



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



March 2009

[www.humanists.net/nm/](http://www.humanists.net/nm/) [fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com](mailto:fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com)

## Quotes of the Month

“Thought is more important than art. To revere art and have no understanding of the process that forces it into existence, is finally not even to understand what art is.”

Amiri Baraka

There are some people who, if they don't already know, you can't tell 'em.

Yogi Berra

## HSNM Family Co-op

### Alternative Children's Sunday School

March 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 am

#### *Regular Meetings*

Ground Level, College of Santa Fe, Albuquerque  
Campus, Pinetree Corporate Center  
4501 Indian School Rd. NE

## Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am

*What Rights Do We Get From the 10<sup>th</sup>  
Amendment*

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

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

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

**Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>**

### Informal Meeting

*General Discussion*

This Meeting is for Members Only or Special  
Invitation Only – For invitation please call Fred  
March - 323-6784

Refreshments: Adela & Harry Willson  
Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

**Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>**

### Topical Discussion

*Is There a Good Side to the Economic  
Meltdown?*

Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE

**Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>**

### Speaker Meeting

*Women's History Month Presentation*

Summer Little MA, Program Manager, UNM  
Women's Resource Center

Refreshments: John Waldrop  
UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

**H**umanism 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*

*Carolyn Kaye: Secretary*

*Ron Herman: Director of Classes*

*Jeff Cornelius: Family Co-op*

*Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor*

*Janet Johnson: Book Club*

*Ted Cloak: Community Liaison*

*Phil Smith: Webmaster*

*Membership Director: Open*

*Social Coordinator: Open*

*Publicity Director: Open*

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published  
monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership  
or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$12  
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](mailto:paragon2012@comcast.net)

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

**Who Needs Stimulation?**

The words "stimulus package" are floating around in every so-called "developed country." "Stimulus" can mean different things: a sound, a smell, a light, a goad, a cattle prod. They don't mean any of that. They want to stimulate "the economy," that is, make money circulate. So they send money, give money, several billion here, several dozen billion there, several hundred billion somewhere else.

What is this? Give money? To whom? Who needs stimulation? The first attempt to move the economy by giving away huge chunks of public money wasn't called "stimulation," but "bail-out." The Bank Bail-out -- 750 billion dollars to banks, that is, to bankers. The intent was to stimulate the flow of credit. We give the bankers money for them to lend to borrowers, who need it for assorted projects that would energize the economy. It didn't work. The bankers kept the money. They used the money to buy competitor banks, and to pay themselves obscene bonuses. The economy was not stimulated.

So, back to our question -- who needs stimulation?  
The following come to mind right away:

- persons who lost their pensions,
- persons who lost their jobs,
- persons who lost their homes,
- persons who moved back in with their parents,
- persons who live under the bridge,
- sick persons who don't get health care.

Remember how we used to shake our heads when members of the richest 5% in the country quoted GNP [gross national product] and average income figures [they were up slightly], and then said that the economy was on a good foundation and that everything was wonderful? We knew it wasn't. The top 5% were doing well; the rest of us were not. There is hunger in America. There are homeless people in our town.

A little math could help us understand this. Note the difference between average income and median income. Take a pool of 100 people. 99 of them make \$100 a week. One makes \$10,100 a week. Average is the total divided by the number of persons.

$$99 \times \$100 = \$9,900$$

$$1 \times \$10,100 = \$10,100$$

$$\text{total} = \$20,000$$

$$\text{average} = \$2,000 \text{ per week!}$$

But you and I, part of the herd, know we made half that. No one is doing well, except that one person. He's doing so well, he doubles the average.

Looking for "median income," the amount made by the guy in the middle, number 50, say, and it is still \$100.

In recent weeks the situation in the real world has become worse. GDP [gross domestic product] is dropping. Even the top 5% are losing. The bottom 95% have been losing for a long time. The whole world is in bad shape, some of it much worse than here. The history of how things got so bad is told in *THE SHOCK DOCTRINE*, by Naomi Klein. I recommend every citizen read it, but I warn you, it is a different kind of stimulation. It made me furious, all over again.

A very serious danger, to everyone, is runaway inflation. Remember Germany, China, Argentina, Zimbabwe. Thank the Powers that Be, "It can't happen here!" "Pray that it not happen in winter."

So then, who needs stimulation? Free money, I mean. It begins to become obvious. Give money first to those who have no income. Then give some to those who have little income. Then to those who have little fixed income. At this point moralists will break in with, "But they didn't earn it!"

What? Do you think those in the top 5% earned it? The IRS even has a category, especially for them, called "unearned income." We're not trying to check on who earned what. We're trying to stimulate the economy. This is the "trickle up" theory of economics, and it would work, if we dared try it.

There is no need to stimulate those with huge incomes. What would they spend it on? What do they still need? They get salaries and bonuses in the hundreds of millions of dollars. What could they possibly still want? More! More, you say. More what? "More," by itself, isn't anything. More candy, more ice cream, more houses, more cars, more companies -- it is ridiculous and obscene.

We need to stimulate the bottom, not the top.

*Harry Willson*

## **Parenting Beyond Belief: Evolution for Breakfast**

Column by Dale McGowan, Ph. D.

[HumanistNetworkNews.org](http://HumanistNetworkNews.org)

[www.humaniststudies.org](http://www.humaniststudies.org)

Getting kids (or adults, for that matter) to comprehend evolution by natural selection can be tricky. If you say, "A long time ago, apes turned into humans," you've only frosted the cupcake of confusion with the icing of ignorance.

So how do you do it? One bite at a time. The old "how-do-you-eat-an-elephant" joke is right on the money.

Religious education is one of the many big ideas best consumed in this way. No big lectures, no Bible marathons required. A toe-dip a day for 18 years will get you wetter than a whole catechistical bath. Best of all, you don't get all prune.

Same for evolution, which is best taught the same way it happens—slowly and in tiny steps over time.

When we lived in Minneapolis, our family used to take walks through an area called the Quaking Bog. I spotted a fawn once and waved the kids over:

DAD: Look, look. See the deer? You can just barely see it against the leaves.

ERIN (then 8): It's almost invisible.

DELANEY (then 4): Whoa. If I was an animal that ate deers, I'd never see them. I'd just starve.

DAD: Unless there was a bright pink one.

*(They laughed. The deer bolted.)*

CONNOR (10): Oh, good job, girls!

DAD: Okay, pink and slow. I think I'd eat nothing but slow, pink deer.

### **(Munch)**

That's one bite of evolution. No need to hammer it home with big hairy terminology or connect every dot on the spot. Just take a bite. *Mmmm, Daaarwin.*

On another hike, we spotted well-camouflaged moths on a tree trunk, and I shared the story of the peppered moth. Peppered moths are light grey with dots of black and brown all over. This was perfect camouflage for the light-colored tree bark in their habitat in 18th century England. A few were completely black, but only a few, because they were easy for birds to spot and eat.

In the 19th century, factory smoke blackened the tree bark in the moths' range. The black moths were now perfectly camouflaged and quickly became the favored phenotype, while the light grey became visibly delicious. The proportions switched — almost all of the moths in the forest were now black and only a few light grey.

Experiments were conducted to confirm the hypothesis in the mid-twentieth century. Errors subsequently discovered in those experiments have led creationists to trumpet the supposed dethroning of the peppered moth as an illustration of natural selection. But subsequent, better-designed experiments have re-confirmed the original hypothesis to the satisfaction of leading experts on moths and on melanism.

**(Munch)**

Another bite of evolution.

Another great selection story centers on the heikegani, a crab native to the Inland Sea of Japan near Dan-no-ura. The sea was the site of a major battle in 1185 between Heike and Genji warriors. The Heike were trounced, and the survivors are said to have thrown themselves into the sea in disgrace.

The spirits of the defeated samurai were said to have gone into the local crabs. And no wonder-- the shell of the crab includes markings that evoke a scowling samurai warrior. And I don't mean "evoke" like Ursa Major evokes a bear (which it doesn't). I mean the crab looks like a scowling samurai warrior.

In the *Cosmos* television series, Carl Sagan offered a hypothesis to explain the phenomenon, one first advanced by Julian Huxley.

Fisherman in the Dan-no-ura region have known the samurai legend for eight centuries. During that time, if the nets pulled up a crab with markings resembling a human face, even mildly so, the fisherman — understandably loathe to disturb the spirit of the samurai — would throw it back. Crabs with less face like markings would end up dipped in butter.

The more face like, the more likely it would be tossed back in with a girlish scream, free once more to fornicate with others of its uncanny ilk. Eight hundred years of this and you'll find yourself looking at some pretty scream-worthy samurai crabs.

I told my girls the story of the heike crab at bedtime a few weeks ago. They understood it and loved it. It even got a coveted "That's so cool" from the youngest.

**(Munch)**

Another bite of evolution.

One morning a few weeks back as my girls ate breakfast, I opened the bottle of their chewable vitamins.

"I want an orange one," said Erin.

"I'm well aware."

"Me too," said Laney.

"I know what color you want, girls, you tell me every morning." I tapped two vitamins into my hand. Both purple. I poured out a bunch more. All purple. "Pfft. Of course," I said, showing the handful of purple vitamins.

Erin chuckled. "That's because we ask for orange every day."

It hit me like a brick. "Hey, Erin! It's just like the heike crabs!"

"The wha...oh, the crabs in Japan! Omigosh, it is!" Just as the fisher folk selected and rejected crab phenotypes, we had selected and rejected vitamin "phenotypes" until purple ruled the bottle.

**(Munch)**

*Mmmm.* Happy birthday, Charles.

**Friendly Philosophers**

**Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Open Forum

Bring a Your Own Topic for General Discussion

**Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>**

*The Economic Meltdown*

Dr. John Tyson

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

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**Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group**

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

**Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 9am**

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

**Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

Special Event!!

Julia Sweeney's "Letting Go of God"

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

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**New Mexicans for Science and Reason**

**Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

*The Age of the Earth*

Dave Thomas

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402