



AOF

Atheists and Other Freethinkers

AOF News & Views – Newsletter for January 2023

AOF Election Results

Votes are in. In this wild new year, the AOF Board of Directors will consist of Pamella Rivera, Roger Zabkie, Ken Nahigian, Ruth Rezos, Kaeleigh Pontif, Fran Evanisko, and Mynga Futrell. Specific offices to be assigned at the next Board meeting. Thanks to all who participated. (If you didn't vote, you can't grump about it.)

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

No Movie Night events this month. "We now have a movie license for watching in person at the (new) Reason Center," says Will Scharff of the AOF Programs Committee. "We can start up movie nights again. It's a matter of scheduling, coming up with the movie and organizing the event. We have a nice TV to watch the movies on, so that's good." However, internet issues at Reason Center mean no movie nights for January. The issues should be resolved soon.

➤ Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, Jan 10, 2023, 7pm - 8pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Ste 675, Sac., map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

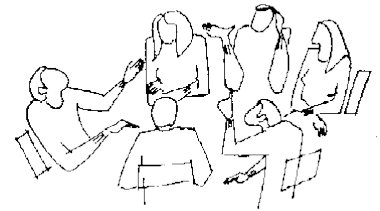
It's an AOF planning meeting, mainly for AOF directors & officers but open to all. These happen as required and are a lot more fun than they sound.

Join us, meet the Board, keep an eye on the shenanigans. We love visitors. We often have snacks. And maybe you'll have some good ideas, hm?

Note, this Board meeting will be an actual in-person meeting, so be sure your vaccinations are current, or wear a mask, or just don't cough on us.

Contact for details: See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your event and activity suggestions -- best of all, your volunteerism! Helping hands are the bomb. (A good kind of bomb.)



➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Jan 21, 2023, 9am - 11am

Location: Near West Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

A tidy stretch of Highway 99 runs two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road -- *our* stretch! Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. It's tidy because we have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. One of our more successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So join us! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures. Note, Cal-Trans is now paying a stipend for our work!

The stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5 past the Natomas area. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, or somewhere near it.

Contact for details: 916-447-2169 (Don Knutson), or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

Please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-a-highway/covid19>.

This is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home.

In case of rain, fog, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, call the Activity Captain (Don).



➤ More of Natural View: A Toolkit

Sunday, Jan 29, 2023, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Ste 675, Sac., map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

Alex Von Allmen and **Paul Storey**, eloquent creators of the [Naturalview.org](https://www.naturalview.org) website, are back to illuminate the inner gears and cogs of the website – specifically the toolkit categories: Tools, Quotes, Science, Faith, Profiles, and Reflections.

[Natural View](https://www.naturalview.org) is new and cool. Its objectives are to provide education, inspiration and support for deconversion and to identify, recognize and fund young atheist activists, authors and video creators who are making contributions to a scientific or non-supernatural worldview. Check it out. Then join us for this inspiring presentation.

Alex Von Allmen is site creator and technician for [Naturalview.org](https://www.naturalview.org), and **Paul Storey** is a longtime AOF member and past president (designated AOF's Freethought Canon).

Contact for details: Email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org", or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

An in-person event -- be aware of COVID risks.



➤ Davis Community Meal – Feed the Hungry

Tuesday, Jan 31, 2023, 4pm - 9pm

Location: St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis, CA, map at <https://binged.it/1uBpi57>.

The **Davis Community Meal** is once again serving up meals to the hungry, the poor, the indigent, the outcast. It all happens in bucolic Davis city, so near to us, where compassionate citizens have developed a secular solution for the problem of hunger, and need our help.

Join us in this effort. Your reward will be an opportunity to meet new minds and hobnob with your freethought friends, a likely free meal, jazzy music, and the rosy hearts-glow of benevolence. Also, seriously, it's a blast!

No cooking required! The Davis Community Meals team will perform all the food prep and kitchen work. Our job is simply to set up chairs & tables, serve, put things away at the end, and clean a bit (with a minimum of mopping). Extra points if you can arrive for setup, but if you can't, that's OK, any help is good help. Setup begins about 4:30 p.m., food service at about 5:45. At 6:30 we clean up, leaving the hall as we found it.

For details, please see [Davis Community Meals](https://www.daviscommunitymeals.org). For a map to the site, see: [Martin's Episcopal Church](https://www.stmartinsdavis.org). (Yes, a church hall, so what?)

Contact: See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, or call Service Coordinator (Don, 916-447-2169).

Carpooling may be available. For info, please contact the Service Project Coordinator.



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

AOF is not the only game in town – other freethought groups exist and have their own parties going. Here are highlights.

➤ Humanist Salon

Saturday, Jan 7, 2023, 10am – 11:30am

An online discussion, details available only to attending member of the Compassionate Humanists of Roseville. See <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/290525087/>.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts

Sunday, Jan 8, 2023, 9:30am – 11am,

Saturday, Jan 14, 2023, 10am – 11:30am, and

Sunday, Jan 15, 2023, 9:30am – 11am

Like to hang out with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Join us at Mel's Diner for what we call our "Blasphemy Breakfast." We don't blaspheme all that much, but who knows what mutterings will emerge? A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups.

On Jan 8: 3000 J Street, midtown Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/nW9U93obp9PKck9a7>.

On Jan 14: 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>.

On Jan 15: 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmkC4bU6>.

For details and contacts, see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/>.

➤ Sunday Assembly

Sunday, Jan 8, 2023, 11am - 1pm



Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>. Sunday Assembly is back! With live music by Sunday Reason, and a presentation on Worldviews by Mynga Futrell. All followed by a potluck lunch, so bring your favorite dish to share with the group.

For details, see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/290595357/> or <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/290500817/>.

➤ Recovery from Religion Online Support

Saturday, Jan 14, 2023, 5pm – 7pm: Women's Virtual Support Group Meeting

Thursday, Jan 19, 2023, 8pm – 10pm: Virtual Chapter Support Group Meeting

Saturday, Jan 21, 2023, 7am – 9am: Virtual Chapter Support Group Meeting

Providing ongoing and personal support to individuals letting go of their religious beliefs. "RfR" is here to help you.

For Jan 14, online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87403436249>.

For Jan 19, for online attendance link see <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/290481716/>.

For Jan 21, online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>.

➤ Word Confusion

Saturday, Jan 14, 2023, 7pm – 9pm

Wonder about words or phrases? Language is weird and twisty, and its quirks change over time. Here's an online

gathering to discuss them. Hosted by Nancy Sneed. Details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/nvshqsydcqbnb/>.

Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iWkwrZjZaTWZFMEMxZz09>.

➤ Coffee and Community

Sunday, Jan 15, 2023, 10:30am – 12 noon

Meet for coffee and open-topic conversation. Get to know new folk or visit with some old friends! Hosted by Nancy Sneed and Mynga Futrell, two amiable people. This will be an online meeting via Zoom Teleconference. To attend, click this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88317332021?pwd=OVI6M3IRQm52L0hQUmhwd0pucENEQT09>.

➤ Humanity Breakfast (yumm!)

Sunday, Jan 22, 2023, 11am – 1pm

An "inaugural post-C-word kickoff breakfast. We look forward to seeing new and familiar faces at this event. We are a fun, friendly, and non-intimidating group of like-minded people, so come join us!"

See <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/290452314/> to reserve your spot at the table.

Location: Fixins Soul Kitchen, 3428 3rd Ave, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/9NzA2FgNDBVat526A>.

➤ Online Photo-sharing

Wednesday, Jan 25, 2023, 7pm – 9pm

Maybe you snapped a pic of something interesting or mysterious, like a landscape, a sculpture, a flower, a shrub or tree, and that photo that's unique. And you might have a story behind it you'd like to share. Join us for a photo-exchange and discussion of the photographer's art. This event will occur on the fourth Wednesday of every month.

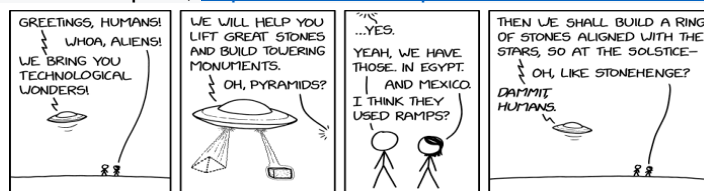
- Please load your best pics to your computer beforehand.
- Photos appropriate for general audiences. No sexy selfies please.
- Please do not share photos of individuals without their expressed permission.

Online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iWkwrZjZaTWZFMEMxZz09>.

➤ More Local Events - Event Calendars

But wait, there's more! And plans keep changing, so don't depend on all these static lists. To keep track of those other events, bookmark & follow these links:

- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- The Reason Center calendar, <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Skeptics events, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Compassionate Humanists of Roseville, <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/calendar/>
- Sunday Assembly Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Think Atheist events, <http://www.thinkatheist.com/events>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>



How you can help

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened (July 2014), it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. Also to be Party Central for us.

To continue, "RC" relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To set up a monthly or one-time donation, visit ReasonCenter.org.

Support AOF

You can support AOF *without spending a dime*. How? When you purchase goods at Amazon.com, simply use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762>. Bookmark it now! Prices & service will be the same, but AOF will receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Sweet!

Suggest a Meeting

Know a compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell us! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughtful suggestion. (Honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

We suggest it meekly. See <http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html> for opportunities.

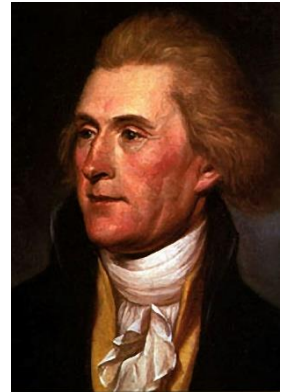
✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ Religious Freedom Day

Monday, Jan 16, 2023

[National Religious Freedom Day](#) is in the truest sense both a religious *and* a secular holiday. It marks the anniversary of the passage of the Virginia [Statute of Religious Freedom](#), the 1786 colonial statute that disestablished the Anglican Church in Virginia and set the foundation for Separation of Church and State. Thomas Jefferson marked this statute as one of his greatest achievements. Among other things it declared the following:

- "that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical,
- "that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions any more than our opinions in physics or geometry,
- "that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of Religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities."



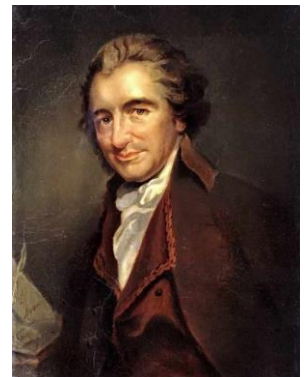
Congress first marked Religious Freedom Day in 1993. It is a day to reflect on the hard-won separation of civic and religious life, and to refresh our resolve to inform fellow citizen about liberty of conscience in matters of faith, a liberty which must include both freedom *of* and *from* religion. Because otherwise, it is no freedom at all.

➤ Thomas Paine Day

Sunday, Jan 29, 2023

Thomas Paine Day, also called Freethinkers Day, promotes appreciation of freethought through the life and works of American patriot Thomas Paine. Paine (1737-1809) was a courageous freethinker whose life and work inspired great social and political advancement across world. Raised in England, Paine played a vital role in the American and French Revolutions. His books and pamphlets, including *The Age of Reason*, *The Rights of Man*, and *Common Sense*, gained a mass audience for the liberating philosophy of the Enlightenment.

Paine arrived in America in 1774 at Benjamin Franklin's request. On January 10, 1776, he published *Common Sense*, a remarkable and powerful republican pamphlet which had an immediate success. He served in the Revolutionary War under General Greene and later in official positions appointed by congress and in the Pennsylvania legislature. In his later publication, *Age of Reason*, Paine expressed that "all religions are in their nature mild and benign" when not associated with political systems. Paine was the quintessential Deist of the 18th century.



Between March 1791 and February 1792 he published numerous editions of his *Rights of Man*, in which he defended the French Revolution. The words of Thomas Paine inspired many to strive for political, economic and social advancement. He was among the first to call for an end to slavery and the establishment of human rights around the world.

In the 1990s, the *Truth Seeker* magazine began celebrating Freethinkers Day on Thomas Paine's birthday in order to educate the public on the importance of Thomas Paine in the history of freedom. Its poetic description of the day, on [this webpage](#), is worthy to repeat:

This day honors Thomas Paine and is on his birthday, January 29. This is a global holiday and is simply celebrated by giving and displaying a White Rose with Thorns. The simple beauty and purity, the fragility and yet not without the danger of drawing blood by a thorn prick, makes this an excellent icon for those Freethinkers who want to reflect on Freedom and promote the ideas of personal liberty as expressed by Paine in The Declaration of Independence,

This is a holiday that celebrates the concept of Freedom by honoring the man who declared our Independence by giving us Common Sense and The Declaration. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Thomas Paine.

So you are welcome to celebrate with us. Just remember a White Rose with Thorns.

Also in the 1990s, the Thomas Paine Foundation began celebrating the birthday of Thomas Paine on January 29th, a Thomas Paine Day proclamation on June 8 and other Paine theme events during the year.

➤ Gorilla Suit Day!

Tuesday, Jan 31, 2023

From the sublime to the ridiculous. Close on the heels of Thomas Paine day comes [National Gorilla Suit Day](#), a pseudo-holiday invented by famed Mad Magazine cartoonist [Don Martin](#). An effluvium of controversy continues to surround this secular celebration: to some it is a blatant conspiracy of gorilla suit manufacturers to promote their wares, others see it as one of America's more important and venerable holidays. Its origins lie in a 1963 comic strip. Don Martin aficionados later evolved the tradition that "NGSD" falls on the last day of January each year.



Whatever your opinion of NGSD, few deny the cartooning genius of Don Martin. Art historian Charles Taylor described Martin's unique style of art and wit:

His people are big-nosed schmoes with sleepy eyes, puffs of wiry hair, and what appear to be life preservers under the waistline of their clothes. Their hands make delicate little mincing gestures and their strangely thin, elongated feet take a 90-degree turn at the toes as they step forward. Whether they're average Joes or headhunters, Martin's people share the same physique: a tottering tower of obloids. Martin puts the bodies of these characters through every kind of permutation, treating them as much like gadgets as the squirting flowers and joy buzzers that populate his gags: glass eyes pop out from a pat on the back; heads are steamrollered into manhole-cover shapes. All of this accompanied by a Dadaist panoply of sound effects found nowhere else: *shtoin!* *shklorp!* *fwoba-dap!* It's unlikely Samuel Beckett was aware of Don Martin, but had he been he might have recognized a kindred spirit.



Thomas Paine birthday celebration! Sponsored by the Thomas Paine Memorial Association, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Secular Student Alliance, Center For Inquiry and The Freethought Society, the celebration will occur **Sunday, January 29, 2023 at Noon Pacific Time**. To attend (free), **register at this link:** <https://bit.ly/PaineProclamation>.

Keynote speaker will be **Greg Claeys**, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of London. Other authors, scholars and educators will read proclamations and statements in honor of Paine, and related news. Representative **Victoria Spartz**, a co-lead of House Bill 6720 (to endorse a Washington, D.C. monument to honor Thomas Paine), will also deliver a welcome address and convey why she supports a Thomas Paine monument. Celebratory music will be selections from a new musical, *The Crossing*, written by **Jason Huza** and **John Allen Watts**.

More details from Margaret Downey, President of the Thomas Paine Memorial Association
P. O. Box 448, Madison, WI 53701-0448
Phone: 610 357-9432 or email "Margaret (at) FtSociety.org"
Website: <https://thomaspainememorial.org>



News: Under the leadership of Congressman **Jamie Raskin** and Congresswoman **Victoria Spartz**, House Bill 6720 was included in the 2022 Omnibus Package. In late December, the package was passed by both the House and Senate. President Biden signed the bill into law on December 27, 2022. The Thomas Paine Memorial Association (TPMA) will now begin working with the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) on advancing the project with a goal of unveiling the monument in 2026, which would coincide with the 250-year anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Recognition of this important milestone will make the Sunday, January 29, 2023 Thomas Paine Birthdate Proclamation Celebration Zoom event even more joyous.

Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President: Prolific Pamella Rivera
 Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
 Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
 Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
 Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
 Program chair: Super Susan McLean
 Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
 Directors at large:
 Roger Zabkie, Fran Evanisko, Kaeleigh Pontif

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us.

How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or come to a meeting. We have forms.

AOF's Facebook pages (two):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF-104763721971742>

AOF is affiliated with the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies (ASHS), Atheist Alliance of America (AAA), American Atheists (AA), American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Sacramento Coalition of Reason (SCoR).

AOF Mission Statement:

"The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives."

What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (*cough*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Any who will treat others with respect and dignity may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See: <http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.

Family news

Some will remember **Rudy Iwasko**, not an AOF member but a frequent visitor to our events. That irascible, lovable, cantankerous intellectual game slayer, who resembled Captain Picard from Star Trek, irked us with truculent question, had a whip-like mind, blacksmithed, skin-dived, spelunked, flew gliders, slung a wicked war bow (contact archery), beat down cancer at least once, hung out with skeptics, atheists, libertarians, sf fans, medievalists and conspiracy buffs, loved felines, hated politicians, loved to "stir the pot" as he put it, and ultimately would give you the shirt off his back with a pair of socks if you needed them, walked quietly and mysteriously into his good night on or about Wednesday, December 21st of 2022. His sister found the remains. There had been no clue of illness, she said. Cause yet unknown, she also said, and many questions still hanging. But she did find a home for his cat, so be glad for that.

THE CURE FOR EXHAUSTION Piet Hein

Sometimes, exhausted
 with toil and endeavour,
 I wish I could sleep
 for ever and ever;
 but then this reflection
 my longing allays:
 I shall be doing it
 one of these days.



"I'm the only deity this house requires."