

HUMANIST viewpoints

THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS & SUBSCRIPTIONS



Vice-President John August (left) and President Murray Love (right) pictured with guest speaker Babu Gogineni who visited Sydney in November to set up an Australian chapter of the South Asian Humanist Association. Babu has previously worked as Executive Director of the International Humanist & Ethical Union.

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SEE PAGES 6-7 FOR OUR CALENDAR OF EVENTS IN JANUARY MARCH AND APRIL 2019

SEE PAGE 8 FOR OUR OBITUARY OF MEMBERS BARBARA & ROSS NIVISON-SMITH

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DARWIN DAY TALK 10 FEBRUARY : JOHN AUGUST ON ECONOMICS 10 MARCH

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MARCH 24 RELIGIONS - TRIBAL, ANCIENT, MODERN & SECULAR

Follow us on our website www.hsnsw.asn.au and Facebook



MEMBERSHIP PAGES

President's continuing appeal to members to volunteer to assist in building our future

We still depend on elder members who have been outstanding workers for Humanism in NSW. We wish them a long life, but we cannot expect them to carry the load indefinitely. Times have changed, and we know modern generations find many other demands on their prime time in the twenty-first century. So why don't we all look for new ways to volunteer, with more of us offering to assist in smaller amounts at a time! There are so many ways to help, Send me an expression of interest. List your skills and how many or how few hours a month you might be available., This way we can build a new corps of volunteers, and begin to rebuild our NSW Humanists community. We particularly appeal to members between 20 and 70 years of age, to assist in growing a future for this organisation, now 58 years young, with assets to be treasured, a heritage to be celebrated, a world network of activism, and a positive philosophy to be shared.

Email President at lovemuz@gmail.com WE NEED YOU! PLEASE DON'T ASSUME THIS REQUEST IS TO SOMEONE ELSE.

Please Consider Making a Donation or Bequest. From \$5 to \$10,000, 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. If you have any good-quality freethought or learned books why not donate them to the Society's Library or for sale in the Rationalist Bookshop or our Bookroom. Volunteers in our headquarters are often frontline contacts with those who enquire about rationalism and humanism while they browse the items around the walls. Space is tighter now so we only take the better books.

Please Send Your letters, articles, information and ideas for inclusion in Viewpoints

Some members are not on the Internet and some live far from Sydney. Attendance and interaction get more difficult as we age, and distances need more assistance to overcome. Stronger, younger and newer members can assist. A newsletter is one thing all members can share in. We report on what's happening at Humanist House through the year, but also need contributions from individual members of the Society. You are welcome and encouraged to send in news and views for publication. These can be controversial - there's no party line. They can be on diverse topics - Humanism has a broad range. We most-of-all love to hear from members who haven't contributed before. A short 'letter to the editor' is a valued inclusion. Disagree with anything you see - or share why you do agree! We can't guarantee everything will be used, but with patience and flexibility we'd love to include all we can. Communication by email is preferred. Handwritten and typed contributions might get postponed. **Email items to lovemuz@gmail.com.**

Members' comings and goings. We have not had any new members in a while. Nearly forty members haven't responded yet to their reminders. Don't forget we offer a concession membership. Do you have a family member, partner, or close associate living with you who would like to share your membership? Two members at the same address with the same journals get a discount membership of \$45 for the pair. If your cohabitant shares your interest in humanism why not ask them to join up? See the Nivison-Smith obituary on page 8.

Dear Editor,

With every issue I read of *Viewpoints* I get a little older. Now I seem to see the same gentlemen around my house. Every day starts when Will Power comes and helps me get out of my bed. I immediately head off to visit Loo.

I get on better with Loo if I have been seeing Mr Quaker who gives me my oats each morning. Pretty soon Arthur Itis shows up again, and seems to hang around all day. He moves about from joint to joint but he always seems to find his way back.

At the end of a busy day Johnny Walker helps me get ready for bed. What a life for a frivolous old girl. I am always flirting with Al Zymers when I remember to.

Some people knocked on my door the other day and told me at my age I should be thinking about the hereafter. I assured them that I do, all the time! Whether I'm in the kitchen, the bathroom, the lounge or my bedroom I'm always asking myself "what am I here after?"

I told them that old people are worth a fortune in the here and now! We've got silver in our hair, gold in our teeth, shiny stones in our kidneys, and gas in our intestines. If they still don't go away I recite the old poem:

*So many gods, so many creeds
So many roads that wind and wind
When all this old world really needs
Is the simple art of being kind.*

Gillian Ellis

Dear Editor

In mid-November, on *SkyNews*, a person on a panel discussion stated: "Australian Christianity is under attack. from the Secular Humanists." With all due respect - I have never known the Sydney Humanists, or any of their publications, to 'attack' Australian religion!

I have known the humanists to protect the right to be secular, and I have known the humanists to promote rights and freedom of speech. In fact Renaissance scholars regarded humanism as being very dynamic, involving many perspectives.

The statement on *SkyNews* was slightly irrational & seeks to maintain 'social control through ideology'. Both these concepts have been studied in modern sociology. Towards the end of that program (*Outsiders*) viewers were even informed that they could "go to bed now"!

Similar sentiments, about humanists, were expressed at a University of Sydney public seminar in 2014, where all the religions were represented on the stage. With all due respect - I think it is defamatory to claim that humanists 'attack' religions.

Thank you & all the best,

Mr. A. D'Angiolillo

(BA Social Psychology & Art History [UWS/ANU],
Qualified economic analyst.)



PETER YOUNG



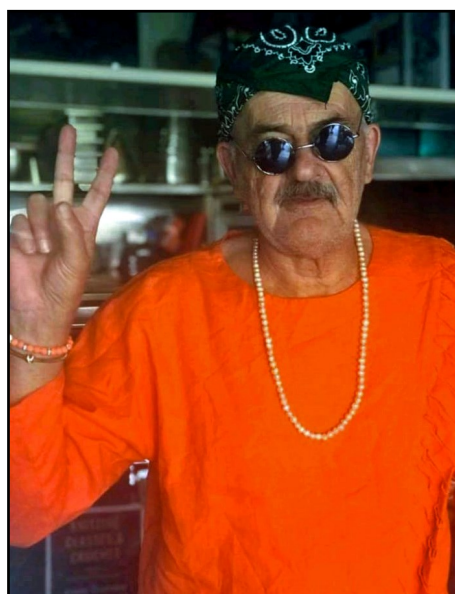
COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

NSW Humanist Society Life Member and committed Kings Cross resident Peter Young lives a well-rounded life any humanist could be proud of.

He is a pillar of the community, often out polishing shoes to fund the Community Centre, and celebrating the birthdays of local heroes and the Melbourne Cup.

A key figure in the politics of the swinging electorate of Wentworth, Peter is always dressed for the occasion, variously as a dignitary, an abbot, a flower child, a hippie and an aficionado of *La Boheme*.

Peter Young is most often found with his faithful poodle by his side or in his arms. All hail Peter the Great, King of the Cross.



A HUMANIST DAY OUT AT GLEBE MARKET

A few of us thought we'd try running a stall for a day at Glebe Markets. We had just two goals – to break even financially and to introduce market visitors to Humanism.

We were lucky with the weather, as Saturday October 13 turned out to be a lovely sunny morning, after a week of heavy rain. Fred Flatow and myself (Alex) got together early at 6.00 a.m. at Humanist House, Chippendale, where we borrowed a folding table and collected some of the surplus secondhand books there.

Parking was easy along Glebe Point Road at that time of the day, so we had only a short walk to the market, which is held on the grounds of Glebe Public School just near the Broadway Shopping Centre.

We'd already booked and paid for the stall online a few weeks beforehand. It was an easy process and we were able to choose our stall's location in the market area. We were stall C32 located under a large Moreton Bay Fig tree with wood chips underfoot.

The market is run every Saturday rain or shine, and although the morning had clear skies, the forecast was for thunderstorms from 2.00 p.m. As the day progressed, the thunderstorms stayed away until about 6.00 p.m. so we were not drenched as expected.

We had to go back to Humanist House and borrow another two folding tables so it was convenient that our headquarters were close by. The market staff hired out wooden trestle tables for \$10 .00 each so we saved \$30.00.

We displayed the recently-printed Humanist banner which added colour to the stall and clarity about Humanism.

While setting up we chatted with David the market-owner, who it turns out is a devout Evangelical Christian and wasn't all that receptive to our Introduction to Humanism!

When speaking with customers during the day, it was clear that almost no-one had heard about Humanism. Apart from our chats, the definition printed on the pull-up banner also got the message out there.

Fred and I managed the stall for most of the day, which ran 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Steve Maxwell from the Rationalists joined us for a couple of hours at midday. This gave us the chance to wander among the other stalls and chat to the stallholders – who were very friendly.

Three of them had been running a stall at Glebe market for over 20 years. Even though some stalls seem to do well, it's hard to see how most would do so.

Apart from food & coffee, popular stalls were those selling clothing, shoes, jewellery and bags. Second-hand books were not a key target for market visitors.

The most interesting occupant was a young woman sitting with an old-fashioned typewriter and the offer to write a poem for \$5. The poem underway looked to be about 5 lines long but I couldn't read it to judge its quality.

As I said, our stall had two goals – to break even (we didn't), and to introduce our visitors to humanism (we did).

If second-hand books don't sell well at Glebe market, what else could we do?

We could consider other markets. Sydney is peppered with markets like those at Rozelle or Marrickville. Maybe they would suit our products and goals?

Or we could offer other products?

What about humorous or thought-provoking humanist-themed t-shirts and mugs? I don't think humanist-themed items would be big sellers, but there would be value in making humanism visible.

Below are some examples of merchandise other humanist groups have developed.

**Text and photos by
Alex Bormans**





The bottom left photo features the three members who staffed the Humanist Society of NSW stall at the Glebe Markets for the day on Saturday 13 October 2018. At the left in t-shirt is Alex Bormans, with Fred Flatow in the white shirt with stripes and Steve Maxwell in the hat and check shirt behind him.

I'm sure we all wish them a big thankyou for their efforts on the day.

CALENDAR JAN TO MAR 2019

PLEASE REMEMBER THERE IS NO ENTRY TO HUVAT BEFORE 3.00PM DUE TO A COMMITTEE MEETING

NSW Humanists Meetup 3-6PM Sunday 27 January 2019 will present HUMANISM FOR THE COMING CENTURY

Each January we start the year looking at humanism itself. Later in 2019, Sydney will host a modest yet ambitious convention at Humanist House on **The Future of Australian Humanism**. At the Meetup on January 27 we will discuss what remains precious in the humanist tradition, as well as what form the movement for humanism needs to take in the years to come, to attract and hold members, volunteers, funders and intellectual, inspirational and pragmatic leaders. Being based in human values, humanism is a fluid conception needing individual flexibility and recurrent discussion, and all this is overdue in the 21st century. This is a century in which humanity itself might become technologically malleable. There has never been a more important time for humanism to provide an alternative to all kinds of phony ideologies. Input from new and younger Meetup members will be vital to the discussion. Opening address by Murray Love, President of Humanist Society of NSW.

HuVAT Sunday 10 February 2019 3.00 for 3.15 p.m. is on NATURAL HISTORY BEFORE DARWIN (Darwin Day Celebration)

Darwin's revolutionary concept of natural selection has had wide-reaching implications in many areas of human endeavour. With scientific and intellectual revolutions it's easy to lose sight of their historical precursors and original social context, that provided the template for such revolutionary ideas. This presentation explores pre-Darwinian notions of biological thought, the popular culture of natural history collecting, particularly in Victorian England, and our struggle in comprehending the antiquity of the Earth. We briefly explore a colourful interlude in history populated by mavericks, clergymen, idealists and gentlemen scientists. We'll conclude with a look at how Darwin has fundamentally changed the nature of Natural History collections, and some recent research into the effectiveness of how modern museums interpret evolution. Speakers TBA.

NSW Humanists Meetup 3-6PM Sunday 24 February 2019 - HUMANISM WITH AUSTRALIAN CHARACTERISTICS

Can we develop a living **Australian Humanism** functioning as a desirable identity, a welcoming community, a matured system of values, a fulfilling way of life, a philosophy with realistic answers, an effective approach to progress, and an inspiration for creativity? Any 21st century Australian form of Humanism needs to be robust for a big country with a good heart and a no-nonsense attitude. While many Australians insist they are 'spiritual', even if not identifying as religious, this is still a pragmatic country, often somewhat cynical about professed values. But avoiding hypocrisy is not a sufficient basis in itself. To escape mind-numbing globalised 'pap-culture' we need a 'muscular' *Australian* Humanism. What are Australian characteristics or stereotypes? Do American ideas work here? What do we learn from Britain, Europe, Asia and Africa? What has been our own secular history? What gets Australians motivated? Hosted by Murray Love, President, NSW Humanists.

HuVAT Sunday 10 March 2019 3.00 for 3.15 p.m. is John August on HUMAN ECONOMIC CHOICES & WHY WE MAKE THEM

John August will return to tell us about some issues in economics that have captured his interest in 2019. How is it that we engage with the market as sovereign individuals and become addicted? How manipulated are we by those selling to us, as compared to making choices? How is our public space and private activity being monetised? All in pursuit of supposed greater benefit for us all? How much backsliding is hidden in the idea of GDP growth, and how much detail do our bumper sticker figures obscure? What is the interaction between 'jobs' and 'growth'? We'll be looking under the hood, where the politicians would prefer we didn't go. We are pressed to consume more and more, but where are the benefits of so-called productivity growth going? How do different forms of consumption impact on the environment? What about future generations? And what about so-called 'equivalent earths'? John August is a Vice-President of NSW Humanist Society.

NSW Humanists Meetup 3-6PM Sunday 24 March 2019 - RELIGIONS - TRIBAL, ANCIENT, MODERN, SECULAR, ECONOMIC

In 2018 our day discussing differences between atheism, agnosticism, secularism, humanism etc. turned out well. So we hope for an equally interesting day discussing 'comparative religion' in the broadest possible way. How has what 'religion' means changed since ancient and prehistoric times and from diverse cultures and indigenous peoples? How have big religions changed over their history? How do 20th century ideologies like fascism, communism and consumerism behave like religions? Is neo-liberalism a cult? Is atheism a belief? Is non-religion a religion? Is football a religion? After we've enjoyed sharing our favourite theories, we'll seriously discuss how the founders of 'secular' humanism often expressed their ambitions in terms of a new approach to 'religion'. Is this a paradox? Just as some nowadays see themselves as 'spiritual but not religious' (SBNR), in the 1930s they saw themselves as 'religious but not supernatural' (RBNS)! These are word games, but they reveal something about human beings. This discussion needs to take place with an open mind. We need anthropological, sociological, psychological, and neurological approaches but we also can speak from our personal experience. We may finish up with realising we all have a lot more to learn. For those who see the battle with superstition as their goal they need to distinguish what they really object to, and avoid unnecessary harm. They also need to see new dangers in modern ideologies. Do we need to update our debating skills to take on new forms of deception and exploitation? Those who understand humanism as the highest pursuit of core human aspirations might explore what can be learnt, and unlearnt, from a vast store of human tradition, culture and behaviour. The discussion will be led by Murray Love.

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

'Open Forum' continues to meet each Wednesday night at Humanist House 8.00pm



- 22-Jan ____ Celebration Of Life Day**
28-Jan ____ Global Community Engagement Day
29-Jan ____ Freethinkers Day
10-Feb ____ World Marriage Day
11-Feb ____ Satisfied Staying Single Day
12-Feb ____ Darwin Day
16-Feb ____ Innovation Day
17-Feb ____ Random Acts Of Kindness Day
17-Feb ____ World Human Spirit Day
22-Feb ____ World Thinking Day, Be Humble Day
27-Feb ____ Inconvenience Yourself Day
04-Mar ____ Grammar Day
07-Mar ____ World Book Day
08-Mar ____ International Women's Day
10-Mar ____ Day Of Awesomeness
14-Mar ____ Science Education Day
16-Mar ____ Freedom Of Information Day
20-Mar ____ International Day of Happiness
31-Mar ____ International Transgender Day of Visibility

<https://www.daysoftheyear.com/>

BARBARA AND ROSS NIVISON-SMITH



It's wonderful to hear the stories of members of the Society who have lived a full life in the spirit of humanism. It's especially wonderful when they have shared their humanism as a couple and with their children and family.

Barbara and Ross Nivison-Smith were born in the 1920s and lived in Sydney, Australia for all of their adult lives. They had four children, Neil, Ian (myself the writer), Barry and Jill.

Barbara grew up in Chatswood on Sydney's North Shore. She excelled at school, and obtained a science degree at Sydney University at a time when it was rare for women to aspire to higher education. Barbara then worked at the CSIRO Coal Research Laboratories in North Ryde, before meeting and marrying Ross. After having four children, she retrained as a high school science teacher, and Barbara spent many years teaching at Sydney schools, rising to the position of science mistress.

I still remember her amusing description of the amazement and shock shown by highly religious girls in Year 9, when, as their science teacher, Barbara introduced them to the principles of evolution.

Ross spent his childhood on a small property near Narrabri in northern NSW, then was sent by his father to work at NSW railways, spending much of his time at Eveleigh workshops in Redfern. Ross studied for many years at night school, firstly acquiring his Leaving Certificate, then a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering. Ross spent most of his subsequent working life as an engineer with the NSW Public Works Department.

Barbara and Ross's great passion was bushwalking, and they took their children on many walks in the Blue Mountains and national parks, all around New South Wales and other states, particularly Tasmania.

Later in life, Ross and Barbara travelled extensively in Europe, Britain and Asia including Nepal. The couple were committed conservationists, who supported the expansion of national parks, and the protection of our natural heritage.

Both Barbara and Ross lived their lives according to humanist principles and demonstrated these to their family by example rather than persuasion. They viewed the world and human society with great compassion and optimism. Barbara and Ross supported a foster child in Central America, and showed support to many other worthy causes.

Barbara and Ross taught their children to appreciate life and the world without needing any beliefs in higher deities. They gave greatly to society in terms of sympathy and compassion, the value of education, and the right to live in freedom.

Ross passed away in 2013, and Barbara passed away in March 2018 after a short illness.

As their son, I feel privileged to have grown up under Ross and Barbara's guidance, and I attribute much of my optimistic and inclusive views of the world to them.

This obituary was kindly supplied by Ross and Barbara's son, Ian Nivison-Smith

SKEPTIC INVESTIGATION -A\$100K PRIZE

This is a summary of a HuVAT talk I gave in October 2018.

The Australian Skeptics (AS) share with humanists a belief that human progress grows from support for real science.

AS are dedicated to investigating claims of pseudoscience, the paranormal and the supernatural since 1980, and offer an A\$100,000 prize for real evidence. This follows James Randi's similar US\$1,000,000 prize in America.

AS also run monthly pub nights, a magazine, and annual conferences. They present the *Bent Spoon Award* to the worst perpetrator of a scam, and also give positive awards for the best investigative research, journalism or activism.

My talk took a scientific slant, examining some of the more entertaining claims. Some claims contradict known laws of science. Some might well violate the laws of the nation.

Investigative articles get published in the AS journals, and a lot of business plans have been ruined. Some still sell their dubious wares on the web, so names have been removed.

Telepathy across the world:

The claimant said he could send messages without known means. So we negotiated a protocol, and arranged a test from Sydney to his colleague in New York, with teams of skeptics at both locations. Sadly, his colleague and attending lawyer failed to materialise at the time! We were forced to conclude they existed only in the claimant's mind.

Wine Improving card:

The marketers claim a simple plastic card contains an embedded set of precise frequencies able to produce a lasting natural 'resonance'. This resonance can apparently be transferred to the wine through the glass containing it.

After the marketers failed to allow a joint test, AS prepared a Placebo Card, and did their own double-blind evaluation at Skeptics in the Pub.

The results: Wine Card 7; Placebo Card 6 – in accordance with the null hypothesis of no effect. Yes we can have fun!

Cold Fusion Reactor:

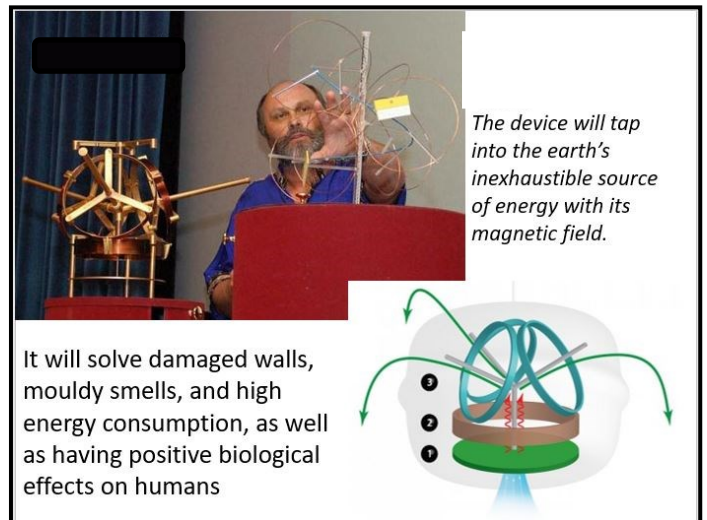
A European inventor got millions from investors for his claimed benchtop fusion reactor. Tests were witnessed by many scientists, including some who'd worked for NASA or won Nobel Prizes, plus nuclear physicists from Sweden.

The scientists attested that there were no hidden pipes or wires, and the device produced far more power than could be explained by hidden batteries, chemical, or other known means. So they assumed it must be fusion!

Ian Bryce and Dick Smith discovered another possibility in 2012 – No-one had checked if an earth wire could have been used to bring in extra power bypassing the metering!

Mobile Phone Radiation Protector:

Attaching a harmless-looking card to your phone, is claimed to greatly reduce the cancer-causing radiation to your head while leaving the signal to/from the Telstra tower unchanged. They even claim approved 'laboratory tests'. Sadly the laws of physics don't allow such things to happen.



Rising Damp Repeller:

A ceiling fitting is claimed to drive the moisture in your walls back into the ground using the Earth's magnetic field. AS have challenged the European manufacturers and the Australian importers to a real test. No response yet.

Mind Body Spirit Festival:

A Skeptics group attended Sydney's *Mind Body Spirit Festival*, and asked the awkward questions some of the stall holders didn't want to answer. Sadly, after several complaints, we were turfed out by the security staff.

The Spirit World:

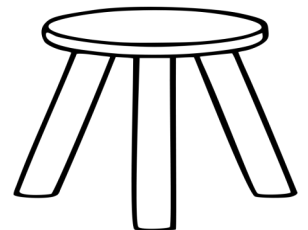
Victor Zammit is a famous Sydney spiritualist. He gives talks explaining that when people die they enter the spirit world, and can be contacted by mediums at séances.

On being asked: "What happens to old skeptics when they die"? He replied: "They often keep walking around because they don't know they're dead." Perhaps that explains how I feel some mornings!

How can you evaluate things at home?

The **Three Legged Stool** offers a method. When faced with claims new to science, ask:

- Is there **evidence** it works?
- Is there a **theory** that at least makes it possible?
- Does the track record of the claimant support his/her **credibility**?



☛ If all legs are sound, the claim (like the stool) stands up.

☛ If any leg is broken, it does not now stand up, but might be worth watching.

☛ If 2 or 3 legs are faulty, it is not worth pursuing at all!



Ian Bryce



We have reached a point in history where there are realistic prospects of increasing our cognitive, emotional, perceptual, and physical capacities through direct technological interventions in our bodies. As this idea has become more familiar, it has also provoked anxiety.

Much of the anxiety is probably not rational, but some of the arguments for caution have greater claims to our rational consideration. In any event, many politicians, academics, church leaders, and lobby groups are passionately resistant to the very idea of 'human enhancement' technologies, such as genetic engineering.

By contrast, transhumanists embrace the idea wholeheartedly. Proto-transhumanist views have a long history, and the word 'transhumanism' itself has been invented, seemingly independently, by various thinkers over a period dating back to the fourteenth century.

The contemporary transhumanist movement began to take shape as recently as the 1970s and 1980s, while the first use of the term 'transhumanism' in its current sense was by the philosopher Max More in an essay published in 1990. Since then, transhumanism has become a well-known, if widely misunderstood, cultural and philosophical movement.

Transhumanism is lively with internal debates, but it has an identifiable core of ideas. One is that of human beings in transition: transhumanists foresee a time when technological interventions in the human body, including the brain and nervous system, will lead to extreme alterations in human capacities.

Such alterations will be so dramatic that it makes intuitive sense to think and speak of the deeply-altered people of the future as *posthuman* (adjective) or as *posthumans* (noun).

Transhumanism adds another core idea: the transition from human to posthuman is essentially desirable. It is desirable, that is, to increase human capacities, including the maximum span of life, through whatever means are available, including direct technological interventions in the functioning of our bodies.

Earlier, I called transhumanism a philosophical and cultural movement, but is it really something more like a religion or a millennarian cult? Not in any straightforward way. Whatever else it might be, transhumanism is not an otherworldly belief system. Nothing supernatural is

postulated, and any transformations that take place will be produced by purely this-worldly means.

Most transhumanists, though perhaps not all, would emphatically deny that transhumanism is a religious system. At the same time, there is something rather apocalyptic about at least some transhumanist activity and writing, particularly when we are promised a rapid transition to vastly extended life spans and a post-scarcity economy.

One suggestion frequently presented in the transhumanist literature is of sudden and unprecedented technological advances to the extent that if we drew a curve of progress over time it would go almost vertical. This prediction of a 'technological singularity' is usually associated with the expectation of very powerful, rapidly and recursively self-improving artificial intelligence.

Such a development might, in theory, lead to the appearance of cybernetic beings so cognitively superior to ourselves that they would defy human comprehension and any human attempts to control them. For this reason, much activity from committed transhumanists working in the field of cognitive science involves efforts to ensure that any machine super-intelligences of the future will be benevolent in their attitudes to human beings.

Not all transhumanists think in such an extreme way, and such 'Singularity' ideas are rejected by transhumanists who have less grandiose visions of the near future.

How seriously should we take transhumanist ideas, given that they assume the invention of futuristic technologies?

I expect we will develop new ways to enhance human capacities, and this could, sooner or later, produce people very different from ourselves or our ancestors. Furthermore, I accept in a general way that enhancement of human capacities, and with it extension of human life, is desirable, whatever qualms we might have about the details.

We might wonder, as have some critics, whether transhumanists are naïve about technology, human nature, and/or the idea of progress. Some transhumanists may be, but transhumanism need not involve any such naivety.

Transhumanism does not rule out that things could go horribly wrong, and, indeed, much recent transhumanist thought has a surprisingly dystopian tinge, as transhumanist

authors contemplate large-scale threats to the human future: threats that might bring an end to human civilization or wipe out human life.

Thus, one focus of current transhumanist thought relates to so-called existential risks to our species and what could be done about them. At its best, transhumanism is far more valuable than a fad or a cult, but my own concern is that the transhumanist movement could rigidify into something more dogmatic and ideological than it has been to date.

Like many other grand 'isms', transhumanism offers a vision for the human future. That's fine in itself, but it means that the movement has at least some potential to develop into a millenarian, and perhaps fanatical, ideology.

That is not a reason to reject transhumanism out of hand, but it is an ongoing challenge for transhumanist thinkers.

This is a precis kindly prepared by Russell Blackford of the talk he delivered at Humanist House, Sydney on Sunday 11 November 2018, entitled *Transhumanism: A Philosophy of the Future*



Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies

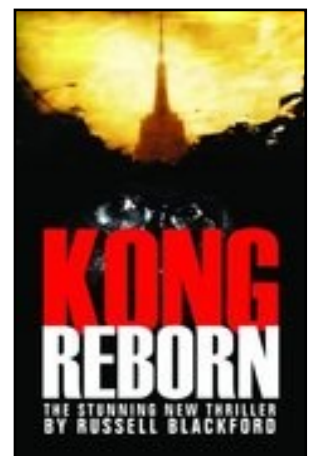
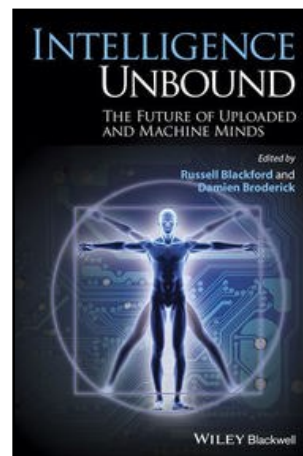
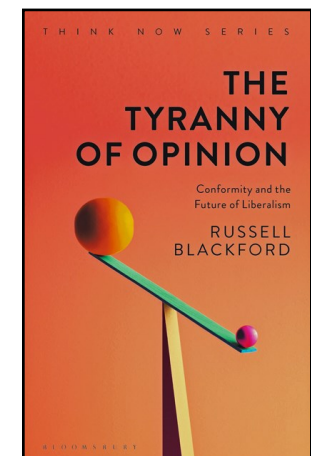
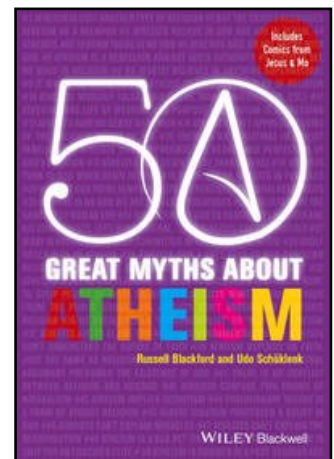
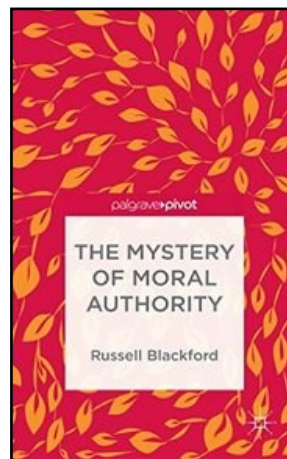
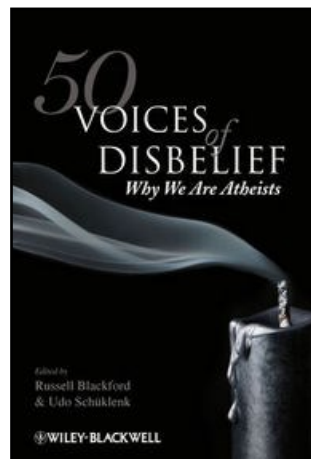
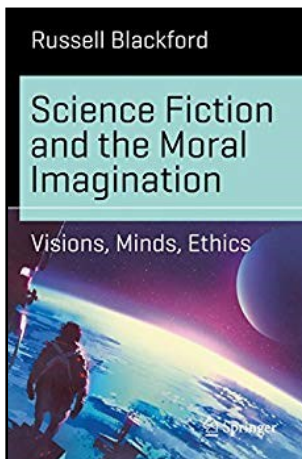
Russell Blackford is an Australian writer, philosopher, and literary critic, based for many years in Melbourne. He was born in Sydney, and grew up in the city of Lake Macquarie, near Newcastle. He moved to Melbourne in 1979, but returned to the Newcastle area to live and work in 2009. Russell Blackford spoke at the 2010 *Global Atheist Convention* and appeared that same year in *The Australian Book of Atheism* (making him a legend).

In 2008 he was made a Fellow of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies, a techno-progressive think-tank, and is the Editor-in-Chief of their *Journal of Evolution and Technology* (formerly *Journal of Transhumanism*).

Russell is a prolific essayist and commentator with interests including legal and political philosophy, philosophical bioethics, philosophy of religion, and debates involving visions of the human future. He has also had some success as a science fiction and fantasy author.

Russell has written many books, the latest of which is *The Tyranny of Opinion: Conformity and the Future of Liberalism* <https://www.bloomsbury.com/au/the-tyranny-of-opinion-9781350056008/>

Check out Russell Blackford's website at <http://www.russellblackford.com>



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