

HUMANIST viewpoints

THANKYOU TO OUR MEMBERS FOR CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THE SOCIETY

Another twelve months have whizzed by since last July 1st, and it's time again to renew your subscription as a member of the Humanist Society of New South Wales. This also goes through our federal body, the *Council of Australian Humanist Societies*, and the *International Humanist & Ethical Union* to make us all part of a worldwide movement of Humanists, thinking and acting at both local and global levels, for human rights and humanity-based solutions to personal and planetary problems.

We also continue to maintain our own headquarters at Humanist House as a beacon and focus for secularism, humanitarianism, internationalism, activism, education, science and philosophy, thinking, drinking, eating, and sharing problems and solutions.

If you need to check details on subscription payment methods, these are always to be found at the bottom of the back page of our quarterly Viewpoints. It would be wonderful if you could once again express your support for this movement in this very material way.

Our fees (\$35 single, \$45 double and \$20 concession) have not changed, and of course, additional donations, to assist in maintaining a Humanist presence in our all-too-hectic state of NSW, are always appreciated. **There is no need to wait for further reminders by mail** (something we'd all rather avoid :)). Please, we would love to hear from you as soon as possible.

THANKS TO THE MEMBERS WHO SENT UPDATES ON THEIR PREFERRED EMAIL ADDRESS FOR HUMANIST BUSINESS

If you haven't been getting emails from us this year, then we don't have your correct email address. Just send an email from your preferred email service to lovemuz@gmail.com and we'll add your correct address to our records, so you'll always be kept in touch. It's also an opportunity to update us on changes to your phone number or street address or anything else you wish to share with us. Email allows for timely exchange of information, and member bonding, and participation, and awareness.



- ☛ FIND OUT ABOUT OUR OPPORTUNITY TO MEET FAMOUS HUMANIST SPEAKER A.C. GRAYLING IN SEPTEMBER ON PAGES 4-5 - CAN YOU BE THERE? PLEASE CHECK IT OUT AND RESPOND POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY
- ☛ SEE REPORT ON OUR WHD SYMPOSIUM ON P8 THE FIRST OF THE SYMPOSIUM TALKS IS REPRISED ON P9
- ☛ JOHN AUGUST CONTINUES HIS HISTORY OF SECULARISM IN AUSTRALIA ON PAGES 10-11
- ☛ DON'T FORGET OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE ON SEPTEMBER 11TH 2016 AT HUMANIST HOUSE
- ☛ PLEASE COME TO OUR ACTIVISM MEETING ON THE COMING SUNDAY 10TH JULY TO LISTEN AND SHARE
- ☛ OUR HUVAT ON SUNDAY 14 TH AUGUST WILL BE 'HUMANIST PILGRIMAGE' WITH MURRAY LOVE
- ☛ CHECK PAGE 6 FOR DETAILS ON MEETUP EVENTS SUNDAYS 24TH JULY, 28TH AUGUST, 25TH SEPTEMBER

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

Once upon a time, there were more than 1,000 members in the Humanist Society of New South Wales. Recently we have fallen below 150. The supply of suitably motivated volunteers with 'rational minds' and 'humanist hearts' has always been lean, and lately more so. In 'the old days' only the NSW Rationalist Association competed for volunteers and members. Now a number of atheist and skeptical entities exist, some boasting more formal membership than the older associations. It's worse for recruiting volunteers, with the modern online environment permitting motivated people to 'go it alone' in forming groups, even if short-lived. There are now specialized groups around things like assisted dying, reproductive rights, and other issues we once made our own. Little political parties and suchlike drain the pool of the kind of people who get jobs done. Web-based activism competes also for interest and funds. Podcasts, and blogs, from around the world can fulfil a lot of the interests that people used to gain from being a member of our society.

I'm one of those who think there's still a role for a Humanist movement in this state. But we need to redefine Humanism in a way that resonates with new generations. The only way to do that convincingly, is to involve new people in the process itself. We can't just package something up and force-feed it. They won't be standing still for that. We have to catch their attention, and hold it somehow in a world that's whirling with distractions.

I believe that Humanism still is a brand with appeal to good people who want a better world. Humanist as a label for secular people of goodwill, devoid of the odium religious people attached to the word atheist for example, doesn't seem to have the same pull it once had. But Humanist as an adjective for the values people hold under the rubric of Humanism still works. Of course it has always been something of an umbrella term, and has the danger of being all things to all men and women. Some see that as a strength binding together those in the Humanist fold. But it is something of a weakness when trying to get more people 'into the fold'. It can be like what they call a 'motherhood statement' - something so easy to agree with, that no-one gets excited about it. (Actually, I tried 'motherhood' as a meeting topic last year, with mixed results.)

While fewer use the personal label of 'Humanist', I find plenty still like 'Humanism' as the descriptor for their worldview. There are, of course, some who fear it signifies 'speciesism' or idolatry of ourselves - but these are actually more like Christian and Islamic notions of humans as the favoured race in the 'image of god'.

Our kind of Humanism comes from viewing the world from a human perspective - which is the only way we can see the world as it actually is. Effective Humanism requires human senses at their most alert and sensitive, and least distorted by the temptations of fear, greed and glory. Knowing ourselves, collectively and individually, is part of keeping our awareness well attuned. Just being real about the world, gives us our distinct values.

Hence my interest is in getting people to focus on their own values, and their own assessments of them. Admittedly, many of us humans do prefer to focus on what they see other people getting wrong - and to demonstrate their own 'correctness', political or otherwise. Yet I keep finding people willing to share, for a day at least, in a deeper examination of issues and limitations. Whether they can form an enduring humanistic identity around this, is harder to foreshadow. I'll keep trying to reach out to such people.

In any case, those with other approaches to rebirthing the Humanist Society are more than welcome to pursue strategies that they feel work.

What I do caution against, though, is the subconscious substituting of one goal for another. It is not reviving the Humanist Society to find exciting developments elsewhere and then act as if the fact that 'someone is doing something' means that the work of the Humanist Society is being done. This is like fiddling while the city burns down.

The Society needs to build a life of its own again if it wants to survive. Borrowing warmth is not living. We need to find 'our own thing' and do it. Mind you, I don't exclude seeking mergers with other entities, (transfusions, so to speak:)) - but that's a story for another day.

Murray Love, Editor & Meetup Organizer



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BREXIT VOTE NOT DEMOCRACY AT ITS BRIGHTEST

Last week the British voters narrowly chose to leave the European Union. As far as the EU is concerned, many of the remaining members will be eagerly awaiting the consequences to the UK economy.

If the UK economy remains resilient and is flexible enough to adjust to changed circumstances then this may encourage other members to have referenda and decide to leave. On the other hand if the UK economy plunges into a serious recession the effect may be the opposite i.e. Brexit may have the effect of strengthening the EU.

Personally I think that the UK has gone down the wrong road. This is an example of that great weakness of democracy where it is let down by universal suffrage. Many people lack the education and foresight to envisage the consequences of their decision. Don't forget the Nazis came to power through the democratic process.

In 1832 when the Reform Bill was passed in the UK the Duke of Wellington wondered how the country could be governed

effectively with such a great increase in the number of people entitled to vote. Of course at the time the general level of education was lower than today. Even today we see so many of the public voting with their hearts and not their heads.

The 'big end of town' will be compromised by their decision, and it is the big end of town, whether they like it or not, that is the engine of the economy. In the end, it is their children and grandchildren who may suffer the consequences of their decision.

Bill Wright

What's your view on the EU and all that?

There are so many issues raised by the Brexit vote of concern to Humanists.

All members are welcome to share their views in their society newsletter.

Consider Making a Donation or Bequest

Please consider making a donation of \$5, \$20, \$50 or whatever you can, to protect and sustain the NSW Humanist Society. Your donation will sustain the diverse range of activities the Society undertakes. Please also remember us in your Will. All bequests contribute to the longevity of the Humanist Society of NSW and Humanism. Our thanks go out to those who have already made generous donations.

Book Room & Library

Some of us have switched to e-books, while many continue to appreciate physical books. Either way, if you have any surplus books in your collection then consider donating them to the Society's Library or for sale in the Bookroom. Volunteers who assist in the Bookroom are often frontline contacts with passers by who enquire about Humanism while they browse the items around the walls. Our most important volunteer Gillian has been recuperating from a medical procedure and this has put the Bookroom in something of an hiatus, but we hope it will be open again in the coming months.

Contributions to Viewpoints

Each quarter we need to remind members they 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 with anything you see in the newsletter and write to tell us about it. Or share why you do agree. We cannot guarantee everything will be used, but with negotiation, patience and flexibility we would love to include all we can. Send items to lovemuz@gmail.com by email. Handwritten and typescript contributions aren't easily dealt with, and might get postponed. Communication by email is preferred. We need to be careful items don't appear in both local and national journals.

Member News

Welcome to new members Nitesh Gurbani, Douglas Everett and Paul Beiboer. Douglas Everett is the brother of Ron Everett, who was our former peace and environment activist.

We regret to inform you of the recent death of Barbara Beiboer, who was a long time member and supporter. Her son Paul, a rural doctor, has applied for membership in her place. We have also lost contact with Stephen Preimeier, who members will remember as an enthusiastic participant in meetings - many copies of recent newsletters and correspondence have been returned all at once. We can only speculate on his fate.

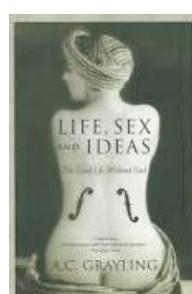
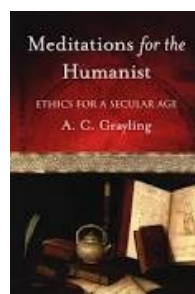
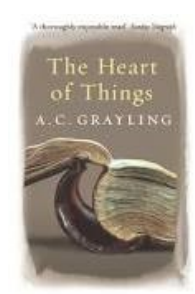
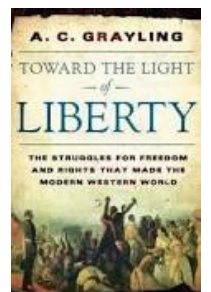
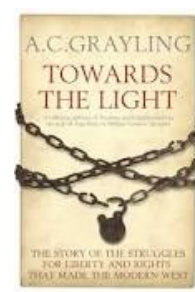
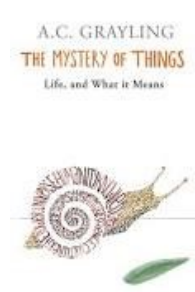
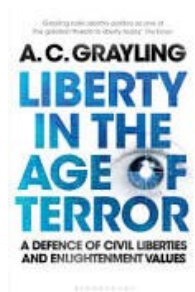
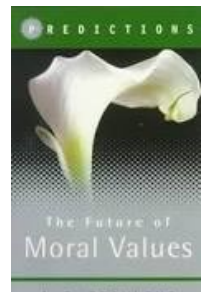
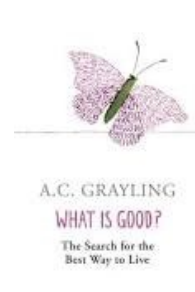
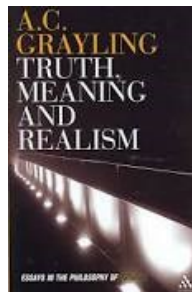
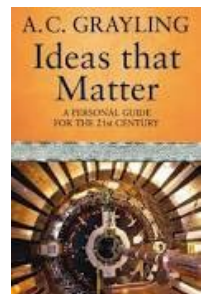
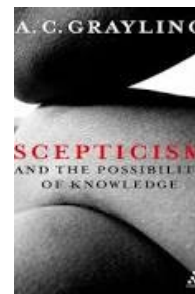
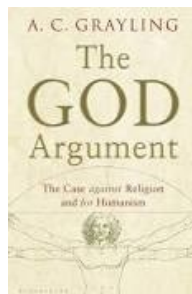
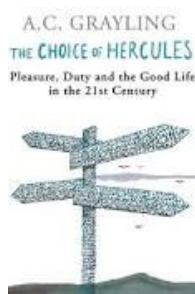
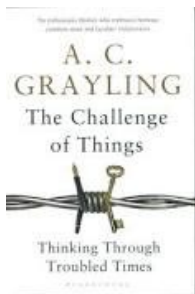
All renewals are due each July (except for recent new members). Please keep up your support of the Humanist Society of NSW.

WHO IS A.C. GRAYLING?

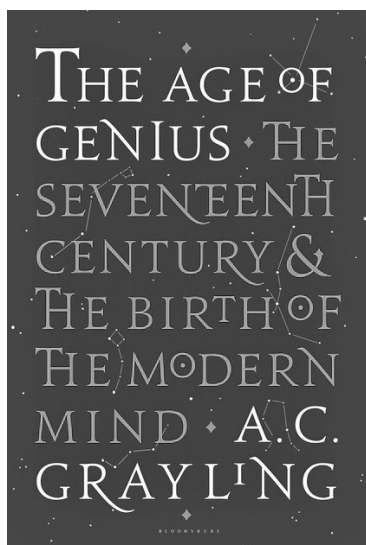
Anthony Clifford Grayling was born April 3, 1949 at Luanshya in present-day Zambia - then the British colony of Northern Rhodesia. He grew up in Africa, running away from boarding school after being caned, and discovered philosophy at the age of 12 in a local library. He spent his university years in England, becoming one of those special people whose Doctorate of Philosophy is actually in Philosophy!

Grayling's academic career was at the University of London, but he is now the first 'master' of New College of the Humanities, an independent undergraduate college, also in London. He is a long-term Vice-President of the British Humanist Association and considered accepting the presidency, but declined due to the controversy over his founding a private university threatened to overwhelm his public image for a while in 2011.

He has written dozens of books, and spoken at hundreds of humanist, atheist and secular gatherings around the world.



SPECIAL A.C. GRAYLING EVENT FOR HUMANISTS IN SYDNEY SEPTEMBER



Famous English Humanist academic, philosopher, historian, writer and speaker Anthony 'A.C.' Grayling will be touring Australia in August and September this year. He has family in Australia, and is on a book tour for his latest book, *The Age of Genius* - an intellectual history of the 1600s.

Professor Grayling will finish his tour in Sydney, with appearances at the *Festival of Dangerous Ideas* (Sat-Sun, 3-4 September), then a **special appearance** for the Humanist movement on Monday evening September 5th 2016.

As the local Humanist organization, the *Humanist Society of NSW* has the task of organizing a suitable event around the Professor's appearance. He is available to deliver a talk on the historical roots of as Humanism. This will be for around an hour, including Q&A, from 7.30p.m. on the Monday night.

Anthony will appear at the *Melbourne Writer's Festival* during his tour, and possibly also in Brisbane, but it is only in Sydney where he will turn out for a special Humanist event. This is at no charge to us, and a token of his special support for the Humanist movement and lifestance.

This is an opportunity to rejuvenate our Humanist movement in Sydney that we 'cannot afford to miss'! But you may notice I haven't yet announced a time and place for the actual event. This is because this hasn't yet been able to be decided.

A presentation of this calibre needs a venue and event worthy of the situation. We would like to see up to 100 people there enjoying a meal beforehand perhaps worth up to \$50 each. This seems reasonable. This can be an opportunity to present Humanism in a dignified setting, and to attract supporters and potential members who enjoy life to the full, but also want the depth that Humanism can offer. Can we manage this in Sydney? This is a big test for our little society in our great city.

For a cheap alternative, we might hire a function room at a club which offers over-the-counter meals for say \$10-\$20. Then we'd gather at a function room afterwards for the talk, then disperse, or hang around the bar. Some would see this as dismal - yet it may have to be the only affordable approach.

I asked by email, if members could say they'd attend a \$50 meal event with Professor Grayling's talk as the highlight. I got 11 expressions of interest - including my wife and myself. This does not seem sufficient as a base for a big gathering.

We need to get commitments from at least 40 of us - which can include partners - as a minimum to build a big event on. This would mean we could reach out to up to 60 new people who are positive enough about life and Humanism to spend \$50 for an evening with Professor A. C. Grayling.

I do need to make it clear that Professor Grayling will not eat a meal with us beforehand or stay afterwards to chat. The offer is just for the hour. But we can enjoy serious conversation at our tables both before and after his presentation.

We can either: 'get the job done' at minimum risk and get back to life 'as usual', or: we could 'go for it', with an upmarket event, and attract capable new people towards our movement, and the Humanist 'brand'. It's up to YOU.

A much bigger response from our own members is the start we really need in making the most of this opportunity. Can the NSW Humanists manage an event with a world-class secular speaker? Yes, it's just for one hour, and on a Monday, night, but it's still the best scenario we've had in a very long time. **Please get involved.**

Murray Love



PLEASE READ ABOVE THEN TELL US: CAN YOU ATTEND A \$50 MEAL AT A NICE VENUE NOT TOO FAR FROM THE SYDNEY CBD ADDRESSED BY WORLD RENOWNED HUMANIST A.C. GRAYLING ON THE ROOTS OF HUMANISM ON MONDAY EVENING 5TH SEPTEMBER 2016?

PLEASE IMMEDIATELY EMAIL YOUR RESPONSE - POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR WITH CONDITIONS, TO lovemuz@gmail.com OR IF WITHOUT EMAIL PLEASE CONTACT YOUR FAVOURITE MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NSW

STRONG COMMITMENT BY SOCIETY MEMBERS IS THE BEST BASIS FOR A SUCCESSFUL NIGHT

CALENDAR FOR JUL-SEP 2016

Sunday 10th July 2016 3.15-5.15 p.m. will at last be another Activism Meeting to share ideas and plans

At Activism meetings we get together with invited guests to hear about projects, views, ideas, values, and issues that concern and inspire people like us. We will be again organizing some interesting guests. Murray may finally speak on the creative thinking, careful risk-taking, genuine outreach, and magnanimous succession planning the Society needs to engender to build a secure future. We'll look for updates on the Humanist Aid Foundation and the Sunday Assembly movement. John August and Tim Josling will further discuss their campaign for assisted dying. Come, listen and speak. Big things grow from little things.

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 24th July 2016

The Meetup on Sunday 24 July will be our 'traditional' HUMANISTMAS IN JULY - our fourth such event. There is a recurrent theme of 'Community' for these events but there will be a particular theme for 2016 of SIMPLICITY - We'll talk about it for a little while, but mostly we'll simply share food, drink and conversation together. Old and new members of NSW Humanists Meetup are once again invited back to Humanist House to share some traditional plum pudding, turkey, or whatever else you'd like to bring and share on the day. Australia seems to like the Yulefest in July idea, and we need to avoid winter blues. Come along and share good food, bad drink, festive spirit and your dreams and ideas. Bring food you love to eat or love to share.

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

The HuVAT for Sunday 14th August 2016 at 4.00 for 4.30 p.m. will be on HUMANIST PILGRIMAGE

Murray Love will give a quick outline of pilgrimage around the world, then take a serious and entertaining look at places he's visited in a lifetime of travel - and some he hasn't got to yet - which have special resonance for Humanists. Then we'll allow the audience to contribute their ideas and experiences on notions and places of 'pilgrimage'. We will keep this interesting - come along and share special moments you've had in special places or with special creatures or special moments such as eclipses, glaciers, penguins, a great painting - or some of the heritage sites we've visited, and the feelings it brought out in us.

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 28th August 2016

Do you have a cause, issue, concern or project that you favour and want to see everyone support? Sunday 28 August is halfway way between *World Humanitarian Day* and *International Day of Charity* so it's a good time to think about projects around the world and at home. The rules of '**Democratic Humanitarianism**' will be as follows. Bring along your favourite philanthropic causes and try to persuade others of their value. Participants will put some 'skin in the game' as we jointly decide how to use a pool of cash on a worthwhile project. Bring some cash you're willing to devote to worthy causes. We'll pass round a collection box several times during the afternoon, building a collective 'kitty'. We'll put all suggestions on a white board. We'll all speak several times. Eventually, we'll shortlist the projects, and ultimately choose just one to receive all the money. The amount isn't critical. What matters is that we cooperate on making the world a little better, and learn about good things going on around the world. And we'll test our critical faculties and humanistic values to the full. It should be a passionate, informative and interesting examination of many things about ourselves and what really matters out in the world.

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

SUNDAY 11th SEPTEMBER 2016 IS THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NSW

Formal announcement will need to be made in due course, but please keep your calendar clear for this important day in our yearly round. This is the time to come along and join in the business of the society and discuss past achievements, future plans and vote in the members of the new committee. Come and be an active part of the Humanist Society of NSW.

It is also the fifteenth anniversary of the events of September 11 2001. THE AGM usually starts at 1.30pm for 2.00pm.

ALL WELCOME TO GO ON AFTERWARDS TO 'THE BROADWAY CROWN' FOR A MEAL

NSW Humanists Meetup 'New Humanists Sunday Open House' 3-6PM on Sunday 25th September 2016

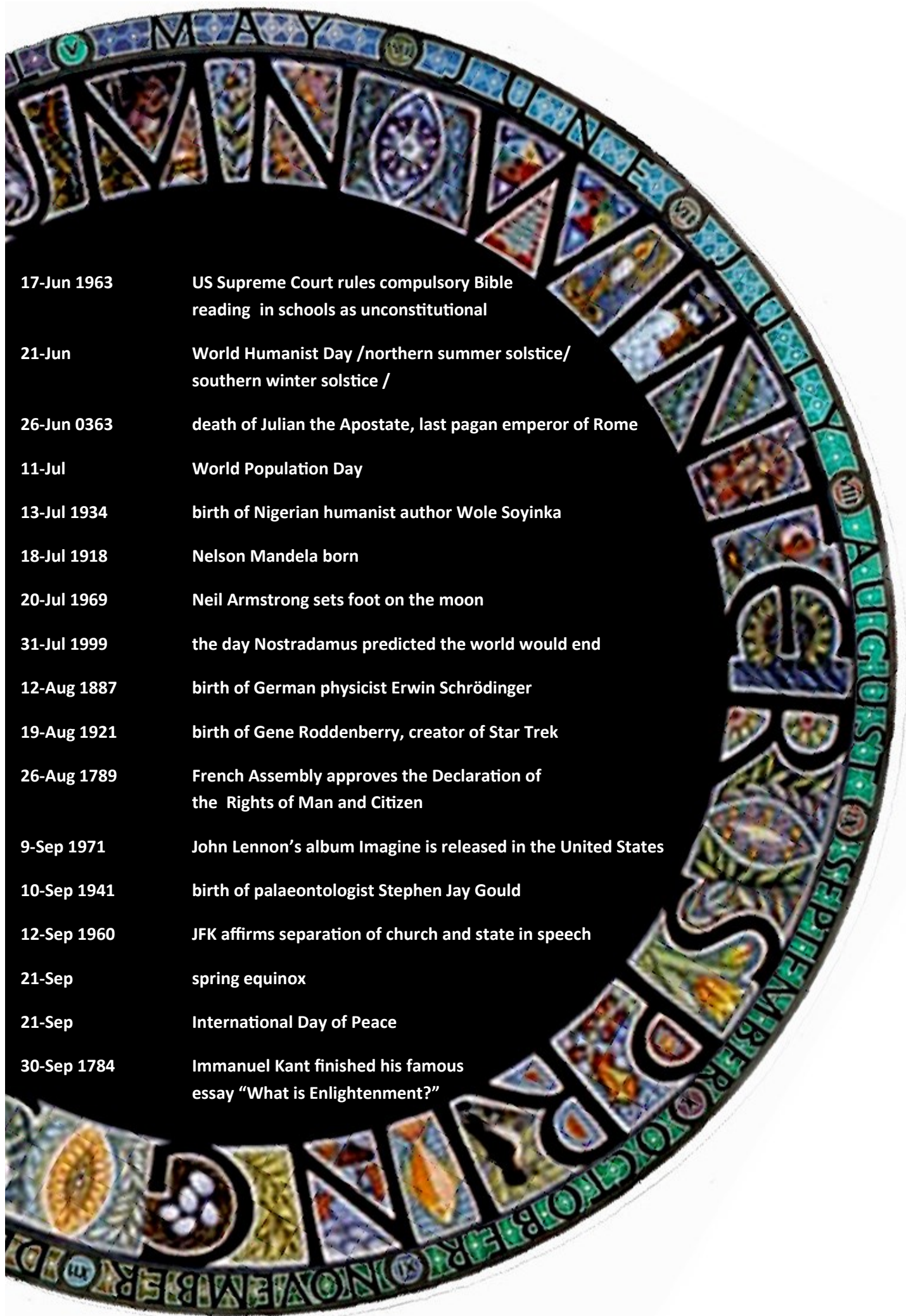
'CONSCIOUSNESS' & OTHER HARD PROBLEMS - With speaker David Killingly we'll examine this complex topic, piece by piece.

Does anyone "have the slightest idea how anything material can be conscious?" Why Should Physical Processes Give Rise To A Rich Inner Life? What is the hard problem of consciousness? What's so hard about it? Are there even harder problems about consciousness? Does the hard problem mean there are other properties for the universe, which are unseen, metaphysical, conscious properties? Is a Dog Conscious? Is a Slug Conscious? Is a thermostat conscious? What's it like to be a Bat? When will a computer be conscious enough to enjoy a hamburger? Is Consciousness the Same as: Concept of Self; Self-awareness; Subjectivity? Does the hard problem prove Souls, Gods or Afterlives exist? How can I tell if another person is conscious?

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

ALL EVENTS ON THIS PAGE ARE HELD AT HUMANIST HOUSE 10 SHEPHERD STREET CHIPPENDALE NSW

'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.



- 17-Jun 1963 US Supreme Court rules compulsory Bible reading in schools as unconstitutional
- 21-Jun World Humanist Day /northern summer solstice/ southern winter solstice /
- 26-Jun 0363 death of Julian the Apostate, last pagan emperor of Rome
- 11-Jul World Population Day
- 13-Jul 1934 birth of Nigerian humanist author Wole Soyinka
- 18-Jul 1918 Nelson Mandela born
- 20-Jul 1969 Neil Armstrong sets foot on the moon
- 31-Jul 1999 the day Nostradamus predicted the world would end
- 12-Aug 1887 birth of German physicist Erwin Schrödinger
- 19-Aug 1921 birth of Gene Roddenberry, creator of Star Trek
- 26-Aug 1789 French Assembly approves the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen
- 9-Sep 1971 John Lennon's album Imagine is released in the United States
- 10-Sep 1941 birth of palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould
- 12-Sep 1960 JFK affirms separation of church and state in speech
- 21-Sep spring equinox
- 21-Sep International Day of Peace
- 30-Sep 1784 Immanuel Kant finished his famous essay "What is Enlightenment?"

CONSTRUCTING A SYMPOSIUM

This is a report on our recent World Humanist Day Symposium. This was a third in a series, building a tradition. (Someone said was it a fourth Symposium, but that's counting an event in 2013 that was part of the CAHS AGM we hosted.)



The idea of celebrating *World Humanist Day* with a Symposium really begins with the 2014 event organized by Affie Adagio and Victor Bien. This was a grand affair with interstate speakers, and a connecting theme 'The Enlightenment Roots of Humanism'. The 2014 Symposium did cost thousands of dollars, something we are unable to sustain.

The beginning of 2015 saw my retirement from employment as well as Affie's retirement from committee work. Affie had been our Master of Ceremonies for many years. I had been hosting the NSW Humanist Meetup so had some momentum as regards topics and speakers so took up more of an event organizing role on the committee.

Conscious of limited resources in 2015 we organized a more modest event to sustain the budding tradition. We kept our speaker list to locally available society members, and held it on the weekend in our own Humanist House. We brought some familiar speakers and some fresh faces together under a flexible theme 'Why Humanism Matters'. I made it a combined Society & Meetup event, and we got a few new people along from the Meetup, although I did get one comment that it was a bit like the Marigold Hotel movies.

We do need to be seeing more younger faces and more diverse demographics in our attendance. So this became a goal in 2016. The first Meetup we held in February got participants to say what kinds of topics they'd like to discuss. One of these was what we mean by 'human' in humanism. This seemed to offer a theme for the 2016 Symposium under the heading 'CONSTRUCTING HUMANITY'.

It was productive in inspiring potential speakers. I soon found I had too many for a four hour show, and had to get some speakers to postpone. The final lineup was full, but I had compelling reasons to keep all speakers. The timing was going to be tight. This makes a good show but inhibits spontaneity.

I finalized the programme early to give time to publicize. We experimented with online ticket sales. Thirty tickets were put on sale at Eventbrite. I gave first go to Society members. They needed a lot of prompting and assistance. After a few weeks I publicized to Meetup members. They also looked slow to take it up, but about twelve went in a single week, and it was sold out. I allowed for five members to turn up without pre-tickets on the day - which did eventuate. Along with five guest speakers that would be forty people and fill the place. However when the day came it was bleak weather and twelve out of the thirty \$10 tickets sold didn't turn up.

Twenty tickets had gone to Society members and ten to those on the Meetup only. All those who came and paid on the day were Society members. Seven of the ten Meetup members who paid didn't come on the day. So the effort to get a significant number of new faces went well for ticket sales, but then fell down badly with attendance on the day. Naturally this was a bit disappointing, as I had striven to give the speakers an audience proportional to their effort in preparing. But if you sell a ticket and people still don't come, at least you know their interest was genuine. What more can one do?

It was great to have certainty in catering for the event. Once money was collected from the latecomers it ran at a tiny profit, insufficient to offer any refunds, but a demonstration that we can run a significant event on a break-even basis.



Our first speaker was Professor Iain Benson from Notre Dame University, someone I met one day in Humanist House itself. He was chatting to Gillian and buying books in our Bookroom. I got talking and found him a decent and intelligent fellow and asked him to speak on how the Law defines humans. He agreed. He is a Catholic intellectual, who showed integrity and erudition and good promise. But his need to get comfortable with a Humanist audience got a little provocative and time-consuming and we had to cut it short and do a bunch of questions. I think that Catholic-Humanist dialogue is of value, but it can become a minefield of mutual suspicion and cheap shots, even from the well-meaning. If we're lucky, we'll get to explore the law a bit more with the Professor at later events.

Our next speaker, Scott McGreal is a more junior academic, but a regular attender at our Meetups so it was good to hear his knowledge on the psychology of personality. Another speaker was Maria Fuentes an Existentialist Psychotherapist who missed speaking at a Meetup last year, but got to share her ideas at last on Sunday 19th. I will be negotiating with all the speakers for content from their talks to be included in future issues of Viewpoints.

Our final invited speaker, Andrew Dickinson, spoke on Hypnotherapy. An article based on his talk appears opposite.

The event was opened by Senator Lee Rhiannon, with final address from Society President, Ian Bryce. Fay Love prepared excellent refreshments. We had only finger food to encourage mingling and to keep things simple. John August and Tim Josling also launched their Voluntary Assisted Dying project.

Organisation involved considerable innovation and quite a bit of work and worry getting everyone used to something different. The outreach aspects were disappointing in some ways but encouraging in others. Thanks to everyone for their support.

Murray & Fay Love

RECONSTRUCTING OUR OWN HUMANITY

I believe hypnosis and hypnotherapy show us that we humans can rebuild ourselves. A tactical combination of analysis, insight and trance can produce small yet significant changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. In fact hypnotherapy dovetails nicely with modern theories of neuroplasticity.

Hypnotherapy works by tactical access to the power of the subconscious mind. It's not the only therapy that does so. These days it gets placed under the banner of 'brief therapy'. That is, it can produce significant positive change in a small number of consultations. Hypnotherapy's standout feature is the benefits of working with the subconscious, over a short period of time, to achieve targeted positive change.

There are many therapies available in today's remedial marketplace. So why hypnotherapy? This doesn't need to be an exclusive choice. Hypnotherapy can work as a standalone, or as part of a larger treatment regimen.

How does it work? There are a number of techniques and schools of hypnotherapy. Therapists mostly agree on the role of the trance state, though not on a definition. The trance state is much misunderstood, often provoking laughter or fear when hypnosis is mentioned. Questions like "will I cluck like a chicken?" or "will you take control of my mind?" come up often. I sometimes reply "only if you really want to".

It is important to understand that trance is a natural state. There's nothing mysterious about it, let alone sinister. Most people drift in and out of the trance state daily. You know the feeling - playing a video game, watching a movie or TV show that you really like. Before you realize it, one or two hours have gone by, though it felt like a couple of minutes.

I have a friend who drives from Melbourne to Adelaide, a trip which takes about ten hours. He's made this trip so many times he drives on auto-pilot. The trip invariably goes without a hitch. It feels like only a few minutes, and he arrives home refreshed. That is yet one more example of a trance, in action.

When people say they can't be hypnotized, I ask them: "When was the last time you drifted off, then came back minutes or hours later, with no idea of where the time went?" Nearly anyone can enter a trance state, and therefore become hypnotized. However, this does not mean that any one practitioner can hypnotize any one patient.

Building rapport is an important skill, with some therapists believing this matters more than the technique used. Preparedness to change can make all the difference. Resistance, fear, and the wrong kind of scepticism can undermine the relationship with the therapist.

Trance is a waking state where you have the best access to the subconscious, and this is where the patterns and beliefs that rule our lives largely reside.

In my practice I believe the only real hypnosis is self-hypnosis. I give suggestions and guidance, but it's the patient who does the work, and the patient who's in control. Together, we work out what they're seeking, and find a way of achieving this.

So what can hypnotherapy treat? Common issues are smoking, obesity, and nail-biting. One of my first patients had bitten her nails, continuously, since the age of 9 months. Having helped her with a number of hypnotic inductions, and taught her the technique, we found a YouTube video she could use in self-treatment. After just one session using this video, she stopped

nail biting at the end of last year. A couple of months ago, Kristy proudly trimmed her nails, for the first time in 35 years.

My own immersion in hypnotherapy has also lasted 35 years, and I've been privileged to have as a mentor and close friend the 'grandfather' of Australian hypnotherapy, Bryan Perry. However, it was only last year that I finally qualified as a practitioner, completing a diploma course in Melbourne, under another senior figure, Rob McNeilly. Rob encouraged us to view hypnotherapy as natural, and to apply it widely.

Focusing on my own practice, my passion is helping to improve the lives of people with mental illness. This is the vision at the centre of my practice. I do not in any way claim a cure. False hope is a highly corrosive commodity, in which I refuse to deal.

But I have yet to meet anyone with a mental illness who has only the illness to contend with. Smoking rates are around 70% amongst those with severe mental illness – much higher than the average. Other poor life choices abound. Drug abuse and drinking – both endemic. Even addiction to soft drinks is a major problem. It continues to amaze me the number of Coke addicts I encounter. That's Coca-Cola, not cocaine. I have seen people get into fist-fights over bottles of Coke. The list goes on. Low self-esteem. Stigmas. Phobias and irrational fears.

Hypnotherapy can correct all of these nasties and more. With problems like these under better control, your quality of life improves and you can better use your own resources to deal with the mental illness. The positive experience of reducing or conquering these difficulties can help improve your outlook. You can shift from "Oh no, not another day of the same old" to "things are a little better than yesterday".

The positive change may be a small step. For some, it may be several small steps together, or one big stride. What these steps are, will be different for each individual. One of the joys of practice is being able to tailor a solution for just that person, with their full knowledge and cooperation.

Therapy can also be applied to aspects of the mental illness. "What is it particularly that bothers you" I can ask my patients.

For instance, two people with Bipolar Disorder, with the same symptoms, may be bothered by different aspects. "I hate being so irritable" says one person. "It drives my partner crazy". Then we can work on strategies to address that.

Rob taught me that everyone has resources and strengths. Using hypnosis, we search for strengths to deal with particular problems. I am proud to offer an approach that is strengths-based and individually focused. Everyone is different. I treat each person as an individual.

I love helping each individual re-construct their own humanity.

Andrew Dickinson

(Dip Hypnotherapy,
Dip Dual Diagnosis,
BSc (Psych., Adelaide)

<http://adhypno.com.au/>

(This is an edited version of Andrew's talk at the Symposium)



SECULAR HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA - II

I wrote about Australia's Anzac tradition in my last article, and of the 'cult of memory' as an alternative to the idea those lost in war have 'gone to heaven'.

Furthermore, Anzac ideals have been challenged, with "lest we forget" being changed to "lest we forget the Vietnamese", or "lest we forget those who face war oppression and injustice".



Women have also challenged these sentiments: The 'Save our Sons' movement disrupted Anzac day 1966. A message was painted on the wall of Sydney's Anzac memorial in 1975: "WOMEN MARCH FOR LIBERATION". Protests like these increased over the years, and then subsided. Marilyn Lake wrote in 1994 about the deeds of men in war trumping the contribution of the women who bore them.

But, in this article, I'll be focusing on some of the tensions around the involvement of Catholics in politics.

In Australia's history, we had tension over the treatment of unions, conscription, the banks, and how to deal with the aftermath of the Great War.

Joseph Cook was Australia's PM from June 1913, a "commonwealth Liberal". He was originally involved with Methodist sects linked to trade unionism and supported maritime strikes, but later moved to an anti-socialist position. He introduced anti-union legislation to force a double dissolution, but the election returned a Labor government.

World War One (The Great War) started in July 1914. Archbishop Mannix denounced it as "just a sordid trade war", and was himself widely denounced as a traitor. When the Australian Labor Party government of Billy Hughes tried to introduce conscription for the war, Mannix campaigned against it and it was defeated. He spoke out more frequently about the 1917 referendum, which was also defeated.



But Mannix was not the sole voice of Catholicism in Australia.



Cardinal Gilroy, the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney did not take such a hard line in NSW. We can wonder how much of Mannix's position was theologically based, rather than displaced Irish Patriotism.

For a time, Irish Australians were very supportive of the war effort, but backed off after the heavy-handed British response to the Easter uprising in Dublin in April 1916. There were also concerns about cheap foreign labour being brought in to replace conscripts.

So, politics was influenced by other events, nationalism and religion.

On the 14th November 1916 Billy Hughes, the then PM was frustrated with lack of Labor support for conscription. He walked out of the Party, taking his supporters with him, breaking up the Government, and forming the National Labor Party. Some said the Labor Party had "blown its brains out".



Mannix supported the Catholic-dominated anti-conscription faction, led by Frank Tudor - although Tudor himself was not a Catholic.

When WWI ended in 1918, Australians had some interesting things to say. Hughes stayed on in the UK to represent Australia. While anti-German during war, he thought the Versailles treaty was done 'in hot blood' and unnecessarily vindictive. He pushed back against the US - saying he represented 60,000 dead.

In any case, it is interesting to see that an Australian could be so considerate about the future of the world, and wanting a treaty that was less harsh, even after all Australia had been through.



In October 1929, James Scullin became Australia's PM. While he was of Irish Catholic background, he endorsed socialism.

This was in contrast to Pope Leo XIII 1891 encyclical condemning socialism. When asked about State Aid for Catholic Schools, he said it was not a federal matter, although he supported other interventions.

So, in spite of certain pushes coming from the Catholic Church,

we see Catholicism was not always a unity, either, and some Catholics in the ALP identified more strongly with "Socialism" than they did with the notional precepts of the church.

In fact, in 1923, Vere Gordon Childe, an eminent Marxist archaeologist, philologist and teddy-bear lover, born in Australia but also working in the UK, noticed the tensions in the Labor Party together with the Catholic influence.



Childe pointed out that Catholicism, with dogmas supporting private property, was essentially anti-socialistic - while Socialism was traditionally anti-clerical.

He described Labor politicians as "walking a tight-rope", vacillating between a working class that put them into power, and middle class voters they wished to avoid offending.



In response to Santamaria, (Mannix's intellectual successor of whom I'll write more in the next article), Tom Truman - writing in the book *Catholic Action and Politics* - noted that Catholics do not believe in the separation of Church and State, and encourage their parishioners to involve themselves in politics.

Their vision is one of a world dominated by Roman Catholics, with an economy emphasizing distributed ownership and small scale farming, but definitely private ownership.

Depending on what exactly the Labor Party's original thrust is, you could see the Catholic influence as subverting that sentiment, as observed by Childe. But, at the same time, you can see that notional Catholics could also be influenced by the 'original' Labor Party socialism, as was Scullin.

But still to come in a future article are more details of the lead up to and the rise of Menzies, together with Santamaria and Catholic Action and a fear of Communism in Australia coming to the fore.

John August



QUARTERLY REPORT

In April we had 29 people attend our HuVAT on the 10th on the question 'DID JESUS EXIST?'. Our projector packed it in on us but the show went on. We didn't really answer this unanswerable question (there's just not enough evidence!) but we did stimulate a lot of people to examine the matter for themselves. Our 24th April Meetup was on a long weekend just before Anzac Day, so had reduced attendance. But an intimate group of nine sat round the table to enjoy 'LIVING HUMANISM TOGETHER'. The theme was simply 'togetherness'. but in true Humanist fashion we enjoyed debating and discussing difficult issues together, and found a real bond between us.

May started quietly when we cancelled both HuVAT and the committee meeting, to allow the mothers to enjoy their special day. The month was hectic with promotion of the June Symposium and all tickets were sold. The Meetup on May 22nd was titled 'CORPORATE HEGEMONY' and discussed how corporations now dominate our lives. Fourteen people came along including some very qualified commentators. The last weekend in May was the CAHS Conference and AGM held in Brisbane which John August and Ian Bryce attended as NSW delegates. There were several major speakers at an ambitiously planned event. NSW's nominee, actor John Bell became our 2016 *Humanist of the Year*.

In June we dedicated all our efforts to a single event on the 19th - our World Humanist Day Symposium on 'Constructing Humanity'. There is a report on this event earlier in this newsletter.

Our President Ian Bryce is a Secular Party candidate in the Federal Elections and the crucial week for compiling Viewpoints clashes with the final week of the election campaign. Ian will return with his usual report in the next issue.



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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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