

He Saw Before Others

DANIEL C. DENNETT

Paul Kurtz led the way for years. When Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and I woke up and turned our time and energy to resisting the encroachments of the religious right on the civil liberties of us all, we found Paul Kurtz already happily marching along, leading the charge, as he had been doing for years. He graciously welcomed us—and many others—to the project, and was a tireless organizer and expeditor of all sorts of activities. He saw, before many others, that these were issues worth devoting your life to, and that is what he did. We owe a great debt of gratitude to his vision and energy.

—Daniel Dennett is professor of philosophy and co-director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University.

Spreading Skepticism Worldwide

AMARDEO SARMA

The death of Paul Kurtz is a blow for skeptics well beyond America. Many skeptical groups around the world would not exist but for him. He was always encouraging and strongly committed to the international nature of skepticism. Without him there would be no GWUP in Germany nor many other organizations operating in Europe and elsewhere. He moved the initiative in the 1980s to spread skepticism all over the world—from China to Europe, and from Africa to Latin America. His example is a constant reminder to maintain our commitment to the “new skepticism” as a strong tool of science for consumer protection and a rational world.

—Amardeo Sarma is chairman of GWUP (the German skeptics group) and a member of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry Executive Council.

A Seamless Enterprise

EDWARD TABASH

We mourn the loss of our true founder, Paul Kurtz. It's a daunting task to single out any of his myriad accomplishments for special attention. However, I would like to focus on his pioneering work in making challenges to the paranormal/supernatural a seamless enterprise. The rules of empirical investigation should be applied to any claim, be they the miraculous claims of religion or those of pseudoscience. Paul Kurtz leaves behind his worldwide insight that no aspect of human experience should lie beyond criticism and doubt. It is now up to us to build on this legacy as we strive to free the world of superstition.

—Edward Tabash is chair of the board of directors, Center for Inquiry, Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, and Council for Secular Humanism.

A Truly Contagious Optimism

D.J. GROTHE

Paul Kurtz was my dear friend and an inspiration to me. His humanity, his passion, his creativity, and his always-grand plans were the building blocks of a number of international organizations, and he worked tirelessly to grow the worldwide skeptics and humanist movements. In this respect, his impact remains unrivaled.

But what was most meaningful to me about Paul was his truly contagious optimism. He had unshakable faith in humanity—in people—and that we can work together despite our differences and make the world a better place without giving in to the transcendental temptation.

I've never known anyone who loved life more. I can still hear him sermonizing about the good life's “tang” and the “zest of living.” It fills my heart to remember this now.

The House That Kurtz Built

DANIEL LOXTON

I am saddened, as a skeptic and a humanist, to hear of the passing of Paul Kurtz. I didn't know him personally, yet Kurtz had an immense and lasting impact on my life, values, and career. As a defining leader in secular humanism and a founder of North America's first successful organization for scientific skepticism, his life's work made my life's work possible. My colleagues and I are caretakers for the house he built.

—Daniel Loxtan is Editor of Junior Skeptic, Skeptic magazine.

I've never known anyone who loved life more. I can still hear him sermonizing about the good life's “tang” and the “zest of living.”

He gave so much to so many people around the world through the organizations he founded, but also often behind the scenes, never looking for recognition. They say no man is a hero to his valet, but the more I got to know Paul over the years, the more I came to love and respect him. He is deeply, deeply missed.

—D.J. Grothe worked with Paul Kurtz at CSI for many years and is now president of the James Randi Educational Foundation.