

Open letter to Tony Hall, BBC Director-General from Patrons of *Humanists UK* on 13 November 2018:

Dear Lord Hall,

It's time for the BBC to open its flagship reflective slot, *Thought for the Day*, to humanists.

Religion doesn't hold a monopoly on ethical worldviews. There is another mainstream tradition, as old as religion, that has much to say on the ethical issues of our time – and that's humanism.

Humanists are people who shape their own lives in the here and now, because they believe it's the only life we have. They make sense of the world through logic, reason, and evidence, and always seek to treat others with warmth, understanding and respect.

Over half the British population do not belong to any religion and around a quarter have a humanist worldview. By barring humanists from *Thought for the Day*, the BBC is blatantly failing its remit to reflect the diversity of beliefs of its audience and wider population, and its legal duty to treat non-religious and religious beliefs equally.

To argue, as the BBC does, that this exclusion is fine because non-religious views are sufficiently represented across 'the whole of the BBC's output', is to miss the point. To many, the exclusion of humanists from *Thought for the Day* sends a very clear message that humanists do not have as much to contribute as religious people to one of the BBC's most high-profile ethical slots. This is simply incorrect.

But equally importantly, religious and non-religious beliefs have always been part of the same conversation on how to live, how to interpret events, and how to act ethically. They have evolved together, sharing ideas and influencing each other. It's now time to bring religion back into conversation with other worldviews so that we can all engage with and talk to each other on a level playing field.

It's time to allow humanists on *Thought for the Day*.

Yours sincerely,

Julian Baggini
Piers Bizony
Simon Blackburn
Nick Brown MP
Ed Byrne
Richard Dalton
Janet Ellis
Warren Ellis
Tristan Garel-Jones
Francis Graham-Smith

David Hand
John Harris
Dr Alan Haworth
Baron Hughes of Woodside
Julian Huppert
Virginia Ironside
Michael Irwin
Christian Jessen
Shappi Khorsandi
Zoe Margolis
Eddie Marsan
Tim McGary
Kate Pickett
Alice Roberts
Michael Rubenstein
Ariane Sherine
Simon Singh
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