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Humanists UK

national
secular
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IHEU
International
Humanist and
Ethical Union



Dorset Humanists

Atheists and agnostics for a better world

■ **Saturday 10th November 2.00-4.30pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation
Avenue BH9 1TW

Ethics & Economics: Does it have to either/or?

Economist Henri Ruff witnessed at first hand the devastating impact of unpayable debt in 1980s Warsaw. During his 25 year career in banking and financial services, which included third world debt negotiations, mergers & acquisitions lending, and lobbying on behalf of international banks, he became disturbingly aware of what they don't teach you about ethics when it comes to learning about economics. For the past fifteen years, he has worked as a tutor for the Open University Business School and since moving to Dorset he has been leading a weekly U3A discussion group on 'Everyday Economics'. This talk will address two main questions: where does ethics belong in economics and how can ethics be applied to economics? Instead of providing definitive answers, however, Henri's aim is to stimulate informed and independent thought.

3.50-4.30pm Talkback

We warmly welcome members and visitors to join us after the refreshment break for 'Talkback'. This is an opportunity to meet like-minded people, discuss the talk we have just heard, or to raise other matters of interest or concern.

■ **Wednesday 28th November 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

The Atheist Bus Campaign and 'Talk Yourself Better'



Comedy writer and journalist Ariane Sherine created and organised the Atheist Bus Campaign, persuading Richard Dawkins and the British Humanist Association to support her. Buses with variations on the slogan "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying

and enjoy your life" ran in 13 countries across the globe. As a result, Ariane received an inbox full of hate mail from Christians, which eventually led to a major nervous breakdown and suicidal ideation. She ended her journalistic career, and didn't write again for over three years. In this talk, she will tell the full story of how therapy and medication saved her life, prompting her to write her new book, *Talk Yourself Better: A Confused Person's Guide to Therapy, Counselling and Self-Help*. Ariane will be signing copies of her book after the talk.

■ **Limited capacity venue. RSVP via Meetup to secure your place.**

☎ David 07910 886629



■ **Thursday 6th December 7.30pm** and an extra Santamas date **Thursday 20th December** at Moon in the Square, Exeter Rd, BH2 5AQ. We'll probably take a break in January and be right back in February.



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 18th November** – This is an 8 mile walk, for those that wish to start with us at Fisherman's walk in Southbourne, and it goes over Hengistbury Head, with beautiful views along the coast East and West and across Christchurch Harbour.

All walks are between about 6 and 9 miles and usually have an optional short cut. Please check [Meetup](#) for further details and any last minute cancellations due to weather conditions. ☎ Dean 07713 858773

☎ Phil 07817 260498



Short Talks

■ **3rd Tuesday of the month 7.30pm** Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX. £2.00-3.00 donation requested.

Short Talks will take a short break until January.

Each talk 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

■ **Saturday 8th December 6.30pm**
Bournemouth Natural Science Society, 39 Christchurch Rd, Bournemouth BH1 3NS



Nine Secular Lessons & Carols

Unmissable world premiere! Dorset Humanists Choir will perform for the very first time at our 'Nine Secular Lessons & Carols' evening. We have a great line up of festive tunes and seasonal readings. Complimentary mulled wine and mince pies will be served. Please give generously to our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal on the night.

■ Please note the time and venue for this event which *replaces* our normal Moordown meeting on the second Saturday of December.

Future dates for your diary...

■ **Saturday 12th January 2019 2.00pm**
Moordown

'Putting the non-religious into religious education.' Luke Donnellan, Head of Education at Humanists UK

■ **Wednesday 23rd January 2019 2.00pm**
Moordown

'A Secular Pilgrimage: Humanist responses to painting' John Hubbard

Other events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 7th November 7.30pm**
Sandford Heritage Hall, Sandford Rd, Nr Wareham, BH20 7AJ (Next to Pine Martin Grange Care Home). 'Out of the Box' presents:

Faiths & Non-Faith in Dialogue

...a panel discussion between representatives of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, & Humanism: Tensions between the three Abrahamic faiths have existed for millennia. Tensions between religion and atheism have also come to the fore in recent decades. Our 'Out of the Box'



dialogue group aims to model 'good dialogue' which means being honest about our disagreements but also open to the possibility of finding of wisdom in different traditions. This month, we invite our panel to state their diagnoses of the human condition and their solutions for how we can make the world a better place.

■ **Wednesday 5th December 7.30pm**

'Out of the Box' presents:

An interview with Noah

Last year we achieved a miracle and brought three authors of the Bible to the present day to ask them first-hand about what motivated them to write the texts of the New Testament. This year we've got another spectacular miracle lined up for you. Aaron 'Showblazer' will be transporting Noah, his wife, and one of the flood victims to the present day to ask them all those questions we have often wondered about. The format is in the style of a chat show with guests being interviewed one at a time and then open to audience questions. This is a seasonal joviality we have come to enjoy and, although light-hearted, it also has deeper educational meaning relating to historic events that may or may not have taken place. Seasonal nibbles will be provided, but why not add to the festivities and bring along a cake, snack, nibble or something for people to share. Sign up on Meetup as this was fully booked last year and proved very popular.

■ **Wednesday 14th November 7.30pm**

Skeptics in the Pub at Brunswick Pub, 199 Malmesbury Park Rd, BH8 8PX. £3

Time to Tell: a Look at How we Tick

Ronald Green will take a skeptical look into what we have been told about time, while delving into the philosophical and scientific ramifications and the centrality of our place within it all. Challenging what is naturally taken for granted, he will forge a link between philosophy and science, blowing away the cobwebs that obscure both.

Ronald Green is the author of 'Time To Tell: a look at how we tick' (iff Books, 2018).

Influence and Persuasion



At our October Green House meeting, Dr Peter Connolly provided us with a basic tutorial in logic and some fascinating insights into how rational thought can so easily be

hijacked by rhetorical tricks. This report includes some examples from the talk.

"What an excellent talk. Full of so much information delivered in a spell-binding way. Thank you so much." Lisa, via Meetup

Peter commenced his talk with a short tutorial on logic. A valid argument in logic is constructed as follows: *if* the initial statements or premises are true *then* the conclusion is necessarily true. Valid arguments are internally consistent and the conclusion is said to be entailed or demanded by the premises. Invalid arguments are often referred to as fallacies.

However, not all valid arguments yield true conclusions and, conversely, a true conclusion may be arrived at by means of invalid reasoning. This is because there are four possible relationships between validity and truth.

Example 1: An argument may be valid and the conclusion true, as in the following example:

All dogs are mammals.
All mammals are animals.
Therefore, all dogs are animals.

Example 2: An argument may be invalid and the conclusion false.

All dogs are mammals.
All cats are mammals.
Therefore, all dogs are cats.

Both premises are true, but the conclusion goes beyond the evidence supplied by the premises to claim a relationship between cats and dogs that the evidence does not support.

Example 3: An argument may be valid and the conclusion false.

All cows are green.
I am a cow.



Therefore, I am green.

This argument has exactly the same logical structure as the valid argument in example 1 but the difference is that there the premises were true and here they are false.

Example 4: An argument may be invalid and the conclusion true.

Caesar crossed the Rubicon.
I am now typing these comments.
Therefore, two plus two equals four.'

Here we have three completely unrelated statements. There are no elements that are common to two or more of them – the minimum requirement for an argument.

Knowledge of validity is important because if an argument is invalid, false conclusions may be derived from true premises. Validity has to do with the relationships between statements. Anyone with a basic understanding of logic can assess whether an argument is valid or not.

Most arguments involve long chains of reasoning which attempt to draw out the conclusions implied in the premises. This is usually a more complex task than the simple syllogistic examples presented above.

In summary, to work out whether an argument is what philosophers call *sound* you can ask yourself two questions: 'Are the premises true?' and 'Is the conclusion entailed by the premises?' You have a *sound* argument only if the answer to both questions is 'yes.'

After entertaining us with some more detailed examples of arguments and explanations Peter moved on to rhetoric which is 'the art of using language and other non-rational devices to persuade others.' One of these devices is 'reciprocal obligation' which is an evolved psychological and emotional tendency in human beings. It is the foundation of most altruistic behaviour that does not involve genetic relatives.

A number of mechanisms enable manipulators to take advantage of our reciprocating tendencies. Three of these are: consistency, commitment, and concession. Consistency lays the

foundations for commitment. Once we commit to something we experience a subtle (sometimes not so subtle) change to our self-image. We then seek to be consistent with our new image. This means that a small initial commitment can lead to a much larger later one as we seek to live up to our new self-image. So be very careful about agreeing to seemingly trivial requests – you never know when they might be exploited.

Concession is another powerful mechanism. For example, a car salesman says to a viewer, 'Let me have a word with my boss, I might be able to get a reduction for you.' Of course he comes back with a reduction and you feel indebted to him and hence more likely to buy something.

'Free samples' work in the same way. You receive a 'free' sample and then end up spending far more than you would otherwise have done. This is especially so with charitable organisations, for example, the envelope containing a free pen and a request to donate to a charitable cause, or being offered a gift on the street and then asked to make a 'donation' to a cause or organisation.

Three-part lists are rhetorically powerful for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that they have a sense of completeness about them. Examples include: 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité', 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie! Out, Out, Out!', and 'Education, Education, Education.'

■ Peter drew some of his examples from Cialdini, R.B. *Influence: science and practice* (2nd. Ed.) Harper Collins, 1988.



Still paying in old money?

You can really help Dorset Humanists run a smooth operation by paying your annual subscription by signing up to our simple, effective, and safe Direct Debit system. Most members now pay by annually recurring methods. Please discuss this with Membership Secretary Cathy Silman next time your subscription is due.





Rule No. 9

“Assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don't.” In his bestselling book ‘12 Rules for Life’, Canadian psychologist

Professor Jordan Peterson analyses how some conversational styles are used for dominance whilst others are used for genuine learning.

‘There is the conversation, for example, where one participant is speaking merely to establish or confirm his place in the dominance hierarchy. One person begins by telling a story about some interesting occurrence, recent or past, that involved something good, bad, or surprising enough to make the listening worthwhile. The other person, now concerned with his or her potentially substandard status as a less interesting individual, immediately thinks of something better, worse, or more surprising to relate. This isn't one of those situations where two conversational participants are genuinely riffing on the same themes for mutual enjoyment. This is jockeying for position, pure and simple.

‘Another variant of the dominance-hierarchy conversation where one participant is trying to attain victory for his point of view. During such a conversation the speaker endeavours to (1) denigrate or ridicule the viewpoint of anyone holding a contrary position, (2) use selective evidence while doing so, and finally (3) impress the listeners (many of whom are already occupying the same ideological space) with the validity of his assertions. The goal is to gain support for a comprehensive, unitary, oversimplified worldview. Thus, the purpose of the conversation is to make the case that *not* thinking is the correct tack. The person who is speaking in this manner believes that winning the argument makes him right and that doing so necessarily validates the assumption structure of the dominance-hierarchy he most identifies with. Almost all discussions involving politics or economics unfold in this manner with each participant attempting to justify fixed *a priori* positions

instead of trying to learn something or to adopt a different frame.

‘Another type of conversation akin to listening is a form of mutual exploration. It requires true reciprocity on the part of those listening and speaking. It allows all participants to express and organise their thoughts. A conversation of mutual exploration has a topic, generally complex, of genuine interest to the participants. Everyone participating is trying to solve a problem instead of insisting on the *a priori* validity of their own positions. All are acting on the premise that they have something to learn. This kind of conversation constitutes active philosophy, the highest form of thought, and the best preparation for proper living. To have this kind of conversation it is necessary to respect the personal experience of your conversational partners. You must assume that they have reached careful, thoughtful, genuine conclusions and perhaps they must have done the work that justifies this assumption. You must meditate too, instead of strategizing toward victory. If you fail or refuse to do so then you merely and automatically repeat what you already believe, seeking its validation and insisting on its rightness. A conversation such as this is one where it is the desire for truth itself, on the part of both participants, that is truly listening and speaking. That's why it's engaging, vital, interesting and meaningful. You're allowing new information to *inform* you, to permeate your stability, to repair and improve its structure, and expand its domain. A conversation like that places you in the same place that listening to great music places you and for much the same reason. Your wisdom then consists not of the knowledge you already have, but the continual search for knowledge, which is the highest form of wisdom. It is for this reason that the priestess of the Delphic Oracle in ancient Greece spoke most highly of Socrates who always sought the truth. She described him as the wisest living man because he knew that what he knew was nothing.

‘12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos’ (2018) is published by Allen Lane



Jane Bannister Winter Appeal: Vote Now



Our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal is named in memory of Jane Bannister who was Chair of Dorset Humanists until 2009. Jane, who died in 2013, supported charities that helped homeless young

people and women seeking refuge from domestic violence. We seek to maintain the spirit of Jane's philanthropy but without necessarily being tied to the same charities every year. We have raised thousands of pounds for homelessness hostels, Refuge for women, and Mosaic for bereaved children.

Please let us know your preference for this year's appeal. Information about the charities is provided in this Bulletin. Pick up a voting slip at our meetings or email your choice to David Warden. Please do not vote more than once if you have already voted.

Please tick TWO charities only. The two charities with the most votes will be selected.

- Michael House Homeless Hostel in Boscombe
- Mosaic charity for bereaved children based in Dorset
- Humanist school in India (Dorset Humanists has had a friendship link with this school since 2003)
- Uganda Humanists Schools Trust (We have raised money before for this Trust and one of our members is a Trustee)
- Malcolm Children's Foundation – a Humanist medical charity based in Uganda
- Space Youth Project (LGBTQ)
- Humanists UK (formerly the British Humanist Association)
- Moordown Community Centre, our 'home' for nearly 20 years

Votes should arrive by voting slip or email no later than 23rd November 2018
chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk

Malcolm Children's Foundation (MCF) is a charity located in Kampala, Uganda.



Its aim is to help save children's lives, especially those with congenital diseases who

don't have access to the vital medical support they need in Uganda. Its vision is to save little lives and give children a healthy start in life. MCF believes in the humanist vision of life and it is a Partner of the International Humanist and Ethical Union based on London.

The families supported are among the poorest in Kampala, and lack access to the most basic health care. As a humanist organisation, MCF strongly believes health is a human right, and this is the driving force behind everything it does.

Uganda is a highly religious, majority-Christian country and it is difficult for individuals to openly express non-religious views. MCF works to give children access to the medication, equipment and other support they need, irrespective of their families' religion or belief.

MCF promotes Humanism by helping patients to think critically and for themselves. In a country where many believe prayer or divine intervention is the only hope of recovering from ill-health, MCF is providing an empowering, science-based alternative.

<https://malcolmchildrensfoundation.wordpress.com/>

Mosaic is a Dorset-wide charity offering a pathway of support to bereaved children, young people and their families. They also work with young people who are



Supporting bereaved children

facing the death of a loved one. Mosaic provides individual, family and group support. Every child has the opportunity to attend our residential weekend programme where they can meet others and share their 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. 2017 income: £237,000 (Charity Commission).

<https://mosaicfamilysupport.org/>

The mission of **Michael House** in Boscombe is to provide emergency and longer-term accommodation to homeless people and to

MICHAEL HOUSE
Rebuilding Lives

provide related day services. It provides encouragement, advice and support to its clients in an environment which enables them to gain a greater sense of self-worth and to move towards a more independent life. It works 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.

2017 income: £283,000 (Charity Commission).

<https://michaelhouse.co.uk/>

Uganda Humanist Schools Trust



The Uganda Humanist Schools Trust was established in November 2008 as a charity to raise funds to support the efforts of Ugandan

Humanists, who have founded schools which offer students the alternative of liberal secular-humanist education:

Isaac Newton High School, Katera, Masaka
Mustard Seed School, Busota, Kamule

Kasese Humanist Primary School, Kasese
2017 Income: £104,000. Dorset Humanists has donated to this charity in recent years and one of our members, Chris Smith, is a trustee.



Kids' Kingdom, India

Dorset Humanists has had a friendship link with this humanist school in northern India since 2003. We've provided school bags, stationery, clothing, laptops and desks for the children. Many of the children are from the lowest Dalit

'untouchable' caste and live in local slums. Kids' Kingdom gives them a chance to escape from street life and to develop their minds and skills for a better future. It's funded entirely by donations and provides elementary 'after-school' education. Classes in English, maths, science and IT run from 4.00-7.00pm in the evening. The school attracts over 100 children. For some, this is their only education. For others, Kids' Kingdom is a stimulating addition to the regular school day.

Swami Manavatavadi was the founder of the school. He died earlier this year from a brain haemorrhage but his associates are still continuing with the work he started. Kids' Kingdom (under the umbrella of the International School for Humanitarian Thoughts and Practice) is an associate member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union based in London.

Space Youth Project



Space Youth Project provides support for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and questioning) young people throughout Dor set including Bournemouth and

Poole by facilitating youth led activities.

Space Youth Project and its members, staff and volunteers raise awareness of LGBTQ issues and encourage an inclusive and happy society. 2017 Income £86,000 (Charity Commission).





Dorset Humanists **Chairman's View**

November 2018

Jordan Peterson's book '12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos' (2018) is a strange compilation. It's longwinded, preachy, and a bit religious, but it does contain quite a lot of wisdom. I was particularly struck by Rule 9: "Assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don't." Political debate in the internet age has become so vitriolic, polarised, mendacious, and downright stupid that we badly need to heed this advice. We all need to put our egos to one side and start listening to each other with the noble intention of pursuing truth rather than victory.

In addition to really listening to each other, Peter Connolly's talk on persuasion highlighted how we also need to pay close attention to the way in which we use language to subvert rational thought. The Brexit debate is a classic example of this. One of the most powerful rhetorical devices employed on the Leave side was 'Project Fear' – a kind of dustbin into which all negative assessments of leaving the EU can be dropped without further thought by ardent Brexiters. I've also noticed how often Remainers use the phrase 'The EU isn't perfect' which is an absurd understatement considering the very severe structural and economic problems the EU faces. To take one example, youth unemployment in the UK is 11 per cent. In Greece it's 43 per cent, in Spain 34 per cent, Italy 32 per cent, and France 20 per cent.¹ When 700,000 people marched for another 'People's Vote' (another clever rhetorical device) and when young people in this country complain that their European future has been taken away from them, I see little solidarity with millions of young people across Europe for whom the EU simply isn't working. Marches and slogans are not strong on nuance and complexity.

For several years, our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal has operated on the principle of prioritising local charities. This helps to forge local connections and demonstrates our positive presence in the community. We do, however, also have an opportunity to give to specifically humanist charities abroad in the very poorest of countries. This year, I would really like to see us continue to give to a local homelessness hostel because Jane Bannister was particularly concerned about this social problem. I would also like us to give serious consideration to a specifically humanist charity abroad to show our solidarity with humanists in other countries. But it's up to you. Please vote for your preferred two charities no later than 23rd November 2018 so that we can launch our appeal at our festive event on 8th December.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266228/youth-unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/>

