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# Dorset Humanists

*Atheists and agnostics for a better world*

## ■ Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August online event

Join us on Zoom from 1.30pm for friendly chat. Talk starts at 2pm. Click [here](#) or enter ID and password:

Meeting ID: 813 9190 2887

Passcode: 621583

## The State of our Planet and its Wildlife



Our speaker Norman Maclean is Emeritus Professor in Genetics at Southampton University and a Patron of Humanists UK. He is one of our most popular speakers and his previous talks have included

animal rights, human evolution, and the human brain.

The world's wildlife is not doing well, partly as a result of factors such as climate change, agricultural intensification, and the introduction of harmful species. But although the general story is one of decline, there are exceptions. Many whale species are recovering as a result of whale watching replacing whale killing. Some UK mammals are recovering, for example otters, water voles, badgers, and some bats. Conservation has helped bird species such as the red kite, curlew, and peregrine falcon. Some insects such as the large blue butterfly have staged dramatic recoveries.

## ■ Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September online event

Join us on Zoom at 1.30pm for friendly chat. Talk starts at 2pm. Click [here](#) or enter ID and password:

Meeting ID: 833 8220 4492

Passcode: 141499

## The National Secular Society



A talk by Alastair Lichten who will provide us with a broad update of the National Secular Society's work and campaigning in the time of coronavirus; from faith schools and educational resources to

reform of religious education, and from challenging unregistered schools to coercive worship and inappropriate evangelism in schools. There will be a good amount of time for questions and discussion.

Alastair is the Society's head of education. He joined the NSS in 2014 to work on a variety of their campaigns before focusing on education and he currently coordinates the 'No More Faith Schools' campaign.

Dorset Humanists is an associate group of the National Secular Society.



■ **Virtual Coffee Morning Tuesday 11am**  
Every Tuesday online until further notice.  
Enjoy lively conversation over tea or coffee  
at our online coffee morning. Our events  
have an international flavour with visitors  
from Cardiff and New York!

<https://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists/>

☎ David Warden 07910 886629

■ **Virtual Pub Quiz Thursday 7.30pm**

Every Thursday online until further notice.  
Pour yourself a beer or a glass of wine from  
the comfort and safety of your own home,  
click on the link, and join our quiz! Quiz  
topics have included Thomas Hardy, Prime  
Ministers, Star trek, local landmarks, music,  
science, and much more! You don't have to  
be a brainbox to attend – it's just a bit of  
light-hearted fun.

<https://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists/>

## Join our 'Meetup' group

Please take this opportunity to join our page  
on 'Meetup' where we post details for all of  
our online events. Please also take this  
opportunity to register with Zoom so that  
you can easily join our online events. You  
can sign up for free.

[www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists](http://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists)

<https://zoom.us/>

## Dorset Humanists Pastoral Team

Please contact our pastoral team if you  
need help or would just like a friendly chat.  
Our pastoral team members are:

Cathy Silman – Secretary of Dorset  
Humanists and a Citizens' Advice Bureau  
advisor. Tel: 07817 695615

Susan Bryson – A member of Dorset  
Humanists committee and an experienced  
therapeutic counsellor. Tel: 07980 276234

David Warden – Chairman of Dorset  
Humanists and a qualified therapeutic  
counsellor. Mobile: 07910 886629



■ **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 5.00-8.00pm**  
**109 Burley Road, Brangsgore, BH23 8AY**

## Summer Picnic

**With distinguished guest Sir Desmond  
Swayne MP**

Committee member Simon Whipple has  
kindly invited members and supporters of  
Dorset Humanists and their partners to a  
picnic in his garden in Brangsgore – a village  
on the edge of the New Forest three miles  
from Christchurch. Sir Desmond Swayne,  
MP for New Forest West, will speak briefly  
on the topic of "Libertarianism in a time of  
national crisis". There will be time for Q&A.

You are asked to follow current guidelines  
as regards social distancing and hygiene, a  
summary of which is posted on our Meetup  
site. Please read this before attending. We  
have undertaken a full risk assessment  
which is available on request.

Please bring your own food and drink. If you  
want to ensure you have a seat to sit on,  
please bring a camping chair. Don't forget  
layers of clothing in case it turns chilly!

RSVP: register on Meetup or telephone  
Simon so that we know who is coming.

Car parking is not available on site. Park in  
the village hall car park (100 yards away, on  
the opposite side of Burley Road.)

In the case of bad weather this event may  
be cancelled at short notice and we will let  
everyone know via a Meetup  
announcement.

Queries or cancellations, please phone  
Simon on the number below:

☎ Simon 07740 432159

RSVP [here](#)



# Terry Scurr almost there!

**Week 21 of Terry's epic virtual journey from Poole to John O'Groats to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support**

Please give generously to support Terry's fantastic effort.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/terry-scurr>



"I walked 35.6 miles this week, following the route from Evelix to Berriedale, one of the small communities strung along the east coast of Caithness. My total so far

is 669.7 miles. The journey is now 97% complete. Only 20.3 miles to go.

The fact that I have almost completed the distance from the sea at the English Channel in the south to the sea of the Atlantic Ocean in the north gives me a great deal of satisfaction. It is something that I have thought of doing since I was 19 years old (photo, right).

I was conscripted into the RAF, for National Service, in 1953. It was overall a positive experience; I learned a lot, I was trained as an airframe mechanic, servicing the latest jet aircraft, and I made friends with some great people. However, I did not enjoy that I was not a free man. I recall standing on parade thinking, 'If I were not here, I could walk from Land's End to John O'Groats and nobody could stop me.'

From that time on, it was always in the back of my mind awaiting fulfilment. When I retired, I planned a green route, on public footpaths; it was 1,200 miles. My Coast-to-Coast walk was intended to be preparation. The big walk didn't happen! It was prevented by family circumstances and a slip, coming down from the summit of Kidsty Pike, the highest point on the Coast-to-Coast, in which I injured my knee.

## Backstory

Terry is 85 and his wife Maureen is 82. Due to the CV19 situation and heart-related problems, they have both been



**Terry Scurr aged 19: "John O'Groats here I come!" (but not for sixty-six years).**

housebound. At a recent virtual coffee morning – arranged by Dorset Humanists – people talked about keeping fit under these circumstances. Terry explained that, with a pedometer app on his smart phone, he was keeping up his previous step-count by walking back and forth in their flat. The app also calculates the distance travelled. With only two or three miles per day, it is surprising how the miles mount up. I reported that so far I had covered nearly 100 miles. One of the group suggested that, to give interest to what I was doing, I might plan a journey and plot my progress. So, using Google Maps, I planned a journey, on foot, from my home to John O'Groats; a distance of about 690 miles. I had read that the CV19 crisis had caused a problem for charities with many fundraising events cancelled. It made sense to use what I was doing to help out.



# Dorset Race Equality Council



*Natalie Sherring, Chief Officer of Dorset Race Equality Council, spoke to us on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June. This is an edited transcript of her talk. You can watch the whole talk on our YouTube channel.*

## How racially diverse is Dorset?

Estimates from 2019 show that out of a total population of 375,000 about 4.4 per cent are from BAME backgrounds (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic). That's around 16,500 people. For Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch (BCP) out of a total population of 395,000, the BAME population is 6 per cent or nearly 24,000 people [Nathalie quoted 12 per cent but according to the graph she presented this would include Irish, the Gypsy, Romany and Traveller communities, and 'white other'.]

When people say "Oh there's *only* 4.4 per cent of people from different backgrounds in Dorset" I always say the 'only' word is detrimental because it implies that they are not very important but that still represents getting on for 17,000 people. And the concentration of different ethnic populations is very variable across the county. For example, in Melcombe Regis it's 12 per cent and for Portland it's 6 per cent. When you look across all the wards, not one has zero per cent. There are people from different ethnic backgrounds everywhere in Dorset. So we need to be a bit careful when we say that Dorset is not very diverse.

For BCP it's the same. For Boscombe West for example there are over 30 per cent from different ethnic backgrounds (including Irish, the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, and 'white other') whereas the national average is 18 per cent so Boscombe is almost double the national average. Bournemouth Central is also over 30 per cent from different ethnic backgrounds whereas Christchurch Town is 6 per cent. But personally I hate the category of 'white

other' because that's the category I fall into being French. I haven't got a problem with the fact that I'm white but I have a problem with the word 'other'. In statistics you will also see BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic). These are labels that have been decided by the government but a lot of people from different backgrounds don't like those labels but it's just a way of lumping people together for statistical purposes. People generally prefer the term 'people from different ethnic backgrounds'. You will hear some people asking, "Are you a 'bame'?" which is awful.

*"About 4.4% of people in Dorset (not including BCP) are Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic: that's 16,500 people."*

We have a community Directory on our websites [which lists groups such as the Gambian Association, the Igbo Community in Dorset, the Dorset Bengali Association, the Dorset Polish Centre etc.]. There are about 38 different groups we work with on a regular basis. If you want to contact any of these groups you can go through our website.



## Mission and Aims

Dorset Race Equality Council is an independent charity based in Boscombe but we cover the whole of Dorset. We've been in

existence for twenty years. Our mission is supporting individuals, communities and institutions in challenging racism, celebrating diversity and promoting equality of opportunity for all in Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset. Our aims are to:

1. Ensure that ethnic minority individuals and communities in Dorset feel empowered to challenge racism and discrimination and have access to support and information
2. Promote the celebration of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in Dorset society and strengthen local ethnic minority organisations, for instance by providing training and supporting groups to run



events. We attend about 100 community events in Dorset every year such as the Dorset One World Festival, Chinese New Year etc. We are doing more multicultural events because we want people to learn from each other and to discover each other's cultures. We support community groups by helping them find funding sources, encouraging them to report hate crime, support with organising and promoting events etc.

3. Work towards making public, private and voluntary sector agencies in Dorset fully representative of, and responsive to, the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the population; offering equal opportunities and equal access to all. We assist with equality impact assessments, we work with and challenge our statutory partners, organise Equality and Diversity Forums, and we provide training on unconscious bias. We work with Dorset Council, BCP Council, Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, Citizens Advice, Shelter and many more organisations.

Our remit is both racial and religious. We hold a caseload of individuals who come to us for support because they feel they have been discriminated against because of their race or religion. Discrimination can happen in education, housing, the police, employment, neighbourhood disputes and other areas. We normally turn around about 40 cases per year.

*“Some people I meet say to me ‘Don’t tell me that racism still exists – maybe it did in the 60s and 70s’ but our community members are on the receiving end of racism all the time.*

We are also a ‘third party reporting centre’ which means that we are a safe place for anyone to report any kind of hate crime. People don’t necessarily want to go to the police straightaway. People from different ethnic backgrounds often do not have a good perception of the police force or feel that you can only approach the police if you are in big trouble.

We also belong to a collective called ‘Prejudice Free Dorset’ – a partnership of local agencies which come together to commit to reducing all kinds of prejudice in Dorset – not just racial and religious.

We also have some targeted consultation groups such as the BME Police Consultation Group where we look at particular pieces of practice or policies before the police implement them. We also have a Muslim Contact Group.

*“Yes, the Black Lives Matter organisation is American, anti-capitalist and it wants to get rid of the police and obviously we wouldn’t support that... When we talk about Black Lives Matter it’s really about the inequalities that black people have suffered for centuries.”*

With the Covid situation there has been a tendency to blame other groups. For example, we have heard comments such as ‘What are the British doing on the beach?’, ‘British people are so disobedient’, and ‘They are going to increase our risk of being affected by Covid’.

We receive funding from local authorities, from Dorset police, and from the CCG, but the funding is nowhere near sufficient to sustain us so we have to apply for grants constantly. We have some more small donations since Black Lives Matter have been in the news. We also charge for our unconscious bias training but this is our only income-generating activity. All of our other services are free. We have nine trustees and five paid staff, four of whom are part time. We’ve never been so busy what with Covid and Black Lives Matter and so we do have concerns about our capacity. If anyone listening would like to become a trustee please contact us as we are always looking for people to support us. We have only a small team to cover the whole of Dorset but Zoom has cut down on our travelling time.

Some community members do not have English as their first language and therefore home schooling during the lockdown was



an issue for some. And we know that people from some ethnic backgrounds are more vulnerable to the virus, for example if they are key workers. So we phoned most of our community groups and I wrote a report which I will send to David Warden.

Sometimes we are criticised for having 'white girls' working for DREC but I have a Polish lady working for me, another French person, and a member of staff who is married to a Mexican person.

The Black Lives Matter protest movement is a great opportunity for all of us to look at our organisations and think about what we are going to do differently to embrace and increase diversity. Some people have said 'All lives matter' and yes in a sense all lives matter, I would agree, but all lives are not the same. There is a lot of work that needs to be done.

In answer to a question from David, Nathalie said, yes, the Black Lives Matter organisation itself is American, it's anti-capitalist and it wants to get rid of the police and obviously we wouldn't support that. We need to be really careful about supporting a particular movement and we did not join the protests during the Covid situation. And also because we support people from China, from Thailand, and from many other groups. So when we talk about Black Lives Matter it's really about the inequalities that black people have suffered for centuries.

Some people I meet say to me "Don't tell me that racism still exists – maybe in the 60s and 70s" but our community members are on the receiving end of racism all the time. I want people to talk about it because that's the only way that we are going to make a change. It is time to challenge people and to ask 'What can I do as an individual?'

■ Nathalie mentioned the documentary film 13<sup>th</sup> which is available [here](#) or search for 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment on YouTube. A loophole in the US 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment allowed criminals to be used as slaves – a huge incentive to mass criminalisation for minor offences.

■ The 'Covid-19 Dorset Ethnic Minority Communities Needs Assessment' is available from David Warden.

## The Whole Gender Thing



*Psychotherapist and Dorset Humanists member Richard Jones gave us a talk on gender on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July. This is an edited transcript. The video is available on request.*

I will mainly focus on gender today. Of course there is an overlap between gender and sexuality. One of the things I encourage my clients to do is establish what they feel their gender is before they can identify what their sexuality might be because if you try and do both at once it may be very confusing.

### Continuums and polarities

I like to think of gender as a continuum and a polarity. A continuum is 'a continuous sequence in which the adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other but the extremes are quite distinct.' The reason I say this is that when we are thinking of a person's gender (not their birth sex which I would classify as a different thing) we're talking about the degree to which they wish to identify as male at one end and female at the other. I ask clients to put themselves on a continuum between the two polarities. So, for example, 60% male, 40% female or whatever. This can be fluid and it can change. Not their birth sex but in terms of how they wish to express their gender identity. It can be hard for people to put themselves on this scale. The reason I talk about polarities is that if you've lived your life in the wrong body you may have tried to go towards the other polarity in different areas of your life in order to try and feel comfortable. The sex we are assigned at birth is one thing but the way in which someone may want to express their gender identity can be anywhere on the continuum between female and male.

### Birth sex v gender

When a person is born they are assigned a sex gender based on their external





genitalia. Fortunately, for people who identify under the trans umbrella, this is beginning to change. My personal view is that gender is a more internal and personal perception of oneself that might not be limited to a biological characteristics. And I'm owning this as my perspective. I'm not trying to suggest that everyone should see it in the same way.

In response to a question, Richard explained that 'intersex' is a condition whereby someone represents both genders in a biological form. Years ago the term 'hermaphrodite' was used but 'intersex' is generally accepted now. An intersex person is more likely to identify as non-binary. Thinking back to the gender continuum, if someone is sufficiently in the middle quadrant it may be psychologically impossible for them to conform to either male or female. Society puts pressure on people to identify either as male or female so for people who are non-binary or intersex or both the world is even more challenging. It's hard enough to transition from one birth gender to another and realign your biological sex but it's even more difficult if you remain in the middle of those concepts. And this is before we've considered a person's sexuality and who they may be physically attracted to.

## Chromosomes and pronouns

Typically (but not always) people are born with either XX or XY chromosomes which determine their physical anatomy and they are assigned a sex based on these characteristics. A term which is sometimes used is 'natal male' or 'natal female'. This is a bit old fashioned. Now we use the term 'cis'. [This is a Latin word meaning 'on this side of' as opposed to 'trans'. For example, the word 'cisatlantic' means on *this* side of the Atlantic from where I'm standing. In the context of gender it refers to people whose sense of gender identity is on the same side as their birth sex.] This can be quite useful because if I sign a letter and put 'cis male, male pronouns he/him' this signals that I am a 'trans ally'. Non-binary people will often use the term 'they' because they're not comfortable with 'he' or 'she'. Or they will just be referred to by name. Transitioning

will usually involve a legal change of name by Deed Poll and people might use a non-gender specific name like 'Sam' for example. If in doubt my golden rule is just ask the person: 'What pronouns would you like me to use?'

## MRI scans

We know from post mortem MRI scans that if someone has been medically diagnosed with gender dysphoria their neurological makeup will match their destination gender in 99.99% of cases rather than the biological sex they were assigned at birth. The sad thing is that the only way to completely confirm gender dysphoria neurologically is via post mortem. Hence the NHS system uses therapy, reflection, safeguarding and so on in order for someone considering transition. In answer to a question on this Richard said that the reason MRI scans are not used for diagnosis is because they are too expensive. But if the money was allocated it could save a lot of emotional heartache and reduce suicide rates. It's quite common for trans people to donate their bodies to medical science after death to further neurological understanding. In answer to a question later Richard also said that post mortem dissection shows differences in the shape of the hippocampus and different shapes of the left and right hand side of the brain. And if someone is on the autistic spectrum they are about seven or eight times more likely to be on the trans spectrum.

## Medical v Social Model

The social and medical models of disability draw on the idea that it is society that disables people, through designing everything to meet the needs of the majority of people who are not disabled. The reason I mention this is to suggest that if we could develop a more social appreciation of gender as well as medical it may save a lot of pain.

## The journey

Not everyone fully transitions and as I said some people are non-binary but it would be wrong to give you a talk on this without

explaining the journey and the processes that people go through.

The DSM5 is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, used in the United States and the ICD10 is the tenth edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems used by the World Health Organization. If someone wishes to access transition via the medical framework they need a diagnosis from the DSM5 or the ICD10. It's a very longwinded and protracted process. I urge you to disbelieve the headlines which say more and more people are transitioning within a week or six weeks. I work with clients every week for six or seven years. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is very popular in the NHS at the moment largely because it's measurable. If someone refers a trans client to me and asks can you offer them six weeks of CBT I'm afraid I usually laugh and put the phone down if they're not willing to consider a more long-term arrangement.

We need to be aware of the black market. It is possible to go online and buy all manner of hormone drugs, some of which are OK enough but others are not. People may do this because they are desperate because they hate their physical self. I can only inform people of the risks. They still have choice. I'm not allowed to recommend treatments available online. But I totally understand the reasons why people are pushed to it because the waiting times are horrendous.

GPs have a lot of power because they hold the money. If you don't have a sympathetic GP then unless someone like me comes along it's very difficult to get anywhere. Every client I have ever seen who has fully transitioned has attempted self-harm and/or suicide. My main aim is to keep them alive.

Speech therapy is important so that your voice will match or more closely match your destination gender.

For someone who goes through full gender reassignment surgery the NHS does not guarantee that sexual function will remain. The only criterion for success as far as the NHS is concerned is the ability to urinate after surgery. So if someone is in a sexual

relationship before surgery or if sexual function is important to them then this is a risk they need to consider.

Trans people have to consider questions of loss and grief. They may have to grieve for the life they didn't have or the childhood they never had. And parents might need to grieve for the son or daughter they lose before they can embrace the new person. The individual concerned is transitioning but so too are all the people around them. If someone is in a heterosexual marriage and their partner transitions they will then find themselves in a gay relationship and they may not be comfortable with that. So a good therapist has to help the person consider all of these effects.

A Gender Recognition Certificate is issued and this gives the person rights to a passport, driving licence and so on in their new gender. But it's a very bureaucratic process.

### **Gender Identity Disorder (GID)**

This is the term used in the NHS. It's not widely seen as a lifestyle choice. By the time someone finds me the best thing I can do is believe them even if that reality changes because they may have lived a life where they have been devalued by everybody. The official statistic is that it affects 1 in 2,000 people but this is unreliable because it's only based on those we know about and not those who have no support or have even committed suicide. It's impossible to get really accurate figures. Female to male transition is less publicised. This may be because if a cis woman masculinises her appearance this may be less noticeable for example than a natal male wearing a dress. This is not to devalue either.

GID may be confused with sexual orientation. We tend to use the term 'LGBT+' to encompass everybody. I tend to use 'LGB&T' just to separate them a bit.

My view is that we don't have a choice about being transgender but there are certain choices and options about what to do about it.





The oldest client I've had started transitioning at age eighty-three and the youngest was ten.

Transvestism (cross-dressing) is not the same as gender dysphoria. There's nothing wrong with transvestism as a choice but we mustn't confuse the two.

The average cost for female-to-male transition on the NHS is £50,000. They wouldn't be spending this amount of money if strong clinical evidence did not exist.

In America mostly, treatment may be given to children to delay puberty until they are old enough to make decisions.

### Gender euphoria

In the Q&A session, Ronnie Barr spoke about the 'gender euphoria' he experienced when he was accepted as a trans man by Dorset Humanists, using his new name and male pronouns. "It's a really happy feeling – this is what works". (Ronnie is a member of Dorset Humanists Committee and he is our Diversity Representative).

### Conclusions

- Not viewed as a lifestyle choice by the psychological profession
- May be the biggest life change to facilitate
- All about core self – the self that the person wants to be in touch with rather than their 'projected' self
- It's all about 'passing the test' – the NHS requires people to live in their destination gender for a period of time before transition but this can play into gender stereotypes.
- It will involve loss of old identity and grieving
- Sexuality and gender are different but every transition will have an effect on sexuality to some extent
- Being trans doesn't mean automatic transition – it may be medically too dangerous for example.
- Be aware of roles and stereotypes
- The most important thing to do is believe someone and be there for them.



# Letters & Emails

*It's your column...*

*From Paul Laurie*

Just a quick email to say how much I appreciate all the hard work you do for Dorset Humanists, and the excellent bulletin that gives such good summaries of the talks that I cannot attend. And also the very good Zoom meetings you have managed to hold have made the lock-down much more tolerable. And for all the work you must do behind the scenes to keep the organisation running so smoothly.

*From Billie Brown*

Congratulations on your end-piece to the July Bulletin – it expresses my own feelings so well. If you have not yet come across *The Lies that Bind* by Kwame Anthony Appiah, I think you would find it most interesting and informative and enjoyably written too. It's sub-titled, *Rethinking Identity and Creed, Country, Colour, Class, Culture* and, for me anyway, explores these sub-topics with such a wise understanding – not the accusatory manner perhaps implied by the title.

*From Karen Smith, Fundraising Manager, Bournemouth Hospital Charity*

I wanted to write to say thank you so much for your incredibly kind donation of £1,090.43 for the End of Life Companions Volunteers Team. This wonderful donation will be used to provide training in order to support families who have been bereaved by Covid-19.

■ This money was raised by our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal. Our second chosen charity, Hurting to Healing, is closing and was unable to accept 50% of the proceeds – hence we paid the full amount to the End of Life Volunteers Team.





## ***View from the Chair***

August 2020

I've no doubt that Dorset Race Equality Council does excellent work supporting minority ethnic and religious groups but I wonder whether its underlying mission could be contributing to separation. To have a cohesive society we need to be moving towards 'our common humanity'. To quote Bertrand Russell, 'Remember your humanity and forget the rest'. When I trained council staff on our 'Diversity Essentials' course I drew attention to the polarity between multiculturalism on the one hand and a monoculture on the other. Of course, we do not want a society which is just white, Christian, heterosexual and so on. But the other polarity is unhelpful too. We cannot have a cohesive and trusting society made up of a patchwork quilt of cultures which are different from and alien to each other. I'd like to see Dorset Race Equality Council model itself more on our 'Out of the Box' group where different beliefs come together in a spirit of dialogue. A 'Dorset Intercultural Council' could ensure that the majority cultures are also represented in order to facilitate communication and the breaking down of barriers of mistrust and prejudice.

'**B**ildung' is a German humanistic and educational concept which means cultivation and maturation. It involves 'the shaping of the human being with regard to their own humanity' (*Wikipedia*). It also refers to a 'lifelong process of human development' and it is particularly associated with the Prussian philosopher and educational administrator Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) whose ideas about liberty influenced John Stuart Mill. For me, this concept expresses one of the core purposes of Humanism which is lifelong cultivation of the philosophy, skills and art of being human. It seems to me that we badly need to rediscover a shared cultural sense of how to live and what values to live by. The alternative is a state of anarchy which, arguably, is our cultural situation today.

**R**ichard Jones, in his talk for us, made a very helpful distinction between biological sex and subjective gender identity which has a proven neurological basis. The concept of being 'in the wrong body' means that someone who identifies as a woman may still be in a man's body (and vice versa) before any transition process, and the transition process itself can only go so far in changing biological sex characteristics to match the person's gender identity. The ignorance and confusion about these basic facts in the media and in our culture generally is shocking. I wish Richard could educate the entire country with his wise, informed, humane approach.

