



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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A Restart

On March 19 we held what you might call our first meeting of more than just board members getting together. It was a pleasant surprise as we had most of the board members plus four or five members and three or four non-member individuals who expressed an interest in our organization.

We did a little chapter business and discussed what we might want to do in regard to discussion groups, general meetings, and special events, much like we did previously. I wasn't actually taking minutes, but I can list some of the points I remember we touched on.

The meeting was held at the Holladay Harmons upstairs common area. While a generally suitable venue, there were issues and we need to seek a new meeting place. We can always fall back on many of Harmon's stores if we need to. I have been advocating that we use the meeting rooms available at the City of Holladay, City Hall. The building use to be an elementary school. Half of the building is a police station

and half is the city hall. There are four rooms for rent, two large and two small. The largest has a capacity of 200 with a stage and screen and podium and a full kitchen. The other large room has a capacity of 100 with a small kitchen. The two small rooms have a capacity of 50, one with tables and chairs. Other facilities they have for rent include: Holladay city park gazebo, Holladay city park picnic Pavilion, Knudsen park picnic pavilion and Knudsen park outdoor classroom. All are reasonably priced.

We're planning to have our next discussion group/ board meeting on Saturday the 15th of April at the Holladay city hall John Holladay Room from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. I hope you'll consider joining us. The address is 4580 South 2300 East, Holladay, Utah 84117.

Along with discussion group meetings we committed to having our first Darwin Day in a few years. Next February, Dr. Craig Wilkinson is taking charge of the event. I am happy that Darwin Day will be back! It is one of the events

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Chaplain's Corner

Entropy and Empathy

“How rare and beautiful it is to even exist...the universe was made just to be seen by my eyes”.

So go my favorite lyrics of one of my favorite songs, a personal lullaby that I listen to every night before bed. These phrases are both inspiring and scientifically defensible... our existence is staggeringly improbable, conscious existence even more so. And though we can't attribute meaning or intention to the universe, it is demonstrably true that we are the universe experiencing itself. The universe came into existence, we came into existence, and now we are experiencing ourselves, each other, and the universe.

Whether existence is beautiful is a more difficult question. A fair summary must acknowledge that existence is both beautiful and dreadful, awesome, and awful all at once. And on many days, it can seem like everything is falling apart. As Newton's second law of thermodynamics states, everything IS falling apart! Entropy always increases, which is why we are marching toward the inevitable heat death of the universe, a state of maximum entropy.

Belief in God can and does bring a delusional, avoidant comfort, the assurance that despite all evidence to the contrary, a super powerful being is in control of everything and will make sure that everything turns out ok. Of course, this belief causes its own (theo)logical problems, as Epicurus so succinctly and devastatingly summarized: If God is unable to prevent evil, then he is not all-powerful. If God is not willing to prevent evil, then he is not all-good. If God is both willing and able to prevent evil, then why does evil exist?

We humanists share neither the comfort

nor struggle of explaining our human suffering: Nature simply doesn't care. Not only does Nature not care, but the mechanisms of Nature are heartbreakingly inefficient, from our conscious, empathetic perspective. Why is there suffering? Why does everything fall apart? Because that is the math of the Universe. In a letter to his close friend J. D. Hooker, Charles Darwin complained, “What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and horribly cruel work of nature!” As just one example, all of us can imagine baby sea turtles struggling across sand to sea... these beautiful beings can live a century, but as few as 1 in 10,000 survive to adulthood, or a hundredth of a percent. Nature doesn't care. It works, whatever the cost.

But here's the pivot. Nature DOES care. The Universe DOES care. At least... a part of Nature cares. A part of the Universe cares. Specifically, the human part of nature cares. At least some of us. Other animals care too: elephants, dogs, and orcas come immediately to mind. The more conscious life is, the more it cares about the preciousness of life.

Personally, I find this framework to be clarifying, sobering, and inspiring, all at once. Social entropy and efficiency explain why in general, people coast along and do the minimum they have to, often while complaining about it. It also explains why often the worst circumstances bring out the best in us, or more precisely, bring out the best in some of us. Entropy explains why it is so hard to change systems, as systems seek to stay the same and individuals in those systems are often willing to cause

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Chaplain's Corner

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discomfort to others in order to minimize their own.

We find ourselves in a race to the death between cataclysm and innovation. Yes, chaos hurts. But it is also inevitable, and it is also fuel for greater order. Tony Robbins popularized the idea that change does not happen until the pain of the pain becomes greater than the pain of staying the same.

It is ok, even inevitable, that we grapple with grief as well as gratitude, and that we both marvel and mourn. Grief is its own gift. As we grieve the costs of entropy and the inefficiency of nature, we are also motivated and empowered to decrease suffering and increase efficiency, at least in our own lives. We are the few, the precious few, who see and feel and feel motivated to do something about what we see and feel.

We can rage against the dying of the light, but we should not resist it. Entropy is simply how the universe works, but we are the order among that entropy. We can draw from the chaos, feel motivated by the cost, and become a good infection that can work toward healing the world. Or at least our small part of it.

And that is enough.

—Chaplain Jared Anderson

A Restart

(Continued from page 1)

I'm most proud of. We have sponsored this event for many years in the past.

We also decided to revive our Thomas Paine Day, or as we decided at some point to call it Founding Father's Day, possibly in July or September. Probably in July we will also be planning to have our annual BBQ in August. I'm not sure we will have a general meeting every month yet.

I almost forgot that we decided that we will be moving our meetings to the weekend and during daylight hours as many members now and in the past have commented that driving at night was difficult and kept them from attending our meetings. We have also ruled out meeting at the Unitarian Church where weekends are not available and would also likely need to be after dark.

We also talked a little about current issues, had some refreshments and generally enjoyed being able to meet in person again finally.

I know I've probably forgotten some of the things we discussed, but this will have to do.

I hope all is well and I hope you will join us soon.

—Robert Lane
HoU Chapter Member

Discussion Group

Informal Discussion

Planning

Saturday April 15, 2023

1:00-3:00 PM

John Holladay Room at City Hall

4580 S. 2300 East

Holladay, UT 84117

Light refreshments will be provided.



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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