



AHA Chapter

THE NEWSLETTER OF

# The HUMANIST ASSOCIATION of CONNECTICUT

February 2010



CSH Affiliate

## *Far Beyond Darwin's Fondest Dreams*

Since February is Darwin Month, we will once again celebrate the incalculable change wrought by one man in humanity's understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe. Among the many forms of good fortune we Humanists have going for us, perhaps the most precious is our historic commitment to the search for truth, and with it our eager embrace of the most powerful tool we have at our disposal in that search: the results of science. If any further illustration of that power is needed, a recent (December 29) dramatic installment of NOVA on PBS has provided it. Entitled "What Darwin Never Knew," the two-hour program offered a clear presentation for popular audiences of the emerging science of the Evolution of Development, a blend of evolution and embryonic development, also known as "Evo-Devo."

Charles Darwin was able to explain the slow accumulation of differences between parents and their remote offspring, and he was also well aware of the marked changes that occurred in each individual during its development from a single cell. But "Evo-Devo" aims to explain all this, by dissecting out the cellular and molecular mechanisms that control each of the many thousands of cell divisions, starting with that of the fertilized ovum, that eventually create the fully functioning offspring. This effort is made possible by recent progress in genetic analysis due in large measure to the mapping of human and other genomes, coupled with a consequent explosion of epigenetics, the study of those phenotypic effects caused not by changes in the fundamental DNA sequence of the genes, but

## *Calendar of Events*

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are held at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, CT. RSVP for dinners at [meetup.com/cthumanist](http://meetup.com/cthumanist).

### FEBRUARY, 2010

Sat., 6	Humanist Conversations: "Humanism: What For?"	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 15	Monthly meeting	7:30 p.m.
	Main program: David Schafer "Far Beyond Darwin's Fondest Dreams"	8:00 p.m.
Sat., 20	David Schafer presents "The Historical Bible"	3:00 p.m.
Sun., 21	Board meeting	2:30 p.m.
Tue., 23	Hartford-Area social dinner, Michel Angelo's Pizzeria, 825 Cromwell Ave., Rocky Hill. (860) 257-3136	7:00 p.m.

### MARCH, 2010

Mon., 1	Social Dinner at Equinox Diner, 285 Boston Post Rd, Orange. (203) 298-4100	7:00 p.m.
Sat., 6	Humanist Conversations: TBD	2:30 p.m.
Sun., 14	Book discussion: "Letters from the Earth" by Mark Twain	3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Mon., 15	Monthly meeting	7:30 p.m.
	Main program: TBD	8:00 p.m.
Sat., 20	David Schafer presents "The Historical Bible"	3:00 p.m.
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Tue., 23	Hartford-Area social dinner, Michel Angelo's Pizzeria, 825 Cromwell Ave., Rocky Hill. (860) 257-3136	7:00 p.m.

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

by changes in the control of the expression of those genes.

We will meet on Monday, February 15 at 7:30 p.m. at 700 Hartford Turnpike with a half-hour of refreshments and conversation. The formal program will begin at 8:00 p.m. Explaining some of the basic concepts and methods of "Evo-Devo," illustrated by

segments from the NOVA film, I will attempt to give an appreciation of the fabulous promise of this research for our future understanding of the detailed panorama of the molecular machinery underlying evolution, something "Darwin Never Knew." I think you'll find this a genuine eye-opener. Come and bring a friend!

## *Darwin Day Dinner A Real Treat*

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism will be holding their second annual Darwin Day Dinner on Friday, February 12, at 7:00 p.m. at Quattro Pazzi Restaurant, 165 Fillow Street, Norwalk.

The program includes a lecture, "Evolution of the Universe," presented by Charles David Bailyn, the Thomas E. Donnelley Professor of Astronomy & Physics at Yale University.

Tickets cost \$60 and seating is limited. To find out if space is still available, contact the Southern Connecticut Darwin Day Committee by calling John Levin at (646) 371-9280 or emailing him at [jlevin@tfm-llc.com](mailto:jlevin@tfm-llc.com), or Craig Tomarkin at [ctomarkin@aol.com](mailto:ctomarkin@aol.com). You can also visit <http://www.humanisticjews.org/darwin/>.

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

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To join, send an email addressed to [hac-announce-request@cthumanist.org](mailto:hac-announce-request@cthumanist.org) with the subject **subscribe**.

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**Officers**

- President June Schafer  
(203) 281-6232  
[president@cthumanist.org](mailto:president@cthumanist.org)
- Vice-President Douglas Peary
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**Committee Chairs**

- Program David Schafer
- Membership Halina Platt
- Development Manny Ratafia
- Publications Carol Stone
- Publicity June Schafer
- Hospitality Randy Olear

**Newsletter**

- Editor Carol Stone  
(203) 264-8546  
[editor@cthumanist.org](mailto:editor@cthumanist.org)
- Production: Richard Siddall  
(203) 264-2182  
[webmaster@cthumanist.org](mailto:webmaster@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: 180 copies. Annual subscription price \$10.00, included in membership.

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

David Schafer will be presenting: Buddhism (2/14), Zen (2/21), Daoism (2/28), and Confucianism (3/7) at 11:15 a.m. at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden.

## *Conversations: Humanism: What For?*

Science marches on. Are the effects always, without reservation, blessings? The possibilities that the development of a cheap, easy, and wide net test for genes linked to some truly dreadful diseases or syndromes are wonderful or maybe dreadful. We will look at a brief news report and a somewhat more detailed written news story. Then the conversation will follow the inclinations of our participants. Join us Saturday, February 6 at 2:30 p.m. in the library at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden. Refreshments will be served.

## *Sumerian Texts And The Book Of Genesis*

The third in our series of monthly discussions on “The Bible from the Standpoint of Scientific and Historical Analysis” will be held on Saturday, February 20 from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., in the library at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden. Handouts will be available to accompany our studies of: The origins of the science of archeology; the timeline of the Stone, Copper, Bronze, and Iron Ages in Mesopotamia; the timeline of the Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, and Babylonian Empires; an introduction to isotopic dating techniques, beginning with carbon-14 dating; the oldest known cities in the Middle East; and finally, a comparison of early Mesopotamian creation myths with the first and second Biblical creation myths. For those who would like to prepare in advance, readings will be suggested via email and online in a few days.

We cordially welcome everyone interested in this subject to join in these discussions. For further information, please call David Schafer, 203-281-6232.

## *Book Discussion: Mark Twain’s “Letters from the Earth”*

The next HAC book discussion will be on Sunday, March 14, 3 p.m. until 5 p.m. and we will meet at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden. The book we will be reading is “Letters from the Earth” by Mark Twain. Lots of copies are available in Connecticut public libraries, as well as in book stores and online. An unabridged audio book is also available.

For availability information in public libraries around the state, try: [www.iconn.org/FindALibraryInConnecticut.aspx?cat=consortia](http://www.iconn.org/FindALibraryInConnecticut.aspx?cat=consortia).

To purchase the book or read the reviews at Amazon.com, try: [www.amaon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1615341099/humanistassoc-20](http://www.amaon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1615341099/humanistassoc-20)

The book consists of a series of short stories, many of which deal with God and Christianity. The title story consists of letters written by the archangel Satan to archangels, Gabriel and Michael, about his observations on the curious proceedings of earthly life and the nature of man’s religions. Other short stories in the book include a bedtime story about a family of cats Twain wrote for his daughters, and an essay explaining why an anaconda is morally superior to Man.

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 Our membership year is 1/1-12/31.  
 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.

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 \_\_\_\_\_  
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