



Humanist Society of New Mexico



July 2010

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

Quote of the Month

Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.

Bertrand Russell

We should not permit tolerance to degenerate into indifference.

Margaret Chase Smith

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings are free and run from 10:00 to noon
(except where noted)

Saturday, July 10th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Visitors please contact Fred March at 505-323-6784
for details or questions.

Refreshments: Salem Smith

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, July 17th

Topical Discussion

Your Humanist Core Beliefs

Edna Ferguson Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd. NE

Saturday, July 24th

Speaker Meeting

No Time For "Wait and See": The Single-Payer Movement after the Obama Plan

By Dr. Bruce Trigg

Humanist Minute: Cathy Burt

Refreshments: Bill and Shirley Little

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

HSNM Family Co-op

Alternative Children's Sunday School

Call 505-292-4375 for meeting times

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, July 3rd, 10:30am

Empathy

Community Room, La Farge Branch of the
Santa Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

For more information contact Bill Weihofen
(505) 988-1343

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience, and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

**The Humanist Society of New Mexico
(HSNM)**

A Membership chapter of the American Humanist Association.

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

Officers

Frederic March: President

Bill Little: Vice President/Programs

Jerry Wesner: Past President

John Waldrop: Treasurer

Secretary: Open

Ron Herman: Director of Classes

Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor

Janet Johnson: Book Club

Ted Cloak: Community Liaison

Phil Smith: Webmaster

Membership Director: Open

Social Coordinator: Open

Publicity Director: Open

Family Co-op: Open

Friendly Philosopher Director : Attila Csanyi

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$15 annually. Send subscription and membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall at Email paragon2012@comcast.net

The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month.

President's Message

By Fred March

I feel privileged to to have served as HSNM President for four years (as of November). But our rules require that each two years that we seek to nominate a new slate of elected Board members (President, VP, Treasurer and Secretary. Other Board members volunteer from the membership at large and are appointed by the President (Ex Officio, Newsletter Editor, Membership Director, Social Director , Publicity Director and Education Director (Director of Classes). In addition our rules have allowed me to appoint certain people who lead ongoing activities that enhance our members' experience. As a result we have Board positions for Webmaster, Community Liaison, and Book Club. Recently Attila Csanyi has accepted my appointment to the Board as the Friendly Philosopher Director.

Without their wonderful commitment and enthusiasm the HSNM could not continue. Currently the Secretary position is vacant and must be filled by election. Other critical positions that are vacant include Membership Director, Social Coordinator, Publicity Director and Family Co-Op, Please consider accepting one of these opportunities including President if the nominating committee contacts you. If you would like to be Secretary please contact VP Bill Little who has put together a search committee for the elected offices. For all other openings please contact me.

I have scheduled a breakfast Board meeting for Saturday July 10th from 8:00-9:40 AM, just prior to our Informal Meeting at Le Peep Restaurant on Louisiana Ave. The agenda will include topics for making the HSNM a more vital and community-connected organization. According to our Rules all Board meetings are open to the membership. I especially want to encourage any one who would like to consider a Board position to attend. Please RSVP to me: fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com to ensure a place at the table.

Finally, I want to commend Ron Herman for having accomplished the resurrection of the Family Coop (please excuse the religious metaphor, but it does feel

like a miracle), and for having represented HSNM on the Chapter Expansion Panel at the AHA Conference. I am also pleased to report that my course for UNM's Continuing Education Program on Humanism had more than 20 students, and received outstanding student evaluations. A few people told me that they plan to join HSNM. As a result I have been invited to continue teaching the course and to expand it from two sessions to three to allow for more discussion. Bill Little suggested that I teach it at two of our lecture meetings and will try to fit it into the schedule.

Excerpts from Zelda Gatuskin's Lecture on The Arts and Sciences

Excerpt II Part One

From the earliest jot on a cave wall to the soaring spires of gothic cathedrals, art is associated with the spiritual needs of the human psyche. Whether an expression of awe, an attempt at direct communication with the divine, or a depiction of a significant insight or observation, Art, by definition, stands apart from the mundane tasks of physical survival. As civilizations advanced and humans became more prolific with their symbol-making, we find writing and images of an obviously functional nature: accounts, biographies, laws and directives. But to us, today, it still looks like art. For these artifacts reveal sophisticated aesthetic tastes and skilled methods of production - form and function.

In art and music history class, we study the arts on their march forward to the present. We see the sacred element fall away and secular interests and aesthetics begin to predominate. There will always be religious art, but high art outgrew the old contexts.

The title of Tony Hileman's essay on the AHA website caught my attention: "Living on the Creative Edge of Our Culture." He states, "It was the humanist impulse of the Renaissance that refused to accept the status quo and freed us from the shackles of authoritarianism, recognized our human abilities and responsibilities, and moved us forward toward where we are today."

Hileman doesn't say who was living on the creative edge of culture during the Renaissance. But we know who - the artists. We know them as artists, anyway, because of the impact of their visual imagery. But, they were men (mostly) of the arts and sciences - "Renaissance men." Much of their innovation involved the observation and depiction of the world around them. They perfected methods for conveying volume and depth in two

dimensions; of foreshortening and perspective, they understood the properties of light and shadow. They were striving for a rational depiction of a rational world. They did all of this in the context of sacred art, because they were supported by church commissions...

Yet Art and Religion have always had an uneasy association. He who pays the musician gets to pick the music and lead the dance. Creating art and music on spec, much as we welcome the work and benefit from the practice, not to mention the payment, still falls somewhat below "doing our own thing" on the artists' satisfaction meter. As for our employers, retaining artists and musicians to further the glory of god and church is like keeping tigers at the circus. They want to attract an audience with the raw power of our creative energy, while taming that energy to their service. Or trying to. Like the tiger, the well-trained artist may perform on command, but we do not submit. Art is inherently subversive of religion. Imagine - our audience might be swept away beyond the confines of religious thought to experience - actually experience - a true oceanic feeling independent of dogma.

Not only is the artist a free-thinker, but she suggests that anyone might be. When the artist exerts creative will to make something where there was nothing before, he competes with god. And when he succeeds, and manifests that creative potential with indisputable skill, he risks outshining the Higher Power! Mozart pens music that actually sounds like a heavenly choir! Michelangelo converts a hunk of rock into a "Pieta" - a work of spiritual import that betrays the artist's interest in pure material physicality: the flesh of Jesus' broken body, the fabric of Mary's gown, not to mention the marble and muscle that went into creating it.

Letters to the Editor

I would like to respond to Laverne Rison's questions that appeared in the HSNM Newsletter last year. She was looking for information about gayness:

There are two gay marriages in my extended family, both are highly successful, especially so when compared to the heterosexual record my family has scored. My cousin and her partner have been together for over thirty years, while my nephew and his partner have been together for over twenty-five years. All four of my gay relatives are personable, prosperous and happy. I like them very much and hope they like me.

The mistake is to think in terms of categories - one brand here and the other brand there. Instead, think Bell

Curve. In one extreme, we have people who find attractiveness only in the opposite sex; in the other extreme we have people who find attractiveness only in the same sex. These extremists are missing out on the attractiveness of half of humanity and probably need psychotherapy. The vast majority of people see attractiveness in both sexes, they see it with variation according to their experiences in life.

My cousin was heterosexual until she reached mid-life and encountered a blow to her self-esteem that rendered her suicidal. In recovering, she met another woman who had encountered another kind of rejection and, together, they pooled their resources and built a life together that can't be improved. They are retired now, traveling everywhere and as happy as can be. I think my nephew had been hunting all of his life for the man he finally married. The two of them lived in England but are now back in California and will remain together working and enjoying life as long as they both shall live.

These people are known as gay, and no one could possibly object to their modes of life.

When God ordered "Go forth and multiply!" the entire human population on this planet was two. Consequently, multiplying was of the utmost concern in order to defend and grow in tribal security, and all non-procreative forms of sex had to be discouraged, shamed and punished.

Today, the entire human population on this small planet is 6.7 million and growing. Soon, very soon, we will have to reverse the orders: Procreative forms of sex will be restricted. While non-procreative forms will be encouraged.

Lois Kimbrell

In support of Zelda Gatuskin's call for humanists to "rally around art in the same way they have rallied around science" I recommend two books. First, *Predicative Minds* by Radu J. Bogdan, The MIT Press, 2009. Bogden is a philosopher (who else talks about 'predication') who draws on archeology and early childhood developmental psychology to develop a thesis about "the social ontogeny of propositional thinking." Based on artifacts showing a start of creative innovation about 60 thousand years ago he proposes that a revolution in human parenting occurred at that time. The rest describes the inherited mental abilities of the infant and how interactions with the parent or caretaker

transform those abilities into the distinctive human mind. The second book, *The Artful Mind*, Edited by Mark Turner, Oxford University Press 2006, is a collection of essays by cognitive scientists on how art transforms the adult mind. The first books answers some of the questions raised in *The Artful Mind* but the latter contains much more on the nature of the aesthetic experience and the role of the creative artist in society. For humanists who do not want to see their organization get stuck as defenders of a particular dogma or ideology understanding artists and the aesthetic experience is crucial.

Dale L. Berry

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, July 5th

Open Forum

Bring a Your Own Topic for General Discussion

Monday, July 19th

Varieties of Fascism

Attila Csanyi

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room.
Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

Sunday, July 4th, 9am

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, July 20th

Social Meeting at 6:30pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25

New Mexicans for Science and Reason

No Meeting for July

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402