

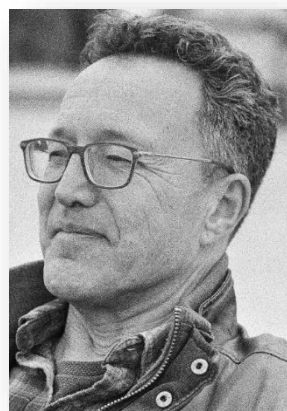


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Poundbury – the good, the bad and the ugly

Saturday 10th June 2.00pm Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW

A talk by John Hubbard. John is a retired English teacher, a lecturer for the U3A, an architectural historian, and a member of Dorset Humanists. He has given us numerous excellent talks on humanist themes in literature, painting, and architecture.



The Duchy of Cornwall's development to the west of Dorchester is now in the last phase of construction. Since its inception it has been the subject of interested debate, particularly in the context of the then Prince of Wales's views on architecture as set out in his programme and book *A Vision of Britain*. Is the place simply an extended piece of anti-Modernist propaganda, a living catalogue of historic building types, a sentimental theme-park, a triumph of urban planning and a pleasing place in which to live or a blot on the landscape? In this detailed and richly illustrated study, John will explore the area and its buildings and attempt an aesthetic evaluation of this project so long in the making with reference to other examples of town planning and reflect on its wider influence in the county and beyond.

Understanding Humanism

Wednesday 28th June 7.30pm Orchid Hotel, 34 Gervis Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3DH

A talk by David Warden, Chair of Dorset Humanists and Humanist Advisor to Bournemouth University and Arts University Bournemouth

Humanism is a complex and sometimes elusive concept to pin down. Is it just a 'non-religious worldview'? A 'way of being'? An 'antidote to fanaticism'? An 'algorithm' which helps us to live the best human life possible? David aims to offer some fresh perspectives.





**Banger on the Beach Barbecue at Branksome Chine to celebrate World Humanist Day
Wednesday 21st June from 6pm**

Please bring food and drink, plates and beakers, etc., for yourself and some to share if you would like to. Bring a guitar if you can entertain us! For the barbecue, bring raw food, not frozen, so that it cooks evenly. Bring a chair or blanket to sit on. And a jacket in case it gets chilly. Sign up on Meetup (click image above). Park in Branksome Chine car park, or on-street in Lakeside Road. If you come by bus, the number 50 stops nearby. Or come by bike and cycle along the promenade. There are four barbecue platforms, including an accessible one, so we can cook mixed dishes, if one is used for fish or vegetarian. It's first come, first served so we may have to wait our turn. Volunteer chefs appreciated to help head chef Aaron. See you there!

Dates for your diary

Saturday 10th June 2.00pm	Moordown	Poundbury – the good, the bad and the ugly <i>John Hubbard</i>
Sunday 18 th June 10.15am	Hengistbury Head	Walk – see Meetup for details
Wednesday 21 st June 6pm	Branksome	World Humanist Day Barbecue on the Beach
Wednesday 28 th June 7.30pm	Orchid	Understanding Humanism – <i>David Warden</i>
Saturday 8 th July 10.00-4.00	Square	LGBT Pride festival – no meeting at Moordown. Join our fantastic outreach team for a hot day out!
Wednesday 26 th July 7.30pm	Orchid	Boys Just Wanna Have Fun: Straight Talk about Gay Relationships – <i>a talk by David Warden</i>

Plus other social events which will be announced on Meetup. Please check all events nearer the time in case of any venue changes.



Are we hiding in plain sight?

Barry Newman challenges us to think about whether we should be doing more to promote humanism and Dorset Humanists

Everyone reading this is probably a reasonably committed humanist and believes that humanism is the best available worldview and way of life. It follows that we should aspire to making the world a better place through the sharing and spreading of these views. In spite of the UK becoming ever more secular with values and views increasingly aligning with humanism, the humanist movement does not seem to be rapidly expanding – locally or nationally. Humanist organisations such as Humanists UK and Dorset Humanists seem reluctant to actively promote humanism and expand membership. One of the common reasons given for this reluctance is the wish not to be viewed as emulating proselytising religions lest we become branded as yet another of these. Other reasons may include an element of intellectual elitism or perhaps a view that people should spontaneously find humanism rather than be actively drawn to it. Are we satisfied with this state of affairs? Or should we take steps to promote what we believe in? Do we even have a duty to do so?

Does promotion work? The only relevant evidence we seem to have is the highly successful Atheist Bus campaign in 2008/9 which fund-raised more than thirty times its

target and spread worldwide. (See Wikipedia for more details). While the message used - "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life" was provocative and not explicitly humanist, it was supported by the then British Humanist Association, but it's impact was not measurable. However, the local impact of an awareness-raising campaign can be assessed by monitoring Dorset Humanists website 'hits', and membership applications.

What kind of campaign could we mount to raise awareness? There are many options, but a geographically-focussed campaign favours physical advertising, e.g. on busses, bus shelters, hoardings and the like. The expense would not be trivial, but a limited campaign may well be affordable for Dorset Humanists. What would the message be? There will be many contenders but a good starting point may be Julian Baggini's 'Think for yourself. But not by yourself' – with our Dorset Humanists logo and website address.

But the first issue to be addressed is this: are we content with hiding in plain sight?

Barry is a member of our committee. Please give some thought to Barry's ideas so that we can take this forward. There will be opportunities to discuss your ideas at our events or you can email David at chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk



Universal Basic Income or Job Guarantee?

Steve Laughton provided us with a stimulating overview of these topics at our evening event at the Orchid Hotel in May. You can watch the talk on our YouTube channel by clicking the image of Steve. This is a short summary of the talk.

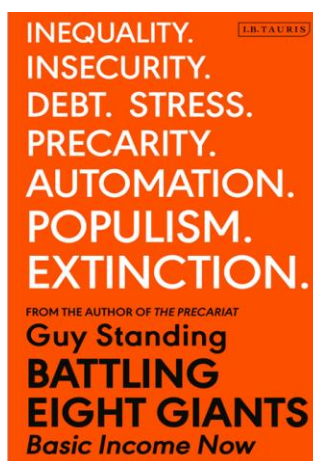
Recently, two concepts that have garnered attention are Universal Basic Income (UBI) and a job guarantee. Additionally, the notion of Universal Basic Services (UBS) has been introduced. UBS refers to services that are already familiar to us, such as the State Education Service, the National Health Service, and pensions provided to everyone at the age of 65.

In this discussion, we will explore the need for UBI and a job guarantee, their goals, and their implementation through pilots and experiments conducted worldwide. We will also examine the pros and cons of both approaches. Furthermore, we will delve into the criticisms levelled by UBI proponents against the job guarantee and vice versa, as they often share similar concerns.

All these discussions revolve around income, money, work, and services that require payment. Therefore, we will conclude the lecture by examining the nature of money, how it is created, how it is spent, and its role in the economy – a topic often overlooked by economists but well understood by bankers.

The concepts of UBI and job guarantee arise from the desire to address various challenges posed by financial capitalism and the market economy. These challenges include inequality, insecurity, debt burdens, and 'precarity' (precarious incomes). Moreover, there are concerns about potential job losses caused by automation and artificial intelligence, leading to economic collapse and the rise of populist or even neo-fascist governments. Another significant issue is climate change which some

proponents believe UBI can contribute to mitigating.



Professor Guy Standing

Economist Professor Guy Standing, an advocate for UBI, suggests that it can help to slay 'eight giants' as shown on the cover of his book above. (This echoes the 'five giants' identified by William Beveridge in 1942: want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness.)

The concept of a universal basic income suggests that it is provided to all individuals unconditionally, regardless of their employment status or income level. It is meant to be a right of every citizen, ensuring a minimum level of economic security for all.

The level at which it is implemented would depend on various factors and would need to be determined through experimentation and pilot programmes. The amount would need to be set at a level that is considered sufficient to cover basic needs, but not so high as to discourage individuals from seeking employment or engaging in productive activities. ▷

The delivery of a universal basic income would typically involve direct cash transfers or deposits into individuals' bank accounts. This allows people the flexibility to use the funds as they see fit, whether it's for essential expenses like food and housing or for other purposes that they prioritize. It provides a safety net for those who are struggling financially and ensures that everyone has access to a minimum standard of living. By reducing poverty, it can also lead to improved health, education, and overall well-being. UBI empowers individuals by providing them with regular, predictable, and unconditional payments. Unlike traditional welfare programmes, UBI is considered a permanent right. There is no benefit trap associated with UBI, meaning it is not withdrawn if someone becomes wealthy suddenly. One of the advantages of UBI is that it eliminates the need for means-testing, saving both time and resources.

Objections to UBI

A common objection raised against UBI is that people may become lazy or choose not to work if they receive a basic income. However, evidence from pilot projects suggests that this is not the case. In fact, basic income has been found to increase employment and productivity. When individuals have a guaranteed income, they are often more willing to take risks, pursue entrepreneurial ventures, or engage in creative and meaningful work that may not have been financially viable otherwise.

There are debates surrounding the issue of immigration and UBI. Some proponents of UBI argue for a residency criterion, suggesting that individuals should have lived in a country for a certain period before qualifying for the benefit. This approach would make it quasi-universal, more like a universal residence income rather than a universal citizen's income.

Another common objection to UBI is its perceived cost. However, various costings

have been conducted, showing that the implementation of UBI would be affordable. For example, in the UK, it has been estimated that UBI would cost around £67 billion per year, which is less than the tax breaks given for corporate subsidies (£93 billion). The cost of UBI can vary depending on the specific design, ranging from 2.7% to 7% of GDP, or even higher if it is set at the level of a basic state pension.

Pilots of UBI have been conducted in different parts of the world, and the results have shown some positive outcomes. It has been observed that UBI leads to a slight increase in employment, enhances skills, improves employability, reduces child labour, increases education levels, lowers birth rates, decreases domestic violence, and contributes to overall well-being.

Notable pilot projects include Finland, where 2,000 unemployed people were paid €560 per month, and they found no negative effect on employment overall. In North Carolina, a Native American community distributed casino profits amounting to \$6,000 per year to the population, resulting in improved education and reduced domestic violence. Similar success has been seen in Indian rural villages and Alaska, where a basic income funded by oil wealth has been established.

Another objection raised against UBI is that it is utopian and has never been done before. However, many societal advancements were once considered unachievable until they were implemented. It is also argued that UBI would dismantle the welfare state, but proponents view it as an add-on or replacement rather than a complete dismantling.

A significant question arises regarding inflation. If the additional demand resulting from universal benefits stimulates increased supply and employment, it may not lead to inflation. However, if the supply doesn't keep up with demand, it could drive up prices. Further research is needed to examine the potential inflationary effects. ▷

Job Guarantee

The viability of universal benefits may depend on the presence of underemployed or unemployed individuals and excess capacity in the economy. When the economy is operating at its full potential, considerations regarding job guarantees come into play. A job guarantee involves the government stepping in to offer employment to those without jobs, ensuring that everyone has access to work.

Advocates of job guarantees include economists like Daniel Kostzer and Pavlina Chernova. They highlight successful implementations of job guarantee programmes in Argentina during a period of high unemployment. Stephanie Kelton and Bill Mitchell, renowned economists, have also contributed to the discussion around job guarantees.

Since around 1973, governments have attempted to combat inflation by maintaining a pool of unemployed individuals. This buffer stock of unemployed people serves as a deterrent to wage increases, as people fear losing their jobs and unions have less bargaining power. However, this pool of underemployed and unemployed individuals in advanced Western economies has not been effectively utilized.

The job guarantee proposal aims to address this issue by putting these unused resources back into use. It provides people with purpose, dignity, and a wage floor that no employer can undercut. The idea is that if the job guarantee pays, for example, £15 per hour, no employer can pay less than that, forcing wages to rise. This would reduce the share of national income going to capital and profits and increase the share going to those who work for a living.

It's important to note that the job guarantee is not meant to be a permanent job but a transitional one. When the economy is sluggish and unemployment is high, the government offers job guarantee positions.

As the economy improves and more jobs become available in the private sector, individuals can transition from job guarantee jobs to private employment. The job guarantee is intended to support and complement the private sector, not hinder it.

These job guarantee positions need to be valuable and adaptable. They can expand or contract based on the economic conditions. When facing unemployment during a business downturn, the number of job guarantee positions would expand. Conversely, when the economy improves, the positions would contract. The key purpose of the job guarantee is to control inflation by utilizing an employed buffer stock instead of an unemployed one. The government sets the price it pays for labour as an employer of last resort. This way, the job guarantee serves as a counter-cyclical measure. As the economy expands, government spending on job guarantee positions decreases, and as the economy contracts, government spending on these positions increases. The government acts as a balancing force. Proponents suggest offering the job guarantee to anyone who turns up, making it a public option in the labour market. The government sets the price, and individuals have the opportunity to participate.

The New Deal

Franklin D. Roosevelt in his New Deal implemented a job guarantee, a public employment programme. The American New Deal lasted for eight years, employing 8.5 million people. Australia has done it with the national railroad, offering jobs as an employer of last resort. In India, in 2005, they had the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – public works projects in rural areas for any adult. And they managed it in Argentina, where they had 25% unemployment, setting up things like community kitchens and bakeries, cleaning services for parks, schools, and hospitals, gardening, and pavement repair. ▷

What do UBI proponents say about the job guarantee?

UBI advocates don't like the job guarantee at all. They think it's a load of nonsense. Why work hard if your job is guaranteed? Well, that's a bit of a straw man argument because the only job that's guaranteed is the job guarantee job. For all the other jobs in the economy, you still have to apply if you want the wage that they pay. Another question raised is if you're given a subsidy as a boss to pay an employee, why would you try and make your company more efficient by introducing new technology? The government is subsidizing your business. But that's not what the job guarantee does. It doesn't subsidize private companies. It's a public employment programme.

What do job guarantee proponents say about UBI?

They say that UBI is something for nothing and that you won't get any people working. But the point about the universal basic income is that it gives you a basic income, not a sufficient income. It's not meant to replace your income, you don't live a life of luxury on it. The more important criticism, I think, is that it removes the need for work and hence the value of the currency. The reason a currency has value is because people have to work to get it. If the currency doesn't have value, we wouldn't be able to have state education or any public infrastructure projects, any roads. The job guarantee people also say that UBI will be inflationary. I do think that if the labour supply falls due to a lack of people working because they've all been given a basic income, then there may well be inflationary pressures. We are seeing this effect now with inflationary pressures resulting from the government's furlough scheme during the Covid lockdown.

Will UBI happen?

Will universal basic income happen? Lots of people are talking about it. If we go up to people and say, "Look, we're going to give you £200 a week. Universal basic income, are you

in favour?" They might say "Oh yes." Then you say, "Well, you're going to have to put up taxes to pay for this." Then they will say "Oh no." So support can evaporate very easily. We've got the administrative challenges, and we have to change the cognitive paradigms that people have. We're all very much stuck, certainly in my mind. It's very difficult to think that if we just pay everybody for not doing anything, that an economy can function.

Where does money come from?

Where money comes from is fundamental to the UBI argument. Steve went on to explain Chartalism, also known as Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) or State Theory of Money, which is a monetary theory developed by economists such as Georg Friedrich Knapp in 1905. According to this theory, the government is a currency issuer, not a currency user. The government instructs the central bank to send payments to us through our commercial banks. So when we get our state pension, the government makes a payment to our bank in what's called 'bank reserves'. Once our bank has got its bank reserves from the central bank, it puts a deposit in our account. That's how money is created under government instruction. When Republican politician Ron Paul was arguing that the US pension system would run out of money, he said to Alan Greenspan, "Aren't we going to run out of money?" Alan Greenspan said, "No. We can create as much money as we want. We do it on our keyboards on our central bank computers." So governments spend and tax. They do not tax and spend.

A final caveat. A British businessman and writer on economics, John Mills (author of *Why the West is Failing*) believes that neither UBI or job guarantee are practical as long as we have an uncompetitive exchange rate because if we start increasing demand by giving people more money to spend, UK firms won't step in and start producing new stuff. It will be Chinese firms or firms in Singapore. So this is something to keep in mind.

Watch the full talk [here](#).

View from the Chair

David Warden
Chairman of Dorset Humanists



Farnham Humanists have asked me to do my transgender talk for them on Sunday 18th June. Given what has just happened to Kathleen Stock at the Oxford Union, should I be worried? Will protesters be gluing themselves to the floor or trying noisily to disrupt the meeting?

I've just listened to a recent interview with Kathleen Stock by the podcaster Coleman Hughes. I learnt that Stock's PhD thesis was on imagination, particular in relation to fictional films. In her book *Material Girls* (2021) she claimed that gender identity, when for example a transwoman claims to be, or wants to be treated as, a woman, is a kind of fiction. It seems probable, although I do not have direct evidence of it, that this is one of the stances that has so riled her opponents. At an extreme, it may be claimed that this is a denial of the real existence of trans people which is tantamount to Nazi genocide. Stock is a philosopher, not a neuroscientist, and this might be part of the problem. I'm interested in the neuroscientific basis of trans identities which is why I found Debra Soh's book *The End of Gender* (2020) so helpful when I was preparing for my trans talk for Dorset Humanists last year. It seems plausible that gender identity is partly a result of developmental processes in the womb as well as social stereotypes. It comes back to the nature/nurture debate. Not 'either/or' but 'both/and' and therefore quite difficult to untangle. I also listened recently to an interview with Dr Iain McGilchrist by UnHerd's host Freddie Sayers. McGilchrist is a psychiatrist and a neuroimaging researcher. In the Q&A session, he was asked 'Is there a difference between the male and female brain?' He sighed and said 'Yes'. When asked to elaborate, he said 'What's established beyond doubt is that women's excellence in skills is often linguistic. Whereas for men, they may be much less linguistic, but more able to manipulate things in space, visual and spatial manipulation. And that is the right hemisphere property largely, and linguistic fluency is largely a left hemisphere property. And in utero, it is testosterone that causes the right hemisphere to expand. I could go on and on and on.' So here we have some evidence, from an expert, that there is a difference between the male brain and the female brain and that this difference is caused by the effect of testosterone in utero. He was not asked specifically about the trans issue, but it seems possible, or plausible, that some people could have a biological sex which is male and a brain which is female, or at least biased towards female traits. This could give rise to the subjective experience of 'being born in the wrong body'. And this would accord with the self-reporting of trans people.

But we do need to be careful. The scientific basis of the trans experience, which as yet appears to be quite tentative, has been overwhelmed by something called Queer theory. Queer theory is not based on science but it is a radical political ideology which seeks to blur or erase the difference between men and women. And it could be that queer theory is driving the demands of radical trans activists more than the neuroscience. Anyway, wish me luck! I will report back after the talk.