

HUMANIST viewpoints

WE ASK YOU PLEASE ACT TODAY IF YOU HAVEN'T YET RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FOR THE COMING YEAR. PAYMENT METHODS ON BACK PAGE. THE WORK OF HUMANISM IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER. WE VALUE YOUR SUPPORT.



Society Secretary Fay Love presents 'the philosopher who has everything' with some Australian tea on behalf of the whole Humanist movement of Australia. All this at the 'Humanist Event of the Year (HEY)' - our Humanist Dinner with speech from AC Grayling and special guest John Bell (left), held on Monday night 5th September 2016. See more pictures and story on page 10.

- SEE IAN BRYCE'S PRESIDENTIAL REPORT ON THE LATEST QUARTER ON PAGE 11
- SEE MURRAY LOVE'S INTRODUCTION AS THE NEW PRESIDENT ON PAGE 2
- SEE JOHN AUGUST'S THIRD ARTICLE IN A SERIES ON 'SECULAR HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA' ON PAGE 4
- SEE SCOTT MCGREAL'S ARTICLE FROM HIS WHD TALK ON MEASURING PERSONALITY ON PAGE 8
- SEE MORE PICTURES OF THE EVENING WITH A.C. GRAYLING ON PAGE 10
- CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING UPCOMING HUMANIST HOUSE EVENTS DESCRIBED ON PAGE 6: -
IAN BRYCE - GRAVITATIONAL WAVES—SUN OCT 09; MEETUP PARTY 'ENCOUNTERING OTHERNESS'—SUN OCT 23;
ACTIVISM MEETING WITH LIFE MEMBERS—SUN NOV 13; MEETUP ON HUMANITY & DISABILITY—SUN NOV 27;
END-OF-YEAR TRIVIAGANZA—SAT NIGHT DEC 03; CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS 5 YEARS ON —THU NIGHT DEC 15

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FROM THE EDITOR/PRESIDENT'S DESK...

First, I'd like to thank Ian and John for nominating me, the committee members for supporting me, and all those who came along, or sent their proxies, or apologies, to our well attended Annual General Meeting - which finally endorsed me (unopposed) as the new President of the Humanist Society of NSW. Congratulations also to all those elected on the day, unopposed or otherwise. The committee can continue its work for another year, with the clear and overwhelming support of the Society members. Thank you also to the many members who have personally congratulated me. I want to be a President who has contact with members, and I'd love to hear from all of you, on what you feel, about what we can achieve together.

Can a President also be an Editor? Obviously, issues of workload and burnout have to be monitored. Certainly, while I'm still getting the newsletter focused on member contributions and society activities and news, doing the newsletter actually helps shape the process of renewal. In talking to colleagues, I have often described my intended approach in terms of a *hands-on* Presidency. But I'd also love to have some more hands around! You know where to find me, if you think you can help.

For those of you who were at the Dinner with AC Grayling on Monday September 5th, I ask that you try to maintain the memory of the community we became on that occasion. Here was a wonderfully diverse gathering of eighty different Sydney people, mightily interested in Humanism, and having a good time together. If you weren't there, we have some photos in this issue, and we have some media and more photos on the web. (We'll have links on our website).

Now of course we had a major international speaker, and that was the big drawcard. Nevertheless, we had living proof that Humanism remains a viable movement in this town, and in this era. On that incredible night, at that amazing gathering, we saw in three dimensions the kind of future this Society could have – if we can sustain a level of quality in our presentations and our communications. Particularly if enough of you continue to get involved. To be quite clear, it is so very true that “nothing succeeds like success”, so please keep coming, just as we keep offering a programme of exciting humanistic events.

There is talent and energy out there among our members, and no harm in letting one another know about that. Write in to tell us about your own active humanism, and your ideas, and ways other members can share with you. Come along to at least one of our smaller events each year, and keep in touch. Don't just hope someone else is doing it.

Through our outreach Meetup events since 2012, I would estimate around five hundred new people have had a positive humanistic experience in Humanist House. But if they arrive in small bursts, and there's no regular cohort of members similar in age, gender and interests, then it's hard to get them to 'stick'. I urge even our busiest members, to find time to show new people what a lively, engaging bunch we humanists are - as we discovered ourselves at the Grayling evening!

In thinking about whether I had something to offer as a President, I began listing some goals I might be able to work on:

- Responding to serious and continuing decline in the society's membership base
- Reviving the Humanism brand, with the society as a local base for a global movement
- Finding ways to appeal to very diverse, and very demanding, potential members
- Keeping the society financially viable - and keeping its assets secure from potential abuse
- Ensuring safety, and indemnity from loss, for our volunteers; streamlining jobs to be easier and more enjoyable
- Modernising with appropriate standards and policies and methods for the contemporary organisation
- Seeking, recruiting and developing a new generation of leaders, helpers, sponsors, and supporters
- Looking for productive partnerships, and even mergers, with similar organisations with similar values

So there's more than enough to get busy on. I hope I can offer a suitable managerial approach. I did learn a lot in my humble career as a local government librarian of over thirty years' experience. What did I do? I did some post-graduate studies in management, plus lots of short courses and experiences. I learned to manage projects, people, and assets. I learned skills in presentation, negotiation, planning, reporting, budgeting, and community consultation. I got office and graphic software skills and designed methods and systems. I was helping people every day find information on the arts, the sciences, the humanities and recreation. Quite honestly, what is more humanistic than a public library! I retired in February 2015 but I'm busy again.

I got activist in 2008 - getting involved in the Atheist movement. But I had a 'conversion' experience. since 2012 I've led NSW Humanist Meetup discussions on Life, Liberty, Happiness, Psychology, Philosophy, Multiculturalism, Islamism, Consciousness, Critical Thinking, Motherhood, Religious freedom, the Enlightenment, Community, Humanitarianism, and Refugees - and the topic of Humanism itself, featured many different ways. (And there are many more facets to Humanism yet to explore.)

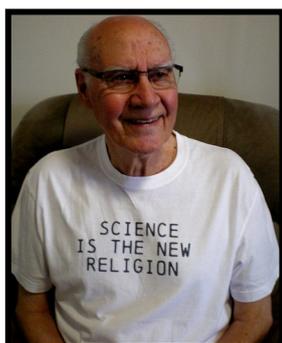
I tried to get those who came to participate, and to get personally involved in 'examining their life'. I hoped they would grow in a sense of what humanism is for them - it's such an individual thing - no proselytizing allowed. It's hard to know how much fruit it bore in those who came - they mostly left with a smile on their face. ☺ But they didn't always come back! All the same, it had a big impact on me and my wife Fay who were the regular attendees. We have had our identification with Humanism very much strengthened over this period - so it works, I guess.

So - there are these factors in my background that I hope can help me lead the pursuit of the goals I mentioned. Seeing as I'm planning to do a lot of meeting and greeting, I thought I probably should give you a reliable up-to-date photo of myself. So here's a selfie I took just the other day - and it really was taken right here at my desk. So now you know me. See you soon at an event - and there's plenty listed on page six.

Murray Love



THE WORKS OF DENNIS MORRIS

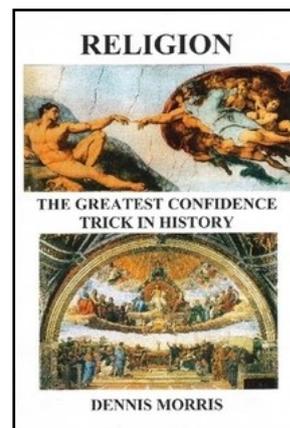


Dennis Morris has traveled in Asia, the Americas, Europe, and the Pacific observing many cultures and living in monasteries of different religions. He bought musical instruments for street kids so they could go busking and feed themselves. In South Africa he explored archaeological sites of early hominids. He fought against apartheid and created a musical with an African cast: *You Can't Stop the Revolution*. He's written songs in both English and Zulu. Dennis came to Western Australia in 1988 and joined the Humanist Society there. Ten years later he was the President of the Society, serving until 2006, when he had a stroke. This didn't stop him finishing his most important book *Religion: the greatest confidence trick in history*. He has been a member of the Humanist Society of NSW for many years, although he continues to live in Perth. Dennis has donated the profits from his books and CDs to the Society as well as a large number of paintings. He is a passionate supporter of equality for Dalits in India and was declared an *Outstanding Humanist Achiever* in 2014.

In *Religion: the greatest confidence trick in history*, Dennis explains the essential difference between religious morals and ethics, and social morals and ethics. He gives an alternative to religion built around principles we can aspire to, and reasons for the values we live by - true freethinking means pure observation without indoctrination. Dennis explains why all religions are false, how they grew over the millennia to what they are today, how the Torah, Bible and Quran grew out of the old Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian religions - and how religion has become a money-making machine. The book includes discussion of various Eastern religions and philosophies.

Dennis reveals Humanism as a way of thinking with philosophical roots in early Greece, and now a world-wide international movement committed to a way of life based on ethical principals devised by human beings, for human needs, and for the love and care of our planet. Humanists base their interpretation of existence on the evidence of the natural world and its evolution, and not on the belief in a supernatural power. This is why it is called a naturalistic stance for living.

(review by James Lovell)



Dennis has produced
2 CDs:

Love is Born

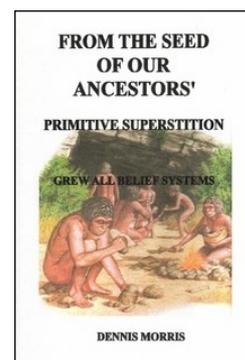
You Can't Stop the Revolution



Dennis has also a second book still in print: *From the Seed of Our Ancestors*. This book starts when, as a child, Dennis played with his friends in and around such famous South African archaeological sites as Sterkfontein and Swartkrans.

Both of Dennis's books are available, as ebooks or as paperbacks, just by googling **lulu.com** then searching **Dennis Morris** ; or go direct to:

<http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/superstitionbuster>



Both of Dennis's CD's are available for \$10 ea + \$2.20 p&p at: <http://www.hsnsw.asn.au/DennisMorris.html>

Please Consider Making a Donation or Bequest

From \$5 to \$100, any amount can help protect and sustain the diverse efforts of the NSW Humanist Society. Please also consider us in your Will. All bequests contribute to the longevity of the Humanist Society of NSW and Humanism.

Do You have items for Book Room & Library

If you have any surplus 'hard copy' books, then consider donating them to the Society's Library or for sale in the Bookroom. Volunteers in the Bookroom are often frontline contacts with those who enquire about Humanism while they browse the items around the walls. Our most important volunteer Gillian has been recuperating from a medical procedure but has reappeared in Bookroom. We hope to see it more active in the Springtime season.

Please Send Member Contributions to Viewpoints

Members are welcome and encouraged to send in news and views for publication. These can be controversial - there's no requirement to push a party line. They can be on diverse topics - Humanism has a broad range. We love to hear from members who haven't contributed before. Even a 'letter to the editor' format is fine. Please by all means disagree - or share why you do agree! We would love to include all we can. Send items to lovemuz@gmail.com by email.

Member News

Welcome to new members David Killingly, Eileen Ross, and Roslyn Mancy.

We regret to inform you of the death on 27th June of member Robert Devine of Port Macquarie.

If your renewal is still outstanding do please take action this very day to stay a part of our vital movement in the world. A big thanks to those very many who've already paid. Please keep supporting the Humanist Society of NSW.

SECULAR HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA - III

This history carries on from instalments in two previous issues of *Viewpoints* (54.04 & 55.03). As we noted, the shadow of religious sectarianism lies over Australian politics. The Catholic Church flexed its muscles at times - with differences between Cardinals Gilroy in NSW and Mannix in Victoria. The *Australian Labor Party (ALP)* suffered pushes from Catholics in its ranks. At the same time, some nominal Catholics embraced 'Socialism' even though it opposed certain precepts of 'Catholicism'.

In Part III things get complex and interesting. We have focused on secular elements, but there was a lot else going on.

We saw how Labor PM Billy Hughes walked out, taking his supporters with him. Hughes saw the Great War through as a conservative Prime Minister. He founded the CSIRO. Hughes drew on business principles, but was blind to class difference. He established the loan council to eliminate confusion in borrowings. Nowadays each state covets its 'rating' with the international rating agencies.

Much of the Australian population saw itself as British, in contrast to Canadians and South Africans, who were more independent. There was always a mix of Irish nationalism in the sectarian current. Catholics ran radio 2SM (for St Mary), while Theosophists had radio 2GB (Giordano Bruno)!

One-term Labor PM, James Scullin (1929-32), was concerned about financial imperialism. The economy, and our economic relationships, were increasing in significance.

Joseph Lyons, another Labor defector, became PM in 1932 as leader of the *United Australia Party (UAP)*. He opposed debt to solve unemployment (shades of the contemporary stimulus package controversy), even though he experienced poverty himself growing up.

Lyons' successor, Robert Menzies, a barrister, had turned to politics 'to put something back into the community'. Menzies briefly became PM in 1939. On the 3rd of September it was his 'melancholy duty' to declare that: "in consequence of the persistence of Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result, Australia is also at war." - Menzies was British 'to the bootstraps'!

Japan had been an ally in the Great War, and there was talk of an Australian-Japanese alliance. When the unions banned the exports of materials to Japan, Menzies opposed them. They called him 'Pig Iron Bob'. We wonder why Menzies didn't see the trouble with Japan brewing, while the unions did. Was it naivety, or business interests blinding effective foreign policy? Or genuine hope based on past good relations with Japan?

There was turmoil in government. Arthur Fadden (Country Party) replaced Menzies on 28 August 1941 but lost out to Labor's John Curtin on 7 October 1941. The conservative side of politics had lost support.

After Pearl Harbor in December 1941 Curtin declared war on Japan. But on 15 February 1942 the Japanese captured Singapore and four days later bombed Darwin. The bombing of Darwin was overwhelming, but the Curtin government suppressed the true scale of the disaster, although rumours did circulate.

The 'Brisbane Line' was developed - the Japanese could take the north of Australia, and we'd defend from Brisbane downwards. It's still possible to see remnants of the fortifications around the NSW/QLD border.

Douglas MacArthur arrived in Australia. On 5th May 1942 the Battle of the Coral Sea began. MacArthur was a controversial figure, worshipped by some - demonised by others. There's a story of the ditty that soldiers sung about him during the battle of Bataan: "Dug-out Doug MacArthur lies a-shaking on the rock, Safe from all the bombers and any sudden shock".

Nevertheless, it seems Australians were jittery on the whole, and the arrival of MacArthur was a great boost to morale. Threats tended to polarise the population around leaders rather than parties or ideals. Curtin played to this. Maybe as now, people join parties because of ideology, but vote for parties for notions of leadership and good management.

In 1943 Curtin was re-elected, and for the first time since 1916, the ALP held majorities in both upper and lower houses. In March 1944, Jack Holloway introduced a bill to provide free medicine, but GPs refused to cooperate. Curtin died in 1945, and was ultimately replaced by Ben Chifley, who won another election in 1946.

Chifley took over income taxes, which had previously been levied by the states. Menzies compared it to the behaviour of eighteenth-century highwaymen. Premiers complained, and the Victorian government challenged it in the High Court, but the court upheld Chifley's move.

The Chifley government funded an immigration scheme, with minister Arthur Calwell infamously quipping "Two Wongs don't make a White"! They put in extensive legislation on wool, dried fruits, sugar, meat, dairy, cotton, egg, hide, leather, apple - and especially wheat prices and production stabilisation. Woomera rocket range, ASIO, and the Snowy Mountains Scheme were established.

In October 1944, Robert Menzies amalgamated the many conservative political organisations into one group. He used the *Looking Forward* manifesto from the *Institute for Public Affairs* - a mild affair compared to what we see now! This was the foundation of the modern *Liberal Party*.

Menzies was critical of sectional interests. By some analyses, his heart was in the right place - wanting to be the party of 'small business', but also obliged to compromise with the 'big end of town'. Still, it's worth recognising that during government, Menzies actually did **increase the pension!**

Nowadays, we can only imagine such increases as a result of outside pressure, but this seems to have been a gracious gesture at the time - at least relatively. So Menzies' policies did include a progressive element.

There was agitation by the *Communist Party of Australia (CPA)* and many strikes. Most were in fact unconnected with the CPA, but there was a belief they were 'orchestrating' the trouble - no 'real' Australians could so callously harm others! Some saw the strikes as against the Labor Government rather than 'capitalism'. It put the spotlight on the communists.

Catholic Church abuses continued. We all heard of the 'stolen generations', but there were also Catholic 'slave laundries' in Melbourne and Sydney (The 'Magdalene Laundries' - now notorious in Ireland, but also found in Australia) - something that drove activist Chris Selnes to distribute Frank Hardy's novel *Power Without Glory*. This portrayed the Catholic Church and the ALP as duplicitous, with the communists as the only party with any sort of moral fibre.

Chifley wanted to nationalise the banks, but ended up with both labour and capital turning their backs on him. The shipping and foreign exchange crisis didn't help! The banking regulation was constitutionally challenged by the banks, and the High Court upheld the challenge. Chifley appealed to the Privy Council, who also rejected it.

Menzies capitalised on the failed nationalisation, to undermine government credibility. The *Sydney Catholic Weekly* suggested that the end of private property heralded 'socialism'. Cardinal Gilroy of Sydney said the issue was no business of the church, unless a moral issue was involved. Again, the Catholic Church was not an absolute unity.

Menzies' newly formed *Liberal Party*, won the December 1949 election. It's been said that: "Menzies' triumph lay in his ability to grasp, that social reform was right for the middle class, but electoral suicide, if extended to the workers".

In April 1950, Menzies introduced a bill to dissolve the *Communist Party of Australia*. Chifley opposed it, but the ALP executive endorsed it, and Labor went along with it in parliament. However, the unions challenged it in the High Court, which declared the act invalid. Menzies won an election in April 1951, but then his referendum seeking "Powers to deal with Communists", was defeated in September 1951.

The whole series of events had shone a spotlight on an interesting divergence between the Union movement, Chifley, and the rest of the Labor Party. Furthermore, Chifley died of a heart attack amid the turmoil, and H.V. 'Doc' Evatt became the Labor leader. Having narrowly defeated the referendum, Evatt and Labor then, just as narrowly, lost the 1954 election.

Around this time there was a defection by a Soviet embassy official, Vladimir Petrov. This was a huge controversy, with both sides claiming conspiracies. The following summary is my own view - you might differ!

Petrov, a low ranking administrator and dodgy character, got on the wrong side of office politics within the Soviet foreign affairs and intelligence apparatus. He must have been moderately successful to get his posting in the first place, but this was more luck than competence. Petrov defected because things were going south for him, rather than through a deep seated appreciation for the west's moral superiority!

At the time, the affair was dealt with internally by ASIO, without any direct involvement by Menzies. It was just chance that it came to Menzies' attention when it did. Menzies didn't engineer its timing, but certainly made much opportunistic use of it in Parliament to attack Labor.

There surely were some Communist sympathisers within the ALP, but it's debatable whether this actually ever compromised any Australian interests. Evatt, as Labor leader was pinned. While a clever and thoughtful person, he lost his objectivity and made wild accusations, leading to the loss of standing of the Australian Labor Party.

After the defeat of May 1954, Evatt made an outburst accusing Catholic Action (formed 1937) within Labor of undermining the Australian Labor Party. When the Victorian ALP executive supported the right-wing Catholics, unions pushed for action by the Federal executive.

In the investigation, Labor MPs criticised Evatt, and the ANU was described as a "nest of communists". Evatt claimed Catholic Action was trying to commit the ALP to anti-

communist action - to the exclusion of other significant issues, and identified B.A. Santamaria as important in Catholic Action.

Labor's federal executive directed that the Victorian executive be re-elected. At one stage there were two 'executives' in Victoria both claiming to be "the 'Australian Labor Party'!"

Bob Joshua, a conservative Protestant, expelled from the ALP in 1955, joined with Catholics to form the *Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist)* - later renamed the *Democratic Labor Party (DLP)*. Menzies congratulated Joshua, and made room on the agenda to debate communism, damaging Labor in the process.

Thereafter, the *Democratic Labor Party* nearly always directed its second preferences to the *Liberal Party*.

Within the ALP, middle-class, militant, Catholic conservatives allied with the right wing of the party. The feud was intense. One Labor leader said: "an inordinately large number of my fellow Catholics are fear-stricken, Communist-hating, money-making, social-climbing, status-seeking, brain-washed, ghetto-minded people to whom the Pope was too venturesome!"

The world was a hot-bed of conflict. In 1956, Soviet troops invaded Hungary. There were plenty of revolutions. Mao bombed Taiwan's offshore islands. All this resonated with anti-communist paranoia. In 1957, Menzies purchased US equipment for the military, cementing the US alliance. Menzies emphasised the economy, job security, higher wages, and the standard of living, and won the election of Nov 1958.

The conservative wing of the Catholic Church, saw events in Egypt, Malaya, Indonesia, Hungary and Vietnam as meaning Australia was under threat. Troops in what's now Malaysia (the so-called 'Malayan Emergency') became a growing issue, with much of Labor against the deployment.

Trade grew with Japan. Wool was sold to China. Menzies resumed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union - and sold wool to them. This was an interesting contrast to the (perhaps politically expedient) claims previously made about these particular foreign powers.

The DLP was upset at these developments, but unable to block them. Over time the DLP changed from being concerned about the industrial influence of the communists, and focused on pornography, violence and sexual permissiveness.

Senator Cole of the DLP opposed divorce law reform, saying it would destroy the sanctity of marriage (*Sound familiar?*), and disintegrate the community. He claimed civil courts could not break religious marriage, which was above the law.

This was in direct contravention of the secular principle of separation of church and state. Catholics, both in and out of politics, would continue to flex their muscles, whenever they felt they could do so to good effect.

The world is a confusing place, and I'm still confused in places.

Nevertheless, I hope you've found my attempt to make sense of the world interesting, and you're a little less confused.

There's more to tell, and I'll continue the story in a future issue.

John August



CALENDAR FOR OCT-DEC 2016

The HuVAT for Sunday 9th October at 4.00 for 4.30 p.m. will be Ian Bryce on GRAVITATIONAL WAVES

We celebrated the centenary of Einstein's 1916 *General Theory of Relativity* by finally detecting the predicted waves last February. **What are Gravitational Waves** in everyday terms, and how were they detected in the **Space-Time Continuum**? Might they answer fundamental questions? Ian gave this very successful talk at WEA's Science Week.

AS ALWAYS PLEASE STAY AFTER EACH HUVAT FOR OUR SHARED MEAL AND HUMANISTIC CONVERSATION AT 6 PM

NSW Humanists Meetup 'New Humanists Sunday Open House' 3-6PM on Sunday 23rd October 2016

October 2016 is 10 years since the founding of the Meetup. So Sunday 23rd October is a **TENTH BIRTHDAY PARTY**. We'll be inviting input from all those involved in the Meetup over these past 10 amazing years. We have a theme **HORIZONTAL HUMANISM - ENCOUNTERING OTHERNESS**. This is inspired by the notion of 'Horizontal Transcendence' popular among those looking for rational spiritualities. But it is also balanced by Christopher Hitchens' call to "Shun the 'transcendent' "! So there'll be a short philosophical address on finding meaning through our living and relating. Plus a slide show and video messages looking back at the history of the Humanist Meetup - the people - the ideas. And then a **PARTY** - with all the celebration that the word implies. We just need **YOU** . Please come and learn about the Meetup and enjoy the company. Why not also **BRING A PLATE**.

SHARE SPACE WITH A DIVERSE HUMANIST MEETUP COMMUNITY AND ENJOY A MIX OF DISCUSSION, SNACKS AND SOCIALISING

Sunday 13th November 2016 3.15-5.15 p.m. will be another Activism Meeting but with a retro feel

We would love to get newer and younger members taking up a chance to hear something of the past activism work of members of the Society. We'd also like to promote some of our more prolific activists to Life Members of the association. This takes a two-thirds majority at a general meeting, so we'll get the paperwork done for that, but we need a good turnout on the day to pass it all with a flourish, and to celebrate the work of our 20th century heroes. We'll still be tracking down elder activists up to the day itself, so won't be listing names here, but we can hope for some interesting stories from the old days. This is a chance to share, honour and enjoy the fruits, and lessons, of decades of Humanist activism. We'd love you to come along and participate.

If you'd like to speak for a couple of minutes about historic or continuing activism, contact Murray at lovemuz@gmail.com. Add your phone number if you'd like to chat about it first. Or contact **John August** or another committee member you know well.

REMEMBER A 3PM START FOR THE ACTIVISM MEETINGS - ALL WELCOME TO GO ON TO 'THE BROADWAY CROWN' FOR A MEAL

NSW Humanists Meetup 'New Humanists Sunday Open House' 3-6PM on Sunday 27th November 2016

We enjoyed talks on *Constructing Humanity* at the World Humanist Day Symposium and this continues the series. This talk will share how **even the most difficult disabilities don't prevent us reaching our human potential**, and participating in everything we call humanism - science, art, thought, achievement. **Alan Conradi** is a freethought activist - but also a parent and, most particularly, a behaviour support specialist and psychologist. Alan can share illustrative stories, and lead us in discussing **BUTRESSING & SUSTAINING HUMANITY UNDER CHALLENGE**. It would be good if we could have also participation from those who've **found alternative humanities** in the face of such difficulties - bringing a **Paralympic** spirit to all spheres of human action!

SHARE SPACE WITH A DIVERSE HUMANIST MEETUP COMMUNITY AND ENJOY A MIX OF DISCUSSION, SNACKS AND SOCIALISING

SATURDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2016 5.30 FOR 6.00 P.M. END-OF-YEAR TRIVIAGANZA

The end-of-year entertainment for 2016 will be another trivia night. Many of the questions will come from the *Baby Boomer* edition of *Trivial Pursuit*. But we'll try to have some Humanism-related questions as well. Those who came last year had a great time, but it would lovely to see some **new faces** this year. We'll organize teams on the night. The questions are chosen with **enjoyment** in mind, but we'll have some token prizes. If you 'remember the sixties', come and tell us what really happened! But if it's the 70s or 80s you prefer - we can talk about that too. The change to Saturday night proved **refreshing** to members last year so having it again on the first Saturday in December. Parking is easier late on Saturdays. We'll have some little **entertainments** while we check the scores. And we'll have a lovely hot meal and end-of-year **dessert**. We'll also have lots of music guessing - you get the French version, but have to remember the English name for the song. *Très Chic - n'est-ce pas!*

PLEASE BRING A \$10 DONATION TO COVER A MEAL AND EXPENSES - N.B. IT'S ON THE FIRST SATURDAY NIGHT IN DECEMBER

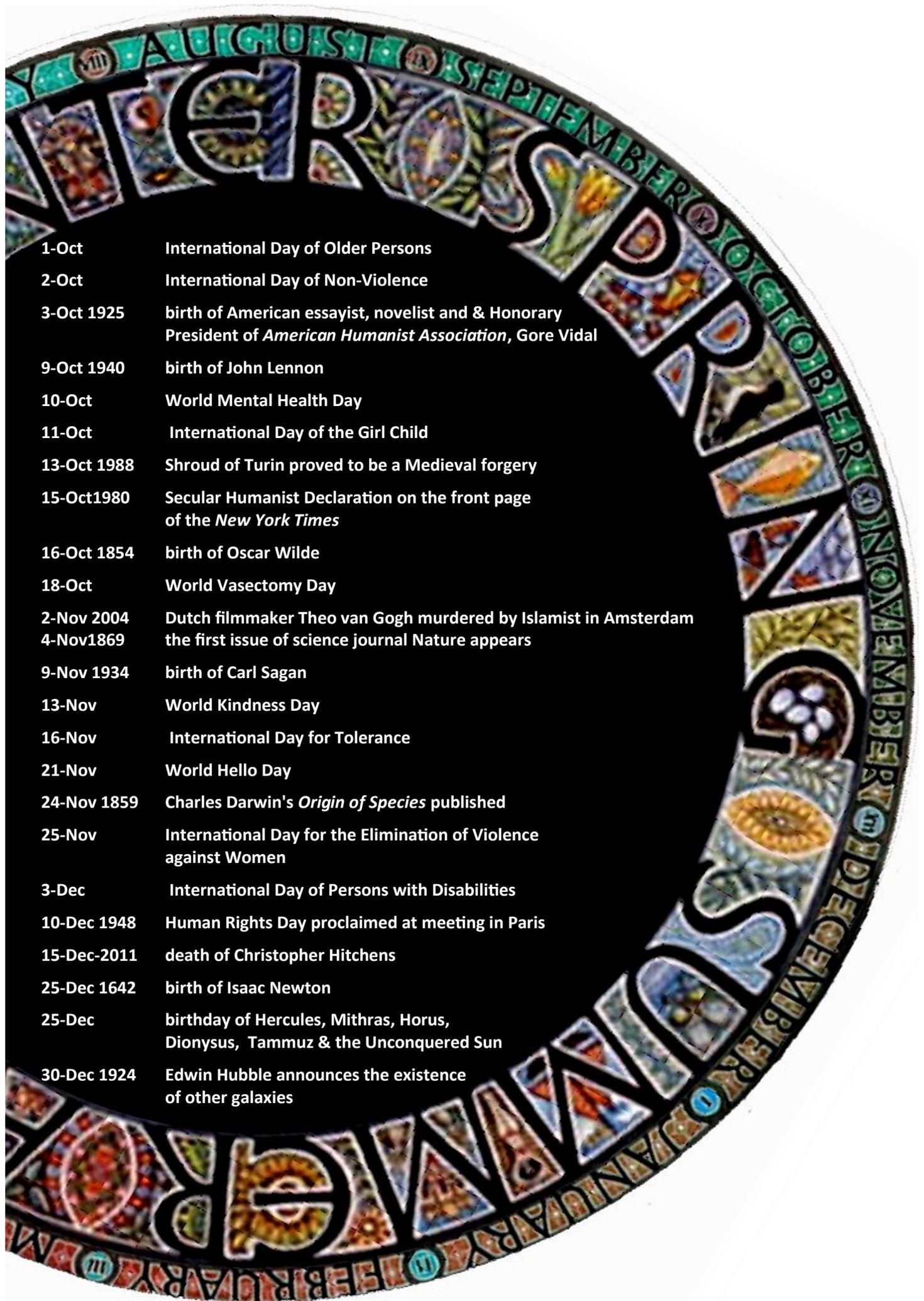
SPECIAL EVENT - 5 Years On - REMEMBERING CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS - Thursday 15 December 7-10pm

It will be five years, on this night, since Christopher Hitchens died. On this date back in 2012 we celebrated one year of sadness, with a toast to the great man using *Johnny Walker Black Label* (Scotch)- always his answer to the question '*what's your poison?*' The bottle we used that night was one of a pair, and the other is still in its box waiting for the next memorial event!

It's time to gather once again for the ritual remembrance. We'll toast him one more time - and remember the good times. There'll be favourite quotations, videos of best moments, and anecdotes to share once again. This was a special night four years ago and worth repeating. Come again or come for the first time. **\$5 includes toasts and snacks. DON'T MISS THIS!**

**ALL EVENTS ON THIS PAGE ARE HELD AT HUMANIST HOUSE 10 SHEPHERD STREET CHIPPENDALE NSW
PLEASE NOTE THEM IN YOUR DIARIES AND CALENDARS NOW - AS THE END-OF-THE-YEAR GETS BUSY**

'Open Forum' continues to meet each Wednesday night at Humanist House 8.00pm as it has done for many years. Open Forum has a diversity of speakers and does not represent the views of the Society.



- 1-Oct International Day of Older Persons
- 2-Oct International Day of Non-Violence
- 3-Oct 1925 birth of American essayist, novelist and & Honorary President of *American Humanist Association*, Gore Vidal
- 9-Oct 1940 birth of John Lennon
- 10-Oct World Mental Health Day
- 11-Oct International Day of the Girl Child
- 13-Oct 1988 Shroud of Turin proved to be a Medieval forgery
- 15-Oct 1980 Secular Humanist Declaration on the front page of the *New York Times*
- 16-Oct 1854 birth of Oscar Wilde
- 18-Oct World Vasectomy Day
- 2-Nov 2004 Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh murdered by Islamist in Amsterdam
- 4-Nov 1869 the first issue of science journal *Nature* appears
- 9-Nov 1934 birth of Carl Sagan
- 13-Nov World Kindness Day
- 16-Nov International Day for Tolerance
- 21-Nov World Hello Day
- 24-Nov 1859 Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* published
- 25-Nov International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- 3-Dec International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 10-Dec 1948 Human Rights Day proclaimed at meeting in Paris
- 15-Dec-2011 death of Christopher Hitchens
- 25-Dec 1642 birth of Isaac Newton
- 25-Dec birthday of Hercules, Mithras, Horus, Dionysus, Tammuz & the Unconquered Sun
- 30-Dec 1924 Edwin Hubble announces the existence of other galaxies

DIMENSIONS OF HUMANITY: MEASURING PERSONALITY

First, just what do we mean by **personality**? Psychologists believe that enduring features of a person's psychological makeup become manifested in the characteristic patterns of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.

In some respects, all humans are alike – there are universal features of our psychological makeup. But In other respects, all humans are unique, because people vary in their individual characteristics, and each person has a distinctive pattern of personal characteristics. This distinctive combination is what is referred to as someone's personality. There is debate about how many factors best describe personality.

One of the most widely used approaches, considers personality in terms of its component **traits**. By traits we mean enduring features of character, that describe what someone is like, in a particular life domain. Any trait can be thought of as a continuum along which a person can vary, rather than a distinct personality type.

There may be hundreds of narrow band traits, however, most traits tend to cluster together to form broader factors, that can be thought of as super-traits, that encompass major features of personality.

One view of the function of personality, is that personality traits are adaptations, that help a person meet their needs as humans (or not, in the case of extreme or maladaptive traits).

For example, traits can influence the **strategies** that people use to meet their social needs. People have a need to get along with others, yet they also have a need to get ahead (i.e. compete with others for social status and access to resources). Some people place more emphasis on one strategy or the other.

Social traits may be broadly **prosocial** or **antisocial**. Similarly, people can develop social strategies that are broadly either mutualistic – cooperating with others for shared goals – or antagonistic – competing with others for personal gain. People vary in their preferred mix of social strategies.

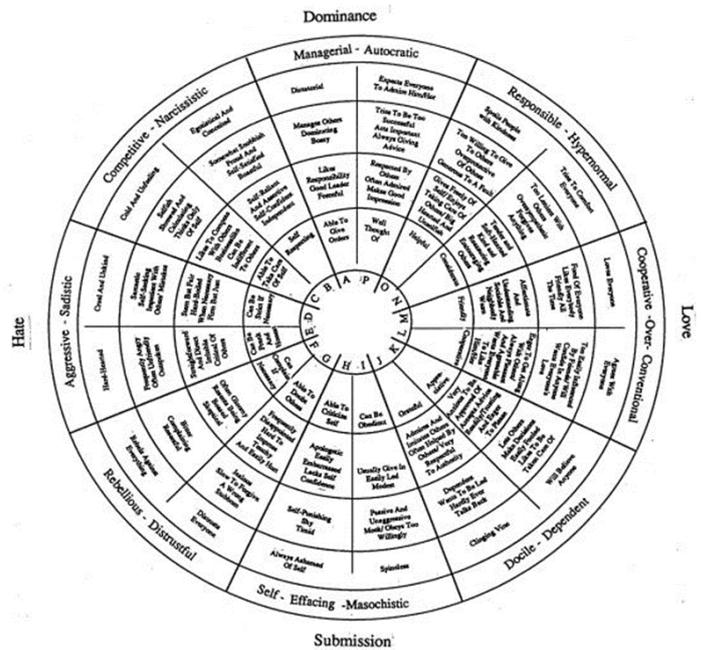
An **interpersonal circumplex** is one of our oldest models focusing particularly on social behaviour, that remains popular today. Circumplex models examine interactions between two specified dimensions of personality.

These two interpersonal dimensions are **agency** (i.e. power: dominance vs. submission, etc.) and **communion** (i.e. affiliation: friendly vs hostile, love vs hate, warm vs cold.) Each dimension combines features of **extraversion** and **agreeableness** in distinct ways. Using these two dimensions, it's possible to map out a variety of ways that people typically interact with others.

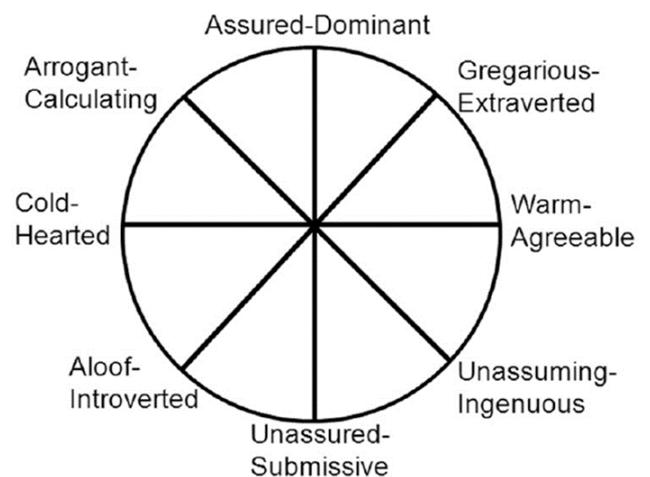
One of the pioneers in the development of the interpersonal circumplex model was actually Dr Timothy Leary, who wrote an influential book on the subject in the 1950s. In later years, he moved on to other interests becoming both famous and notorious for his work with psychedelic drugs such as LSD. But back then, Timothy Leary worked on a very complex and sophisticated model of interpersonal traits.

More recent research uses a simplified version focusing on eight main positions. Tests based on this model assign a

person a score for each octant based on their distance from the centre. The octant(s) with the highest score represents their most preferred mode of relating to people.



Leary's original Interpersonal Circumplex model. The vertical axis represented agency, the horizontal communion.



The simplified Interpersonal Circumplex model

In the simplified model, a person might display any of the eight styles at particular times. But people generally have a preference for one or two.

There are three personality types called the **dark triad**. They have a common core of high agency and low communion – the 'arrogant-calculating' part of the interpersonal circumplex – indicating self-aggrandisement and the use of antagonistic social strategies. The three types are: **Narcissism** exhibiting a grandiose sense of admiration and feelings of superiority; **Machiavellianism** showing cynicism and willingness to manipulate others; and **Psychopathy** i.e. having a callous disregard for the rights of others.

One of the most widely used models today is the **Big Five**. Someone's personality profile can be described – very broadly – in terms of their standing on each of these five factors.

- ◆ **Openness to experience**
- creative, intellectual vs. conventional, practical
- ◆ **Conscientiousness**
- self-disciplined, hard-working vs. uncontrolled, lazy
- ◆ **Extraversion** – sociable, assertive vs. reserved, shy
- ◆ **Agreeableness** – considerate, trusting vs. ruthless, cynical
- ◆ **Neuroticism** – worrying, stressed vs. resilient, calm

Looked at in terms of the 'Big Five', the 'dark triad' seems to share a common core of low 'agreeableness.'

Most traits have a socially desirable pole that is generally preferred to the opposite pole: e.g. most people prefer others to be kind rather than mean, emotionally stable rather than neurotic, and so on. To some extent social desirability biases reflect the terms used to describe particular traits - e.g. is someone simply 'lazy' or just 'laid back'?

Self-serving biases can also influence judgments: e.g. people consider their own level of openness to experience to be optimal, and sneer at people higher, or lower, in this trait than themselves. However, despite these biases, in general, some traits seem to be more highly valued by society than others.

Instead of the 'Big Five', some theorists have argued that all the various personality factors can be integrated into a single underlying tendency known as a **General Factor of Personality (GFP)**. A GFP forms a single broad continuum with one end that is highly socially desirable, prosocial and adaptive, while the opposite end is socially unacceptable, antisocial and maladaptive.

JP Rushton claimed that a high GFP represents a 'good personality,' while a low GFP represents a 'difficult personality.' Debate about this is still ongoing, but I personally consider that the idea of a GFP has conceptual difficulties.

Dark traits, particularly narcissism, may combine strengths and weaknesses, in a way that does not fit neatly into a good vs. difficult personality continuum. Narcissists are often perceived as charming and charismatic, yet also as self-centred and vindictive.

Conversely, many other people are basically honest and prosocial yet may be socially awkward. Extraversion is supposedly socially desirable, yet is associated with tendencies to sexual promiscuity and drug use, and is a component of narcissism. A GFP has difficulty explaining complex features of personality.

We can ask why personality differences have evolved. Wide variations in personality traits are found not only in humans but in many species of animals. Evidence suggests that personality traits are strongly influenced by genetic factors, with heritability estimates of up to 50%.

Genetically influenced characteristics are subject to natural selection. In that case, why aren't people much more uniform in their personalities? And why do so many people exhibit dark traits? Would not natural selection eliminate undesirable traits? The answer to these questions is not fully understood. However, even desirable traits have costs as well benefits.

High levels of extraversion tend to be associated with popularity, and with having more sexual partners. On the other hand, highly extraverted people tend to take more social and sexual risks, that can put them in danger.

People particularly associate agreeableness with moral goodness and virtue, yet highly agreeable individuals risk exploitation by unscrupulous peers, and may be perceived by others as overly passive and naïve.

High levels of neuroticism are generally maladaptive, and may indicate increased risk of mental illness. Yet, a certain level of neuroticism may confer emotional sensitivity and help people avoid danger.

Another theory consider whether people vary in their preferences for **short vs. long-term mating**. Dark traits may facilitate short-term mating. Narcissists and psychopaths are perceived as highly attractive by some people.



The fictional hero James Bond displays many classic psychopathic traits, yet is widely admired as a masculine archetype and sex symbol. Highly extraverted people in particular may be interested in both long and short-term mating, e.g. marriage with affairs on the side.

Perhaps individual differences in personality have developed because, during human history, people have developed many different ways to survive. Strategies for survival do not all work equally well in different times and places. Hence, from an evolutionary standpoint, diverse differences may be normal, and there may be no universally 'ideal' combination of traits.

The diversity in our personalities reflects the diversity of humans in other respects - as natural, and sexual, selection pressures progressively construct our evolved humanity.

Scott McGreal, MSc, BA – Hons

Scott tutors at the University of Sydney.

He has his own blog at the **Psychology Today** website:

Unique – Like Everybody Else

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/unique-everybody-else>



This article is based on Scott's enjoyable presentation at our World Humanist Day Symposium on 'Constructing Humanity' held in June 2016.

DINNER + AC GRAYLING + JOHN BELL

Back In April this year, we heard the famous AC Grayling had offered a talk on Humanism to a Sydney audience. Scott Sharrad, our national President, was busy organizing the Convention in Brisbane. Our own President, Ian Bryce, was busy in the federal election campaign for the Secular Party. I was a bit busy myself - but surely this was the kind of offer 'you can't refuse!' At first I was even a bit skeptical. Too good to be true? I phoned the marketing manager of Bloomsbury Publishing. She sent me a copy of his newest book! It was real, after all. This became an "Oh, crap" moment. If this was real - we had to 'get real' too!

I was already involved in the World Humanist Day Symposium - intended as our 'big event'. And it was a success, in a small way. But it turned out to be a useful rehearsal, for organizing the real 'event of the year'. I needed to arouse our little society to be the large receptive crowd that AC Grayling would be used to, and entitled to expect. The pride of Sydney was at stake! Fortunately, after several different efforts, members finally started reading my emails. I got the signal - we could think big. Ian Bryce learnt of the Occidental Hotel as a suitable venue. It had good access, could fit 80, and was very central. It was all falling into place.

Half the tickets sold to Society members in a week. Over a fortnight, thirty more went to Humanist Meetup members. The Atheists took up the last ten tickets in 24 hours. Soon enough the big night (Monday 5th September 2016) came around. We had good food, a wonderfully warm crowd of receptive, enthusiastic people who identified as Humanists, - and an honoured guest in John Bell. Was any last minute disaster going to spoil the night? No - there was the great man himself, waiting on the staircase till we finished eating. No time for that! We brought him into the room, and got everyone relaxed and ready. He did the rest. A brilliant speaker. What a night it was. The Humanist Society is 'back in town'! Let's keep it coming. Thanks to everyone involved.

Murray Love



Everyone donated over \$300 for our humanitarian project



President Ian Bryce and AHOY John Bell warmed up the audience



The intimate crowd of eighty humanists were there for just one thing, and they got their fill. And there was food to eat as well!



It was a great night for young and old - once we fixed the audio!



Article author and event MC Murray Love with A. C. Grayling

PRESIDENT'S QUARTERLY REPORT

Our Humanist Viewpoints Afternoon Talks (HuVAT) in July was an Activism meeting, run by John August. We heard from the Sunday Assembly people who offer an interesting secular alternative to church services including music and speakers.

Our August HuVAT meeting was titled *Humanist Pilgrimage*, with a photographic slideshow depicting some of the world's significant places of special interest to humanists. Many were from the travels of Fay and Murray Love - who gave the presentation.

The July Meetup was another 'Humanistmas in July'. We enjoyed food and discussion around a festive table. The theme was 'The Simple Things' and, as always, sharing in community - a pleasant afternoon together.

The August Meetup was ambitiously titled 'Democratic Humanitarianism'. They ultimately voted on a project to assist a Ugandan girl who has albinism to attend a wonderful Humanist secondary school in her country. The project was also promoted to society members, and other Meetup members who weren't able to get there on the day, and the response has been excellent.

The September Meetup was an intense discussion on the nature of 'Consciousness' - always difficult to define. 18 people had a great day discussing everything from A for Awareness to Z for Zombies! The speaker was David Killingly.

Our September meeting was our Society's Annual General Meeting at Humanist House. It was very well attended. Members agreed to several alterations to the Committee's structure, to adapt to changing conditions.

I stepped aside from nominating this year, so that Murray Love could be President - he has shown initiative and skill on many fronts including the Meetups, *Viewpoints* editorship, and constitutional change; as well as organising World Humanist Day and the A C Grayling function. I am confident the Society will continue to benefit. I will be continuing my liaison and outreach activities as a Vice-President.

The new Committee consists of:

- ◆ President - Murray Love
- ◆ Vice President - Ian Bryce
- ◆ Secretary - Fay Love
- ◆ Treasurer - Angela
- ◆ Ordinary Committee members - Fred Flatow, John August, Sturt Duncan, Gillian Ellis, Bill Wright, Roslyn Mancy, Eileen Ross.
- ◆ The constitution now allows for a second Vice-President. We are also moving to a smaller committee structure, which will be more efficient.

I would like to thank the other committee members for their support over the last two years.

I continue to attend debates and presentations on religion and ethics, while presenting the Humanist view wherever possible. A highlight was a talk to Sydney Atheists by

American Chris Johnson on his book and film *A Better Life - An Exploration of Joy and Meaning in a World Without God*.

I am in my sixth year of ethics teaching at Balmain, and met with the new management NSW Primary Ethics. I note that Victoria has already removed Special Religious Education (SRE) from core time in its schools.

The 2016 Census is expected to show 'No Religion' as exceeding all other faiths - thus hope increases that Special Religious Education might be banned from NSW schools.

However this would remove the basis on which ethics got into schools in 2010 (as an alternative to SRE). A new rationale for continuing the momentum of the 2300 volunteers in Ethics might be needed.

A highlight of September was a dinner attended by 80 humanists, at which A C Grayling gave an inspiring address titled *The Philosophy Of Humanism & Its Roots*. This was our biggest event in a long time.



We also took the opportunity to present the *Australian Humanist of the Year* award to John Bell in person (previously announced at the Australian Humanist Convention in Brisbane). Over five decades he has brought the humanist and secular aspects of Shakespeare's works to public audiences.

The night didn't end there, as both John Bell and AC Grayling went on to a special edition of the ABCs Q&A on the topic of Shakespeare in the contemporary world.

The Humanist Society of NSW is a sponsor of the WEA Sydney community college, and supports its activities in open education. In *Science Week* recently, I presented a lecture there on 'Gravitational Waves' which was very well attended (28). Perhaps this will open doors for future humanist-sympathetic courses.

Our Bookroom has been run for many years by Gillian. It's been quiet while she's been rehabilitating after a knee operation, but it's good to see her up and about again lately.

Other continuing activities include Open Forum, room rental, and hall hire to likeminded groups.



Ian Bryce

UWS researcher Rhys Gower wants to interview Humanists about their 'beliefs' as part of a sociological study. Volunteers need to be fluent speakers over 18 years old who attend Humanist Society events. Just email Rhys at: r.gower@westernsydney.edu.au

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Our Patrons



Robyn Williams AM

Humanist of the Year 1993

A talented actor, science journalist and broadcaster, Robyn presents Radio National's Science Show and Ockham's Razor. Robyn has written more than 10 books and received Honorary Doctorates in Science from Sydney, Macquarie and Deakin Universities.



Dorothy Buckland-Fuller AM, MBE

Mother, feminist, bilingual sociologist, peace activist. Dorothy is also an environmentalist, and committed to the cause of reconciliation with indigenous Australia. A founder of the Ethnic Communities Council, Dorothy was, and is still, a vital influence in the ethnic communities.

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