

IFH MONTHLY

Irish Freethinkers & Humanists

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1. WHAT'S IN *IRISH FREETHINKER* - SPRING 2024

The Spring 2024 edition of *IRISH FREETHINKER* is to be published in February and will be dispatched by post to subscribers; it is otherwise available for purchase in shops.

The contents are as follows:

- *Olympe de Gouges: French Feminist*
- *Losing Religion, Finding Myself*
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The IFH website (www.irishfreethinkers.com) continues to be developed and editions of *IRISH FREETHINKER* for the period before May-June 2020 and back to Autumn 2016 will be gradually put up on it, as eventually will back copies of *IFH NEWS* no 2 onwards. There is now also an online payment system on the website. Copies of recent editions of these items not online may be purchased through our site.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES FOR THE SUMMER '24 EDITION OF *IRISH FREETHINKER* IS 15 APRIL 2024 (Editor: ifh.sde@gmail.com)

2. MARY ANN McCracken

Owen Morton

A LONG, EXEMPLARY, CHRISTIAN HUMANIST LIFE

Framework

When you'd ponder mid-to-late 18th Century Enlightenment-inspired republican idealism, playing out in the lead-in to the French Revolution, embraced at first-hand and then delivered overseas by the likes of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Wolfe

Tone, Lord Edward FitzGerald, any wonder, looking around, you'd ask where did it all go wrong?

There is light at the end of the tunnel, in these parts at least, as embers of the noble legacy of the spirit of '98 flicker. And, just as with the real thing, it's happening now in our northern Province.

We develop the theme in aligning this mod-

ern-day neighbouring phenomenon, as yet in its infancy, with the inspiration of the philosophes, the men and women of letters in the French coffee houses, whose challenges to the *ancien régime*, in thrall to the privileges of Royalty, of Church Princes and of the Aristocracy, spilled out on to the streets over the course of the French Revolution. Their enlightened, idealistic promotion of science, reason and tolerance, at the expense of dogma, ignorance and superstition, would evolve to find expression in pivotal citizen-led demands centred in *liberté, fraternité, égalité*.

Radical Ulster Presbyterian Dissenters of yesteryear, as we know, bought into this ideology, and this story is about them - one in particular.

In September just gone, your storyteller travelled the very manageable distance to Rostrevor to engage in a celebration of the memory of one Tom Dunn (Tomás Ó Duinn - 'O Dwine' offered locally in what seems a Scots Gaidhlig dialect). Dunn was a United Irishman, a Catholic hedge-school teacher devoted to tolerant, non-sectarian education and cross-community advancement. He died as a consequence of brutal beatings at the hands of the militia. On the day, a life-size bronze Dunn statue was unveiled by Mary McAleese who knows a thing or two about divisive sectarian strife. A former resident of Rostrevor, concluding her unveiling speech and honouring the heroes of '98, our former President offered: "including the women, of course ... let's not forget Mary Ann McCracken." Let's not.

A Potted Biography

In August 2023 Belfast City Council gave the green light to the commissioning of a statue in Mary Ann's honour, to be erected in the grounds of the City Hall.

Along with her higher-profile brother, Henry (or Harry), she was raised in well-to-do liberal Presbyterian family surroundings in Belfast. Her father, of Scottish descent, was a sea captain and an industrialist. The family of her mother, Ann Joy, was of Huguenot roots, owning a linen mill, and founders of the Belfast *News Letter*. Ann was influenced by, in turn handing down, the radical views of Thomas Paine, only later distancing herself in disapproval of his burgeoning atheist platform. Paine radicalised the aristocratic Edward Fitzgerald in Paris.



Around this time, inspired by the same radical republican groundswell, physician, writer, poet, philosopher, son of Francis Hutcheson's closest ally, Thomas Drennan, William, of same surname of course, proclaimed: "The Ascendancy represents a rooted moral and national evil, fostering a planter and slave divide". Mary Ann would subscribe with a gusto to the idealism of the Society of the United Irishmen founded in

1792 in Belfast by Drennan, Thomas Russell, and her brother Henry, among others.

Over the course of her long life, whilst personally eschewing labels, Mary Ann McCracken presented variously as a devout Christian, a humanitarian, an intellectual, an entrepreneur, a republican, an abolitionist, a pamphleteer, a social activist and campaigner, a feminist, a philanthropist, a benevolent employer, an egalitarian, a patron of the arts, a gaelgeoir, a correspondent, an adoptive parent. In a word, you might say she was a Humanist. Remember, the Enlightenment momentum that fostered everything this principled woman stood for, serves as the cradle of modern secular Humanism.

In 1788, along with Harry, she established a

Sunday School for Belfast waifs; her Humanist persuasion is hinted at in ordaining that neither sectarian divide nor class distinction would sully her place of learning - nor would religion be taught in the classroom. It was closed down in time at the diktat of the Anglican Bishop of Belfast.

Affirming the intellectual premise of United Irishmen ideology of founding father Thomas Russell with whom she shared a common commitment to social justice, Mary Ann observed that he presented “as a model of manly beauty, with a grace which nothing but superiority of intellect can give”.

She operated a muslin factory, pursuing labour-saving initiatives not with a mind to enhanced bottom line return on investment, rather that hard-pressed operatives might have more free time, for leisure, for education and the like.

Following on the execution of her beloved brother Henry at the age of 30, in opposition to family counsel, she adopted his love child, Maria, raising her as her own. In later life, Maria would return the kindness in bringing Mary Ann to share her household.

A lifelong abolitionist, into her nineties, she was to be found on the docks in Belfast, pamphleteering, aimed at Irish emigrants bound for America, as to the evils and inhumanity of slavery.

The marginalisation of women and the deprivation of children were arguably her most targeted aberrations.

A Gaeilgeoir and lover of Irish music, she was a founder member of the Belfast Harp Society, the McCracken family affording a home, as a live-in guest, for the noted musician and collector, Edward Bunting.

Influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Ann was a relentless and vocal feminist, including a resistance to women’s spin-off or splinter societies that merely undermined or

delimited women’s influence in matters of the day.

Embers

Sympathetic to the cross-pollination of remnants of yesteryear, referenced above, where intellectual ideology found expression in revolutionary zeal, traces of the republican legacy of Mary Ann and her contemporaries are re-emerging in Belfast and its environs. Now presenting as ‘Reclaim the Enlightenment,’ now as ‘The Society of the United Irishmen of Belfast’, they constitute either side of the same coin, depending on the context; Facebook platforms invite open engagement. Links to their inspirational 18th Century counterparts are anything but tenuous. Leading from the front, most prominent in the latter camp is Stephen McCracken, boasting direct line descendancy from Henry and Mary Ann. And in the ‘Reclaim’ camp we find John Gray who, in like manner to Thomas Russell, served as Librarian in Belfast’s august Linen Hall Library.

John has penned an engaging 34-page heavily annotated pamphlet dedicated to Mary Ann, to which one is indebted. Her regard (*grá?*) for Russell is sympathetically woven into the narrative. The publication can be accessed via the Reclaim the Enlightenment website.

The joint and several fingerprints of McCracken (Stephen) and Gray are evidenced in three recent events: (i) the Rostrevor Dunn sculpture initiative as referenced, (ii) a customary mid-October anniversary ‘Remember Orr’ wreath-laying commemoration at the gravestone of William Orr (the first martyr to the United Irishmen cause) in Templepatrick, and (iii) a ‘Harps Alive’ dual celebration in Belfast and Dublin commemorating Mary Ann and Edward Bunting, symbolically profiling the harp as emblematic of cultured Irish tradition harking back through the ages.

Legacy-Epitaph

Gray’s eulogy:

It may seem obvious to us today that Mary Ann was on the right side of history in so many of the causes she espoused, and thus she can so readily be co-opted as a model female pioneer, and rightly so. What we forget is how far ahead of her times she was and how she always had to struggle against the odds. Her story should accordingly lend strength to new generations willing to fight for a better society however daunting the task.

Although finding an accommodation with de facto post Act of Union integration, Mary Ann never quite shed the remnants of dissent that fired her youthful spirit; never quite abandoned a resistance to the less than dignified proposition that an enlightened spe-

cies would bow its head and lower its gaze in ‘royal’ presence. With characteristic understatement she’d be more circumspect:

I do not think we are thereby authorised to take up arms against the Government but consider it a duty to wait with patience till the Great Ruler of all events brings about a change through the progress of public opinion.

When, indeed, ‘the Great Ruler’ ordains that this patient duty is rewarded and witnessed in a progressive societal awakening, maybe then we can embrace a new tolerant, ideologically republican Ireland of many persuasions, Mary Ann’s legacy copper-fastened.

•.....•

3. DO WE NEED GOD TO DEFEND CIVILIZATION?

Adam Wakeling, Historian

“That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me”, wrote C S Lewis of his conversion to Christianity in *Surprised By Joy*. “In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.” Like most new Christians, Lewis converted because he had become convinced of the truth of the Scriptures and felt a connection with the God of the Bible. He went on to become the most famous Christian apologist of the twentieth century, always arguing in support of a literal, real and personal God.

In the twenty-first century, the God of the Christian Bible has found new defenders. Unlike Lewis, they do not argue that he is real. Rather, they argue that he is necessary. More specifically, that he provides our civilisation with its ethical foundations and, without him, we face nihilism. New Atheism “inherits a vague rational humanism that it has to pretend is natural, or common-sense,” wrote Theo Hobson in *Spectator*. “It’s an important task of Christian apologetics to point this out, to insist

that the moral assumptions of our culture have Christian roots.”

“Atheism can’t equip us for civilisational war” was Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s position in her article on her conversion to Christianity, published in November 2023 in *UnHerd*. Referring favourably to Tom Holland’s *Dominion*, she wrote that “all sorts of apparently secular freedoms - of the market, of conscience and of the press - find their roots in Christianity.” Ali does not mention accepting Christianity’s metaphysical claims in the article.

Perhaps no public figure has become more associated with this argument than Jordan Peterson. Peterson does not appear to believe in a literal supernatural being, but believes that the secular ethics of the modern west are based in Judaeo-Christian values and it would be better if we acted as though the Christian God did exist. “What else do you have?”, he demanded of sceptical young men in his 2022 message to Christian churches. And, to those who might respond by saying that they do not believe in the doctrines of the Church, “who cares what you believe?”

This argument is made by conservatives and directed at a specific audience: non-religious people sceptical of modern progressivism. Christianity, they argue, provides a bulwark against geopolitical threats like Islamic fundamentalism and China, and against the extremes of ‘woke’ culture. I have not heard left-wing Christians argue that only Christian ethics provides a basis for demanding that the rich give away their wealth and care for the poor, although such an argument would be similar.

There are a few problems with this claim. Proving that Christianity is influential would not prove that its supernatural claims are true, and vice versa. For this reason, atheists of different political opinions do not find the argument satisfactory. Secular humanist Matt Dillahunty had a lengthy debate with Peterson which left him, as he later told Douglas Murray, “confused and more than a little irritated.”

“I want to believe as many true things and as few false things as possible,” Dillahunty said, explaining that things were true or not based on whether they comported with reality. The usefulness of God is irrelevant to his existence.

It is also unsatisfactory to the conventionally religious, for similar reasons. “Contra Peterson, the story of Scripture was not written in philosophical abstracted metaphor, but in real time, space and blood,” wrote Dani Trewek for Gospel Coalition, a gospel advocacy group based in Australia, in 2022. “It is not ultimately concerned with the earthly ‘optimisation’ of created man, but the eternal glorification of the Son of Man.” Again, God’s usefulness is irrelevant to his existence.

Even if the argument were sound, it is not clear what we would do about it. Christianity might, as Ed West put it in *Spectator*, “meme

itself back into existence” if we all go through the motions, but it is hard to see people being persuaded into accepting the supernatural for political reasons.

I want, though, to focus on a particular problem with the argument: that it overstates the continuity of Judaeo-Christian ethics. According to Genesis, God created man in his image - yet the morality of the Bible is not humanist. The Ten Commandments condemn disbelief and sabbath-breaking before murder; Leviticus and Deuteronomy are filled with condemnations of ritual offences, but permit slavery and treat women as property.

Let us look at one specific case. Writing on heresy in *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas

accepts that heretics should be put to death. He favourably quotes Saint Jerome verbatim on the way heretics should be treated: “cut off the decayed flesh, expel the mangy sheep from the fold, lest the whole house, the whole paste, the whole body, the whole flock, burn, perish, rot, die.”

Aquinas’ position is consistent with Scripture. The God of the Bible collectively punishes societies for tolerating sin, floods the earth, rains down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, and allows the Babylonians to march the Israelites into captivity when they fail to self-police their morality. Aquinas’ position was uncontroversial in the medieval and early modern church.

Today, however, this position is repugnant to us, including among the devoutly religious. Morally, killing someone for their religious beliefs strikes us as murder. And, practically, if we had kept the death penalty for heresy, we could never have achieved what we have in philosophy, science, literature and art. A society that burns heretics is doomed to stagnation.



François Marie Arouet aka Voltaire

The idea of killing an individual to protect the morals of society as a whole is fundamentally incompatible with liberalism.

In many ways, traditional Judaeo-Christian ethics are as different from modern secular ethics as Sharia law is. This is not to condemn them for being unusually bad: most pre-modern ethical codes are based in similar principles. But it does ignore the massive break with the past represented by the Enlightenment, which saw the concomitant rise of liberalism and the creation of the modern concept of human rights. In practice, the advocates of the ‘necessary’ Christian God are dining at an ethical buffet, picking and choosing from the Scriptures and the writings of theologians according to taste.

Ultimately, there is a false dichotomy between faith, or at least the appearance of faith, and nihilism. We can - and should - consider ideas on their own merits. Those for whom

faith is real and personal will believe. But those who are not persuaded by metaphysical arguments will not be persuaded by political ones, and nor should they be. Voltaire was alleged to have quipped that he did not believe in God but hoped his servant did, so she did not steal his silver; the modern argument for the ‘necessity’ of Christianity, when it is boiled down, looks similar. By comparison, I actually prefer C S Lewis’ straightforward and direct approach.

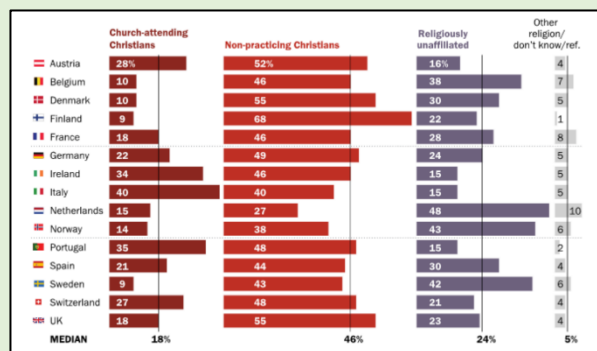
Anyone who appreciates the benefits of living in a modern Western country can look to the tested and proven principles of the Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution, constitutional government and human rights. If someone wants to believe in the Christian God and in the values of the Bible, that is fine - but it is not necessary.

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<http://www.freethinker.co.uk>

4. ‘CHRISTIANITY’ BY COUNTRY

In 2018, the prestigious Pew Research Centre carried out a survey in a number of countries concerning those people who designated themselves as Christian and then ascertained how many were practising and non-practising in respect of that religion. As can be seen from the table, in the Irish Republic, only 34% of the people said they were practising Christians. If one adds together ‘non-practising Christians’ and the ‘religiously unaffiliated’, one comes up with a total of 61%. The remaining 5% of people were either in the categories of ‘other religion’ or ‘don’t know’.



most significant datum comes from the referendum on an amendment which opened the way towards abortion on demand within a specified period. Two thirds of those voting approved the amendment and one third opposed. Nothing could be taken as more of a signal of rejection of a key position of the Roman

Catholic Church than this. It is this evidence, along with indications from other sources, which has led to the modern Irish State being correctly described as post-Catholic.

A reasonable interpretation of the data is that, in censuses, people tend to classify themselves according to the religion of the family into which they were born and perhaps also taking account of the schools that they were sent to. However, as the saying goes, the proof of the

pudding is in the eating, and the identification of ‘non-practising Christians’ would seem to be a fair pointer to what that could mean in everyday actuality. In other words, considerable suspicion arises as to how far ‘non-practising’ is to be construed as nonbelief. Although, it is accepted that nonbelief does not necessarily infer being a full-blown atheist or agnostic.

Nonetheless, one can justifiably take it that non-practising does reveal an actual decline in real Christianity. But of course that still leaves open questions about what people think in connection with the idea of some kind of supernatural and stories related thereto. It would be fascinating to learn the various thoughts of non-practising Christians in those regards. ▲

5. SOMETHING AND NOTHING

Daltún Ó Ceallaigh

Why is there something rather than nothing? That is the stirring question posed by, among others, the Catholic theologian Hans Küng. It is supposed to be the ultimate and challenging query put to Humanists. Obviously, it is regarded as pointing towards a divinity as the answer.

That there is something - all around us and including ourselves - is generally agreed on, apart from the few who look upon the world and beyond as an illusion. Most accept the noumenal-phenomenal distinction of Kant that the things we see are constructed in our minds following sensory encounter with reality. But they are thus still based on actuality.

So, in what way do we react to that perceived reality? To ask the question as to why it is all cosmically there is in fact tendentious. This ‘why’ is intended to imply intent or purpose.

The more legitimate questions that can be tabled are about ‘why is there something’ within the cosmos in particular instances at any juncture in time rather than nothing. Such a ‘why’ implies cause and effect, but it does not necessarily imply intent or purpose.

Although, it does prompt some to entertain the notion of a ‘first cause’ for the cosmos. But, if everything is held to have a cause and an effect, that logically means an endless regression of causes and, similarly, an endless succession of effects - in other words, infinity. The religious are accustomed to the idea of infinity; they believe there is a god who is, always was and always will be. Thus, by definition, their

god cannot be said to have a cause. Yet, while they therefore endorse supernatural infinity, they seem unable to conceive of natural infinity.

While there are certainly lots of first causes and final effects in life and in the cosmos, that does not mean that there is a first cause for the cosmos itself. In other words, there does not have to be a ‘why’ about the cosmos rather than simply acceptance of ‘what is, is’? Or put another way, the cosmos may be viewed as self-constituting. And we can then concentrate on the business of how matters function within that given.

The cosmic ‘why’ may thus be perceived as a superfluous question. To seek meaning where there is no inherent meaning is pointless. Is it not just presumptuous and somewhat fatuous to think there ought to be such a ‘why’? In fact, the question involves an alienation of where meaning actually lies - within ourselves, insofar as we create it. To imagine that meaning has to be originated externally to be authentic displays a lack of self-understanding and self-assuredness in the context of subscribing to a fanciful cosmological mystery.

So, Mr Küng, instead of there having been nothing and then something as Christians believe, what if there is never nothing and always something? Of course, one could still ask ‘why is *that* so?’. However, the answer is simple: “There is no such ‘why’; the cosmos (inclusive of our perhaps finite universe) just was, is and ever will be.” ♦



6.

NORWEGIAN GATHERING



In a partnership meeting, representatives from Humanist organizations in Romania, Poland, Norway, and the Czech Republic gathered in Oslo for a collaborative initiative to foster a stronger sense of unity and cooperation. The meeting, which took place on a weekend in October, was part of an ongoing collaboration that has been in place for several years, to share ideas and experiences among European humanist organizations.

The initiative is aligned with the international strategy adopted by the Norwegian Humanist Association, which encourages regional groups to collaborate with select European counterparts. This year's meeting was particularly significant as it included the Czech Republic's participation, expanding the cooperation network.

The planned program, developed during Teams meetings in June and a shorter session at the World Humanist Congress in Copenhagen in August, comprised four main elements. First on the agenda was a partnership meeting where all organizations shared comprehensive

reports on their activities in 2023 and outlined preliminary plans for 2024.

The second element featured an open meeting focused on the issue of modern superstition in Europe, with speakers representing each of the participating countries. This forum allowed for an exchange of perspectives and insights on a growing concern.

Adding a unique cultural touch to the weekend, participants had the opportunity to take part in one of the Norwegian Humanist Association's baby naming ceremonies at Oslo City Hall. This experience provided a glimpse into the diverse practices within the humanist community.

The fourth and final element involved a meeting dedicated to unravelling the secrets behind the success of the Norwegian Humanist Association over the past sixty years. Past Presidents, a former Secretary General, and a senior political advisor engaged in discussions, shedding light on the key factors contributing to the organization's remarkable growth.

7.

PREAMBLE TO CONSTITUTION

As reported in the last edition of this bulletin, a letter was sent by IFH to the political parties on 15 January 2024, viz. Aontú, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Green Party, Independent Ireland, Labour Party, People Before Profit, Sinn Féin, and So-

cial Democrats. Only one (Fine Gael) had the courtesy to even acknowledge the communication. As expected, there will not in fact be a question about the Preamble put to the people on 8 March, but, as already stated, the important

point is that the matter has been flagged and will continue to be followed up.

The Preamble therefore stands for the present as set out below.

PREAMBLE

In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and States must be referred,

We, the people of Éire,

Humbly acknowledging all our obligations to our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, Who sustained

our fathers through centuries of trial,

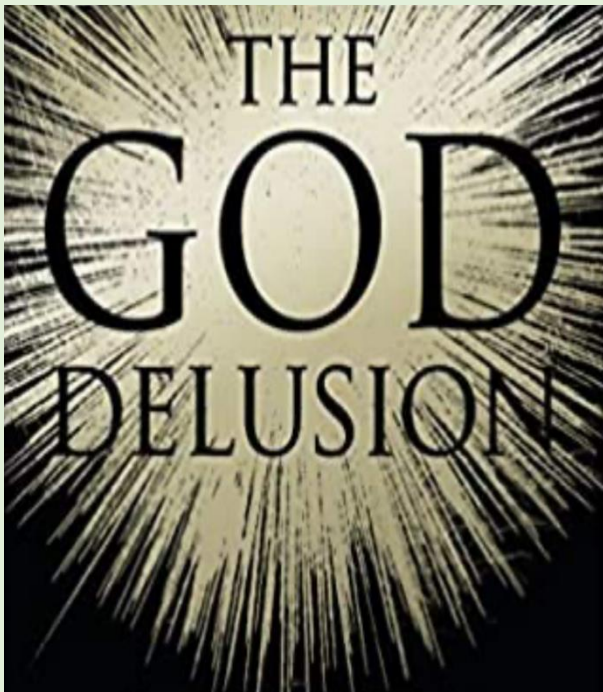
Gratefully remembering their heroic and unremitting struggle to regain the rightful independence of our Nation,

And seeking to promote the common good, with due observance of Prudence, Justice and Charity, so that the dignity and freedom of the individual may be assured, true social order attained, the unity of our country restored, and concord established with other nations,

Do hereby adopt, enact, and give to ourselves this Constitution. ▲

8.

THE DAWKINS SCALE OF ATHEISM



As with many facets of life, theism and atheism lie on a spectrum rather than a strict binary. Richard Dawkins popularized the idea of a spectrum of theistic probability in his book 'The God Delusion'. He suggested that there are actually seven positions which can be held regarding the existence/nonexistence of a god.:

1. STRONG THEIST

I do not question the existence of God. I know he exists.

2. DE-FACTO THEIST

I cannot know for certain but I strongly believe in God.

3. WEAK THEIST

I am very uncertain, but I am inclined to believe in God.

4. PURE AGNOSTIC

God's existence and nonexistence are equiprobable.

5. WEAK ATHEIST

I do not know whether or not God exists but I'm inclined to be sceptical.

6. DE FACTO ATHEIST

I cannot know for certain but I think God is very improbable.

7. STRONG ATHEIST

I am 100% sure that there is no God.

Strong theism is where the believer knows without a doubt there is a God.

De facto theism indicates that believers are not 100 percent sure that God exists, but consider it very probable and live their lives as though he does.

Weak theism conveys that a believer isn't wholly certain but leans toward belief in a deity.

Pure agnosticism refers to complete impartiality, where the likelihood of a god's existence is just as likely to be true or false.

Weak atheism is where an individual isn't certain whether God exists but is inclined toward scepticism.

De facto atheism covers a person is not wholly positive that God does not exist, but considers it very improbable and lives his/her life as though

there is no deity.

Strong atheism obtains where believers have a 100 percent certainty that there is no deity.

According to Dawkins, position 6 is more common than 7 among atheists. If you were to rate your beliefs on the Dawkins scale, where would you classify yourself? ■

HUMANIST MEETINGS

IN IRELAND

Belfast Freethinkers

Meeting quarterly, 8.00 p.m.
Holiday Inn, University St, Belfast
Contact: Roger 0777 858 3435
roger.kelly.2@ntlworld.com

North Down Humanists

1st Sunday of month, 11.00 a.m.
Coffee Cure, Bangor Castle
Contact: Andy Barr, 078 889 20063

North Dublin Humanist Community

3rd Monday of month
Contact: Alan Tuffery
atuffery@tcd.ie

South Dublin Humanist Community (SDHC)

Contact: 086 857 2005
Janielazar@gmail.com
Mailing List: [southdublinhumanistcommunity](http://southdublinhumanistcommunity.com)

Humanist Association of Ireland

Monthly meeting at rotating venues, mostly Dublin
Details of next meeting at humanism.ie
or HAI Facebook Page

Westport Humanists

2nd Sunday of month at 12.30 p.m.
Wyatt Hotel
Contact: Seamus O'Connell
087 245 3536/098 50802
shayoc37@gmail.com

Cork Humanists

Contact: Geraldine O'Neill 086 812 8892
<http://corkhumanists.weebly.com>

Humanists West (Galway)

1st Sun of designated month, qly, 11 a.m.
Knocknacarra Cmty Centre (H91 E7KW)
Zoom meetings for other months
Contact: Donalfinnegan@hotmail.com

Kilkenny Humanist Group

2nd Sunday of month, 11.00 a.m.
Langton House Hotel, Kilkenny,
Contact: Patrick Cassidy 089 463 0005
patrickacassidy@gmail.com

Mid-West Humanists (Limerick, Clare, Tipperary)

3rd Wednesday of month in Limerick
Contact: Peter 086 815 5102
info@midwesthumanists.com
Also check <https://midwesthumanists.com>

North West Humanists

2nd Tuesday of month
Radisson Hotel, Sligo
Contact: Gill Bell 087 295 8206
humanistgb@gmail.com

Waterford Humanists

3rd Monday of month, 7.30 p.m.
Phil Grimes Pub, John St, Waterford
Contact: Teresa graham22@gmail.com

THEY SAID



Why don't you arrange it at the beginning? The intervention of God in human affairs speaks of incompetence.

Carl Sagan

The world is my country and to do good is my religion.

Thomas Paine

Our conscious minds hunger for a permanent existence.

Edward O Wilson

Fear was the first thing on earth to make gods.

Lucretius

Sapere aude dare - Dare to know.

Horace

Religion is the 'affirmation that death is not real ...'

Bronislaw Malinowski

Regarding the universe: fine tuning is a fallacy of post hoc reasoning.

Stephen Pinker

Because of this disease of curiosity, men proceed to investigate the phenomena of nature [even though] this knowledge is of no value to them ...

St Augustine

After Jesus Christ we have no need of speculation, after the gospel no need of research.

Tertullian

Christians should 'restrain your own reasoning, and empty your mind of secular learning, in order to provide a mind swept clear for the reception of divine words.'

John Chrysostom

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