



Humanist Society of New Mexico



March 2010

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

Quotes of the Month

One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.

Maya Angelou

We could never learn to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world.

Helen Keller

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, March 13th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Visitors please contact Fred March at 505-323-6784
for details or questions.

Refreshments: John Waldrop

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, March 20th

Topical Discussion

Open Discussion

Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, March 27th

Speaker Meeting

HSNM Visits the Mind Research Network

See details inside

Humanist Minute: Ted Cloak

Refreshments: Leland Franks

HSNM Family Co-op

Alternative Children's Sunday School

Call 505-292-4375 for meeting times

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, March 6th, 10:30am

Taxation

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

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

Humanism 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

Secretary: Open

Ron Herman: Director of Classes

Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor

Janet Johnson: Book Club

Ted Cloak: Community Liaison

Phil Smith: Webmaster

Membership Director: Open

Social Coordinator: Open

Publicity Director: Open

Family Co-op: Open

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$15 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

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

HSNM to Visit Mind Research Network

By Carolyn Kaye

Join us as we visit a world-class mind research facility that is located one-half mile from the UNM Law Center where we usually meet. The Mind Research Network (MRN) conducts exiting frontier research on the functions of the human brain and a variety of brain disorders and injuries that impact all of us . You may have seen the director interviewed on PBS last year. Ever wondered whether female and male brains are truly different? Or what the latest 21st century mind research has discovered about diagnosing and treating individuals with schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, addiction, substance abuse and other brain-based illnesses? Our visit will include a presentation by Dr. John Phillips, Medical Director, who is responsible for reviewing proposed research and a tour of the architecturally magnificent research facility.

Directions: From the corner of Lomas and University, head north on University to Tucker (first right). Turn right and go east bound on Tucker less than 1/4 mile to Yale--no street sign, but there is a turquoise-lettered sign saying "Children's Psychiatric" among others. Turn left until it dead-ends, lab out 1/4 mile. North Golf Course is on your right. Building is last on your left and called Domenici Hall. There is also a sign on the building that says "Mind Institute."

From UNM LAW-- at Mountain and Stanford, south on Stanford 1 block to Tucker. Right on Tucker about .2 mile to stop sign. There is a turquoise-lettered sign saying "North Campus, North Golf Course, Children's Psychiatric" plus others. DO NOT CROSS WASH, that's too far. Right on this street (which is Yale, but unlettered) to dead-end, as above, and Domenici Hall, Mind Institute.

Park in lot north of Domenici Hall overlooking the city (wow view!) or in the dirt lot. Enter through the north door.

Egalitarianism, Hierarchies, and Human Societies

By Jerry Gilbert

Egalitarianism in its ideal form refers to equal access to resources and sociopolitical power. Decision-making is done by consensus in which each person has a voice. If the group shares assets (food, tools, technology, etc.), they are distributed fairly (not identically) throughout the group, and each member has access to more-or-less the same resources as any other member. Equality between the sexes is probably greater among hunter-gatherers [H-Gs] than in most other societies around the world. !Kung culture downplays many of the attitudes that encourage male dominance in other societies (Shostak, 1981).

“To get to an egalitarian social system, we need a social equilibrium produced either by individuals or groups controlling one another's selfishness [Strong Reciprocity] or by members of groups constraining their own selfishness—[i.e.], resisting the temptation to dominate subordinates even when it is not in their immediate interest (Krebs, 753-754).” Resisting the temptation to dominate is not very common in most societies, which is why “controlling” mechanisms become necessary. Several foraging societies use such mechanisms as criticizing, shaming, rejection, failure to provide aid, ostracism, and violence (Gurven 2004, Marlowe 2004).

Societies based on a hierarchical system represent the antithesis of egalitarianism. They are typified by a strong social structure, an intense striving for dominance and status through competition of various sorts, a limited amount of cooperation and resource sharing, etc. Hierarchies are evident in most primate societies. H-G societies tend to have non-hierarchical egalitarian social structures (especially in the more nomadic societies, which generally are not able to store surplus food), and there may not be any structured leadership. In addition to social and economic equality in H-G societies there may be a degree of sexual equality as well.

Egalitarian cultures are typically kinship-oriented (both genetic and “cultural”) because they value harmony over wealth or status which are economically-oriented. The latter type of society endorses competition, superiority, hierarchies, and rewards for winning economically-oriented contests. Kinship-oriented cultures actively work to prevent social hierarchies from developing, otherwise there would be an increase in conflict and instability.

Two important factors which enable H-G

societies to maintain their egalitarianism and cooperation are remoteness and size. Many H-G societies are relatively isolated from other H-G societies, and especially removed from “modern civilization.” This reduces the amount of environmental variation and outside pressures they have to deal with.

Size is also a crucial factor. The smaller the group, the easier it is to know everyone sufficiently to build trust. Trust, in turn, helps build cooperation. Not only is cooperation developed for dealing with regular tasks, but when there is an environmental crisis (storm, drought, predator) it is easier to mobilize the society to coordinate in coping with the problem. As the size of a H-G society increases, there is the advantage of more people to do work. However, there is also greater need for food and a more complex system for food distribution, particularly if the larger group expands into a larger habitat.

In maintaining traditions of egalitarianism and cooperation, there is an optimum range of size. Beyond this optimum, significant growth may increase variation and diversity that make it harder to maintain a sense of social unity and loyalty. Gradually, the society would partition into groups—perhaps along lines of kinship, values, wealth, strength, etc. As growth continues, each member of the society would experience an increasing conflict of loyalty between the whole society and the smaller group. The former reflects a longer history of allegiance, but the latter reflects more specific points of commonality.

Eventually, the growing allegiance to the smaller group would lead to an increase in cooperation among members within that group, and a decrease in cooperation with members of the society at large who are not members of that specific group. As the society fractures into a number of groups, this separation can contribute to an “us vs. them” mentality which, in turn, would influence a ranking of the value of members of the society, which would accelerate the development of hierarchies (Kurzban and Neuberg 2005).

Large societies cannot maintain a level of egalitarianism or cooperation that extends throughout the entire society. This results in an amalgam of selfish and cooperative values that yield selfish and cooperative institutions. In modern industrialized nations such as the U.S., each citizen has multiple identities at different levels, such that loyalties are greater within smaller levels. This can change when the society as a whole is threatened by war, natural catastrophe, or other danger. Therefore, it is in the interests of a H-G society to develop mechanisms for maintaining an optimum size and for resistance against efforts by insiders or outsiders to tamper with the historical traditions.

In a democracy (or republic) such as ours, the values advocated by our Founders and Framers and embodied in our Constitution, can be encouraged and modeled on a regular basis to be demonstrated by individuals and groups at all levels of identity. However, some segments of a society as large and diverse as ours may require a hierarchy; e.g., the military, law enforcement, scouting, sports etc., which strive to balance stratification with teamwork.

References

- Gurven, M. (2004). To Give and To Give Not: The Behavioral Ecology of Human Food Transfers. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 27, 543-583.
- Krebs, D. (2005). The Evolution of Morality. In *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*. (ed. D. Buss). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Kurzban, R. and Neuberg, S. (2005). Managing Ingroup and Outgroup Relationships. In *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology* (ed. D. Buss). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Marlowe, F. (2004). What Explains Hadza Food Sharing? *Research in Economic Anthropology*, 23, 69-88.
- Shostak, M. (1981). The Story of a !Kung Woman.

Humanism on the Move

Staff Report for HumanistNewsNetwork.org

February 17, 2010

The American Humanist Association celebrated Darwin Day last Friday by calling on all Americans to get involved in the fight to preserve the teaching of evolution in public schools.

"It's disgraceful that over 150 years after the publication of 'On the Origin of Species' the battle over evolution is still being played out in science classrooms," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "Efforts to insinuate 'Intelligent Design' or to 'teach the controversy' about evolution have been launched by anti-science, far-right ideologues who care more about enforcing a narrow religious agenda than providing our kids with the best possible science education."

Darwin Day, which is held every year on February 12, commemorates Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution by natural selection. Each year, events are held around the country and the world to

celebrate Darwin and science, including lectures, documentary screenings, potlucks and other events. This year, over 100 local events have been planned.

Several weeks ago, the American Humanist Association launched a petition that called on President Obama to issue a presidential proclamation declaring February 12 to be Darwin Day and recognize the importance of teaching evolution in science classes. Although the White House has so far been mute on the issue, the AHA says it is not giving up. "We'll be redoubling our efforts for next year," said Speckhardt. "Our petition garnered over 10,000 signatures after circulating for only a short while. Our goal is to hit 100,000 signatures before next year's celebration to really drive home to the Obama Administration that this is something mainstream America wants to see happen."

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, March 1st

Open Forum

Bring a Your Own Topic for General Discussion

Monday, March 15th

TBD

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

The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico

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

Sunday, March 7th, 9am

Showing Best of "*Penn Says: Religion*"

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, March 16th

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

New Mexicans for Science and Reason

Wednesday, March 10th, 7pm

Behind the Scenes on a TV Ghost Show

Benjamin Radford

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402