

# Darwin at 200, Human Nature at a Few Million, and a Myth Dispelled

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This talk first reviews some of the least known but important elements of Charles Darwin's portfolio as he published *Origin of Species* in 1859, and *Descent of Man* in 1871. (For example, Darwin was, fortunately for us, very prone to sea sickness.) Focusing on the evolution of humanity and on natural selection's counterpart, sexual selection, Darwin's 1871 book re-fueled a firestorm, one that still burns today. Polls show that a significant proportion of today's population does not accept Darwinism as applied to humans. Darwin foresaw and actually embraced this resistance. More importantly, a significant proportion of adults, including academics, accept human evolution but eschew the idea of a DNA-supported (i.e., not genetically determined) "human nature."

Dr. McBride will touch on interesting examples of evolved human nature, including pregnancy sickness and male preference for mates with certain waist/hip ratios. With these, we will examine the way in which the realities of bipedalism and increased brain size explain birth-related injury, and how this consideration undermines one of the most troublesome socio-legal myths of our time: the myth of shaken baby syndrome.

Dennis K. McBride, Ph.D. is Academic President of the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, a Washington area think tank dedicated to the provision of science and technology policy expertise to the administration, congress, and

the judiciary. Members of the Institute remain actively engaged in the scientific disciplines for which they provide expertise. McBride is an evolutionary psychologist with an extensive background in the science of human evolution. His most recent book, *Quantifying Human Information Processing* (Rowman & Littlefield) is followed by a soon to be released, co-authored treatment of *Best Available Science*. As an active adjunct faculty member at Georgetown University's medical school and Public Policy Institute, he has also held appointments as professor in colleges of engineering and arts and sciences.

Saturday, Feb 14, 2009

1:30 pm

National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Blvd, Room 110  
Arlington, VA 22230  
(Ballston Metro stop)

Enter NSF from the corner of 9th N & N Stuart Streets.  
[www.nsf.gov/about/visit/](http://www.nsf.gov/about/visit/)

FREE admission – Everyone welcome,  
members and non-members

For more information, call the 24-hour NCAS  
Skeptic Line recording at 301-587-3827.  
[ncas@ncas.org](mailto:ncas@ncas.org)  
[www.ncas.org](http://www.ncas.org)



National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series  
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## Skeptics to Converge on Bethesda!

NCAS members are encouraged to attend the Center for Inquiry's 12th World Congress, "Science, Public Policy, and the Planetary Community," which will be held at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda, April 9-12, 2009. Speakers will include James Randi, Joe Nickell, Paul Kurtz, Christopher Hitchens, Elizabeth Loftus, and others. Visit CFI's website, <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/worldcongress/>, for more information. ☞

## Special Event for NCAS Members

Join with skeptics from around the world, famous and non-famous alike, when NCAS honors the father of organized skepticism. NCAS will bestow its 2009 Philip J. Klass Award on Paul Kurtz, founder and chairman of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry and Prometheus Books, at the start of the CFI Friday luncheon (11:30 AM, April 10) at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda, located at 7400 Wisconsin Avenue, directly above the Bethesda Metro station. Admission for NCAS members is free (or \$35 to include lunch). NCAS members ordering lunch should register at the CFI website above, or by calling 1-800-458-1366. All other NCAS members planning to attend should RSVP at [ncas@ncas.org](mailto:ncas@ncas.org), or by leaving your name and contact information at 301-587-3827. ☞

## February's Drinking Sceptically Event!

On Wednesday, February 11, come to Jackie's Restaurant at 8081 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring at 7:00 p.m. to join fellow NCASers for the next DC-area *Drinking Sceptically* event. *Drinking Sceptically* is an

informal social event designed to promote fellowship and networking among skeptics, critical-thinkers, and like-minded individuals.

Don't drink? Don't let that stop you from joining us! Some of the world's most famous skeptics are teetotalers, and we are happy to have you!

[ncas.org/ds-ncas.html](http://ncas.org/ds-ncas.html)

[www.jackiesrestaurant.com](http://www.jackiesrestaurant.com)

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



There's no cover charge, and if you order from their very reasonably-priced menu, you'll be delighted. (The most recent *Washingtonian* magazine rated Jackie's #78 of all DC-area restaurants in 2009.)

Remember that drinking sceptically means drinking responsibly. If there's one thing science has taught us, it's the effects of alcohol on the human body. ☞

## NCAS Video on YouTube.com

NCAS has created an NCAS Channel on *YouTube.com*. Our first upload there is a 5-part video of the November 8, 2008 NCAS program at the National Science Foundation, "Autism and Vaccines: How Bad Science Confuses the Press & Harms the Public," by Steven Salzberg, Ph.D., of the University of Maryland. Other past and future NCAS programs will soon be posted. Check it out at [YouTube.com/NCASVideo](http://YouTube.com/NCASVideo). There you can also "Subscribe" to receive email notices whenever new NCAS videos are posted. ☞