



The Utah 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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Chaplain's Corner

What's the Point?

The existential bar for my email is pretty damn high, but this subject line still got my attention:

Could you please share with me what makes life worth living?

Maria continued,

I'm a high school student who loves science. But I'm depressed by scientific claims that life has no purpose and that we might not even have free will.

How is it possible to live a happy and meaningful life with a purely scientific worldview that rejects traditional notions of free will?

Could you please share with me what makes life worth living?

Please respond soon.

Thanks,
Maria

mariasaveyourtruth@gmail.com

[I have shared this correspondence with Maria's permission, and she said she would be interested to hear how other humanists answer the question, so feel free to email her]

I was struck by the specificity of Maria's question. Not what is the purpose of life, but what makes life worth living?

Here is the response I gave her:

Dear Maria,

Thank you for writing me, and with such a beautiful, important question.

One of my favorite ways of looking at life and its parts is as a conversation. You and I are having a conversation. Your life is its own conversation. The poet David Whyte uses this metaphor often, that we are part of the conversation of things. His book *Consolations* is superb.

Often cliches have elements of truth, and it is true that the meaning of life is what you make it.

We also live within complex systems, and that's another part of the conversation. Different people treat you differently based

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Feeling Outraged Part 2

Last month I wrote a rant about Liars and people I consider Traitors or Unamerican. I want to add a little to that rant before I move on to another subject or two.

While surfing the net recently I came across this headline from the Huffington Post “Republicans cheer as congressional candidate demands Fauci’s execution by firing squad.” The candidate’s name is John Bennett, chairman of Oklahoma GOP. That folks is what angers me, disgusts me. It is that kind of use of fear and hatred that plagues our politics. While statements like that are potentially harmful, they are also mostly hot air.

In the mid 1970’s Jerry Falwell is attributed with coining the term Moral Majority, it was a lie then and still is a lie. With the tutelage of D. Trump, they have taken the black art of lying to a new low.

I was watching MSNBC when Johnathan Capehart talked about how He can no longer listen to people you know are liars and has no respect for people you know are lying. That’s pretty much my attitude also.

Anyway, moving on, I’m getting excited that the weather is warming up. If things go well for awhile with covid, it may be that we can start to get together for meetings and such. I think we should have more than just our one BBQ this summer adding say a picnic and perhaps an outdoor discussion group.

I’ve wanted to get back to discussing the environment and climate change. The topics are almost endless ranging from the little things we can do as individuals with our personal footprint, to the global aspects and how to make progress that will actually help globally.

So, I was thinking about how I still have a lot of places I can improve my footprint. Some ways I could improve are at present not practical for me, such as changing vehicles to electric. But, looking at some of my household habits, I can point out some mundane, yet useful places for improvement. First one that comes to mind is that I use too many paper towels. I like to cook and spend time in the kitchen, so I reach for them all the time. I also have to keep reminding myself not to run the water full blast, which is a habit that goes back to when the thought was (in my youth) there is a lot of it and it was cheap. But price shouldn’t be the only reason you decide to conserve water, you should conserve because it is prudent and wise to not waste the resource. I could also do better with saving electricity, but we have done pretty good job changing to LED light bulbs as they save quite a bit.

I now live in the house I grew up in. It has a swimming pool which holds about 35,000 gallons. I have worried about that as part of my personal footprint with regards to water use. But, as I researched water use by swimming pools, I found that they don’t use as much water as the same size area of lawn. Also, I have purchased a solar cover which is like heavy duty blue mini bubble wrap. With the cover you save water from evaporation, use less chemicals and it helps heat the pool saving energy used to heat the pool.

Next month maybe I’ll talk about doing something about the environment a step up from personal to say the local.

Hope to see you this summer.

—Bob Lane



Humanism As the Cure for What Ills Humanity

Editor's Note:

This piece from another Humanist Chapter makes extensive use of the term "non-believer." My personal prejudice is to define myself and my beliefs by what they are instead of what they are not. I could refer to myself as non-black, non-female, non-homosexual, etc. Possible word choices to use in lieu of non-believer include secularist or free thinker.

—Wayne Wilson

What has become very clear to me is that without our freethought community the hopes of a safer, richer, and kinder humanity dwindle. Freedom of thought is a human right. It is an equal right. It is at once a liberation, as it is in some places around the globe, a Scarlet Letter. And for those people who are not free to express their ideas and conclusions, there is ongoing danger to life, imprisonment, shunning and other retribution against the nonbeliever and their family.

So, here's the thing and probably the core reason as to why I identify as a humanist and non-believer. I see humanism and the conclusion that there isn't a divine force in the universe, as the ultimate acceptance of nature and reality. That because I see this as such, it equally informs my ability to have and lead a just, moral, and happy life.

I've kicked the tires of various religions and have found them wanting. I've read other spiritual philosophies, and because of my curiosity still research competing views of how best to be in the world. However, as I look to the history and current actions of organized faith traditions and spiritual movements, I see so much lacking.

But thank the cosmos for each of us!

According to the statistics, atheists, agnostics and humanists as a group have the highest level of COVID-19 vaccine adoption. Somewhere north of 90%. Beating out EVERY other social, ethnic, racial, and religious group category. Perhaps this is why reason matters most and humanism serves as my (and our?) view of how best we should treat ourselves, as well as others and the planet. There are deep moral, social and evolutionary consequences to our vaccine adoption and they are each positive.

Those best prepared to lead the expanding conversations are the same people in our diverse movement and community. The non-believers, humanists and secularists who fight for reason and kindness both in the present and for generations to come.

So, break those chains! Do not be a slave. Do not ask permission to think and be who you truly are. But learn to bask in our modernity and your liberation as a nonbeliever.

—Dr. David I. Orenstein
Board President

*Secular Humanist Society of New York
Reprinted from the May PIQUE newsletter*





Chaplain's Corner

(Continued from page 1)

on how you look and speak, for example. I've worked at the Utah State Prison for five years and I encourage volunteers to do as much good as the system allows.

Positive Psychology is one of my favorite fields, and it is literally the science of thriving. Ikigai is another powerful idea.

I personally believe that the meaning of life is to live it. Which seems silly to say, but it's surprisingly hard to really open yourself up to life. I also think the purpose of life is to help things be better.

Sleeping At Last is another of my favorite artists. Every night before I go to bed, I listen to Saturn, the refrain of which is "How rare and beautiful it is to even exist".

The Rabbi Joshua Heschel said "Just to live is a blessing. Just to be is holy".

But you didn't ask about the purpose of life. You asked what makes life worth living. I'll admit that for much of my life, I resented being alive. It hurts so much. I've always felt big feelings. I like this sequence of questions: How do your mind and body work? What do you want to do about it? What help/resources do you need?

I'm prone to joy and wonder as well as sadness and anxiety, for example. Relationships, beauty, art, the experience of being conscious... for me all these make life worth living.

What makes life worth living is a question only you can answer, but I'm glad to be part of the conversation.

I'd love to hear your thoughts about what makes you happy and fulfilled.

Witnessing with you,
Jared

Ikigai relates to career fulfillment, and I think it is a significant improvement over the simplistic "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Ikigai describes the overlap between What you love, what you are good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for. Love + Skill = Passion; Love + Need = Mission; Need + Pay = Vocation; Skill + Pay = Profession. And Ikigai is that precious spot that captures it all. As a Chaplain, I am constantly amazed and

grateful that I get to live in that space.



Positive Psychology addresses all of thriving, not just job satisfaction. Human thriving has been distilled to the categories summarized in the acronym PERMA: Positive Emotions, Engagement (think flow), Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement. It is an important challenge for us as Humanists to provide responses as good as religion in all of these categories.

So, I'd like to leave each of you with the same question. For you, what makes life worth living? As I shared with Maria, this is a quest and question that each of us need to engage.

Where is your joy? Where is your gratitude? What makes you glad that you are conscious and alive? I have deep respect for the harder, deeper, more grounded emotions. I feel an inexorable drive to facilitate wellness. As a Chaplain, I companion people on their worst days. I help them make peace with life and death. It isn't always pleasant, but it is deeply fulfilling.

Here do you get your sense of fulfillment? What is it about life that makes it feel worth it?

Not what's the point, but where is the joy? Where is the gratitude? What makes you glad you are conscious and alive, what makes you glad you are here?

—Chaplain Jared Anderson



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!**

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 Craig Wilkinson, MD

Key Contacts:

Melanie White-Curtis—385-495-3786
 melaniewhitecurtis@gmail.com
 Wayne Wilson—801-561-0406
 wwilson@xmission.com

Website:

<https://HumanistsOfUtah.org>

Newsletter Contributors:

Jared Anderson
 Bob Lane
 Dr. David I. Orenstein
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Humanists of Utah
P.O. Box 1043
West Jordan, UT 84084

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- ◆ *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.
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All Public in person
meetings are CANCELLED
again until further notice
Due to the Pandemic



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A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

P.O. Box 1043
West Jordan, UT 84084