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national
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IHEU
International
Humanist and
Ethical Union

February 2019

Dorset Humanists

Atheists and agnostics for a better world

■ **Saturday 9th February - Lunch at 12.00pm followed by talk at 2.00pm**
Bournemouth International Centre

Darwin Day

– **The Evolution of Human Morality**
– **Also featuring Dorset Humanists Choir**



Our guest speaker Dr Diana Fleischman grew up in in the Southern United States in a religious and conservative area where evolution was not taught in school. At the age of

twelve she was called 'monkey girl' for endorsing evolution. During a formative year at the London School of Economics she read Richard Dawkins and other evolutionists and this stimulated her interest in atheism and evolutionary psychology. In this talk, Diana will explain that human morality developed in the small groups in which humans lived for hundreds of thousands of years. Our world is very different. How does our evolved morality cope with this novel ethical landscape and will we allow ourselves moral enhancement? Diana is an evolutionary psychologist at the University of Portsmouth.

Lunch & Talk Ticket (12.00pm start): £22 Members / £25 non-members including welcoming glass of wine or soft drink, followed by a 2 course Italian buffet lunch & coffee.

Talk only Ticket (2.00pm start): £4.00 includes coffee or tea on arrival.

Bookings: Lyn Glass 01202 767323
lyn.glass@btinternet.com

■ **Wednesday 27th February 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

The Art of Reality Bending



In this talk James Brown will argue that we all begin our lives with a falsehood: the belief that we can perceive reality objectively. The truth is we can't – we only have access to what he calls a 'metareality'

which consists of our perceptions of reality, not reality itself. He will demonstrate how easily these perceptions can be manipulated not only by demagogues, evangelists, and professional tricksters but also by ourselves.

James describes himself as a 'professional opportunist'. He is a magician, pickpocket, hypnotist, lecturer, and corporate trainer.

Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk

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dorsethumanists.co.uk



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

■ **Thursday 7th February 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 17 February 10.15am
Canford Heath. Another walk to enjoy some of our local heathland. Canford Heath is a wild area and nature reserve. The walk is about 5 or 6 miles depending on which route we take.

Sunday 17th March 10.15am
Nine Barrow Down and Corfe Castle. An 8 mile walk with magnificent views all around, and especially of Corfe Castle. Subject to the ferry being back in action.

Sunday 14th April 10.15am
Ringstead Bay, White Nothe and Osmington.

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

■ *Please note change of date and topic for this event:*

Wednesday 20th February 7.30pm Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX. £2.00-3.00 donation requested.

A Different Type of Brain

Two short talks on autism and Asperger syndrome by Trisha Jubb and Dr Rachel Moseley. We hope that as many of our members as possible will attend to find out more about these important topics. Rachel

writes: 'The road to understanding autism, an umbrella term which includes Asperger syndrome, has been a long and twisting one with many false turns. Scientists have now come to realise that autism is a neurodevelopmental condition: one that is genetic, lifelong, and has its roots in the structure and function of the brain. It appears that autistic brains are wired differently, and that this gives rise to a very different way of experiencing the world. How good we are at socialising; how well we communicate; how we experience sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches; all of these ways in which we differ can be traced back to the natural diversity in our brains. In this talk, I will explore the brain basis of autism, adding a perspective from brain science to explain some of the differences between autistic and non-autistic people.'

Trish will talk about Asperger syndrome. She writes: 'This is a form of autism which has really only been recognised in the UK for a little over twenty years. Most people have only become aware of it much more recently, in much the same way as dyslexia became known to people a few years earlier. It affects a large number of people in a variety of ways and although some are clearly affected, others have learnt to mask their difficulties and differences to such an extent that onlookers may believe the difficulties are greatly exaggerated or even made up. However, the impact on the person with Asperger's can be huge, stopping them having what is generally considered a normal life. I have seen the condition not only from the point of view of understanding and providing for the needs of people with Asperger's but also from the inside, as someone who has been living with it.'

Each talk/presentation is around 20 minutes followed by questions and discussion. See [Meetup](#) for further details.

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



Future dates for your diary...

■ Saturday 9th March 1.15pm Moordown

Members' Annual Lunch and AGM

Our AGM is always preceded by a delicious lunch provided free of charge to our members. This year there will be curry and a non-curry option. The AGM itself is always an interesting, lively, and sometimes controversial event which celebrates the achievements of Dorset Humanists and looks forward to what we hope to do in the future. A highlight of the event is our 'Humanist of the Year' presentation. We hope you will join us for this important date in our calendar.

■ Wednesday 27th March 7.30pm Green House

Bring Present – How to cultivate a peaceful mind

Author and speaker Darren Cockburn provides practical insight into how to cultivate a peaceful mind, live skilfully, and nurture a connection through the power of the present moment. Darren will explain how simplifying life where possible will also bring a better understanding to all types of existing addictions, including harmful thought patterns, providing precious breathing space for our overly busy minds. In addition, he shows how a stable practice of mindful presence can enhance the quality of communication with others, be it with family, with friends, or at work.

Other events of interest...

■ Wednesday 6th February 7.30pm

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

Life on the Food Chain

A panel discussion on the ethics of eating life forms.

'RE a mess' says Luke Donnellan



Luke Donnellan, Head of Education at Humanists UK, informed us about the state of RE in his January talk and concluded that 'it's a mess'. There are 173 locally agreed syllabuses,

many schools such as free schools and academies can do what they like, difficult new GCSE and A level syllabuses are turning children off the subject, and 33% of schools offered no RE at all for pupils aged between 14 and 16 in 2016. The Religious Education Council of England and Wales has claimed that RE is in a 'critical condition'.

One high-profile body calling for change is the independent Commission on Religious Education. It has described the situation for RE as 'very precarious' and that it could face 'collapse' in many schools. Its 2018 report, *Religion and Worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE*, sets out a national plan for RE. It sets out what all pupils up to age 16, in all publicly funded schools, should be entitled to be taught. The 'National Entitlement' reflects a new and inclusive vision for the subject, fully embracing the diversity and richness of religious and non-religious worldviews. The report is the result of two years' work from Commissioners. They listened to evidence from a wide-range of concerned parties including pupils, teachers, lecturers, advisers, parents and faith and belief communities. The Commission received over three thousand submissions, all of which were carefully considered. One of its key recommendations is to change the name of the subject to 'Religion and Worldviews'.

In December, the Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds responded to the Commission by saying that there were concerns about 'diluting' RE to be inclusive of worldviews and that now is not the time to introduce radical changes which would increase teachers' workload.



The Religious Education Council of England and Wales responded to Damian Hinds by pointing out that the Commission's recommendations have widespread support from teachers and representative bodies and that the law already stipulates that RE should include both religious and non-religious worldviews following a High Court Judgment in November 2015. The judgment stipulated that 'the state has a duty to take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in a pluralistic manner... the state must accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious beliefs; it is not entitled to discriminate between religions and beliefs on a qualitative basis; its duties must be performed from a standpoint of neutrality and impartiality as regards the quality and validity of parents' convictions.'

Humanists UK wants every young person to have the opportunity to learn about humanism and leave school with an accurate and sound understanding of humanist beliefs and values. Humanists UK wants every young person to have the opportunity to explore life's fundamental questions and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to decide for themselves how to lead a happy, ethical, and meaningful life.

One of the challenges is to address damaging misinformation about Humanism promulgated by popular writer Yuval Noah Harari who described it as one of a family of religions that 'worship humanity, or more correctly, homo sapiens.' Harari has also claimed that 'the crimes of Nazism, Stalinism, and environmental destruction can all find their origins in the central tenets of humanism.' Harari's ignorance of the ethical basis of international Humanism echoes the worst excesses of misinformation about Humanism promulgated by fundamentalists.

Fortunately, we now have an array of excellent resources for teachers including the 'Understanding Humanism' website which contains a wealth of information and practical teaching ideas. In 2018 more than 30,000 people visited 'Understanding Humanism' and downloaded over 20,000 resources. And in 2018, humanist visitors



FINAL REPORT

RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS: THE WAY FORWARD

A national plan for RE

SEPTEMBER 2018



spoke to over 30,000 students in over 300 schools. Luke concluded, however, that there's still a lot to do.

What can you do?

- You can attend a one-day Humanists UK school speaker training course.
- You can join Dorset Humanists' school visiting team.
- If you have children or grandchildren in school you can find out what's happening in terms of learning about Humanism and you can ask the school to contact us for further information.
- Write to your MP explaining why they need to know about the Commission on RE's report, and why they should act on its recommendations. You can download a template letter to use for writing to your MP: [Template Letter to MP](#).

■ Further information

[Commission on RE](#)

[Understanding Humanism](#)

[One minute YouTube film](#)



52 Humanist principles

'Living Humanism: A Guide to Personal Conduct and Action for the 21st Century and Beyond' is a new book by Philip Nathan.

Philip is a former Chair, Education Officer and Media Officer for North East Humanists. He has given a range of talks on Humanism and has appeared on both radio and television broadcasts discussing issues related to Humanism and atheism. He is an assistant professor (teaching) at Durham University where he lectures and teaches on Masters courses in the area of TESOL and Applied Linguistics. He also leads on and teaches academic writing and supervises doctoral research. He holds doctorates in molecular biology and applied linguistics, and has published a number of research articles. *Living Humanism* is his first book publication.

'Living Humanism' is a very long two-volume book and comes in at about 3,000 pages. David Warden is currently (attempting!) to read at least some of the book. He was struck by the very comprehensive 'principles' section which is reproduced here with permission. We'd like to hear what you think of them.

Core Principles

1. Act to support and promote your own well-being and the well-being of all others.
2. Act to reduce and prevent pain and suffering for yourself and for all others.

Additional Fundamental Principles

1. Use rationality, reason, evidence then action, to support the achievement of your more personal goals and the goals of your families, communities, societies and of our broader humanity.
2. Use your passions, emotions and instincts to help achieve your personal well-being and to support the well-being of others.
3. Acknowledge yourself as both an individual and a social being.
4. Treat all people primarily as individuals having equal and individual core value

and validity, worthy of receiving equal and individual respect, worthy of receiving equal core individual rights, fairness and justice, and exercising core individual responsibilities.

5. Take responsibility for yourself, for others, for our communities, societies, and for our broader humanity.
6. Have regard to, be mindful of, and take care of the non-human world.
7. Aim to be efficient and effective in supporting your personal well-being and the well-being of others.

More specific principles

1. Act with honesty and integrity in your personal, family, work and public life.
2. Resolve differences and disputes wherever possible through discussion, cooperation, mutual understanding and respect.
3. Never pursue revenge.
4. Do not use aggressive violence; do your utmost to avoid taking physical action against others; and do your utmost to prevent others taking part in and engaging in aggressive violence.
5. Develop your personal skills, your understanding and knowledge about both yourself and the world around you.
6. Be a participant not just an observer.
7. Work to ensure your independence, freedom and autonomy and support the independence, freedom and autonomy of others.
8. Pursue justice.
9. Be fair to yourself.
10. Pursue the material things and resources which are necessary for your well-being but don't be greedy.
11. While there are general patterns and rules of thumb that may support our actions and decisions, individual challenges and problems often need individual solutions and judgments.
12. Maintain regard and care for others, spend time on caring for others and



looking after their well-being, but also focus on pursuit of your own pleasures, enjoyment, fulfilment and happiness.

13. Maintain a sense of scepticism and doubt, where appropriate, about beliefs and statements, but when required, take decisions with commitment and take the necessary action.
14. Aim to achieve in practice.
15. Do not discriminate unfairly against others because they are different in innate features such as sexuality, colour, physical characteristics, ethnicity and race. Do not discriminate unfairly and unjustly against others for any reason.
16. Live life to the full, enjoying all the pleasures and fulfilment that life can bring.
17. Be prepared to forgive.

Additional and related principles

1. Be generous, sharing, kind and helpful but beware of letting others exploit you such that your own well-being and the well-being of others is damaged.
2. Pursue co-operation with others both actively and proactively.
3. Accept that mistakes will be made and some things will go wrong in your efforts to achieve worthwhile goals.
4. Explore, seek adventure, and be open-minded.
5. Master communication.
6. Oppose conformity – Remember it takes all sorts.
7. Nurture and support the full range of positive human potentials.
8. Don't let the past, your upbringing, others, family, community and society around you unnecessarily constrain you, keep you from the future you desire, and keep you from your dreams. Act as far as you can to determine your own future.
9. Don't let others victimise and oppress you, and avoid as far as possible being and seeing yourself as a victim.

10. As far as possible, be open in pursuit of goals, especially when operating social groups or teams. Wherever possible, avoid aiming to achieve goals in a covert, dishonest and manipulatory manner.
11. Be robust in the face of disappointment and failure.
12. Take time to reflect, relax, and rest.
13. Be patient, be prepared for, and, where necessary, plan for the long haul.
14. Be kind not only through your actions but also through your words.
15. Take care of your health, both physical and mental, and support the physical and mental health of others.
16. Always be prepared to learn and be prepared to teach.
17. Be prepared to give and receive help.
18. Support democratic values, openness, inclusion and transparency in decision-making.
19. Be as fearless as you can be – avoid being fearful if you can. Be bold in deciding what you wish to achieve and be bold in your efforts to achieve your goals.
20. Be tolerant of those announcing and holding opinions and beliefs which may astound you or which you may find offensive, unless those beliefs promulgate a real and significant physical threat.
21. You can follow the law; you can follow instructions. You can do as you're told or asked. But never obey.
22. Look to the future. Avoid bitterness and harsh regret.
23. Feel free to be determined and stubborn at times.
24. Have realistic expectations.
25. Attempt to see the world from the perspectives of others.
26. Give love and care.

 livinghumanism.com



Dorset Humanists 'Jane Bannister Winter Appeal'

Votes cast in our poll were Michael House (22), Mosaic (9), Space Youth Project (7), Indian school (5), Ugandan schools (5), Malcolm charity (2), Humanists UK (1). We will therefore divide the appeal between Michael House and Mosaic and we hope you will give generously to these two very worthwhile local charities. Our Winter Appeal has raised thousands of pounds in previous years. The appeal is named in memory of Jane Bannister who was Chair of Dorset Humanists until 2009.



Mosaic is a Dorset-wide charity offering a pathway of support to bereaved children, young people and their families. Mosaic also works with young people who are facing the death of a loved one. The charity provides individual, family and group support. Every child has the opportunity to attend a residential weekend programme to meet others and share experiences. Dorset Humanists' donation last year went specifically to support this wonderful residential weekend at Leeson House near Swanage.

The charity receives 30% Local Authority funding allocated to support for bereaved children in Dorset. All other money has to be raised through applications to The Big Lottery, Children in Need, charitable trust grants, fundraising, corporate sponsorship, individual support, and donations from local groups.

MICHAEL HOUSE

Rebuilding Lives

Michael House is more than just a hostel; it's a home and our mission has always been to help anyone who is vulnerable. It offers supported accommodation to both men and women.

Michael's Mission

- To provide emergency and longer-term accommodation to homeless people and provide related day services.
- To provide encouragement, advice and support to our clients in an environment which enables them to gain a greater sense of self-worth and to move towards a more independent life.
- To work in co-operation and a collaborative way with the relevant statutory agencies and with other voluntary organisations.

£250.00 will provide care and support for one homeless person for one month.

Homelessness has been a major problem in the Bournemouth area over the last twenty years and we always operate to full capacity. Official Rough Sleeper Counts, which tend to minimise the situation, are consistently in double figures. Soup kitchens have been crowded throughout this period. By providing respect, care, and support to all residents, we aim to restore self-esteem, assist with life skills, access further education, facilitate training for employment to enable individuals to rebuild their own lives and reintegrate back into the community. Michael House is a place where our residents feel "safe, warm and inspired".

giftaid it

Please consider gift aiding your donation. Forms available at our meetings or from John 07766 473728.

Please donate at our meetings or send a cheque made payable to 'Dorset Humanists Winter Appeal' to John Kingston, 90 Lowther Road, Bournemouth, BH8 8NS.

■ **Closing date end of February**



Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
February 2019

I've recently been surprised by the vehemence of an attack on Humanism and humanists for having 'closed minds' and for being 'science deniers'. As you might expect, this has played out on social media in our Facebook group where the normal restraints of polite discussion sometimes break down. In general, having an open mind is a good thing. But should one have an open mind towards astrology, flat earthism, conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, ley lines, crystal healing, urine therapy, phrenology, the law of attraction, palmistry, dianetics, speaking in tongues, and the 130 other such topics listed by Wikipedia on its 'pseudoscience' page? Just how open-minded are we supposed to be? Wikipedia may not be the final arbiter of what should be classified as pseudoscience but the sheer number of topics listed indicates the scale of the problem.

People who are open to, say, reiki also tend to be open to the idea of crystal healing, and people who believe that the full moon has a strange effect on people's behaviour also tend to be open to the idea that all physical diseases are the result of emotional trauma. Once you are open to the possibility that one of these theories is valid it tends to open your mind to all of them. What we appear to be looking at is a worldview which rejects the rigid confines of conventional science in favour of believing whatever takes your fancy. The ridicule which this often attracts is what provokes the 'closed mind' counter-accusation.

The 'closed mind' accusation can be disregarded. If humanists reject this whole panoply of esoteric and sometimes fraudulent ideas it simply means that we have drawn the boundary between valid and invalid beliefs in a different place. One of the foundations of Humanism is belief in the validity of physical sciences and scepticism towards ideas which invoke mystical and unseen forces. This is not about having a closed mind. It's about healthy scepticism. Of course, the humanist worldview is not absolute and it should be open to challenge. But as it stands, Humanism is a worldview which is anchored inside the boundaries of the physical sciences. Until such time as that scientific paradigm is overthrown I'm not unduly perturbed by those who, like Hamlet, insist that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

David Warden

