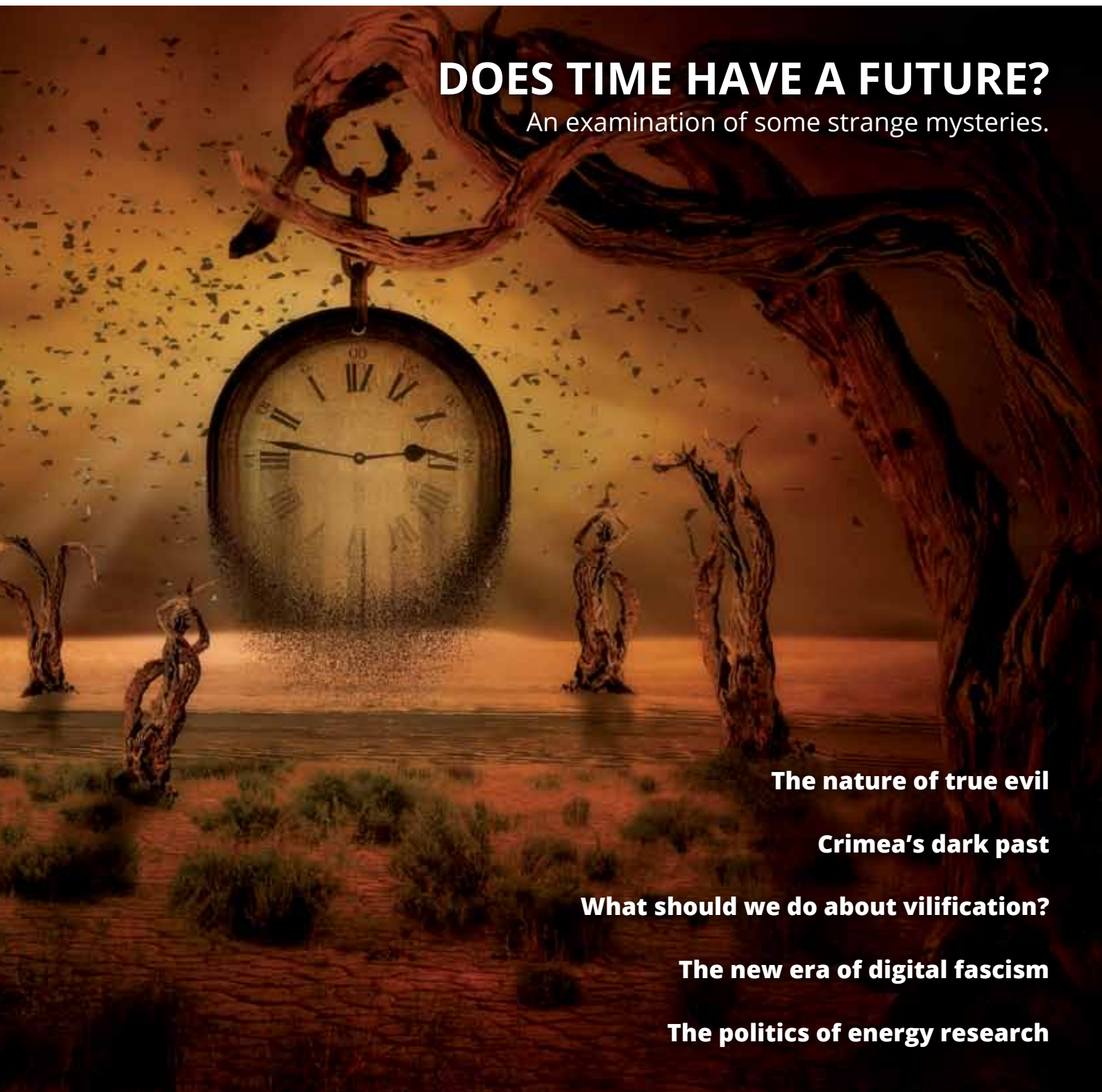


Australian **Rationalist**
Journal of the Rationalist Society of Australia



DOES TIME HAVE A FUTURE?

An examination of some strange mysteries.

The nature of true evil

Crimea's dark past

What should we do about vilification?

The new era of digital fascism

The politics of energy research

ISSN 1036-8191



9 771036 819003

www.rationalist.com.au



**Rationalist
Society of
Australia**

Contributors

Jillian de Araugo has an honours degree in chemistry and a PhD in organisational leadership. She completed an extensive career as an educational leader before focusing on promotion of science.

Neil Bechervaise is a writer, educator and academic. He works widely as a change consultant, training developer and executive mentor.

Dr Colin Benjamin is director general of Life Be In It. He is a futurist and an expert on strategy.

Kevin Childs was a senior writer at *The Age*, where he spent a quarter of a century. A former editor of *Australian Rationalist* from 2002-2011 he is working on a book on Aboriginal warriors who resisted the invasion.

Leo D'Angelo-Fisher is a business journalist, author and commentator, having worked for *BRW*, *The Australian Financial Review* and *The Bulletin*. He is author of *Rethink: The Story of Edward de Bono in Australia*.

Meredith Doig is the president of the RSA, and has a PhD in organizational design.

Martin Hirst is associate professor at the Centre for Citizenship & Globalisation in Deakin University's School of Communication & Creative Arts.

Peter Mares is contributing editor to Inside Story (inside.org.au) and an adjunct fellow at the Swinburne Institute of Social Research. He was formerly a journalist with ABC's Radio National.

Dr Kristie Miller is senior ARC Research Fellow at the University of Sydney's School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry and The Centre for Time.

Alan Sparx is a scientist.

Paul Tonson has a study background in maths and economics in New Zealand. His postgraduate studies centred around the figures of Abraham and Lot, as presented in the Bible, the Talmud and the Qur'an, underlying his commitment to interfaith endeavours.

Jeroen Wijnendaele is a doctoral fellow at the University of Cork.

Correction: In the Autumn 2014 edition of *The Rationalist*, on the contributor's page James Fodor was incorrectly referred to as Jerry Fodor.

Contents

The evolution of Evolution Darwinism's continual adaptation <i>By Colin Benjamin</i>	5
Facebook Science A story of superficiality <i>By Jillian de Araugo and Neil Bechervaise</i>	6
From the president <i>By Meredith Doig</i>	7
Letters	8
News Super bugs, spies get angry and an absurd copyright dispute	9
The dark past of the Crimea An historical look at a troubled region <i>By Jeroen Wijnendaele</i>	10-11
Hanna Arendt and the question of evil A consideration of the banality of the Nazis <i>By Peter Mares</i>	12-14
Poem Alas! This is not what I thought life was <i>By Percy Bysshe Shelley</i>	15
Of clocks, work and mysteries An examination of modern ideas of time <i>By Kristie Miller and Meredith Doig</i>	16-21
Perspectives – do we need to change the vilification laws? Martin Hirst and Robert Stephens consider the question	22-26
Depression and the rational A story of a life long battle <i>By Leo D'Angelo-Fisher</i>	28-29
What is the relationship between ethics and religion? A consideration of belief and rationality <i>By Paul Tonson</i>	30-34

Contents cont.

What is really philosophically necessary? An analysis of the state of metaphysics <i>By Massimo Pigliucci</i>	35-36
Factions in fusion and fission The dubious politics of energy research <i>By Alan Sparx</i>	37-39
Governments are watching you How Edward Snowden has exposed a new fascism	40-41
Reviews Kevin Childs on a slice of World War 2 history and Lisa Techera on the best Australian science writing of 2013	42-44
From the Archive	47

The Rationalist Society of Australia has published a journal almost continuously since the 1920s, interrupted only by war, internecine strife and lack of funds. The ideas and opinions published in these pages do not necessarily represent the views of the RSA, its Committee or the Editor. Rather, we aim to publish material that furthers the RSA's mission to inform, to educate and generally to promote thoughtful and dispassionate analysis of issues of public contention. We publish regular articles on Philosophy, Ethics & Religion, Science & Technology, and Law & Politics. We will also consider humour, poetry, short fiction and cartoons; excerpts from forthcoming or just released books; and previously published material if it has appeared recently in non-competing, low circulation periodicals. In addition to being published in hard copy, the Australian Rationalist is also published online, and the RSA has formal publishing arrangements with RMIT University's online website Informit. Successful contributors will be asked to agree to certain 'groundrules' which protect both parties regarding copyright. Articles should be submitted in final draft form in a recent version of Microsoft Word. As we are responsible for the material published, we retain the right to edit or abridge submitted material prior to publication. The preferred length for feature articles is 1800 or 2700 words. Shorter articles may be 900 words. Please email the Editor (editor@rationalist.com.au) for details.

Editor

David James

Creative Director

Leonardo Carbonara

Layout Design

Mattia Scaranto

Inquiriesinfo@rationalist.com.au**President**PO Box 1312
Hawksburn 3142
Victoria, Australia.Letters: editor@rationalist.com.auCopyright restrictions apply unless
otherwise stated. Views expressed are
not necessarily those of the RSA.Australian Rationalist is published by
the Rationalist Society of Australia Inc.

ABN 41853904693

Registered office
1/6 Pilley St
St Kilda East 3183
Australia.

Distributed by Gordon & Gotch.

The evolution of Evolution

Some scientific debates are inherently controversial.

by Colin Benjamin

Clarence Seward Darrow, one of the most famous American lawyers and civil libertarians argued in the famous 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial, which was over whether a teacher, John Thomas Scopes, had broken Tennessee law by teaching human evolution in a state funded school, that: “We have the purpose of preventing bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States”.

Scopes was accused of having taught students that humans were descended “not even from American monkeys, but from old world monkeys”. The trial publicised the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. Modernists said evolution was not inconsistent with religion; fundamentalists said the word of God as revealed in the Bible took priority over all human knowledge.

The prosecutor, William Jennings Bryan made the following summation, which was distributed to reporters but not read in court: “*Science* is a magnificent force, but it is not a teacher of morals. It can perfect machinery, but it adds no moral restraints to protect society from the misuse of the machine.”

This seminal case was a theological contest, a trial of modern science, and an examination of the creation–evolution controversy and what should be taught in schools. Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100. The verdict was overturned on a technicality.

In 1967, Professor Allan Wilson, a Kiwi by birth, published “Immunological Time-Scale For Hominid Evolution” in the journal *Science*. Wilson, who was a groundbreaking researcher, became a lightning rod for controversy, galvanizing the scientific community with his quantitative biochemical approach to the history of evolution.

He showed that evolutionary relationships between the human species and other primates -- in particular chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans -- could be inferred from molecular evidence obtained from living species. It was not necessary to rely solely on the fossils of extinct creatures.

This, too, led to a struggle about what could be taught to students. There was a confrontation between those fixated on fossils and those seeking to apply the new tools of the emerging biosciences. Wilson, following a lifelong interest in the evolution of birds, carried out some of the first extensive research into the role of molecular analysis in deciphering avian phylogeny. He later suggested that the principal utility of molecular systematics, as applied to birds, rested at the sub-ordinal (sub-order) level. He compared several lines of genetic evidence, including immunology, amino acid differences and protein electrophoresis. By examining the divergence of humans and chimpanzees he showed that all methods indicated that the two species were more than 99% similar.

Wilson came under attack from anthropologists. But he mounted a successful challenge to their intellectual arrogance -- as strongly argued as the counter against the earlier Monkey Trial fundamentalists -- by insisting on the quantification of evolutionary phenomena and the recognition of new molecular techniques that could shed light on questions of evolutionary biology.

In the early 1980s, Wilson refined traditional anthropological thinking further when he worked with PhD students Rebecca Cann and Mark Stoneking on the so-called “Mitochondrial Eve” hypothesis. Previously, the conventional hypothesis was that various human continental groups had, over several million years, evolved from diverse ancestors, after diverging from chimpanzees. The DNA data, however, strongly suggested that all humans descended from a common, quite recent, African mother.

In 1987 Wilson, Cahn and Stoneking claimed they had evidence that the most recent maternal ancestor of all living humans was a woman living in Africa about 200,000 years ago. They based their conclusion on the analysis of restriction maps of mitochondrial DNA taken from 147 individuals representing different races and geographic origins. In typical journalistic fashion, the popular press immediately hyped this as the “Eve Hypothesis,” “Garden of Eden Hypothesis,” or the “Out-of-Africa Hypothesis.”

The conflicts have continued into this century. It is now perfectly legitimate to query the Darwinian models in the light of current scientific expertise. Many are questioning the claim that it is irrational to oppose the teaching of evolution as science. In 2007, Rutgers University philosophy professor Jerry Fodor published an op-ed in the *London Review of Books* called “Why Pigs Don’t Have Wings.” He was not so much concerned with science as the extension of evolutionary ideas outside of biology, but he also mounted a critique of a straw man (false) version of evolutionary theory characterized by a brand of adaptationism so narrow that, if it were true, biologists could be charged with just making things up as they went along.

In 2011, Duke University Professor of Philosophy Alex Rosenberg attacked Fodor’s critique of natural selection, focusing on the philosophy of biology, in particular the relationship between molecular, functional and evolutionary biology.

Throughout this long debate over evolutionary theory it is possible to identify a common thread. Labelling those who challenge new theories as “bigots and ignoramuses” is no substitute for good research and the rational understanding of fundamental ideas and intellectual constructions.

Farmers, Fire and Facebook Science

Facebook and Twitter are poor forums to decide complex science.

by Jillian de Araugo and Neil Bechervaise

In the absence of a Minister for Science, the Federal Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt, recently gave the go-ahead to an application from the Victorian Government to conduct a 'research trial' of domestic cattle grazing in the Wonnangatta Valley, part of the National Heritage-listed Victorian Alpine National Park. This 'scientific research program' is based on the premise that grazing may be a useful means of managing bushfire fuel.

Under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, the Victorian government was required to invite public comments on the preliminary documentation relating to its application to undertake this 'research trial'. Ten working days were allowed for the public to view, digest and provide informed comment on over 750 pages of scientific, legal and ecological information. It was a limited time frame provided for comment and the problem was exacerbated by the consultation webpage and supporting documents being made unavailable four days before the deadline for submissions.

Although an appropriate time for reading, consideration and consultation was not afforded, a range of organisations, including the Victorian National Parks Association, the Royal Society of Victoria and the Australian Academy of Science nevertheless sought to review the documents in good faith in an effort to salvage scientific aspects of the process and to aid public engagement with a process that, directly or indirectly, affects us all.

The scientific consensus gained from that 'consultation process' is that the program proposed by the Victorian Government *is likely to have a significantly adverse impact* on the heritage values of the Victorian Alpine National Park. Apart from identifying threatened species, and communities impacting the biological diversity and aesthetic characteristics of the region, the consultation reports express substantial concern for the lack of *scientific* rigour of the proposal and its potential to reduce the quality of alpine scientific research.

Ecological fire management in Australia is often built on the basic assumption that if one aims for a mosaic of different vegetation types and seral stages in a landscape, the needs of animals will be met. As Clarke (2013) reported after a two-year multidisciplinary study across 28 landscapes in the Murray-Mallee region, this is not always true. The recent proposal to introduce 60–300 cattle into the Alpine National Parks to establish that animal presence reduces fire risk within three years seems, superficially, to be an equally laudable study. More importantly, its findings may provide a case for the re-introduction of high

country grazing which was ended after years of heavy lobbying of the Bracks' government by environmental interest groups.

In this age of unmediated opinion delivery through social media channels, however, comprehensive data collection, peer-reviewed analysis and informed scientific opinion carry less weight than political expedience and short-term financial advantage. Facebook and Twitter tend to overlook scientific data in favour of populist assertions and, increasingly, the media have been willing to follow similar processes. The high country grazing 'experiment' offers a superb case-study of this pseudo-scientific 'rush of blood' approach to environmental study.

While animal protectionists defend the 'rights' of an estimated 6,000–10,000 feral horses to graze freely across Victoria's Alpine National Park, and 4-wheel drivers with shooter's licences can hunt the 20,000–50,000 Sambar from purpose-built roads across the same park, flora and fauna studies within the region remain stunningly incomplete. Grazing half of the habitat of the nationally endangered Pale Golden Moths orchid (*Diuris ochroma*) with a small number of cattle over three years in an already heavily grazed region is unlikely to establish their potential role in fire control. Similarly, the meagre two-week desktop study commissioned by the Victorian government, the scientific basis for the cattle trial, clearly recognises threats to "*Four nationally significant flora species ... within the 10 proposed study sites ... An additional 16 species have previously been recorded within a 10 kilometre radius of the 10 study sites. [While] Three fauna species (Spotted Tree Frog Alpine Tree Frog and Swift Parrot), listed as threatened under the EPBC Act, have also been recorded from within the study sites, [and] a further 12 species have been recorded from the buffer zones around the study areas.*" (SEWPaC 2011a).

As the Academy of Science submission demonstrated, the impact of cattle grazing in the half century prior to their removal and in the decade since, has been to damage water supplies by destroying fragile sphagnum bogs, to pollute stream shallows and reduce plant diversity by trampling vegetation, to increase erosion and to remove specific flora through selective grazing and the introduction and spread of weeds.

Cutting to the chase, the program proposed by the Victorian Government -- now accepted by the Federal Minister despite its apparent prevention under the EPBC Act (1999), -- is unscientific on several grounds. There was no literature review and it fails to consider relevant prior studies. It does not even attend to its own (DES, 2011) study findings. There is no rationale provided, the results can't be replicated as the trial is for a single region and time

period, no hypothesis is being tested and no peer review of results will occur. In summary, the study has no credible scientific basis. And in a final twist, research involving animals, even in wildlife studies, should comply with the Australian Code of Practice for the Use and Care of Animals for Scientific Purposes (NHMRC 2013). No such compliance has been sought. Nor would it be granted, because the code stipulates that projects that are not scientifically valid must not be performed, no matter how mild the impact on the wellbeing of the animals involved.

The Federal Minister for the Environment the Hon Greg Hunt notes that the Victorian Government's trial of grazing in the Wonnangattta Valley was approved subject to 33 'strict' conditions and followed 'careful consideration' of the impacts of the trial. This is cold comfort in the light of recent Federal approval for a proposal which is clearly flawed, certainly incomplete and probably illegal under Federal legislation.

Clarke, M. F. *Mallee Fire and Biodiversity*. Lecture at Royal Society of Victoria, 10 October 2013

SEWPaC. 2011a. Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 Protected Matters Search Tool <http://www.deh.gov.au/erin/ert/epbc/imap/map.html>.

From the President

In 1997 I gave a presentation to the Women Lawyers Association on the Future of Work, in which I asked: "Will women bear the brunt of increasing time poverty?" Arguably, the answer these days is "no". Both men and women suffering ever increasing incursions into the long gone eight hour day. And yet in 2010, 38% of Australian women and 34% of Australian men participated in voluntary work. Unexpectedly, employed people had a higher volunteering rate than the unemployed.

What is it that prompts people to contribute their time and effort voluntarily?

Here's Five Top Reasons:

1. Volunteers want to make a difference.

Most people volunteer based on values they've been brought up with – that living a life without contributing to the lives around you is less than satisfactory. These people want to put more than just their 'money where their mouth is' but their time and effort as well. Idealistic perhaps, but welcome.

2. Volunteers learn new skills.

Many people join groups and committees that champion particular causes, and in the process, learn new skills: how to run meetings, how to write persuasively and speak confidently, how to organise events. Also, they learn how representative democracy

works: the difference between a Federal matter and a State matter, how to influence bureaucrats and politicians, how community groups lobby for change.

3. Volunteers want to add to their CV.

Some people just want to make their CV look better. An instrumental reason perhaps, but as long as it's not the only reason, this is fine – a reward for contribution. And it can lead on to better job opportunities, wider employment networks and the chance to mentor or be mentored.

4. Volunteers meet like-minded others.

Becoming a volunteer usually results in forging friendships with others of similar outlooks, an intrinsic reward that adds emotional and social value. When a group or committee is working well, there's a real 'hum' that provides a sense of accomplishment, belonging and satisfaction.

5. Someone has to do it!

Occasionally, there's just no-one else who's put up their hand and what kicks in is the old saying "If you want something done, give it to a busy person". There is something in this, because the more people take on voluntary tasks, the more experienced they become and the easier and quicker it is to get things done.

Over the past few years I have heard some say that the various freethought groups in Australia ought to join forces and create a single, unified voice. There would of course be advantages in doing this: a stronger voice, pooled resources (financial and human), heightened public profile. But there are also disadvantages.

Most community groups operate through the efforts of a small group of dedicated volunteers, usually about four to eight. If the freethought movement combined into a single, national group, it's likely there would still be four to eight people who would do most of the work. Why? It's a matter of logistics: it's just harder, more complex, to organise a larger group of people. With multiple freethought groups around the country, that small group of four to eight dedicated volunteers is replicated across different locations and different emphases. While Atheists, Humanists, Rationalists, Secularists and Skeptics share a commitment to philosophical rationality and political secularity, each group has its own mission and each group provides an opportunity for more volunteers to get personally involved.

In Bhutan, the national government is famous for measuring not Gross National Product (GDP) but Gross National Happiness (GNH). One of the main factors in measuring GNH is time – time for family, time for spiritual reflection, time for community. Relief of time poverty is unlikely under Western society's obsession with ever increasing productivity and higher living standards. But volunteering one's time still pays rich rewards. We need more of it.

Meredith Doig

The threat to antibiotics

Keith Ashman rightly highlights the health risks associated with overzealous and inappropriate use of antibiotics in humans. Overuse depletes the individual's health maintaining microbiome, leads to serious multiresistant infections and incurs adverse drug reactions in the susceptible. Furthermore, the richness, health and biodiversity of the human gut microbiome contributes to the balanced immunomodulation required to suppress harmful inflammatory and allergic processes. Its ecological disruption is implicated in the rising community rates of asthma, allergies, inflammatory bowel disease and other autoimmune disorders. A vastly reduced microbial population in patients who have undergone gut resection predisposes them to chronic disease when compared with the full microbiome complement available to people with intact colons. This reinforces the importance of our microscopic companions for human wellbeing. On another note, Ashman could do well to also protest the widespread use of antibiotics in animal feed to accelerate cattle and poultry growth to meet our burgeoning demand for dietary protein. Antibiotic use in animal husbandry poses a far greater risk in the global permeation of bug killers into human and natural ecosystems.

Joseph Ting, Adjunct associate professor, School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

Correcting Islamic spin

Dear Editor

Islam is certainly something that needs to be understood. Professional Islamic dissembler Sherene Hassan would have

us believe that Islam is entirely benign and all criticism of it is xenophobic (*Understanding Islam*, A.R. Summer 2013). However we may perhaps gain a truer understanding of Islam if we are aware of the extent of misrepresentation, disinformation and indeed taqiyya, that is present in Hassan's article. Here are some of the most blatant examples.

Sharia is not a system of law, but of colonial imposition, she says. But there are Islamic laws, which are constitutionally imposed in many Muslim countries, the doctrinal interpretation of which called Islamic "jurisprudence". The laws are "not set in stone", she says, yet being "divine and sacred" they cannot be rejected by Muslims. The laws of the land must be obeyed, she says, except if they require a "sin". Since "sins" are Koran defined, this mean that sharia law does indeed dominate democratic civil law.

Only 80 verses of the Koran are "legal" matters, Hassan says. Presumably these include verses that devalue women's testimony and provide for divorcing wives, including those who are too young to have menstruated (65:4). Presumably the remaining merely "spiritual" verses include the numerous injunctions requiring the punishment and death of infidels.

Surely Hassan's most egregious error was her statement that the Prophet Mohammed was pluralistic and allowed other religions to flourish. In fact, the entire Arabian Peninsula was forced to convert to Islam and Mohammed beheaded an entire Jewish tribe in the process.

It is "often stated" that Islam is incompatible with democracy, she says. Hassan rather deviously does not deny this incompatibility, but indirectly confirms it, saying that only "consultation" with the governed is allowed.

Regarding the status of women she again side steps responsibility. The Koran says women are inferior and should be beaten (4:34). The wearing of oppressive garments is mandated in the Koran, so that women will not be molested (33:59).

Female genital mutilation is sanctioned in the Hadith. Child brides do not have freedom of choice. The only choice many Muslim women have is to obey the rules or face punishment.

Hassan's claims that violence in Islam is not "contextualised" are nonsense. Islam is the only religion to be started by a military leader and was established by conquest, starting with Mohammad's unprovoked attacks on the Meccan caravans in 623 CE. If Islam was a religion of peace then Islamic extremists would be extremely peaceful. Hassan finds a quote saying the innocent should not be killed. But in Islam, infidels are not innocent.

Muslims are a minority in Australia, and minorities have a right to be respected. This does not mean that non-Muslims have no right to object to the erosion of secularism that Islam imposes, or to the dangers and human rights abuses inherent in Islam. Raising these objections is even more important when Islamic public relations promoters present their case dishonestly and where they succeed in painting legitimate criticism as irrational and unfounded prejudice. Islam is indeed something we need to understand.

John L Perkins

Author of "Islam Arrogance and delusion."

Energy issues

Dear Editor,

Thank you for a really magnificent Autumn edition. However, on page 9, "Fusion, not fission" the Nuclear Ignition Faculty should be the National Ignition Faculty. Also, I thought the report lacked precision: the phrase "more energy" is not quantified.

Peter Trebilco

Super bugs on the march

Bacteria that resist antibiotics are becoming widespread, according to a report by the World Health Organization. The report said that unless “significant actions” are taken to improve efforts to prevent infections and change the way antibiotics are produced, prescribed, and used, the implications could be devastating.

The WHO warns that pharmaceutical companies do not have sufficient incentives to develop new antibiotics, adding that many could become useless while authorities are still trying to measure the problem.

Antibiotics, first introduced in the 1950s, have stopped common bacterial infections, such as sore throats, diarrhea and cuts from becoming fatal. If they cease to be effective, health systems could be placed under severe stress. The heavy use of antibiotics with farm animals is helping bacteria develop resistance.

In the United States, resistance to antibiotics costs the health system \$US34 billion, and reduces Gross Domestic Product by 0.4 to 1.6 per cent every year, according to the WHO. The most dangerous threats to human life could become Ecoli, Streptococcus, Staphylococcus and gonorrhoea.

The drugs that have been used to treat Klebsiella pneumonia, a common intestinal bacteria, which can cause life-threatening infections in intensive care unit patients and newborns, no longer work in more than half of patients in some countries. Likewise, drugs used to treat urinary tract infections, are ineffective in more than half of sufferers in many parts of the world. The WHO reports that efforts to limit the spread of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, malaria and HIV are also all under threat due to increasing bacterial resistance.

Watchers who won't be watched

The damage caused by whistle blower Edward Snowden has been “staggering” according to a “top secret” Pentagon report (which appears not to be especially secret). According to *The Guardian* newspaper, the heavily redacted 39-page report was prepared in December and is titled “DoD Information Review Task Force-2: Initial Assessment, Impacts Resulting from the Compromise of Classified Material by a Former NSA Contractor.”

The DIA report claims the harm to US intelligence agencies is “grave”, but with characteristic irony has refused to release any details to support its conclusion. *The Guardian* claims that the whole impact assessment was redacted from the material released.

Steven Aftergood, director of the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists, questioned the decision to withhold specific details. The assessment excluded

NSA-related information and dealt exclusively with non-NSA defense materials. The report was distributed to multiple US military commands around the world and all four military branches.

Selective spreading of the word

Fairness In Religion In Schools (FIRIS) has been threatened with legal action by ACCESS Ministries for putting its document “Religion in Life” on its web site. ACCESS sent a letter to FIRIS saying that it has infringed its copyright by posting a copy of its Launch 1 Red Book on its web site.

A spokesman for FIRIS says ACCESS Ministries has claimed it welcomes the current debate, but that this claim is belied by its actions. “What better way to inform the debate than to allow anyone who wants to review and discuss the actual lessons given in our prep classes to see the lessons for themselves?” he writes. “Instead, ACCESS is using its muscle to come after us so that this debate doesn’t happen. We have presented scholarly reviews of these lessons, and these scholars affirm that what parents are told and what is actually in these lessons are two different things.

“ACCESS Ministries is in effect a private corporation funded by our taxes, working under an exclusive, non-competitive government grant which enables it to use 3 per cent of the time children are required by law to be in school. ACCESS wants to have its cake and eat it too, and prevent us from seeing what it does and what it publishes, as if it were merely a private business. Parents have a right to inspect the curriculum that the government has authorised.”

Meanwhile, a Department of Education investigation has found that Access Ministries volunteers have breached department guidelines. Education Minister Martin Dixon has issued a directive prohibiting instructors from offering gifts to students and ruling that religious materials cannot be displayed or distributed in Victorian government schools. Access Ministries receives about \$735,000 a year from the Victorian Government to provide SRI and for chaplaincy programs.

Stalin's Legacy

Crimea has been contested ground for thousands of years.

By Jeroen Wijnendaele

It began on 20 February. A representative of the Kremlin ominously proclaimed that if Ukraine were to disintegrate such a scenario would lead to war, with Russia coming to Crimea's aid and its neighbor losing the peninsula, "just as in Georgia". Neither the reference nor the timing turned out to be coincidental.

The Russian government was furious about the agreement that the Ukrainian president Yanukovich had concluded with the leaders of the protesters who had occupied the Maidan square in Kiev. Yanukovich was believed to have the upper hand in the run-up to the talks. But Moscow watched in dismay as he swallowed one concession after the other. The presence and attitude of three European ministers (there on behalf of France, Poland and Germany), who did not lift a finger when the opposition torpedoed the agreement and toppled Yanukovich, was sufficient for the Russian representative to withdraw from the talks.

One week later, on February 27, masked militias took control of Simferopol airport. In the following days, the world held its breath while Russian soldiers crossed the Strait of Kerch. It seemed like the opponents were on the verge of starting a new Crimean War.

From antiquity, the Crimean Peninsula has been subject to political evolutions that did not run parallel with the rest of the Ukrainian hinterland. The most obvious explanation for this is Crimea's geographical location. Taurica, as the Greeks called it, is dominated by a rugged upland relief. It is believed that the modern name of Crimea comes from the Tatar language and means "fortress". It is an apt name for an area that has for centuries served as a bastion for numerous powers, separate from the Ukrainian mainland. The interior, with its vast steppes, was in antiquity ideal grazing grounds for the great nomadic civilizations: the Scythians, the Huns and the Mongols.

In the sixth and fifth centuries BCE Greek colonists founded trading settlements on the south coast peninsula. Some of these colonies developed along both sides of the Strait of Kerch. They would form the basis for the so-called Bosphoran Kingdom, often considered by scholars as the first true Hellenistic state. This realm developed along both sides of the Sea of Azov, which the Greeks regarded as a "lake", hence demonstrating that the dividing line between the territories of present-day Ukraine and Russia was already much smaller than is commonly thought.

Due to its strategic position, the peninsula formed, for more than two millennia, an anchor point for foreign powers that wanted to keep their "finger on the pulse" of the Black Sea. Before the current Crimean crisis erupted, it served as the official basis for the Russian fleet – even though it was technically harboured in Ukrainian territory.

It is nothing new. A similar attitude could already be seen in the early days of the Roman Empire. As early as 15 BCE, Rome's first emperor Augustus sent his most competent commander, Agrippa, to help preserve the throne of the ruler of the Bosphoran kingdom. For more than three centuries the principality remained a satellite state of Rome. The Empire did not interfere with the kingdom's internal government, but it did station a legionary base at Charax, near present Sebastopol. In antiquity, Taurica formed the hub of the rich grain fields north of the Black Sea and it is therefore not surprising that Rome desired to maintain a watchful eye in the area. External intervention by Mediterranean powers remained a recurring theme for most of the peninsula's history.

Plague Platform

During the late antiquity period first the Goths, and then the Huns, took over the interior of the Crimea. The isolated location of the peninsula explains why the (Crimean) Gothic language survived for more than a millennium. Even in the sixteenth century, the Habsburg diplomat Ogier Van Busbeek was able to compose a report with a hundred words of Crimean Gothic vocabulary. For most of the Middle Ages, the Eastern Roman Empire maintained its hold over the southern port city of Cherson (presently on the outer edge of Sebastopol). It is no coincidence, therefore, that one of the most important religious events in Eastern Europe history occurred there. In 988, Vladimir, prince of Kiev, allowed himself to be baptized in the Orthodox Christian faith at Cherson, in return for the hand of a Constantinopolitan princess.

After the destabilization of the Eastern Roman Empire because of the Fourth Crusade (1204), the maritime Republic of Genoa seized control of the main Crimean ports. Crimea thereby gained the dubious honor of serving as launching pad for the plague in Europe. In 1346 Mongol besiegers catapulted infected corpses over the walls of Jaffa. Italians who managed to sail out of the city carried the Black Death with them to the Mediterranean and the rest of the continent.

Political discord between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland remained constant during the early modern period. At the end of the 15th century, the Ottoman sultanate established its dominion over the political heirs of the Mongol and Tatar rulers of the peninsula, acquiring a huge stake in the regional slave trade. Yet barely a century later Poland-Lithuania started incorporating the western half of the Ukrainian interior and the Russian Empire began to spread its wings over the eastern territory. It is no coincidence that Western Ukraine is more Catholic than Eastern Orthodox. This regional divide, which today runs along the Ukrainian supporters and opponents of the riots, was reconfirmed



between Poland and Russia after Lenin's revolution (1917–1939). It took until 1783 before Russia finally managed to conquer Crimea. For the first time in its history a major power held sway over both the peninsula and the vast hinterland north of the Black Sea, thereby ushering in a new phase in its history.

Heroic carnages

The links between Crimea and Russia intensified over the last two centuries. The peninsula endured many a battlefield during the industrial wars of the modern era. The Crimean War (1853–1856) was unleashed for reasons that may sound eerily familiar to today's readers: the Russian Czar underestimated how Western European powers were eventually going to respond to his push to expand power in the Black Sea at the expense of his weaker Ottoman neighbor.

The conflict is often regarded as the first modern war in Europe because of the use of industrial technology (such as railway logistics), the failure of traditional war tactics and the atrocious cost in human lives -- immortalized during failure of the charge of the Light Brigade -- and the presence of the press, which extensively covered the conflict. The use of photography and the telegraph ensured that day after day Western European citizens knew more about this war than any before. Equally new and memorable was the high participation of female nurses in the field hospitals: Florence Nightingale became an iconic figure. The war between Russia on the one hand, and Britain, France, Piedmont-Sardinia and the Ottoman sultanate on the other, resulted in a tactical defeat for Russia. But a compromise was worked out in subsequent negotiations that guaranteed regional stability for the remainder of the century.

In the follow up of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Crimea gained temporary sovereignty as a state. This independence proved to be short-lived when the White Army retreated into the peninsula for its last stand during the subsequent civil war. The region finally acquired autonomy within the new Soviet Union in 1921 as the 'Crimean Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic.'

The Second World War, and its aftermath, were to be even more pivotal. They help us to understand the current conflict and the links between Russia and the Crimea. Hitler was hell-bent on conquering Crimea because of pseudo-historical theories identifying the region as 'the cradle of all Germanic peoples'. When German forces eventually succeeded in doing so, he renamed Simferopol 'Gothenburg' and Sevastopol 'Theoderichshafen'. The latter city, however, only fell after nine months of dogged resistance. For generations of Russians the heroic aura surrounding the siege of Sebastopol was second only to the Battle of Stalingrad and the siege of Leningrad. After the Russian reconquest of Crimea, Stalin, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill gathered there at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. Stalin had chosen the location partially to emphasize the military success of the Red

Army, although he was mainly motivated by paranoia. He refused to fly and the conference had to take place at a location he could reach by train. Hence the outlines of a new Europe were drawn in the least damaged city of the Russian Riviera.

The legacy

Stalin's Crimean policies fundamentally altered the ethnic composition of the region. During the Soviet reconquest in 1944, the Tatars (originally a Turkish minority) were deported en masse to Siberia on charges of collaborating with Nazi Germany. Half never survived the brutal migration. Even after Stalin's death, it was forbidden for them to return -- a prohibition that remained in force until the last days of the Soviet state. That Stalin was attempting to complete Russification of the peninsula is also evident in the harsh expulsion of Greek and Armenian minorities.

When Stalin died, an unexpected development occurred that was to have massive ramifications that are still felt. In 1954 Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, formally handed over Crimea to Ukraine. This transfer is often attributed to Khrushchev's Ukrainian background, although one apocryphal story claims the new General Secretary of the Communist party was simply drunk when he signed the deal. The 'state borders' between the various Soviet republics were not as rigid during the Cold War. It was primarily a demonstration of gratitude towards Ukraine for the heavy toll it had to endure through 'The Great Patriotic War'. Moscow retained the upper hand over all territorial issues and back then nobody could have foreseen that the Soviet Union would disintegrate less than forty years later.

It was, ironically, in the Crimean peninsula that the Soviet Union finally came to an end. On 22 August 1991, the last General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, was placed under house arrest during his vacation there. Boris Yeltsin established a junta, with the support of the military, after his release. Before the end of the year the Soviet Republic was formally buried although Russia never fully released its grip on Crimea as is evident in the establishment of its Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol.

Half a century later, Stalin's legacy is finally coming full circle. A significant majority of the Crimean population primarily regards itself as Russian and hails Vladimir Putin with open arms. At the same time, 266,000 Crimean Tatars, who started migrating back in large numbers to their motherland in recent decades, see no benefit in returning to life under a new Russian dictator.

The West is once again hopelessly divided on the issue, while Putin treads on international treaties with his boots. Nevertheless, as Professor Geoff Roberts (Professor of Russian History, University College Cork) recently wrote: "Putin's regime is unsavoury in many respects but Russia must be a partner in any resolution of the Ukrainian crisis. There can be no winner in a zero-sum game between Russia and the West and the victims will be the Ukrainian population."

The evil that men do

A glimpse into a past darkness.

by Peter Mares

The recent feature film *Hannah Arendt* is rather slow to get going. There is only so much dramatic tension that can be wrung from bookish arguments in New York apartments in the early 1960s, even by a director as skilled as Margarethe von Trotta, a veteran of the New (West) German Cinema of the 1970s. These early scenes, of academics, writers and editors philosophising amidst the fug of their chain-smoking, nevertheless help to establish Arendt in her milieu, making apparent the scale of her later rejection by friends and colleagues when her reports on the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann were published in *The New Yorker*.

It is in the scenes set at the trial in Jerusalem that the film gains momentum – particularly with von Trotta's decision to intercut her dramatic recreation of the proceedings with black and white archival footage, including excerpts of Eichmann's testimony from his glass-walled dock. Stylistically, the combination of documentary footage and feature film is awkward, even stilted; yet for me, this is where Hannah Arendt became interesting. I saw the film just after reading *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil*, the book that emerged from her magazine articles. Here we could see – or at least glimpse – something of what Arendt had witnessed in Jerusalem.

The New Yorker did not invite Arendt to be its correspondent at Eichmann's 1961 trial. She approached the magazine, and had to convince the editor William Shawn, that a philosopher could meet a deadline. (She couldn't – her essays did not appear until 1963.) But Arendt was a compelling choice – she was a German-born Jew who had fled the Nazis in 1933. She then escaped from a concentration camp in Vichy France in 1941 before migrating to the US and establishing her intellectual reputation with the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and *The Human Condition* (1958). During the war and immediately after Arendt had worked with Youth Aliyah, a Zionist organisation that helped teenage Jewish refugees to move to safety in Palestine. She was, however, far from being an uncritical supporter of the state of Israel.

When Arendt's articles for *The New Yorker* finally appeared, they caused outrage. Arendt was ostracised and vilified. She received hate mail and death threats and lost many close friends. She was denounced in synagogues and a campaign was launched to discredit her in the academic world. As critic Amos Elon puts it in his introduction to a 2006 edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, a “kind of excommunication seemed to have been imposed on the author by the Jewish establishment in America.” The controversy, he adds, “has never really been settled.” (Amos Elon, “The Excommunication of Hannah Arendt”, Introduction to Hannah Arendt *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil*, Penguin Classics, 2006)

Karl Adolf Eichmann was an *Obersturmbannführer* in the SS (equivalent to a lieutenant colonel) and chief of “Jewish Affairs” for the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, (Reich Security Main Office). In this capacity he was the Nazi officer primarily responsible for organising the transport of more than one and a half million European Jews to death camps and other killing sites in Poland and occupied parts of the Soviet Union.

Arendt did not dispute the facts of Eichmann's deep involvement in operating the machinery of the Holocaust – she describes him as “the most important conveyer belt in the whole operation, because it was always up to him and his men how many Jews could or should be transported from any given area, and it was through his office that the ultimate destination of the shipment was cleared, though that destination was not determined by him.”

Yet Arendt did not see Eichmann as a monster or an anti-Semitic ideologue. She understood and portrayed him as a rather mundane functionary who was following orders. For this, she was accused of being a Nazi apologist, of diminishing Eichmann's culpability and of attempting to exonerate him from his crimes, even though she supported the guilty verdict and the death penalty imposed by the court.

The most politically explosive and sensitive part of Arendt's coverage of the Eichmann trial was her treatment of the question of the *Judenräte*, or Jewish Councils. These were administrative bodies established by the Nazis to organise Jewish ghettos under their control. Jewish elders and other community leaders were often co-opted or coerced into joining these councils. In arguing that the “role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people” was “the darkest chapter of the whole dark story”, Arendt verged on accusing Council members of being complicit in the Holocaust:

The Jewish Councils of Elders were informed by Eichmann or his men of how many Jews were needed to fill each train, and they made out the list of deportees. The Jews registered, filled out innumerable forms, answered pages and pages of questionnaires regarding their property so that it could be seized the more easily; they then assembled at the collection points and boarded the trains. The few who tried to hide or to escape were rounded up by a special Jewish police force. As far as Eichmann could see, no one protested, no one refused to co-operate. “*Immerzu fahren hier die Leute zu ihrem eigenen Begräbnis*” (Day in day out the people here leave for their own funeral) as a Jewish observer put it in Berlin in 1943. (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* p.115)

For this and similar passages, Arendt was accused of blaming the victim, of moral equivalence, and of being a self-hating Jew.



It is not that she did not appreciate the various and complex motivations of the Jewish leaders involved – whether they did not fully comprehend the extent of the Nazis’ plans, or were trying to save at least some of members of their community while sacrificing others (‘like captains “whose ships were about to sink and who succeeded in bringing them safe to port by casting overboard a great part of their precious cargo”’), or attempting to save themselves and their families, or trying to make the path to death more “humane”, or simply trying to buy time in the hope

trial but should pursue justice – and the pursuit of justice requires a search for truth. For Arendt, the role of the Jewish Councils under the Third Reich was a historical fact that had to be faced (though critics argue that she vastly overestimates the extent to which different choices were open to Jewish leaders in the circumstances).

The passages on the Jewish Councils constitute only a small part of Arendt’s report of the trial, but they are crucial to her overall argument. She dwelt on the role of the Councils, she wrote,

“Arendt’s argument about Eichmann’s incapacity to think appears to go too far”

that the inevitable might not be inevitable after all. But Arendt’s language is blunt and uncompromising, her conclusions stark and unpalatable:

Wherever Jews lived, there were recognised Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganised and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people. (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* p.125)

Arendt’s “truth” is highly contestable and highly contested. How the Third Reich might have responded if the Jewish community was less organised, or if more Jewish leaders had refused to cooperate, can be at best a matter of historical speculation. Amos Elon suggests that the certainty in Arendt’s tone was in part responsible for the offence she caused:

Would she have shocked her readers less had she registered doubt instead of attacking? Would it have shocked less had she said explicitly that the Jewish leaders “inadvertently” collaborated in their own destruction? This was certainly what she meant to say. (*Eichmann in Jerusalem, Introduction* p.xvi)

Arendt’s inclusion of such material in her book arose from insistence that the Eichmann proceedings should not be a show

“because it offers the most striking insight into the totality of the moral collapse the Nazis caused in respectable European society – not only in Germany but in almost all countries, not only among the persecutors but also among the victims.”

Arendt’s close observation of Eichmann and his testimony in Jerusalem informs her understanding of what made such a moral collapse possible – which was, she believed a failure, or an incapacity, to think.

For Arendt, the idea that Eichmann was the intellectual architect of the Final Solution – the “motor” rather than a “cog” in the machinery – was laughable. She regarded him as a clown and a buffoon. She saw Eichmann as a man who was only able to speak in clichés, stock phrases and bureaucratese (*Amtssprache*), because he was incapable of thinking properly:

The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. (*Eichmann in Jerusalem, Introduction* p.49)

This does mean that Arendt thought Eichmann was stupid. But in her eyes, neither was he a clever and devious liar determined to mislead the court as to his true understanding of his crimes. Others dispute this view – and see Eichmann as a dogged and committed anti-Semite who was deliberately evasive and untruthful in his testimony. For Arendt, he suffered from a lack of imagination:

It was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means

identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of the period.

To describe Eichmann’s version of evil as “banal” was, she insisted, not the same as calling it “commonplace”. “What intrigued and alarmed Arendt was that far from displaying any” “diabolical or demonic profundity”, Eichmann was ordinary, even mediocre

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are terribly and terrifyingly normal. (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* p.276)

Arendt is not seeking to lessen the magnitude of Eichmann’s crime or concede that the defence of following orders had any validity. The fact that the mass murder of the Jews “could only be committed by a giant bureaucracy using the resources of government” does not provide Eichmann with any cover, because “all the cogs in the machinery, no matter how insignificant, are in court forthwith transformed back into perpetrators, that is to say, into human beings”:

If the defendant excuses himself on the ground that he acted not as a man but as a mere functionary whose functions could just as easily have been carried out by anyone else, it is as if a criminal pointed to the statistics on crime ... and declared that he only did what was statistically expected, that it was mere accident that he did it and not somebody else, since after all somebody had to do it. (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* p.289)

The question that Arendt wrestled with was “What made it possible for such orders – mass murder on an industrial scale – not only to be followed but also to be perceived as “normal” by people who “were not sadists and killers by nature?”

She has no sympathy for those Nazi leaders who claimed retrospectively that they had engaged in an “inner emigration” – “those people who frequently had held positions, even high ones, in the Third Reich and who, after the end of the war, told themselves and the world at large that they had always been ‘inwardly opposed’ to the regime.”

Eichmann never claimed to be an “inner emigrant” – he claimed that he was doing his “inflexible duty” – but in her film von Trotta presents us moments from his evidence that suggest that despite his supposed inability to think “from the standpoint of some body else”, Eichmann did nevertheless dimly perceive that he was evading the true moral implications of his actions. Elsewhere, Arendt describes this as the practice of “self deception” or “bad faith” that became so common in Germany it was “almost a moral pre-requisite for survival”. In other words, people had to deceive themselves, if they were to live with the consequences of their actions.

In the trial, Eichmann is asked whether he ever felt an “inner conflict” between his duty and his conscience. Eichmann replies

that it “would be better to call it a split state, a form of splitting, where one fled from one side to the other, and vice versa.” At another point he is asked whether he would have shot his own father if Hitler declared him to be a traitor. Eichmann seeks to evade the question, saying he would do so if his father’s betrayal were proved true. But this was not the question – the question is whether Eichmann would kill his father simply because *Hitler had ordered it*. Eichmann fails to answer and squirms uncomfortably. The veneer of his argument about duty has been exposed for the sham that it is. Eichmann has been forced, however momentarily, to think more clearly. This suggests to me that he was complicit in constructing the “split state” that allowed him hide from the consequences of his actions by fleeing from “one side to the other”. He retreats from this moment of thinking as quickly as possible.

In this sense, Arendt’s argument about Eichmann’s incapacity to think appears to go too far. He displays not so much an inability to think as an active refusal. It is not the case that Eichmann, as Arendt writes, “*merely*, to put the matter colloquially, never realised what he was doing”, but rather that he chose to do certain things and not to do others. As she acknowledges, his primary concern was with the advancement of his own career within the system; while he professed to forget key events in the organising the transport of Jews to the death camps, he had a clear recollection of such a pleasurable event as going bowling with the Interior Minister of the puppet government of Slovakia.

Whatever its faults and controversies, Arendt’s book forces us to acknowledge that to be morally competent human beings, we cannot evade our responsibility to think, including to think from “the standpoint of somebody else”, and to make judgements accordingly. We do not live in Nazi Germany, but we live in a nation and an era that faces its own ethical changes. To give just two examples, Australia is expanding coal exports in the face of the undeniable evidence that this will accelerate catastrophic global warming and we are warehousing vulnerable people in desolate offshore detention centres in the full knowledge that this will inflict severe damage on their psychological and physical health. These things can only happen because people at all levels play a role – however banal – in their organisation. That is not to say that we are all equally culpable, any more than it would be true to say that leaders of the Jewish Councils were guilty of the same crimes as Eichmann. Such a notion would be worse than offensive, and it was certainly not what Arendt was arguing. What Arendt does insist upon, however, is that we must “be capable of telling right from wrong”, regardless of our position in the social order, and even if this “happens to be completely at odds” with the prevailing opinion of those around us.

Elemental as this insight might be, it is profoundly confronting.

Alas! This Is Not What I Thought Life Was

By Percy Bysshe Shelley

Alas! this is not what I thought life was.

I knew that there were crimes and evil men,

Misery and hate; nor did I hope to pass

Untouched by suffering, through the rugged glen.

In mine own heart I saw as in a glass

The hearts of others ... And when

I went among my kind, with triple brass

Of calm endurance my weak breast I armed,

To bear scorn, fear, and hate, a woful mass!

Do clocks exist?

The mysteries of temporality and the timeless.

by Kristie Miller

When one wonders “what is the future of time” one is most likely wondering what it is that future developments in physics, philosophy, psychology and neuroscience will tell us about the nature of time and our perception of temporality. Given developments over the past couple of decades, however, it seems fitting also to ask “does time have a future?” For time has, of late, come under attack.

Much of the recent assault has come from physicists attempting to reconcile quantum mechanics with general relativity. This has turned out to be significantly more difficult than one might have expected, spawning various theories ranging from string theory to countless theories of quantum gravity. Some, but by no means all, of these theories are timeless: that is, according to these theories time does not exist. At least that is how their adherents advertise these theories. This is, to say the least, a starting conclusion.

It is difficult to assess so-called timeless theories. In part it is because such an assessment involves an exploration of the empirical adequacy of the theory (the extent to which the theory gets the empirical data right) and an evaluation of the manner in which the theory resolves the tension between the quantum and macro levels. In part it is because such an assessment involves trying to figure out what sorts of conceptual baggage is built into these theories and how to evaluate whether this is baggage that we want to carry. Often these two tasks are carried out in isolation, with physicists focussing on the former and philosophers of physics and metaphysicists focussing on the latter. That is hardly surprising. Philosophers are typically not very well placed to adjudicate whether this, rather than that, physical theory is the better. This has led some to wonder whether philosophy has any useful role in elucidating the nature of time. I want to suggest that it clearly does.

Those of us in philosophy who are interested in understanding time typically set aside the issue of which of the many current relevant theories in physics is the right one and focus instead on what those theories tell us about our world. What is there for the philosopher of time to do if she is not trying to ascertain which physical theory is the correct one? Well suppose we want to assess the claim that if a particular so-called timeless theory of quantum gravity is true, then there is no time. Even abstracting away from the question of whether the theory is true, its startling conclusion -- that there is no time -- goes well beyond anything found in the theory itself. No theory explicitly says, “There is no time”. In order to assess whether if a particular theory of quantum gravity is true there is no time we need to first know what it would take for there to be time.

When is a lizard a lizard?

Here is a helpful analogy. Consider the following claim made by evolutionary biologists: “there are no reptiles”. Let us assume that evolutionary biologists know quite a lot about which animals exist and how they are related. Still, no theory about the manner in which current animals are related is one that explicitly says “there are no reptiles”. Scientists draw that conclusion on the basis of a certain theory plus some additional inputs. We can think of some of these additional inputs as conceptual baggage. After all, what do scientists mean when they claim that there are no reptiles? What do they think the world needs to be like to make it true that there are reptiles, such that the world fails to be like that?

One possibility is that what it takes for there to be reptiles is for there to be lizards, snakes, iguanas and so forth. If that is all it takes then unless we are all suffering under a massive delusion even the evolutionary biologist will agree that there are reptiles. Clearly, then, that cannot be what evolutionary biologists think it takes for there to be reptiles. One possibility is that evolutionary biologists think that there are reptiles only if the group of animals we have been calling reptiles is monophyletic: that is, if there is no shared ancestor of all those animals that is a closer relative to each of them than it is to anything else not in the group of reptiles. In fact evolutionary biologists have discovered that the group in question is not monophyletic. If what it takes for there to be reptiles is for there to be a monophyletic group that includes everything we label ‘reptile’, then evolutionary biologists have discovered that there are no reptiles because there is no such group.

Here, then, is a nice example of finding some not-so-hidden conceptual baggage. It turns out that evolutionary biologists are working with a certain concept of “reptile”; one according to which what it is to be a reptile is to be a member of a monophyletic group that includes all of the things that you are I am inclined to called reptiles. There is no such group, so according to these scientists there are no reptiles.

The point is this. We can assume that biologists are better placed than you or I to know about the evolutionary history of present day animals, and we can thus accept that the relevant group of animals is not monophyletic. In just the same way, we can accept that a “timeless” theory of quantum gravity is the right theory if physicists ultimately tell us that it is. But that still leaves open the question of whether, in the former case, it is right to conclude that there are no reptiles, and in the latter case right to conclude that there is no time.

That is where conceptual and metaphysical baggage comes in.

In part because “reptile” and “time” are part of both scientific vocabulary and everyday vocabulary it is easy to create confusion. Perhaps when biologists claim that there are no reptiles they are simply claiming that given what they mean by the term, there are no reptiles. It is not so obvious, however, that you and I mean anything quite so narrow, and thus not obvious that the interesting biological discovery about the phylogenetic tree is, for us, the discovery that there are no reptiles.

This is all, in a way, entirely trivial. Whether we say that there are reptiles or not doesn’t much matter. The point is this: just knowing the evolutionary biology is not enough to tell you whether there are reptiles.

The same is true for time and physics. But in the case of time matters are more complicated for two reasons. First, it is very unclear what we all mean when we talk about time. What is our concept of time? What do we think the world needs to be like for there to be time? Second, our concept of time matters to us in a way that our concept of reptiles just doesn’t. I, for one, don’t really mind if evolutionary biologists want to say that there are no reptiles. Equally, I don’t mind if a mum wants to tell her children that there are reptiles, and they are the group that includes snakes and lizards.

the next 100 years of debate.

McTaggart thought that in order for there to be time it must be that events are ordered via certain relation -- that some events are earlier than others, some later than others, and some simultaneous with others. Further, he thought, it must be that some events are past, some future, and some present. Finally, it must be that which events are present changes: events must go from being future, to being present, to being past. By changing, in this way, time’s flows McTaggart famously thought that our world could not be like this, and so he concluded that there is no time. Very few philosophers have subsequently agreed with him about this. But many, though by no means all, have thought that he is right about what our world needs to be like in order for there to be time.

Is time thick or thin?

What McTaggart offers is a really quick, thick concept of time -- there are lots of features the world needs to have in order for there to be time. Moreover, many philosophers have argued that there could be time even if not all of these features are present. One of the most heated debates in the philosophy of time is whether or not time really does flow, and whether there could be time in the absence of flow. Those who argue that time does not flow

“No (scientific) theory explicitly says, ‘There is no time’”

But time matters to us. We care that events come in a particular order (or seem to). We bear quite different attitudes towards past events and future events. We take ourselves to have causal influence over some future events and to lack that influence over past events, and because of this we deliberate and plan about the future.

Indeed, most of our lives are spent attempting to make the future this way rather than that way. From the moment we are born we try to manipulate the world around us. We conceive of ourselves as agents who have a past history that we remember, whose lives unfold in a certain order, and who can affect at least some aspects of what will come in the future. All of this involves thinking of ourselves as being located in time, as existing at different times, and as bearing different relations to the past than to the future.

So when physicists tell us that “according to a particular set of theories there is no time” are they telling us that all of that is an illusion? That depends on what physicists suppose is necessary for there to be time. The question of what it takes for there to be time is one that long precedes contemporary physics. It extends back at least to the ancient Greeks and probably beyond. But it was in 1908 that J.M.E. McTaggart published the most famous, controversial and vexing paper on the issue that set the stage for

point out that the idea that there is a single moment which is the real present, and that which moment is present changes, comes perilously close to being inconsistent with the special theory of relativity. They champion a much thinner notion of time according to which all that is needed for there to be time is for there to be instants that are ordered into earlier, later, and simultaneous with, one another.

Part of what motivates those who champion a thinner conception of time are developments in physics in the early 20th century. Nearly everyone is familiar with the way in which the theories of special and general relativity changed our understanding of space and time. Indeed, one way of conceiving of Einstein’s discoveries is as the first salvo in the war against time. After all, it is widely agreed (though not by everyone—those who think time flows reject certain aspects of the theory of special relativity) that the upshot of special and general relativity is that we must put to rest the folk idea there is some fact of the matter as to which events truly happen at the same time and which happen before and after other events. We could see this discovery as the first attack on time since many everyday assumptions about time were overturned. Yet it is interesting that despite this, we did not conclude that there is no time. Instead, Einstein’s message was that time is starkly different to the way we had previously taken

it to be. Thus what might have appeared to be an attack on time turns out not to be.

To me, that suggests that our concept of time is neither the thick nor the thin conception typically offered by philosophers. Instead, it seems plausible that our concept is both very abstract and highly malleable. Our concept of time and our concept of ourselves as agents are inextricably linked. We live in the world in a timey way. Time is, in a way, the thing that allows us to make sense of ourselves acting in the world. That is why I am inclined to think that time is, for us, whatever it is in the world that explains why events seem to be ordered one after another and whatever it is that allows there to be change, motion, decision, and agency. Time

change, and agency. We would need to discover that much of the way we experience the world is illusory, and much of our way of being in the world is the result of a delusion. That could happen. Arguably some of the timeless theories of quantum gravity are such that if any of them were true this would be the discovery that there is no change, no agency, no past and no future. Then there really would be no time.

My suspicion, however, is that many so-called timeless theories are not timeless in this sense: there is something which, according to these theories, does not exist and which some scientists are apt to call “time”. It will certainly be an interesting discovery that there is none of that, whatever it is. Yet I am not

“It is very unclear what we all mean when we talk about time. What is our concept of time?”

is whatever it is that plays a certain metaphysical role—the role of making possible motion, change and agency.

If that is right then it makes it less likely that whatever physicists discover about our world, it will be the discovery that there is no time. To make that discovery we would need to find out that there is really is nothing at all that makes possible motion,

inclined to conclude that there is, therefore, no time in the ordinary sense in which you and I use the term: the sense in which our lives are inextricably temporally bound, temporally extended and temporally directed.

Time, work and fair reward

A Canadian management theorist showed that managers' time span of thinking defines what they are worth.

by Meredith Doig

Outrage over excessive levels of executive pay rose following the 2008 global financial crisis but in Australia it never reached the fever pitch experienced in the United States. It is not hard to see why. In 2013, CEOs of large American companies received on average more than 350 times the take home pay of the average worker (Globalist, 2013), while in Australia the gap is more like 100:1. This outrage has led to a number of proposals designed to limit senior executive pay, from capping the amount that can be deducted for tax purposes to amending the *Corporations Act* to make it easier for shareholders to sue boards for irresponsible pay practices (Morrow, 2009). These proposals may satisfy blood lust but they fail to address the fundamental fallacy that underlies executive pay: “pay for performance”.

The theory of paying for performance assumes CEOs are rewarded in line with the performance of the companies they lead, usually measured by the share price (or something similar). In practice however, CEO salaries are set *relative to other CEO salaries*. Most large companies participate in ‘salary surveys’, exchanging

data about senior executives’ pay in order to gauge the extent to which they are paying market rates. These companies also set a policy to pay their executives at some point in the relevant market. For large corporates, this is often the 75th percentile. But when most companies aim to pay their executives at the 75th percentile, the effect is to automatically ratchet up pay levels each year, irrespective of performance. This racket was clearly explained by Graef Crystal, former Vice President of Towers Perrin, one of the US’s leading compensation firms, in his damning expose “What Are You Worth?” (Crystal, 1992).

There is an alternative. If, rather than playing the sort of game Crystal reveals, executives were paid for the *weight* of the work they do as opposed to movements in the share price, which can be relatively easily manipulated, we can see what reasonable salary levels might look like. The MD of a medium sized firm could be paid around \$400,000 and few would bat an eye; the head of a global company could be paid a couple of million dollars and the general public would not be upset.

But how to measure the weight of work?

It feels heavy

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Canadian social scientist Dr Elliott Jaques worked as a social analyst at the Glacier Metal Company, an automotive parts manufacturer in England. For around 20 years, he gathered information about how the company operated, from shopfloor to board room: its roles and relationships, authorities and accountabilities, pay and performance. Out of this mass of long term data there gradually emerged Jaques' *General Theory of Bureaucracy*, an extraordinarily comprehensive and complex work, based largely on a surprising insight about the role of time in understanding the nature of work.

Jaques' great discovery came about when he was analysing how workers on the shopfloor viewed their managers: were they respected or reviled, envied or dismissed as inconsequential; in particular, were they worth the salaries they were paid? Unlike today, Western nations at that time still clung to the idea that equality was something to be valued and sought. Yet the workers in Jaques' study acknowledged that competent bosses did merit significantly more pay than those on the shopfloor. Why, and how much more?

It turned out that 'felt fair pay' had something to do with the *weight* of decision-making and subsequent action involved at each level of the managerial hierarchy. And the weight of decision-making was directly related to what Jaques called the 'time span of discretion' of each role. Time span of discretion is "the longest period which can elapse in a role before the manager can be sure his (sic) subordinate has not been exercising marginally sub-standard discretion continuously in balancing the pace and quality of his work" (Jaques, *A General Theory of Bureaucracy*, 1976, p. 109). In other words, the time span of a role is how long it takes before a manager knows definitively his decisions/actions (including task delegations) have gone wrong.

So, for example, the Managing Director of the Glacier Metal Company had to make decisions the wisdom of which might not show up for seven or eight years: major mergers or acquisitions, development of new products or entering new markets. Decisions by workers on the shopfloor on the other hand had consequences that could be measured in days or weeks; in between, section or department managers made decisions whose 'weight' could be measured in months.

For a company the size of Glacier, five levels could be distinguished in this managerial hierarchy, with time spans from weeks to 10 years:

	Typical roles	Time Span of Discretion
Stratum I	Shop or office floor roles	A week – 3 months
Stratum II	Foreman / Superintendent	3 months – a year
Stratum III	Department Head	A year – 2 years
Stratum IV	General Manager	2 years – 5 years
Stratum V	Managing Director	5 years – 10 years

Jaques found there was a consistent sense of felt-fairness across the workforce if pay was correlated to this sense of the weight of a role as measured by its time span of discretion. "Payment at equitable level for the time-span of work involved appears to induce a feeling that in principle the wage or salary is reasonable. A person might want more, wish the country were richer and that everyone had more, or resent the fact that some groups appeared to be paid at above equity rates. He might, moreover, feel he was entitled to more because he was capable of higher level of work but there were no opportunities for him to get a job at his warranted level. But he would still be of the view that his pay level was equitable for the work he was being given to do, even though he himself was worth more." (Jaques, *A General Theory of Bureaucracy*, 1976, p. 231)

Further, he found workers instinctively respected bosses whose personal capacities enabled them to properly meet the challenges of the weight of their role. Eventually, this led to the proposal that for any organisation, there are a *requisite* number of levels in a managerial hierarchy. Too many levels and employees feel micro-managed; too few and they feel abandoned with insufficient support and coaching.

This fundamental finding, that there should be neither too many nor too few levels within a managerial hierarchy, led over recent decades to waves of fashionable downsizing and rightsizing, flattening and restructuring. While some of these exercises have no doubt been based on a genuine understanding of *why* there should be fewer managerial layers, most have taken the opportunity, provided by some distant and underappreciated theory, to indulge in simple cost cutting.

A good idea too far?

There is something inherently *reasonable* about Jaques' notions of time-span of discretion and requisite number of layers in an organisation. But Jaques was a psychiatrist as well as a sociologist and it seems he couldn't resist extending his findings to the arena of psychology.

Jaques wanted to explain the *why* of his requisite organisation model. Why is it that organisations with too many layers are dysfunctional, and why is it that some managers earn the respect of their workers by effectively fulfilling the challenge of the work of their roles?

The answer, for Jaques, came from the fact of individual differences in humans' personal capacities. Just as there are distinct and recognisable levels of work in a managerial hierarchy, the boundaries of which can be measured by discontinuous time spans, so, he postulated, there are distinct and recognisable levels of human capacity which correlate to the levels of work in organisations: "The levels in the depth-structure of bureaucratic hierarchies follow from the existence of sub-populations each with its own particular state of work-capacity." (Jaques, *A General Theory of Bureaucracy*, 1976, p. 139)

Drawing on prior work of psychologists like Jean Piaget (1953) and D.J. Isaac (1969), Jaques proposed that a person's work-capacity develops over their lifetime in a series of *discontinuous* jumps, each stage characterised by differences in both the quality and the quantity of cognitive operating. The existence of these discontinuous stages of cognitive development are the *reason*, said Jaques, there are distinct levels within organisations. Each stage of cognitive development, with its attendant quality of thinking capacity, corresponds to the work challenges at a particular level within an organisation:

"The capacity to manage activity through time is the counterpart of, and depends upon, the capacity to analyse and detail situations, to pattern and order the detail. The capacity to analyse, pattern and order detail depends upon the organising and conceptualising capacity of the mind. The wider the span of the hierarchy of concepts a person is capable of manipulating, the greater is the range of detail he is capable of organizing and therefore the greater his work-capacity. Since categorisation is a discontinuous process, so too will work-capacity in populations be found to be discontinuous." (Jaques, 1976, p. 157)

This remarkable conceptual leap led Jaques to postulate a set of mental capacities that correlate with the set of work challenges of his stratified organisation:

	Work Challenges	Cognitive Processing
Stratum I	Direct action: problems are dealt with as they are encountered, using given rules or previously learned methods.	Assertive processing: unsupported verbal assertions.
Stratum II	Diagnostic accumulation: problems have to be anticipated and resolved by using previously accumulated information.	Cumulative processing: arguments supported by accumulated data.
Stratum III	Alternative serial plans: Tasks are addressed by choosing the best of several options and then planning a way forward.	Serial processing: arguments organised as a logical series of events.
Stratum IV	Mutually interactive programs: Optimum outcomes are achieved by balancing time and resources across interacting projects.	Parallel processing: arguments involving several lines of argument at once.
Stratum V	Overall organisational progress achieved by 'sensing' interconnections between multiple plans, projects and pathways.	Assertive processing: at a conceptual level.

Implications of Felt Fair Pay

While Stratified Systems Theory has had its fair share of critics (see for example, *The Glacier Project: Concepts and Critiques*, 1976), the idea that some objective measure correlates to a sense of fairness in pay is interesting when considering current levels of CEO pay in Australia and elsewhere.

In *Requisite Organization: The CEO's Guide to Creative Structure and Leadership* (Jaques E. , 1989) Jaques worked out mathematical multiples corresponding to the time spans of organisational strata. In Australia at present, a department level manager (a Finance Manager or an Operations Manager) is paid between \$60,000 and \$150,000 – let's call it \$100,000. The table below uses these multiples to show what felt-fair pay would look like relative to this amount, from a minimum entry level role

through to the CEO of a global company.

	Time Span	Multiple	Maximum package
Entry level minimum	Days	0.17	\$17,000
Associates	Up to 3 months	0.31	\$31,000
First Line Manager	3—12 months	0.55	\$55,000
Department Manager	1—2 years	1	\$100,000
General Manager	2—5 years	2	\$200,000
Managing Director	5—10 years	4	\$400,000
Group Executive	10—20 years	8	\$800,000
Global CEO	20 years plus	16	\$1,600,000

Clearly current executive salaries are nothing like the table above. Taking a cue from US-style 'pay for performance', senior executive salaries in Australia have been inflated way beyond what most people feel is fair relative to other salaries. Jaques' notion of time span tells us why.

The theory of 'pay for performance' is a notion concocted by consultants for client boards and CEOs intent on mutual self-interest. The measures of performance used are notoriously slippery, easily manipulated and with little sense of 'value for money'. Instead, why not pay executives for the weight of responsibility they bear in facing up to the challenges of the work they do? If Jaques is right, the outrage would dissipate and disappear.

References

- Crystal, G. (1992). *What Are You Worth?* Whittle Direct Books.
- Globalist, T. (2013, November 21). *Just the Facts: CEOs and the Rest of Us*. Retrieved April 25, 2014, from The Globalist : <http://www.theglobalist.com/just-facts-ceos-rest-us/>
- Gray, J. (1976). *The Glacier Project: Concepts and Critiques*. New York: Crane, Russak & Company.
- Isaac, D. J. (1969). Experimental Treatment of a Discontinuity Theory of Psychological Development. *Human Relations*, 427-455.
- Jaques, E. (1976). *A General Theory of Bureaucracy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Jaques, E. (1989). *Requisite Organization: The CEO's Guide to Creative Structure & Leadership*. United States: Cason Hall and Co.
- Morrow, M. (2009, February). *The executive pay controversy*. Retrieved April 25, 2014, from CEO Forum Group: <http://www.ceoforum.com.au/article-detail.cfm?cid=9468&t=/Martin-Morrow--KPMG-Australia/The-executive-pay-controversy/>
- Piaget, J. (1953). *Origin of Intelligence in the Child*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Science versus time

An ongoing mystery story.

Few aspects of existence are as difficult to identify or describe as time. Few, at least with normal mental faculties, say they do not know what time is. But when it is examined more closely, it becomes elusive.

It is putting time and science into an uneasy relationship. Science is concerned mainly with observing and analysing physical

to think of physical reality as a four dimensional existence, instead of, as hitherto, the evolution of a three dimensional existence.”

Einstein went on to say that the “separation between past, present and future is only an illusion, although a convincing one.”

Science’s structural antipathy to time was complete. But then along came the uncertainties of quantum mechanics, with

“Time is not a thing in actual existence with qualities and attributes,” -- J.B. Priestley.

events. But as the writer J.B. Priestley argues in *Man & Time*, this becomes a problem with time.

“Time is not a thing in actual existence with qualities and attributes,” writes Priestley. “If I seem to suggest that it is, I am doing this for convenience of reference. I realize that Time is a concept abstracted from our unavoidable acquaintance with succession and all our before and afters. I regard it as a condition of our experience.”

Priestley says the problem is that time is too close: remaining “in our eyes as we look, in our minds as they record, refusing to be an object that can be detached and captured.” He compares it being like a knight wandering through forests looking for a magic beast, not realising that it is “the horse he is riding.”

Science has a structural antipathy to time, usually trying to remove it as a primary consideration.. A scientific “law” cannot be said to be true at one time yet not true at another time. If it does not apply at all times it is not a law. Indeed the situation is even more extreme. Virtually all the laws of physics can be played backwards in time – from the future back to the past – except for the law of entropy (gradual decline into disorder). Time, it seems, does not sit well with science.

One response is to simply make time a dimension of space, the approach used by Albert Einstein, who coined the term “space time”. This exploits the perspective afforded by imagining that one can see across space for vast distances, thus “seeing” other times. When we look at the light from a star, for instance, we are witnessing light from millions of years ago. In that sense, we are “witnessing” the past. From this perspective it is possible to imagine time as just a dimension of space.

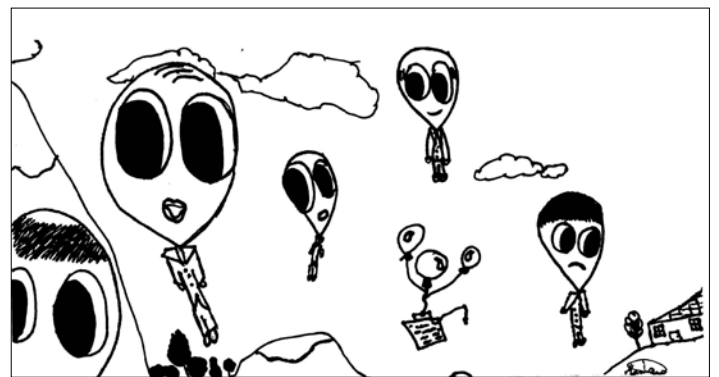
Einstein in effect dismissed, or at least tried to reposition, time, because what is “now” is relative to where you are standing in space.

“Since there exists in this four dimensional structure [space-time] no longer any sections which represent “now” objectively, the concepts of happening and becoming are indeed not completely suspended, but yet complicated. It appears therefore more natural

its inherent un-predictabilities. It meant that time could not be eliminated; because of the Uncertainty Principle each time the result could be different. When Einstein said he did not believe “God plays dice with the universe” he meant that he could not mean that the result could be different each time.

More recently, scientists have speculated about “multi-verses” rather than a universe: many worlds in which events are different in each. This, too, is a subtle way of removing time as a problem. If every conceivable outcome is played out in one universe or another, then it is not necessary to have a law that works each time in this universe. It is sure to work in another universe. All possible times are covered, so time can be removed as a problem. One can return safely to the timelessness of maths.

The scientific theories will no doubt get stranger, but science’s antipathy to time will remain. At heart, the problem is captured by the question: “What happened before the universe began and the laws of physics were established?” It is impossible to answer, because “before” implies there was a time earlier than when time began. In the end, the puzzles of time lie beyond language and thought.



“Physicists contemplate cosmic inflation”

Question: Do we need to change the racial discrimination laws?

Martin Hirst is associate professor of Journalism and Media at Deakin University.

There are two certainties about *The Australian* and *The Weekend Australian* that make the occasional perusal of them a tiresome duty. You understand I only do it for research purposes.

1. The News Limited propaganda sheet is tireless and relentless in pursuit of the shibboleths that occupy the increasingly erratic thoughts of the Dear Leader, Chairman Murdoch

2. The pervasive groupthink emanating from the News Limited bunkers displays a remarkably consistent level of shared paranoia, delusion and editorial agreement among the Thought Police.

Nowhere are these certainties more likely to reveal themselves than in the fevered attention the paper is lavishing on the supposed attack on free speech posed by Section 18C and 18D of the Racial Discrimination Act. News Limited's considerable, yet unprofitable editorial resources are being harnessed in unwavering support for George "right to be a bigot" Brandis in his campaign to make it OK to be a racist in 21st century Australia.

In *The Weekend Australian* 29–30 March 2014 there were no less than six pieces supporting the campaign to have the 'Bolt' amendment passed in Parliament. This is not really surprising; between 15 February and 14 April this year *The Australian* and *Weekend Australian* published more than 60 news stories, opinion pieces and editorials on the 'free speech' question. Most of them were commenting on the proposed Section 18C and 18D amendments

That figure alone is an indictment of their bleating claims that debate is being shut down and that 18C has a chilling effect on free speech. These free speech warriors are able to prosecute their case freely and at great length with the support of several lengthy editorials and acres of newsprint.

I respect the editorial right to publish as you please if you own the means to do so, but let's not confuse corporate ownership of a press with the individual or personal right to freedom of speech. The real issue here is that it is not a debate as such in the pages of *The Australian* and *The Weekend Australian*. It is all one-way traffic; it is propaganda without answer. Perhaps it is wishful thinking to argue that a newspaper that claims to take freedom of speech and debate so seriously would allow an oppositional voice. But after all, News Limited has knowingly and enthusiastically taken on the role of the Coalition's party-political mouthpiece, so I won't be so naive. How about you?

And the issue is?

Before Bolt there was no problem with 18C or 18D, so what's the problem now? The problem is that people like Bolt have relied on the exercise of their privileged right to speak and to pontificate

from the bully pulpits of their newspaper columns, company-supported blogs and subsidised television soapboxes.

The problem for these defenders of privilege is that their right is now being challenged by other voices not under their control. But it would seem self-serving for them to rally around that particular battle cry and also perhaps a bit vulgar.

So, instead, they pretend that there is a 'war' against freedom of speech; a war that demands their sacrifice and fusillades from the ramparts of conservatism. As we will see, in order to campaign for their rights, the rights of others have to be trampled and history has to be rewritten. Like Winston Smith in 1984, but without his insights into the horror of what he was doing, they throw yesterday's version into the memory hole and recast today in light of tomorrow's political imperative.

It's not so long since the valiant libertarian storm troopers of News Limited fought off the attacks of the former ALP government which they argued was trying to impose Stalinesque totalitarian censorship on the heroic champions of freedom – Rupert Murdoch, Andrew Bolt and the Institute of Public Affairs.

It really was a blitzkrieg of freedom.

Now Liberty's defenders are once again throwing themselves selflessly into the breach against the black hundreds of the "Left" who want nothing more than to close down Murdoch's tribunes of freedom so that they can make us all into tofu-munching, multicultural poofter-loving, tree-hugging, anti-fracking drones who will then undo all of God's work by making everyone equal by abolishing the right to live in poverty while the one percenters further bloat themselves at our expense and the planet falls into a smog induced coma.

There is only one way to describe the hive mind ideas that circulate in the corridors of News Limited where the air is thick with intrigue and Left conspiracy theories. Whacky. The feeling created from the combination of a lack of oxygen and sunlight is one of free speech fundamentalism and the coma-like state is maintained through the mandated ingestion of the company Kool Aid.

Free speech fundamentalism

I use the term free speech fundamentalism to describe the zealotry with which *The Weekend Australian* (emblematic of the output from the Limited News presses) pursues the cause of repealing Section 18C of the RDA.

The approach is well characterised by a guest contributor to *The Weekend Australian* (29–30 March 2014), Gabriel Sassoon.

Sassoon is straight from Central Casting, perfect for the walk-

on role he's been allocated in this free speech drama. According to the bio supplied, Sassoon is an ALP member [tick the box]; he is Jewish [tick the box]; he claims to be a fighter for human rights and he works in Tel Aviv for members of the Israeli Labour Party [presumably this absolves him from supporting real human rights for Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories].

Also, the fact that Sassoon is Jewish is also useful because it means that anyone who criticises him can be tarred with the accusation of anti-Semitism, the veil behind which the pro-Israel lobby likes to conceal its own apartheid. The fundamentalist approach is well articulated in Sassoon's opening comments:

The measure of a society's commitment to free speech is the extent to which it protects offensive, unpopular speech. Free speech is hard: it has any meaning only if it protects the most virulent and obnoxious of views.

Further definition is given a few pars later:

...free speech is the pre-eminent human right...free speech is the right from which all others flow. It is the right that guarantees all others.

Sassoon continues in this vein for some 600 plus words on page 1 and 2.

Why should virulent and obnoxious views be protected as free speech? What right do racists, homophobes, sexist cretins and other hate speakers have to poison the world with their vile and uncomplicated idiotic and disproven prejudices? Surely a sane person would argue the opposite; that is that the victims of hate speech actually deserve the right to protection from obnoxious bullies and ignorant bigots.

Inevitably, this commissioned opinion piece is flagged as an "Exclusive" by the paper, although it is not remotely news-related, nor is it reporting. But let's focus, for a moment, on the idea that free speech is the 'pre-eminent human right' that 'guarantees all others'.

In my view this is a theological doctrine of the free speech fundamentalists that does not stand even a second of scrutiny. You only have to look at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted in 1948 by the United Nations to see that freedom of speech is actually quite low in the hierarchy established some 65 years ago.

The first 'right' established at Article 1 of the Declaration reads as follows:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Leaving aside the archaic and sexist use of the term 'brotherhood' here, the key issue seems to be 'free and equal in dignity and rights' and that people should act towards one another in a spirit of generosity that maintains the dignity of both parties.

Racists and other bigots breach this principle every time they

open their foul gobs.

The second article is about the universal application of the rights espoused in the Declaration's 30 clauses. The real work begins in Article 3 and — surprisingly perhaps — it is NOT about freedom of speech.

Article 3• Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

This is the fundamental right — the right to not be murdered, to not be wrongly imprisoned and the right not to be beaten-up or otherwise have your 'security of person' interfered with. What use is the right to speak if your speech does not lead to action or consequence? Articles 4 & 5 are about freedom from slavery and freedom from torture.

Articles 6 through to 12 are about rights before the law. Article 13 is about freedom of movement and migration.

Article 14 is about the right to seek asylum, but this one it seems does not apply to those seeking asylum in Australia who travel by sea. Funnily enough, none of the free speech fundamentalists has yet spoken up about these rights. Most of them actually support Abbott on this – certainly News Limited and the IPA are right behind Operation Sovereign Borders.

News Limited has taken a vow of silence on any criticism of Scott Morrison and has been a champion of punishing the ABC for exercising its right to broadcast uncomfortable news about the asylum-seeker issue.

Article 15 is about the right to a nationality (again, not apparently applicable to Palestinians in the Occupied Territories); 16 is about freedom to marry, but perhaps it only applies to heterosexuals; 17 is about freedom to own property; 18 is about freedom of 'thought, conscience and religion' and 19 is about free speech.

Yes, that's right; according to the collective wisdom of the United Nations (for better or worse) in 1948, the right to freedom of expression is number 19 on a list of 30. You might have thought that if the UN shared the libertarian obsession with freedom of speech it would have rated much higher than it does. You might also have expected that it would have a pre-eminent place in the Preamble, but it doesn't.

Pre-eminent in the Preamble is this phrase:

...recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

So we come, at last to free speech:

Article 19• Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20 is related to this — it is the right to freedom of assembly.

And coincidentally (or not), both the IPA and News Limited are only supporters of a limited application of Article 20. Both are enthusiastic supporters of the government's political, ideological and industrial fatwah on the trade union movement.

Forgive me for thinking these conservative champions of my 'freedoms' are not to be trusted when it comes to protecting my freedom of speech or of assembly through my trade union membership and forgive me for calling them hypocrites, for that is surely what they are.

So, for the drafters of the Universal Declaration this trio – freedom of religion, expression and assembly, are important, but not pre-eminent. They are in the bottom half of the list.

The last third of the Declaration is about the right to a job, a house, food, education and participation in cultural life. All of these are important and in my view a home, a full belly, reading and writing and the ability to sing and dance without persecution are all precursor rights to the right to freedom of speech if it is to mean anything at all.

Now to the objections raised by those wanting to tear down S18C and 18D. For the fundamentalists the United Nations Declaration document is flawed because it does not support their libertarian hierarchy of rights that fetishises freedom of speech. They would argue that it reflects the Left's emphasis on conformity and group rights over individual rights, but that is no more than sophistry.

The Declaration was written by the nations that emerged victorious from the Second World War and it was crafted by these imperial leaders against a backdrop of a global war in which the horrors of Fascism were all too clear to see in Spain, Italy and Germany. However, there is a view of history much more favourable to the free speech fundamentalists and it too is regularly on display in *The Australian* and *The Weekend Australian*.

The right to be a racist

I am grateful to journalist Brendan O'Neill for one thing — he makes it clear that what he is arguing for is the 'right' to be racist. It is important to put this on the record and to challenge everyone who wants to repeal 18C to clearly say if this is actually what they intend to support. I will come back to this in the context of recent comments John Roskam from the Institute of Public Affairs, but first here's Mr O'Neill.

The Bolt case is no Aussie one-off — it's better understood as part of a global war against so-called hate speech, where states are clamping down on what they consider to be offensive words, and in the process are criminalising certain moral, political and religious world views and trampling on freedom of speech.

This is just plain stupid. The way that O'Neill and his fellow warriors write about this issue it gives the impression (deliberately) that somehow the free speech fundamentalists are fighting a defensive battle against further encroachments on their rights.

This is simply not the case, it is a distortion designed to make out that they are the victims in this matter and that 'the state' is in the hands of insidious creepy faceless Lefties who are intent on turning the world into some Soviet-style dystopia.

Seriously, do not think for a minute that these paid touts even believe their own propaganda. It is the height of their arrogance that they think the rest of us are dupes who will simply swallow their dire "warnings" as if there is gospel truth in their lies. It is time to turn the question back on these defenders of bigotry.

There was an enlightening exchange between John Roskam (executive director of the IPA) and ABC talkbot Jon Faine in the last week of March in which Roskam made it clear that he is in favour of the right to bigotry. Roskam asked the most pertinent question in this debate: (paraphrase, I don't have a transcript) Should it be against the law to be racist?

His answer is a resounding "No", but to his credit Jon Faine seemed to think that the right to be a bigot was one of the most offensive lines he'd ever heard. This really is at the nub of the debate about the repeal of 18C.

Is it OK to publicly air your racist views and prejudices without some form of social sanction? The IPA's position has been made clear, time and time again: the organisation wants the right to be racist protected from legislation. Here's a speech from prominent Liberal and IPA supporter, David Kemp:

The federal law depends on the notion that there is something special about a racial insult, but is there? Why is a special law needed for racial insults?

Kemp then makes a tactical elision in his argument, referring to 'overblown rhetoric' and arguing that rhetoric alone is not enough to cause offence. But he deliberately hides the real point — that words precede action.

In the Bolt case the words were not uttered to be mere words alone. Bolt always has a political purpose — to advance the cause of conservatism in the service of capitalism and its ruling class — and the purpose of stirring racism by uttering racist crap is to divide and to sow division among workers so that they are easier to manipulate and manage.

As a decorated class warrior David Kemp knows this, but he can't say it out loud, lest his political mission be exposed. Here's another quick snapshot of the IPA's views on Section 18C and 18D taken from another speech, this time from Garrick Professor of Law at the University of Queensland, James Allan:

"Think about it. Someone's subjective sense of being offended or humiliated has been made determinative of whether an unlawful act has been committed, subject to a few exemptions in section 18D.

...So what they really want is a right not to be offended, as long as it's the sort of things a good chardonnay-sipping member of the progressive elite ought to be offended about, nothing else."

Again, the real point is deliberately missed in a dig at the ‘progressive elite’. The targets of racial vilification – those who are really offended, insulted and intimidated by racist speech — are those less able to defend themselves. It is the factory workers with poor English skills who work long hours in low paid jobs and struggle to meet the requirements of decent food, housing, education and participation who are most at risk. In fact the very people that the drafters of the Universal Declaration had in mind in 1948.

It is hard not to conclude that the IPA is in favour of rights for racists, but not for the victims of racism. This is from the IPA’s Legal Rights Project, Simon Breheny:

“The establishment of a crime for incitement to racial hatred would be a dangerous restriction on freedom of speech. If it had been in place in 2011, Andrew Bolt could have been sent to jail,” said Mr Breheny.

This proposal is part of the Coalition’s response to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. Section 18C was the law used to take Herald Sun journalist Andrew Bolt to court in 2011 over two articles he had written on a matter of public policy in 2009. The provision makes it unlawful to “offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate” a person because of race, nationality or ethnicity.

“Section 18C is a significant limitation on freedom of speech. The Coalition acknowledged the negative impact this law has on

free speech while in opposition, and on several occasions promised to repeal it,” said Mr Breheny.

“Now the Coalition has won government it must act on its election commitment. But recent media reports have suggested the government is planning to only remove the words “offend” and “insult” from the provision. Merely amending section 18C would fail to restore free speech in Australia,” said Mr Breheny.

So not only does the IPA and its libertarian lunatic fringe want 18C repealed they are also for decriminalising hate speech. These people are the ideological engine room of the Coalition and Tony Abbott has rewarded their support by speaking regularly on their platforms.

Let me leave you with another mis-statement. This one is from Mr O’Neill and is an invocation of Godwin’s Law – that the first person to mention Hitler loses the argument. So this has no credibility, except it is a nice (though not thought-through by O’Neill) statement about how Bolt and his supporters are campaigning against 18C and 18D:

“The Nazis turned their prosecutions for hate speech to their advantage, presenting themselves as political victims and whipping up public support among aggrieved sections of German society, their future social base.”

Precisely the aim of News Limited’s persecuted columnists.

Robert Stephens is a writer

It is hard to find two more nebulous concepts than “rights” and “freedom”. So it is little surprise that the current debate about the balance between freedom of speech and the right not to be racially vilified is vexed. “Freedom” can be interpreted in many, even opposite ways (the freedom to choose versus the freedom from the tyranny of choice, for example). And “rights” are the legal equivalent of rabbits. Let them loose and they never stop increasing in number.

Neither can rights and freedoms be neatly contrasted. Tim Soutphommasane, Australia’s Race Discrimination Commissioner, in this year’s Alice Tay Lecture in Law and Human Rights at the Australian National University, noted that the loss of the right not to be vilified felt like a loss of freedom:

“A few years ago, in developing the National Anti-Racism Strategy, the Australian Human Rights Commission conducted a consultation involving a survey of Australians’ perceptions and experiences of racism. It was commonplace for many respondents to reflect on how sad and angry the experience of racism made them feel, and how racism diminished their sense of worth. One

respondent, a male from China in his late thirties, said, “I came to Australia for freedom. However, racism makes me feel my liberty is incomplete.”

On the other side of the debate, I have little doubt that commentators like Andrew Bolt, who want to express their “free speech”, not only claim it as an independent right, but also would argue that they have a right not to be vilified and sued (successfully, as it turned out) by the targets of their attacks. One side demands the freedom to criticise; the other demands the freedom that comes from not being criticised. One side demands the right to say something; the other demands the right to prevent it being said.

The only certainties here are that there are fundamentally different understandings of the basic concepts of freedom and rights and that it is not something that can be decided by simply opting for the majority opinion. It is a legal problem; it must have a legal solution.

Perhaps some other perspectives might help. One way to look at it is to assess the damage done. This is not an argument based on legal principle, but it might offer some pointers.

How much harm do the current race laws do to free speech? According to research by the University of Queensland's Katherine Gelber and the University of Wollongong's Luke McNamara, not much. Their research showed that fewer than 4000 formal complaints were lodged across the country in the two decades from 1990 to 2010, an average of 200 complaints a year. By contrast, there were 12,000 in NSW alone for the crime of using offensive language in a public place.

Fewer than 2 per cent of complaints resulted in a court decision. Usually, an apology or correction, and removal of the material,

does not mean the State should introduce preventative legislation to curb them. Too often, legal issues are approached as moral contests, which is not the State's domain.

The signal sent by the State that certain types of objectively assessed offence are inadmissible represents an important message about tolerance in a society as diverse as Australia (and in which racism is as common as most other countries). But it is also possible that the signal sent by the anti-vilification laws also has a contradictory effect. It may encourage certain types of bigotry to be taken seriously, amplifying the harm done.

The signal sent by the State that certain types of objectively assessed offence are inadmissible represents an important message about tolerance in a society as diverse as Australia

sufficed. "One of the biggest fears voiced by opponents of hate speech laws is that they have a chilling effect and stifle public debate on important issues. Our 20-year study of media content shows no evidence of such a chilling effect," comment Gelber and McNamara. So it seems the harm felt by Andrew Bolt (which is probably not financial; it is likely his company paid any legal costs), is fairly unusual.

The next question is: "How much harm is done when you ban the right to make racially offensive comments?" This is more hypothetical, but as the Racial Discrimination Commissioner points out, the harm and distress experienced by those subjected to racism can be considerable. Those who, by contrast, feel constrained by the current vilification laws seem less likely to experience deep distress. Frustration, perhaps, at not being able to vent the full force of their views in public, but not powerful emotions that deeply affect their sense of themselves. Of course there will be exceptions, but this seems generally the case.

Another question that might be useful is: "What is the effect of the existing laws on social cohesion?" As Gelber and McNamara show, there is little evidence that the existing laws greatly impede those who crave more freedom of speech (although it may be that they simply are good at abiding by the law). But there may be good reason to think that loosening the laws will increase instability in a society that is one of the most multicultural in the world. At first glance, it would seem to be an aid to racial tolerance to have in place strong laws against racial vilification.

But is it? Which is better, stopping people saying hurtful or offensive things, or allowing them to do so and letting the best utterances "win" – the so called market place of ideas? I suspect this is more complex than it first appears. The Attorney General George Brandis has commented that people have the "right to be bigots". In one sense, he is right. The State should not be a moral arbiter. Just because we don't like some views, or some people,

I, for one, do not read Andrew Bolt very often. When I do, usually when a newspaper happens to be lying around in the local fish and chip shop, it is a source of considerable amusement. The techniques of provocation are so transparent: journalistic pantomime, skillfully executed. What I do not do is ever take him seriously. True, I have not been the target of his personal attacks. But it is worth remembering that the current furore over rights and freedoms has helped advance his technique of marketing by giving offence.

Perhaps the greatest harm created by poor quality media is what it does to our use of public language. The persistent debasement of public language produced by "shock jocks" and extremist media draws everyone into its vortex. When language is abused, it is easy to respond by trying to "correct" it; hence the advent of political correctness. But such efforts are based on the assumption that language has only one level and there is always a simple, one-to-one relationship between language and intent.

This is not so. Language has multiple layers (News Corp newspapers excepted, of course) and many shades of expression. We are robbed of this when we start to become overly prescriptive. The harm caused by racism is something that all civilized societies should aggressively seek to diminish. But this should be focused on the intent behind the language, not the language itself.

After all, Afro-Americans can happily use words for each other that would be considered deeply offensive if they came from a white person. It is not the words themselves, it is what the words reveal about a person's intent. In law, establishing intent is always difficult, but it should be the test used in vilification legislation.



Venue for hire

Share the comfort and the history of the rooms where Von Mueller planned the Botanic Gardens, where Burke & Wills organised their explorations, where Phillip Law discussed Antarctic discoveries.

Ideal facilities available for:

Product launches, film shoots, workshops seminars, lectures, conferences, weddings, dinners, parties and celebrations that need 'that special place'.

To discuss your needs email James@sciencevictoria.org.au

Then call Jill on **03 9663 5259** to arrange an inspection at 8 La Trobe Street, Melbourne.

**For an overview of Society offerings, visit
www.royalsocietyvictoria.org.au**

When the rational mind fails

A story about the pernicious effects of depression.

by Leo D'Angelo-Fisher

Near as I can pinpoint it, I have suffered from depression since I was 14. I was in “Form 3”, today’s year 9, and depression enveloped me like a giant black fog. I had thoughts of suicide; I was terrified of “failure” and disappointing my parents who had sacrificed to send their first-born to a prestigious private school; I was afraid of not fitting in. On those days when the mood set in, I would dread getting out of bed; my heart would sink when my bus arrived at school – how I wished that bus would just keep going with me in it; and sitting in the classroom was agony.

I was a working-class son of immigrant stock from the wrong side of Melbourne. Introverted, afraid, self-loathing, I thought this confused inner turmoil was my private, secret hell. But one of the “masters” saw that something was amiss and took me under his wing. I was so grateful for his compassion and understanding. The feeling of release was indescribable. We had long talks and things settled down for a time.

Even so, I hated school and as result I didn’t make the most of being at one of Melbourne’s best schools. Despite my introversion,

ANU I was permitted to return the following year. I continued writing, honing my craft and building up a portfolio of published articles. Student politics provided an unlikely outlet – I even enjoyed speaking at rowdy student councils. But on these occasions I was somebody else. When I was in my room at my residential college I – the real “I” – would not venture out if I could hear anyone in the hallway.

True tragedy strikes

Until this point, I was my only tragedy. But when I returned to Melbourne and the family home, true tragedy struck. My youngest brother – I was the eldest of four brothers – died by his own hand when he was alone in the house. He was just 15. Four years later, my second-youngest brother died at 22 in a car smash. I saw both bodies; in the latter case I had to identify my brother.

These were devastating blows, but I’ve never really “processed” my brothers’ deaths. Soon after my youngest brother died, I got my first job, as a reporter for the Numurkah Leader in northern Victoria. My career was off and running, and so was I.

When the fog descended on me – it’s a physical sensation, I can feel its terrible weight on my person – I could somehow keep it at bay as long as I was working.

as a budding cartoonist I found that I had the ability to make people laugh. My cartoons about school life, including parodies of various teachers, were published in the school paper. But I remained an outsider, even if only in my mind.

It was the solitary passion of writing that became my solace. At home I wrote a weekly neighbourhood newspaper by hand. I preferred writing short stories and plays to going out on weekend outings with the family, much to my parents’ consternation. A comedy play I wrote was performed at school and was a big hit, but such moments were not enough to banish this boy’s demons.

The black moods came and went, confounding my parents, who responded by signing me up to gyms and dance classes, which only sent me into deeper despair. When I had the opportunity to go to the Australian National University in Canberra I jumped at it. It became part of a pattern throughout my life; when life seemed to get too much, I would flee, looking at new challenges, a fresh start, just being somewhere else.

At university I had that same self-doubt and agonising sense of failure. I dropped out of my Arts degree in my second year – confirming my worst fears – but thanks to the forbearance of the

While nursing the guilt of leaving my parents to their grief, I had found my calling.

Through chance I fell into business reporting early in my career and I’ve never looked back. I joined a computer industry weekly newspaper as a reporter, lived in Sydney for a time, and then returned to Melbourne as the paper’s editor when I was 26. (A reporter I recruited, who years later went on to win a Gold Walkley, called me her “boy editor”.) From there I was poached by Bob Gottlieb’s *BRW* Group at Fairfax, returned to Sydney, becoming editor of *Rydges* magazine and later, back in Melbourne, associate editor of *BRW*.

Throughout these heady times (it was the 1980s) the depression never left me, but writing, and later editing, remained my solace. Work was everything, even when my secret self-doubt and self-loathing were at their worst. As well as my workload at Fairfax I would take any freelance work that came my way; I was more than happy working seven days a week. I was running away from me.

When the fog descended on me – it’s a physical sensation, I can feel its terrible weight on my person – I could somehow keep it at bay as long as I was working. But as soon as I stepped into my

car to drive home, the sobbing would start. At home it was worse. That's when the Mahler came on. These episodes were frightening, perplexing, and exhausting. This overwhelming sadness would come unexpectedly from some primordial place deep inside. The pain was immense, its source unknown. There were terrible nightmares. And I craved death.

I simply had to wait for these periods to pass in their own time. It could be days, it could be weeks. But nobody at work would have been any the wiser. Perhaps I might have been darker or moodier than usual, or my humour was a little more biting, but that's just who I was.

This was my normal

Very rarely during these times did I consider getting help. I convinced myself that this was my normal, that my pain wasn't affecting anyone else. Besides, who says that everyone can be happy? But there were moments of happiness: I had a wonderful relationship for a couple of years (although its ending was crushing), my career was extremely satisfying – possibly life-saving – and I frequented some wonderful pubs whose publicans often became good friends.

But there was something else about the idea of “seeing someone” that put me off: the thought of all those demons, known and unknown, that I had suppressed over so many years might all come bursting out in a terrifying frenzy if I dared let anyone get too close to my innermost self. No, I could take care of this myself.

Then, in 1989, I got married. Maybe this is what it would take to put it all behind me? And for a time it was. This was the most decent, caring, giving human being I had ever known. But that's not how depression works. Not mine at least. The moods, the remoteness, the withdrawals, the anger, the selfishness were never far away. They came and went as always. It must have been very confusing and disturbing for my wife, but as always I was convinced that I could deal with it. And the way I dealt with it was to bury myself in my work, rather than my marriage.

The time of supreme contentment was with the birth of our boys. I gave myself over to them. As babies, toddlers and throughout their primary school years I was a doting, involved, blissfully happy dad. Those years were a gift. As they grew older my love for them was undiminished, and I was so immensely proud of them, but I found family life increasingly onerous. At times the normal thrills and spills of family life would be overwhelming. More than once I thought of leaving, maybe work interstate for a while. Yet never did it occur to me to seek help.

The depression grew worse. The periods of depression lasted longer and longer, the crying more frequent. Sobbing quietly in bed without disturbing my wife became a specialty. Did it ever occur to me to talk to my wife about this? No. Anything could trigger

my black moods, tears and periods of despondency. A passage of music, a look, a minor disappointment, dropping my toast.

Life comes crashing down

The last three years have been the worst. During this time I basically closed down. They have been hell for me, but especially for my wife. We barely conversed anymore, I showed no interest in her work, I didn't want to go out, I didn't want to receive visitors, I was all but comatose when I got home from work. I was depressed at home, and at work.

As my employer, Fairfax Media, went through a litany of soul-sapping and seemingly erratic changes – endless strategic reviews, cutbacks, redundancies, new technologies, hot-desking – work was no longer a refuge. Never comfortable with change at the best of times, the environment at Fairfax had become intolerable. Some days I could not bear to pick up the phone to do interviews. I would stare at that phone with dread as if it was my darkest nemesis. My daily ray of satisfaction was my column, even when each word was like climbing a mountain. Oddly enough, last year, the worst year for me personally, saw some of my best work (for which I thank the good humour, patience and inspiration of my young editor).

When the print edition of *BRW* closed late last year I took a voluntary redundancy. I thought my big challenge for 2014 was going to be rebuilding my career in a very difficult market. It turned out to be the least of my worries. In January, my wife could take no more. We separated just weeks short of our 25th wedding anniversary. I was inconsolable with grief. My world had been turned upside down. At last, sobbing, I asked my GP to refer me to a psychiatrist.

When the diagnosis of clinical depression was made, I was relieved. Finally, I had placed myself on the road to recovery. I am now seeing a psychiatrist and a psychoanalyst. And already I am seeing the benefits. It may be too late for my marriage, but I can see a light at the end of that very long, dark tunnel that goes all the way back to my school days. I have dithered over writing about this. I don't want to alienate or frighten friends and colleagues, let alone future employers. I'm still me. It's just that me has been very hard work. And there's more of me that wants to come out. Good me; happy me.

My reasons for these revelations are simple enough. First, I want my beloved, treasured boys to know. I also want to offer some small explanation to anyone I have exasperated, hurt, confounded or upset over the years. And I also want people to know about the true nature and prevalence of depression in the community.

But most of all, there is a very personal reason. I am drawing a line in the sand: I am going to beat this thing.



Believing and rationality

What exactly is the relationship between ethics and religion?

by Paul Tonson

Broadly, the realm of my interest is the encounter between reason, research and religion as three methods people adopt in their search for meaning and ethical living. I am asking myself how, and even whether, the realms of the rational, the empirical and the faith elements of my life hang together under thorough scrutiny from other viewpoints. Respectful discussion across contrasting world views is useful and necessary in our pluralist society.

During my earlier life within Christian university circles the notion was strongly asserted that true religion is not reducible to ethics. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ was clearly contrasted with an ethical religion of rules, the dynamic contrasted with the static. The assumption was made that ethical decisions had

with the intention to act in a rational manner and we rightly hope that they/we will do so. But in her article in *Australian Rationalist*, Lyn Allison wisely acknowledges a parallel fact, that we are not always rational and logical. For one, we do things we do not intend, like eat too much. For two, we fail to do things we intend, such as exercise. This ambivalence in human character also provides a level playing field in terms of our lived experience as human beings, regardless of our differing worldviews.

More importantly, the ambivalent behaviour of humans points to the fact that motivation often trumps rationality as a primary determinant of behaviour and thus of ethics. In the realm of motivation and ethical behaviour, faith and religious belief have a strong impact, for good or ill. However, I note that the obvious

“I suppose we may credit most people with the intention to act in a rational manner and we rightly hope that they/we will do so.”

to be grounded in spiritual insight. In contrast to that approach, my view is that a distinction between true religion and ethics is a false dichotomy. Many biblical texts make the point that true religion necessitates ethics, including the Hebrew prophetic traditions and most specifically James 1:27:

‘Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you’.

From a similar viewpoint, William James (1901) in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, asserts against critics of his day argued that religion should be evaluated in terms of its function and fruitfulness, leaving aside historical enquires and psychological observations. I am drawn to this outcomes emphasis since it provides a level playing field uncomplicated by the contrasting and even conflicting beliefs of different religions and worldviews. Presumably a religion would be valued, even if not believed in, if it is shown to function in a constructive and fruitful way.

I am grateful for the refreshing and articulate essays in the first issue of this journal. I now refer to these to provide the reader with perspectives that underlie the argument that follows. I assume that if faith and religion is to make any claim to be a useful method in the formation of ethics, I need to first show that both deductive rationality and scientific empiricism are insufficient for this task.

Beyond the limits of the rational and empirical

Regarding rationality, I suppose we may credit most people

diversity about ethical issues within and between religious communities shows that religious belief per se does not determine particular ethical standards.

Not long ago, I took part in a public conversation with RSA president Meredith Doig under the hook title “Religion is not rational”. Now this does not mean that religion is irrational in its method, since in seminaries for centuries, an advanced level of education and a certain kind of logic and philosophy has been central. While I allow that a fruitful discourse need not be limited to rational deductive argument, I accept that it cannot be against reason, and must remain open to the criticism that it may be irrational.

Regarding empiricism, an unexpected assertion from Kenneth Davidson in *Australian Rationalist* makes an instructive link between economics, history and theology in terms of method. He wrote: “As a moral science, economics has more in common with history (and theology) than the natural sciences, which deduce ‘natural laws’ that can be proved or disproved by repeating the experiments”. I assume he refers to the agreed fact that economic theory cannot be tested in the same way as physical science because macroeconomic parameters cannot be replicated.

My point is that economic theory is still valued since it provides a language and categories and models of the real world. Such theories may derive from rational deduction but they may represent a hunch based on an inductive process that waits years

for general acceptance. Theories provide models that enable a fruitful discourse between adherents of different theories. Theory contributes to policy, even if it does not determine that policy. The utility of the discourse does not depend on a strictly scientific form of empirical research that is replicable. I consider that, similarly, the discourse of theology, faith and religion might also be valued for the language, categories and models they provide of the real world and real people and that this discourse and its models may contribute towards useful policy for human living, even if it does not determine that policy.

When it comes to the interplay of rational and empirical method applied to human life and ethics, it seems to me the empirical method dominates. One may be able to give a rational deductive account of one's beliefs and ethics, but believers committed to a faith into which they were born are likely to use reason from hindsight to rationalise their beliefs, even though they may have adopted those beliefs by some process other than reason. Perhaps freethought adherents will acknowledge the same likelihood among themselves. It seems to me that rational deductive thought is usually subsequent to empirical experience. I suggest this is especially the case in regard to one's personal ethics. In exploring ethical standards we are all like Columbus, for regardless of what Mother taught us, we are determined to journey into the unknown and to live by experimentation.

If learning by experience, a discovery method, is an attractive alternative to learning by rational deduction regarding personal ethics, I suggest it is an essential alternative in the formulation of laws for the ethical behaviour of a multicultural society. In order to establish a law that will be universal for a variety of cultures we need to disentangle ethics from the relativity of any one culture. I acknowledge that this may include the relativity of the British Christian heritage which has been largely preferred in Australian law. Formulation of fair laws for a multicultural society needs input from the lived experience of different worldviews and from the wisdom of those who cross over into another culture in order to experience for themselves the different motivating factors at work there. The formulation of law then becomes rather more inductive than deductive as we move from the particularity of many traditions to the generality of a law established for all.

I draw two conclusions from the above observations that explain why I look beyond the strictly empirical and rational in considering ethical issues. While rationality in terms of language that makes sense to both parties is necessary to any fruitful discourse, rationality in terms of deductive logic is neither necessary nor sufficient for a discourse on ethics. Similarly, while empirical observation is inherent in all avenues of human life and discourse, a scientific method based on the replication of results is not essential to a meaningful discourse about ethics and the formulation of public policy. In this matter, I welcome the notion

of evidence based policy but I question how far that can take us if it expects to lay claim to objectivity unaffected by subjective experience.

Ancient texts and myths

From the viewpoint of a biblical scholar, I will now suggest two methods that faith and religion bring to the task of ethical determinations. First is the examination of religious texts that embody stories and traditions with long histories that accompanied the rise of the great array of religious and ethical systems in our world. The methods of this examination are the growing variety of highly nuanced hermeneutical (interpretative) approaches accessed by scholars of all literature, sacred and secular. These methods may focus on historical elements (for example, Source Analysis), or literary features (for example, Narrative Criticism) or on subjective aspects (for example, Reader Response). Religious literature as artful story (fiction) often embodies myth that bears profound meaning for living. Such myth can be deeply true in terms of meaning, even though the story is entirely fictional in terms of historical truth. An example may be the words of Alice to Caterpillar that convey something about human nature: "I think, you ought to tell me who you are, first". While deductive reason is part of any hermeneutical method, myth leads the reader into an inductive and even intuitive response. Without depending upon any appeal to revelation or external authority, and without recourse to historicity or logical enquiry, a myth can make an unmediated, persuasive impact on human behaviour in the realm of ethics.

I take as an example Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a, commonly known as a creation myth. The results from my reading do not dispute the worldview of the text but offer a kind of translation of its themes in terms that are meaningful within my different worldview. I use the words 'divine in humanity' in order to retain the religious perspective behind the text but they refer to what is of ethical and ultimate significance in human life, not to any supernatural realm.

Any reader, regardless of religious belief, can see here themes that have enduring significance for human life that may become formative for their own ethical values:

In Genesis 1, God is presented as creative, not by creation *ex nihilo* but by shaping chaos into order; the divine in humanity is expressed in human creativity.

God is presented as speaking commanding words; the divine in humanity is expressed in the power of language that can motivate and transform life.

This God brings order by differentiating light and dark, land and sea, male and female; the divine in humanity is expressed in appropriate ordering and differentiation in which all parts are valued.

Male and female are both made in the likeness and image of God; women and men (and the non-gendered) are all of ultimate value and of equal value.

This God invites humanity to be fruitful and multiply and to take responsibility for the earth; humanity is capable and responsible to act in the world with the initiative and due care appropriate to a treasured gift.

God rested on the seventh day; regular time spent in the natural environment and not dependent on the products of human ingenuity is a worthwhile pattern for sustainable living.

The above observations relate only to literary aspects of the text and its life related themes. The text has no agenda relating

witness to a subjective or communal experience, to conviction and to intention. Those hermeneutical methods that attend to Reader Response have recognised that a text is as much a performance as is a speech. One of the common elements of text and speech is the persuasive power of language and story. An added ingredient of a live speech is the passion of the speaker and possibly unusual insight.

The role of a prophet, understood as one who wisely interprets the consequences of present circumstances, rather than forecasts

“Believers committed to a faith into which they were born are likely to use reason from hindsight to rationalise their beliefs, even though they may have adopted those beliefs by some process other than reason.”

to scientific questions but readers may be further interested in conclusions based on historical research.

The concept of creation emerged in Israel around the seventh century BCE, as evident in Isaiah 40–55 (2nd Isaiah). The language of Genesis 1 is quite different from that of Genesis 2 and reflects the theology of the priestly community that has a special interest in the ordering of the world and the community, as shown by the several Priestly genealogies. Priestly texts are woven into earlier traditions in Genesis and the whole Torah. Like the multiple prefaces to successive editions of modern texts, Genesis 1–11 is a preface to the rest of Genesis and Genesis 1 is a preface added to Genesis 2ff. The priestly traditions emerged during Israel’s experience in Babylonian captivity (589–539 BCE). Israel was then struggling to maintain her identity as a nation. The Genesis 1 creation myth may have been formulated for Israel to recite at the New Year festival as an alternative to the Babylonian creation myth about the god Marduk, after which Genesis 1 is modelled in part. From a Western perspective, the creation myth in Genesis 1 has a much higher ethical sense than the Babylonian original.

Knowing this likely historical importance of Genesis 1 in relation to Israel’s national identity and survival adds a lot to its ethical significance. Different myths have different formative influences upon the national identity and ethical sense of the people who treasure them. This is a consideration that is fundamental to the fraught journey of the Indigenous peoples of Australia and to the ethics of public policy such as lie behind the Northern Territory Intervention.

Bearing witness

There is a second method that is active in religious and other communities with ethical effect, namely bearing witness. This is a dynamic found in ancient sacred texts but also in the spoken word that is heard in contemporary communities. In this respect, a text is like a sermon or political oration, for regardless of their historical aspects, an ancient story and a modern speech both bear

future events, is as much an element of modern Australia, eg Michael Leunig, as of ancient Israel. The persuasive effect of text or speech or cartoon depends less on reason and research than on anecdote and analogy and metaphor. Together with passion, these elements can influence our understanding and our commitments in a compelling way, and they may move discussion of ethical matters and policy setting beyond the limits of rational argument and empirical research.

I may illustrate this from the advocacy of groups such as Reconciliation Australia and GetUp Australia that employ persuasive argument to stimulate action on ethical issues. We are receptive to such advocacy because we realise our own views -- for example for or against euthanasia or equal marriage -- are greatly influenced by our own subjective experience of people dying painfully or of GLBTQ people among our family and friends. Another example is the teaching given in the classrooms of seminary, yeshiva or madrasa, where empirical and logical discourses are an essential part of literary and historical studies but where various interpretations and contrasting arguments exist alongside one another for students to consider. The bearing witness of the scholar teacher has a strategic place among other witnesses. Bearing witness is not a particular preserve of religion but has its own long established method and protocols within judicial tradition. For this reason, discourses about ethics can benefit from a respectful listening to the witness of others, even though the empirical aspect of witness cannot be separated from the subjective. The jury is a metaphor for the importance of a communal approach to ethics and law.

Through reflection on treasured texts and myths and through attention to passionate voices bearing witness, religious traditions at their best are able to function in a constructive and fruitful way and contribute to ethical understanding and action in the world. At their worst, the opposite has often been the case.

I draw two conclusions. Religions and religious powers should

never have entirely autonomous status but must function within laws agreed by wider consent. The witness of ancient traditions and of passionate contemporary advocates is a vital element of religions, and of other associations, that can make a valuable contribution to ethical determinations beyond the limits of empirical science and deductive rationality.

Living with Difference

I have set out my viewpoints that ethics is implicit in religion, and that research, reason and religion are all useful methods that provide motivation for ethical determinations. I will now focus my attention on a model expressed in existential terms that I think offers a useful approach to the nature of ethics and that is accessible to both faith and freethought worldviews. In this model, the nature of the relation between the Self and the Other is the primary question of ethics. From one's conception of this relation, in a variety of contexts, derives secondarily the motivation that will determine any ethical response. The behaviour that is considered appropriate to particular relationships across the difference between Self and Other then follows as a third element.

I will begin with an example from Israelite tradition where the Other is another human being, represented by the term 'stranger' or 'resident alien'. This term is prominent in the Book of Deuteronomy which is a real mix of warrior God stories and the more developed theological insights of Israel up to the 6th century BCE (but apparently prior to Priestly traditions). Israel's experience in Babylonian exile during the 6th century is viewed through the ancient tradition about their slavery in Egypt seven centuries earlier, as described in the book of Exodus. Through the stories of Israel, these ancient texts speak about the universal human experience of living with difference, which is our own suburban reality today and a realm of considerable ethical challenge.

Living with difference is a key theme in Deuteronomy 10 which presents both a challenging ethic and a remarkable motivation. The challenging ethic is that Israel must love the stranger in

We may weigh the command to love the stranger against the more familiar and easier ethic: 'love your neighbour as yourself' that originates from the Israelite Holiness Code in Leviticus 19:9. The gospels contain stories in which Jesus affirms in conversation with other Jews that love of neighbour is one of the greatest commandments. I wonder whether Jesus was equally familiar with and even more committed to another text from the same chapter: 'Love the stranger as yourself' (Leviticus 19:19), which seems to me a greater command. For relatively progressive scholars from the Jesus Seminar have concluded that one text that can be most reliably attributed as the actual words of Jesus is 'Love your enemies and do good to those who mistreat you' (Matt. 5:44). This is a radical challenge in any worldview.

Closely linked to the challenge to love the stranger are two motivating justifications, one theological, the other existential. The comparison between these is instructive. Placed in the mouth of God are the words: 'I have no favourites; I love the stranger' leading on to the command that Israel, as people bound to this God, also must love the stranger. One might imagine that a command issued from the mouth of God would carry sufficient motivation for the believer to act. But a second reason is given for this command: 'because you also were strangers in Egypt'.

This second reason, which perhaps was added from a distinct tradition, offers a very different motivation from the first. It is based not on an external 'ought to' from a mysterious God but on an internal self-identity as a stranger, based on lived experience and existential awareness. The picture of Israelites as strangers in Egypt is a metaphor for the experience of every person or community that experiences the tension between belonging and alienation when confronted with the difference between the Self and the Other; in some situations we are insiders and in some we are outsiders. The ancient editor of Deuteronomy has provided a fine example of the possibility that we may establish motivations for ethical behaviour that are based upon existential experience

"A scientific method based on the replication of results is not essential to a meaningful discourse about ethics and the formulation of public policy."

their midst. Clearly xenophobia is rejected but also a positive response to difference is required. This is a challenging ethic for anyone, particularly for any Jew who might think covenant means privilege (which Jews do not in fact believe), or any white Australian who thinks British settlement history affords priority over asylum seekers. It is not of concern to me that the stranger referred to in the Torah may be the resident alien who perhaps observes the Torah even though not an Israelite. In the global village of today I read this text for what it may offer to any relationship across difference.

accessible to all, not upon metaphysical conceptions particular to one worldview.

The otherness of the stranger we meet in our local space is only one of various worlds of otherness that place an ethical challenge in front of us. Not far from us in the global village are vast numbers of other people with whom we have no personal relationship whose daily lives are preoccupied with survival. For some this results from political strife, for others, from natural disasters. This is focused for me in UN statistics that every day 29,000 children under the age of five die from preventable causes.

Love of stranger asks us to consider what is an ethical response to situations remote from us. We also meet otherness in the realm of nature and natural phenomena that confronts us daily with challenges about living a sustainable life on earth. In good times, a variety of life style choices confronts us individually and produces considerable political energy in our society across differences of ethical perspective. In bad times, scarce resources and climate change and natural disasters arise like a stranger or enemy in our midst.

This analysis of Otherness would be incomplete without attention to encounters that are largely inward and subjective and evoke in our own thoughts a sense of wonder. We may experience the ethical implications of these experiences more as invitation than demand. Perhaps we wonder at the opportunity of living and making a difference even while we know life is fragile and short, or at our sense of creatureliness as a dominant species on earth but as ant like in relation to an expanding universe. We wonder at brilliant insights that burst into human minds – the eureka moments of transformative discovery. We wonder at the birth of a child and at the courageous way some face their dying and death. We wonder at the undeserved love and generosity we sometimes receive and at the forgiveness offered us when we feel so guilty or embarrassed. We may ponder our own physical limitations and our own moral frailty and emotional pain and what courage we can bring to challenges in life. Sometimes it is through reflection on such life experiences and response to them, that human beings demonstrate the greatest ethical endeavour that they are capable of.

While all these experiences of the Other are commonplace, one may lack a sense of responsibility and respond passively, apart from acting in one's own self-interest. This indicates that the ethical motivation we draw upon is based on the self-understanding we develop from prior lived experience, including experience of community and of isolation, such as being a stranger in Egypt. For this reason I am deeply committed in a partnership with people of all worldviews, including members of RSA, to provide a diversity education program called PATHWAYS (<http://www.rationalist.com.au/campaigns/secular-education/pathways-a-faith-and-freethought-project/> through which senior high school students can encounter a range of others and their voices, from faith and freethought communities. You may read about this on the RSA website under Campaigns; Secular Education, and communicate with me via the email noted there.

I have attempted to demonstrate how the realms of reason, research and religion provide a framework and resources for ethical determinations. My viewpoint is that these realms are not mutually exclusive and that each has its limitations. When referring to elements of religious traditions, I have not referred to personal faith or divine revelation but I have attempted to address all matters in existential terms, using the language and categories of the world of direct human experience that is accessible to all worldviews. It seems to me that for a person of faith, their sense of the divine is very much located in the awareness of the Other and of Otherness.



What is so in all possible worlds

What does it mean for something to be metaphysically necessary?

by Massimo Pigliucci

During a recent discussion of sections 4 and 5 of David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* ("Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the understanding" and "Sceptical solutions of these doubts") the concept of metaphysical necessity came up.

As is well known, Hume wasn't very keen on metaphysics in general (the branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things such as being, knowing, identity, time, and space). One of the most famous quotes by him (in section 12 of the very same *Enquiry*) says:

"If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion." Ouch.

Anyway, back to metaphysical necessity. What might it mean for something to be metaphysically necessary, or — conversely — metaphysically impossible? Not surprisingly, there is a fairly large literature about this.

We'll proceed here by looking briefly at the basics. First of all, what is metaphysical necessity/impossibility as opposed to other kinds of necessity/impossibility? Two immediately come to mind: logical and physical. It is logically necessary that I either am me or am not-me. It is also logically necessary, though for different reasons, that there is no such thing as a married bachelor. It is physically necessary that objects with mass attract each other; it is also physically impossible for me to both be here in New York and simultaneously in Rome. And so forth.

physics are solid enough to allow us to talk about things that are either possible or impossible given the respective sets of laws.

The remaining case (the impossibility of a married bachelor), of course, hinges on issues of definitions: since a bachelor is defined as an unmarried man, there simply cannot be any such thing as a married one, on penalty of (logical-semantic) contradiction. Definitions, of course, are tautological, and tautologies are often regarded with little interest in such discussions. But this is a mistake: think about the fact that mathematics (and much of logic itself) consists precisely in the working out of the tautological implications of certain axioms or premises.

So, where were we? Well, the discussion so far hints at one promising way to look for metaphysical necessity: search for laws of metaphysics. Unfortunately, that's not at all a straightforward quest, because it is not clear what counts as a metaphysical law, as distinct from either a physical law or a law of logic — which of course doesn't help our predicament at all.

Perhaps we should do what I've done above in the cases of logic and physics: look for examples first, then see what we can learn from them.

If you follow that route, one of the most commonly advanced examples of metaphysical necessity is the existence of God! Since that is *prima facie* (I love it when I get to write that!) ludicrous — or it should be at the dawn of the 21st century -- we will ignore it and proceed otherwise.

What else can be done? Well, there are some more intriguing examples of alleged metaphysical necessity, for instance "whatever is water is H₂O" and "whatever is elemental gold has atomic number 79."

"the role of metaphysics is to make reasoned sense of what the natural sciences tell us about the world"

Let's see what we can glean from the above examples: in both instances concerning physical possibilities, and in one instance concerning logical possibility, the idea seems to be that there are certain "laws" that govern logic or physics, and that these laws are inviolable.

Now, one could be skeptical about the *a priori* validity of the laws of logic (like W.V.O. Quine was), and one can even think of the laws of physics as simply empirical generalizations that could, in fact, admit of exceptions or have a limited domain of application. But I won't go there. As far as we are concerned, both logic and

These are not examples of definitional necessity, like the bachelor. True, once we discovered that the molecular structure of water is H₂O we could simply define water as that substance that has that chemical structure and be done with it. But this required an empirical discovery, it wasn't true *a priori* from the beginning, as is the fact that there cannot be a married bachelor. The reasoning is the same for gold being the element with atomic number 79.

Could it be that these two examples can be interpreted as instantiations of the laws of logic? Hard to see how. There is nothing logically contradictory in imagining a substance with the

characteristics of water that is not made of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. But wouldn't that contradict the laws of physics, at least? Here things become tricky.

Surely water behaves the way it is in our universe because the laws of physics are such that if a molecule has that structure then it will behave in that way. But it is hard to say which specific law of physics would be violated if something made of H₂O actually behaved differently (say, it had a different freezing point at standard pressure).

Another way to think about this is to say that we can imagine a universe where the physics is (slightly) different and where, as a consequence, H₂O doesn't behave as our H₂O. Of course, if that were the case, the H₂O = water equation would not be a metaphysical necessity after all, but only a physical one. That's because metaphysicians these days seem to make sense of the notion of metaphysical necessity by saying that something is metaphysically necessary if it is true in all possible worlds. (Talk of possible worlds is tightly connected with modal logic which, not surprisingly, is a set of logics that deal with expressions such as "necessarily," "possibly," etc. — which philosophers call modalities.)

To return: is it physically or metaphysically necessary that H₂O = water? For this to be an example of metaphysical necessity, the equation would have to be valid in all possible worlds. But what makes a world possible to begin with? We could, again be talking about either logical or physical possibility (the former, should be clear, being much ampler than the latter). Let's say we are talking about physical possibility: possible worlds are those worlds that could exist while instantiating a coherent set of physical laws.

Our world, obviously, realizes one of these possibilities. Worlds that, say, were different from ours only with respect to the gravitational constant would be our possible-neighbors, the closer to us as a function of how similar their gravitational constant is to ours.

One can easily extend this concept to a multidimensional landscape of fundamental physical constants, each varying within whatever range is physically possible for them to vary (for example, although logically the gravitational constant could take any of an infinite number of values, it is perfectly possible that only a small subset of these values would yield a physically realizable universe).

If you smelled "multiverse" you are close. Despite some people's reservations about the scientific status of the multiverse theory (reservations with which I sympathize), it does seem to make philosophical sense to deploy it within the context of this discussion. But if you don't like that particular take, then think of possible worlds as the set of worlds that are mathematically realizable instead. I think they do help to get an intuitive grasp

on the whole idea of "possible worlds," because they give a fairly precise answer to the obvious question: possible in what sense?

So, again, water = H₂O would be a metaphysical necessity just in case it had to be true in all possible worlds, say in the entire multiverse. My hunch is that this isn't the case. It seems that some change in one physical constant or another would yield a pocket universe (within the multiverse) where a substance had the molecular structure H₂O and yet had different physical characteristics from our water.

Still, there may be things that are metaphysically necessary in all possible instantiations of the multiverse. Perhaps the inter-conversion between matter and energy? Or the existence of fields from which matter emerges (like the Higgs)?

I am going to bet that most metaphysicians won't like my analysis of metaphysical necessity as presented above. True, I have arrived at the conclusion that there can be such a thing as metaphysical necessity as smaller than logical necessity but ampler than physical necessity, thus legitimizing the concept. But I have also linked said concept operationally to either the multiverse as conceived by modern physics or its mathematical equivalent. If so, then discovering metaphysical necessities becomes either a matter for physics (because it is an empirical question) or for logicians-mathematicians (because it is a logical-mathematical thing). Which means that even our newfound way of thinking about metaphysical necessity either expands into logical necessity or collapses into physical necessity.

Where, then, does that leave metaphysics? I still think it has a role to play, in the same sense that philosophy in general has a role to play. I have come to see philosophy as a type of critical inquiry that bridges logic (broadly construed) and science (and other sources of empirical knowledge), in the sense that it applies rigorous reasoning to whatever the issue at hand may be (e.g., ethics) while taking into account empirical input. This is nothing new: it is a restatement of Immanuel Kant's compromise between rationalism (the idea that one can derive a priori truths about the world) and empiricism (the idea that all truths derive from sense experience).

Similarly for metaphysics: I see it as a bridge between the Scylla of logic and the Charybdis of physics: the role of metaphysics is to make reasoned sense of what the natural sciences tell us about the world as well as to elucidate how that knowledge fits with our understanding of abstract objects, such as mathematical and logical relations. But there are no laws of metaphysics, just like there are no laws of philosophy, so this endeavor is one of critically making sense of things, not of discovering or dictating how things are.

Fusion Factions

Dirty tactics in clean energy.

by Alan Sparx

Science and Technology have bought humanity many improvements in well-being and ways of life. There is hardly an area of life in the twenty first century that has not been positively affected in some way by science. Science will affect most jobs in this century and hopefully for many centuries. Dr Craig Cormick of the CSIRO published in the last *Australian Rationalist* magazine results that should concern us; 39 percent of Australians do not like or have no interest in science?

It appears not to be clear to Australians that we all enjoy significant benefits from science. One has only to ask how many alive today would not be so, were it not for the diligent and brilliant work of the Australian biological scientist, Howard Florey who developed the first large scale antibiotic production in the world, subsequently saving the lives of tens of millions of people and improving the health of hundreds of millions others. Almost all of the credit was given to Alexander Fleming, who in 1928 observed the effect that *Penicillium* mould had on pathogenic microbes. One might think that at the time hundreds of people were working on Fleming's discovery to develop an antibiotic, but this was not the case. Fleming's paper received very little attention, had escaped the purview of most, and it was not until 1939 that Florey and Chain proved the worth of Fleming's chance discovery.

A parallel exists today in the field of energy research. Dogma, prejudice and bullying has researchers shy away from investigating

the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory and claimed to be a milestone.

By contrast, with budgets only in the tens of millions, worldwide, another group has produced hundreds and thousands of watts of energy, in low temperature experiments on lab benches rather than in billion dollar Tokamak reactors. This group research is on Low Energy Nuclear Reactions, LENR; aka cold fusion. But using the term cold fusion is political dynamite, just not done in polite society. Perhaps we should call it the Voldemort process -- he who must not be named.

The former group is rich, with almost unlimited funding. The latter is the poor group, who must be careful how they phrase their grant applications lest they raise the ire of the rich group and lose all hope of getting backing. Hot fusion researchers believe that they are the only game in town and that there is only one path to a nuclear fusion reactor; extremely high temperatures. They live in complete denial of any possibility of fusion taking place at low temperatures. It is hard to escape the conclusion that they are closed minded on this issue. Remember the Milgram experiment when study participants were, under instructions, willing to inflict what they thought was terrible pain, even death, on someone on the other side of a screen? The guards know how to treat the prisoners. Hot fusionists know how to treat the LENR researchers and unfortunately the press just follow the power.

The word nuclear for most people conjures all sorts of negative

"Unlike nuclear fission, nuclear fusion reactions produce no nuclear waste whatsoever"

a discovery that was announced in 1989 which could lead to the biggest and most significant change to the human condition since Watts steam engine: an inexhaustible source of clean energy. It would also remove the excuse to kill people for their energy resources. So it may not suit the Military Industrial Complex that President Eisenhower warned us against, whose power and influence has become global.

The search for a viable means of extracting clean energy from fusion nuclear reactions has been heavily subsidised since the early fifties, and is now in the range of a billion dollars a year. That is just for American research. So what's the problem I hear you say? The problem is that with well over forty billion dollars having been spent on this research, not a single watt of energy has been generated in hot fusion reactors in many nations until February 2014 when a meagre billionth of a second result was obtained at

images, but it is not a dirty word. Let's clarify the difference between the two types of nuclear reactions.

Nuclear fission (splitting the atom) is the most widely known because it drives nuclear power plants, fuels atomic bombs and produces large amounts of radioactive waste which requires storage for thousands of years. Then there is nuclear fusion, or joining the nuclei of atoms together. This releases even more energy than splitting atoms. It was first demonstrated with the detonation of the Hydrogen bomb in the early 1950s. Although enormous amounts of energy were released, it was not in a way that was useful for the production of electricity. Since that time almost no expense has been spared seeking a means of harnessing the energy from nuclear fusion reactions.

Unlike nuclear fission, nuclear fusion reactions produce no nuclear waste whatsoever and the fuel source is available in almost

unlimited amounts. That is why so much has been spent in the quest. It would solve the world's energy demands almost forever. Unfortunately the quest has been rather like that of the Holy Grail. The predicted time frame of success of thirty years has remained unchanged for at least the last forty years. A 2006 editorial in the *New Scientist* opined that "if commercial fusion is viable, it may well be a century away. I'm sure that suits the belligerent militaristic types, who are happy to acquire countries as well as oil fields, but for the rest of us I think research investment into nuclear fusion ought to take another path."

In the late sixties electro-chemist Professor Martin Fleischmann, a graduate of Imperial College London began working on the idea that fusion of isotopes of hydrogen may be possible in the metal palladium which has the remarkable characteristic of being able to store 900 times its volume of isotopes of hydrogen. These isotopes of hydrogen are potential fuel for nuclear fusion. Fleischmann was joined by Stanley Pons. Their experiments showed that significant excess heat was being produced. The heat released was much too great to be from any chemical reaction, implying that it had to be some kind of nuclear reaction. After twenty years of self-funded research Fleischmann and Pons

fusion was taking place; namely neutron emissions. Though measuring neutrons in these experiments proved to be much more difficult than anticipated, neutron emissions seemed almost non-existent. This bolstered the hot fusion faction. However, a number of observers discovered, almost unbelievably, the production of tritium, which is an undeniable evidence of fusion! This was too much for the hot fusion faction. They were incensed. They had been, for the last thirty years, on budgets of billions and not a single watt of energy had been forthcoming. Now these two electro-chemists appear to have produced hundreds or thousands of watts and what's more, on a micro budget! These strong results were making the careers of many people very shaky indeed.

The old guard of the scientific establishment, with their powerful influence on media and government, got behind hot fusion and began queuing up to undermine, discredit, insult and taunt Fleischmann and Pons and anybody else who claimed successful reproduction of their work. Naturally, those in the middle joined the ranks of those that grant their research funds; the scientific establishment. After censoring, blocking publications, denying appointments, withdrawing research grants, harassing, blacklisting and spreading rumours, a tipping point was quickly

"A veritable priesthood of high science controls major segments of public and private policy and expenditure for research"

innocently decided to seek funding with the aim of publishing their results. This led to one of the most disgraceful public displays of greed, corruption and shamefully unethical abuse of power the twentieth century was to witness in the field of science.

Seeking funding Fleischmann and Pons (herein after F & P) disclosed their work to a Department of Energy grants review committee hearing. They soon learned that their idea was leaked by a member of the G.R. committee, and tested by Steven E Jones a physicist of Brigham Young University. In a flagrant example of shameless opportunism Jones insisted on going to the public press quickly with his own comparatively poor and unclear results, disparaging the excess heat results of Fleischmann and Pons. Jones' announcement would have effectively prevented the two scientists from patenting their process: a process they had developed on their own over long years of research. On the advice of University attorneys, feeling their backs to the wall they reluctantly delivered their work to public scrutiny in a press release. Probably the least fortunate aspect was the introduction by the press of the term cold fusion, of which Fleischmann did not approve.

Many physicists and chemists quickly set about to conduct experiments to reproduce the results. Some were able, some were not. What the physicists had started to look for was by-products that, according to current theory, would indicate that nuclear

reached and Fleischmann's and Pons' work became that which could "not be named" -- without inviting ridicule and scorn from the science body and the physics community. "Excommunicated" was the term impolitely used to describe Fleischmann and Pons who found that funding for any work dried up completely, necessitating their departure from the U.S. in order to continue any kind of research.

Scientists with powerful backers were easily cajoled into breaking one of the fundamental tenets of science. They were denying experimental evidence because it did not fit their theories of how nuclear fusion must take place. Physics Nobel laureate Richard Feynman frequently said: "If a theory disagrees with experiment, it's wrong! In that simple statement is the key to science. It doesn't make a difference how beautiful the theory is; it doesn't matter how smart or famous the person is who created the theory. If it disagrees with experiment; it is wrong! That's all there is too it." What can now be added to that statement is 'no matter how much mathematical elegance it has, or how much prestige its supporters have, or how many billions of dollars industry has bet on it, if the theory disagrees with experiment. It's wrong!

Experimental or observed evidence that indicates that an accepted theory is incomplete, severely flawed, or completely mistaken, is often rejected in the journal review process on

the grounds that it does not support the current paradigm, and therefore has to be the result of sloppiness or fraud. In true science, theory always surrenders to the primacy of evidence. True science, where free inquiry, natural curiosity and open-minded discussion take place, is, it appears, waning. The twentieth century saw a new orthodoxy emerge. Robert Anton Wilson called it “The New Inquisition” consisting not of Cardinals and Popes, but of journal editors and reviewers, of leading authorities and self-appointed sceptics, and last, but certainly not least, governments controlled by the lobbying of multinational corporations that have a vested interest in protecting the tremendous income from their huge investments. Of course, for them it is better if the realisation of nuclear fusion does not come about until oil becomes scarce and profit can be maximised from a diminishing resource with no alternative.

Robert G. Jahn writes in *20th and 21st Century Science: Reflections and Projections*: “Thus, at the dawn of the 21st century, we again find an elite, smugly contented scientific establishment, but one now endowed with far more public authority and respect than that of the prior version. A veritable priesthood of high science controls major segments of public and private policy and expenditure for research, development, construction, production, education and publication throughout the world, and enjoys a cultural trust and reverence that extends far beyond its true merit. It is an establishment that is largely consumed with refinements and deployments of mid-20th century science, rather than with creative advancement of fundamental understanding of the most profound and seminal aspects of its trade. Even more seriously, it is an establishment that persists in frenetically sweeping legitimate genres of new anomalous phenomena under its intellectual carpet, thereby denying its own well-documented heritage that *anomalies are the most precious raw material from which future science is formed*. (my italics)”

Henry H. Bauer gives a similarly bleak assessment of the state of modern science: “Mainstream orthodoxy routinely resists novelties that later become accepted ... Indeed, it may well be that the suppression of unorthodox views in science is on the increase rather than in decline.” In *Prometheus Bound* (1994), John Ziman says: “traditionally (since perhaps the 17th century) a relatively disinterested knowledge-seeking activity, science progressively became handmaiden to industry and government, and its direction of research is increasingly influenced by vested interests and self-interested bureaucracies, including bureaucracies supposedly established to promote good science such as the National Academies, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health.

In many cases of anomalous evidence that threatens established theories; simple denial of publication suffices to suppress the anomaly. Sometimes, however, renegade scientists

manage to capture the attention of the general public, pleading their case to a larger audience that has no vested interest in the validity of the established theories. When that happens, and significant interests are at stake, the scientific establishment may turn nasty and resort to misrepresentation or outright falsification of evidence and to ad-hominem attacks.”

Towards the end of the twentieth century it became impossible to continue to reject all the positive LENR results being submitted, so recognition of a new branch of study finally took place. Dr Edmund Storms of Los Alamos National Laboratories observed: “Cold fusion violates most of what I was taught of nuclear chemistry. But when you see it happen in front of you in your own apparatus, it is pretty convincing that it is a reality.”

Since those early years, the production of excess energy is now routinely encountered and there is even an LENR course at a respectable university, M.I.T, short though it may be. But the stigma of the early years remains and it is difficult to get the interest of good scientists in this important branch of research. Those involved in grants have closed their minds when it comes to LENR Articles so they are rarely published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. When they are, the results do not receive as much scrutiny as more mainstream topics. Let’s hope that dogma and prejudice decline.

Martin Fleischmann died August third 2012 at the age of 85. Sadly, his work still does not receive the acknowledgement it deserves, and is, if mentioned at all, skipped over in undergraduate courses, or referred to with wry derision exemplified by this early quote of Dr Nathan Lewis: “This experiment hasn’t been reproduced by any National Laboratory or any university yet”. Then, with a smirk and some delay, it is added: “without a good football team.” The implication is that such universities are unworthy of recognition and can’t do sound research.

It is true that no theory acceptable to all, to explain the excess heat, is yet forthcoming. But the results tell us there is much to discover yet. The ultimate impact of Fleischmann’s and Pons’ unprecedented work may in time prove to have an even greater impact on humanity than that of Fleming and Florey.

Here is something to ponder. If an inexhaustible source of cheap clean energy for all the world was discovered today, would governments of the world step in to protect ‘too big to fail’ Wall Street corporations that have such large investments in the automotive and related industries including the fossil fuel infrastructure? Hopefully, we will see at some time in the future the realisation of Fleischmann’s dream. Low cost energy from an almost limitless resource for the entire planet.

Your government watches you

The revelations of Edward Snowden have revealed an era of digital totalitarianism.

The revelations by the former National Security Agency (NSA) employee Edward Snowden exposed the extent to which governments, especially in America, spy on users of digital technology. But it also had an irony. It showed how easy it would be for the watchers to be exposed to scrutiny, as well as those who are watched. It seems nothing is private on the internet, including the activities of those who are invading others' privacy.

Given that a large proportion of our activities are now conducted on-line, it is not hard to see how a more subtle form of totalitarianism could be ushered in. What Snowden's NSA revelations underline is that relying on the good intentions of those with power is both naïve and foolish. If operatives can do it, they will do it. Only the most severe constraints will stop them, and that is unlikely when it is considered that they are part of the government.

As if to underline this, the attacks on Snowden in America have been extreme. Remember, what he showed was true. He was apprising the public of something factual about what governments are doing. But intelligence officials publicly threatened his life. He, and his "accomplices", were accused of "terrorism".

Our own prime minister, Tony Abbott referred to him as a "traitor", taking aim at the ABC for passing the information on:

"This gentlemen Snowden, or this individual Snowden, who has betrayed his country and in the process has badly, badly damaged other countries that are friends of the United States, and of course the ABC didn't just report what he said, they took the lead in advertising what he said ..."

Snowden showed that the NSA deliberately collects the phone records of virtually every American, allowing US intelligence to construct detailed social and political networks. He demonstrated that there is a world wide digital police state. The spying apparatus is so sophisticated it enables access to every communication of individuals around the world.

Like any good totalitarians, the intelligence community is skilled at concealing the truth. According to the *Washington Post*, the director of the NSA, James Clapper, in a 2013 Congressional hearing on surveillance, was asked whether the NSA collected "any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans." Clapper replied: "No, sir ... not wittingly." After Snowden's revelations, a group of Congressmen wrote a letter to president Obama calling for Clapper's removal. Obama wrote back saying he had "full confidence" in Clapper.

"Full confidence in his ability to do what?" one wonders. Clapper later confirmed, to a Congressional committee, that

the NSA used "legal authority" to search for data related to "US persons". "There have been queries, using US person identifiers, of communications lawfully acquired to obtain foreign intelligence targeting non-US persons reasonably believed to be located outside the United States," Clapper wrote. "These queries were performed pursuant to minimization procedures approved by the Fisa court and consistent with the statute and the fourth amendment." This might be restated as: "It wasn't really legal, but we at least adhered to some laws when we were doing it."

The shifty response from the Obama administration was equally revealing; a marvellous piece of doublespeak. It was claimed that only metadata is being collected: who was communicating with whom. It was claimed that people's privacy is not being violated; it is only violated when the government reads, analyses, or listens to the communications. "When it comes to telephone calls, nobody is listening to your telephone calls. That's not what this program's about," Obama said. "As was indicated, what the intelligence community is doing is looking at phone numbers and durations of calls. They are not looking at people's names, and they're not looking at content." See no evil, hear no evil.

To underline the point, the administration then repeatedly used metaphors about finding "needles in a haystack", implying that the whole thing is really quite innocent after all. This scarcely passes the laugh test. Digital data is easy to search in a way that previous kinds of information were not. Digital "needles" are easy to find, you just have to have the right algorithm.

As Kenneth Roth commented in *The Age*, the assertion that this monitoring is legal has never been tested in court (probably because it would not survive). He adds that it makes a mockery of the requirement that the government can only invade people's privacy when there is evidence that it is needed for a criminal investigation.

"If the government's logic were played out, we would have no reason to object to the government even placing video cameras in our bedrooms with a direct feed to a government computer, so long as the government promised not to look at the videos until it had a good reason for doing so. Indeed, the cameras on our laptops and smartphones may already be playing that role.

"Even with respect to the contents of our communications (not simply the metadata), US law lets the government read your email or listen to your phone calls if you are outside the United States and not an American. That would include most readers of this article.

"Washington arrives at that position by a cramped reading of international human rights law, claiming it has no duty to respect

the right to privacy of non-Americans abroad. A United Nations rights committee challenged this claim last week, but the Obama administration shows no sign of budging.”

There is a growing recognition that nothing you do is private. Indeed, staying private is becoming all but impossible. *The Guardian* reported an instance when Janet Vertesi, a sociologist at Princeton University, tried to keep her pregnancy secret from marketers. Pregnant women, because of their prospective purchasing decisions,

“Vertesi determined that there would be absolutely no mention of her new state on social media. She phoned or wrote individually to friends and family members to give them the good news, and asked them not to mention it on Facebook. But an uncle in Australia sent her a congratulatory message via Facebook. “I then did,” she said, “what any rational person would do. I deleted the thread of all our conversations and unfriended him.” He replied plaintively:

“If the government’s logic were played out, we would have no reason to object to the government even placing video cameras in our bedrooms with a direct feed to a government computer”

“But I didn’t put it on your wall”, apparently unaware that chats and other messages aren’t private in the sense that he assumed.

Vertesi did not use a web browser in the normal way to avoid leaving a trail of cookies. She shopped offline. When she did use Amazon she set up new accounts each time and had the packages delivered to locker. She only paid with gift cards. “The really significant moment came when she came to buy a big-ticket item – an expensive stroller (aka pushchair) that was the urbanite’s equivalent of an SUV. Her husband tried to buy \$500 of Amazon gift vouchers with cash, only to discover that this triggered a warning: retailers have to report people buying large numbers of gift vouchers with cash because, well, you know, they’re obviously money launderers.”

In other words, when you try to stay private, you are quickly suspected of being a criminal. Which is the fundamental problem. The implication is that anyone who wishes to remain private is acting unreasonably: in relation to the law and to the government. It is often claimed that: “You only will have a problem with this kind of surveillance if you are doing something wrong. Only criminals and terrorists need fear us.” That is, don’t complain, we have your best interests at heart.

This is a deceptive trick, a way of taking the real issue off the table. If such an argument, for example, was proffered to angry leaders of foreign countries, whose communications have been monitored, such as Germany’s Angela Merkel or Indonesia’s Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the response would no doubt be: “What makes you think you have the right to make such a decision?”

The same question might be asked by ordinary citizens of their

governments. What gives governments the right to make such decisions? By undertaking mass surveillance, they are exerting a new kind of power over their citizenry. Indeed, the very act of undertaking such surveillance is an expression of that power. It is saying: “We have the right to decide if what you do is acceptable and will monitor you accordingly.” That is taking the right to choose away from people. It is not just personal privacy that is being violated. It is the sense that certain areas of choice, which are considered by their nature private, not the government’s business, will now be invaded.

The privacy of media sources is similarly under threat. Paul Farrell, writing in *The Guardian* Australia, says government agencies could “almost instantaneously” track down journalists’ sources, no matter what the public interest considerations are. “The Telecommunications Interception and Access Act 1979 is so broad and poses such low limitations on state and federal government

agencies that it is a remarkably easy feat for governments to track down a journalist’s sources, and to take swift and decisive action against them.

“In the event of a serious leak of government information, an agency that was so inclined – for instance the Treasury, the Attorney General’s department or the immigration department – could apply to a senior officer within their own department to access the journalist’s telecommunications data. This can reveal who they called or emailed, what time they contacted them and the location of the contacts. If there hasn’t been a level of obfuscation or encryption used by the journalist and the source, it’s a relatively simple task to track down the source using this information.”

So this is the Brave New World. If governments are to protect us we are not allowed to know what they have on us. Nor are we allowed to know what we don’t know about them. To preserve democracy it is apparently necessary to deny it in the higher levels of politics and administration. War is peace.

Julian Assange commented in an article entitled “Conspiracy as governance” that only mass disclosure of information to the public can really undermine the emerging form of digital totalitarianism. Snowden’s large scale revelations are the only effective counter to this growing intrusion – and to do it you have to migrate to Russia.

“To radically shift regime behaviour we must think clearly and boldly for if we have learned anything, it is that regimes do not want to be changed,” Assange writes. “We must think beyond those who have gone before us and discover technological changes that embolden us with ways to act in which our forebears could not.”

Scott Morrison should know about this story

by Kevin Childs

Cycling home from work early in February 1942 Giuseppe Grasso was stopped by police. They ordered him into their car. He was forced to leave his bike with a friend. Also in the car was Mario Sardi, who had been working at about 7.30pm that Saturday when two policemen arrived. They already had another two friends of Mario's in custody.

'By order of the Government,' said a 'kindly' policeman, 'you must come with us to be interned.'

Mario went weak. He had to leave his fiancée, from whom he had never been apart for 15 months, and her parents. He asked if he could take a bath. Just wash your feet and hands, he was told, because the police were in a hurry to seize others. They were off to the lockup at Innisfail, Queensland. Mario's correspondence was in their possession.

Many Australians would doubtless be unaware of what the editor of *The Internment Diaries of Mario Sardi*, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien rightly calls 'the injustice and futility of denying basic civil rights on the grounds of ethnicity'. As many now watch aghast while the Abbott Government mounts what is almost a secret war on refugees, many of whom are fleeing persecution or worse, the message of this book is instructive.

Italians would go to social functions for dignitaries from their homeland. This could be enough to be branded a fascist sympathiser. Yet most were not involved in fascist politics notes O'Brien. Their views ranged from anarchist to socialist, communist and anti-communist, fascist and anti-fascist. Or no interest at all.

O'Brien's father was among those interned, if only for eighteen days, after which he said the authorities 'didn't know what they were doing'. So many who were jailed were born here, so many had simply come for a better life.

Mario Sardi was among 4855 people of Italian origin locked up during World War Two. He was held at a camp called, with no irony, Loveday, in the interior of South Australia, far from home. We should be grateful that he kept a daily diary, five hand-worked, well preserved books, for as O'Brien says there are few first-hand accounts of the camps and this diary fills a void.

The Innisfail lockup was packed, hot and mosquito-ridden. Outside, family and friends came with food and items to help the prisoners. They included a woman whose accountant husband was said to have kept books for the fascists. Before long they were moved to the Show Grounds and held under the guns of the local militia.

Sardi had come to Australia aged 19 in 1935, ten years after his

father emigrated from Elba, an island off the coast of Tuscany. There was plenty of work in the sugar cane fields of Queensland and as they prospered the Italians bought in, owning about half the farms in the Ingham district by 1925. By the thirties racial discrimination had hit – 75 per cent of jobs in northern towns were reserved for Anglo-Saxons. It was called British Preference.

This had consequences. A 19-year-old refused to go to war because the Preference deprive him of his rights to cut cane. This stand for his 'just rights' earned him internment, along with his father and brother. Mario's father fought beside the allies in World War One. His fellow veterans formed Italian sections of the RSL in northern towns. Yet their loyalty was questioned.

The day Italy joined the Second World War in 1940 the doctor who owned the Italian hospital in Ingham was among 103 Queensland men seized. Fascists and anti-fascists were included. Panic grew with allied defeat in Greece and then Pearl Harbour at the end of 1941.

Mario Sardi was taken because he was said to subscribe to a semi-official fascist newspaper and to have signed correspondence with the fascist year date. But he was also mistaken for one M. Sardi, first name Manlio, who signed a petition against a statement by a local communist which had said that all Italians repudiated the Abyssinian War.

The list of those interned from Innisfail is intriguing: 503 Italians (a quarter of those living in the district), 31 Japanese-born, two German-born, six Finns, two Albanians and lone representatives from New Zealand, Bulgaria and Rumania. Twenty-seven had been born here, five adults were of Italian extraction and four of Japanese origin. Sixteen children of German, Italian and Japanese ancestry were taken from their mothers. Eight women held were Italian (four), German (two) and one each of Japanese and of Chinese-Aboriginal descent.

Sardi records going 20 hours without food on the journey to Brisbane, including handing to someone else a police offering of bread containing spaghetti in tomato paste and beans, which he found disgusting. Perhaps the spaghetti was in a tin. They were shipped the 221 miles from Adelaide to Barmera, where 6000 men were behind the barbed wire of six camps, clad in burgundy-stained khaki.

They were doctors, artists, painters, farmers, labourers, accountants, engineers and tradesmen. One farmer from near Innisfail was reported by a station mistress to be "congregating" and laughing outside her station the day Italy entered the war. This was seen as anti-British behaviour. He was also accused of wearing

a black shirt at a big fascist funeral in 1940, two years before he was interned. An Albanian who was held for 18 months was denounced by a former boss who was later found to be erratic and unreliable.

Quite a few of those interned had volunteered for the war. Some were rejected on medical grounds. A milk bar owner from Queensland who was not accepted for Home Defence was locked up for almost two years and went home only to find his wife had sold the business and left with another man.

A judge who interviewed more than 2000 Italian internees in Loveday found most had no politics, an approach summed up by one who said: 'My work is my politics and my family is my religion'. So they fretted about their abandoned families, farms and businesses.

Their new home was rightly called a camp because they were living in tents and sleeping on palliasses on the bare ground. Efforts to improve things by building makeshift wooden 'beds' were frustrated when guards destroyed them. Specially minted coins with a hole in the centre were used in the camps. Silver coins were forbidden, but ways were found to get them and melt them to make rings.

This was a place of heat, then cold, wind and sand which was to become a huge farm producing vegetable seeds, growing pigs, hens, opium (for medical morphine) and pyrethrum (for insecticide). It was also a place of tension. After almost 200 self-described fascists arrived from WA a dedicated anti-fascist and anarchist was murdered. Francesco Fantin became a martyr of Australia's Italian left. His killer pleaded guilty to manslaughter and got two years' hard labour.

Mario's diary notes hunger and a shortage of soap and tobacco. It was hard work digging holes for tents at a shilling a day. A biscuit and buttered slice of bread comprised breakfast. And he records revealing scenes such as seeing four armed soldiers with a little horse and cart carrying two gallons of precious kerosene. About 740 people had 75 lamps for that amount of kerosene, so his tent was often dark.

There was no shortage of humour. Coloured drawings in the Australian War Memorial show that those whose vegie patch was triangular because of space were said to be Freemasons, anyone who talked to the military authorities was a spy, but if he avoided speaking he was afraid. Someone who created an object from wood and sold it was exploiting his comrades but if he gave it away he was an imbecile.

He passed the time by writing to his fiancée and family, continually reading and gardening. He played bocce and soccer, poker, many different card games and draughts. He made ships in bottles, carved picture frames and other objects from Mulga wood. Also helpful was reading books aloud, singing in a choir, watching plays, poetry readings (some written in the camp) and musicals, including Neapolitan songs and, later, attending school. There are

also diversions such as farting in order to clear the tent of those who talk too much. His despair emerges in a diary entry during Easter 1942: 'Oh Japan! Japan! Come and free us from this burnt country.'

Later, he writes, 'Italy, Germany and you Japan, which is the closest, come and give a lesson to these uncivilised people who keep a lot of mother's blind, limp paralysed young and old children who are a pitiful sight, locked up.' As the newspapers are read at night there is music and cries of 'Long Live Italy' and 'Long Live Il Duce' as arms are raised in the fascist salute.

When the Japanese march out to be exchanged for Australian prisoners the salute is given to cries of 'Eia! Eia! Eia' 'I wish our allies a nice trip home,' he writes.

He does not see his father until he is freed in June 1942. Soon after, Mario gets a letter from the Innisfail Canegrowers Executive saying there was work available land and he should start immediately. Melancholy and nostalgia grips him. Yet there is humour: an inmate's pyjama leg is sewn together and a rock put under his palliasse.

There is gambling. When caught, internees got up to two weeks' jail. Grape rations were suspended because internees failed to answer roll call politely and without insolence. The Japanese bombardment of Sydney in June 1942 gives Mario hope of freedom. The internees happily follow the Germans' progress in Russia and the Italians in Libya.

What comes through the diary is the sheer boredom, petty officialdom and constant struggle to either pass parcels to nearby camps or in other ways beat the authorities. At one stage Mario goes before a tribunal. His freedom depends on his answers:

Q: Would you like Mussolini to come to Australia?

Sardi: Whoever comes, it's the same to me.

Q: Would you like Japan to come here?

Sardi: Same answer

Q: If Japan comes would you go against them?

Sardi: I don't go against them but I don't support them either.

Q: Were you a young Fascist?

Sardi: Yes.

Q: Were you ever convicted?

Sardi: No.

Even after Italy declared war on Germany the lot of the prisoners did not greatly improve, despite Prime Minister John Curtin saying any genuine anti-fascist would be released. Sardi was sent to the Northern Territory and Western Queensland; a pharmacist was put to work as railway fettler on the Nullarbor Plain; cane farmers had to work in Victorian salt mines. On release, they all had to report regularly to police and notify any change of job or address.

When Sardi's release came, two packets of cigarettes for a soldier ensured his suitcase was not searched. He left Loveday at

the start of December, 1943. Almost three weeks later he was in a logging camp at Yeuralba, about 290km south-east of Darwin. Four months later he was moved to another camp outside town, then in July he was sent to Longreach. His odyssey continued into January 1945 when he was sent to Larrimah, a tiny hamlet 428 kilometres south-east of Darwin. This was the railhead of the North Australia Railway during World War II.

That month he was moved to Camooweal, then to camps at Mt Isa, Townsville and Innisfail. He was given leave to marry but had to work as a conscripted labourer building roads in Townsville until August 1945.

As in any book published by the author there are blips, such as the misspelling of Nullarbor, but this is minor in a work that is excellently designed and adds to the list of necessary histories which throw light on Australia's treatment of 'the other'.

The Internment Diaries of Mario Sardi, Edited and annotated by Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, Lucerne Press.

Gonads and self actualised fish

by Lisa Techera

Science may be taking us into unimaginable areas, but science writing is often a dry affair. The discipline is mostly concerned with numbers and concepts, which do not lend themselves to exciting prose. It is thus delightful to read a selection of some amusing and often insightful examples of essays and articles that are far from dreary. *The Best Australian Science Writing of 2013* contains some delightful examples of writing about the strangeness and awe of the physical world.

Most entertaining is a delicious exercise in anthropomorphism by Becky Crew, in her article "It's time to become gonads", which is about the deep sea anglerfish of the Ceratiidae family. Crew notes that although males of many species tend to be quite proud of their genitals, the idea of actually becoming genitals by fusing yourself to your mate is probably a bit less appealing. (It lends an entirely new meaning to the phrase: "You are a dick", I suppose.)

Crew pens a mock journal of the anglerfish's progress:

"I never knew my father. Mother told me as soon as I was old enough to understand that he was gone before I was born. My friends all say the same about their fathers, but it doesn't make it hurt any less that he didn't want to stick around to see what I looked like, what I would act like, which uni I'd end up going to."

There are some excellent articles on weather and climate change. Mark Treddinick notes that "weather talk is politics now". Clive Hamilton conducts an intriguing look at attempts to reengineer the world's climate. He identifies a fascinating conflict:

"The divide is between Prometheans and Soterians (named here after the Greek god of safety, preservation and deliverance and harm): a technocratic rationalist world view confident of humanity's ability to control nature, against a more humble

outlook suspicious of unnatural technological solutions and the hubris of mastery projects."

That is a debate that will intensify.

There is a fine description of the politics of finding the Higgs Boson, when results were probably released early to the media before they can properly be checked. Fred Watson's description of how it was decided (by ubernerds) that Pluto is not a planet is a delightful insight into cosmic morphology.

Antony Funnell takes an intelligent look at the issues of energy efficiency and sustainability. He notes the effect of Jevons paradox: that as technology is made more efficient it gets used more, reducing any expected savings. Rachel Robertson's description of dealing with autism with her son, and in her family, is affecting.

Rhianna Boyle's article on stoned animals is entertaining. Traces of drugs are seeping into the waterways, affecting marine life. One was the amphipod, which it is believed has been affected by Prozac. Boyle muses that after a few weeks on the drug it starts to experience an improved mood, realising that what has been holding it back in life is fear:

"Maybe, with their new found self confidence and a few affirmations, they realised it was self defeating to spend their lives hiding at the dark bottom of the water column. Instead, perhaps, they decided to live in the moment and swim on the surface of the water.

Unfortunately, in the wild, a stray, self actualised amphipod on the water's surface would immediately be eaten by a fish."

Best Australian Science Writing of 2013. Multiple authors. NewSouth Press. University of New South Wales.

Membership Application

The Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. is Australia's oldest free-thought group, dating back to 1906. Join us and be part of the international movement to defend the legacy of the Enlightenment and to further the cause of genuine secularism in Australia.

Check our website www.rationalist.com.au for up to date information about what we stand for and what we're doing about it.

You may also use this form as a gift subscription, to introduce those you care about to the ideals and actions of the free-thought movement.

I hereby apply for membership of the Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. and affirm that I agree with the aims of the Society and will abide by its Rules, as set out on the RSA website.

Name

☐ This is for myself

☐ This is a gift

Address

State

Postcode

Mobile

Phone

Email

Signature

Date

Please tick

☐ \$50 Single

☐ \$40 Single concession

☐ \$70 Couples

☐ \$60 Couples concession

☐ ____ Donation? (many thanks)

Student or Healthcare
card number

Send this form and your cheque to The Secretary, PO Box 1312, Hawksburn 3142, Victoria, Australia.

Or send in the form and transfer funds electronically to RSA Admin, BSB 313-140 account 1200 2918, being sure to cite your name as reference so we know where the funds are coming from.

Rationalism grows out of a respected tradition of critical thinking that goes back to the ancient Greeks, flourished during the Enlightenment, and in modern times continues to develop its views in the light of new evidence and argument. It is an ideal approach to public life and personal belief in the twenty first century.

To achieve our aims we:

- Publish a journal, the Australian Rationalist
- Host a website, rationalist.com.au
- Organise public lectures, debates, and conferences
- Participate in media discussion on issues of concern
- Make submissions to public inquiries
- Lobby MPs, governments and other relevant bodies

As rationalists we:

- Propose ethical principles based on shared values rather than religious doctrine
- Defend freedom of thought and conscience
- Advocate for the separation of church and state
- Work for the secularisation of the education system
- Endorse and support science and the scientific method
- Adopt a sceptical stance towards supernatural and paranormal claims
- Campaign to eliminate superstition
- Promote an open and just society
- Oppose the intrusion of religious dogma into public decision making

Official Aims of the Rationalist Society of Australia Inc.

To propound and advance Rationalism, that is adherence to the principle that all significant beliefs and actions should be based on reason and evidence, that the natural world is the only world there is and that answers to the key questions of human existence are to be found only in the natural world.

To stimulate freedom of thought.

To promote inquiry into religious and other superstitious beliefs and practices.

To encourage interest in science, criticism, history and philosophy as connected factors in a progressive human culture, independent of theological creeds and dogmas.

To promote the fullest possible use of science for human welfare.

To promote a secular and ethical system of education.

The Scientist Is An Atheist

"I am often asked why I do not stick to my proper business of scientific research, teaching and popularisation, instead of attacking a religion which leaves me free to go my way.

There are many answers to this question. In the first place, my practice as a scientist is Atheistic. That is to say, when I set up an experiment I assume that no God, angel or devil is going to interfere with its course; and this assumption has been justified by such success as I have achieved in my professional career. I should therefore be intellectually dishonest if I were not also atheistic in theory, at least to the extent of disbelieving in supernatural interference in the affairs of the world. And I should be a coward if I did not state my views in public ...

Secondly, I deny that religion leaves me alone. I wish it did ...

never read the book thoroughly at all. Those who admire it most have usually read it least, and those who know it best are the most sceptical about its value. Still God wrote the book ... so we are told. Then it is clearly up to us to know all we can about it. There can be no faults in God's work. Let us then sharpen up our blue pencils and, appointing ourselves as a group of sub-editors, let us see what sort of book it is. Ten thousand volumes have already been written on the subject, you say? What of it? ... Let us see if we cannot find something of interest which we have missed to date. Let us open the book anywhere and see what God has to say.

Attention please. Look what we have, first pick! A gentleman who was not born, had no father, no mother, no ancestors at all, and did not die! Absurd you say? Please, I beg you. God wrote it.

The followers of the book are all going in different directions, yet they all claim that the book is showing them the way.

Protestants still stop "infidels" from playing on Sunday because it is alleged that over three thousand years ago Jehovah told Moses to forbid Jews from working on Saturdays.

Religion is like that. It endows excerpts from the laws of primitive peoples with an eternal significance and stands in the way of an attempt to deal with the problem on constructive lines ...

Scientific education and religious education are incompatible. The clergy have ceased to interfere with education at the advanced stage with which I am directly concerned, but they have still got control over that of children. This means that the children have to learn about Adam and Noah instead of about Evolution, about David who killed Goliath instead of Koch who killed cholera, about Christ's ascent into heaven instead of Montgolfier's and Wright's. Worse than this they are taught that it is a virtue to accept statements without adequate evidence, which leaves them a prey to quacks of every kind in later life, and makes it very difficult to accept the methods of thought which are successful in science."

-- Prof. J.B.S. Haldane (Fact and Faith). Sent by W.G.C.

God as a Journalist

Many years ago God wrote a book. The book was to be a revelation to the human race. Now, many centuries after the completion of this remarkable celestial document the only people who seem to understand the revelation are clearly the people who do not believe it. The book was to lead men in the path of life, and yet it is apparent that the only people who know where they are going are those who have given up on the book. The followers of the book are all going in different directions, yet they all claim that the book is showing them the way! And most of them have

(Hebrews 7:1-13; Genesis: 14-18; Psalms 110-4 etc. etc.). Well, that something to start with. Let us try again. What have we here? What is this? Pardon me while I find out how much a talent weighs. So - about 120 pounds. Well, well, so God says hailstones weighing 120 pounds dropped on men. (Revelation 16:21). So be it. Who am I to argue with God? Let us flick over a few more pages. There they go ... H'm. This is interesting. The Loch Ness monster. So God believes in sea serpents. (Amos 9:8). Well, I have never been to the bottom of the sea so ... And here, if I mistake not, is a gentleman who makes a speech and is immediately eaten by worms (politicians take note). (Acts 12:21-23). And right here, believe it or not, is a pelican and a porcupine singing a duet (Australian Broadcasting Corporation please note). What was that? Where did you say? In Zephaniah 2:14. After that there is some excuse for the Salvation Army bands. Still, there is a sneezing crocodile in God's book (Job 41:18). So why not a pelican porcupine duet? Queer birds you say? Not at all compared with the four footed fowls that creep (Lev. 11-20). They shall be an abomination unto you, says the book. We quite agree ...

Here is an item of interest to boarding house keepers ... a gentleman feedeth on the wind! (Hosea 12:1) No directions for serving, unhappily. And ladies, if you wish to win a beauty competition, the Lord says you must become a vegetarian. (Daniel 1:11-16). Sorry, on reading over the passage, I find that the contest was won by four young men.

Even the longest sermon must come to an end but next time I am preaching on this subject you must remind me to tell you how an angel helped a jail full of Communists to escape and I shall probably add to it the amazing business of the man who was older than his father.

-- F.R., Adelaide

*Fancy a good chat about about a thought
provoking book? Join our Big Ideas Bookclub!
We meet up on the last Wednesday of every month.
Contact events@embiggenbooks.com for details*



INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS

{EmbiggenBooks}

197-203 LITTLE LONSDALE STREET MELBOURNE VIC 3000

*Books are the carriers of civilization. Without
books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled,
thought and speculation at a standstill
~ Barbara Tuchman ~*



*Embiggen Books regularly hosts events that focus on science,
philosophy, ethics, religion, history and politics. We also
work with the Australian Science Communicators, The Australian
Medical Writers Association and The Rationalists on bigger events.
Join our email newsletter for details events@embiggenbooks.com*
