



The Utah Humanist

Happy Humanist

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Humanists of Utah is a Chapter of the American Humanist Association. We are a nonprofit corporation organized to advocate and promote ethical, rational, and democratic humanism among our membership and the larger community.



Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
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Humanist Association

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Origin ~Book Review~

Dan Brown’s most recent book is *Origin*, it is also the next in the series of the Robert Langdon novels; preceded by *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels & Demons*, *Inferno*, and *The Lost Symbol*. The common theme among these books is a questioning of organized religion, mostly Christianity, and especially Catholicism. *Origin* goes much further than the previous titles in what may be Brown’s personal search to ascertain the role of religion in life. Like previous titles *Origin* is constructed as a mystery where a renegade group tries to prevent new knowledge from displacing religious dogma in explaining the world we experience.

That said, *Origin* goes much further than previous efforts to present religion as a largely outdated way of thinking. Edmond Kirsch, the main character of this story is an outspoken atheist and a pioneer in technology. His hardware and software skills have made him a fortune via a company he built. We find out that Kirsch was a student in one of Professor Langdon’s classes and was heavily influenced by Langdon’s ideas.

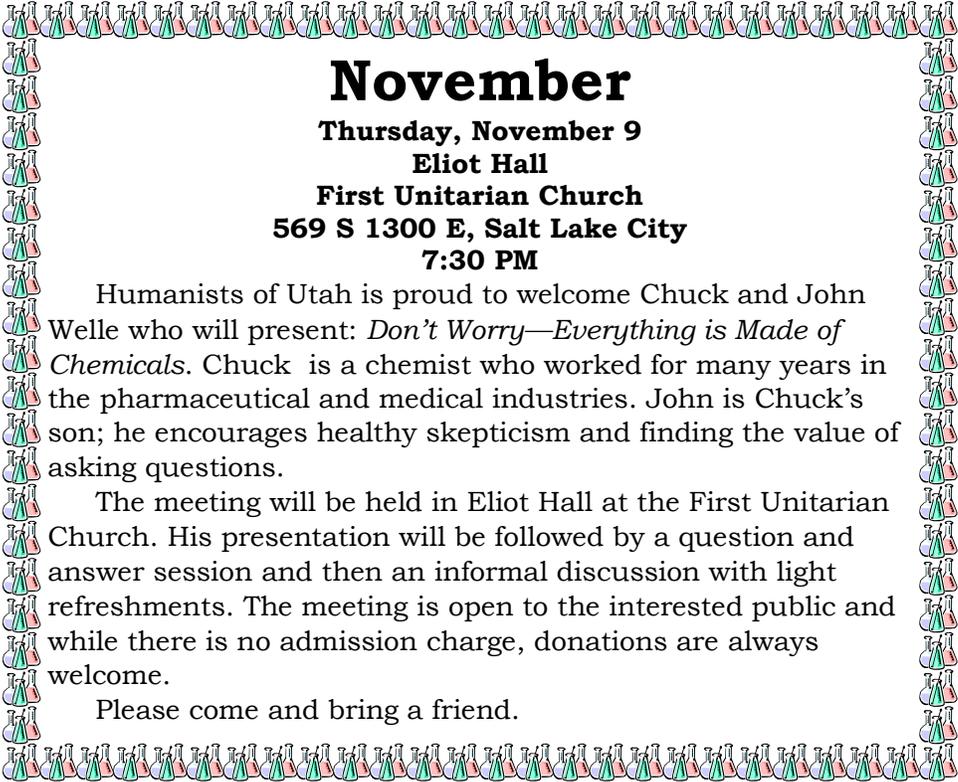
The now wealthy and influential, Kirsch makes an announcement that he has discovered the answers to the two most important questions facing humanity: “Where did we come from?” and “Where are we going.” He arranged to make a live announcement of the “answers” that will be broadcast worldwide at a black tie, invitation only event. He begins the announcement with footage from a Professor Langdon lecture about the importance and meaning of symbols. As he prepares to launch his saved presentation he is struck between the eyes with a bullet and killed. The shot was fired by the classic Langdon-esque religious fanatic villain. So yes, the main character is killed early in the book, but this is a mystery that Langdon needs to solve.

Nobody else has access to the details of Kirsch’s discoveries; but Langdon is able to lift the custom made cellphone from the Kirsch’s lifeless body. With this device he can communicate with Winston, an artificial intelligence personal assistant that

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November

Thursday, November 9
Eliot Hall
First Unitarian Church
569 S 1300 E, Salt Lake City
7:30 PM

Humanists of Utah is proud to welcome Chuck and John Welle who will present: *Don't Worry—Everything is Made of Chemicals*. Chuck is a chemist who worked for many years in the pharmaceutical and medical industries. John is Chuck's son; he encourages healthy skepticism and finding the value of asking questions.

The meeting will be held in Eliot Hall at the First Unitarian Church. His presentation will be followed by a question and answer session and then an informal discussion with light refreshments. The meeting is open to the interested public and while there is no admission charge, donations are always welcome.

Please come and bring a friend.

Support the AHA

Humanists of Utah urges you to support the American Humanist Association. The AHA is dedicated to preserving individual rights and promoting nationally the philosophy of humanism.

Membership brings you the *Humanist* magazine and *Free Mind* newsletter six times a year.

Annual membership is only \$45.00 (**\$35 Introductory Rate**) and can be paid with plastic. Phone (800) 743-6646 or write to:

American Humanist Association
1777 T Street, NW
Washington DC 20009

President's Message

I was thinking how it was odd that for the last several months, when I finally force myself to write my President's message, there is a disaster of some sorts happening. First with Hurricanes, fires, the Las Vegas shooting, and now on Halloween a terrorist attack with a truck running down people in a bike and pedestrian lane in New York City. But I had to use skepticism to remind myself that what I'm doing in my life here in SLC has very little to do with what happening on the streets of New York. It has, however, been distracting and makes it hard to focus and changes my mood. But I really don't want to talk about disasters.

What I was thinking about, before the Halloween incident was to say a few words about pejoratives and censorship.

Our previous President and co-founder Flo Winewriter advised us to always try to communicate with those we may disagree with a civil tongue. It's good advice, if for no other reason than the fact that yelling and name calling rarely accomplish anything. But what do you do when your opponent uses your desire to

be nice in conversation against you. Making it look like they won the argument because they are more aggressive and a louder mouth. I've heard it said that conservatives are fist pumpers and liberals are hand wringers.

This has become particularly common in our political discourse with President Trump constantly using pejoratives of the derogatory and belittling type. He seems to be unable to engage anyone who disagrees with him without turning it adversarial.

As a rather black humored joke I asked if the list of pejoratives that fit Trump was as big as the list of his lies. But I saw the folly in that as I realized that, while the list of pejoratives that fit Donald Trump is a long one, his lies create a tome that I suspect goes back to when he first uttered a sentence as a toddler.

On the somewhat related subject of censorship, I kind of chuckle and groan when I see the media censor a word like bullshit. With all the horror and coarse language, we see and hear in movies and on TV, it seems rather

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President

Origin

(Continued from page 2)

hypocritical to think we are protecting the public from something shocking by writing bullshit, bulls—t. Its more than hypocritical, it's quite silly.

One more thing before I sign off. The idea that we should be in some way forced to honor or salute the flag, the pledge of allegiance to the flag or stand for the national anthem is absurd. I didn't serve four years in the U.S. Air Force for a flag or a song or a pledge. I served for our country and its freedoms which include sitting or kneeling or any other form of protest including burning the flag.

For two of the four years I served I was a Security Police law enforcement Sargent who raised and lowered the base flag with pride. But I also understand that the flag means different things to our diverse population. I believe it was Malcolm X who said "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock landed on us." And I remember seeing a Native American on TV say that the only salute he had for the U.S. flag was a middle finger. Pointing out that the U.S. government robbed them of their lands and attempted genocide, somewhat successfully, on Native Americans who were here first.

That's all for now freethinkers. Let's hope there's no disasters for a while.

—Robert Lane
President, HoU



(Continued from page 1)

Kirsch created. We learn that Kirsch was heavily influenced by freethinkers like Richard Dawkins, Margaret Downey, and Daniel Dennett. The point is made that even though evolution has been demonstrated countless times that the real issue is "First Cause,"...the term Darwin used to describe this elusive moment of creation. Darwin proved that life has continuously evolved, but he could not figure out how the process started. In other words, Darwin's theory describes the survival of the fittest, but not the arrival of the fittest. The legendary 1950s experiment by Stanley Miller and Harold Urey who tried to simulate earth conditions a few million years ago where a soup of chemicals was subjected to heat, and electrical shocks did not produce life, maybe a few amino acids, which are the building blocks of proteins, but not the hoped for appearance of life.

Like previous Dan Brown mysteries, the setting grabbed my attention. The action takes place in Barcelona, Spain and explores the work of architect Antoni Gaudi whose most famous work is the Sagrada Familia, a cathedral that was begun in 1882 and is still a work in progress to this day. There is also intrigue and romance because Edmond Kirsch is engaged to marry the crown prince of Spain and the king is on his death bed.

Unlike previous Langdon stories the villain is something less than superhuman and is thwarted relatively early in the story. The part of this novel I was most intrigued by is the resolution of the second question: Where are we going? It involves Darwinian evolution, Kirsch argues that an extremely rapid change in humans is coming. If he is correct, and it seems plausible to me that he might be, the possibility that our children and certainly our grandchildren will not be *homo sapiens* as we know them today.

I found this an intriguing novel and highly recommend it.

—Wayne Wilson

(I took the picture to the left inside the Sagrada Familia in 2013, unlike any Catholic cathedral that I have ever seen)



On Past Judgements

Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'till it's gone

—Joni Mitchell

In the 1976 Presidential election, I voted for John Anderson. I was then, and still am, a liberal. So, Gerald Ford was not a consideration, especially after he pardoned Nixon, which was unforgivable. But I didn't trust Jimmy Carter, who claimed to be honest. I didn't know much about the Southern Baptist Convention but what I did know was that they opposed almost everything I supported. Carter was a Southern Baptist, so Carter was out. Four years later and I had changed my mind. I enthusiastically supporter Carter against Ronald Reagan, and over the years I have grown to appreciate Jimmy Carter more and more.

Carter turned out to be much more honest and thoughtful than the average politician. And he was open to change. He recently left the Southern Baptist Convention after 60 years because of their belief that women should be subservient to men.

Here are some examples of some prescient thoughts from then-President Jimmy Carter's speeches:

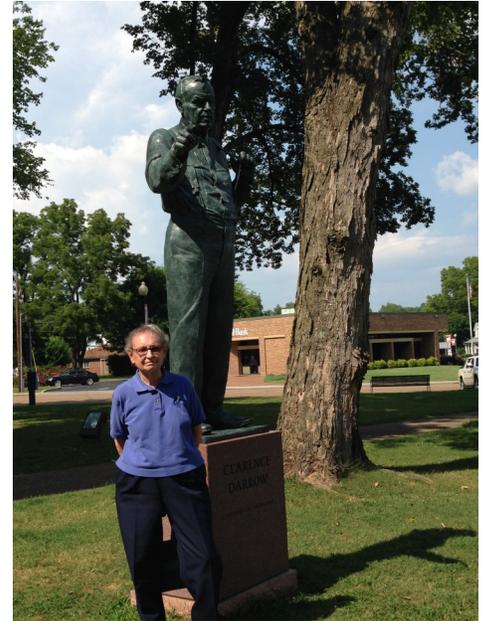
- Too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning.
- You see every extreme position defended to the last vote, almost to the last breath by one unyielding group after another. You often see a balanced and fair approach that demands sacrifice, a little sacrifice from everyone, abandoned like an orphan without support and without friends...
- Carter warned the nation against following the "path that leads to fragmentation and self-interest," for "down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom, the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others"
- We have lost our way...because we have exalted "a mistaken idea of freedom"; our self-indulgence has led us to assert every right as absolute, every form of compromise or regulation as inimical to freedom, and...to elevate the very avatar of self-absorption to the highest office in the land.

—Pete Barkett

Northwest Humanist Monthly
October 2017

Editor's Note: I too voted for Anderson in 1976 and switched to Carter in 1980. I think Carter will go down in history as one of the most moral politicians to ever serve; anywhere, anytime.

Traveling Local Humanist Leader



Chapter Treasurer Leona Blackbird traveled to Dayton, Tennessee this summer. She posed in front of a new statue of Clarence Darrow that was erected 7/17/17 at the Rhea County Courthouse where the (in)famous Scopes Monkey Trial took place.

Most institutions demand unqualified faith; but the institution of science makes skepticism a virtue.

—Robert King Merton
Sociologist
1910-2003



Humanists of Utah meetings are open to the public and free of any admission charge. A discussion and light refreshments follow the speaker's presentation. Come join us and **bring a friend!**

Monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM in Eliot Hall of the First Unitarian Church, 569 South 1300 East, on the second Thursday of each month.

Disclaimer: The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Humanists of Utah nor the American Humanist Association. Reprinting of articles is permitted for humanist groups promoting the interests of humanism if attribution is properly stated.



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>> **Put Your Name Here** <<
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Nonprofit

Humanists of Utah is a nonprofit organization supported in large part by dues paying members. Our other major source of funds comes from generous gifts, mostly from the same dues payers who give a little more. In February 2003, chapter member Marion Craig died and left HoU a bequest of \$20,000. We invested this money in an endowment fund. The interest is still helping to pay for banquets, special events, etc. When you create your personal will please consider leaving a gift to Humanists of Utah.

Membership/Renewal Application

Name: _____

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- \$50 Regular Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$90 Regular 2-year Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$35 Regular Annual Membership with email delivery of the Utah Humanist
 - \$65 Regular 2-year Membership with email delivery of the Utah Humanist
 - \$20 Student Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$20 Annual subscription to the Utah Humanist (I do not want to be listed as a member of **Humanists of Utah**)
 - Please send a *FREE* trial Subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$ _____ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism
- => All contributions in excess of the \$20 subscription fee tax deductible.
 => *Members* have the right to vote in Chapter elections and participate in Chapter decisions.
 => Dues provide for information packets, honoraria to speakers, expenses of newsletter publication, trial subscriptions, copies to libraries, and newsletter exchange with other chapters.

Humanists of Utah
P.O. Box 1043
West Jordan, UT 84084

Notes:

- ◆ *General Meetings* are for all members and the general public. There are no admission charges.
- ◆ *Discussion Group* meetings are open to everyone. A different book or topic is covered every month.
- ◆ *Board Meetings* are planning and business sessions. They are open to all members.
- ◆ Eliot Hall is in the First Unitarian Church located at 569 South 1300 East in Salt Lake City.
- ◆ RE 201 is upstairs in the East Educational Building at the First Unitarian Church.

Upcoming Events

Meeting	Topic	Date	Time	Place
General Meeting	Everything is Made of Chemicals <i>Chuck and John Welle</i>	Nov 9	7:30	Eliot Hall
Board Meeting	Chapter Business	Nov 16	7:30	RE 201
General Meeting	Annual Business Meeting and Banquet	Dec 14	6:30	Eliot Hall
Board Meeting	Chapter Business	Dec 21	7:30	RE 201



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