio Atheists group.**

**Contact us at -  
[info@midohioatheists.org](mailto:info@midohioatheists.org)**

### Reverend Governor

Within one hour of becoming governor of Alabama, Robert Bentley angered many non-Christians by saying- "If you're a Christian and you're saved ... it makes you and me brother and sister," according to a report in the Birmingham News. "Now I will have to say that, if we don't have the same daddy, we're not brothers and sisters," he added. "So anybody here today who has not accepted Jesus Christ as their savior, I'm telling you, you're not my brother and you're not my sister, and I want to be your brother."

Nothing like a little proselytizing to start out your first day as governor.

**Mid Ohio Atheists Newsletter**

### Once Upon a Time in America

By Justin Rosario

Once upon a time, America was THE smartest nation on the planet. We were the most advanced. We invented almost EVERYTHING and the stuff we didn't invent ourselves, we improved on. We were at the cutting edge of science. Or, as Michael "I look like a Muppet" Steele might say, beyond cutting-edge! We invented the internet (and if you still think Al Gore claimed he did, you are a dumbstupid). We put a man on the moon to play freaking golf. GOLF! How awesome were we?!

Now? We're that cranky old man down the street who can never remember your name even though you've mowed his lawn for five years. We still use a rotary phone and drive a Model T compared to the rest of the industrialized world.

You think we're still the smartest people on the planet? We don't even have the potential to be the smartest anymore. We have literally lobotomized ourselves.

And to what do we owe this gift of dumb? Right Wing fundamentalism, both religious and political. No one has taken this quote from Benjamin Franklin as seriously as the powers that be in the conservative movement: "A nation of well informed men who have been taught to know and prize the rights which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins."

They've taken it seriously all right; as a serious threat to their agenda. A well informed populace is hard to lie to. A well informed population is hard to manipulate with propaganda, and hard to convince that economic suicide is a viable platform.

The Right has spent decades slowly eroding the foundations of intellectual America. Where once teachers were

respected and scientists idolized, now they are pariahs. Teachers' Unions are the cause of our failing schools! Educated people are elitists! Intellectuals are Socialists! Scientists are all lying to you about the environment! Except for this small handful of scientists and intellectuals that inexplicably agree with everything we paid them to say, you can trust them.

The first test of real science versus conservative science was cigarettes. Big Tobacco spent billions to confuse the issue and convince people that cigarettes were safe. It didn't matter that every properly run study found exactly the same thing: cigarettes are physically addictive and cause cancer (in addition to a host of other ill side effects). Big Tobacco found a willing ally in conservative politicians (shocking, I know); Congressmen who stood in front of cameras and told the country that the damning science was "junk science" and the attacks on Big Tobacco were politically motivated. I would say they lied but I honestly believe they didn't know the truth and, much more importantly, didn't WANT to know. Big business had come for help fighting regulation and that's all they needed to know. That, and how much in donations they could expect for their re-election fund.

CONTINUED PAGE 2

**We're also on Facebook**

**[www.facebook.com/  
midohioatheists](http://www.facebook.com/midohioatheists)**

### Atheist Quote

"Atheism is nothing more than the noises reasonable people make in the presence of unjustified religious beliefs."

- Sam Harris

**Page 1**

And it worked. For decades. Even as the public's awareness that smoking seemed to be killing their loved ones grew, Congress, carrying water for Big Tobacco, did nothing. Finally, enough incontrovertible evidence surfaced, much of it "borrowed" from Big Tobacco itself, that cigarettes were finally seen for what they really are: a product that will, in all probability, kill you. A dangerous product intentionally pushed onto an unsuspecting public by uncaring corporations. This should have forever put to rest any question as to whether Big Business (and by default, their champions, professional conservatives) has the public's welfare in mind at all. (ou :sɪ jəmsue əʃt) But it didn't.

Environmentalists have been shrieking for years that pollution is damaging the planet. They were labeled "tree hugging hippies". There have been warnings for decades about overfishing. "Alarmists." Disastrous climate change. "Al Gore, the serial exaggerator." That the Ozone layer was eroding. OK, that one had real graphic pictures and was impossible to argue against without looking like an imbecile so they took unusually substantial steps. But the list goes on forever. All opposed by conservatives claiming "junk science". And what did it get us?

Acid rain, dangerously depleted fish stock, melting ice caps and rising sea levels and a giant hole in the Ozone layer that will take centuries to reseal. "Junk science" indeed.

How does religion fit into this scam? Easily. Fundamentalism works best when no one questions the authority and authenticity of scripture. "You will obey MY interpretation of God's word or else!" Science, by its very nature, questions and is, therefore, the enemy.

Mind you, we're not discussing Ultimate Truth here. We're talking about the observable workings of the universe and the history of the Earth. Fundamentalism insists that the Earth is only 6000 years old, Noah's Flood was a historical event and evolution is a liberal lie.

When presented with the choice of believing utter nonsense and being forced

to question the very underpinnings of their faith, all too many reject the real and embrace the fantasy. Fundamentalist leaders count on this. Once you can convince someone of your absolute infallibility, you can tell them to do anything, believe anything and they will because any other course would shred the very fabric of their life.

Many (most) worshippers reject this fallacy and set religion apart from science. The Fat Smug Bastard is one of them and while our conversations about whether or not God exists can be, at times, vicious energetic, we both agree that science is the final authority on pretty much all matters not having to do with the spiritual.

Even the Vatican, a long time proponent of "Shut the hell up, the Earth is the center of the universe!" looks at the United States and wonders how we became so stupid. How embarrassing is THAT?

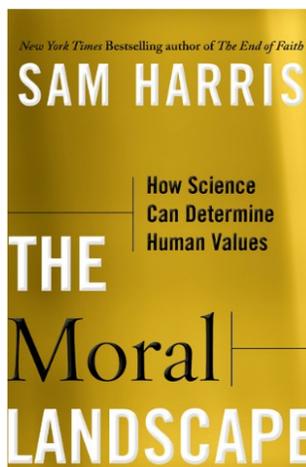
Right Wing politics and Fundamentalist religion made a devil's bargain a long time ago. They would both work to undermine science, thereby rendering the population ever so more open to manipulation and control. This paves the way for unregulated industry (read as: unlimited profit) and for the mixing of temporal power with spiritual (read as: theocracy). Economic conservatism and social conservatism. The two banes of modern America's existence.

This is great news for the rest of world. As we become dumber and dumber and more technologically unsophisticated, we are unintentionally seceding the role of world leader to whoever can claim it first. Someone else will make it to Mars first. Someone else will invent the new, virus free, internet. Someone else will create the first quantum computer. Someone else will perfect nanotechnology. We'll just be their customers. We'll have terrible credit and won't understand the instruction manual.

By Justin Rosario  
www.addictinginfo.org ♦

Sam Harris' new book, [The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values](#) has had mixed reviews from the rationalist community.

In "The Moral Landscape", Sam Harris advances that objective moral values do exist and they can be determined by science. Harris argues that questions about values (meaning, morality and life's larger purpose) are really questions about



the well being of conscious creatures. Values translate into facts that can be scientifically understood.

Harris admits up front that the arguments he

makes in the book will be controversial to some, and he certainly was right.

Many philosophers have taken Harris to task since he does not show how to solve the is-ought problem which was expressed by philosopher David Hume. Simply put, the objection is that just because we know what a situation is, it does not follow what the situation ought to be.

Beyond that, Harris' writing style is excellent as always and the book is certainly thought provoking. His descriptions of his work in neuroscience is well worth the price of the book. ♦

### Atheist Humor

Fifteen thousand atheists in London rotated after a blank sheet of paper was found on a cartoonist's desk. ♦

### February Meeting

This month's meeting will be on Sunday, February 20th, at Barnes and Noble in Ontario. Anyone that is atheist friendly is welcome to attend. ♦