



# Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

Volume 18, Issue 1  
[www.hellskitchen.org/gdt](http://www.hellskitchen.org/gdt)



Member of  
Hell's Kitchen  
[www.hellskitchen.org](http://www.hellskitchen.org)

## GDT versus Ayn Rand: Atlas Whines

*The first portion of this article is a submission we received from the Ayn Rand Institute. The second is our reaction.*

---

Subject: Arizona State University  
Lynching Shakespeare

THE AYN RAND INSTITUTE  
4640 Admiralty Way, Suite 406 Marina  
del Rey, CA 90292  
November 10, 2000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY LYNCHING  
SHAKESPEARE

MARINA DEL REY, CALIF.—An Arizona jury will soon decide the fate of theatre professor Jared Sakren, who Arizona State University fired for teaching Shakespeare and other classical drama and ignoring the multicultural and feminist canon. The Sakren case reveals the loathsome essence of multiculturalism, said an Ayn Rand Institute resident fellow.

"Superficially one might think that with their proclamations of 'diversity,' the multiculturalists would welcome all viewpoints, including Sakren's," said Dr. Onkar Ghatge. "But to think this is to misunderstand the evil that is multiculturalism. At root, this philo-

sophical movement wants to smash values as such."

Ghatge noted that the motive behind the multiculturalists' egalitarianism—the perverse idea that African tribalism is equal to Western civilization, that superstition is as good as science, that "ethnic" writers are on par with Shakespeare—is actually not to elevate the non-Western, the superstitious, the tribal, but to destroy students' capacity to value. "In championing writers who can't even compose grammatical sentences as 'deserving' equal study with Shakespeare—and now as 'deserving' to replace Shakespeare in the curriculum—the multiculturalists are trying to show students that values don't exist," said Ghatge. "The multiculturalists champion such writers over Shakespeare precisely because their writing is trash. In elevating trash above Shakespeare in the curriculum, they are teaching students that there are no rational standards for identifying good and bad literature—and, fundamentally, that there are no rational standards at all."

Ghatge said that instead of denouncing and dismissing professors like Sakren for being "sexist" and "racist," we should applaud and encourage these iconoclasts for doing something fewer and fewer pro-

fessors have the courage to do: to teach and demonstrate that rational values exist.

Ayn Rand Institute resident fellow Onkar Ghatе is available for interviews.

---

## Response to the Ayn Rand Institute

by Mookie Harrington

The original topic didn't really interest me, but based on some of the comments Ayn Rand Fellow Dr. Onkar Ghatе had, I decided to look into the matter for myself.

A quick web search turned up that this case isn't very new. In fact, widespread reports of Sakren's firing (tenure denied) were available by mid-October 1998. (That's over two years ago).

Many web articles contained phone interviews with Sakren, defenses of his character by former students (including semi-famous actors and actresses like Willow's Val Kilmer), and general, aimless outrage. In this case, Sakren's strong resume would seem to speak for itself.

However, I did notice an intriguing lack of articles that investigated the side from the ASU's department's standpoint. People seem to assume that those in academia just naturally act irrationally. As the old joke goes: "Why are departmental politics so bloodthirsty? Because the stakes are so low."

Finally, I was able to locate a Kansas City Star article written Sunday November 1, 1998 by theater critic Robert Trussell. (You can view a copy of that article at <http://omega.cohums.ohio-state.edu/hyper-lists/classics-1/98-12-01/0111.html>)

Here, Sakren's former Department Chair, Ms. Bonnie Eckard responds to the case allegations. Arizona State University asserts, among things, that they do teach several courses on Shakespeare and produces a yearly Shakespearean play. Also interesting is that the widely reported Eco-feminist play, *Betty the Yeti*, has never been performed at ASU.

Now, I did not feel compelled to write this response because I feel qualified to judge either side as

Founded in 1985, the Ayn Rand Institute promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. Visit the Institute's Web site at [www.ayn-rand.org](http://www.ayn-rand.org).

---

right or wrong. There does appear to be some persuading evidence that a prevailing Feminist feeling in the Theater Department challenged Sakren's programs. However, I believe that since much of the information about this case has been distributed one-sidedly through the Internet, it's considerably difficult to truly judge this matter fairly. Instead, an Arizona jury will examine the case in full and render a decision hopefully that is just and appropriate.

My beef is not with the case itself. Rather, I wish to contend some of Dr. Onkar Ghatе. Under the pretense of discussing the ASU case, Ghatе launched into an unrelated assault on African literature. He must view this field as a prime example of "the evil that is multiculturalism." (first paragraph from release).

Who is Onkar Ghatе? Well, he received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Calgary in 1998 while specializing in epistemology (the theory of knowledge).

While Ghatе might be well learned in the fields of education, epistemology, and philosophy, it does not appear he is an expert in History, Anthropology, English or half a dozen other fields. (Women's, African-American, and multicultural programs come to mind immediately.)

Dr. Ghatе challenges the "perverse" idea that African ideas (he calls it, "African tribalism") could EVER be as good as western civilization. I don't mean to be blunt, but how exactly does exposing students to African literature amount to garbage?

I find Ghatе's use of the word "ethnic" humorous. Is he implying that only writers who are not of any race, creed, gender are talented? I would love to these heritage-stricken poets. God forbid people would use their own experiences in their native lands in their writing. We should applaud Ghatе for reminding us that true intelligence is blindly conforming to American thought, style, and form. Furthermore, we

should make sure these writers don't even try.

From this brief piece, Ghate's assumption of Western superiority borderlines on racist and irrational. Ghate reminds us that it's time for the civilizing mission of Western philosophy to bestow their sacred knowledge and faith upon the "superstitious, the tribal" of Africa. Written about 150 years ago, these same words were used by European colonial settlers and slaver.

Celebrated books such as *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe, *The Joys of Motherhood* by Emecheta, Simbene's *God's Bits of Wood*, and Ngugi wa Thiong's *Devil on the Cross* are meaningless to Ghate. (I have cited books, while perhaps he was attacking plays. Still, they both fall under the title of literature.)

"In championing writers who can't even compose grammatical sentences..."

Ignoring the fact that many of these works have been translated from their original languages (!), Ghate attacks the content and morality of these works.

He fails however, to address the 400 years of exploitation and imperialism by Western powers. Using phrases like "White Man's burden" and "Civilizing Mission", people have justified creating a system which took more than simply the immediate human toll of slavery. Through economics imperialism from 1807–1950s, Africa was allowed to function as a "protected markets" under Western control. The development of transportation, communication, and education systems was denied and hindered intentionally by European powers. This ensured that Africa would be available as a market for exploitation (first as slaves, next for raw materials, now with cash crops). There has been no industrial revolution in Africa because there has been no influx of capital to allow for

one. Manufactured products are created abroad and then shipped in to ensure dependence on foreign trade. Foreign Marketing boards have kept food prices low, while political leaders use Famine as tool to control people.

Why do I stress all this? Because it is important to see that:

a) the superiority of Western Culture is a myth and a lie. History books would have African people portrayed as sitting back and allowing Europeans to enter, as if history was something being done to them, not something they have actively participated in.

b) the exposure of new concepts is not the same as blind faith in them. Students have always been allowed to register their own opinions on what they study and read. Yet, Ghate assumes that literature can be arbitrarily deemed "Good and bad" and that to "champion such writers" ("ethnic writers") is akin to "elevating trash above Shakespeare in the curriculum."

Rational values exist and are very, very important. I believe I understand the point that Ghate is attempting to make, but does it not sound like he is inferring that being "sexist" and "racist" implies being rational? Now, that sounds a bit farfetched.

I believe that Sakren was quite possibly fired for political reasons by a department that did not truly support Classics like Shakespeare. However, I feel that Ghate's comments on multiculturalism reflect a misunderstanding and rejection of things that are not of "Western Civilization". He implies that all those who are not in the West are neither civilized nor part of science in an earlier comment: "embracing superstition over science." Such a myopic viewpoint sounds strikingly similar to those written by Colonial imperialists.

Perhaps I have exaggerated, but I his comments were bold enough to invoke such a response—one longer than the original article I was criticizing.

# SUBMIT.

[gdt@hellskitchen.org](mailto:gdt@hellskitchen.org)

### SUB-MISSION: Bible Belt Beelzebub

by Gary Sloan

How fares free speech in America, you ask? I've done a protracted test of sorts, and the results are—well, let's say enigmatic. Maybe you can make sense of it all. As Shakespeare might say, I'm lost in it.

For thousands of readers in north Louisiana, I am "that atheist fellow from Ruston," a small town on I-20, not far from Mississippi. For ten years, I've written anti-religious letters and columns to the two largest newspapers in the northern half of the state. The letters have elicited about 400 written responses, most published.

I decided to defend nontheism because no one else was doing so, even though both papers had long been saturated with pro-Christian letters and features.

My comeuppance followed hard upon my first letter and has, through the unabated responses to subsequent letters, continued ever since. Bible Belt readers, I now realize, neither suffer a fool gladly nor hesitate to call a fool a fool.

I am often advised to read Psalms 14:1 ("The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'"). In the responses, the ad hominem retort has flourished like a perennial weed. I have been christened with such unendearing epithets as Satan, anti-Christ, Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Mao, Mussolini, Attila the Hun, Madelyn O'Hara (sic) and William Buckley, Jr. (because of my putative predilection for sesquipedalian diction). I have also been nicknamed after diminutive species: mouse, minnow, housefly, spider, ant, flea.

I am rebuked both for being an intellectual and a pseudo-intellectual, and I don't know which is worse: "Sloan may be an intellectual, but he's also a gibbering idiot

and a bubble and a half off." "Mr. Sloan is highly intellectual—that is, he speculates about things he doesn't know anything about." "Sloan ought to consider it is no coincidence that intellect and ignorant begin with the same letter."

My bogus intellect frequently elicits exhibitions of wit: "I was no *magna* nor *summa cum laude*, but simply a grateful 'thank you laude' when I graduated." "Sloan thinks Jesus is a liar, a bum, a beggar, and thief. In his vast wisdom, he has confused Jesus with Bill Clinton." "Professor Sloan has a BDIP degree (bombastic, doctrinaire, intolerant, and predictable)."

One reader sent me a clipping of his response to one of my letters. A dime and a note were attached. The note read: "Send a copy to a friend—if you can find one." Offhand, I couldn't think of one.

Eleven professors signed a letter assuring parents not all faculty members shared my views: "If you or your children enroll at this university, you will meet faculty who have Dr. Sloan's perspective. But you'll also meet many faculty who are committed to Christ."

An editorial page editor refused to print my responses to criticism of me, though he printed critics' responses to my criticism. When I publicly pointed out the double standard, he wrote a column defending himself: "Sloan is right, you know. His turning upon those who criticized his deep emotional aversion to worship was prevented. It just seemed too, too sadistic on my part to do otherwise. I think of the Bible Belt as people who are proud to give their allegiance to a higher spiritual power rather than follow the unwashed rudiments of man."

Some respondents try to strong-arm editors. A professor of economics spearheaded a movement to have my letters squelched: "Sloan's letters are the moral equivalent of yelling 'fire' in a crowded theater. It is time to suspend



publication of Sloan's clever but ill-intentioned letters. They pump up his ego at considerable expense to the public good." A guy named Bubba wrote: "If you share Sloan's beliefs and that is the reason for your continued support, then you can cancel my subscription. I'll pass this along to all my buddies, and you'll probably hear from them also."

Respondents assure readers my foot will slide in due time: "While I will pray for Sloan, I pray not to see him in the end, because I don't plan to go where he's heading." Some display a Dantesque dash: "It looks like Sloan is going for the whole enchilada—death, followed by the White Throne judgment, humiliation, condemnation, then thrown into the bottomless pit by an archangel with an attitude, to swim around in a burning fire with his master, the devil for eternity."

Some think I'm still salvageable: "God has shown me that you, sir, will in time accept Jesus as your savior, and you will stop disgracing Him." One woman was grandiose: "Mr. Sloan, you are like Saul. I believe God is going to use you the way he did Saul. I just can't wait to see you proclaiming the gospel of Jesus." On my answering machine, a Pentecostal woman left a message in tongues. After the last indecipherable word, she emitted a long, satisfied exhalation.

---

## Cult Corner

by Sean T. Hammond

Instead of wasting time, let's throw another witch on the fire and get started (nothing quite so festive as a flaming, screaming innocent). I've all sorts of goodies I want to talk about, but I need to introduce a general movement, called Gnosticism, first.

Gnosticism, from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*, wasn't a single religious movement. Instead, the various flavors of Gnosticism, which flourished from the time immediately after the death of Jesus (you know: that Jew that was nailed to a tree) through the middle ages, were essentially a fusion of Greek philosophy, Asian and Middle Eastern mysticism, and alternate interpretations of Judeo-Christian texts. Prior to 1945, most of what was known about the Gnostic groups came from the writings of heresy hunters such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius...the Three Stooges of the Church; what a bunch of wacky guys they were.

In December 1945, a number of Gnostic texts were found buried in the sand near the village of Nag Hammadi in Egypt by a local peasant. Why the 52 recovered books were hidden remains unknown, but they have shed light,

Some commiserate with me: "Gary, I often wonder who let you down. Was it your mother, your wife, a friend? What filled you with such hate for all that is sacred and true?"

Several churches have made me their project: "Gary, next Sunday at 10 a.m. we will be praying that the Holy Spirit will reach out to Gary Sloan and that he will receive a sign by Wednesday, June 14th, at 6 p.m." If the sign appeared, I missed it. A large Baptist church (Six Flags Over Jesus, one wag called it) blazoned a pithy homily on a marquee that faces a thoroughfare: "GARY, GOD IS REAL, AND HE LOVES YOU DEARLY." No one from the church dropped by, wrote, or called.

I've received two published letters of support. The first was from one of my wife's undergraduates: "Hurrah for Gary Sloan! I hope he runs for President!" The effervescent student was, I surmised, bucking for an A. The other kudos was from a devout Christian: "Gary, with every letter you write, you bring people closer to Christ. Keep up the good work."

After I had written my first letter, a colleague said he figured I had a death wish or had gone off my rocker. He may be right on both counts. Come to think of it, maybe all this has nothing to do with the First Amendment. As I said, I'll let you decide.

---

one might even say that they have provided gnosis, on the general beliefs of Gnostic groups.

All Gnostic groups stressed the inward quest for knowledge, rejecting Church organizations and treating the scriptures as useful, but not the ultimate truth. This led to Gnostic Christians considering themselves as an elite within the Christian ranks. Despite the spread of Gnostic texts, some attributed to and written by women, gnosis was a personal experience and could not be learned from books. Irenaeus claimed the Gnostic Christians quoted 1 Corinthians 2:6–8 to support their pursuit of gnosis:

And yet I do speak words of wisdom to those who are ripe for it, not a wisdom belonging to this passing age, nor to any of its governing powers, which are declining to their end; I speak God's hidden wisdom, his secret purpose framed from the very beginning to bring us to our full glory.

Humanity, in the eyes of the Gnostics, was divided into three classes: the spiritually advanced pneumatics, the less aware psychics, and the totally materialistic somatics...sometimes called hylics (Greek for "sleepers" and "wooden" respectively). While some groups felt that only some humans had souls that yearned to reunite with God, most felt that each human carried a spark of divinity.

Where Mediaeval European Christians viewed the world as a conflict between good and evil, embodied as a struggle between God and the devil, Gnostics envisioned a conflict between an unknowable, distant God, and a lesser God which rules the world. This lesser God, sometimes called the *Demiurge* (Greek for “public craftsman.” The philosopher Plato first used this term to describe the maker of the material world in the fourth century BC) was identified with the angry, law giving God of the Old Testament.

Within Gnostic traditions, Jesus became the emissary from the true God, showing the way through which they could free themselves from the Demiurge’s control and rejoin the divine; Jesus for the Gnostics was a guide, not a judge. Starting with this view, the Gnostic traditions began to butt heads with the Church Fathers. In time, the tradition of docetism arose. Docetism said that Jesus, being sent by the true God, could not have been forced to suffer at the hands of the Demiurge. Instead, Jesus’s death was an illusion created by his divine power.

At the time docetism was growing in popularity among the Gnostic Christians, the Christians as a group were under increasing pressure from persecution. During the 200s, failure to acknowledge the Roman Gods was considered treasonous within the Roman Empire, and was, of course, punishable by death. The willingness to accept martyrdom was rightly seen by Christian leaders (and later by Kierkegaard) as a unifying principle, and transformed it into a spiritual act. With the Gnostics running around saying the Jesus didn’t really martyr himself, and that martyrdom was actually kinda dumb, the Gnostics were undermining the Christian community.

Eventually Christians gained power and began to establish themselves through organized scripture and complex organizations. The Gnostics with their disdain for “cookie cutter” knowledge, didn’t like this at all, and served as vocal critics of the Church.

The downfall for the quasi-organized Gnostic Christians came about because of their liberal views of sex. While a great deal was written by the Three Stooges, it is unknown how much of it is accurate, and how much exaggeration to make them look bad. Regardless, Epiphanius denounced true Gnostics and charlatans saying:

“Have sex with me so that I may present you to the archon [guardians of the various heavens separating humans from the true God].” With each act of sex they [Gnostics] name the outlandish name of one of those invented by them, and pray: I make an offering to you, so-and-so, that you may offer to so-and-so.... When therefore he has reached the number of 365 lapses, that is of shameful acts and of the names invented by them, from then on he dares say, “I am Christ, for I have come down from above by means of the names of the 365 archons.”

Thanks to this reported sexual promiscuousness, the Church Fathers looked down on their “superior” Gnostic brothers. While the Gnostic Christians were respected for their self-discipline, the constant creation of new, personal knowledge and texts was a threat to their authority. In time, it was in relation to the Gnostics that the Church was able to define itself as it came to be known throughout Europe.

Nothing like a perceived enemy to strengthen your resolve and define your purpose, right *Reporter?*



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

**Publisher:** C. Diablo

**Editors:**

Randall Good  
Mike Fisher

**Layout:**

Adam Fletcher

**Writers:**

Sean T. Hammond  
Mookie Harrington

**Contributors:**

Gary Sloan  
The Ayn Rand Institute

**Cartoonist:**

Gil Merritt

**Printer Daemons:**

Jennifer Martorana  
Mike Confer  
Jenn Kobialka  
Alex Moundalexis

**Feedback:**

Send email to  
[gdt@hellskitchen.org](mailto:gdt@hellskitchen.org)

© 2000 *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*.

Don’t reprint the contents of this publication without permission; that’s stealing. All the work remains copyright the Authors, bitch.