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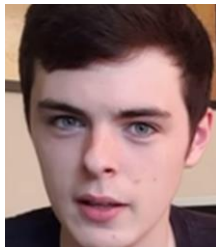


# Dorset Humanists

*Atheists and agnostics for a better world*

■ **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2.00pm** Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

## The Good Delusion: What's The Closest We Can Get to Objective Ethics?



In this brand new talk for Dorset Humanists, Alex J. O'Connor offers a means to ground ethics in a way that allows us to determine what people should and shouldn't do as a matter of fact, whilst

dispensing with terms like 'good' and 'bad.' The concept of good may be delusory, but ethics does not have to be. Alex is the owner of the Cosmic Skeptic Blog and YouTube channel. He is an ex-Catholic, atheist, science enthusiast and advocate for political and educational secularism. His YouTube channel currently has more than 240,000 subscribers and he is a first year student at the University of Oxford, reading theology and philosophy.

■ **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 3.50-4.30** Moordown Community Centre.

## Talkback

Why not come along to our popular 'talkback' session after the refreshment break to continue the discussion or get something off your chest.

■ **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm** Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

## How corrupt is the UK?

**Event cancelled**

Transparency International (TI) is a global movement sharing one vision: a world in which government, business, civil society and the daily lives of people are free of corruption. Transparency International UK is the UK chapter of this movement. Its vision is a society in which:

- The lives of people in the UK and around the world are significantly improved
- The health of our institutions is enhanced
- We can trust the integrity of those in authority;
- There is no impunity for the corrupt at home or abroad.

With a network of chapters in over 100 countries the TI movement has unparalleled global understanding and expertise. TI-UK fights corruption by promoting changes in values, attitudes, and behaviour at home and abroad, through programmes that draw on the UK's unique position.



■ **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 7.30pm** and every first Thursday at Moon in the Square, Exeter Rd, BH2 5AQ.



## Pub socials

Enjoy stimulating conversation over a drink or two at our pub social evening. Look out for the Dorset Humanists signs on the table. We warmly welcome regulars and newcomers.

☎ Dean 07713 858773



## Sunday Walks

■ **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 10.15am**  
Ringstead Bay, White Nothe and Osmington.

■ **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May** – Bluebells in Roydon Woods near Brockenhurst.

All walks are between about 6 and 9 miles and usually have an optional short cut. Please check [Meetup](#) for further details and any changes, for example last minute cancellations owing to weather conditions.

☎ Phil 07817 260498



## Short Talks

■ **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm**  
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX. £2.00-3.00 donation requested.

## Sustainable Energy - No easy answers!

*A talk and video about options for sustainable energy. Presented by Phil Butcher.*

Phil says: 'Prof David JC MacKay FRS was one of my heroes when he brought out his book "Sustainable Energy without the Hot Air" in 2008, because of the clear quantitative assessment he gave to the issue of how to provide our energy without fossil fuels. He was not attached to any of the industries involved and was a professor in the physics and engineering departments at Cambridge University. He also was

appointed as Chief Scientific Advisor to the Department of Energy and Climate Change for 5 years up to 2014. Sadly, David died in 2016 but I will introduce a TED talk that he gave about his subject in 2012.

I have worked in the nuclear industry for nearly 45 years and will give a short talk about that. I guess I'm biased because of that history, but am happy to have an open discussion about all things nuclear. Come along with questions or criticisms and I'll do my best!

**Calling budding speakers!** Do you have a short talk up your sleeve? Contact Phil Butcher if you would like to discuss your idea for a short talk.

✉ [ph.butcher@gmail.com](mailto:ph.butcher@gmail.com)

## Future dates for your diary...

■ **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2.00pm**  
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

## Erasmus Darwin and the Lunar Men

A talk by David Croman. This fully illustrated talk will start with the life of the extraordinary physician, innovative inventor, botanist, scientist, engineer, poet, evolutionist, and grandfather of Charles Darwin. Erasmus Darwin was a leading member of a group of key pioneers including Josiah Wedgwood and James Watt. They shared their ideas and informed and challenged each other at regular meetings of the Lunar Society.

■ **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 7.30pm** Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

## Transforming the FutuRE

A talk by Dave Francis who is Deputy Chair of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales and an RE Adviser. He has been involved in several educational projects in recent years and in this talk he will focus on two of them of interest to humanists.



## Other events of interest...

### ■ Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 7.30pm

Sandford Heritage Hall, Sandford Rd, Nr Wareham, BH20 7AJ (Next to Pine Martin Grange Care Home). 'Out of the Box' presents:

## What Really Matters in the End?

*A discussion evening about the international bestseller 'Being Mortal' by Dr Atul Gawande*

Being mortal is about the struggle to cope with the constraints of our biology, with the limits set by genes, cells, flesh and bone. Medical science has given us amazing power to push against these limits. But when medicine fails to acknowledge that this power is limited the suffering it inflicts can be barbaric. This evening's discussion will start with a twenty-minute video of Atul Gawande followed by our usual lively interaction and debate. Facilitated by David Warden. 'Out of the Box' is a dialogue group for people who subscribe to different worldviews.

## Pastoral Care Volunteer and Training Opportunities

*From Humanist Celebrant and Humanist Chaplain Paul Noble*

I have been working as a Humanist Assistant Chaplain at Southampton General Hospital. I am leaving that post at the end of the month. The Head of Spiritual Care, Karen MacKinnon, has asked me to see if there are any humanists who might be interested in being a voluntary pastoral carer or an honorary chaplain.

Whether or not this specific opportunity is of interest, some people may like to know that HQ is running a (free) two-day course on pastoral care on 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> September in Bournemouth.

People can call me if they wish on 07779 209790 or contact Karen direct by email on [Karen.Mackinnon@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:Karen.Mackinnon@uhs.nhs.uk).

## Humanist of the Year 2019 Cathy Silman

At this year's AGM, Chairman David Warden presented our 'Humanist of the Year' award to Cathy Silman in recognition of the many roles she plays in helping to make Dorset Humanists such a success.



In addition to the certificate, David presented Cathy with a bust of Charles Darwin from the English Heritage collection.

Cathy has been Secretary of Dorset Humanists since 2014. She is also our Membership Secretary which entails chasing up members (in the

nicest possible way) for overdue subs. Cathy is also a committed member of our schools team specialising in teaching very young children about Humanism as a non-religious worldview and she represents Dorset Humanists on the Dorset SACRE (the body which determines local RE syllabuses). She often hosts our committee meetings and helps with catering for some of our special events. She contacted Poole Council to get Dorset Humanists represented at the Poole Remembrance Service last year. She is also one of our 'Meet and Greet' team and a member of our pastoral team.

## Dorset Humanists Pastoral Team

Dorset Humanists has a small team of people who are willing, subject to capacity, to respond to the pastoral needs of our members. We would like to develop this aspect of Humanism further so please get in touch if you have relevant skills and time to offer.

[chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk](mailto:chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk)

07910 886629 (David)



## Jordan Peterson and the Perils of Political Correctness

*At our 'short talks' meeting in March, Simon Whipple and David Warden presented a selection of Jordan Peterson's views on political correctness, gender and masculinity. Jordan Peterson is a clinical psychologist and a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto who came to global prominence in September 2016 when he objected to an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code.*

Simon Whipple focused on the controversy over 'Bill C-16' which added gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination where 'gender identity' is defined as each person's individual and personal experience of gender, their sense of being a woman, a man, neither, both, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. Discrimination happens when a person experiences negative treatment or impact, intentional or not, because of their gender identity or gender expression. Bill C-16 became law in June 2017. Peterson's objections included being compelled by law to use gender-neutral pronouns such as "zhe" and "zher". Peterson's argument was that if gender-neutral pronouns make their way into common speech over the course of say 20 years then he would be happy to use them. What he's objecting to is a situation where it becomes illegal not to use them. Simon played a video clip from a Munk Debate in which Stephen Fry similarly complained about the Orwellian control of speech and thought.

David focused on Peterson's views about hierarchy, patriarchy, gender and masculinity in his bestselling book '12 Rules for Life'. Peterson claims that dominance hierarchies have been around for 350

million years by looking at the world of lobsters. Lobsters display status-forming rituals and displays. They have complex defensive and aggressive behaviours built into their nervous system. When seeking out high quality shelters or hiding places they employ special jets under their eyes to direct streams of liquid at their opponent. The liquid spray contains a mix of chemicals that tells the other lobster about its size, sex, health, and mood. Depending on the mix, the other lobster may back down without a fight. But sometimes, they engage in mortal combat. If a once-dominant lobster is badly defeated its brain dissolves. It then grows a new brain more appropriate to its new, lowly position. The winning lobster gets an extra boost of serotonin and becomes a cocky, strutting shellfish. Female lobsters identify the top lobster quickly and become irresistibly attracted to him. The top lobster not only gets the prime real estate, he also gets all the girls.

Peterson writes that the primary hierarchical structure of human society is masculine as it is among most animals including chimpanzees and that order is symbolically associated with masculinity because men throughout history have been the builders of towns and cities, the engineers, stonemasons, bricklayers, lumberjacks, and the operators of heavy machinery.

Peterson denies that gender is a social construct. He writes that the two sexes, male and female, have been around for a billion years and that these categories are deeply embedded in our perceptual, emotional, and motivational structures. He writes that women tend to score more highly on agreeableness and neuroticism (tendency to worry) in the big five personality traits. These traits are not predictors of success in business but according to Peterson 'women are doing fine in medicine' and other occupations. He worries about the 'feminisation' of boys which, he believes, leads to an unhealthy fascination with fascism.

■ Dorset Humanists presented some of Peterson's views to stimulate debate. Dorset Humanists is committed to fostering an ethos of diversity and inclusion. The full statement is on our membership form.





## Learning from Difference

*Aaron Darkwood reflects on his journey from militant atheism to Humanism, a change which has been strengthened by attending our dialogue group 'Out of the Box'.*

In watching BBC's 'The Big Questions' this morning I was reminded both about my internal feelings about faith and the growth I feel I have achieved over the past few years. I have spoken before about how strong a militant atheist I used to be, and that sci-fi and Star Trek had led me to this 'science and evidence' approach, but my time attending 'Out of the Box' has, I feel, strengthened that journey from atheist to humanist.

I believe many people are still unclear about the subtle difference between the two. I remember attending my first 'Out of the Box' and not knowing what to expect. I admit I probably went there with an armed and offensive stance. My role of "I'm right – you're wrong" was clearly defined, and part of me felt that through evidence, strong scientific argument, and belittlement I could convince those with faith to see the light. I wasn't the only one, and that others also had strong arguments reinforced my own delusion. However, a strong argument with facts and evidence can win a political debate but that doesn't work with religion.

Dialogue guidelines appeared later on, and the more I attended, the more I understood. I heard the stories, grasped the messages they held, and could see human beings rather than an opposition. During the same three years I was understanding Humanism, attending courses, reading books, researching for an ethics class, and defining the core principles and values that Humanism holds. There are many of course and each of us define them in our own way,



but whilst crewing Dorset Humanists' Pride stand it was important to get a 6-week Humanism course down to a one minute 'sales pitch'. I describe Humanism as: 'Equality, Fairness, Understanding, and Compassion, grounded in evidence-based science.' For me, this encapsulates the finer parts of humanity and informs people where Humanism is coming from.

Atheism, being a non-belief in something, only says what you are not, not what you are whereas Humanism is a worldview and for me it is on much more solid ground.

Attacking those with faith, belittling them, calling them names or bluntly offending them does not show any understanding at all. It lacks compassion and doesn't treat them as an equal. I'm certainly not perfect, and I can still engage in debate, but I attempt to do it treating the other person with the dignity they deserve, respecting them as an individual with the right to an opinion, whether I agree with them or not.

'Out of the Box' explores human topics, raises questions, encourages discussion and it builds understanding of those different from ourselves. Encountering those with alternative opinions, varied ways of life, and cultural diversity builds a stronger cohesive society in my opinion, and after all, if they are prepared to meet us halfway, isn't it our duty to do the same?

■ 'Out of the Box' meets in Sandford on the first Wednesday of every month except January and August. Aaron is a member of the steering group. Join our [Meetup](#) group to stay informed.

## Time is Running Out Holocaust Oral History Project

*Henri Ruff recently interviewed Hungarian sociologist Borbala Kriza on her latest visit to the UK and Bournemouth. Can you help Borbala?*

In association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Borbala Kriza carries out video interviews with those who have lived through and survived the Holocaust years as part of the museum's Oral History programme documenting that period. Born in the 1970s in Budapest, Borbala gained a Masters degree in Sociology, has studied and taught at the Central European University established by the George Soros Foundation, and also studied at 'Sciences Po' in Paris.

Her early involvement with this period of history came with preparations for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary in 2004 of the Hungarian deportation of Jews and other minorities. She was responsible for script writing and interviews in the making of Zsuzsanna Varga's documentary film "Once they were neighbours" (2005) in which inhabitants of Köszege, Hungary, remember what they saw during the last days of World War II, when their Jewish neighbours were removed to a ghetto, conscripted to forced labour, and executed or deported. She has also contributed to other prize-winning documentary films about minorities, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism.

The Museum has asked Borbala to assist with collecting more testimonial evidence from as wide a spectrum of witnesses to the effects of the Holocaust, not only those who fell victim but also by-standers and even perpetrators. Her focus has been directed to include non-Jewish witnesses, from as wide a geographic field as possible. Apart from her base in Hungary, this remit has taken her to the Ukraine, Romania, Poland, Austria, France, mainland UK and Ireland.

Given that we are now almost 75 years after the end of the Second World War, many would-be witnesses have died. This means that increasingly her video interviews are with people who were in their youth or just

children at the time of the Holocaust. Finding witnesses is possibly the hardest part of the task. She relies on a network of contacts, and she has enlisted the research assistance of the university students she currently teaches as part of their course work. Incidental word-of-mouth recommendations can often lead to very useful contact with prospective witnesses. So she welcomes contact from anyone who can point her in the right direction to set up a video interview.

Still, the clock is ticking, and time is running out for some of her work. So if anyone can assist Borbala, directly or indirectly, by putting her in touch with any Jewish, Christian, Humanitarian or Quaker witnesses in Britain, especially any who may have been involved with the Kinder transport, please contact her by e-mail [krizab@gmail.com](mailto:krizab@gmail.com).



## Letters & Emails

*It's your column...*

*From Simon Bowden*

I think that to attract new members and to show what Humanism means, we should outline more core values. This is especially important at a time when a new populist style of politics seems to be leading us back from progress towards international co-operation towards a me-first nationalism and to hell with the consequences for anyone else. My own list of core values would include:

- Respect for human rights
- Tolerance of human difference
- Internationalism
- Seeing people as individuals
- Trust in science and the consensus of academic experts



- Upholding civil society – free speech, independent courts, and access to unbiased information.

This last point I think is vital in a democracy where so much of the media is in the hands of a few off-shore press barons. Then there is the power of social media.

We as humanists, with our respect for reason, should be campaigning for a thoughtful democracy and a recognition that political problems are complex – not to be resolved by emotive populist slogans. We need to be clearer about our values.

■ Dorset Humanists subscribes to the values of Humanists UK which are as follows: In all our work, we strive to embody our values by:

- Engaging in dialogue and debate rationally, intelligently, and with attention to evidence
- Recognising the dignity of individuals and treating them with fairness and respect
- Respecting and promoting freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law
- Co-operating with others for the common good, including with those of different beliefs
- Celebrating human achievement, progress, and potential

*From Philip Nathan, Author of ‘Living Humanism’*

Richard Scutt comments in your March bulletin that he feels the fifty-two principles of Humanist conduct and action set out in the guide *Living Humanism* are too ‘me-focused’. In a sense perhaps he has a point, because if, with all of us being ‘me’s’, we are all enjoying well-being and happiness, then this would be in line with the desired goals of and outcomes of the guide. And as author of the guide I would, without reservation, like for you all (all me’s) and for all of us, for everyone, to have lives filled with well-being and happiness.

However, in terms of supporting both ourselves and others, which is a substantial

focus of the guide and which of course interrelate, what is important to see is the myriad connections between our own personal well-being and the well-being of others, not the least of these being the pleasure, fulfillment, the sense of joy we gain from helping, supporting and loving others.

Illustrating this, by simply being social, through our love and kindness to others, through practical actions such as paying our taxes, engaging with our communities and our contributing locally and beyond, through our charitable works, our love for our families, through our jobs and work, we act to support our families, communities, societies, our global world and thereby we support not only our own well-being but also the well-being of those we love, and the well-being of all others.

Of course, the *Living Humanism* guide certainly does emphasise our support for our communities and societies. Indeed chapter four of the guide is titled *Supporting Others and Working for our Communities, Societies and Beyond*. And as I hope members will note from their own reading, the core (and other) principles refer to supporting the well-being of *all others* and preventing pain and suffering for *all others* which, I would suggest, it would take some interpretation to see as ‘me-focused’ even though the outcomes of such other- person focused actions will be good for us all (our all being me’s).

Of course, Living Humanism consists of two books and two thousand pages of practical suggestions and discussion about our personal Humanist action and conduct. These matters, our Humanist conduct and actions must be to some degree contingent and sometimes complex in their determination. I would (totally impartially 😊) recommend buying and reading the guide, though perhaps you might wish to do this selectively since, as your chair, David Warden might suggest, reading this guide cover-to-cover will take some time!

[info@livinghumanism.com](mailto:info@livinghumanism.com)

■ *Philip is coming to speak to us in July at the Green House Hotel.*





## Dorset Humanists **Chairman's View**

April 2019

In the spirit of dialogue, it possible to frame the debate about the European Union in terms of positive humanist values driving both sides? Humanist values on the Remain side of the divide seem easy enough to identify: internationalism, co-operation, friendship, liberalism, peace and prosperity, a welcoming openness to immigrants. If we try to identify the best of humanist-inspired motivations on the Leave side we can identify liberty, self-determination, democracy, social cohesion, prosperity, and internationalism. Of course, each side has a different take on internationalism, one believing that this value implies the continuing existence of self-governing nations and the other that individual nations should be subsumed into a larger union with national differences subdued. Each side also has a different economic argument to make about prosperity, one believing that we are better off in a protected economic union with our close neighbours and the other believing that the nature of this union has been to the detriment of wider opportunities. The arguments about this have been ferocious but both sides value trade and prosperity. On immigration, the ideas of free movement and a borderless world seem like humanist ideals. It was Thomas Paine who said 'My country is the world'. But we have seen what can happen when two or more communities with competing ethnicities or religions try to occupy the same territory. A good society depends, to an important degree, on shared values and traditions. Immigration may benefit the UK economically. We seldom reflect, however, on the structural damage which can be done to those countries which are losing the young people which they have reared and educated. If we need more young people we could start by building more houses for young families to live in. On the Continent, the idea of democracy is tainted by populism and tyranny which is why the EU was set up to operate on the basis of a stable bureaucracy rather than removable governments as in the UK and all other democratic countries. But when that bureaucracy goes wrong, as with the flawed architecture of the euro which has created economic imbalances across the Eurozone and mass youth unemployment in Greece, Spain, Italy, and France the absence of a democratic safety valve is worrying to say the least. Mervyn King, the mild-mannered former governor of the Bank of England, calls it 'extraordinarily dangerous'.<sup>1</sup> For better or worse, in 2016 we voted to withdraw from the EU project, having been ambivalent about it for perhaps far too long. Most of us would be content with a common market or free trade area which is what we were led to believe we were joining in 1973. Perhaps that was the original lie which has finally come home to roost. There are 50 countries or states in Europe and only 27 are in the EU. The rest have a patchwork of bilateral free-trade deals with the EU. One positive vision, put forward by Lord Owen and others, was for Europe to be reconfigured so that the Union and the free-trade area can co-exist happily and for mutual benefit. With intelligence, patience, and goodwill it should not be beyond human capabilities to build this doughnut-shaped Europe of the future. Please write to the *Bulletin* with your views.

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<sup>1</sup> *The End of Alchemy: Money, Banking, and the Future of the Global Economy* (2017) p344.