

## EXPERIMENT

by Cole Porter

Before you leave these portals  
To meet less fortunate mortals,  
There's just one final message  
I would give to you.  
You all have learned reliance  
On the sacred teachings of science,  
So I hope, through life, you never will decline  
In spite of philistine defiance  
To do what all good scientists do.

(Refrain)

**Experiment.**

Make it your motto day and night.

**Experiment**

And it will lead you to the light.  
The apple on the top of the tree

Is never too high to achieve,  
So take an example from Eve,

**Experiment.**

Be curious,  
Though interfering friends may frown.  
Get furious

At each attempt to hold you down.  
If this advice you always employ

The future can offer you infinite joy  
And merriment,

**Experiment**

And you'll see



Cole Porter



## HUMANIST BILLBOARDS



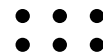
Wouldn't it be great to see this on a U.S. quarter! This image is on a billboard created by the American Humanist Association. The only other thing on the billboard was the website for AHA:

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

Other billboards in the last two years have included statements like:

- "There's Probably No God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." (Great Britian - Atheists).
- "Don't believe in God? You are not alone." (United Coalition of Reason - RBH is a member).
- "Millions are good without God." (AHA)
- "Imagine No Religion" (Freedom From Religion Foundation)
- "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake" (AHA)

Perhaps RBH should have a discussion about putting up a billboard of our own. What statement could we put on it that would best represent a humorous Humanist perspective?



## “PSYCHICS AND FORTUNE TELLERS BEING REGULATED TO REDUCE FRAUD” (?)

While surfing around the various online news feeds for pertinent items of interest, we spotted the article above from Time Magazine. We thought maybe it was a comic turn like one of those fake articles you might read in the online send-up, The Onion. But as we read, we discovered that it was written by Elizabeth Dias on September 3, 2010, and was a “serious” piece of reporting.

Reducing fraud is always a good thing. I stand with them on that. However, in what regulatory way could they possibly reduce the fraud perpetrated by psychics and fortune tellers? I had to read on.

The opening paragraph sets the stage:

“Starting this week, fortune tellers in Warren, Mich., must be fingerprinted and pay an annual fee of \$150 - plus \$10 for a police background check - to practice their *craft*. The new rules are among America’s strictest on palmists, fortune readers and other psychics, part of a growing push to regulate a business that has never been taken, or overseen, very seriously. But officials in Warren, a town of 138,000 near Detroit, say it’s time to *weed out tricksters*. ‘We had no mechanism of enforcement to protect people against unsavory characters,’ Warren city-council member Keith Sadowski says. ‘We want to be sure there is some recourse in case we do get *somebody who is not legitimate*.’”



Observations: a) Let’s correct the word “craft” to read “con.” b) By what criteria could they possibly weed tricksters out of a bunch of palmists, fortune readers and psychics? It seems they are putting their hopes on the new \$150 annual fee rather than the \$10 background check. c) Has there ever a person in this group of thieves who was legitimate? See dictionary: “oxymoron.”

From here on, we’ll let you do your own analysis. We continue to be amazed at the level of superstition that abounds in the countryside. (see more excerpts)

\* \* \* \*

“...Regulating an industry that deems itself *clairvoyant*, has no standard education requirements and yet rakes in cash for revealing *spiritual truths* may itself be an act of faith. It also might make good economic sense: *about 1 in 7 Americans consulted a psychic or fortune teller in 2009, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. That could be 30 million plus...*”



“...Municipalities are struggling to manage their activities. Annapolis, Md., issues what it calls a “fortune-telling license” only if its police force concludes the applicant is ‘of good moral character.’ ...”

“...Last year, Will County, Illinois, decided to count fortune telling as an official business (along with *tattooing and dog watching*)...”

(Holy water? Lourdes, France)

“...Once a year since at least 2005, Nichols, a Warren police officer, told the city council that *he has had to try to persuade a psychic to return jewelry or cash taken from a client in exchange for performing spells or freeing the client from a curse*. But since no regulations barred such acts, criminal charges weren’t an option...”

“...Psychic Gina Marie Marks pleaded guilty Wednesday, Sept. 1, in Florida to grand theft and organized fraud. One of her victims testified that Marks *swindled her out of \$312,926.29 - and persuaded her to get a tattoo, to boot...*”

“...‘We are not, however, persuaded that all fortune telling is fraudulent,’ *Washington, DC Judge Clayton Greene Jr. wrote*...”

“...Some psychics, sensing the way the wind is blowing, are developing codes of ethics *to ensure honest clairvoyance...*”

“...Not all psychics fear tougher government oversight. ‘I think it’s wonderful,’ *Julia Mary Cox, a Michigan psychic said*. ‘There are so many people practicing out there, *doing it under false pretenses, giving honest people a bad name...*’”

“...But she concedes she wishes Warren’s new rules could more clearly separate *true fortune tellers from false seers*. ‘They are not looking at any training,’ she notes. ‘I have a college degree, I have a background in religion and philosophy and English, and I have experience doing this.’...”

(Continued from Page 3)

(Fortune Tellers - Continued from Page 2)

"... 'But given Americans' hunger to know the unknowable - and their willingness to pay for it - it's a safe bet that psychics are going to keep peddling predictions, regulated or not.' ..."

\* \* \* \* \*

This superstitious mumbo jumbo is so engrained in our society that 1 in 7 actually consulted a psychic or fortune teller last year. How many others do you suppose believe this silliness, but just didn't have the guts or the money to visit some tacky little storefront? I think that number would be huge.

Another oddity is the enormous disconnect for religious folks who refuse to recognize the relationship between their supernatural religious beliefs and these other supernatural beliefs.

Perhaps to help eliminate the incredible amount of gullibility in our society, we could lobby for more critical scientific thinking to be taught in schools. The more we point out the value of rational inquiry, the more we are likely to help other people out of the dark ages.



## GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE?

There is a sound scientific explanation for the making of our world—no gods required.

It's in a new book by Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow.

According to Viking mythology, eclipses occur when two wolves, Skoll and Hati, catch the sun or moon. At the onset of an eclipse people would make lots of noise, hoping to scare the wolves away. After some time, people must have noticed that the eclipses ended regardless of whether they ran around banging on pots.

Ignorance of nature's ways led people in ancient times to postulate many myths in an effort to make sense of their world. But eventually, people turned to philosophy, that is, to the use of reason—with a good dose of intuition—to decipher their universe. Today we use reason, mathematics and experimental test—in other words, modern science.

Albert Einstein said, "The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible." He meant that, everything in the universe follows laws without exception.

See the new book, "Why God Did Not Create the Universe" by Stephen Hawking & Leonard Mlodinow.

## DR. PAUL KURTZ TO SPEAK AT RBH HUMANLIGHT

Although the final plans are still materializing, let it be known that the Red Bank Humanists 2010 HumanLight celebration will be held on Saturday, December 18, 2010 in Red Bank, New Jersey (location to be determined) at 3:00 p.m., and will feature Dr. Paul Kurtz as the keynote speaker. Red Bank Humanists will partner with the New Jersey Humanist Network to host this event.

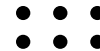
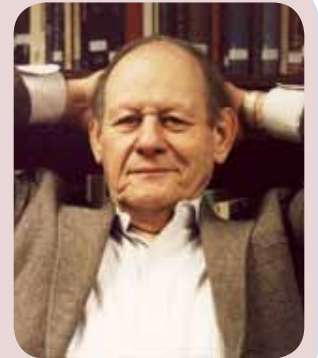
The next day Dr. Kurtz will move on to the Philadelphia area and will give the same presentation at the HumanLight luncheon of the Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia, which will be at the Williamson Restaurant in Horshan, PA at 1:00 P.M.

Dr. Paul Kurtz is Professor of philosophy (retired emeritus) at the State University of New York at Amherst (Buffalo) and founder of the Center for Inquiry Transnational and Prometheus Books. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and humanist laureate and president of the International Academy of Humanism.

Kurtz announced the formation of ISHV (Institute for Science and Human Values) last July after resigning from the board of the Center for Inquiry. He said the new organization will promote a rational reevaluation of morality in order to strengthen the moral framework of Humanism and "develop values that are naturalistic and humanistic in character."

RBH is pleased he will join us for a discussion about HumanLight and his new endeavor.

SAVE THE DATE:  
HUMANLIGHT  
SATURDAY, DEC. 18,  
2010 - 3:00 PM  
RED BANK AREA  
- LOCATION TBA  
- KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
DR. PAUL KURTZ



"Neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him." ~Dwight D. Eisenhower

"If you want to make enemies, try to change something." ~Woodrow Wilson

"I put a dollar in one of those change machines. Nothing changed." ~George Carlin

## ATHIESTS KNOW BEST

"On average, Americans correctly answer 16 of the 32 religious knowledge questions on the survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life. Atheists and agnostics average 20.9 correct answers. Jews and Mormons do about as well, averaging 20.5 and 20.3 correct answers, respectively. Protestants as a whole average 16 correct answers; Catholics as a whole, 14.7."

## IN THE NEWS OR IF YOU ARE SO DISPOSED

(For your convenience, all of these links should now be hot and you should be able to access these sites.)

1. RBH gets a shout out in Rutgers University Paper.  
<http://www.dailytargum.com/university/speakers-advocate-for-humanist-movement-1.2329318>

2. John Stewart and Stephen Colbert are having their marches on Washington at the end of October.  
<http://www.rallytorestoresanity.com/>  
<http://www.keepfearalive.com/>

2A. Well, AHA is hosting a gathering the night before, and then gathering together on day of the rally and marching over to the rally.

Come join the American Humanist Association in advance of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert's October 30 Rally to Restore Sanity and March to Keep Fear Alive! If you are standing up for reasonableness and rationality, or annoyed at the drone of Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin followers, or if you just want to meet other people looking to bask in the sardonic glory of Jon and Stephen, then come join AHA for an evening of fun the night beforehand (read: "adult beverages" and snacks!). The next morning bright and early meet up at AHA to head toward the rally together. And please, leave your "These colors don't run" pieces of flair at home.  
[www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org)

3. AHA Humanist Convention in Boston, April 7-10.  
[http://www.americanhumanist.org/What\\_We\\_Do/Annual\\_Conference](http://www.americanhumanist.org/What_We_Do/Annual_Conference)

4. Secular Coalition 2011 Policy Summit - May 19-22, 2011.  
<http://www.secular.org/2011-summit-save-date>

A woman went to a fortune-teller and said:  
"I don't know which of my 2 suitors I should marry! Who's the lucky one?" The fortune-teller said: "One will marry you. The other, will be the lucky one."

## TAKE NOTE: THE BOOK CLUB IS ON A DIFFERENT DATE

We meet on the 1st Thursday of every month at a member's house, alternating between fiction and non-fiction, EXCEPT FOR THE NEXT MEETING which will be held on the 2nd Thursday. All RBH members are welcome.

Our next fiction book will be The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by that great humanist Mark Twain. **The meeting will now be held on October 14.**

"... Commonly recognized as one of the Great American Novels, the work is among the first in major American literature to be written in the vernacular, characterized by local color regionalism. It is told in the first person by Huckleberry "Huck" Finn. The book is noted for its colorful description of people and places along the Mississippi River. Satirizing a Southern antebellum society that was already out of date by the time the work was published, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is an often scathing look at entrenched attitudes, particularly racism. The drifting journey of Huck and his friend Jim, a runaway slave, down the Mississippi River on their raft may be one of the most enduring images of escape and freedom in all of American literature."

**Next month** the Book Club will return to its regular date, the 1st Thursday of the month, Thursday, November 4, 2010. The Book will be "Collapse" by Jared Diamond.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ **Next Forum - Sunday, October 10, 2010 - 10:30 a.m.** Red Bank Charter School, 58 Oakland St. Topic: "The Pursuit and Paradoxes of Happiness" - Presented by Dick Lester
- ◆ **Humanist Salon - Saturday, October 23 6:30 pm to 10:30 pm - Woman's Club of Red Bank**

## RED BANK HUMANISTS

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