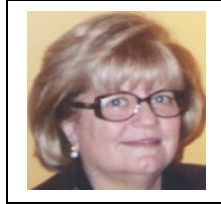


## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

*Affie Adagio*

The CAHS AGM was productive and very harmonious, and with Dr. Alan MacPhate effectively chairing the meeting, had a professional feel.



We've recently had three women AHOYs and that pleased the NSW membership especially, considering we started banging the drum about correcting the imbalance. I will send members the resolutions by separate mail when we send out the AGM Notice of Meeting.

On Saturday evening the function was excellent and the food delicious, all at a most reasonable cost. The low turnout from the NSW membership was disappointing, nevertheless, those present had a good time.

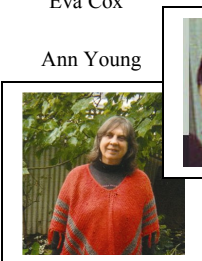
Sunday's event was mind boggling: *Humanism and Feminism – how truly compatible are they?* Eva Cox spoke about the beginnings of Humanism and how it was based on the male founders' way of thinking. She did criticise some comments from her panel members in a most outspoken way. Nevertheless, the audience found the discussion most enlightening. The Panel consisted of Sophia Catharios, Ann Young, Waratah Rose Gillespie, Angela Drury and Dr. Victor Bien. Senator Lyn Allison was also present on Sunday morning. Rosslyn Ives will print the transcript in the AH.



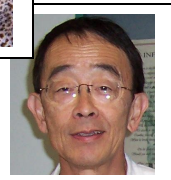
Eva Cox



Sophia  
Catharios



Ann Young



Dr. Victor Bien



Waratah Rose Gillespie  
Angela Drury



Bruce Barry entertained the guests at the CAHS Convention Dinner on Saturday night at the Ridges Camperdown

Photos supplied by Hugh, names are not shown due to space limitations.







## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*John August*

### CAHS CONVENTION

#### COUNCIL of AUSTRALIAN HUMANISTS SOCIETIES



The Humanist Society of NSW recently hosted the CAHS Convention.

It was great to see many NSW members and also interstate Humanists. The convention saw much discussion, and we awarded Lyn Allison Australian Humanist of the Year at the convention dinner. Lyn has been working tirelessly for many years on Humanist issues. It seems a sad reality that your efforts do not survive translation through the media - with the Democrats suffering under a good deal of misinterpretation and undeserved criticism. We also had a Sunday seminar on the compatibility of humanism and feminism, with some very strong opinions voiced by the different sides.

#### BOB BROWN & VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA.

Bob Brown of the Greens recently put forward a bill to repeal the Commonwealth legislation which originally blocked the Northern Territory's voluntary euthanasia legislation. The Senate referred this bill to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs for inquiry and report. The Atheist Foundation, NSW Voluntary Euthanasia Society and many other organisations made submissions to this inquiry (see [http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/committee/legcon\\_ctte/terminally\\_ill/submissions/sublist.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/committee/legcon_ctte/terminally_ill/submissions/sublist.htm)). The Atheist Foundation received congratulations from Marshall Perron, the architect of the NT Rights of the Terminally Ill Act. I congratulate the efforts of the Atheist Foundation and others; let's hope Bob Brown's initiative makes progress.



HumSocNSW president, John August M.C.



CAHS president, Dr. Alan MacPhate introducing AHOO 2008

## FOREIGN AID AND ABORTION

In 1996 the Howard government sought Brian Harradine's vote in favour of the privatisation of Telstra. In exchange, the government agreed to a ban on Australian aid money being spent to provide information about abortion and some contraceptives. The Greens, and Senator Kerry Nettle in particular, are campaigning to have the Government lift this ban. It does not require a change of law. Much as the majority of Australians are in support of access to abortion, voluntary euthanasia and so on, some believers will exert their disproportionate will on Government. We need to support the Greens - and also the Australian Government - should they decide to repeal this ban. They need to know we would appreciate the gesture, should those believers try to muscle in.

## WORLD CATHOLIC YOUTH DAY

In late July (15-20), we'll see the World Catholic Youth Day (WCYD). Rather than being a private affair, it's a diversion of public funds which has been deliberately held outside public scrutiny, and an affront to the separation of church and state, transparency, and the general operation of democracy. The NSW Humanists have been part of a small number of groups who have been challenging WCYD. Atheists based at the University of NSW plan protests at Randwick Racecourse (see [www.worldtruthday.org](http://www.worldtruthday.org)). I posted a media release to the Sydney Indymedia site ([www.sydney.indymedia.org](http://www.sydney.indymedia.org)) and was interviewed for a student publication at the University of Technology. I've also been interviewed by Kate Pinnock from the Wire radio program at 2SER radio Sydney (along with David Nicholls from the Atheist Foundation); this program is networked over Australia (search for "World Youth Day" at <http://www.thewire.org.au>). Sydney Central (which I'll get to later), was kind enough to print one of my letters. So, we've had a moderate amount of media coverage on this issue; it's good to see, and perhaps we'll get more as time goes on. Challenging religious institutions and initiatives is a more prominent exercise these days; hopefully we'll yet connect a bit better with the media.

Getting back to WCYD. (I'm, "beating a drum" here - apologies if I'm telling you something you already know) Individuals can believe what they wish, but it's worth remembering the institution of the Catholic Church acts to limit freedom, being against contraception, abortions and voluntary euthanasia - in spite of a majority of cardinals voting in favour of contraception during Vatican II.

Along with the prerogative of people to believe as they see fit, it's certainly fair enough for people to meet and worship privately. If only it were such a gathering. If only the State and Federal

Government were not pouring so much money into the event. If only it were not such a disruption to the residents of Sydney. The State and Federal Governments have refused to disclose their financial justifications. They claim visitors will be drawn to Australia and provide an injection into the economy which would supposedly exceed the taxpayer's subsidy. But some significant economic negatives have not been factored in. There are many businesses (particularly inner city retailers) who will suffer from reduced sales - perhaps losses. And while they will be obliged to stay open, many employees will be working reduced hours. This needs to be subtracted from the supposed economic positives. Many pilgrims will be billeted. That's fair enough and understandable if you're on a budget - but it undermines the economic case, which was based on tourists spending big in high end hotels. In fact, the hotels are being hit with a double whammy - they set aside accommodation for WCYD pilgrims, which are not being filled. But, in addition, internal Australian travel will be cut because people who would otherwise visit Sydney see it as "just too hard".

WCYD proponents claim a comparison to sports tours. However, if you compare the Lions rugby tour in 2001 - this was a completely different affair. The games happened at Homebush, but city trade continued - if anything, it was enhanced. High end hotels were well patronised. The activity was "contained" rather than affecting regular economic activity. And the rugby players were not visiting officials who needed security. Sure, our public transport system took a hammering - but that's poles apart from the disruption of an APEC like "lockdown". Then you have the social cost of disruption; we're going to be denied freedom of movement and access to public spaces in our own city. Still groaning from APEC, it seems to me that the thought on many Sydneysiders' minds is "oh no, not AGAIN!!!"

My local weekly news magazine, the Sydney Central, describes how the trees of Parkham Street will be removed to make way for the pilgrims walking from Central Station to Randwick Racecourse for the events there. One of the trees due to be removed was planted by Mr Glen Gould 17 years ago on the day of the funeral of a close friend's grandmother. It's symbolic of the disruption-at-large caused by World Catholic Youth Day. Sydney Central also published a letter from me as President - see <http://digitaledition.centralmag.com.au/?iid=8029> (Though I understand they've recently backed off from this removal through public pressure).



Still, it's not all bad. We do have the freedom to criticise World Catholic Youth Day. That is a wonderful thing. The world is problematic enough that we can stop to look at its problems, but not so problematic that it's a pointless exercise or we're totally overwhelmed. Let us rejoice.

### **SYDNEY BUDDHIST LIBRARY**

Paget Sayers from the Sydney Buddhist Library and given a few presentations, and is very supportive of Humanism, given the strong overlaps. You should find a flyer with the next issue of Humanist Viewpoints, outlining the Sydney Buddhist Library. Please take a look ! Please think about supporting Humanist Viewpoints with notices about your services if they'd appeal to Humanists.

### **KINGS CROSS – LATE NIGHT TRADING ARTICLE**

*I've written an article for the South Sydney Herald. Here's an early version (the published version may differ somewhat) :*

There's a battle in Kings Cross over late night trading. Is Kings Cross "saturated" ? Some claim there's "too much" late night trading - the more pubs, the more problems. Michael Gormly, a graphic designer and community activist, points to advantages in saturation like reduced car travel, quick police response times and a concentration of ancillary services. But at *market* saturation, venues might simply run out of customers. Some say it's already happening. Others claim venues send buses to other early closing pubs to bring people in. Is this "pumping up" the patronage? Or is it good that at least the intoxicated are using public, not private, transport ?

Then there's the battle over the present and the past. Michael Gormly says, "While some things like broken glass need to be managed, things have not gotten dramatically worse over the last few years. Decades ago there was drunken behaviour and there still is. The Cross has never stopped being an issue. But it's one Sydney's safety valves. What goes on around the Cross is misunderstood and overstated. I suspect that Police have concentrated on drug crimes to beef up the statistics, which has the side effect of directing people towards alcohol." Hugh Cox, Rector of St John's Anglican Church, has a different view : "At a meeting about a year and a half ago, the then local head of Police said the biggest problem was not mental illness or drug

abuse, but rather alcohol related violence. I see it often. People from Oxford street walk down Forbes street towards Williams street at 2 and 3 am on Friday and Saturday nights, urinating, vomiting, yelling and they're frequently violent. Violent excesses which I see all too often are usually the result of people drawn to the Cross. Sure, some are just "partying" like the local venues claim - but it has its dark side, something that we and the police bear the brunt of."

Steve and Jane Thompson have run the Fire Station Newsagency for the last twenty years. Steve : "Its definitely got worse over the last few years, but not dramatically worse. In fact it was really bad twenty years ago, got better , and then only became worse recently. Twenty years ago the drug addicts were sometimes violent - these days, they're managed differently and aren't a problem. But now we have intoxicated women, who vomit over the counter and try to shoplift. Men aren't as bad, but around 3am when the taxis change over, they 'go ballistic' when the few around don't stop. It's the result of more and later trading without any compensating transport."

Nobody really talks about noise *from* venues - rather it's people making noise on the streets or even queueing in front of nightclubs. Affie Adagio, a local resident, sees this as something they do just to inflate their popularity, with such queues a breeding ground for abusive behaviour and violence. But if we had more space for people in venues at the Cross, we'd have fewer people in the streets. Needless to say, venues want extra people to fill their increasing collective capacity. Melbourne's approach of letting people into venues only before 2am (they can stay inside, but can't re-enter a venue or change venues after leaving) would reduce people on the street.

Affie did, however, manage to negotiate some improvement. "I attended a meeting at the Liquor Licensing Board with 15 people. The local venues claimed 'their' patrons were not to blame for the groups of people gathering outside of our block of units - who swore and were generally loud around 2 and 3 am - not pleasant, particularly when my grandchildren stay over. Then we told them we'd *seen* these people come out of the same local venues, and they had to admit their responsibility. At least the Empire Hotel on Darlinghurst Road now maintains security to stop people from

collecting outside our unit. Not all security staff are as conscientious. Still, it's been an improvement. But overall more venues and longer trading hours have made things worse."

What's it all mean ? For the most part, patrons come in from outside. Most are well behaved. But, who has the greater say on what happens in the area ? Business or residents ? Residents buying into a certain environment might fairly have some right to maintain what they've bought into. Others point out you shouldn't move into Kings Cross for a quiet life. And so the argument remains. Have things gotten worse ? What's the policy been ? Should Kings Cross be a "safety valve" for the city ? But who decided that's the case ? Who's paying ? And who's benefitting ?

#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Robin Holliday

Dr. Robin Holliday writes in correction to John August's synopsis of the points he made at the last Darwin Day event. John wrote : *Dr. Robin Holliday, member of NSW Humanists and speaker at last year's Darwin Day, gave another possible reason for their extinction - while competition might push animals into larger and larger sizes, this very size means a slow rate of growth, and a slow rate of reproduction. And this slow rate of reproduction carries its own problem - a reduced ability to make evolutionary changes in response to a changing environment. So to speak, larger animals are more "specialised" - and being more "specialised" means you have less ability to adapt (Hope that's a fair summary, Robin !).*

Robin writes :

Dear Affie, John August's summary of my contribution to the discussion is not quite complete. I think the following is an improved version: In a natural environment mortality rates can be reduced by improved adaptation, in which case animals tend to evolve to larger sizes, and reproduce more slowly. However, if the environment subsequently changes so that mortality rates increase, then their slow reproduction makes it difficult to adapt, and

they are liable to become extinct. Small more rapidly breeding animals can adapt to a changed environment and are much more likely to survive. Hence the extinction of mega fauna in Australia, North and South America and parts of Asia. Regards, Dr. Robin Holliday

#### THE CROSS AND THE GUN: PARTNERS IN CRIME??

Waratah Rose Gillespie

A recent conference in Melbourne involving international and indigenous lawyers exposed a few sacred cows.



One is the so-called "Doctrine of Discovery", which has both a racial and religious bias. Under this doctrine, peoples of non-European, non-Christian countries lost their sovereignty and property rights after being "discovered" by someone from a European country.

This doctrine has its roots in the Crusades, which lasted for almost two hundred years and were tied to a Holy War against "infidels" (non-Christians). Pope Innocent IV declared that it was legal for Christians to invade land belonging to "infidels" because the Crusades were "just wars" fought in "defence" of Christians.

Two hundred years later, representatives of the King of Portugal, who wanted to seize control of new territory, argued that the purpose was to spread the Gospel and that any conquests by the King were conquests on behalf of Christianity. Persuaded by this and related arguments, the pope authorised Portugal to convert the natives of the Canary Islands, and to manage and control the islands on his behalf. This papal authority was later extended and in 1455, Pope Nicholas authorised Portugal to "invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans" and to place them in perpetual slavery and take all their property.

Queen Isabella of Spain worked out a plan to sidestep Portugal's monopoly on colonial acquisition. She sponsored Columbus to sail west under a contract making him Spanish Admiral of

any lands he could “discover and acquire”. Columbus sailed in 1492, and in 1493 Pope Alexander issued bulls stating Spain had title to the lands he “discovered”.

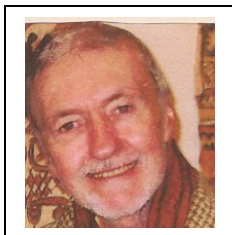
As other European states got into the act, the Doctrine of Discovery solidified into international law – backed up by a succession of popes. The Doctrine gave European countries a fig leaf of legitimacy to take “new” lands not previously claimed by another European state. This became a vehicle by which European invaders could take possession of lands belonging to non-Christian, non-European peoples by the use of force, using the sword and later the gun – while at the same time claiming to be spreading Christianity and civilisation!

The gun and the cross became partners in crime, the colonisation and subjugation of peoples. Decolonisation, begun during the twentieth century, is still unfinished business. Racism, an ideology used to prop up both slavery and colonialism, continues to flow like a poisoned underground river in countries such as Australia.

The oppression originating in religious dogma – or dogma of any kind – has many interconnected facets. Hopefully an understanding of the interconnections between basic human rights and freedom of thought can open the door for Humanists to consider including a human rights clause in the objects of our organisation at our next AGM.

#### ***HuVAT: WHAT'S TRULY BEHIND CLIMATE CHANGED? David Tribe***

David gave a sceptical perspective on global warming and climate change as popularly represented.



He regretted that some Humanists seemed to be treating Al Gore's “an inconvenient truth” as if it were Holy Writ. He summarised the talk here...

There have been alternating periods of climate cold (ice ages) and climate hot (interglacial periods), which are thought to be related to changes of the revolution of the earth around the sun. Within these major cycles are smaller cycles largely dictated by

solar cycles (sunspots) both before and after the industrial revolution. Measurements of temperature and carbon dioxide and sea levels have been made since about the time of the industrial revolution, which happened to occur at the end of the last little ice age - thus figures quoted by the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) are able to show an overall increase in temperature. No increase is currently occurring. Green lobbies and the IPPC claim that global warming is caused by increased levels in the atmosphere of greenhouse gases (chiefly carbon dioxide and methane) produced by human activity, chiefly power generation and industrial processes. It could be that global warming occurring naturally is actually increasing carbon dioxide levels and not vice versa, as claimed. Clearly on many counts, anthropogenic (human generated) pollution should be minimised. Much more important (in my view) than power generation is deforestation and, above all, the population explosion which has the major impact on all aspects of climate change, however caused. It is doubtful whether the Kyoto Protocol (excluding the USA, India and China) and carbon trading will actually reduce human pollution. Renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind and tidal are to be encouraged but at present they have technical problems and huge costs. In the meantime any dramatic curtailment of power generation would not make poor countries richer but rather rich countries poorer.

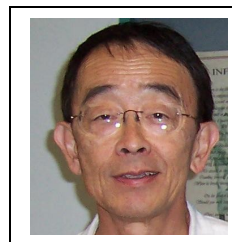
[David's talk has triggered off a passionate discussion this can be found on the CAHS discussion group at:

<http://lists.topica.com/lists/humanist/>

#### ***AGW - anthropogenic global warming***

*Victor Bien*

The Humanist Society of NSW's last discussion meeting last Sunday featured David Tribe who expressed his doubts about human induced global warming now euphemistically called merely “Climate Change” (more accurately AGW - anthropogenic global warming).



David is well known in Humanist circles as a prolific writer for us and former Australian president of the National Secular Society UK now a freelance journalist. He complained about the

hysterical tone of Gideon Polya's article in the current issue of the Australian Humanist (No.90 Winter 08) entitled Humanism, Altruism and the Global Climate Emergency

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~humanist/resources/cahs.html>-

Another humanist skeptic is Prof Ian Plimer well known to us for anti-creationism. He is an AHOY (Australian Humanist of the Year 1995). There are significant scientific names who are climate change skeptics amongst these is the famous US physicist Freeman Dyson. Strongly on the other side of the fence we have of course a well known scientific name Prof Tim Flannery also an AHOY (2005). During discussion I said to David and others that the hysterical tone is fully justified if you accept that AGW is real and a serious present threat. I have been following the scientific concern about AGW for thirty years and noted their frustration of getting the attention of politicians. Now that it has become accepted politically as a serious issue there are serious backlashes expressed by the likes of David Tribe and others. The vast majority of scientists notably those working in fields directly related to climate science have concluded that urgent action is needed to reign in the use of fossil fuels.

As Prof Stephen Schneider Climatologist Stanford U pointed out in his reply to Prof Don Atkins (skeptic and chair of the ARC [Australian Research Council] i.e. a significant and scientifically credible person) most AGW skeptics who while may be scientists, by and large do not work directly in climate science related fields (however, Plimer is a geologist which is a related field). The basis for concluding there is AGW is vast and complex (reflecting the complexity of the whole planet and its many subsystems). Typically, as Schneider pointed out, skeptics pick a few points of doubt to dismiss the consensus of a huge number of scientists associated with the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change). That is what David Tribe did. He suggested that Schneider is a raving greeny! He reified the IPCC considering the large numbers in it effectively as mere drones to their lunatic leaders! David also complained about the tendency for "pushers of climate change" like Robyn Williams (AHOY 1993) whom he named as one who tried to attack free speech, which is how he interpreted Robyn's

attempt to block the screening last year of the video show The Great Climate Change Swindle shown on ABC TV. I know that Robyn Williams is seriously offended by the defamation implied by words like "swindle" and "lies" outrageously attributing bad faith to people who have spent large parts of their lives studying climate change. I know that Robyn nominated Dr Graeme Pearman of CSIRO climate division and member of the IPCC who is a person of excellent character who is one who has vast scientific knowledge supporting AGW. David and uncommitted interested people like some in the Humanist meeting were not prepared to accept that the "debate" was over and that a decision has been made and now is the time for action - to get on with it, not indulge in endless uninformed debate. I wasn't sure whether David even agreed that global warming is a fact besides considering whether it is caused by human activity or by natural variation.

This brings to the foreground a serious disconnect between expert scientists and the layman of which most Humanists would belong. Professional scientists tend to lobby "important" conclusions to governments and ignore the democratic basis for government as not of "their direct concern" - they don't engage in "politics". This I fear is a serious mistake. There is still a culture amongst professional scientists that it is a no no to go direct to the media. Scientists who do are regarded as suspect. AGW has such serious implications for all sorts of interests vested and otherwise that there is tremendous urge to question, "can that really be right"? Indeed it is tremendously "inconvenient". Scientists like Stephen Schneider must be much more out there "selling" the scientific basis for the IPCC consensus. It should not devolve on a "high brow" program like Ockham's Razor to debate the issues in public.

On a more encouraging note, in the May issue of *Australasian Science* journal

<http://www.control.com.au/> includes a paper on ocean acidification. The rising level of CO<sub>2</sub> is making the oceans more acidic, threatening the carbonate structures of reef skeletons and shell fish species i.e. their survival. The authors noted that this evidence for rising CO<sub>2</sub> is clear cut, directly measurable and immune from the doubts and dismissals of AGW relating to the atmosphere. With significant lack of conviction of AGW amongst Humanists we can't be part of the solution but remain part of the problem.



**This is a reply to Margit Alm** commenting on my posting about some Humanists being sceptics of climate change :

*It takes a deal of time to write these postings and often I simply don't have the time to answer more promptly. So that is why it took a while to compose this answer. For decades there have been two schools of thought about which factor has the greater effect on the environment. One concentrates on the nature and level of economic activity, the other arguing that human population is more important. Humanists by and large have usually sided with arguing the importance of limiting population. For myself, I think the nature and level of economic activity is more significant. This is not to say that population is not important - more of that later. I go along with what Barry Commoner pointed out in the early 70s - that the growth in impact on the environment caused by the rate of growth and nature of economic activity far outstripped the growth in population. Therefore growing population is of secondary concern. He gave the example how after WW2 people gradually changed over from using soap to wash to using detergents. People used more detergents because there was a latent demand previously inhibited by the limitations of soap.*

*Further, detergent had a big impact on the waterways not only because of greater usage but also detergents were bad for the environment, causing algal blooms, fish kills and the like. The situation today looks similar. At <http://www.irrationalexuberance.com/> there is an Excel spreadsheet the author Robert Shiller has prepared which plots changing population together with changes of a couple of other factors. It's the 2nd link on the page. On bringing up the spreadsheet you get the numbers but a tab at bottom provides a plot. You will see a plot of growing population but you will also see home building costs gyrating wildly, nothing like the steady line of population growth. What this shows is that growing population plays a minor role in determining economic outcomes, easily swamped by other factors. In this case the "other factors" hardly lead to a desirable outcome - a real estate price bubble, but for my purposes here it shows the same point Barry Commoner made in the 70s. So my position vis a vis climate change is that the human fossil fuel kick, energy intensive city*

*layouts, energy intensive buildings, lack of public transport or reliance on the grossly inefficient private car is what has to be reigned in. Limiting population growth will not do it (unless population is somehow decimated [which may happen in an uncontrolled or uncontrollable fashion anyway but that is another story which I may try to write about soon]). Now considering the control of population. Politically attempting to limit population is very hard perhaps even "too hard". Religious lobbies will resist it, but so will a host of vested interests. Apart from that a big difficulty seems to be that if a population policy is successful you get a skewing of the population's age profile as time goes on. In Western countries due to high levels of education of women there are low birth rates. In most Western countries, absent immigration, the birth rate is below the natural replacement rate of about 2.1 children per woman.*

*All Western societies and some non-Western ones are moving into a crisis of "aging population". The crisis is that there are fewer and fewer people of working age to support more and more aged persons. This is coupled with rising life span and steeply rising costs due to naturally growing demand for medical services by the aged and to the growing sophistication and cost of medical technology. A recent article (probably in the SMH ) noted that China may have to relax its one child policy because of this age profile problem. All this looks very depressing - there thus seems to be no way to "humanely" reduce population. What looms very bad is this coming triple whammy: Peak Oil; Global warming disruption to previously known weather patterns and low lying areas of human settlements; food crisis (this has suddenly reared up like a monster from the deep). Already it appears that there will be mass starvation in parts of Africa and if the food crisis persists there will be mass deaths all over the world. These three whammies are interrelated. After I wrote that, I realised there is a fourth whammy - water!*

#### **LETTER TO EDITOR Dr. Gideon Polya**

Dear all, What's this non-specific, unsubstantiated stuff about my alleged "hysterical tone" about global warming? I am merely a sober, concerned, science-based reporter, responsibly reporting in the public interest what eminent climate scientists and prestigious scientific bodies such as the US National Academy of Science, the UK Royal



Society, the IPCC, CSIRO and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) say about anthropogenic climate change. Argument by ad hominem abuse is hardly a useful argument. Top US climate scientist Dr James Hansen has written a letter to the newly-elected PM of Australia, Mr Kevin Rudd, urging global cessation of net carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) pollution (letter dated 27 March 2008:

[http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2008/0401\\_DearPrimeMinisterRudd.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2008/0401_DearPrimeMinisterRudd.pdf)). Dr Hansen includes an excellent detailed technical summary about the sources of CO<sub>2</sub> pollution. I have provided a summary of this summary in an article entitled "'Clean Energy World'. NASA's Dr Hansen pleads for Negative CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions": <http://mwcnews.net/content/view/23119/42/>. Further, in a scientific paper written by Dr Hansen and 8 other climate science colleagues, variously from the US, France and the UK and sent to a top scientific journal Science (see:

<http://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/0804/0804.1126.pdf>) the summary states that "If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, paleoclimate evidence and ongoing climate change suggest that [atmospheric] CO<sub>2</sub> will need to be reduced from its current 385 ppm to at most 350 ppm". Top UK climate scientist Professor James Lovelock asserts that unaddressed climate change will kill over 6 billion people this century (see:

<http://www.businessandmedia.org/printer/2007/20071022221333.aspx>) - and the horrible reality is that 16 million people die avoidably every year ALREADY [100 x 16 million = 1.6 billion] from deprivation and deprivation-exacerbated disease (see: (see: "Body Count. Global avoidable mortality since 1950" (G.M. Polya, Melbourne, 2007: <http://mwcnews.net/content/view/1375/247/> and <http://globalbodycount.blogspot.com/>). It would be highly irresponsible of a person such as myself to ignore the acutely serious messages from such eminent scientists and scientific bodies. However, leaving global warming aside, there is ANOTHER deadly aspect of CO<sub>2</sub> pollution - the effects of the toxic pollutants of coal burning. It can be estimated that 4,500 Australians die EACH YEAR from the effects of pollutants due to coal-based electricity generation (see: "Pollutants from

coal-based electricity cause 170,000 deaths annually": <http://green-blog.org/2008/06/14/pollutants-from-coal-based-electricity-generation-kill-170000-people-annually/>). Dr Gideon Polya

## WORDS AND IDEAS

*David Tribe*

What does "humanism" really mean? (continued from last Vpts edition)

**CLASSICAL ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM (C5 BCE):** As an agnostic Protagoras believed that "the shortness of human life" made it profitless to even think about the gods, let alone worship them. Some of his contemporaries satirised the gods, presumably on the assumption that they didn't exist or that, if they did exist, they were powerless to exact vengeance. But, as the Greek word for atheism suggests, they lived "without" God or the gods and didn't apparently engage in arguments to disprove his or their existence. Thus they were what we would today describe as negative atheists, believing that we cannot prove there is a god.

**CLASSICAL RATIONALISM (C5-4 BCE):** As rationalists, Socrates and Plato were the quintessential "armchair philosophers", seeing "science" as largely knowledge of abstract disciplines like mathematics, rhetoric, harmonics and speculative astronomy, and reason as the supreme element of each person's immortal "soul". They looked beyond things in this world to transcendent (supernatural), eternal, unchanging ideas or "Forms" which things imperfectly imitated. Chiefly they aimed to discover the Forms for beauty and the Good, from which virtuous conduct could be deduced.

**CHRISTIAN CLERICALISM (C1-4 CE):** The early Christians believed in the "priesthood of all believers", but by the end of the first century a distinction was being drawn between the priesthood and the laity. In the 4th century CE, hermits who had gone off into the desert to escape pagan persecution or to meditate without worldly distractions (or because they were mentally unbalanced) came together to form primitive monasteries. After the Roman emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the empire in 324 CE, they could live more openly and organise themselves under an abbot who established a "rule" to direct the monks' lives. Hence they were called "regular" clergy. Clergy who'd remained in "the world" (the general population) under the administration of the local bishop then became known as "secular" clergy. While some monasteries later undertook teaching or medical functions, others lived in isolation and even in silence. The day-to-day activities of ministering to the faithful and, above all, administering the sacraments were left to the secular clergy.

**CHRISTIAN FREE WILL (C5 CE):** By the 5th century CE the clamorous Christian factions had sorted out most of their rivalries. These included debates over the primacy of either faith or (good) works in the lives of believers (faith won), the relationships between the Persons of the Holy Trinity (disputed by Eastern Orthodoxy then and later), the relationship between the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ, the substantially accepted canonicity (supposed authenticity) or otherwise of each of the plethora of gospels, apostolic letters and other Christian texts in circulation, and the validity of sacraments administered by morally or ecclesiastically suspect clerics. But one great controversy remained and has persisted. This was the concept of human free will. Spearheaded by Pelagius these “libertarians” argued that humankind was made in the image of God to freely accept or reject salvation, and to believe otherwise was to reduce everyone to the status of a mere puppet, and to completely undermine moral law. Eventually most Christian sects, especially the largest ones, accepted this doctrine. For most of the Christian or common era it appears to have been generally supported by freethinkers as seeming to bestow a certain dignity on humankind. Of course they rejected its theistic underpinning.

**CHRISTIAN PREDESTINATION (C5 CE):** In fierce opposition to Pelagius was St Augustine of Hippo. He argued that as God was omnipotent and omniscient it was illusory to pretend that people were free to believe what they liked, so he promoted the doctrine of predestination. While generally rejected in Christendom, it has survived in Calvinist churches like orthodox Presbyterianism, Jehovah’s Witnesses and other small sects. In the modified form of surrendering to God’s will it’s a tenet of Islam. Increasingly freethinkers have come to shed their voluntarist pretensions. They haven’t, of course, come to accept divine predestination, but its nontheistic equivalent, determinism. Despite the views of David Hume and claims by proponents of quantum mechanics, both logic and observation overwhelmingly attest to the principle of causality. If this is indeed a universal principle, it would be a manifestation of human conceit to argue that the human brain is a solitary exception to the rule. In *Nucleoethics: Ethics in Modern Society* (1972), recently vindicated by neurophysiological studies using brain scans, I argued that the traditional sequence of awareness - will - memory should be reversed. That is, our memory pathways are activated by new stimuli calling for action; these trigger a call to action, which we call the will, by the muscles, which in turn triggers awareness of what we’ve done. The time lag between each step is half a second or so. Thus we feel we’ve “chosen” in advance to perform the action. Naturally, in some circumstances we may have been thinking about it in advance, but the action is deterministic at the time it happens. (Contd. next edition)

#### **TIME FOR A LAUGH** anon

A little girl asked her mother, 'How did the human race appear?' The mother answered, 'God made Adam and Eve and they had children and then all mankind was made.' Two days later the girl asked her father the same question. The father answered, 'Many years ago there were monkeys from which the Human race evolved.' The confused girl returned to her mother and said, 'Mom, how is it possible that you told me the human race was created by God, and Dad said they developed from monkeys?' The mother answered, 'Well, dear, it is very simple. I told you about my side of the family and your father told you about his.'

#### **MEMBER NEWS**

Angela Drury

#### **NEW MEMBERS:**

A warm welcome to new members Steven Moore, Tony Gentile, Derek Whitmore and Thomas Gately.



**Congratulations** to our Dorothy Buckland Fuller for being awarded an MBE

**WEA Rep** is now David Duffy. Thanks to Keith Johnson his many years in that role.

**Thankyou** to all members and friends who attended the events of the recent CAHS (Council of Australian Humanists) Convention held in Sydney this year. However, I was extremely disappointed at the lack of support from the NSW membership, and even some NSW committee members, especially the low turnout at the fabulous and affordable CAHS dinner at which the prestigious speaker was Humanist of the Year 2008 - Senator Lyn Allison.

**Membership renewals:** reminder to all members that membership renewal 2008/09 is due now (July). **Please send in your renewal** and continue to support the Society.