

## WAR IS PEACE Gary L. Bennett

In George Orwell's novel, *1984*, on the wall of the Ministry of Truth is the slogan "**WAR IS PEACE.**" Spoiler alert! When the reader first sees this slogan it seems absurd. But as the novel progresses the meaning of the slogan becomes ominously clear: A country at war will have peace at home. One has only to look at such wars as World War 2, Korea and the invasion of Iraq to see that. Opponents of the U.S. entry into World War 1 were arrested and/or deported. In the early days of the Vietnam War opponents were vilified.

Columnist Mark Shields observed that in early 2002, it appeared that Republicans might lose the midterm elections. George W. Bush's Senior Advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove assured worried Republican congressmen that they had nothing to fear; that there would be a war (and this at a time when the Bush administration insisted it was only exploring options to disarm Saddam Hussein).

As if on cue, on 20 March 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq (a country that had not attacked the U.S.) thereby launching violent upheavals throughout the Middle East. Experts predicted these upheavals but they were ignored and countries like France, which opposed the invasion, were severely criticized (remember how French fries became "Freedom fries"?). The drumbeat for war in 2002 helped the Republicans retain their power in the 2002-midterm elections.

The key question that should concern us all is "Is Donald Trump trying to repeat the 2002 Republican hold on the government by starting a war?" Trump has issued a number of belligerent threats (tweets) – against Iran, against Daesh (Daesh is the Arabic acronym for the misnamed Islamic State), and against North Korea. Lately, the threats against North Korea seem the more serious, as if Trump is goading North Korea into a war.

War would benefit Trump whose poll numbers (like those of Republicans in early 2002) are low. His administration appears incompetent, uncoordinated, unhinged and corrupt. The public (at least the thinking members of the public) seems to sense this as witnessed by the many demonstrations against Trump policies.

A war against Iran or North Korea would be a disaster. Both countries have large armies (Iran about 523,000 counting the Islamic Revolutionary Guard; North Korea has about 1,300,000 – larger than the U.S. Army and Marines combined).

Any war with either of those two countries would necessitate the U.S. fielding an equally large army. This means reinstating the draft and raising taxes, two things conservatives profess to oppose. Trump's implied preference to "bomb the shit out of 'em" is insane and unworkable. It inflames the Middle East – but, then, maybe that's what Trump wants.

Even using U.S. troops to eliminate the much smaller Daesh will require a large commitment of troops and resources (taxes again!). Worse for the U.S., which has built its ground forces largely around the idea of clashing armies (think the first Gulf War), Daesh will not stand and fight. Daesh, al-Qaeda and other religious zealots will hide and fight using guerrilla-style tactics. A rough rule-of-thumb is that one guerrilla can tie up 10 regular soldiers because the guerrilla can choose when and where to attack while regular soldiers must guard everything 24/7.

After Saddam Hussein's ouster, when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dismissed the 40,000 remaining Baathist fighters as "pockets of dead-enders", he signaled both his ignorance of guerrilla warfare and the disastrous consequences of his ill-advised invasion. Using the 10-to-1 rule-of-thumb, countering 40,000 guerrillas would have required an army of at least 400,000, something the U.S. was not prepared to deploy. And from Rumsfeld's failures, Daesh arose.

Trump gives all the indications of being as clueless as Rumsfeld. But perhaps Trump doesn't care about battlefield losses since he is most concerned with not suffering political losses at home. (Ever notice how people like Trump and Bush, who both avoided serving in Vietnam, are willing to sacrifice other people's children?) A war would allow Trump to declare a national emergency and jail or deport his opponents and shut-down any media that criticizes him. Thousands of Americans may die, but for a narcissist like Trump those are minor details to be ignored in his quest to have absolute worship. We must insist on Congress exercising its constitutional authority to declare war and not cede that authority to someone as unbalanced as Donald Trump.

Just as the George W. Bush White House understood it, look for the Trumpanistas to implement

**WAR IS PEACE**

## Who Stole My Post-Modernism? J Ross

One of the pleasures of my profession, back in the 1970's, was an opportunity to attend classes without taking exams, or at least without the expectation that my scores would be recorded.

Full of confidence, I came up with a tweak on a good study skills program that was good enough to be the basis for my doctoral dissertation. That was published in a peer-reviewed journal and earned me credibility with a few of the faculty who wanted to improve their methods of instruction.

This was mutually beneficial with one professor in particular, Frances Seaman. Frank taught philosophy, which had so few students that he taught a variety of courses and asked me to read his class notes and sit in on classes. I had not had time or opportunity to take logic or even intro to philosophy so greatly enjoyed this chance to gain some sense of the bigger questions from the Greeks to Wittgenstein.

Frank had such equanimity that he could address each philosophy and its foremost thinkers in a way that confused his students. They mistook his careful presentation to be that of an advocate who then, most confusedly, spoke as appreciatively from an entirely different perspective in the next chapter. How could all these people disagree and still be 'right' about something this important?

I was attracted to existential writers who suggested that there may be no ultimate truth, and we may not be able to understand each other at all. Persistence is futile, that's what I carried away from Beckett, Sartre, and later, those irritable French post modernists. We each have our own definitions even when we use the same words. It's a short leap from here to anthropologists who point out that truth, morality, all the so-called universal truths are cultural artifacts, true for one time and place, but only maybe, and equal rights includes the right to redefine at will.

Then Casey Williams in the NYT April 17 pointed out that our current president is mad-happy po mo. He wields a heavy sword of certainty, and not only at highly variable targets. Reasons vary, and he gladly steals coin of realm minted by someone else ("Fake News") for his own purposes. He's a damned post modernist, and I resent how he's discredited by extension a wonderfully cynical notion.

### *GROUPS affiliated with Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason*

**Idaho Society of Reason** <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events> 2nd Sunday in Boise, 4th Sundays Nampa at noon.

**Objectivists** meet last Wed 6pm , varying restaurants. Ask Tim Scharff at [scharffdesignworks@icloud.com](mailto:scharffdesignworks@icloud.com)

## Plums in a New Age Cake J Ross

I paused, this time, and before leaving the Flicks I picked up a copy of Hedra News. What's the latest therapy, is there more than colon hydrotherapy or crystal healing? Well, yes, I did roll my eyes at Siberian cedar herb steam barrels, but mostly because the photograph left me feeling claustrophobic.

Beyond this, I found much to like. The quote from Dr. Bernie Siegel provided a charming anecdote as a reminder that we adults are immersed in a world that finds fault and we can get stuck in that territory ourselves. We can see the beauty and lovability in a child but lose that with each other and with ourselves. The point is not original, but a reminder can't hurt.

Another columnist tackled the subject of coping with frustrations with sensible advice. Reading through that reminded me of an incident I'd just experienced earlier in the day. I could have responded better if I'd followed advice to 1. Take a minute, take a breath, step outside of yourself. 2. Avoid personalizing this experience. Maybe it's not about you.

Okay, what about that catalog that just came in the mail, from New Harbinger Publications. I pulled it out of the recycling box and gave it a try. The first roadblock was multiple uses of insider language, which forced me to apply rule #1 above. Take a deep breath. That helped me remember that the 'direct path' is one school of Buddhism. Back to the catalog.

What I found was similar to the most accessible parts of Hedra News. Here's an example, describing the approach of Joan Tollifson's book, [Awake in the Heartland](#). The book is meant to be "a fresh look at everyday life.. utilizing a non-dualist perspective without clinging to old opinions or relying on outside authorities." That's a goal I can applaud. I'm not likely to dip into any of these books or sign up for a cedar barrel steam bath, but I would welcome the chance for a conversation with several of the authors. Maybe over chamomile tea.



**Humanists of Idaho**, a chapter of American Humanist Association & Council for Secular Humanism, is a nonprofit corporation promoting ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism through public awareness, education and community involvement. We meet 3rd Mondays, Jan-Nov, upper room of the Flicks, Boise. Open discussion and dining at 6:30pm; business 7pm. On April 17 7:30pm, our guest, answering your questions, is 2nd degree priestess in a pagan tradition, Morgaine O'Hearne.

**You can Be Happy:** from "The Happy Factor" by Julie Scelfo in Education Life issue NYT April 9

Dr. Martin EP Seligman is no advocate of arcane therapies of the type published by New Harbinger. He is not an ethereal man. For him, happiness isn't relieving symptoms or negative emotions. It's not the other side of depression, anger, anxiety, loneliness or stress. The pursuit of well-being through personal spiritual practice is probably not effective either (he calls that path "empirically false, morally insidious, and a political and educational dead-end." Both happiness and anguish are responses to situations that come and go, while ongoing contentment, well-being, a sense that life has pleasure and meaning, worth, *must be cultivated*. A personal journal is highly recommended as a way to record for focus and for review of thoughts.

"To actively cultivate components of well-being, which include engagement, good relationships, accomplishments and purpose" Seligman suggests: "**Identify your Signature Strengths**" deliberately, writing them down and reviewing them as a coherent story, the initial situation, how you recognized a role for yourself, what action you chose, what personal qualities were drawn upon, what strengths led to a favorable outcome— what positive steps? Original strategies or pathway? Where good judgement and how mistakes overcome? How did you attend to others? Gain allies? Show interest in others, show appreciation for the skills and strengths of others? Support their positive action, change, potential? When did you exhibit courage, strength in face of discouraging situations? Loyalty, passion? Forgiveness and overcoming cruelties, ignorance, the dismissal and roadblocks thrown up by others? THEN consider ways to make use of what you've learned, gained over time, in a "new, different way".

**Find the Good** "Set aside 10 minutes" each day to recognize at least one positive event for that day. Seligman says, beside that ask yourself why that good thing happened. Consciousness of one's experience can be adjusted for good or bad; recall Dali Lama to children: Watch as bad feelings, bad things approach, arrive, leave.. 'here it comes—here it is—there it goes.'

**Make a Gratitude Visit** **virtual or actual**—let those who make gifts to you, or opportunities to learn something important, know what they have done, how you have benefitted. Dr S urges writing this down and reading it in person. "Respond Con-

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structively" and actively to accomplishments, positive actions, positive qualities, skills of others. This is application of the Family Advocates system of building on strengths.

**YOU CAN WIN NICE** NYT April 9 2017 commentary by J Ross

Mitch Prinstein, in The Power of Likability in a Status-Obsessed World considers popularity as it starts in middle school, with the likable and those seeking status. The likable are trusted, admired, sociable, connected to others, with many friends; their interpersonal skills lead to opportunities at work and in families, in personal relationships. Status emerges in a very different, darker path, "born of power and notorious behavior." The status path lends itself to torturing the nerd. Remember how Mitt Romney was a notorious prankster and led a gang that gave a haircut to an unwilling fellow student in prep school. But being cool by working around rules has its cost.

Both the least liked in elementary school (who in one study became more aggressive around other students, over time) and the high status in high school are "most likely to engage in dangerous and risky behavior" like smoking cigarettes, using drugs. More ominously, highest status high school students also became more hostile, had less compassion, were more closed, and did not play well with others in later years.

"Being liked creates opportunities for learning and new kinds of life experiences that help somebody gain an advantage." The genuinely nice do very nicely, thank you. **Consider Donald Trump** who once said, "I am the chaos." Obsessed with his ratings, he demands total loyalty from others, still the leader of the schoolyard pack.

## OUR BRAINS: *STILL UNKNOWN TERRITORY*

*review by Jeanette Ross*

In his newest book, *Incognito: Secret Lives of the Brain*, David Eagleman orients us by saying that each of our brain cells, among billions, has the complexity of a city. Each cell sends hundreds of electrical impulses per second to other cells; each neuron makes ten thousand connections to its neighbor neurons. Our thoughts are part of neurological systems, expressed as electrical impulses that are mostly operating separate from our consciousness. They were formed in eras when such impulses kept us alive without our awareness or direction of them. The evidence is present in their operation; physical movements precede thought about said action. Much research here: an example is that patterns of light, activated by buttons, can be perceived even if not consciously.

The body especially responds to events, good or bad; when 'something bad happens the entire body responds and remembers.' At the same time he says 'we can train our bodies to work, consciously or unconsciously, with increasing speed and efficiency.'

**Galileo**, between 1610 and 1615 observed that Jupiter has 3 moons, disproving the theory of a universe as celestial spheres revolving around our earth. With this, we humans lost our privileged place in a god's universe. This observation so destabilized RCC hierarchy that he recanted his work in 1633, to save himself from **the fate of Bruno**, who was burned at the stake in 1600 for suggesting that earth was not the center of the universe.

In the 1660's, **Leibniz** wrote essays on human understanding, suggesting unconscious thoughts. By comparing the time to perceive versus respond he demonstrated that thinking takes time. **Freud** absorbed Darwin's ideas in medical school. Freud started treating neurological disorders, deciding that disorders were caused by unseen processes (accessed through dreams, intrusive thoughts..) rather than by postulated demons, devils. Implied: there are limits on free choice of control of will. His personal comparison came analysis of his feelings about his father. At the same time, interpreting what we see and already believe we create the illusion of a connected, focused all-over view. The power of our mental construct is such that we don't discount what is seen peripherally and smooth over the blind spot in the eye. We don't notice changes related to perspective or camera angle; we fill in for the eye's blind spot.

Perception of motion is another illusion. One study suggests how the brain translates input; blindfolded and blind persons have the capacity to convert vibrations into what they believe they have seen. The brain borrows input to fill in; visual input affects what we report that we hear. The brain constructs a model of what to expect; the thalamus sends impulses of new input, while we imagine that we see what is familiar. And *over time* the brain remodels, re-organized memory to match our expectation.

**Simple exposure to a face, a name, will make us prefer or like it better later. This effect is as true with words.** We like what we hear repeated, the 'illusion of true.'

**The role of bias and expectation** are evident in the speed of responses: we operate quicker if we have a set of 'takes,' such as bias based on race or gender, other. We like best what is like our SELF, an 'implicit narcissism' p 63.

**POTENTIAL of the brain to learn: we can learn by copying good feedback without** the need for explanations. Brains have multiple ways of doing much the same operation; using it builds 'cognitive reserve.'

Our selective attention and stereotyped expectations are essential to operating in a complex world. There are variants; synesthetists can experience days as colors.

We have inborn capacities for recognizing faces, which are essential to social interaction—and mirroring, reflecting the mood, the movements, the language of those facing us, helps us get along, fit in. Evidence suggests that sexual attraction, fear of dark, empathy, a desire for fairness and solutions, as well as a tendency to argue when confronted are all inborn capacities.

**Conflicts take energy and time;** heuristics save time and stress. We reconcile any differences between previous experience or other memory with new evidence will elicit a verbal rationalization. It's easier for us to rationalize our emotional responses.

We can fake or act out the mood we want to be in. Consciousness is our way to reconcile internal conflicts, to optimize. Ideologies are efficiently impersonal, as are impulsive behaviors. Reasoning, recognizing inconsistencies or past errors don't have the same comfort value.



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## ART STILL MATTERS

J Ross

Contemporary art was once my journalistic beat and I regret the psychic distance between general public esthetics and the work of contemporary artists. Here are three very different ways that art and its makers have gained notice recently.

First, *that fearless girl*, in the form of a statue placed in a public area once dominated by what has become the model of Wall Street. The charging bull, representing the style of investors, corporate leaders and their companies, was a gift of one artist, Arturo Di Modica circa 1987. He meant to buck up our spirits after one of the periodic crashes, and he is still around and waxing furious when a new investment company commissioned the statue of a pre-pubescent human female standing boldly and just as bravely before the bull.

She's in his space, said the bull's creator. Maybe it's just a temporary sensation, but the New York Times and other sources had a rush of photographs, selfies with women and girls linking arms with the obstreperous girl.

I was just happy to see art get us excited.

*Quite the opposite reaction* followed the death this month of one of our most iconoclastic free thinkers, Vito Acconci. He didn't just give up sky gods or attendance at places of faith, like churches and art museums—he gave up being a heroic figure, of making decorative objects that hang on walls and celebrate excess wealth and time. He gave up certainty, continuity, trying to impress those who follow the latest and most shocking in the art business; he gave up trying to make sense.

Why does this matter to you or to me? My own rebellion against the rules is hilariously modest. I make 'jewelry' out of paper, plastic and children's toys, as well as out of lovely stones and beads. One necklace, for instance, is a somewhat battered copper, old fashioned radio as charm. It makes me laugh.

Vito first came to public attention reading poetry in the 1960's. Then he thought of words as a way of constructing reality—and quickly realized how little his own words were accomplishing, and created a museum installation with his words, poetry, commentary on life, random thoughts—printed on card and placed too high to read.

The senior class was more conversational, but those megafrothy drinks were big enough to last the hour., and a ping-pong table next to the still-manned coffee bar invited after-class lingering. Okay, maybe we can't compete with Flicks treats and don't have room for ping-pong, yet. On to more.

Acconci moved on to video, humiliating himself in various ways as the camera ran. A former good Catholic boy, he created a false floor for a museum room and placed himself under it, with a microphone, talking nasty as he performed a usually private act while innocent museum-goers walked on the flooring over his body. Desecration and shame have seldom been more evident, more deliberately constructed.

He built furniture that appeared to be carefully stepping itself out of a window. He gave up trying to explain himself or playing the fool; he switched to constructing experiences, architecturally. One lovely one was an artificial island, really a floating room that gently cradled those who crossed a metal walkway and eased into it.

Acconci in his later years built public parks and places of repose at airports. He was a popular guest lecturer at colleges and universities, Says Randy Kennedy in a New York Times obituary. "His classroom presence became legendary, a kind of performance work itself." After speaking at the School of Visual Arts in Canada, before flying back to New York, he left his apartment key with a note at the registrar's desk. In case of his death, the first person to pick up the envelope was welcome to use his apartment any time they wished. Life is a performance act and art is a very special act, a kind of giving.

*Here's one more, still much alive*, Frank Gehry. Gehry is best known for creating architectural spaces that break all previous rules—and function as spaces entirely suited to their purpose. They shock and please at the same time.

Gehry explains himself and his goals in another way. He is a humanist who began with an appreciation for honest materials and mundane tasks, the work of building warehouses where beauty is a luxury. He used everyday materials in new ways, most famously for the Bilbao museum that turned a seedy seaport town into a tourist destination.

What has provided him with fabulous contracts was a realization that his buildings have become destinations capable of rehabilitating a city. Tourist-laden ships now dock in Bilbao so that visitors can walk toward the bulbous sheet-metal-covered extravaganza in anticipation of being transported out of their selves. They take selfies and show their friends. Gehry, meanwhile, speaks of the tension we all feel between the desire for comfort, for predictability, our vulnerability and desire for protection even as we love to be surprised. We yearn to be thrilled. And he knows how to do it.

## Sages Prêt à Porter

At the next meeting of the BUUF Sages, Jim Lyons will give us an update on the subject of wearable devices, two years after Google Glass was a thing.

Sharpen your cutting edge over a no-host breakfast with a friendly group. Newcomers are welcome! Join us at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way), Thursday, May 11, at 9:30 am. Contact Tom von Alten, 208 378-1217, or [tva@fortboise.org](mailto:tva@fortboise.org) for more information

**Humanists** May 21 in the BUUF library will ask, who are the Indivisibles, and what's worthy of another rally?

*BUUF Humanists next meet informally for conversation, a May Day celebration sharing of spring rituals on Sunday May 21, 11:15:am, in the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship library. Sages meet 2nd and 4th Thursdays 9:30am, May 11 and 25 at the Kopper Kitchen, near the Boise airport..*

## Mestra and a parable of Greed J Ross

Chronicles of the Greek culture remind us of something almost lost today: how many gifts and burdens move from mother to son, father to daughter, how many mistrials and errors, how many individual tragedies pass through and mutate from one generation to another before we find a balance between heroic effort and its dangers.

Ovid tells us that Erisichthon of Thessaly always knew he would some day be king. Next to his father, king Triopas, he watched the farmers patiently cultivate their patches of field, the shepherds lovingly follow nimble sheep on rocky slopes, and knew all this would be his.

After his father's death he kept a cushion for his own curly-headed daughter, Mestra, beside him as hunters brought trays of duck, fishermen and farmers brought baskets of wheat and fresh, glistening fish, shepherds led their fattest lambs to the royal quarters.

It seemed to the young king that all the land, from snowy mountain top to Neptune's shores produced prodigiously in his honor. All, that is, with one exception. More and more, when Erisichthon rode out into his kingdom his eye moved up the mountain to the one uncultivated place in all his realm, a wild oak grove dedicated to Ceres.

Why should Ceres, goddess of cultivation, be honored this wild way, he demanded of his forest keepers. To explain, his faithful men led him through the grove. He was shown delicate pathways from humble hut and village outside the forest to trees where youths would come to make their wishes and vows. Here, on another branch, young maidens would secretly hang fillets and flower crowns. Under another ancient oak whole families would set table to celebrate a new spring season. Under another, neighbors would sing and frolic around a grand old trunk where the wood nymphs of Ceres were said to dance, hand in hand.

Erisichthon looked at the largest, most sacred of these oaks. As he felt the awe of his subjects for this venerable old tree his anger rose. "Cut it down!" he shouted, but not a man moved. Erisichthon seized the nearest ax. "Were this tree the darling of Ceres herself, I'll have it kiss the grass," he shouted, and swung at the trunk. A moan rose up through the woods, a groaning cry from the tree and, at the same time, from the man who had given up his ax to the king. Erisichthon turned to his subject and said, "Go, then, with the guardian of your godliness," and with one blow hacked off the head of his weeping servant and then chopped down Cere's oak himself.

## Tweet Lore

Jeanette Ross

*I've been re-reading folklore studies related to charms and curses, to magical outcomes and excesses of insulting, provocative language. What can the study of curses tell me about my President's tweets? The curse-expression, whatever it's form, is a quasi-religious ceremony, attempting to bring about by divine intervention what is expressed as a fact. Like other communications in its class, including proverbs, spells, taunts and charms—there are some common characteristics.*

*They are expressed formally, each within a set of understood conventions. Curses and taunts are verbal assaults, expressed as absolutes, with immoderate intensity. They are meant to change the future by reference to past offenses. They are meant to cause or predict harm by some miracle, for past wrongs and for status of being—categories such as the 'lying media.'*

*Donald Trump plays on common stereotypes, 'liberals,' progressives, 'elites' and government workers. He rallies powerful Others to influence or change his identified enemies and has credited these enemies as demonic, monstrous powers who control governments large and small. His damnations and curses are broadcast to his fans, to ingratiate himself and increase affiliation of those already in agreement with him.*

*Donald Trump's attempts to gain power through extreme accusations and pronouncements. Imply a victim mentality, a lack of confidence in his power to influence without superhuman effort or breaking the power of the ones attacked. Bill O'Reilly expresses this most directly stating that the white male is the least powerful, most endangered member of our society.*

*The curse tweet also betrays a dark view of the universe, as a place without a powerful, helpful deity who will protect the worthy and punish the unworthy. Paired up with Trump's interaction with the crowds at his rallies, his curses can be read as a call for supporters to act as enforcers.*

*Trump solutions are magical— a wall excluding 'bad dudes,' and conversely polluted waterways that marvelously produce jobs. He is a golden calf worshipped by a tribe lost in a wilderness where they once expected to be masters.*

*MESTRA continued from page 7*

Those who remember this day say that real blood poured from the wood of Cere's fallen oak and mingled with the blood of her hapless defender. Others recall hearing the cries of the wood nymphs as they rode the wind to Cere's home in the mountain tops.

The chronicles report that Ceres herself rode through that night's sky in a chariot pulled by dragons-- and Erisichthon's sleep was interrupted. "Leave me, Hag," he cried on seeing her step to his bedside. "Leave me, your acolytes will waste no more time celebrating you. Your power here is gone." And he turned away from her.

Ceres bent down and whispered her answer in the ear of the king. "Ungrateful man," she hissed. "My spirits do not die. That which you consume will remain hungry."

When he awoke, Erisichthon announced to his court how good it was to subdue the proud Ceres. He would build his own temple with the timber, he said, and called for a banquet to celebrate his triumph. That evening, Erisichthon ate prodigiously and ordered more food, and again more. From this day the people were kept busy harvesting, hunting, then searching through storehouses to bring food to their king.

But without the grove of Ceres the waters did not gently course through fields but came in torrents and left the land exhausted. The fields did not replenish; the few remaining birds went elsewhere. Everything of value, even the clothing and jewels of the princess Mestra, was sold for food. Everyone, including Mestra, grew lean and anxious as their king ate with a fearful appetite, ate the food of whole households, the seed for the next planting.

When there was nothing left of his own land, the king sent out a secret message. His daughter was for sale to the man who could pay the best price. Mestra was known to be beautiful and innocent. In a short time a chieftain known only as the Iron King sailed into the harbor with a whole fleet of animals and grains and groaning loads of foodstuffs which he had extorted from his people so that he could claim the lovely Mestra.

In the poor dress left to her, Mestra appeared as her father demanded. But her heart left her when she saw the monster in shield and armor who was purchasing her. Mestra panicked and fled, with the Iron king running behind her. Slowed by the weight of his armor, he followed her tracks to the water's edge.

Here the Iron King stopped. He turned to an old fisherman who stood with rod and baited hook on the shore and said, "Old fellow, tell me what has happened to the frizzle-topped wench in coarse and sluttish gear who came from the king's house to this shore. Her tracks stop here."

The fisherman did not look up but spoke respectfully. "Who ere you be, good master, I pray you pardon me. I turned not my eye at one side nor the other but did apply myself to my labor. With Neptune as my witness I saw no other man nor woman stand here on this level sand."

The Iron King believed the humble fisherman in hooded rags, and entered into his ship, immediately setting sail in search of whatever craft had carried off his new queen.

Moments after the ship left shore the fisherman threw down her line and herself escaped in the first of what would be many disguises.

From country to country Mestra fled. Ovid tells us she took the shape of mare, hart, hind, hare and even bird as she traversed from one rocky shore to another seeking safety. And yet, from pity for her father, when she alighted she took her own form and begged of that country's ruler that a mercy ship of food be sent to her father.

This is how Erisichthon of Thessaly stayed alive until Mestra met a young thief on the road. Autolycus, son of Mercury and Chione, was a child of the gods and a master of disguises with no reason to make better use of his skills until he met the good Mestra.

As these two sat on the shores of Ithaca and planned their future, Erisichthon awoke to find no food for his demons and began biting his own flesh. Thus, the story tells us, Erisichthon consumed himself and Mestra and Autolycus founded the kingdom that their grandson Ulysses would make famous.

## What's Next? Humans Creating Humans? JR

In his latest book, Homo Deus, Yuval Noah Harari suggests that the skills humans have used to make their lives stable through agriculture and then enhanced by technological and mechanical inventions will progress to the next obvious step. We can improve artificial intelligence to where it can provide for our mundane physical needs and free us to modify our genetics, create more perfect humans. He suggests that the advantages to health, physical and mental, can be extended to creating algorithms for social and cultural benefits.

He imagines "a methodological set of steps that can be used to make calculations, resolve problems and reach decisions." We will be better humans and free ourselves of the cost of conflict when we have at hand the patterns for mutual benefit. These are goals of religious faith, and now the genuine gifts from technology can make gods irrelevant. Plus, we can reconcile ourselves to the natural world, becoming the true stewards of earth as one tribal god once promised. Homo Deus! Notice that this does not require denying our emotions, or eliminating them. Lying is pointless when information is so readily available. Jealousy, envy are childish errors when health and wealth can be available to all. Sounds good, eh? Harari jumps over the miseries we are suffering now, with his expectation that we can fix all this with the right algorithms.

Humanists of Idaho

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### ***anonymous comments on local rallies:***

1. GET A GOOD PA SYSTEM! (The best was the public lands rally -- that PA system boomed across Jefferson; the worst was the immigration rally in which the opposition could drown out the pro-immigration speakers). AND SPEAK INTO IT!!! (At least one of yesterday's speakers didn't.) Study BSU President Bob Kustra -- that man could project his voice at a rally without a PA system!

2. Introduce the speakers! The Rally for Science was deficient in that regard (as have some earlier rallies).

3. Get the audience involved -- the public lands rally had some call-and-response moments. (Today's newspaper report on the D.C. climate change rally said the rally participants marched to the White House -- where El Trumpo was for a change -- and let out a huge roar then chanted "Resistance is here to stay, Welcome to your 100th day.")

There needs to be followup action. Groups need to form. Calls to politicians need to be made. Letters (not e-mails) need to be written to politicians. Candidates need to run for office. Trump is ignoring these rallies. He knows he'll never get the science and climate change vote but he needs the RUBEs\* so he will always tilt toward them. RUBE = Rightwingnut Upholding Baloney Everywhere