



The Royal Society of New South Wales

"for the encouragement of studies and investigations in Science Art Literature and Philosophy"

1287th ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2020 AT 6.30PM

By ZOOM Webinar

AGENDA

1. **WELCOME** – President, Emeritus Professor Ian Sloan AO FRSN
 - 1.1 **Acknowledgement of country**
 - 1.2 **Diversity and Inclusion statement**
 - 1.3 **Minutes of the 1286th Ordinary General Meeting held on 2 September 2020**
2. **CONFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

As no valid objection was lodged within two weeks following the 1286th Ordinary General Meeting, the election of the following new Fellows took effect from the date of that meeting held on 2 September. Certificates will be presented at the first opportunity at a face-to-face meeting.

2.1 **Fellows**

Dr Noel Geoffrey Barton
Professor Dane Robert McCamey
Dr Graeme Laurence Cohen
Emeritus Professor Annabelle Duncan
Adjunct Professor Nick Lomb
Professor John Harold Loxton
Professor Huw Price
Professor Peter John Radoll
Dr Tristan Andrew Reekie
Ms Belinda Robinson
The Hon Arthur Sinodinos
Professor David Iain Warton

3. **ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR MEMBERSHIP**

The Fellows and Members Assessment Committee is scheduled to meet on 13 October. Nominations emanating from that meeting will be considered at the Ordinary General Meeting scheduled for 11 November.

4 REPORT FROM COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

Council met on 23 September. The President wishes to bring to members' attention the following matters.

4.1 Bicentennial year

Council has agreed that the Society's bicentenary will be celebrated from June 2021 to June 2022 rather than in the 2021 calendar year. It is hoped that the change of date will allow unrestricted face-to-face events.

4.2 Revised Rules

Council has undertaken a major revision of the Society's current Rules and By-laws in order to modernise them. This major exercise was greatly assisted by The Hon John Dowd FRSN, a former NSW Attorney-General. Under the current Rules and By-laws, the revised Rules require the approval of members. This approval will be sought from members using electronic voting (as was done for elections this year's AGM) in time for the result to be announced at the November OGM.

4.3 Strategic planning

The draft strategic plan 2021 – 2023 is currently being considered by Branches and Council committees before going to the November meeting of Council for approval.

4.4 Criteria for membership

Council has decided not to change the current criteria for membership.

4.5 Membership fees

Council has decided that the 2021 membership fees will remain the same as this year.

5 THIS EVENING'S PRESENTATION

“Where now for the study of time?”

**Professor Huw Price, Bertrand Russell Professor of Philosophy
University of Cambridge**

For this evening's lecture, Huw Price will be joined by two current co-Directors of the University of Sydney's Centre for Time, Associate Professor Kristie Miller and Professor Alex Holcombe, to ask: *Where now for the study of time?*

Huw Price is Bertrand Russell Professor of Philosophy and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. He is Academic Director of the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence, and was co-founder with Martin Rees and Jaan Tallinn of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk. In 2019 he joined the inaugural Board of the Ada Lovelace Institute, and became the UK Director of the new China-UK Research Centre for AI Ethics and Governance. Before moving to Cambridge he was ARC Federation Fellow and Challis Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney, where he was founding Director of the Centre for Time.

He is a Fellow of the British Academy, a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and a Past President of the Australasian Association of Philosophy. He was consulting editor for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy from 1995–2006, and is an associate editor of The Australasian Journal of Philosophy and on the

editorial boards of Contemporary Pragmatism, Logic and Philosophy of Science, the Routledge International Library of Philosophy, and the European Journal for Philosophy of Science.

The scientific world has just marked the centenary of Sir Arthur Eddington's confirmation of Einstein's prediction of the bending of light by gravity. This work, based on observations during a solar eclipse in 1919, made Eddington a household name. He became one of the great science communicators of his generation. When he died in 1944, TIME magazine said that the world had lost 'one of mankind's most reassuring cosmic thinkers'.

One of Eddington's favourite cosmic subjects was Time's Arrow, a term he himself introduced to the literature in his 1927 book, *The Nature of the Physical World*. Eddington thought that there is something essential about time that physics is liable to neglect: the fact that it "goes on", as he often puts it.

Despite the best efforts of philosophers to pour cold water on this idea, similar claims are still made today, in physics as well as in philosophy. In the lecture that begins this presentation, Huw Price argues all sides in these debates can profit by going back to Eddington. Eddington appreciates some of the pitfalls of these claims with greater clarity than their contemporary proponents, and also issues a challenge to rival views that deserves to be better known.

Kristie Miller will talk about: One compelling account of time is that time is a fourth dimension similar to, but not the same as, the three spatial dimensions. On this view, each of us is extended along this temporal dimension. So rather than its being the case that we move through time, by being first here, and then there, instead we are really one long elongated worm that is stretched out through time. Often though, this is not how we conceptualise time, nor is it how we experience time, or ourselves in time. Regardless of what time is really like, the ways that people think about, and experience, time, have an impact on how they understand their lives. Some of our most recent research focuses on the ways in which *what* we want, and *where* we want it, are affected by the ways that we think about and engage with the temporal dimension. In a nutshell, one hypothesis is that the way we think about time leads us to have what seem to be irrational preferences: we prefer that we experience *more* suffering, rather than less suffering, as long as that suffering is located in our past, rather than our future.

Alex Holcombe will explain how scientific psychology research has revealed a number of illusions associated with our experience of time, and hopefully demonstrate a few of them, screen sharing and video link permitting. These illusory phenomena, together with theoretical considerations regarding what perception is for, cast doubt on the validity of inferences about the nature of reality from our experience.

6 VOTE OF THANKS AND CLOSE