



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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Why Doesn't Humanism Work Better?

What does humanism have that religion doesn't? YOU! At least kind of, since you are reading this column...

There are lots of playful answers we could give to this question. Lies, stupid people, ghosts... (unfortunately, humanism does indeed have a fraction of that list). Why don't more humans call themselves humanists? Sometimes I call humanism the coolest worldview people have never heard of, similar to how I call Chaplaincy the coolest job people have rarely thought of. I'm not asking why more humans aren't humanists, because they are!

I am fascinated by this puzzle, about how almost every human is a humanist but doesn't think to admit it, and why, with all of its problems, religion remains so powerful. Virtually every human being in 2023 is a humanist. How can I know? Because virtually every current global institution is humanist. The core idea of humanism is a human-centered approach to life. If you are asking yourself "Um, what else would we center life around, other than humans?" that shows just how deeply humanism has saturated our world and worldviews. Politics, the Arts, Economics, Education, Business... every one of our cultural institutions (other than religion) is human-centered, and therefore humanist. Ergo, we are all humanists. So why aren't more of us excited about being humanists? Why don't more of us claim humanism?

Let's talk about religion for a minute. Religion is weird. Religion is powerful. Religion is powerful in part because it is weird. Religion is powerful because it is both comprehensive and implicit. It impacts every part of believers' lives, and they take for granted that their beliefs are real. Other cultural institutions are explicitly human. Religion is the only human institution that pretends it isn't a human institution. Religion is taken for granted internally, and creates friction externally, which then triggers tribalism. It's a powerful and often terrifying recipe.

Religion is also a reason why humanism isn't more powerful and organized. Many of us are responding to or reacting against religion. We are humanists precisely because we don't like

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Territories

Humanism Works?

Last October I included the lyrics of a song by the rock group Rush titled “Witch Hunt” which is a song with a message. I decided to expand on my love of music and especially message songs this month. Do you ever think about what group, album, or songs you would put on your top 10 or even top 20 lists? I do, and the Rush album “Power Windows” is right up there for me. The titles of some of the songs give a hint as to the message, like “The Big Money” which speaks to how big money goes around the world doing good and bad, or the track “Manhattan Project” which is about the beginning of the atomic age, with a passage that says, “The big shots—try to hold it back, fools try to wish it away.” But My favorite on this album is “Territories.” For me it speaks to the fact that humanity is so fearful and warlike. I am going to transcribe the lyrics here for you to read through a time or two. [Click here to see a YouTube video of the song.](#)

Territories

I see the Middle Kingdom between Heaven and Earth

Like the Chinese call the country of their birth
We all figure that our homes are set above
Other people than the ones we know and love
In every place with a name
They play the same territorial game
Hiding behind the lines
Sending up warning signs
(refrain)

The whole wide world

An endless universe

Yet we keep looking through

The eyeglass in reverse

Don't feed the people

But we feed the machines

Can't really feel

What international means

In different circles

We keep holding our ground

Indifferent circles

We keep spinning round and round

We see so many tribes—overrun and undermined

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religion. We've been burned by religion and burned by cultural institutions. In addition, we are constantly being told what to do, what to like, and so current humanism often has an independent, anti-joining flavor.

Unitarian Universalism provides a fascinating bridge between religion and humanism. In fact, the UU humanists are likely the largest group of congregational humanists in existence. It's fitting that Humanists of Utah has met at the local UU building. UU benefits from its religious history and organization, including the humanists, but it also illustrates the limits of this type of humanism. There's nothing to fight about, not much specificity.

So, what's the key to being a better humanist? One idea is to not make yourself a humanist, but to make humanism yours. Get specific. Get neurotic if that's your thing. Figure out what you are already passionate about and claim that as your humanist beliefs and rituals. For example, I have created my own Pantheon (I'm dramatic like that), and it's been a powerful practice to meditate and reflect on the principles of Life, Elegance, Expedience, and Integrity (My Pantheon personifies my value of prioritizing elegant efficient approaches to well-being).

And as you figure out what kind of humanist you are, what makes you a passionate human, join the conversation. From this point of authenticity, we can create a sustainable community, at whatever level you choose to engage.

—Jared Anderson
HoU Chaplain





President's Message

I hope that this finds you well and happy. This year is offering a hopeful perspective in terms of rising from the ashes of the previous couple of years of chaos and turmoil. We have all experienced heavy things and persevered. We have all learned much. To add to your learning, I want to offer a bit of interesting information about who we are and what/why we believe the way we do. The humanistic perspective is a psychological approach that values human potential, creativity, and free will. It emerged in the mid-20th century as a reaction to deterministic views of psychoanalysis and behaviorism. It was influenced by philosophers like Sartre and existentialism, and by human rights and social justice movements. It was pioneered by psychologists like Maslow and Rogers, who proposed theories of self-actualization and client-centered therapy. This is where Maslow's hierarchy of human needs was born. The theory states that there are certain needs that we must meet to grow and develop. It emphasizes empathy, respect, and unconditional positive regard for each individual as a unique and holistic person. It has applications in education, counselling, health, and social work, as well as in personal growth and development. It is

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Hag-Seed ~Book Review~

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian author with more than 35 volumes of fiction, poetry, children's literature, and non-fiction to her credit. She is perhaps most famous for her *Handmaid's Tale*.

Hag-Seed is a retelling of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; indeed, the story is retold several times through the eyes of different characters of the novel. Felix, the book's main character, is shocked when his planned production of *Tempest* at a Theater Festival is cancelled with political machinations at his longtime employer. He goes incognito, adopts a second persona, and contacts a local prison and uses inmates to film a production of Shakespeare's farewell play.

The Tempest is among my favorites of Shakespeare's plays, I've seen it many times over the years. I really enjoyed this book; while I no longer read books, I listened to it on Audible narrated by R.H. Thompson who does an amazing job of reading. Felix and other characters have active, some extremely active, imaginations and Thompson's characterizations add a great deal of context to the novel.

The title *Hag-Seed* means the progeny of a witch. Caliban was birthed by Sycorax, is one of the leading characters in the story. He is a monster that Prospero, the main character who has been exiled to an island with his young daughter Miranda enslaves. Caliban, I learned in my class at university in 1972 and 73, may have been inspired by early 17th century explorers returning to England from the New World who brought Native Americans with them to display in Court. Besides Caliban there is a spirit character named Ariel who was imprisoned within a tree by Sycorax who does not actually appear in the play. Ariel was released from the tree by Prospero but had to serve him to earn freedom. It is Ariel who created the tempest and directed much of the confusion among the other characters.

A *New York Times* book review says, "A marvel of gorgeous yet economical prose, in the service of a story that's utterly heartbreaking yet pierced by humor, with a plot that retains considerable subtlety even as the original's back story falls neatly into place." If you decide to read this book and are not familiar with the play, I suggest you start with the Epilogue (chapter 50 in Audible version) which as a succinct summary of Shakespeare's story) which will help you follow the sometimes rambling development of the story's many threads.

—Wayne Wilson
HoU Board Member



Territories

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While their invaders dream of lands they've
left behind
Better people better food—and better beer
Why move around the world when Eden was
so near?
The bosses get talking so tough
And if that wasn't evil enough
We get the drunken and passionate pride
Of the citizens along for the ride
(refrain)
They shoot without shame
In the name of a piece of dirt
For a change of accent
Or the color of your shirt
Better the pride that resides
In a citizen of the world
Than the pride that divides
When a colorful rag is unfurled

Before I bid you adieu, can we talk politics for a minute? I'm sure I'm not the first to see in such simple terms, but I was thinking of how to describe the difference between Democrats and Republicans without writing a book. While I know that generalizing about groups of people is troublesome, I put it this way. Republicans do things to people. Democrats do things for people. If you think about it, you can come up with many examples. Just one big example is healthcare where democrats gave us the affordable care act and republicans continue to try to take it away. Of course, the list is very long.

I am hoping we will be scheduling a discussion group get together soon. It has been far too long since we've had any kind of meeting. I have suggested we meet at Holiday city hall where they have several meeting rooms of various sizes and plenty of parking. There are also outdoor facilities for a barbeque when weather permits. I am looking forward to springtime and getting together with some rational free thinking folks.

—Robert Lane
HoU Board member

President's Message

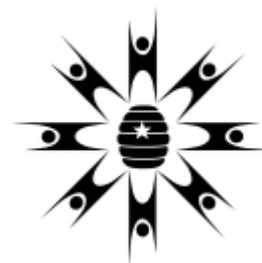
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critical thinking like this that enables individuals to grow in their lives, to self-regulate in ways that contribute their world both on a personal level, a familial level, a community level and ultimately on a global level for the betterment of all.

To some, this may seem like simplistic beliefs and that “it can't be THAT simple”. Actually, yes it can. It is a foundation of thought that you build on in your lives. Yes, there is so much more, but this is how it all starts. For each of us. It starts accountability for yourself. You, and you alone are responsible for your life. Yes, there are variables and not everything is in your control from outside stimulus. However, YOU are able to decide how you want to feel, want to respond (or don't), what you choose to believe (or not believe) and how you want to present yourself into your life. The best part is that this can always change, whenever you want to. It's so wonderfully empowering. The most difficult part is just learning how to drive your life with these basic thought processes in place. That is the real adventure.

This year is going to be full of growth, adventure and rising from the ashes for our group. The world is a different place than it was pre-pandemic. It is critical to keeping this in mind as we re-evaluate how we want to present to you, to each other, to the community and to the world. Welcome to the new year of growth and prosperity. We are excited you are here with us and can't wait to see you soon.

—Melanie White-Curtis
HoU President





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!**

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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Ariel the spirit from *The Tempest* who has been played as/by both male and female actors.

Membership/Renewal Application

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 \$90 Regular 2-year Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
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 Please send a *FREE* trial Subscription to the Utah Humanist
 \$_____ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism

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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.

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Smith's Grocery Stores

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All Public in person
meetings are CANCELLED
again until further notice
Due to the Pandemic



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