



NEW SERVICE LOCATION(S) IN 2011 !!

BEGINNING THIS MONTH, March 6th, 2011, the NTCOF's monthly first-Sunday services will be held at the Sheraton Grand Hotel at 4440 W John Carpenter Freeway located right across Highway 114 from the Wyndham (where we had been meeting). NO CHANGE in the time at 10:30 AM and encouragement to come early for coffee and conversation and join us afterwards at the Golden Corral on East Grapevine Mills Circle near Grapevine Mills Mall. For May and September 2011 only services will be held at the Westin Hotel back on the other side of the freeway on the northwest corner of Esters Boulevard and 114. (Same time)

FREE SOCIETY REQUIRES FREE MINDS

The Austrian-British philosopher Karl Popper popularized the idea of "The Open Society," a form of social organization that allowed for nonviolent and noncoercive change and reform. Such a society is not obsessed with achieving utopia but is content to make continual improvements since, as with a house that people must live in, it is folly to tear it down completely to make way for the perfect structure instead of making repairs and additions that allow its continued occupancy while the work goes on. In this the open society is open to change, open to the future, and, most of all, open to new and innovative thinking that must stand on and succeed or fail on its own merits.

In arguing for the open society Popper had occasion to discuss many philosophical issues, which is to say, issues relating to how we consider and hold ideas. One of the most important of these is that of terminology and what significance is laid on terms, about which Popper had this to say:

"Methodological essentialism, i.e. the theory that it is the aim of science to reveal essences and to describe them by means of definitions, can be better understood when contrasted with its opposite, methodological nominalism. Instead of aiming at finding out what a thing really is, and at defining its true nature, methodological nominalism aims at describing how a thing behaves in various circumstances, and especially, whether there are any regularities in its behaviour. In other words, methodological nominalism sees the aim of science in the description of the things and events of our experience, and in an 'explanation' of these events, i.e. their description with the help of universal laws. And it sees in our language, and especially in those of its rules which distinguish properly constructed sentences and inferences from a mere heap of words, the great instrument of scientific description; words

it considers as subsidiary tools for this task, and not as names of essences. ... And to those philosophers who tell him that before having answered the 'what is' question he cannot hope to give exact answers to any of the 'how' questions, he will reply, if at all, by pointing out that he much prefers the modest degree of exactness which he can achieve by his methods to the pretentious muddle which they have achieved by theirs. ... methodological nominalism is nowadays fairly generally accepted in the natural sciences. The problems of the social sciences, on the other hand, are still for the most part treated by essentialist methods. ... But many who have noticed this situation judge it differently. They believe that the difference in method is necessary, and that it reflects an 'essential' difference between the 'natures' of these two fields of research." [Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol I [1943] 5th Edition, Princeton University Press, 1966, page 32-33]

This idea is consistent with NTCOF's use of the (for some atheists) dreaded "C-Word." For terms are tools. They are used as labels for various purposes. It is well to know what those purposes generally are or resemble but these should not be considered dogma or even worth quibbling about. What is important is to have it understood what we mean by a term in a particular context so as not to be misunderstood. After all, for example, there is not the potential for misunderstanding of the idea of "atheist church" that there is, for example, with the idea of "Jewish Mosque." Again, Karl Popper: "I believe that nothing depends on words, and everything upon our practical demands or upon the proposals for framing our policy which we decide to adopt."

The open society is open to the future because it is open to new ideas. And new ideas depend on

freedom of thought and expression. Popper speculated that this may have begun when closed societies began breaking down as they came into contact with one another:

“[Philosophy] is an attempt to replace the lost magical faith by a rational faith; it modifies the tradition of passing on a theory or a myth by founding a new tradition – the tradition of challenging theories and myths and of critically discussing them. ... The earliest philosophers ... were the representatives as well as the unconscious antagonists of a social revolution. The very fact that they founded schools or sects or orders, i.e. new social institutions or rather concrete groups with a common life and common functions, and modelled largely after those of an idealized tribe, proves that they were reformers in the social field, and therefore, that they were reacting to certain social needs.”

Popper is best known for his “principle of falsification” which is an indispensable feature of critical thinking and reason. What is the point of doubt and questioning, after all, unless one may discover errors and discard them? And what, furthermore, is the point of thinking unless it is possible, even if only in principle, to discover error? As Popper put it:

“In the empirical sciences, which alone can furnish us with information about the world we live in, proofs do not occur, if we mean by ‘proof’ an argument which establishes once and for all the truth of a theory. (What may occur, however, are refutations of scientific theories.) On the other hand, pure mathematics and logic, which permit of proofs, give us no information about the world, but only develop the means of describing it. Thus we could say: ‘In so far as scientific statements refer to the world of experience, they must be refutable; and in so far as they are irrefutable, they do not refer to the world of experience.’ But although proof does not play any part in the empirical sciences, argument still does; indeed, its part is at least as important as that played by observation and experiment.”

**COMING NEXT MONTH:
“SOMETHING FUNNY”
and more! APRIL 3, 2011 !!
AT THE SHERATON GRAND HOTEL AT
114 AND ESTERS**

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE
NTCOF ARE NEEDED, APPRECIATED,
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar (yes, website needs and will get an update!), or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at:
- www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP to get email updates too!

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Sheraton, cross over the freeway and make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going west. Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

Freethought Salon: Get together to discuss today’s service topic or other conundrums of interest to Freethinkers. Second Sunday monthly, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine this month; see the meetup site!

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

Secular Singles: Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

**We exist for the sake of one another.
Teach them then or bear with them.**
- Marcus Aurelius



DFWCOR

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

Presenter: Tim Gorski
Music (usually) by: “Faithless Companions”
Jay Purrington, Ed McGuire,
Cathy & Kevin Smith and Scott Williams
Welcome Coordinator: Mark Barnick
Equipment Wrangler: John Hendricks
Videographer: John Gauthier
Minister: Dr. Tim Gorski

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