

# New Humanism Symposium

18.00 on Sun 12<sup>th</sup> – 12.30 on Wed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024, James Joyce Centre, Dublin, IRELAND

*We invite you to join this initiative, regardless of your background, expertise, or orientation  
The symposium/workshop will be experimental and reflective, allowing plenty of room for  
exchange of views, discussion, and deliberation. The Symposium will use accessible language  
in tune with the shared experience of the speakers and participants.*

## New Humanism

New humanism is a term that we arbitrarily define for the purpose of this symposium/workshop as humanism stripped of its sometimes-aggressive atheism. It does not necessarily imply a religious version of humanism. Rather it proposes sharing many aspects of a rich humanist heritage with those retaining a religious impulse even though they may have parted company with organised religion. Likewise, it may facilitate rediscovery of an equally rich (human) heritage embedded in the religious culture we are losing contact with. This includes areas as diverse as visual arts; ritual at times of celebration and need; music; a sense of community; and literature to mention but a few. After all, Seamus Heaney fondly remembered ‘the radiance of his Catholic boyhood’ although he was not a believer in later life. And he noted that ‘the older I get the more I remember the benediction of it all’.

## Background

How can we make the world a better place for all? More and more people feel lost in their personal and spiritual lives. In the search for meaning, recognition, and self-affirmation, they often feel overburdened and exhausted. Psychological distress and depression are commonplace. The available belief systems, including those from religions, do not cope well with the complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity of lives embedded in twenty first century technology.

The scientific framework we inhabit, and its humanist support culture fail to resolve questions involved and can exacerbate them. Problems with social media, dietary advice, emerging vaccination crises and global warming illustrate this at day-to-day level. There is much more at other levels not yet shared by the common imagination. We cannot save the planet, human society, or help make life tolerable and meaningful for the individual without addressing the complexity, and uncertainties involved and organising our co-existence in a way that is adequate to the problem. Our point of departure is that a New Inclusive Humanism open to the heritage of the sciences, the humanities, the arts, and religions is likely to help. The challenge is how?

## Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May: Session 1

### Welcome reception and Preface to the Symposium

- 6.00 – 7.00 pm      Reception/Bufferet  
Introduction to Joyce and The James Joyce Centre.  
**Darina Gallagher**, Director, James Joyce Centre
- 7.00 – 8.00 pm      Preface to the Symposium.  
**Professor Philip McDonagh**, Director, Centre for Religion,  
Human Values, and International Relations & former Irish  
Ambassador
- Recital of Joyce songs  
**Darina Gallagher & Sinead Murphy**



## Mon 13<sup>th</sup> May: Session 2

- 9.00 Coffee and Registration
- Welcome, and Opening Presentations (Moderator)**
- 9.30 Welcome/ Scene Setting Prof Jim Malone and Gaston Meskens
- 10.00 Philosophy as a way of life – including 10 Universal Laws that can serve Humanity. Prof Camillus Power, Dublin, IE
- 10.40 Discussion
- 11.00 The Person as the Peephole of Humanity  
Mark Patrick Hederman, Glenstal Abbey, Limerick, IE
- 11.40 Discussion of paper followed by general discussion
- 12.15 Lunch**

## Session 3

### **Imagining Futures: Sources, Dilemmas and Religious/Cultural Heritage 1**

- 1.45 Bahá'í: Humanism, Cosmopolitanism and Optimism in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. (25 min presentation; 15 min discussion)  
Prof Friedo Zolzer, , České Budějovice, CZ
- 2.25 Telling stories, doing rituals, and making pilgrimage are not just about the Truth. (25 min presentation; 15 min discussion)  
Michael Harding, Cavan and Leitrim, IE
- 3.05 Break for Tea/Coffee**
- 3.40 Humanism Contemplates the Buddha - A good fit?  
(25 min presentation; 15 min discussion)  
Dr Noirin Sheahan, Wales., UK.  
Noirin's talk will be read by Therese Cafferty, IE
- 4.20 An Uncertain Agnosticism and The Big Bang: What Science can/cannot do for the Atheist cause.  
(25 min presentation; 15 min discussion)  
Gaston Meskens, Antwerp, BE
- 5.00 General Discussion of sessions 2 and 3**
- 5.30 Close
- 6.30 Dinner (subsidised contribution €20)**

## Tue 14<sup>th</sup> May: Session 4

### **Global Secular Ethics Framework in Medicine and Science**

- 9.00 Global ethics frameworks in Scientific and Medical Practices  
Prof Friedo Zolzer, České Budějovice, CZ
- 9.40 Discussion
- 10.00 Global Ethics for the Personal, Big Systems and living with Complexity  
Gaston Meskens, Antwerp, BE
- 10.30 Discussion of paper followed by discussion of session
- 11.00 Coffee**
- 11.30 Towards a Shared Functional Ethics: Learning from a Concordance of Science, Medicine, Art, and Faith, towards a New Humanism  
Prof Ehsan Samei, USA
- 12.10 Discussion followed by discussion of session
- 12.30 Lunch**

## Session 5

### **Imagining Futures: Sources, Dilemmas and Religious/Cultural Heritage 2**

- 1.45 (Placeholder) Mysticism, The English Mystics and Humanism  
(25 min presentation; 15 min discussion)  
Dr Louise Nelstrop, UK
- 2.25 What's it all about: Can Humanism help?  
(25 min presentation; 15 min discussion)  
Janie Lazar, Dublin, IE
- 3.05 Break for Tea or Coffee**
- 3.40 Getting into their Habits: knowing, growing, thinking, being(s)  
(25 min presentation; 15 min discussion)  
Dr Harri Hudspith, Barcelona, ES
- 4.20 Literature, arts, lived spiritualities, a challenge to the Christian Redemption Narrative. Some final words. (35 min; 15 min)  
Prof Jim Malone, Dublin, IE
- 5.10 Session Discussion and Discussion of Sessions 1 – 5.
- 5.30 Main Symposium Closes**

## Wed 15<sup>th</sup> May: Session 6

### Further Meeting to consider possible initiatives

#### (Moderator & Rapporteur TBA)

9.30 Round Table review and discussion by those who can stay.

Among others, questions to be addressed include:

- What important topics have we missed?
- Is it worth considering further meetings or symposia?
- If so, what type and where?
- Are there other initiatives, within the competence and capacities of the group, that would be worth considering?

Survivors will draft conclusions and identify future actions, if any.

Further questions will be generated during the symposium.

12.00 Close



## Speaker/Organising Committee Short Bio Notes

**Therese Caherty** is a freelance writer and editor. She has worked in print media for three decades and has consistently engaged in civic projects with organisations such as the National Union of Journalists, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas and Pavee Point. She is an election observer for Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs. She was co-chair of the Mary Mulvihill Award for excellence in science communication. She co-founded and chaired the Irish Women Workers Commemorative Committee and the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution. She co-authored the recently published *Road to Repeal*, a photobook that recounts 50 years of gender equality activism in Ireland. Therese will read Dr Noirin Sheahan's paper.

**Darina Gallagher** is Director of the James Joyce Centre, Dublin. With her colleague Sinead Murphy, Darina presents a musical extravaganza of songs drawn from the life and works of James Joyce. They guide us through the theatrical soundscape of Joyce's Dublin, from parlour song and music hall to bawdy ballads and folksong. Their work has toured internationally to critical acclaim in Boston, New York, Budapest, Prague, San Sebastian, Milan, Trieste and Moscow and has been described as 'A Joycean feast of music hall memories...delightful' and 'a rare insight into the contemporary popular music that haunted James Joyce's imagination'. (Under review by contributor)

**Michael Harding** was ordained a Catholic priest in 1981 and retired from ministry in 1985. In the mid-nineties he became a student of the Panchen Otrul Rinpoche, a Tibetan lama living in Ireland. He has written 3 novels, numerous plays for the Abbey Theatre, and is the author of a hugely successful 8 volumes of memoir – "a creative chronicle of ordinary life in Ireland." A regular columnist with the Irish Times since 2006, he is a member of Aosdana and is currently hosting a weekly podcast on faith and wellness – The michael harding podcast on patreon.com.

**Fran Hegarty** is a Clinical Engineer with extensive experience in applying technology at the point of care in Hospitals. His research interests include Healthcare Technology Management, Clinical Measurement & Informatics, and Art in Health. Fran is also a musician and composer and is currently studying for an MPhil in Music and Media Technology.

**Mark Patrick Hederman** is a Benedictine monk and former Abbot of Glenstal Abbey in Limerick. Formerly headmaster of their school, he has lectured in philosophy, theology and literature in Ireland, Nigeria, and the USA. A founding editor of the cultural journal *The Crane Bag*, he is the author of numerous books including *Anchoring the altar*; *The Haunted Inkwell: Art and Our Future*; *Underground Cathedrals*; *Kissing the Dark: Connecting with the Unconscious*; *Tarot: Talisman or Taboo? – Reading the World as Symbol*; *The Opal and the Pearl*; *Living the Mystery: What Lies Between Science and Religion*; *Crimson and Gold – Life as a Limerick*. He is a popular speaker and will address personalist philosophy using Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber as the major lynch pins. But as we have come to expect, he will make it as accessible and enjoyable as possible.

**Dr Harri Hudspith** is an artist-researcher whose practice explores the relationship between historical Christian thought and our conceptions of language, gender, and the mind/body. Their PhD (University of Bristol) explored how an emulative, embodied, and practice-led approach could develop a closer understanding of the psychological role of language, word, and image in the mysticism of St Teresa of Avila. In 2024 they will take up a Javier and Marta Villavecchia

Fellowship at the Haas Library – Centre for Aesthetics, Religion, and Contemporary Culture at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) with a project which visually explores conceptions of knowing as growing in pre-modern female mysticisms.

**Janie Lazar** initially trained in London as a French teacher, fell into advertising for a time, and moved to Dublin in 1994, where she has lived since. She is self-employed, drawing on accumulated skills as strategist, celebrant, and specialist speaker coach. Her work is generally purposeful and rich in communication/ connection/ collaboration, combined with inclusion and a strong sense of social justice. She has been, at various times, a founder/founding member/chair of voluntary/ advocacy endeavours like TEDx Dun Laoghaire and End of Life Ireland. Her role in the latter attracted public attention when she attended all the sittings of the inter party Dail Committee charged with reporting on the subject. Janie comes from a Jewish background with Catholic and Anglican influences, but she is no longer affiliated with these, though she greatly respects the individual's religious sensibilities. She makes sure that she can make time to take the time for what matters most.

**Timothy Lyne** has been a Trustee and Secretary of the Robert Boyle Foundation since its establishment almost thirty years ago. He contributed significantly to the establishment and shaping of the foundation. He was Chief Executive, and previously Finance Officer of the Federated Dublin Voluntary Hospitals (FDVH). Later he was Director of Technical Services, Buildings, and Education at Tallaght University Hospital.

**Prof Jim Malone** is Robert Boyle Professor (Emeritus) of Medical Physics and was Dean of the School of Medicine at Trinity College/ St James's Hospital, Dublin. He works regularly with various UN and EU organisations, including WHO, the IAEA. He has a broad interest in the humanities, directed two Merriman Summer Schools, and was closely involved with the Robert Boyle Summer School. He has numerous publications in the scientific and medical literature but is particularly proud of three recent books: *Ethics for Radiation Protection in Medicine*; *Mystery and the Culture of Science*; and a recent almost true memoir: *Tales from the Ivory Tower*, published by Liffey Press.

**Prof Philip McDonagh** is Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Humanities at Dublin City University and Director of the Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations. As a diplomat, he was involved in the Northern Ireland peace process in the build-up to the Good Friday Agreement (as Political Counsellor and deputy Head of Mission in London) and served as ambassador to India, the Holy See, Finland, and Russia and as Permanent Representative to the OSCE. Philip is co-author of *On the Significance of Religion for Global Diplomacy* (Routledge, 2021) and many articles on the place of religion and literature in the public sphere. Philip's volumes of poetry include *The Song the Oriole Sang* (Dedalus Press, Dublin, 2010) and *Gondla, or the Salvation of the Wolves* (Arlen House, 2016), an adaptation of Nikolay Gumilev's verse drama.

**Gaston Meskens** Gaston Meskens is a theoretical physicist with over 15 years experience of research related to sustainable development, energy, climate change and radioactive waste management. He works part-time with the Centre for Ethics and Value Inquiry of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of the University of Ghent and with the Science and Technology Studies group of the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre SCK•CEN. His research focusses on a human rights perspective on intellectual capacity building in the interest of global sustainable development governance. At SCK•CEN, he co-founded the Programme of Integration of Social Aspects into Nuclear Research in 1999. The programme takes nuclear technology as a case to critically study

the complexity of risk-inherent technology assessment from the perspective of social justice and sustainable development. Recently, he has been a key contributor on the ethics framework for radiation protection for ICRP. At SCK•CEN, he works as researcher, writer, lecturer, and mediator of dialogue on ethics in relation to science and technology. Gaston is also a practicing artist. (Under review by contributor)

**Sinead Murphy** with her colleague, Darina Gallagher, Sinead presents a musical extravaganza of songs drawn from the life and works of James Joyce. They guide us through the theatrical soundscape of Joyce's Dublin, from parlour song and music hall to bawdy ballads and folksong. Their work has toured internationally to critical acclaim in Boston, New York, Budapest, Prague, San Sebastian, Milan, Trieste, and Moscow and has been described as 'A Joycean feast of music hall memories...delightful' and 'a rare insight into the contemporary popular music that haunted James Joyce's imagination'. (Under review)

**Dr Louise Nelstrop** is founder and co-convenor of the Mystical Theology Network, which organises annual conferences around the world on mysticism. She is Director of Studies at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge and specializes in the English mystics. She has recently completed a monograph, *Deification and Sacred Eloquence: Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich*. In addition, she co-authored *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives*, and is/has co-editing a number of volumes for the Routledge Series, Contemporary Theological Explorations in Mysticism. She also recently co-directed a multi-award-winning short film on mysticism and love, 'Complete Surrender', which followed five internationally renowned artists in their engagements with Marguerite Porete and Hadewijch. (Under review by contributor)

**Prof Camillus Power** is a Consultant in Anaesthesia, Critical Care and Pain Medicine at Tallaght University Hospital, Dublin, and Clinical Professor at Trinity College School of Medicine. He founded the Ulysses Multidisciplinary Pain Management Programme in 2002 which offers holistic care to patients in chronic pain. He served as the first elected Dean of the Faculty of Pain Medicine, CAI (2009-2012), and currently serves since 2017 as National Director of Training at the College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland CAI.

He has studied practical philosophy with specific focus on Advaita (nondualism), Meditation and Plato at the School of Philosophy and Economic Science (SPES) which is an educational charity. He served on the Board of the John Scottus School 2009-2018, a project of SPES which seeks to bring principles of practical philosophy into primary and secondary education. He supports the Holistic Health Centre in Athens on yoga, meditation and the applications of Ayurveda to modern medicine. He has an enduring interest in wider philosophical questions in general as well as in their medical ramifications and is a popular speaker on related themes.

**Prof Ehsan Samei** is an imaging scientist and the Reed and Martha Rice Distinguished Professor and Chief Clinical Physicist at Duke University and the director of two national centres of biomedical research in the US. Author of over 360 referred papers and 4 books, he aims to bridge the gap between scientific scholarship and clinical practice focused on smart use of AI, and *in vitro*, *in vivo*, and *in silico* metrologies in medicine. Mentored over 150 graduate students and junior scientists, he advocates for translational medical science, where the merits of innovations are measured not in terms of publications alone but patient-informed practice of science for clinical outcome. He is a fellow of five professional societies, and the recipient of multiple awards including the 2022 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Award by the International Organization of Medical Physics. Ehsan is also an accomplished musician.



**Dr Nóirín Sheahan** practices and teaches the Dhamma at Satipanya, the Buddhist Meditation Centre in Wales led by Bhante Bodhidharma. In 2011, she was ordained in the Burmese nun's tradition. Since taking up residence at Satipanya, she has taken lay ordination. Prior to her life with the Buddhist community, Noirin was awarded MSc and PhD degrees in Medical Physics and was a Principal Physicist in St James's Hospital/ Senior Lecturer in Trinity College Dublin. She also taught mindfulness to various hospital groups. In July 2013 Noirin underwent surgery for larynx cancer and in consequence lost her voice. Her talk at the symposium will be read by her friend Therese Caherty.

**Prof Friedo Zölzer** is professor at the Institute of Radiology, Toxicology and Civil Protection at the University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, Czech Republic. He is a radiobiologist with a strong interest in ethics and has published and lectured regularly in the area. He has contributed to the development of the new approach to ethics of radiation protection that is emerging in the international organisations (e.g. ICRP, IRPA, IAEA, WHO, EC). He has participated in related ICRP/EC initiatives/projects and has organised a highly influential biennial series of conferences on ethics and environmental health. A major source of motivation is his commitment to the Bahá'í Faith, which he adopted in his early youth. His involvement with the community has given him opportunities to contribute to interfaith dialogue, discourses between science and religion, and discussions on current societal issues.

## Organising Committee

Prof Jim Malone (Dublin, IE)

Gaston Meskens (Antwerp, BE)

Prof Friedo Zolzer (Budweis, CZ)

Fran Hegarty (Dublin, IE)

Tim Lyne (Dublin, IE)

Darina Gallagher (Dublin, IE)

## Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the trustees of the Robert Boyle Foundation for their support of this initiative. We particularly acknowledge the support of the late Professor J Kieran Taaffe, founder chairman of the Robert Boyle Foundation whose support for the proposal for this event was crucial.

# Registration

Registration and further information at: [www.NewHumanism24.com](http://www.NewHumanism24.com)

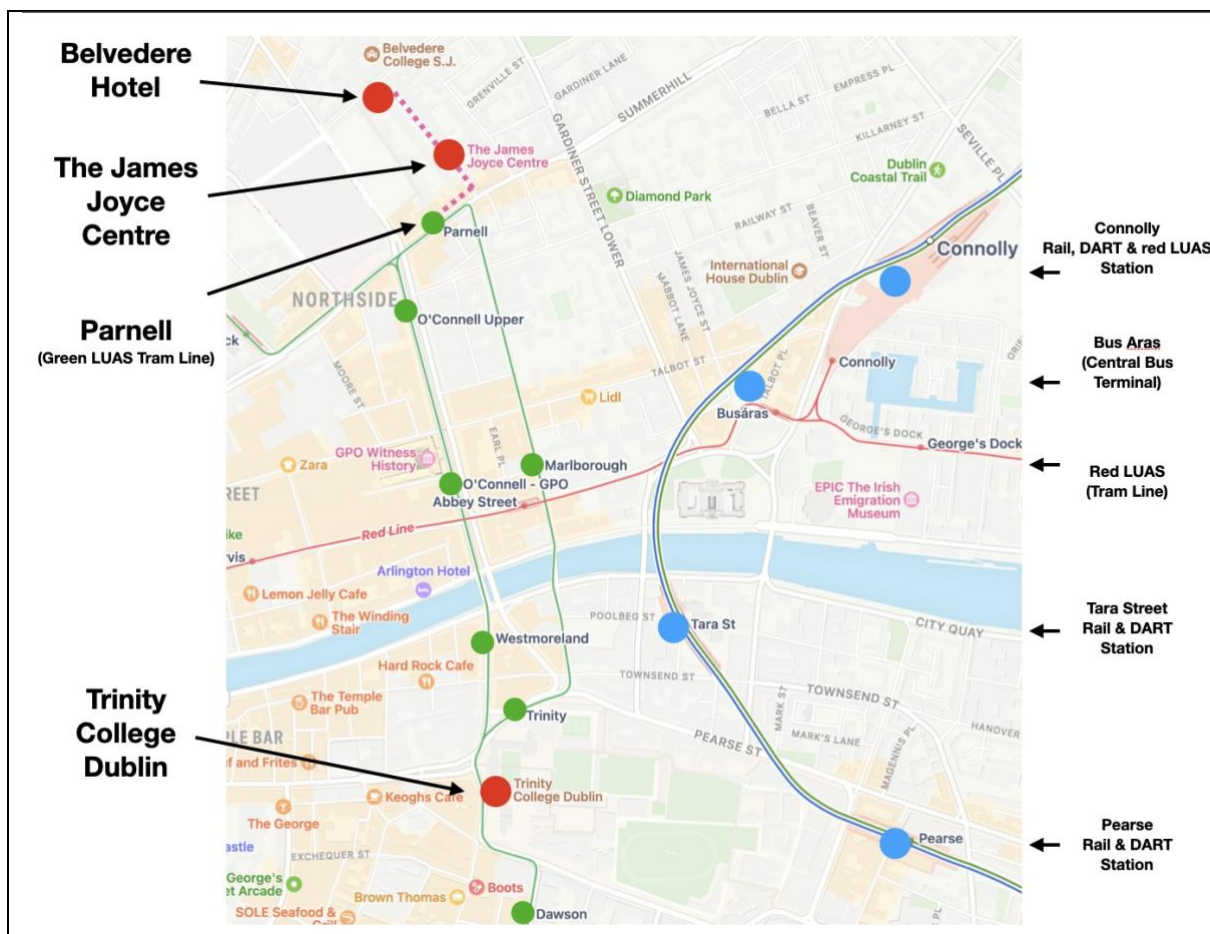
Contact re: registration at: [humanismsymposium@conferencepartners.com](mailto:humanismsymposium@conferencepartners.com)

Registration Fee €120.00 for all events and catering except the dinner on Monday evening. An additional (subsidised) €20 is charged for the dinner. It can be paid at registration or at the symposium. Arrangements may be made to waive the fee for those whose circumstances might warrant it.

The venue is not wheelchair accessible.

Should you wish to explore accessibility, registration charges or other issues, please contact the organisers at [jifmal@gmail.com](mailto:jifmal@gmail.com)

Participants should arrange their own accommodation.



**Getting to the James Joyce Centre from the Belvedere Hotel**

When you leave the Hotel turn right and right again onto North Great George's Street. The Joyce Centre is No 35 on your left hand side as you walk down towards Parnell Street

**Getting to the James Joyce Centre on the Tram**

In Dublin the tram system is called LUAS.

The James Joyce Centre is one minutes walk from the Parnell LUAS tram stop on the Green line.

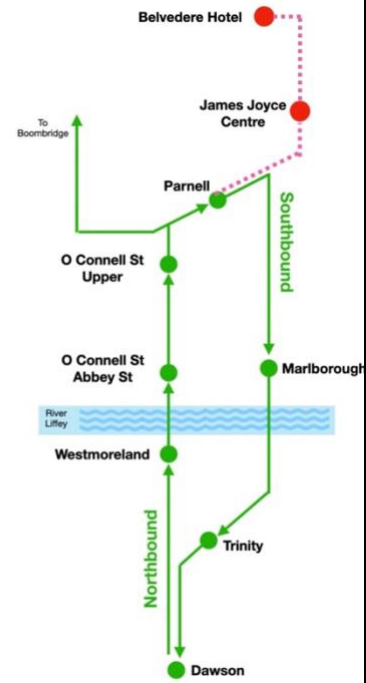
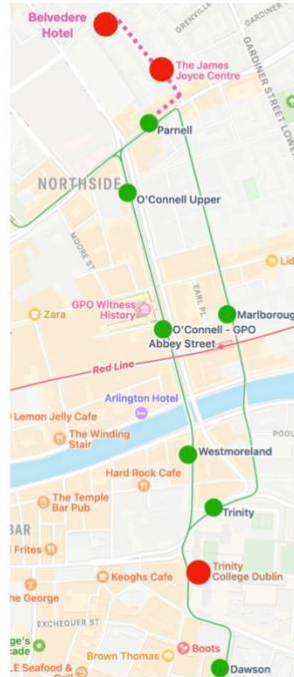
From the city centre or Trinity take a Northbound LUAS tram from:  
 Dawson  
 Westmoreland  
 O'Connell St. / Abbey St.

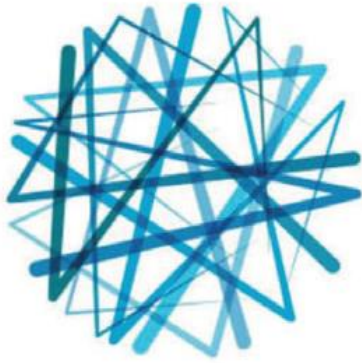
Be sure to take a LUAS tram going to Parnell (not Boombridge).

**Going south from the James Joyce Centre or Belvedere Hotel**

All trams that depart from the Parnell LUAS tram stop go south to both Trinity College and Dawson Southside City Centre stops.

A ticket for the LUAS tram must be bought at the stop before you get on the LUAS tram, unless you have a prepaid card option.

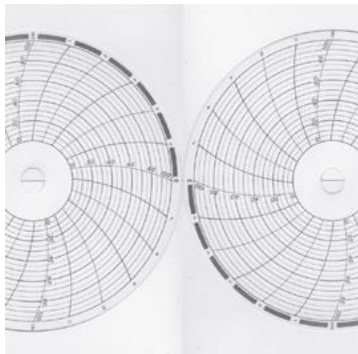




## Robert Boyle Foundation (Dublin)

Robert Boyle (1627-1691) is known as the father of chemistry and the son of the Earl of Cork. However, he was much more and contributed substantially to medicine, physics, the life sciences, philosophy, theology, and in many respects was the founder of the experimental method as we now know it. He was deeply religious and lived in exemplary, if somewhat stoic Anglican life. Like Newton he was fascinated by alchemy and sorcery and not at all at ease with the positioning of the boundary to empirical enquiry in these sensitive areas. His personal spirituality and its relationship with his science is also beginning to receive attention.

The purpose of this initiative includes celebrating Boyle's life and work, creating cultural spaces for science, engineering, medicine and religion in society, particularly in the Irish community, that now earns its living for the greater part in the former and has become estranged from the latter.



## New Humanism Project (Antwerp)

The adagio that we cannot solve our societal problems with the same methods that (facilitate to) create them is well known. The vision that inspiration and motivation for 'new methods' need to come from deeper thinking about who we are as individuals and groups, and about how to deliberate these problems and live together is less popular. This vision is the point of departure of the New Humanism project, and it thereby deliberately distinguishes the political from the social context. The idea is that, for the political, in order to tackle societal problems such as climate change, poverty and the various forms of social oppression, we first need to rethink and reform the formal methods we use to make sense of our coexistence, namely the methods of education, scientific research and democracy. Second, but not least, there is an urgent need to reconsider the modern conformist patterns aimed to 'order' our social relationships, as they alienate the human being from what love can and should be: a compassionate love for the other, based on a reflexive self-care, while accepting the ethics and aesthetics of ambiguity of that connectedness.

**Go to [www.newhumanism.org](http://www.newhumanism.org) to read a general introduction to the why and how, for information on upcoming and past activities and to join the dialogue.**