

Australian

Rationalist

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PLANET OF THE WATCHED

Has digital surveillance robbed us of privacy?



The five Europes resurface

The Zoe's law conundrum.

Is Richard Dawkins giving atheists a bad name?

The crisis in psychology

Persian images

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 **Rationalist
Society of
Australia**

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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.

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The borders of asymmetric rationality

A consideration of limits.

by Colin Benjamin

Sir Isaac Newton said, “I can calculate the motions of the heavenly bodies, but not the madness of people.” Our media is strong on outrage but pathetically weak in consideration of the global changes that fuel what it is dramatically covering. Jingoistic nationalism sells more advertising space than considered analysis of underlying causes.

There are a number of asymmetric assumptions that defy the rational accountability of the nation states in situations that can no longer be resolved under the rubric ‘we determine who crosses our borders’.

One of the assumptions that is clearly under threat is that citizens have a right to full, free and informed choices and that national governments make their decisions under the rule of law with truth, trust and transparency guarding against tyranny.

All neo-institutionalist approaches are based on limited rationality. The problem of asymmetric information, determined by media imperatives, leads to a loss of accountability when there are claims to be acting in ‘the national interest’.

Let’s look at some current instances of asymmetry:

1. Scott Morrison’s imprisonment of kids at sea for over a month and his deals to thwart his own High Court review of the secret seaside operations whilst permitting India to determine who comes to Australia but not for how long they may stay.

2. The US decision to swap Guantánamo prisoners with terrorists, yet block the release of the kidnapped kids in Nigeria on the grounds that negotiation with terrorists is internationally inconvenient.

3. The media coverage of the ‘disproportionate’ killing of kids by Israel in the face of thousands of rockets from Hamas whilst giving no coverage to the identical process of destruction by the Ukraine administration that led to the MH17 destruction, including children.

4. The encouragement of ‘conditional detention’ of thousands of children in refugee camps because the member nations of the UN Security Council cannot agree on a humanitarian solution to the problems of failed states and national identities.

5. The massive asymmetry of male and female life (or rather death) expectations on the sub-continent that reflect religious differences which deny kids their legal status under UN Rights of the Child.

In *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, a vital historical and philosophic book by Philip Bobbitt, it is argued that there is an emerging interplay between strategic imperatives and constitutional innovation, which will impact on the constitutional order of the state. (For a review of this significant 919 page book, go to Jay Ogilvy at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20071019104838/http://www.gbn.com/GBNDocumentDisplayServlet.srv?aid=1606&url=%2FUploadDocumentDisplayServlet.srv%3Fid%3D12865>)

Bobbitt argues that: “We are at a moment in world affairs when the essential ideas that govern statecraft must change . . . owing to advances in international telecommunications, rapid computation, and weapons of mass destruction.” It used to be that “states threatened states”. Now, the model of territorially sovereign states is challenged by five developments:

1. Recognition of human rights
2. Weapons of mass destruction
3. Threats that transcend state borders (e.g., migration, disease, famine)
4. Globalization of the economy
5. The global communications network.

According to Bobbitt, the end of ideological conflict has left states unable to articulate strategies for the commitment of troops. He says: “‘Ad hoc strategies’ is almost a contradiction in terms, because the more states respond to the variations of the hour, the less they benefit from strategic planning.

“The nation-state is dying, but this only means that, as in the past, a new form is being born. This new form, the market-state, will ultimately be defined by its response to the strategic threats that have made the nation-state no longer viable.

“Bandits, robbers, guerillas, gangs have always been part of the domestic security environment. What is new is their access to mechanised weapons, another product of the technological environment of the Long War, and the unique political role of such groups, which pits them against noncombatants as a means of war against the State itself. Against these threats, the nation-state is too muscle-bound and too much observed to be of much use. The mobilisation of the industrial capacity of a nation is irrelevant to such threats; the fielding of vast tank armies and fleets of airplanes is as clumsy as a bear trying to fend off bees.”

Bobbitt concludes that the market-state will live within three paradoxes:

- (1) it will require more centralized authority for government but all governments will be weaker;

- (2) there will be more public participation in government, but it will count for less, and thus the role of the citizen qua citizen will greatly diminish and the role of the citizen as spectator will increase;

- (3) the welfare state will have been greatly retrenched, but infrastructure security, epidemiological surveillance, and environmental protection ... will be promoted by the State as never before.

There are a number of asymmetric assumptions that defy the rational accountability of the nation states

It's surely time for us to follow the lead of Médecins Sans Frontières, Doctors Without Borders. A not for profit group created in 1971 by a small group of French doctors and journalists who believed that all people have the right to medical care regardless

of race, religion, creed or political affiliation, and that the needs of these people outweigh respect for national borders.

– Colin Benjamin is a futurist, strategy expert and founder of *Life Be In It*.

Atheism and tolerance – but not the Dawkins way

Criticising a household god.

by Martin Hirst

I've been a Level 7 Atheist for as long as I can remember; the idea of "god" always seemed strange to me. I was fascinated by science as a boy growing up in early 60s England. I loved "outer space" and stories about the undersea world. My first brutal encounter with "the Scriptures" was at Prince Edward's Infants in Sheffield. I drew a picture story of taking a "rocket ship" into space to meet up with God; it seemed logical to me – a child of Sputnik – that if Heaven was where the Bible said it was, somewhere "up there", we should be able to visit the place.

My teacher, the twitchy Miss Gamble, took great umbrage at my insolence and ignorance. I was hauled to the front of the class and given "the slipper" across my buttocks. I had, it seems, offended both Church and State with my childish views of materialism and space travel.

Growing up I was offered a remarkable degree of choice about religious instruction. It was compulsory at school, but my parents never made me go to Sunday School. As far as I can remember the only time I've been in a church with my parents was on my Christening day; perhaps there was the odd family wedding too, but we never went to pray as a family.

I did go to Sunday School with my cousins as a young boy; I liked to get out of the house and play with friends, but I could never take the hymn-singing very seriously and when it came time to close my eyes and pray I would always sneak a look around to see who was communing and who was conning.

As a teenager, I had my share of encounters with religious families too, usually because I was lusting after a girl. This led me to the Seventh Day Adventists for a brief period. I was thrown out of the sect and the house when the girl's parents realised my Passion was for their daughter, rather than their God.

I went to Fellowship for about three years during senior High School. Every Friday night I would leave the house with as much pocket money as I could obtain legally and by subterfuge from my

mother. It usually amounted to no more than a few dollars. That didn't matter though; a schooner of Resch's was about 30 cents and a packet of B&H Special Filters less than 50 cents. We'd go to the Wagon Wheels, or the Station hotel and get ourselves a bit drunk; then we'd go up to the church hall and try to pick up girls. One memorable evening Gail let me go upstairs inside. That was my idea of religious ecstasy. All my prayers – to that point – had been answered.

I offer you this confessional background in order to make the point that, despite my hardcore atheism, I am very tolerant of religion.

You see I believe that a Level 7 Atheist has a duty to be a strong proponent of the freedom to worship. I think it is important to make this point at a time in history when Secularism is being given a bad name by religious bigots.

And the worst of them – now that Christopher Hitchens has gone to meet his maker (or not) – is the renowned, but increasingly erratic Oxford Professor, Richard Dawkins.

Dawkins coined the term "Level 7 Atheist" in his book *The God Delusion*, which is an intelligent argument for religious instruction being "adults only" and for the cogent practice of atheism as a wholly moral outlook. In other words, Dawkins is right that we don't need to be "religious" in order to have a good "moral" worldview. In fact, like all Level 7 Atheists, I firmly believe that NOT having to kowtow to a fictional "Higher Authority" makes us more moral, not less, because it means we have to take full responsibility for our actions in the "here and now", not leave absolution until the day after we kick off this mortal coil.

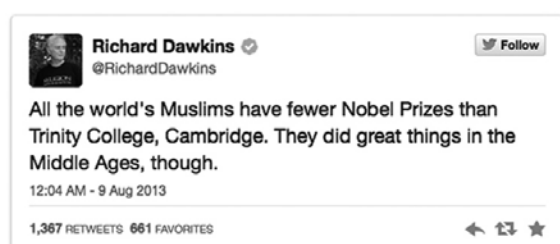
But sadly, despite the greatness of his previous work, Richard Dawkins has become an embarrassment to any self-respecting atheist.

In the last five years or so, Dawkins has become an awful parody of himself. He is now so religiously fanatical about his opposition

to Islam that he has turned himself into an intolerant zealot. Just look at this tweet from August 2013; it borders on racist, but it is certainly Islamophobic:



This one, from March 2013 is both racist and Islamophobic:



Of course, Dawkins, and those who still support his line of reasoning, will argue that Islam is not a category of ethnicity – in other words, it’s not a “race” – and strictly speaking they are semantically right. However, to defend Dawkins in this way falls right into the “I’m not a racist, but...” line of arguing which is thoroughly discredited. Dawkins’s Islamophobia is a form of racism; it identifies a specific group with common characteristics

and it denigrates them on the basis of those characteristics.

I’ve heard it said that Dawkins is the champion of the “New Atheism”, a more militant form of secularism that is supposed to be a counter to a rising tide Islamic fundamentalism. If the aim of this “new” atheism is to “convert” Muslims by berating them about the logical fallacies of their religion, then it is clearly not working.

The end result, unfortunately, is to give succour and political cover to the real nasties who would have us equate Islam with Fascism and therefore justify a brutal global war against Islamic “terrorism”. You do not win hearts and minds through a campaign of brutal suppression. It has never worked. From My Lai to Abu Ghraib it has failed.

For instance, demanding that Muslim women forsake the hijab – as is now the law in France – just drives Islam underground and reinforces the mistaken ideas of the Jihadis. That is not tolerant secularism; it is religious bigotry.

The New Atheism is wrong because it makes excuses for the worst kind of anti-Islamic hatreds. For Muslims, as for adherents of any religion, the only way they will be free of the “opiate of the masses”, is if they come to secularism of their own free will and after considering the material aspects of their religion in a rational way. Secularists can best help this process by getting out of the way, not joining the chorus of Islamophobic ranters like Dawkins.

– Martin Hirst is associate professor of journalism and multimedia in the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University.

The unkindest cut

A plea against barbaric practices.

by Jonathan Meddings

Every day, thousands of young girls are forcibly restrained, whilst they scream and writhe in pain, as parts of their genitals are cut off with various sharp instruments. Many of them will contract HIV because the same unsterilized instrument has been used on dozens of other victims. The World Health Organization estimates that globally, 140 million girls and women are currently living with mutilated genitals.

Most people react to this with a profound sense of moral indignation. And yet many think nothing of the fact that every day, thousands of young boys are forcibly restrained, whilst they scream and writhe in pain, as parts of their genitals are cut off. It’s true many of these boys have the benefit of the procedure

being performed by a trained health practitioner in an appropriate healthcare setting. But many don’t. It was estimated back in 2006 that 665 million men were living with mutilated genitals, and undoubtedly that number has increased since then.

The question I find myself asking is this: why is there a collective cultural cringe in the civilized world at the mere thought of female genital mutilation, but not male genital mutilation? And how is it that in America, the land of the free, that the freedom of its newborn male citizens to grow up and decide what they do to their own bodies is violated every day?

The reason for this double standard I think is clear: male genital mutilation has been normalized here, as female genital mutilation

has been in other places. It's this normalization of genital cutting that causes many to refer to it not as genital mutilation, but euphemistically as circumcision. But the genital cutting of any child, male, female, or intersex, is genital mutilation.

It's taboo to compare male circumcision with female genital mutilation. But viewing both in opposition has led to the trivialization of the mutilation of baby boys. I'm not saying the degree of physical damage is equal. Arguably, even the least damaging form of female genital mutilation results in greater physical damage than the excision of the foreskin, but this is of no consolation to men who have lost theirs.

Over the years as I've debated people about this issue I've seen common arguments emerge, of which it turns out there are six. They are the arguments from: religious freedom, parental rights, medical benefits, aesthetics, conformity, and moral relativism. In

parents who have circumcised their children about circumcision being a "personal choice". But if it were really a personal choice it would have been made by the person being circumcised.

When it comes to medical decisions, it is true parents have the right to make decisions for their children who cannot. But that right is constrained by their responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of their child. And genital cutting does not enhance their health or wellbeing. Not one single reputable medical association in the world recommends circumcision as a preventative health measure. The World Health Organisation – more of a bureaucratic organisation than a medical one – stands alone and defiant in its support of routine infant circumcision as a preventative health measure.

As a medical scientist and writer I've grappled with the medical arguments about circumcision for years. I'm absolutely convinced

'Why is there a collective cultural cringe in the civilized world at the mere thought of female genital mutilation, but not male genital mutilation?'

principle each of these arguments could be used to justify male, female, or intersex genital cutting, but in practice they're used differently. The argument from conformity is, in my experience, the most common argument employed by parents.

Let's start with the argument from religious freedom. Of course, the vast majority of circumcisions in the United States or Australia are not performed for religious reasons. But when they are they violate the religious freedom of children by denying them the chance to grow up and decide for themselves if they want to follow the preachments of Judaism or Islam. And as far as Judaism is concerned, circumcision has its roots in the patriarchal, misogynistic teachings of an oligarchy of hysterical, theocratic zealots obsessed with sexual purity. There is absolutely no reason for modern day Jews to continue the bizarre practices of a cult like theirs, and I'm pleased to see many progressive Jews have turned away from the practice of circumcision. I encourage you to visit [Beyond the Bris Online](#) for more information.

If you're a parent considering circumcising your child for religious reasons remember this: religious freedom doesn't grant parents the right to impose their religion on their children, any more than it does to impose it on anyone else. That's not religious freedom – that's religious indoctrination and privilege.

We should also dispense with the argument from parental rights. Parents don't have rights over their children – they have responsibilities to them. Insofar as parental rights exist, they exist for the purpose of meeting one's parental responsibilities – responsibilities that don't include the imposition of parental preferences about body image on children. We hear a lot from

that any medical benefits are negligible, if not non-existent, depending on the specific medical claim in question. And in any case, circumcision will never be a substitute for condom use and vaccination.

Let's turn to the argument from aesthetics. It is not unusual to hear men say things like, "I want my son to look like me", when advocating circumcision of baby boys. But imagine if a father said, "I want my son to look like me", before proceeding to give his baby boy a tattoo. No one would think this a normal, sane thing to do. And yet just like circumcision, tattooing your baby boy is a painful procedure, the consequences of which are permanent (barring some expensive and painful laser surgery).

Such actions appear unacceptable even when the consequences aren't permanent. Consider that if I were to cut someone's hair in a style of my choosing without their consent (say I were to do so whilst they slept) because in my view this particular hair style was better than the one they already had, I would rightly be regarded as domineering if not totally insane. I fail to see how cutting the genitals of another without their consent is any different, except that genitals, unlike hair, do not grow back.

Just because you might think surgically altered genitals look better doesn't mean your child will. Let them grow up and decide for themselves what they think looks better for their own bodies. It amazes me that some parents, who can't bear the thought of their child getting a tattoo or a piercing of their own choosing, see nothing wrong with cutting their genitals without their consent.

And so we turn to the argument from conformity, for which there appears to be some overlap with the argument from

aesthetics. Does the father who says, 'I want my son to look like me', circumcise his son because he thinks a circumcised penis looks better, or because whether he thinks it looks better or not the father wants his son to look the same as himself and/or other men? It shouldn't come as a surprise if in many cases the answer is both.

At the end of the day parents want what's best for their children. And the argument from conformity appeals to the parental desire that one's son fits in with their peers. On the one hand, in countries with an already high circumcision rate, this works in favour of circumcising one's son. On the other hand, in countries with a low circumcision rate, it works in favour of leaving one's son part of the intact majority. But talk of the circumcision 'rate' can be confusing, because it could refer either to prevalence (the total number of boys and men who are circumcised in a population), or incidence (the number of newly circumcised boys and men each year).

The circumcision rate is often very different when one is talking in terms of prevalence or incidence. Fathers in a country like Australia, for example, should be aware that although the circumcision rate in terms of prevalence is still quite high, that the circumcision rate in terms of incidence is quite low (around 15%). This means that even though the majority of Australian men might still be circumcised, the majority of boys in their son's peer group will not be, and within a couple of generations the prevalence of circumcision will lower to resemble the incidence, assuming no change in current trends.

This line of reasoning may cause parents in Australia to leave their sons intact, yet at the same time cause parents in the United States to circumcise their sons, because the circumcision rate in terms of incidence is still a majority there (albeit a slim one due to the decline in newborn circumcisions here over the past decade). I think the fact the argument from conformity can be used to support or oppose circumcision shows how vacuous it is.

But if conformity is really of such importance to parents, they should be informed that the majority of men worldwide are not circumcised. Indeed, the World Health Organization estimates that globally only 30% of men are circumcised, of which 70% are Muslim. In 2010 the Royal Australasian College of Physicians estimated that between 10–20% of Australian newborn boys were circumcised. Meanwhile a survey conducted in Canada estimated that from 2006–2007 the circumcision rate of newborns was 31.9%.

In both Australia and Canada the circumcision rate varied greatly from one state/territory to another. In Australia the lowest is 1.6% in Tasmania, and highest is 19.3% in Queensland. In Canada the lowest is 6.8% in Nova Scotia, and the highest is 44.3% in Alberta. Such marked variation means talk of national

circumcision rates is misleading parents. Indeed, according to CDC figures, newborn circumcision in urban areas of the United States is already below majority, with national figures being propped up by higher rates in rural areas.

As far as the argument from conformity goes the logic appears to be this: mutilate the genitals of one child and it's an abomination, mutilate the genitals of millions and it's a statistic.

As for the argument from moral relativism, it is possible to be against genital cutting, but not oppose other people doing it to their children, because doing so is seen as some kind of cultural imperialism. But morality being relative in the descriptive sense doesn't mean we have to draw the normative conclusion that anything goes. There are objective moral truths to be known, and it seems to me that one of the more obvious ones is that taking a sharp instrument to the genitals of an infant is an unnecessary harm, one which is therefore morally wrong.

The genital mutilation of children is outrageous. And it's my hope that one day everyone will share my moral indignation for any parent that forces it on their child, any religion that endorses it by holy writ or rite, and any unctuous, insufferable moral relativist that turns a blind eye to such barbarism.

When it feels like fighting to create a better world is just too hard, remember that we're fighting to protect the rights of children, and what could be more important than that? I believe that by working together we can and we will eradicate the archaic practice of genital cutting. It's not going to be easy, because changing the world never is. So if you feel like giving up, remember the immortal words of Margaret Mead, who said to never doubt that a small group of determined citizens can change the world, because it's the only thing that ever has.

After decades of public outreach by outstanding individuals like Marilyn Milos, the breakthrough moment for the genital autonomy movement has come, and it is up to us to seize it. We are the ones fighting to protect the human rights of defenceless children. We are the ones who have the medical evidence on our side. And we are the ones who are going to change the world for the better, because we aren't going to stop until we create a world where the bodily autonomy and integrity of every child is respected and preserved.

– Jonathan Meddings is a medical writer, fencing coach and board member of the RSA.

From the president



I am sure many RSA members feel strongly about the awful situation in Gaza. Since the latest conflict began on 8 July, more than a thousand Gazans have been killed and many thousands injured, many of them children. About fifty Israelis have died.

The stark difference between these numbers is shocking, and leads to one of the most common arguments about the “situation” in Gaza – that Israel’s actions are disproportionate compared with those of Hamas.

And yet ... what if you happened to live within a few kilometres of a community that kept lobbing rockets into your community?

In the 1970s I lived in Israel for about 18 months on the shores of the Dead Sea – “Ha makom ha yafe b’olam – the most beautiful place on earth.” It was after the Six Day War of 1967 and the ‘73 Yom Kippur War. There was a Labour Government in place and the idealism of the kibbutz movement was still influential.

One young Israeli friend used to tell me of his recurring nightmare of being trapped in a burning tank half way across the Sinai; another of his girlfriend who had disappeared in Europe while on a Mossad mission. I travelled to the Banias in the northern hills of the Golan Heights and saw how close Syria and Lebanon were – literally just a stone’s throw. It was easy to feel sympathy with a people trying to find a way to live in peace with displaced neighbours. The Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, later shared a Nobel Peace Prize with Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat.

And then, the hope of peace evaporated. The conservative Likud party won office. Rabin was assassinated by a radical orthodox Jew. There was the break-up of the Soviet Union which led to thousands of conservative Jews settling in Israel and changing the balance of power.

Now, the situation is intractable. It’s almost as if the Israeli government is playing a high stakes game of “tit-for-tat”. In game theory, tit-for-tat is the name given to a strategy that explains how otherwise competing actors can eventually co-operate to achieve stability. The idea is that each actor will respond in kind to the other’s action, a kind of “equivalent retaliation”. If one side lashes out, the other side will retaliate, but if the first side co-operates, the other side will also co-operate.

But this doesn’t seem right. It’s not as if the Israelis and the Gazans are equivalent actors in a computer simulation. This is more a David and Goliath situation.

What could the Israelis do to break this “death spiral” of destruction?

A utilitarian might say, “What action would result in the least suffering?” and urge the Israelis to accept a relatively small number of deaths on their side and stop causing the large number of deaths on the other side.

A deontologist (a person who judges ethical actions according to a set of rules) might argue, ‘The death of innocents on either side is unacceptable’ and sympathise with the Israelis trying to protect their children.

But this argument doesn’t feel right, and I think it’s because with might comes not right but responsibility.

In the classic Melian Dialogue, Greek historian Thucydides contrasts two irreconcilable forces: power and honour. The inhabitants of the small island of Melos refuse, despite threats of annihilation, to submit to the demands of imperial Athens, claiming to do so would be to abandon all honour. The Athenians argue that “The strong do what they can while the weak suffer what they must” – a classic formulation of the doctrine of ‘might is right’. While the Athenians prevail in the short term, killing the Melian men, enslaving the women and colonising the island, Thucydides points out that they eventually overreach themselves and lose the Peloponnesian War some years later. It is the inevitable result of hubris – overbearing arrogance.

It’s incontrovertible that Israel is the most powerful actor in the Middle East and Gaza is puny by comparison. But no matter what Gaza does to Israel, with that power comes a proportionately greater moral responsibility for achieving an end to this death spiral. To ignore this responsibility, to indulge in disproportionate tit-for-tat, to batter with might as if that confers right, is to lose the battle for honour. In the end, hubris will be answered.

– By *Meredith Doig*

The end of meat

Dear Editor,

Most of us are unable to forgo the taste of meat despite pleas of cruelty and slaughter. With 7 billion, or more, mouths to feed, humanity could reduce the one third of food (animal and plant) that is daily wasted by only shopping for, cooking and ordering at restaurants as much as we need in order to live healthily. This simple, yet effective, measure does not necessitate the complete abolition of our lust for animal protein. But it could mitigate the cruel upbringing and deaths that are inflicted upon animals bred for food. It could potentially reduce the need for animal farming and slaughter by a third. The ultimate disrespect for nonhuman life is in thoughtlessly and prolifically wasting what we kill.

Even animals raised humanely are meted out for a “nicer killing” when the time comes. It is a murder nonetheless. At the risk of being accused of conflating human psychic yearning with the existential angst of animals raised for protein I would still prefer, given the stark alternative, a life of sunshine, fresh air and open spaces until my last breath is hastened away.

Their fate nevertheless remains the same. Animals bred for food, even when raised with empathy, kindness and assiduous shielding from suffering throughout their lives are still subjected to the same end fate. They are killed for human consumption. It is even worse for their unfortunate cousins that are born and bred in cages that are barely able to accommodate them, and which provide them with no opportunity to experience the world outside the four walls of their confinement.

The animals that we treat with respect are euthanased without pain and suffering, with their only mortal risk the psychic awareness of having a deliberate death inflicted on them by people with whom they have formed some attachment.

Although we cannot presume to know that food animals experience existential angst at the imminent erasure of their life, even anthropomorphic interpretations do not negate the desire of sentient beings to be spared a deplorable life on earth.

As to attempts to genetically engineer carnivorous out of non-human hunters, one could reasonably be accused of playing God and changing the fundamental constitution of what it means to be a wild animal. Before we manipulate the instincts and essence of the wildlife that are already threatened by mankind's encroachment, may I venture that we experiment on ourselves first? This would be ethically correct. Big Cats, left to themselves, would never overeat or kill for pleasure. The dream to change the dietary predilections of wild animals serves only us, not them.

– Joseph Ting

Fossil fuels and fusion

Dear Editor,

While I'm delighted to be proven wrong about nuclear fusion (even if it only lasted a “billionth of a second”), I'm hoping more good non-fossil-fuel energy news might become a regular feature in *The Rationalist's* news section.

I feel that for Australia and Canada not to become the dumb and dumber of a clean energy future, people will need to know the reality and potential of what is out there. In that regard, I wish to point out this recent CSIRO news regarding solar thermal electricity:

<http://www.csiro.au/en/Portals/Media/Supercritical-solar-new-frontier-for-power-generation.aspx>

– Keith R Adkins

No to assisted death

Dear Editor,

There are reasons one might want to die – and the arguments why this wish, if expressed, should not be aided or complied with, are varied and convoluted. Alternatively, it can be viewed as simple indeed.

An ailing person may feel themselves to be a burden on their loved ones and deem it is time to go. An ailing person may feel much pain and like to end it all. That intelligent, ailing person's quality of life has been reduced, due to illness and age. It is a situation, therefore where life has become a burden, to themselves and to their family.

As far as ‘quality of life’ goes, our situation and health, changes throughout our lives. Why do we expect life to be any different? Life is a slow (or not) progression towards ageing, a process of slowing down, of change.

Let's say the family takes the ailing person's wish to die to be what the person really wants. What that person possibly really wants, however, is to feel better, not to be so old, not to be at the far end of life. They want to have the energy, and strength and life they once had.

It could be that self interest is the reason that the family of the ailing loved one considers the wish or expression to die as the only solution. Here, there is motive. For example, it might mean that no more time or money need be spent on them. Or it could be a solution to the burden of the sight of the parent's suffering.

The opiate solution for the pain of terminal illness is not a new idea. Traditionally, it was opium. Through time it morphed into morphine. It can be argued that morphine does not deal totally with severe pain and that heroin, a stronger, most effective pain killer, should then be used. Governments need to change the drug laws, allowing heroin to be distributed

in hospitals for such patients.

Heroin is addictive but why does it matter when the patient is terminally ill? It is claimed that it fogs the brain, but actually, it does not. And if it did, what difference if the patient/person is bed ridden? Isn't he or she better off relaxing, sleeping, feeling comfortable, whiling the time away without pain or complaint?

There is the burden of guilt for remaining family members who have been instrumental in aiding their ailing and loved parent to die, rather than spending the remaining time holding hands or just being in each other's company.

A person doesn't need to be religious to be compassionate; in fact an expression of 'humanity' is kindness, well wishing, empathy. And when is there a greater need of compassion than when someone is suffering, terminally ill? But the 'final solution' (euthanasia) is not the answer to the problem.

Neither is the Dying with Dignity bill, which requires the opinion of two physicians and a psychiatrist. It leaves a lot unsaid. So what if two doctors agree. This is merely an appeal to authority. Dignity! Who cares about that if you're dying!

Which brings me to my mother's end story. Poor Mom. She had a stroke to the limbic system that left her pretty well incapacitated, and, as is the way of this malady, there were progressive little strokes in the area that left her prone in bed in a nursing home. She went from being an intelligent autodidact, a great conversationalist, an Italian socialist (she was in the Italian Resistance, she is mentioned in the book on the Partigiani of il Veneto), to someone lying prone on her bed, fed, cleaned changed by the nurses, doing nothing but looking.

When I visited her, her eyes followed my every move, as her eyes had done during all my growing up with her. She said nothing. It was not clear to those in the nursing home to what extent she absorbed her situation and surroundings. But one day, after a few years of this, she looked

at me very clearly and said: "Raffaella, ti ho sempre amato!" (Rafaella, I have always loved).

I laid down on her bed with her, hugged her, and cried. The nurses looked in and left without a word. The mind. Who knows what is going on behind a shattered body, behind closed doors, so t'speak?

I have come away from my speechless visits with 15 Mommy portraits, which is how I used to employ my visits. Mom would look at me and I would paint her looking. No words were needed. Mostly Carmen was no longer 'my mother' but her slow retreat from life was our slow separation. There was time enough to say goodbye.

My point here is that we never really know the 'other'. Some in distress might say 'I want to die', but what is really meant? With assisted death not only is there the trauma of departure - here now, then gone forever. There is also the everlasting guilt of having been instrumental in the final solution.

- Raffaella Torresan

The right niche

Dear Editor

I was enjoying the Winter issue, and had read the aims of your Society with interest and expectation, until I read the article by Hirst. This would seem to undermine almost all of the stated aims of the Society. It was more of a political polemic than a studied defence of the Act.

The vehement vitriol, and facetious comments were more akin to what he decries of Bolt, and more in keeping with such tabloid journalism, than an intellectual journal. He even invokes the N (Nazi) word. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, everyone has a right to make an ass of themselves and I strongly uphold that right. Bolt has found an appropriate medium, Hirst has not.

- Iskender Lebistourie

Gaza and the rational

Dear Editor,

As a supporter of the rational, I find the events in Gaza deeply shocking. It is not just an abomination to bomb UN shelters, it offends against any idea of international law. As the lawyer Noura Erakat comments, "Israel does not have the right to self defence in international law against occupied Palestinian territory." They are not being attacked by a foreign power; they occupy the area illegally. Gazans have been deprived of nationhood for 60 years and in recent years have been subject to an extraordinarily cruel blockade, in which even the number of calories allowed is strictly controlled. Exports are banned. Now we watch their children being killed with precision bombs. The rational conclusion is clear.

If we accept that Australians fighting in overseas wars is unacceptable -that seems to be the prevailing mood - then why do we say nothing about young men with dual citizenship going to Israel to serve for an army that is committing these horrors against the Palestinians? Many legal experts believe that what Israel has done in Gaza constitutes a war crime, especially the targeting of children and UN shelters with weapons that the Israelis boast are exceptionally accurate. A number of lawyers have filed complaints with the International Criminal Court. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, has called for "real accountability considering the increasing evidence of war crimes."

There is little chance that the aggressor will be held to account. There was not much comment about the cruel blockade of Gaza, which has been happening for years, and there will be no justice for the current savagery. But we might at least notice the double standard and ask questions about who the terrorists really are.

- Frank Robertson

What is a Europe, anyway?

A century after the beginning of World War 1, is Europe really any more unified?

by Anis H. Bajrektarević

Twenty years ago, a genocide of the worst kind was taking place just a one hour flight from Brussels. At that time, assassination of a different kind from the one that occurred in 1914, which triggered World War 1, had enveloped Sarajevo. While massive European ignorance resulted in Bosnia, and Yugoslavia -- a union of different peoples -- becoming a slaughterhouse, the Maastricht dream was to unify the Westphalian world of the Old Continent.

Two decades later, Atlantic Europe is a political powerhouse with two of the three European nuclear powers, and two of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Central Europe is an economic powerhouse, Russophone Europe is an energy powerhouse, Scandinavian Europe is a bit of all that, and Eastern Europe is none of it.

No wonder that as soon as serious external or inner security challenges emerge, the compounding parts of the true, historic Europe resurface again. This was seen with the Iraq war (with

nation-state was conducted primarily along linguistic grounds. Religious grounds were defeated, once and for all, by the peace treaty of Westphalia in 1647, which ended the Thirty Years War.

All peoples talking the Portugo-phone dialects were in one state, all Hispanophone dialects in another state, all Francophone dialects in the third state, and so on. This was an easy cut for peripheral Europe, the so-called old colonizers on the Atlantic flank of Europe.

After the Westphalia treaty, Europe maintained the inner balance of powers by keeping its core section soft. Peripheral powers like England, France, Denmark, Sweden, Prussia, the Ottomans, Habsburgs and Russia pressed and kept the center of continental Europe as their playground. At the same time, they kept extending their possessions overseas or, like Russia and the Ottomans, over the land corridors deeper into Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

'Did Europe change or did it only became more itself?'

the exception of France) and now with Libya, Sudan, Mali and Syria. Central Europe is hesitant to act, Atlantic Europe is eager, Scandinavian Europe is absent, Eastern Europe is bandwagoning, and Russophone Europe is opposing.

So the question is, 'Did Europe change or did it only became more itself'?

The history of Europe is a story of small hysterical and xenophobic nations, traditionally sensitive to the issue of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and behavioristic otherness. The political landscape of today's Europe was actually conceived in the late fourteenth century, gradually evolving to its present shape. The universalistic world of the Holy Roman Empire and Papacy was being steadily contested by explicitly confrontational, or implicitly dismissive, political entities, whether it be for ideological reasons (the Thirty Years' War culminating with the Peace of Westphalia) or for geopolitical reasons (Grand Discoveries and the shift of the gravity center westwards).

The early round of colonizers, the two Iberian empires of Spain and Portugal, were the first entities that emerged, followed by France, Holland, England and Denmark. Engulfed with the quest of the brewing French revolution for the creation of a nation state, these colonizers, all of them situated on the Atlantic flank of Europe, successfully adjusted to the nation-state concept. Importantly, the very process of creation and formation of the

Once Royal Italy and Imperial Germany appeared, however, the geographic core 'hardened' and for the first time started to press politically and militarily onto the peripheries. This new geopolitical reality caused a big security dilemma lasting from the 1814 Vienna congress up to Potsdam conference of 1945. It was re-actualized again with the Berlin Wall destruction: How many Germanies and Italies should Europe have to preserve its inner balance and peace?

In very simplified terms, we can say that from the perspective of the belligerent European parties, both world wars were fought between the forces of status quo and the challengers to this status quo. The final epilogue, in both wars, was that Atlantic Europe managed to divert the attention of Central Europeans from itself and its vast overseas possessions onto Eastern Europe, and finally towards Russia.

By the early 1990s, the 'security hole', Eastern Europe, was approached in multifold fashion. Besides the EU and NATO, there was the Council of Europe, the Commission on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). All of them were sending messages about the political, economic, human dimension, plus commercial signals, assistance and expertise. These moves were making both sides very nervous. Russia was becoming assertive on its former peripheries, and Eastern Europe defiantly dismissive. Until this very day, each of



them is portraying the NATO enterprise as the central security consideration: one seeing it as a must-go, and the other as a no-go.

No wonder that the absolute pivot of Eastern Europe, Ukraine, has become a grand hostage of that very dilemma. It is caught between the eastern pan-Slavic hegemony and Western ‘imperialism of free market’. To the Ukrainians, Russia is a geographic, socio-historic, cultural and linguistic reality. But this reality is far less influential than the seductive, but distant, Euro-Atlantic club.

In the Russian mind, Ukraine is more than a lame western-flank, geopolitical pivot. To Moscow, Kiev is an emotional place – an indispensable bond of historio-civilizational attachment. Putin clearly redlined it as was seen with the sudden annexation of Crimea, which was an unpleasant and humiliating surprise that will bring a lot of foreign policy hangover for both the NATO and EU. Ukraine is chopped off, a prisoner of this domesticated security drama.

So how should we see the EU, this Brussels-headquartered construct? Is it a political and economic re-approachment of sovereign states or maybe just another enterprise of the borderless financial capital? If so, would that be a pure construct of financial oligarchy whose invisible hand tacitly corrupted the Maastricht Treaty, rendering it a borderless, limitless, wireless and careless power hub, while at the same time entrenching, silencing and rarefying labour within each nation state?

Is the EU a supersized Switzerland, ruled by the cacophony of many languages and enveloped in economic egotism of its self-centered people, with its cantons that are still far more powerful than the central government: the EU Parliament, Brussels’ Commission, the European Court of Justice.

Is the Union yet another virtue crafted out of necessity? After centuries of colonial overstretch and of mutual destruction has Europe irreversibly lost its demographic, economic and politico-military importance?

Most scholars agree upon the geopolitical definition of the EU. It is predominantly defined as a grand rapprochement of France and Germany after World War II, culminating in the Elysée accords of 1961. The interpretation of the instrument is rather simple. There was a bilateral peace treaty achieved through consensus. Germany accepted a predominant French say in the political affairs of the EU and Europe, and France, in return, accepted a more dominant German say in economic matters. It was tacitly blessed by a perfect balancer, Britain, which attempted, in the post-WWII years, to return, conveniently, to its splendid isolation from the Continent. Thus nearly all scholars would agree that the Franco-

German alliance actually represents a geopolitical axis, a backbone of the Union.

But what does it mean, precisely? Why Germany, and why France? And why, besides the geographic definitions (for example, north-south, Nordic-Mediterranean) and political categorisations (for example the EU and non-EU Europe; the ‘good old’ West and new ‘transitioning’ East, or old EU 15 and new EU 13, or the Paris treaty core-6) do we need to take a closer look at the classification of historical Europes?

In the hype of early 1990s historian Francis Fukuyama euphorically claimed that the world was at the end of history. Just two decades later, twisting in a sobriety of inevitable, he quietly moderated it to the ‘future of history’. Was and will our history ever be on holiday?

One hundred years after the outbreak of the World War I on 28th June 2014, young generations of Europeans are being taught in schools about a singularity of an entity called the EU. However, as soon as serious external or inner security challenges emerge, the compounding parts of the true, historic Europe resurface again.

For example, we are witnessing successful pipeline deals between Russia and Germany -- which, while circumventing Eastern Europe, will deprive it from any transit-related bargaining premium, and will tacitly pose an effective joint Russo-German pressure on the Baltic states, Poland and Ukraine -- and the relative decline of the US and re-calibration of their European commitments. This must have triggered alarm bells across Atlantic Europe.

Although seemingly unified, Europe is essentially composed of several segments, each with its own dynamics, legacies and political culture. There is Atlantic and Central Europe, confident and secure on the one end. And there is EU and non-EU Eastern Europe, as well as Russia, on the other end, insecure and neuralgic, in a permanent quest for additional security guaranties.

“America did not change on September 11. It only became more itself” analyst Robert Kagan famously claimed. Paraphrasing it, we may say: From 9/11 (the 9th of November 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall) and shortly after, followed by the genocidal wars in Yugoslavia, up to the formation of the Euro, the expansion into the Middle East and North Africa, or the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, Europe didn’t change. It only became more itself – a conglomerate of five different Europes.

-- Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarević is attached to the IMC University of Austria as a Professor and Chairman for International Law and Global Political Studies.

Now

by Gerard May

Waves building above troubled waters

The Central Kingdom expanding air defence boundaries

Korea let comfort women sleep (for now)

Japan let questions of their past rest (for now)

Following Air America pushing China back (for now)

On the ground the Symphony of Lights plays to a new marching tune

‘Good Citizens spend, spend, spend, for it is our time to glow’

Look away

The revelations of Edward Snowden have confirmed just how much surveillance the state undertakes.

“What you should assume is that nothing you do on the internet is private.” So said a Victorian government bureaucrat (who for privacy reasons shall not be named) during a discussion at a recent conference on ethics and the morality of government. It is good advice. Unlike previous, non-digital, forms of communication and interaction – letters, conversations on analogue phones, face to face conversations – the on-line environment is connected in a way that has never before been seen.

That makes it easy to search and investigate. Even if there are governmental constraints on the legality of such searches – and in Australia the legal strictures remain comparatively strong and effectively enforced – the ease with which such investigations can be conducted has greatly increased. That suggests the stakes are raised: the enforcement of legal constraints on government has become more critical. The distinction in legal terms is clear. The police can only get the contents of communications with a warrant in Australia and it does not apply to past activities. But they do not require warrants to access metadata, which is generally a record of the communication rather than the content of a communication.

The current privacy debate in the digital environment is very different to, say, the need not to be viewed when changing clothes or overheard in the family home. It is posing fundamental questions about what government is and what individuals are, part of the redefinition of what it is to be human in a post-industrial, digital world. The privacy debate is as radical, in its own way, as the blurring of the boundaries between the human and the machine that is being posed in the attempts to create artificial intelligence.

Matt Beard, a moral philosopher at the Centre for Faith, Ethics & Society at the University of Notre Dame Australia, commented in a recent radio interview that the privacy debate is intimately linked to other issues: liberty and identity. “Privacy is becoming less and less concerning as we move into the on-line space because our identities are extending into the on-line space, which is publicly accessible. As we get more and more isolated in these devices we are becoming more and more communal as well, so our identity is moving.”

Beard comments that privacy matters because freedom and liberty matter, adding that the two things are related. “The more that people know about us and our private information – not on our terms but on their own terms the more they are able to control us, the more they are able to influence us. So the debate about privacy is in a larger sense a debate about civil freedoms.”

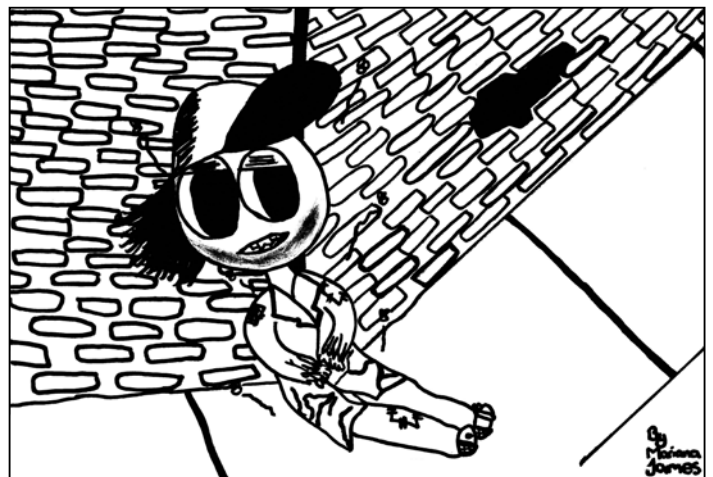
Meta-what?

The intense interest in privacy has been triggered by the revelations of Edward Snowden, who revealed the enormous extent of governments’ collection of meta-data, which is essentially information about the information being viewed on-line. Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch sounded the alarm about this massive collection of information on citizens in a newspaper column.

Roth called for an examination of the rationales the American government uses to claim that its mass snooping is legal, adding that because Australia has a close intelligence partnership with the United States as part of the “Five Eyes” program a similar logic is applied locally. (Although, given the stumbling of the Attorney General George Brandis over definitions of meta-data, applying the word “logic” to government policy is perhaps being overly optimistic. It is deeply concerning that the politician most responsible for formulating the law about privacy and data collection seemed not to understand some basic distinctions about what is being collected.)

The privacy debate is very much about the boundaries between the individual and the state. “Washington claims we have no privacy interest in the so-called metadata about our communications – the highly personal and revealing information about whom we call or email, what we search for on the web, which websites we browse, and even where we go physically (because our phones serve as electronic tracking devices),” writes Roth.

“The rationale? We are said to have waived our privacy when we “share” this information with a third party like a phone or internet company. Australia seems to have adopted a similar rationale, given the ease with which it lets many agencies gain access to this information.”



“I don’t have trouble with privacy”

The privacy issue is also global. It has the potential to transcend nation states, and the laws of smaller nation states such as Australia. Just as the superpowers dominate the military landscape, they also dominate the surveillance landscape. There is perhaps no better exemplification of that than the protestations of Asian

Sydney alone. In Melbourne, Melba Marginson, executive director of the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC), says she sees 150 women a week who are in forced and violent marriages, many of them married off when they were still children."

'Washington claims we have no privacy interest in the so-called metadata about our communications - the highly personal and revealing information about whom we call or email, what we search for on the web, which websites we browse, and even where we go physically'
– Kenneth Roth

and European leaders when it emerged, courtesy of Snowden, that their phone conversations were being tapped.

Roth comments that the US Supreme Court endorsed the view that shared information is fair game for governments 35 years ago in a ruling about phone call data. "It could just as easily have ruled that a communications company, like a doctor or lawyer in whom we confide, has a duty to preserve our confidence, but it didn't," writes Roth. "Now, with electronic communications much more central to our lives and the capacity for government surveillance vastly enhanced, the court has hinted at misgivings about the "sharing" rationale.

"President Obama last week announced a new proposal to end the US government's bulk collection of phone data in the United States. But he has not recognised any limit on seizing metadata concerning our emails, web searches, and physical locations, or even admitted that we have a right to privacy in our metadata."

Not always good

Privacy may be considered a basic liberty but is not necessarily a good in itself. It can be used to cover up very great ills, and not just potential terrorist activity. As a recent article in *The Australian* revealed, child marriage in Australia has been concealed from public eyes "hidden under layers of culture and tradition in tight-knit communities." When it was revealed that a 12-year-old girl was "married" in January to a 26-year-old Lebanese university student in an Islamic ceremony at the girl's home in NSW's Hunter Valley. That is, their privacy was compromised: "the layers of secrecy began to peel away".

It is estimated that hundreds of girls are being forced into marriages each year. "Girls as young as 12 or 13 are disappearing from schoolyards, packed off to the countries of their parents' birth to wed men they have never met, while others are taken from their homes in southern Asia and the Middle East and brought into Australia to marry.

"The National Children's and Youth Law Centre has identified 250 cases of under-age marriage over the past 24 months, while Sharobeem, who was herself married to a cousin at the age of 14, says there are at least 60 child wives living in south-western

In situations like these there is an expectation that the government will not respect individual's privacy. There is equally an expectation that potentially criminal or terrorist activity should not be protected by privacy constraints. But if this right to investigate to investigate criminality is to be properly balanced against other rights, then government activities should also not be remorselessly kept private. When there are calls for government decisions to be "transparent" what is meant is that government officials and government activities should not be kept secret. If governments are to act in the interests of the public, then they, too, must be subject to scrutiny.

This is exactly what governments have not agreed to, exposing a fundamental imbalance. Consider the reaction of the American government to the revelations of Edward Snowden, which were arguably the most important act of disclosure of government activities in decades.

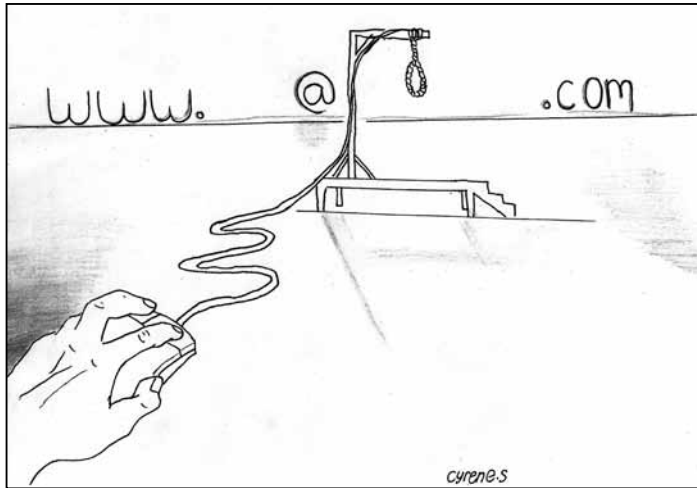
We are watching

Snowden revealed that there were secret orders under which the NSA was seizing phone and text records of virtually every citizen in the United States, described by one federal judge as "almost Orwellian". He revealed that there was extensive surveillance of least 122 world leaders by the United States. There was the forced cooperation of US telecommunication companies to turn over data on every US citizen under programmes like PRISM. Other software programmes search "nearly everything a user does on the Internet" through data it intercepts across the world.

Snowden showed there was the tapping of fibre optic cables by British spy agency, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in conjunction with the NSA. There was also the interception of millions of calls in targeted countries, including every call in places like Afghanistan.

And how did the US government react to having their privacy compromised? With outrage and dissembling. Initially, there was an attempt to cover it up. The United States National Intelligence Director James R Clapper Jr. not only denied the existence of the programme before the Senate, he later explained that his testimony was the "least untrue" statement he could make.

There then followed a litany of threats against Snowden and accusations that he was a traitor. The Secretary of State, John Kerry, railed that he should “man up” and come back to the United States – presumably to be marched straight into solitary confinement and jailed for the rest of his life.



The question that is suggested by these continuing accusations against Snowden is: ‘If privacy does not matter so much for individuals if the common good is to be protected, why is it suddenly so important for governments?’ To say the least, it is a double standard. If government is doing the right thing, then

information about its information collection – the metadata of government, as it were – should, by the government’s own logic, not be against the public interest.

Yet that is precisely what is angering especially the American, and other, governments. True, the revelations could compromise some activities of government against illegal activity, although these claims are surely exaggerated. But it surely comes as no surprise to those indulging in criminal or terrorist activities that the techniques of surveillance are thorough and aggressive.

The privacy divide

What emerges is that there is a class division in relation to privacy, with government the overclass and citizens the underclass. Jonathan Turley, the Shapiro Professor of Public Interest Law at George Washington University writes in *Al Jazeera* that it represents a threat to governments that are not interested in genuine accountability.

“The anger over Snowden clearly goes beyond the act itself however. For many of Washington’s elite, Snowden is as baffling as some alien from another planet,” Shapiro writes. “These are people who spent their lives playing by the rules in a system controlled by a duopoly of power. With two parties controlling the system, there is little that happens in Washington that is not predictable and often controlled. The reactions of former Secretary

Of castles and caravans

Our desire for privacy is fundamental.

by Diane Preston

For me, the phrase, ‘an Englishman’s home is his castle’ conjures up the romantic images of the poet Wordsworth. I can see an English gentleman gazing from the study window of his castle into a field of golden daffodils.

For others, the phrase represents a symbol of a class system on its way out, and for others it is an expression of women as absent, or as chattels. Whatever our perspective, this expression in western society, particularly in the history of property law, is an expression of personal privacy and security. It is an expression of the freedom of the individual to do as he or she wishes in the sanctity of his or her home without the interference of the State.

Whether we live in a caravan or a castle, our homes are not what they used to be. The advances in technology have spread like ether into our homes and anesthetised the authority of the family to dictate the values and beliefs of its members. At the click of a

mouse, we have access to the ideas, perspectives and experiences of the global community. That community sits as an unseen guest at our family dinner table providing counter arguments to the views and prejudices of family members.

The recent debate about metadata is about whether we are ready to accept some of the unwanted baggage of that unseen guest. Metadata is data about a telephone call, sms, email, visited website or application used by a person rather than the content of the same. It is not difficult to put together an identity profile of a person from metadata, including his or her political and social preferences.

In contrast to the times of Wordsworth, the modern day expression of our rights and responsibilities is found in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. The rights of personal privacy and security are found in section 13 of

of State Hillary Clinton and current Secretary of State John Kerry are particularly illustrative.”

Turley observes that Snowden is seen as a hero by many citizens and as a traitor by most in government. “What is clear is that Snowden pulled back the curtain on new reality of living within a fishbowl of constant surveillance. People clearly don’t like it, even if they don’t like Snowden. They are left, however,

The surveillance in the Soviet Union was exceptionally intense, with one tenth of the population spying on the other nine tenths. China conducts intense monitoring of the activities of its people, and has strictly controlled their use of the internet. During the French Revolution the use of the Law of Suspects – under which “words or writing” deemed suspicious could result in a person’s execution – resulted in mass killing.

‘It’s important the public realise the lesson in the media circus surrounding the Snowden affair: that despite all the damning discoveries and illegalities, neither the US nor anyone else in its sphere has any plans to roll back this intrusive network’ - Patrick Henningsen

with the same sense of frustration and isolation when it comes to their government. Snowden stepped outside of a system that many Americans now view as impenetrable and unchanging. Whatever he may be, Snowden remains fascinating precisely because he proved to be the malfunctioning cog, the one who walked away.”

Having a government overclass and a citizen underclass is scarcely new. It could be argued that it is the norm in human society: democracy, after all, has emerged relatively recently. Witness England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First, when Walsingham’s spy network used to monitor dangerous Catholics. It became the prototype for the English secret service.

It is generally true that those in power expect to scrutinise the activities of those who are less powerful. Unsurprisingly, there is no appetite for the scrutiny going both ways. When it is, it is routinely seen as an act of treason and depicted as being against the public good. Thus Snowden has been denounced in America as a traitor.

In a sense, the outrage is understandable, if not justifiable. The threat posed by Snowden is deep. He has exposed the whole system of government, not particular acts by the government. That is perhaps why the Watergate revelations are lionised, whereas Snowden’s (and Wikileaks’) exposures are demonised.

the Act. Section 13 provides that ‘A person has the right not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with...’

The State therefore interferes in our private lives when we act unlawfully. Is it lawful for the Commonwealth Government to collect all this personal information in the form of metadata about us?’

It is well established that Commonwealth and State law enforcement agencies have the legislative power to collect metadata for law enforcement purposes. Further, Commonwealth and State law enforcement agencies have access to a host of content about our private lives collected by public and private agencies.

The Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 and the Victorian Telecommunications (Interception) State Provisions Act 1988 govern the collection and use of metadata and have a statutory regime for listening to and obtaining the content of telecommunications including electronic communications. That legislation has protections for the collection and use of such information and there are heavy criminal penalties for the misuse of such information.

The Information Privacy Act 2000 in Victoria provides for the protection of private information collected and used by public agencies. The personal information for the purposes of this Act is

not of a ‘metanature’, it is content. Personal information cannot be collected, used or shared unless certain criteria are met under the Act. However, law enforcement agencies can obtain that content information from any public agency and are not subject to such criteria as long as it can be shown that a law enforcement purpose exists. Again, there are legislative penalties for the misuse of that information.

It appears to me that the relatively innocuous legislative change sought by the Commonwealth government to ensure that the metadata of Telcos presently available to law enforcement agencies is available for at least 2 years has ignited a debate about the need by law enforcement agencies for our metadata and the use of the same.

It may well be that the legislative regimes noted above are constructed to ensure that law enforcement agencies only collect and use our metadata and content when there is a law enforcement purpose. However, it appears from the metadata debate that we remain uncertain as to whether sufficient protections exist in the digital age to regulate and protect the increase in traffic of our personal information. In my view the debate should properly enter this area rather than focus on law enforcement.

– Diane Preston is a lawyer and committee member of the RSA.

The revelations that exposed President Richard Nixon were about individual transgressions by one president and a small number of aides. Snowden made revelations about the whole system of government.

It is a point that was made by Scott McNealy, co-founder of Sun Microsystems when he expressed serious concerns about the depth of federal surveillance. “I go back to Watergate and that’s peanuts compared to what it feels like is going on in terms of stuff happening and lack of transparency,” he said. “And the other thing that’s peanuts ... compared to now is how much more the government is in our lives.”

The distinction is described, by Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, as that between conventional journalism, which is about individual stories, and the releasing of large amounts of data, sometimes indiscriminately. The former is conventional media. The latter, Assange told the *New Yorker*, is a social movement designed to hold government to account by compromising its privacy. That is, it is a direct challenge to the hegemony of government. It is scarcely surprising that it attracts a ferocious response.

Finding a balance

Is there a clear philosophical way through these cross currents? Probably not, and even if there were, it is unlikely that it would mean much in the political sphere. At stake are some seminal issues of governmental power, the rights of individuals within the state, and questions of identity.

There is potentially a more troubling aspect to what is happening. While spying and intrusions into citizens’ privacy are far from new, the emergence of digital technology raises the stakes. It means intrusion can be achieved more comprehensively and more quickly. Worse, the machinery of intrusion may be starting to develop a life of its own.

Patrick Henningsen, writing for *New Dawn* magazine comments that the recent controversies have done little to slow the pace of the rollout of surveillance apparatus. “It’s important the public realise the lesson in the media circus surrounding the Snowden affair: that despite all the damning discoveries and illegalities, neither the US nor anyone else in its sphere has any plans to roll back this intrusive network,” he writes. “As the world’s media focused on the Snowden leaks and recoiled in horror over the implications, behind the scenes the NSA steamed ahead by embarking on its biggest expansion phase since Echelon.

“We are told there must be austerity for just about every public service and expenditure, but when it comes to spying and data mining on citizens, they’re writing nothing but blank cheques. The bill is already in the trillions of dollars and it’s far from over. As a facility that is already much bigger than the Pentagon, the NSA headquarters is set to grow by an additional 50 per cent when construction is complete in 2022.”

Cyber wars

The intense roll out may be more connected to what is happening between states than what is happening within states. Scott Borg, director and chief economist of the Cyber Consequences Unit in the United States argues that there is an intense cyber war going on between the world’s major powers, much of it related to commerce. He says the fresh development over the last two or three years has been techniques that were originally developed by national intelligence services being offered for hire to any companies willing to pay enough. “The people who are increasingly behind much of the worst cyber crime today are unscrupulous corporate executives.”

The implication is that the extreme roll out of cyber technology may be as much connected to economic interests as the monitoring of citizens. It is often observed that companies collect an enormous amount of information on customers, but they are also collecting information on each other.

Borg says China, which is in a catch up phase and needing Western technology, is especially active. During the early phases of industrialisation, for China it was mainly a matter of purchasing industrial machinery and operating it and using low cost labour. But as China develops it becomes necessary to acquire more complex computer technology, which it cannot develop itself.

“Cyber attacks right now are part of the economic development of China,” says Borg. “There is little hope of getting them to scale it back too far, because the pressures on that economy are too great. The only thing that has limited it is that the Chinese have a limited understanding of Western ways of doing business and Western technology.”

Borg believes the cost to the American economy is already in the “tens of billions of dollars”. Eventually, it may threaten American prosperity, he claims. “We are not talking about stealing information here, we are talking about stealing entire industries. The problem is that it takes resources away from companies that know how to innovate and hands them to companies that have no idea how to innovate.”

The use of digital technology to intrude on ordinary people’s lives is not likely to be constrained any time soon. Neither is it a matter of choice; citizens cannot opt out of the digital world without opting out of society completely.

The only true corrective is for governments to submit themselves to scrutiny by the people. But given the savage attacks on whistle blowers like Edward Snowden and Julian Assange, there is little cause for optimism that governments will make themselves accountable to the people, and observe limits about how they are spying on them. The familiar question: “Who watches the watchers?” remains unanswered, and the stakes are higher than ever.

Persian narratives

Sofi Basseghi is an Australian/Iranian photographer with an interest in the psyche of Iranian women and Persian folklore. She migrated to Australia in 1998, but travels to Iran each year, collecting factual or fictitious stories about the experiences arising from the complexities of the cultural, religious and social climate in which her subjects find themselves.

Her work is a pictorial observation the evolution of a nation recovering from the turmoil of the Iran/ Iraq war under a theocratic rule. She has explored the destruction of the female image from the walls of historical monuments. She has witnessed the belittling of Iranian women by enforced clothing codes and gender apartheid. And she has observed how Iranian women have fought, and continue to fight, for their rights.

Here is a sample of her recent work.







The challenge of Zoe's Law

On Christmas Day, 2009, Brodie Donegan was struck by the driver of a car who was under the influence of drugs. She was pregnant. Her daughter Zoe was subsequently stillborn as a result of injuries sustained in the accident. Donegan's complaint was that, while the driver of the car was convicted for causing grievous bodily harm to her, including the loss of her foetus, the law did not permit the driver to be charged for causing harm to her foetus as a separate person. To enable this to occur, the foetus needed to be redefined as a legal person in its own right. It eventually led to proposed legislation in New South Wales called Zoe's law. The Bill, which has passed the New South Wales Lower House but is considered unlikely to pass the Upper House in its current form, declares a foetus of 20 weeks or more to be a "living person" for the purpose of grievous bodily harm offences under the NSW Crimes Act.

John August is president of the NSW Humanists

I have qualified support for the principles behind Zoe's Law 2, if not its exact wording. I have written in support of access to abortion. I have participated in protests in support of abortion – including one where we were challenging a march from the local Catholic Church to the local abortion clinic and another in the face of a prayerful vigil – intimidation by prayer – at another abortion clinic.

So, I'm certainly in support of access to abortion. But what we're talking about here is not so much laws around abortion, but rather laws which only come into play when there are injuries to pregnant women resulting in the death of the foetus. What also seems to be at issue is how this would impact on the laws around abortion.

Now there's a number of issues that come out of this :

- If a foetus draws breath, it is then considered a living person, and then considered something which was injured.
- If Ms. Donegan has been less injured, the foetus might have survived long enough to draw breath, and if it had then died as a result of injuries previously received, the criminal would then have charged with a greater crime.
- Is a sentence of two years and three months jail, which was then reduced to the non parole period of nine months – appropriate? In the context of the injury done – and in the context of penalties applied to other crimes? Would there have been a greater penalty if Ms. Donegan had been less injured, with the foetus surviving long enough to draw breath and then die?

When so much relies on whether a baby draws breath, or not, the outcome seems very arbitrary and inconsistent to me. The NSW Bar Association makes the point that the "proposed definition designed to distinguish between a foetus which is treated as part of the pregnant woman and an 'unborn child' which is treated

as a distinct 'living person', is arbitrary." They have a point. But relying so much on whether the child draws breath also seems pretty arbitrary.

Even if the law were to pass in the manner currently put forward, I don't believe it is as threatening as is made out. What is at issue is recognition of "foetal personhood" in order to obtain prosecution for this harm as a separate category of crime. Recognition of harm to the mother's foetus, because it is able to turn into a child. It is a recognition of a denial of that potentiality. Before the baby draws breath there is a vacuum, a void. I could still live with "personhood" happening when the baby draws breath if there were something before that.

The Concept

What is that concept? It relates to injury to a mother that results in a denial of a mother's interest in a foetus becoming a wanted child. We don't remove the foetus from the conceptual legal space of the mother, but we still recognise injury to it. This conception puts further firewalls in between it and the legal damage that some people hypothesise.

In much debate, the issue considered is not what this thing is, but rather its consequences. In introducing Voluntary Euthanasia, for example, we are contrasting the alleviating of suffering, and matching it off against the risk that all those evil people will want to knock off dear old granny. Arguing against recognising same-sex marriage is not about recognising the love two people have for each other in same way as we recognise the love other people in society have. It is fearing the fact that society will somehow collapse into civil disorder as we proceed to trash our traditions and start our irrevocable journey into darkness.

In the Zoe's law debate, while there's some recognition of injury to a mother and her wanted foetus, it is claimed that recognition of the concept of foetal personhood will have consequences in other areas of law, where the concept will be used to deny women their freedoms.

It's wrong to say that women have a "right" to an abortion. They can ask the state, and the state will consult the goat entrails and decide whether it will approve. OK. I understand women have found this process demeaning. Women are able to apply for an abortion, but that's not the same thing as having a right to an abortion. I understand the distinction, but it seems many people do not.

What is the history? Section 83 of the Crimes Act, 1900, notes:

"Whosoever: unlawfully administers to, or causes to be taken by, any woman, whether with child or not, any drug or noxious thing, or unlawfully uses any instrument or other means, with intent in any such case to procure her miscarriage, shall be liable to imprisonment for ten years."

This exemption means that it would be almost impossible to use these provisions as a means of prosecuting someone for carrying out an abortion. It would either be a medical procedure, or something done with the consent of the woman. It's hard to see, therefore, how Zoe's Law can be regarded as a back door route to criminalising abortion. To be sure, it does declare that a foetus is a living person and someone might say that it is inconsistent for homicide offences not to be an "applicable offence" for the purposes of the legislation. Why should it be unlawful to injure the foetus but not to kill it? But even if they were to be included, the exemption in subsection (4) would still apply and an abortion carried out with the consent of the mother would not be rendered illegal.

'Even if the law were to pass in the manner currently put forward, I don't believe it is as threatening as is made out.'

Why does the statute fail to define what "unlawful" is? That is what the Parliament is supposed to do – define what is unlawful, and let the courts go at it from there. Because it was too controversial an issue. Parliament did not engage with the detail, and left it to the courts to decide.

Ultimately, this was done by Justice Levine in the 1971 case of *Regina v Wald*. He said that an abortion would not be unlawful if it was skilfully carried out by a competent medical professional who conscientiously believed that the procedure was necessary to avert a serious danger to the woman's mental or physical health. As the Crown would need to establish beyond reasonable doubt that such a conscientious belief was not held by the medical practitioner in question, prosecutions for unlawful abortion have been pretty rare ever since.

This, and other cases in other states, provides the background to why women do not have a "right" to abortion; we have a rather messy legal legacy, that, in spite of several attempts, has not been overturned.

The original section 83 clause never identified the foetus as a person – otherwise the charge would have been for murder. The charge related to unlawful administration of drugs or other interventions. The bill declares that "For the purposes of an applicable offence an unborn child is taken to be a living person despite any rule of law to the contrary". Foetal personhood, the recognition of "an unborn child" for the purposes of the act, and not for any other purpose. Why should this "recognition" leak into other areas of legislation, with it being explicitly quarantined? Plus there is further quarantining: the offences are limited to grievous bodily harm and not homicide and there is the exclusion of "Anything done in the course of a medical procedure or treatment; or ... Anything done by, or with the consent of, the pregnant woman concerned."

So, the issue is, can such a seriously qualified idea of "foetal personhood" ever become "unqualified" to the point where it affects other legislation? I think not. However, it does seem the mere mention of the concept does set people off. Yes, I can see where they are coming from. But I think that the idea does not hold up under close examination.

How is it that a new legal concept in one area might "unsettle" another area of law that is currently "settled"? Normally, a judge can only use their discretion when a current issue is ambiguous. Yes, then they can look around at other legislation to establish a context. But I can't see why you'd want to assume there was other than a "quarantining" within each area of legislation. You'd assume that each bit of legislation gave you the tools to deal in it, without the necessary need to look elsewhere. Indeed, this section explicitly does this.

Motivations are not positions

There have been claims that the people involved in this initiative have had a prior involvement in so the so-called pro-life cause. Greg Smith, the Attorney General was previously involved in the pro-life cause. It appears comments by Damien Tudehope, Mr. Smith's chief-of-staff were that further reviews to abortion law would be "too hard", but we don't have any details of his rationale. Sure, he thought that. But why do we automatically assume that just because our opponents are saying something that comforts them they will automatically be correct? I rather prefer to think that if enough things are shaken up, opportunities arise. Perhaps to finally decriminalise abortion and endorse women's rights to abortions, after several failed attempts over the decades. I've not found any claimed connections between Chris Spence and the pro-life cause.

More importantly, people's motives are separate to the ideas

themselves. Greg Smith has a past involvement in the pro-life cause, and may well promote law that supports the pro-life cause. Equally, he may support good laws that make sense regardless. Why do we assume malice?

I can't see why a past involvement anywhere automatically taints the current exercise. Perhaps the hidden claim, not spelt out, is that these people would only get involved in something if it supported the pro-life cause. They would never support anything

identifying a separate category of injury to the mother, no foetal personhood but nevertheless identification of the wanted foetus.

But what are the details of this? We want recognition of this injury and further penalty as a result. Certainly, we want proportionality to other possible injuries. Perhaps injury to the mother preventing her bearing more children should be considered a greater offence. And injury is not the only thing which results in the loss of a foetus. Natural miscarriages do occur. Rather than

'It would be good if we could actually own the law in an informed manner.'

that was worth doing for its own sake. And that seems an extreme presupposition to me.

Then there's history. Yes, Fred Nile put up a bill previously. He also claimed that his law had nothing to do with abortion, and had included wording to suggest it would not apply to medical procedures or actions taken by mothers. But many people, including Brodie Donegan, saw straight through it. They were aware of Nile's anti-abortion agenda, and could see it was the thin edge of the wedge.

This bill could in fact be entirely different. It does not seem to me to be fair to blame a bill for anything remotely connected to it in the past. A rose can grow from a dung heap, after all. Sure, maybe Zoe's law 2 will still have the problems of Zoe's law 1. But that's a matter for argument, not strong assertion.

A lot of this stuff really does have the feel of pointing a stick somewhere and saying "beware"!

Who owns the law

Shadow Attorney General Paul has been quoted saying that murder/manslaughter would have been more logical, but more politically difficult, so the concept was parked with "Grievous bodily harm". However, the wanted foetus concept only needs

praying that God's hand of providence might not touch women making them lose wanted foetuses, Christians do prayerful intimidation at abortion clinics.

The point is that while there is the natural course of events and reasonable expectations about this natural course, injury can interfere with it. The degree of interference varies; the loss of a close-to-term foetus would mean more than an early term one. We are talking about proportionality, not arbitrariness. But, I do think that the current "arbitrariness" of an injury to a foetus only being recognised if it draws breath is a problem in itself.

In this world, the reality is that men are making laws for women. There is no acknowledgement of the bias in this "representation". Just as war is too important to be left to the generals, politics is too important to be left to politicians. So too law is too important to be left to the lawyers. Yes, we should engage with the views of the professionals – but let's make our own choices too.

It would be good if we could actually own the law in an informed manner. Instead, we have a polarisation between superficial populism and the elitism of the qualified. Invariably this degenerates into name-calling and squabbling. So much for the noble traditions of Westminster Democracy. And if we do not own the law, will things ever change for the better?



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Mary Peterson is a writer.

Zoe's Law (2) should be strongly resisted for many reasons. It would create ambiguities that would muddy the waters in relation to the abortion laws. And it would set up a dangerous precedent by changing the legal status of a foetus. Zoe's Law is using a single incident to redefine what it is to be a "person" in NSW. Why should one sad and tragic event change something as important as our definition of a person?

The proposed bill seeks to criminalise grievous bodily harm to a foetus, treating it as a separate offence from harm caused to a pregnant woman. It does exempt "anything done in the course of a medical procedure, or anything done by, or with the consent of, the pregnant woman concerned". But this is insufficient. It does not ensure there will not be future ramifications for women seeking a safe abortion in the state. Plus it uses the term "unborn child". This is exactly what is rejected by those who favour women's choice. If passed, it would set a dangerous precedent, seriously infringing on women's reproductive rights.

There are disturbing developments in America, and while their

humans, such as corporations, is created in order to enable the "person" to have an autonomous interaction with the law. How can a foetus do this? It is in the mother's womb. It is obvious that only the mother can advance the rights and interests of the foetus.

Worse, the changes to the law are unnecessary. There are already options in the law to deal with such tragic circumstances. When there is an injury to a foetus because of a crime, this can affect the defendant's sentence, irrespective of whether the pregnant woman suffers injuries or not. Treating the foetus as being a separate person from its mother is not required.

Revealingly, the NSW Bar Association argues that there is no "gap" in the law requiring filling. Abortion has only been decriminalised in the ACT, Victoria and Tasmania. In Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory the criminal code stipulates when an abortion is not lawful and when and how it can be lawfully obtained. In NSW and Queensland abortion is considered a crime for both women and doctors. Common law interpretations of the criminal code, however, have effectively made lawful abortion available. Nevertheless, if Zoe's law is

'the category of 'personhood', which sometimes includes non-humans, such as corporations, is created in order to enable the "person" to have an autonomous interaction with the law. How can a foetus do this?'

system of justice is different from ours, it has its origins in the British common law system. The concept of 'foetal personhood' is being used in the United States to restrict or even ban safe abortions. Doctors are potentially subject to prosecution for doing their jobs, and women may die from a lack of access to proper care. We do not want that here.

It is true that the circumstances that led up to this legislation being proposed were tragic. Ms Donegan's and her family's suffering must have been intolerable and it is important to recognise their loss. But responding by changing the law could easily result in unintended consequences. It is a clear there is an attempt by the politicians to undermine women's rights.

Hard cases, bad law

A legal truism is that 'hard cases make bad law' and this is a very hard case. But law reform is extremely complex and changing legislation because of one situation is extremely risky. It is necessary to extensively examine the risks and legal consequences. It does not seem that this has been the priority in the NSW parliament.

The law has not previously recognised a foetus as a legal person for sound reasons. As a number of lawyers have pointed out, the category of 'personhood', which sometimes includes non-

adopted, it could easily be used to make access more difficult in the state.

The Campbell Review was conducted in 2010 to provide a critical assessment of this area of legislation. It concluded the law should be left unaltered. If there is to be a criminal offence against an unborn child that would be considered independent of the mother, there would be ramifications for the way the foetus is regarded.

There are areas where reforms would be justified. Julian Savulesku, professor of ethics at Oxford University and Lachlan de Crespigny, a senior research associate at Oxford University have argued that instead of ascribing rights to the foetus, or "unborn child", and creating "foetal personhood laws", a better way to remedy these wrongs is to recognise the rights of the future child. They say that in this framework, when a child is born with brain damage because of a car accident, it's because of wrongs against that future child. After all, the child has been harmed by the actions as well as, in some cases, the mother.

This does not apply to the circumstances in which Zoe died. But it is an area where law reform could be conducted with positive results, unlike the current initiative.



WITHOUT HONOUR

Religious texts cannot independently validate themselves.

by Ralph Robinson

“A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house.” (St Matthew 13:57). The Gospel according to St Matthew attributes these words to Jesus and follows them with the comment: “and he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”

“Mighty works,” one assumes, would be miraculous events: instant healings, restoring life to the deceased, producing plentiful food from meagre resources, transforming water into wine, walking on water. That this response to unbelief was attributed to Jesus in a Gospel provokes curiosity precisely because the said mighty works reported on other occasions seem to have been intended as demonstrations of superhuman powers and authority, intended to reinforce claims to be fulfilling a divine mission. No doubt seeing a manifestly dead person arise and resume interest in a conversation that was interrupted by their dying might provide compelling reason to abandon unbelief!

Feeling curious about this response, though, is to take the gospel narrative at face value, as an account of an historical incident. If we recognise the Gospels (and we must) as anonymous writings compiled several decades after the death of Jesus -- supposing indeed that there was such an individual as the Gospels represent -- and acknowledge their role as an aid to proselytising, rather than sober history, we might well come to a more radical view.

A prophet might well perform no “mighty deeds” amongst those familiar with him, because no “mighty deeds” could truthfully have been attributed to him, even in regions that had honoured him as a miracle-worker.

Myths rise and are accepted more swiftly than is often imagined. Modern Cults: the Aum cult, the Jonestown sect, the Mormons, Scientology, the Cargo Cults of Papua-New Guinea, Christian Science, to name a few, emerge and are followed by credulous believers. Contemporary phenomena, such as the propensity to believe that statues of Jesus weep real tears, or bleed from wounded side and hands, or that the image of Jesus is imprinted on the Shroud of Turin further illustrate the point.

Once such beliefs have been adopted by a number of people, a sect is created, rituals are developed, and there is the establishment of mutual support in asserting these beliefs. Such bonding overrides any rational examination of the belief. It is a group version of “my country, right or wrong”, which replaces prudence. Asserting belief becomes paramount, eclipsing any need to examine the grounds for the belief. It is simply necessary

to identify with the sect’s beliefs.

A prime example of this development is the ferocity with which creationists, believers in so-called Intelligent Design, deny scientific evidence and claim that the planet is some 6000 years young, believing that evolutionary theory is foolish mistake and that humans co-existed with dinosaurs. The best and most careful efforts of scholars are trumped, they believe, by the eternal truths revealed by a mythical deity appearing in ancient writings of dubious provenance.

To illustrate: Creation Ministries International is an organisation devoted to fundamentalist beliefs about the Bible, subscribing to a doctrine that the universe was created within six literal 24 hour days, the first two “days” passing before the sun and moon were created. A Statement of Faith on their web site makes an unambiguous claim:

By definition, no apparent, perceived or claimed evidence in any field, including history and chronology, can be valid if it contradicts the Scriptural record. Of primary importance is the fact *that evidence is always subject to interpretation by fallible people who do not possess all information.* (italics mine)

I have italicised the only part of this A Statement of Faith. It is undoubtedly true.

Whether from ideological blindness or unsupported arrogant certainty, the directors of Creation Ministries International fail to see that this condition is in fact true of their whole “Statement of Faith”. The preceding sentence: “By definition, no apparent, perceived or claimed evidence in any field, including history and chronology, can be valid if it contradicts the Scriptural record” is itself also a judgement made by fallible people who do not possess all information.

It is true, indeed, of everything of which these people feel most sure. They, like all humans, are fallible. Like the rest of humanity they lack access to complete information. Especially they lack any information that could conceivably validate the mentioned preceding affirmation, which is a statement of their faith, not *evidence for it*. **All** beliefs are “subject to interpretation by fallible people who do not possess all information.”

The claim to have found incontrovertible truth in ancient scriptures is thus fatuous. The fact is, the Directors of Creation Ministries International do not even have reliable information about the God in whom they profess to believe, because anything they believe about that God they glean from the Bible; which they believe is true because it is God’s Word.

It is a circular argument, in which every element is a belief formed fallibly with little information. However you play it.

Premises: God exists and is truthful. God is revealed in the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God

Conclusion: Everything the Bible says is true.

So the Directors of the Creation Ministries International are in no better a situation than devotees of the myriad other deities that we see proclaimed in religious writings. They have no better grounds for belief than do adherents of the opposing religions that they reject, such as Muslims, Mormons, Hindus and Zoroastrians.

Those who hold to such simplistic ideologies are prone to see Science and Religion as antagonists, slugging out a competition for the title of Truth Champion of the World. But neither Religion nor Science is a repository of absolute truth. **There is no such repository.**

Science has long known not to make such claims. Science does not parade itself as infallible, and does not claim to know everything. Science proceeds by conjecture and refutation, testing the answers proposed to questions and retaining them just so long as evidence does not arise to cause a re-think.

Such people as the Directors of Creation Ministries International are neither so modest nor so truthful. They do not question a belief that there is a spiritual world inhabited by a God or gods, demons, departed humans — despite there being no evidence for this except their own religion and its holy books. They accept without demur that miracles (magic) happen, that some mysterious process they imagine to be “inspiration” conveys information from a ghostly other world to this, that planetary motion allows the sun to “stand still” for some hours. Like children immersed in a video game, they are so wedded to this virtual reality of gods, spirit, angels, demons, heaven and hell they feel the need to deny what goes on about them in the world in which they actually — though, it seems, somewhat reluctantly — must live. And they claim to know all about this fanciful alternate world because they accept ancient, often copied, religious writing as absolute truth. They claim to know this infallibly despite being themselves *fallible people who do not possess all information*. They *believe* the religion they subscribe to, fallibly, but claim access to recognised *infallible truth*. No need to rethink. Decide in advance that no evidence — however plain — need ever be thought about unless it agrees with what is already believed. Easy! Blind Man’s Bluff.

And notice also that this one truth contained in this unlikely Statement of Faith applies to any claimed certainty about proclaiming the Bible as “The Word of God.” Every believer, no matter how sincerely and piously they claim to recognise God’s Word, is both fallible and unable to possess all information. Belief does not confer infallibility!

Notably the claim that the Bible is the “Word of God” is not one that the Bible makes of itself, despite the repetitive use of that phrase. The expression is popular with Biblical literalists,

Creationists, and the like who assert that “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...” (2 Timothy 3:16) The problem is that it is not clear what this reference to “all scripture” might mean. What it cannot mean is the Christian Bible, since when these words were written there was no Christian Bible. This text (2 Timothy 3:16) is itself believed to be pseudonymous and dated 90–100 CE; its earliest known fragment is found c. 350 CE in *Codex Sinaiticus*.

None of the writers of Biblical books was ever aware that a Bible would later be assembled centuries later. So no book in the Bible asserts anything about the whole Bible, or asserts that the Bible is “the Word of God;” it *could not* since there was no such thing as a Christian Bible when any of its separate books was written. “Scripture” (writing) in this text could in fact have referred to any of the apocryphal books rejected by the Church Councils of the fourth century of the Common Era, or to any other pious writing that the author of “2 Timothy” might have had in mind. To assume that the Bible is one integrated book and that any isolated verse (text) from any part of it refers to the whole diverse collection of ancient books, is a baseless fundamentalist fantasy. It is a salutary exercise to read a history of the process of debating, disagreement, that was involved in assembling of the Canon of the Christian Bible. It is to be made aware that there is more than one version of the Canon.

Just in case you imagined otherwise, it is a reminder that those who made the decision about which books became part of the Bible were also fallible people who did not possess all information. They were, as Church Councils, just as likely to make mistakes as the other Church Councils that the Directors of Creation Ministries International abjure.

Any response to this that is based on an appeal to “inspiration” creates difficulties of its own. If it is not simply hand-waving mystical belief in magic, it is difficult to clarify whether God is thought to have dictated words to robot-like writers, or magically placed thoughts the writers felt compelled to express. But factual mistakes and inconsistencies are evident to any alert reader. There is the pronouncement by Jesus that within the lifetime of some of his followers there would be a coming in glory from the clouds. That has not yet taken place over two millennia later. Unless one has an investment in insisting that there is no problem (and going to risible lengths to offer implausible interpretations of such passages, fallibly interpreted by less than all-knowing apologists) it is impossible to see such passages as divine truths infallibly revealed.

And if the notion of inspiring the writers to write only God’s words is dubious enough, just think of the notion of inspiring a gaggle of squabbling theologians to decide which books contained only God’s words. If you think that is easy, you don’t know many theologians.

We have already noted some fatuous circular arguments. For similar reasons, no claim that the Bible is God's Word can be proved by reference to a Biblical text, for the same reason that protestation of innocence from the dock is not accepted because "He is innocent: he admits it himself." *The Koran*, *The Book of Mormon* and others make similar self-justifying claims.

The whole project of insisting on a divine revelation rests on the belief in metaphysical dualism: a mythical (and sometimes a philosophical) doctrine, which is accepted without enough evidence to justify even everyday beliefs. As with a number of other widely held unquestioned beliefs, this amounts to mere superstition (which Christians feel free to mock when it is expressed in Hinduism). Since this claim is frail, any assurance that the Bible is true, its truth guaranteed by a mythical God, must

be equally frail.

Further, this project of insisting on a divine revelation demands belief in magical (miraculous) processes, again without enough supporting evidence to justify even everyday beliefs. Magical thinking, whether or not it is religious, expresses a futile desire for causation disconnected from physical reality. It is a hope for fulfilment of wishes beyond one's means of achievement. Children sooner or later abandon belief in Santa Claus and fairies. Adults often come to realise that they are responsible for themselves, that there are no magical others and that no magic is busily constructing happy-ever-after endings.

Quite a few beliefs deserve to be *without honour!*

– *Ralph Robinson is author of Abandon the Cave: Faith's Seductive Virtual Reality.*

Why didn't God prevent the holocaust?

An inquiry into the meaning of meaning.

by Reg Naulty

In 2006 Pope Benedict XVI visited Auschwitz concentration camp and asked God why he remained silent during the "unprecedented mass crimes" of the Holocaust. In his television debate with Richard Dawkins, Cardinal Pell was asked why God had not prevented the Holocaust.

Does God intervene in history? According to the doctrine of Providence, God does. Providence means that God provides for our good. This doctrine is implied by Jesus when he tells his disciples that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge, and presumably, consent, and that every hair on their head is numbered. The doctrine existed in ancient Stoicism. Marcus Aurelius wrote "Whatever happens, happens rightly. Watch closely, and you will find this true. In the succession of events there is not mere sequence alone, but an order that is just and right, as from the hand of one who dispenses to all their due." [*Meditations*. Penguin. 1964. P66]

Let us consider some examples from World War II. Firstly, officers plotted to kill Hitler in July 1944. The room in which the bomb was to be planted was originally an underground bunker, which would have concentrated the blast and killed everyone. But it was a hot day, so the venue was changed at the last minute to a light wooden hut with all the windows open. Von Stauffenberg and his assistant took two bombs with them in the briefcase which was to be placed on the conference table underneath Hitler's nose. They armed one, but just as they were about to arm the other,

an aide opened their door and told them it was time to take the briefcase in.

So it went in with only one bomb. During the conference, one of the participants moved the bomb with his foot, so that an oak trestle effectively shielded Hitler from the blast. The outcome is well known. Hitler escaped with a shaking, more than ever convinced that Providence was supporting him.

What interest did God have in foiling the von Stauffenberg plot? A convincing answer was given by Field Marshall von Manstein, the commander of an army group on the Eastern Front, when von Stauffenberg approached him and asked him to join them. If they killed Hitler, von Manstein argued, German resistance on the Russian Front would collapse. Russian armies would then flood into Europe which would then come under the control of a dictator every bit as bad as Hitler. There would be nothing gained. The best thing that could happen, he said, was that the German Army delay the Russian Army as long as it could, so that the Allies could control more and more of Europe. Von Manstein had a case.

Consider another example from World War II. D Day had to be postponed from its original date to the following day because of bad weather. On that next day the weather was also bad, so D Day was put off till the following day. On the morning of that day, the weather had not changed. Rommel, the general in charge of the German Atlantic defences, went back to Germany for his wife's 50th birthday. However, that afternoon, the weather lifted and



the Allies came over. Enemy aircraft made it too dangerous for Rommel to return to Normandy by plane, so he had to drive across France. By the time he arrived at the Normandy coast, a beachhead had already been established.

One more war time example. Once Operation Barbarossa had been launched against Russia, the German Armies advanced with spectacular speed. But the Russian winter arrived a month early. That slowed them down and gave the Russians time to respond more effectively to the Blitzkrieg.

Providence or chance? Well if it were Providence, why didn't Providence intervene to stop the Holocaust? Or stop Stalin trucking out the grain from the Ukraine, which caused a mass famine and millions of deaths? But perhaps there was no way for Providence to stop these disasters without making it obvious that this was a divine intervention.

'Well, what would that matter?' it will be asked. "Wouldn't it have been better to demonstrate intervention from God than let millions of people be slaughtered?" It would have shown that God cared. At last, demonstrable evidence of divine concern for humanity!

But perhaps it would matter. Once it had become obvious that God intervened to prevent disasters, we would wait for that to happen, and thus stop managing our own world. Perhaps it would be better for us if we went all out as masters of our own fate, with some unseen help from Providence where that could be done unobtrusively.

There are two objections to this. The first is from the atheist side. Since God is omnipotent, it is always possible for Him to act unobtrusively, so why doesn't He? The second is from the theist side. This scenario demeans God, since it requires Him to await human actions, then tidy things up afterwards behind the scenes.

But perhaps God isn't doing it. We tend to think of Providence on a kind of central command model where God does everything, but perhaps Providence is exercised by many agents, as in a decentralised economy. The suggestion is that there are

intermediaries who know what God wants and have power to influence events in that direction.

In that way, two imperatives would be satisfied. We would be running our own world, and God would be influencing events for the good through his agents, who may have been people who lived on earth before us. They would be attending to unfinished business.

Perhaps that is the best way of combining human actions and divine influence. That would explain why God didn't use his omnipotence directly: it was not the best way of doing it. Perhaps that explains, too, why no one intervened to help the millions of Jews: the ones intervening didn't have that kind of power.

Is there any independent evidence that someone other than God is intervening? In the Bible there are mentions of interventions by lesser beings. The annunciation to Mary is one such case. Joan of Arc believed that her voices came from St Michael and St George. In our own time, apparitions to the dying and the severely ill are not uncommon.

The atheist response will then be that God's love for us is limited, since he permits an arrangement which leads to so much human suffering. But perhaps it is better that we, and those who have been here before, attend to our own world.

There is one other pertinent consideration. If those who were killed in the Holocaust live on, then what happened earlier in their lives takes on a different character, just as the first chapter of a book is brought to a different perspective by the later chapters.

One final point, a correction of Marcus Aurelius. Not everything that happens does happen rightly. Events which flow from human agency may happen wrongly. In that case, Providence would do something further down the track. The analogy of The Persian Rug Maker is relevant here [J.R.Lucas, *Freedom and Grace*.1976].

The Rug Maker sits at one end of the rug working, and his children work at the other. Occasionally, they make mistakes. When they do, he alters the design to accommodate their mistakes.

- *Reg Naulty is a philosopher and a Quaker.*

Repeat after me

The crisis in psychology

by Rohan Kapitany

The discipline of experimental psychology is in crisis, apparently. A number of big, established and (previously) esteemed researchers have lost their jobs, whole fields of enquiry within psychology are being targeted, and pundits of all varieties are weighing in on the merits of the adolescent science. Given the range of outlets critiquing psychology – published in places as mainstream as *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *Slate*, *National Geographic*, and *NPR* (as well as within the academic literature) – it's easy to envisage serious discussions in Tea Rooms in Psychology schools everywhere (this has certainly been the case in mine). The crisis, dubbed 'repligate', is one of replication. Experimental psychologists just aren't doing enough of it. As a result, it is argued, findings in psychology must be taken with a grain of salt. We simply cannot have confidence that effects reported are not due to chance, questionable research practices, or more serious transgressions. Certainly each of these cases has been revealed to have been so in the recent past. This period in the history of psychology will be remembered as dark and stormy. I contend, however, that in addition to the legitimate concerns that are raised, both inside the discipline and out, it will be remembered as a period lacking measure and context. *Is psychology all that different from other disciplines of science?*

Psychology does have a problem. A recent push to replicate 27 "important findings" within social psychology found at least 10 that couldn't be replicated at all (a project which took more than a year to complete and involved more than a dozen international research teams). A number of well established and esteemed researchers have been found guilty of tampering or fabricating data (see Smeester, Hauser, and Staple). Recently developed statistical methods have been applied to old data suggesting that researchers – while not engaging in outright misconduct – test for as long as is needed to find a significant effect, then stop (a practice known as 'p-hacking'). The purpose of this article is not to argue against these claims. It is clear that psychology has issues. Nor is the purpose of this article to propose solutions. Many have already been proposed and some have been broadly adopted. The purpose of this article is to put psychology into context within science generally.

First, let me break down the 'replication crisis'. Replication isn't the problem, per se. The problem is that within psychology some effects are published and accepted by the community without being subsequently vetted by other independent research groups. Sometimes these effects are 'false positives', that is, the effect reported is not reliable but rather a product of chance or an artefact of the testing environment. Sometimes, it is elements

more sinister. Direct replications are (one of) the solution(s) to this problem. If findings are directly replicated then false claims are caught early, put on record, and appropriately regarded. Science progresses thusly. The Replication Crisis, then, is not necessarily a problem of replication, but one of reliability. Replication is a good safeguard of this quality. But is the condition of scientific output in psychology any better or worse than in other disciplines?

A meta-analysis (a large statistical survey of publications on a given topic), published in 2009 by Daniele Faneli found that, on average, 2% of scientists have falsified research at least once and up to 34% had engaged in other questionable research practices. This number, Faneli admits, is certainly a conservative value that represents a low estimate of the true frequency. It seems for every Diederik, Staple or Marc Hauser (revealed psychologists) there is a Hwang Woo-Suk or a Jan Hendrik Schon (Biotech and Physics, respectively). No data exists that compares rates of fraud between scientific disciplines. It is possible that psychology is more fraught. Indeed, frauds may be revealed in other disciplines at a higher rate due to higher rates of replication, which can help detect when a given result is unreliable. It's possible that even if the number of revealed frauds between domains is comparable, low rates of replication in psychology might indicate that the psych-specific number is an underestimate. That said, no data exists to directly support (or disprove) this claim.

Not all frauds, false positives, or statistical flukes are equal. We justly demand that the output of scientific enquiry is reliable. It is the promise of science and the expectation of those that consume and fund it. Let's focus on those that consume science rather than those that fund it (considering the alternative raises legal questions that I do not have the knowledge to address). Consumers of science broadly fall into two camps: fellow scientists and those who are applying the findings (these are non-exclusive categories). The crisis as it relates to psychology focuses largely on social psychology (the domain of psychology concerned with the relationship between individuals and groups in social / interpersonal contexts) a branch of observation/experimental psychology with limited direct applications in the real world. Smeesters and Staple were social psychologists investigating 'priming': a phenomenon whereby individuals who are exposed – 'primed' – with particular words/ideas/images/concepts unconsciously alter their behaviour; e.g., seeing the word 'OLD' makes primed individuals walk more slowly). The consequences of these researchers' behaviour are relatively confined to psychology. This certainly doesn't excuse their actions – not in the slightest – but allow me to elaborate. Unreliable psychology results slow the

progress of science and our understanding, they waste the time of other researchers investigating the claims, they slow the progress of students gaining their education at graduate and post-graduate levels and, yes, they waste money.

But they are unlike unreliable results in some other fields – notably medicine – that can cause considerably more damage. Despite the fact Andrew Wakefield’s notorious MMR Vaccine / Autism paper was published 15 years ago, and subsequently revealed fraudulent, it still causes deaths *every year*. By way of illustration, jennymccarthybodycount.com estimates that in the last 7 years anti-vax denial (broadly fueled by Wakefield’s publication) has caused more than 6000 preventable deaths. The paper was retracted from *The Lancet* (where it was originally published) in 1998, yet its impact continues to cause ripples.

Retractions are important and contribute to the reliability of a large body of knowledge; a retraction removes unreliable information from the corpus. A comprehensive survey of retracted articles from the scholarly literature (published in 2012) showed

are willing to admit they lack expertise in psychology. After all, are we all not thinking, feeling, agents with ready access to decades of experience? Are we not able to predict and understand the behaviour of ourselves and others? Psychology is rated as far more easy to understand for these very reasons, than other sciences. Indeed, Keil and colleagues published a paper in 2010 in which they conclude that psychology “*seem[s] to be seen as especially easy to understand in comparison with all other domains of phenomena. Thus, the primary cause ... may lie in a discounting of the difficulty of understanding psychology*”. But even if this is the case, it by no means supports the position that psychology is actually easier to master, more intuitively interpretable, or that our experience trumps counter-intuitive findings. Psychology, in short, is an attractive target – counter-intuitive results feel obviously wrong, and alternative post-hoc explanations are easy to generate. When particular results are revealed to be the product of poor science we are validated in challenging future claims, or even the discipline as a whole.

‘Psychology has problems, and is justly being held accountable, but is psychology unique? Probably not.’

that over the last 84 years 4,449 published articles were retracted, with around 20% of those retractions due to ‘alleged research misconduct’ and 42% due to ‘questionable data/interpretations’. The top 10 journals for number of retractions in all fields are, in order, excluding generalist journals: crystallography, biological chemistry, gene expression, anaesthesiology, and immunology. The top ‘repeat offenders’, who account for 25% of all retractions, include: anaesthesiologists, cardiologists, oncologists, physiologists, and immunologists. The list of journals which had more than 15 retractions includes no psychology journals, and none of the top 15 repeat offenders was a psychologist.

Should we be concerned with the reliability of results in psychology? Yes, absolutely. Should we expend effort remedying the situation? Unquestionably. Is our ire well-placed and well-informed? Perhaps not. Psychology has problems, and is justly being held accountable, but Is psychology unique? Probably not. Who is harmed by the failings of experimental psychology? Plenty of people, but those people are typically scientists and those that fund them. Should we be equally concerned with failings in other domains? Yes, and if we consider the potential for direct harm to lay-consumers of the science, like those at risk of preventable illnesses, or those who are subject to the expertise of anaesthesiologists and cardiologist, then we might want to redirect some of our efforts.

Psychology is a discipline unlike ‘harder’ sciences. While most would readily admit they lack any level of expertise in domains such as chemistry, physics, statistics, biology, or engineering, few

So when we, as scientists, psychologists, and consumers of science look back on the era of the ‘Replication Crisis’ how are we going to remember it? It will certainly, and justly, be recalled as a period characterized by criticism from those inside and outside the discipline. Perhaps, through rose-tinted glasses, it will be euphemistically referred to as an academic adolescence – a necessary period of development for the relatively young field of enquiry. Less optimistically, it may be recalled as a purge, a much needed blood-letting, a cull of fraudulent bad-apples lurking inside the ‘soft’ science of psychology.

I predict the former. While there certainly is ‘sturm und drang’ and the gnashing of teeth, changes are being made. The value of direct replications is highly salient, proposed ‘pre-registration’ for studies will help protect against statistical flukes, data is being made more available, and journals are being pressured to publish more replications (it is not currently the norm). What I additionally hope to look back upon is an emergent appreciation of science more broadly. The overwhelming discussion of ‘replication’ is misleading. What we’re really concerned with is reliability. These criticisms are valid to all disciplines (though at times attention does need to be focused) and I hope that once psychology begins to move forward, the ire is not lost, but redirected toward disciplines that may be equally problematic, and which may have more ‘real world’ consequences. I hope we look back from a house in order with a greater appreciation of measure and context for how science is done.

– Rohan Kapitany has a degree in Psychological Science



The drama inside our bodies

The immune system is an entire ecology that matches the complexity outside.

‘Why are we here?’ is a question that is usually thought to be more in the domain of religion or philosophy than science. Science tends instead to concentrate on describing what is here and, to the extent possible, how it works.

Yet that is the question that science writer Idan Ben-Barak has posed in his book *Why aren't we dead yet?* It is a way for him to describe a wondrous degree of complexity in the immune system.

“The question I wanted to ask is ‘how come it works at all?’” says Ben-Barak. “Why, with all the threats to the human body, how come we are still surviving? How it works, how it develops, how it came into being in an evolutionary sense, and how we came to learn about it.”

The immune system is a constantly evolving system that is dealing with an enemy that is also constantly evolving. There is “an amazing variety of things that can go wrong with the human body” observes Ben-Barak. Many of the threats evolve very rapidly, but the immune system is also constantly adapting and evolving. “I thought it was a very interesting thing to behold, that kind of mirroring of what is going on outside happening inside us.

“What you get is millions and millions of B Cells producing millions and millions of kinds of antibodies. They are just there.

of kinds of threats externally. Rogue cells that threaten to become part of tumours, for example.”

Ben-Barak agrees with the “hygiene hypothesis”, which suggests that urban dwellers are living in environments that, by being so clean, do not create enough of a load for the immune system. “That is why a lot of health figures today say it is alright – it is more than alright, it is recommended -- that you don’t scrub your children, that you don’t wash everything all the time. There is a place for dirt in your life because the immune system does need challenges because that is how we evolve.”

The understanding of the immune system has greatly advanced in recent decades due to better magnification power. Ben-Barak says there has not been a paradigm change – the basic understanding of the structure has not greatly altered – but it is now understood to be far more complex than previously thought.

He notes that immunology is only 100 years old. In 1888, Louis Pasteur proposed a theory of immunity that did not include an immune system. “With all his greatness, and with all he knew and surmised about the human body and the way it reacted, he didn’t think there was room for an active immune system. It was not until the nineteenth century that people started thinking about an

‘There is an amazing variety of things that can go wrong with the human body – Idan Ben-Barak.’

They are not produced in response to an actual threat, but in response to a potential threat. There are antibodies in your bodies which are specific for all kinds of things that you have never encountered and you never will.

“There are even antibodies for things that don’t exist in nature, because it is a random process. The reason why this came to pass is that once in a very long while the human body needs one of these things and then that particular B cell, that particular antibody producing cell, springs into action.

“It is a very nearly pointless thing for the body to do. There is an amazing amount of redundancy and you ask yourself ‘Well why does the human body do this?’ The human body isn’t known for producing redundant stuff all over the place. (But) if it didn’t exist then we would be dead as a species.”

Ben-Barak describes the process as at once “evolutionary” and “beautiful”. But exactly why it is that way remains something of a mystery. “Insofar as we can answer why questions I think that the immune system developed as part of the human body and the things that can happen to a human body in terms of infection and so forth are very varied and the human immune system needs to provide a response to that. And it is very difficult. There are a lot

active defence and it wasn’t until the 1950s that we started figuring out what is going on.

“We keep finding out further layers. There is apparently whole levels of communication between cells and cross regulation that we just now starting to scratch the surface of. The entire field has changed over the last 15 years; the maps of the entire thing are a lot more complicated.

“But because this doesn’t yet lead to magnificent revolutionary treatments people outside immunology don’t get the sense that much is happening. There has not been some huge overthrow of an existing paradigm, where people say everything we thought before is wrong. It has stayed stable since (Sir Frank Macfarlane) Burnet’s time.”

Ben-Barak believes it may already be too late in the overuse of antibiotics. The last 60 years may have just been a hiatus, although he hopes that vaccines, which use the immune system -- rather than “going it alone” as antibiotics do -- will improve.

Is he worried that disease will mean the human race is no longer here? “I suspect we will kill ourselves off before bacteria kills us,” he says.

No change, please, we are powerful

An analysis of how control works at the top

by Stanley S Schaetzel

There are, basically, two types of organisations administering large numbers of people: Governments of Countries and Transnational Companies. It is not new. The earliest Transnational Company was the Dutch East India Company which was chartered in 1602. But the real growth of such organisations occurred in the 20th Century. These days, the largest of the Transnationals span all five continents and their budgets exceed those of most small, and some of the medium, countries. Their accomplishments are due to their system of management and their success is, in no small measure, responsible for the fortunes of Western economies. Many believe that certain of their management practices, which evolved for controlling complex organisations, could be adopted to successfully administer entire countries.

But we have to be very careful in making such extrapolations. Big business, which is mostly based on 'public' (i.e. share) companies, is not democratic. Methods of hiring and firing personnel below board levels give businesses much more flexibility in the choice of fully trained and efficient employees. Reactions to sudden changes do not require prologued parliamentary debates but are adopted immediately. More efficient ways of operating are constantly studied and applied. But, at the same time, boards of many companies are 'societies of mutual admiration' and it is very difficult for unsatisfied shareholders to remove a non-performing board. Only the pressure of major institutional shareholders, holding large percentages of issued stock, can affect such changes. In every country there is a 'directors' mafia', whose members sit on boards of several companies and 'retire by rotations and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election'.

There is much more going on under the surface than the supposed 'director's mafia'. A recent study by a Swiss organisation found that, through various forms of interconnectivity, more or less obvious, 1% of some of the 43,000 Trans national Corporations control 40% of the entire network.¹

The main original, and the present ostensible, purpose of incorporated companies, which is funded by shares, is to make profit for the shareholders and to maintain, or increase, the value of their shares. This statement has several aspects. First, because profits of a company are intimately related to the performance of its management, all aspects of that 'art' have received great attention from practitioners and theoreticians alike. Management had become a recognised profession, with its rules, its gurus and its stars. The MBA is one of the most common professional qualifications.

Maintaining, or increasing, the value of shares is not only important from the shareholders' point of view, it is also necessary to prevent take-overs, which may occur when the

price of the shares tumbles. Increased revenue is sometimes achieved, temporarily, by diminishing the investment in plant and processes, or by dismissing staff – but this often leads to an even greater danger in future years. To make top executives take heed of the future, share options form part of the salary package of top executives. (And, talking about salary packages of CEOs and Directors, we have to mention their recent extraordinary growth when compared with average wages and with the value of their input to society. It has now reached a stage whereby it could become a socially disrupting factor and might thus require some form of government intervention).

The word 'profit' mentioned above is, in many circles, a dirty word. It needn't be. It is not a dirty word when it relates to just rewards for well conducted operations. It is necessary to give the shareholders a return for the risk they incurred by providing the capital to fund company operations. As far as the company is concerned, profit is required to repay loans, provide adequate salaries to the workers and the management, invest in research and development, maintain and expand plants and equipment, and cover maintenance, contingencies, taxes and insurance, as well as public relations. Profits become 'dirty' if they result from dishonest deals and exploitation of the work force.

Peter Drucker was a recognised guru (and philosopher) of management. He saw well managed companies as a bulwark against authoritarian tyranny. Because society needs all the services provided by these autonomous organisations, their abolition would 'substitute one absolute boss for the pluralism of operating institutions'.

His basic premise is this: *'Management, that is the organ of leadership, direction and decision in our social institutions, and especially in business enterprise, is a generic function which faces the same tasks in every country and, essentially, in every society. Management is to give directions to the institutions it manages. It has to think through the institution's mission, has to set its objectives, and has to organise the resources for the results the institution has to contribute...'*²

And: *'...Management will have to be considered both a science and a humanity, both a system of findings that can be objectively tested and validated, and a system of belief and experience.'*³

A statement by Drucker that will ring a bell in relation to public services in various countries is as follows: *'What people mean by bureaucracy, and rightly condemn, is a management which has come to conceive itself as an end and the institution as a means.'* He goes on to say: *'University, hospital and government agency equally have impacts, equally have responsibilities -- and by and large have been less aware of them, far less concerned*

with their human, social and community responsibilities than business has'.⁵

The first task of the management appears to be to find an answer to the question what is our business? Drucker reckons the answer is the customer. I can just see Sir Humphrey looking very blank.

And now we come to Drucker's crucial statements: 'Objectives are the fundamental strategy of business.',⁶ and: 'Objectives are not fate – they are directions. They are not commandments, they are commitments. They do not determine the future, they are means to mobilise resources and the energy of the business for the making of the future.'⁷

Drucker makes another pointed observation that explains why certain systems seem to fail: 'The less visible or prominent technological change is in the business, the greater the danger that the whole organisation will ossify; hence the emphasis on innovation is doubly important'.⁸

Planning is an immensely important function for management and is necessary... 'precisely because we cannot forecast'... 'Future will not just happen if one wishes hard enough. It requires decision – now. It imposes risk – now. It requires action – now. It demands allocation of resources and, above all, human resources – now. It requires work – now.'⁹

The importance of those admonitions can be realised when we discover that half of the GNP in the USA and other developed countries is spent on public service institutions. Drucker reckons that the faults are in the system. Business is paid for satisfying the needs of customers, service institutions are paid out of budget allocations.

Drucker's final comment on the latter is: 'All service institutions are threatened by the tendencies to cling to yesterday rather than to slough it off, and to put their best and ablest people on defending what no longer makes sense, or serves a purpose. Government is particularly prone to this disease'.¹⁰

When talking about the reluctance to change existing organisations, either from within or from outside, it is useful to bear in mind the wise words of Machiavelli: 'It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of old institutions, and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new ones'.¹¹

Other factors to remember are outlined by David Katz: 'Human intelligence and insight are not so godlike that they can divorce desirable ends from concrete experiences for achieving them... The administrators closest to the problem are likely to overestimate the practical difficulties which loom large in their everyday mode of functioning. Their frequent answer to any

radical plan for policy change or structural reorganisation is to point out that the eggs are already scrambled. They argue that we are not starting de novo with the possibility of imposing a new blueprint on the organisation; we are dealing with long established patterns and must work within this framework. This view leads to defeatism with respect to any policy change.'¹²

And a final quote which applies to any system of management: 'Many poor decisions are made on the basis of overweighting information from powerful and illustrious sources, irrelevant to the problem. It is a truism that organisational leaders frequently make important policy decisions without obtaining relevant information from within the organisation.'¹³

How could the methods proved to succeed in management be adopted to systems of governance? The question of personal freedom is bound to arise when talking about any changes to methods of governing nations. The safeguards are protected in democratic nations by their Constitutions and statutes of law. But what is the freedom of an individual in a democracy? To an anarchist: 'no government is good. A dictatorship is at least honest about the denial of freedom, but a democracy hides its tyrannies by implicating the general public through the mechanism of a vote, which simply confirms the tyranny of the majority over the minority of citizens'.¹⁴

The most important point to remember with respect to freedom of a citizen in a democratic country is that there is 'freedom of...', and 'freedom from...' – especially freedom from coercion by individuals. Hayek uses whole chapters to define what freedom and liberty are all about. 'Free' society has met this problem by conferring the monopoly of coercion on the state'.¹⁵

The freedom of an individual is one aspect to be considered, his economic needs and rights are another. Often, they are in apparent opposition. For 'managers' of countries the two types of freedom appear opposed: too much freedom for individuals means less flexibility of action for the managers. For individuals it means less freedom to 'manoeuvre'. But both aspects must be accommodated in a successful system.

Russia, China and the Vatican

A good example is the comparison of the introduction of economic and other changes in the former USSR and in the Peoples' Republic of China. In Russia, the changes went under the names of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika'. These two terms entered the vocabulary of the West. To make certain that we know their correct meanings, they shall be listed as follows: Glasnost means freedom of expression and a certain amount of honesty between the government and the public. Perestroika means changes from dictated to free market economy.

Lessons from resulting developments in these two giant 'test tubes of history' – Russia and China – will be studied for years by



historians and system managers alike.

In Russia, glasnost was introduced along with a badly planned economic change which could be described as ‘half-cocked’ perestroika. There were no trained personnel to take place of party apparatchiks. The result appeared to be close to an unfettered, robber-type style of capitalism, where ex-black market operators (i.e. the few guys in Russia who understood ‘biznes’) and party bosses acquired huge slices of ex-state enterprises at bargain basement prices. They became instant billionaires and were known as ‘oligarchs’.

GDP dropped, the standard of living fell, unemployment climbed, and the people, who could now openly criticise, did so with gusto. Between 1990 and 2000 the mean length of life in Russia dropped by over two years. It was only Putin, and his return to some ex-KGB methods, who introduced a measure of stability and economic progress. The return to more extensive government controls was initially well received in Russia, since the only periods in history during which they experienced an almost democratic government, were also periods of economic chaos. After the second Putin election independent media were gradually silenced and several renowned critics were murdered by ‘unknown’ criminals. His return to power after the masquerade with Medvedev, will continue this trend.

In China, perestroika was introduced without any hint of glasnost. Simply: ‘to get rich was glorious’. The gate was slowly opened to market capitalism by a system of such slogans, but the government retained control of all major investments as well as of all media. While millions were using the Internet, access to sensitive information was selectively blocked. A significant factor in the success of their economy was that professional people

were put in control of departments and on the staff of various ministries (Hu and Xi were both engineers). Labour could be directed into planned directions as was education and research. China became a member of GATT. GDP began to mount in double percentage figures per annum and Chinese exports, based on low price labour, flooded the world markets. In 2009, more new cars were sold in China than in the USA, and since 2011 more cars are made in China than in the USA. But corruption at all levels of administrators prevents complete professionalism being achieved in many departments.

George Soros, whom the media describe as ‘the prince of currency speculators’, had this to say in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in February, 1997: ‘the untrammelled intensification of the laissez-faire capitalism and the spread of market values in all areas of life is endangering our open and democratic society’. A successful society, he claimed, must also allow for moral principles and include cooperation as well as competition.

The following basic facts emerge from contemplating past attempts to evolve methods of governing large masses of population and introducing various forms of administration.

The first aspect is that these attempts were, almost invariably, reactive. Those in power tried to fix, or improve, various perceived shortcomings of previous regimes. Very rarely, if ever, was there an overall, new, long term plan. If there ever was a long-term objective, it was almost invariably a self serving one: to retain and increase the power within one’s own family, group, or party.

When the general level of knowledge is low, and when communications are almost non-existent, as was the case until the Renaissance, various rulers, aided and abetted by the Church, could promulgate laws and edicts unfettered by public opinion.



Machiavelli's *The Prince* summarises this type of approach.

In fact, the Roman Church is still second largest 'organisation' in the world after China. But in all developed and most developing countries, there are now laws which separate religious and government activities. As far as our discussion is concerned, the following aspects can be discerned in relation to management practices of the Roman Church: its management is facilitated by the fact that its faithful believe in the guidance provided as coming from above. Vociferous internal critics can be excommunicated, ejected from the fold. The management is provided by individuals trained in the faith as well as in a form of pastoral leadership. No outsiders are admitted. The management is dictatorial and is effected through a minimum of authority levels: the Pope, the Bishops and the Priests. Some see behind most activities the hand of a Vatican Mafia of cardinals.

Finally its management is not affected, unlike in other sectors, by economy: 'Blessed are the Poor.' It can be said, in fact, that religions flower in difficult economic or post-disaster times. It follows, therefore, that only the third aspect listed (namely few levels of management) has some relevance to our discussions.

A glance at the history

The increased literacy that resulted from Gutenberg's press, which was invented in 1436, meant that words were written in the vernacular. There was the re-discovery of Greek and Latin texts. The first inklings of political thought began to appear. These initial concepts, covered what we might call the 'idealistic' side of the matter, such as personal and religious freedoms, free expression, rights to vote, rights to property and so on. Scant attention was paid to considerations of the economic, health or educational

needs of the citizens, and even less to the methods in which a country could be efficiently administered. But there were also watershed moments in history when public opinion reached the stage of near-revolt and resulted in written documents being penned without blood being shed: like, for instance, the Magna Charta and the US Constitution.

Trade, which started as barter between villages, widened to exchanges between cities and eventually between nations, spreading new ideas – such as use of money and transfer of obligations in order to facilitate transfer of goods. It also introduced new types of organisations suited to the tasks required. The British used to say that 'trade follows the flag', but in many cases individual traders preceded the men of war.

The final factor that emerges from our brief comparison of business practices with politics is the amateurism of politicians as compared with the professionalism of business managers. Government decisions, due to the multiplicity of factors and the type of people involved, seem always to be made slowly, following the lowest common denominator. The result is that we train people to be captains and generals, but we use amateurs who create situations in which they have to shoot. I am not saying that all individuals who get to the top in politics are incompetent, but the current systems make life difficult even for the bright ones. Customs and procedures are used that force them to learn on the job and to play real-time games with economies of countries and lives of their citizens. As journalist John Cole observes:

'Each government insists on learning the hard way. Labour advocates of currency devaluation in the sixties saw only the benefits for the British industry, and rarely foresaw the pressure on prices and, therefore, on wages. Conservatives, dazzled by their

belief in the automatic, almost magical, benefits of the Enterprise Culture, did not foresee what the switch to indirect taxes would do to the wages. In fact, politicians as a class contrive to remain comparatively oblivious to the almost iron laws of the labour market'.¹⁶

It would thus appear that our organisational development has been, by its nature, at the same time ad-hoc and conservative and that it is now up to science and technology to focus on the necessary changes by concentrating on the 'science of Man' and 'science of the Earth'. But is it possible? The final quote will be from the opening address to the 1992 Council and Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences (CAET) conference:

'For all their achievements, science and technology have failed to provide a universal, long-term solution for establishing stable and humane societies for all people of the Earth ... (they) have changed the standards of public behaviour for the better, but they have not changed the ethics of man nor his basic drives It cannot be doubted that societies of Man will face a major crisis in the next century as nations of the world will grope with the inextricably linked problems of Environment, Development and Population'.¹⁷

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Music in the darkness

The story of emigrating Jewish musicians.

by Albrecht Dümmling

With its many orchestras and opera houses, Germany has always attracted musicians, producing perhaps one of the highest numbers of fine active musicians in the world. But in 1933 German nationalists and conservatives saw with displeasure that a large number of those artists were Jewish. While they praised the great German music tradition and claimed that music was the most German of the arts, the Nazis “cleansed” German music from foreign influence. Infamously they labelled all Jews as foreigners. They said that music making was to be reserved for Aryans only. New laws in 1933 excluded Jewish musicians from orchestras and conservatories, and gradually from all musical professions. Jewish musicians, once an essential part of the musical life in Germany, had to leave to look to their survival and for new opportunities.

Australia was not the first choice for many. Not only was it far from Europe, the country also had made it clear that, with a few exceptions, there were no jobs for musicians. In the face of limited opportunities and stringent labour laws, only new arrivals with more practical skills would be welcome. So, refugee musicians tried to go to France, England or America. But when no more places were available and desperation grew, escaping to Australia was considered. In order to be accepted by the Australian authorities, many musicians learned new skills. The conductor Alfred Brenner, formerly Kapellmeister at the theatre of Regensburg, accepted work as a craftsman. The violinist Ellen Byk arrived in Australia as a domestic aid, the lawyer and conductor Alfred Silbermann as a hotel manager and the viola player Richard Goldner as a jewellery maker.

As a German musicologist I knew about the fate of the famous German musicians Otto Klemperer, Arnold Schoenberg and Kurt

Weill who began new careers in the United States. It was only much later that I learned about refugee musicians who fled to Australia. Some were deported from England and arrived aboard the notorious “Dunera”. One of these refugees was the Jewish cantor and composer Boas Bischofswerder. He never recovered from the shock of deportation and died in 1946, at only 51 years of age. His son Felix, became an influential Australian composer: Felix Werder. Others, like the conductor Curt Prerauer, were luckier to arrive on a concert-tour. But the majority of the refugees had to apply for an entry permit.

I decided to research this neglected field of music history, focussing on German-speaking musicians who arrived in Australia between 1933 and 1945. At first there seemed to be a very small number. But in interviews with survivors and their families and conducting research in German and Australian archives, many names were discovered. Some of these musicians, like the pianist Jascha Spivakovsky, had attracted some interest in Australia for years after his concert tour, but over time his name was forgotten. Others never had the chance to continue their European careers and died early. Ellen Byk had to make her living as a factory worker, before being able to work as a violin teacher. The conductor Alfred Brenner was a clerk in the Department of Immigration. However Richard Goldner was successful sooner and in 1945 founded the Musica Viva Society. He is one of the refugees who overcame the difficulties of being a refugee in Australia after the war and was able to contribute significantly to Australia’s artistic identity.

– Albrecht Dümmling is author of “*The verschwundenen Musiker. Jüdische Flüchtlinge in Australien*” (*The vanished musicians. Jewish refugees in Australia*).

Permutations

<http://johnaugust.com.au>

Working through the issues – objectively and methodically. Putting a spotlight on the contradictions around which otherwise pass unnoticed.

An article blogsite by me – John August – past Secular Party candidate, current community radio announcer, Humanist Society NSW President, and popular science teacher at WEA Sydney.

A unique perspective on : The Hockey Budget, Global Warming, Intellectual Property, Housing Affordability ... and even abiogenesis, the biological origins of life (amongst others).

What will be left after all this?

by Kevin Childs

The Reef, A Passionate History by Ian McCalman (Penguin Australia); *A Country Too Far, Writings on Asylum Seekers*, edited by Rosie Scott and Tom Keneally (Penguin Viking).

These two important books, one about that hush-hush topic, on-sea matters, help us understand today's Australia. On one hand we have the Great Barrier Reef, one of earth's most superb ecosystems threatened by a scheme to dump five million tonnes of mud for a new coal port. On the other we have the Great Barrier, where some the world's most wretched people seeking succour are be turned away in a way that echoes the brutality of the despotic regimes we have come to abhor.

What, then, is going on? How did a slouching, she's apples, mate, country become so mean-spirited, petty and destructive? It cannot all be blamed on the propaganda machine that is the Murdoch media megaphone, with its cynical and often risible defences of Tony Abbott and his cronies. There is a disturbing stridency that has entered public debate and which comprehensively obscures the issues raised in these books, an upsurge of the harden-fuckin'-up bumper-sticker mentality out there in Team Australia.

There are tears by the Foreign Minister for our dead in foreign lands, but for those at peril at sea emotion, like information, is off-limits. Perhaps it is all best summarised by Abbott with his reaction to the death of a soldier while the PM was in Afghanistan, "Shit happens".

So shit is happening at the 240-million-year-old reef, and in our refugee prisons. McCalman, a research professor at Sydney University, takes a dozen encounters with the world's largest reef. Here is Cook, drawn back to it after one escape, "like a scorched moth returning to circle a flame." His *Endeavour* was holed by a fist-sized piece of coral at night in June 1770. Jammed in, the coral also helped save the ship. Six weeks later Cook was back at the reef, fearful of missing a passage to confirm that New Holland and New Guinea were separate.

So Cook terrified Joseph Banks, and doubtless the crew, by almost dashing *Endeavour* on to the reef. Two hours frantic rowing by a longboat and yawl failed to clear them, but a few puffs of wind led them to a narrow channel until the tide whisked Cook's ship "like a nimble canoe" into a lagoon. Cook's "very jaws of destruction" (sic) had been avoided.

Having made it out of the coral labyrinth, he got out of there.

His journals inspired the as yet unborn Matthew Flinders. By the time he was 28, Flinders was trying to circumnavigate the continent as commander of the barque Investigator and also outdo the great Cook. He did so at a severe price, losing sailors to illness, giving up on closely surveying big parts of the northern and nor'west coasts, but his odyssey was, of course, astonishing.

He did complete his circumnavigation, he demonstrated that New Holland and New South Wales were one, named the continent, enlarged upon Cook's mapping and lived just long enough to finish his book on what he called the Great Barrier Reefs. Significantly, too, he saw that the coral ran in an unbroken train almost to New Guinea.

McCalman calls *A Voyage to Terra Australis* a brilliant fusion of the romance and science that made up Flinders. What Flinders did not know, however, is that the corals that comprise the reef need light to survive and only grow in relatively shallow water. He could not, as it were, fathom the mysteries of how monuments were built down in the ocean.

Charles Darwin read Flinders' book and when he made his voyage he used the metaphor of Flinders about these monuments. Curiously, both of these great explorers read *Paradise Lost* on the reef.

There follows more sensational happenings: Eliza Fraser became notorious for her six weeks with indigenous people after being shipwrecked in 1836; Barbara Thompson's saga eight years later is much richer. She was a *marki naroka*, a ghost maiden rescued by a shipwreck by three young warriors whose chieftain saw, from her eyes and chin, that she was the reincarnation of his drowned daughter Giom.

She had eloped from Sydney after her family sailed there from Aberdeen. It was five years before she got away from the turtle-hunting clan by saying to four white sailors, "I am a white woman, why do you leave me?" By then, she was so tanned and blistered they had not noticed her. The clan, called the Kaurareg, was almost exterminated by mass killings undertaken by whites.

Today's plan to dump all that mud on the reef has an echo of the 1967 idea to dredge coral near Dunk Island. A canefields farmer reckoned the reef was dead and wanted to mine limestone for cheap fertiliser. Next would come drilling and blasting for oil and gas. So began a 14-year battle to save the reef led by, among others, poet Judith Wright.

Five years earlier Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*. Those who cared knew about what toxic chemicals could do to the reef. The conservationists came up against Joh Bjelke-Petersen, head of one of the most ruthless and effective populist governments in modern Australian history. He readily derided southerners and federal government interference, slugging off "commies intent on overthrowing the Australian way of life," the "lunatic fringe", "nitwits" and "ratbags". Bjelke-Petersen flew in an American mining expert who reported on promising oil and gas fields and how "non-living" bits of the reef could produce fertiliser and cement.

To Wright this was like using the Taj Mahal for gravel. She wrote
*For we are conquerors and self-poisoners
 more than scorpion or snake
 and dying of the venoms that we make
 even while you die of us.*

It took the wreck of the oil tanker *Torrey Canyon* in Britain to start to change thinking, which accelerated two years later, in 1969, when crude oil spewed from a rig off the coast of California, killing fish, coating seabirds and blackening beaches. The following year Prime Minister John Gorton helped the Commonwealth establish its sovereignty over the Reef and its waters. Then, in 1968, UNESCO gave it a World Heritage listing.

McCalman remains an optimist about the reef, while being aware of “the seemingly implacable forces of climate change”. He has another reef hero, Charlie Veron who, with his wife Mary is, astonishingly, building a database of the corals of the world, because they believe most coral species will soon be gone. These biologists are a combination of historians, artists, geographers, ecologists and more. Theirs is among some of the inspirational stories in this fine book.

Above the sometimes traumatised coral live traumatised people. For a nation whose dominant forebears sailed here to seize the land, there is no small irony that anyone who dares to approach now may be seized in international waters, locked in an airless hold of a ship for weeks, then shoved into a plastic sphere, and pointed towards the horizon.

Historians may view what Rosie Scott describes as the venom and cliché directed at refugees as akin to the public hangings, which settlers introduced, the ‘reds under the bed’ mania, the stamps on early furniture showing it was made by Europeans and the White Australian policy. A chapter may be reserved for the particularly odious Scott Morrison whose stewardship in the portfolio of Immigration has taken political behaviour to a new low. If patriotism is the refuge of the scoundrel, his hiding behind a charade of national security is the refuge of a charlatan.

The fraudulence of Morrison and his minions was laid bare when Fairfax newspapers recently disclosed how many illegal workers come here on phoney visas. Fairfax revealed endemic corruption in the Immigration Department. Warnings and whistle-blowing about this sordid mess went unheeded. Meanwhile, the persecution of the innocent proceeds.

As the Pulitzer Prize winner Geraldine Brooks writes, “Whoever devised the gulag system for asylum seekers understood very well that the Australian heart was too big to withstand the truth about the people who risked everything to come here. But if the truth is silenced, lies can fill the space. And that is what happened.”

As she says, the lies of the shock jocks and of elected leaders. The big lie about queue jumpers when there is no queue. Shouted loudly and often enough, they were believed by many.

Philosopher Raymond Gaita quotes Simone Weil:

“At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experiences of crimes committed, suffered and witnessed, that good and evil will not be done to him. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being.”

The cry from the depths of a human heart, “Why am I being hurt?” goes unheard by man. “For it is a silent cry which sounds only in the secret heart.”

When we hear our leaders talk of their admiration for their country, we may contemplate Gaita’s words that we must distinguish real love from the counterfeit...”real love of country from the kind of aggressive nationalism that we call jingoism and which pollutes everything that comes into contact with it”.

To him, real love can be identified by the desire to love truthfully and the desire to love without the shame that would be the only truthful response to the wrongs done on behalf of the nation by our leaders or, in time, of war by our soldiers.” As he says, severe criticism of one’s country can be a form of loyalty. The cruel and inhuman treatment of refugees makes novelist Alex Miller reconsider what it means to be an Australian.

Poet Judith Rodriguez seems to have little doubt in *There are no words for this*:

*Let the young man hang
 Let children lose their trust.
 Let them despair and run amok.
 And send them back*

*Let the woman lose hold of her child
 On the deep, among known bodies.
 Let oceans take as flotsam these lives.*

*1835: a captain- saved -
 leaves his shipful of women
 to drown off Boulogne, not one
 alive, taken off -*

*his orders being to land them
 in New South Wales. What’s changed?
 Let oceans take them, or slavers.
 Or years damn them*

*It’s simple: they’re different. Plus
 Illegals, they chose their fates:
 There are words for it - human waste.
 And the words for us?*

- Kevin Childs was formerly the editor of
Australian Rationalist

The United States of Empire and its lapdog

by Alan Sparx

Malcolm Fraser espouses excellent rational logical sense in his well-researched new book for Australians, *Dangerous Allies*. If you have an interest in Australian History you will thoroughly enjoy this book from *Colonial Foundations to Missed Opportunities*. You may even be surprised at Mr Fraser's gauge on President Bush Senior and his 'legal war'.

Malcolm Fraser is famous for having instigated the most notorious event in Australian political history: The Dismissal. At 25 he was the youngest Member of Parliament, winning his seat after an electoral redistribution. Mr Fraser's resignation in 1971 may have contributed to the Liberal Party defeat a year later. But he went on to reconcile that, first by taking leadership of the Liberal Party in March of 1975 and then regaining for the Party the helm of government in November of 1975 following the dismissal.

In 1983, after electoral defeat, Mr Fraser resigned from Liberal Party leadership and soon resigned from Australian politics. Significantly, following Tony Abbott's election to Liberal Party leadership in 2009, Mr Fraser resigned from the Liberal Party, stating "the party was no longer a liberal party but a conservative party."

From the mid-eighties Mr Fraser established an international profile assuming many positions involved with humanitarian issues, including work with numerous charitable organisations. In 2006, he was appointed Professorial Fellow at the Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law, and in October 2007 he presented his inaugural professorial lecture, "Finding Security in Terrorism's Shadow: The importance of the rule of law". In 2011, he became a member of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. He has received many honours internationally and at home including three honorary doctorates.

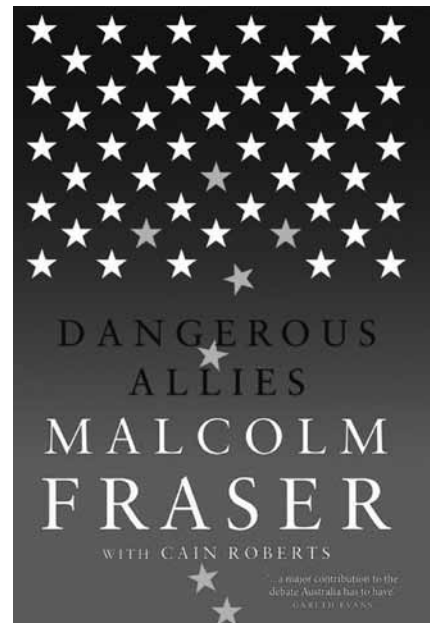
It is thus clear Mr Fraser has a strong interest in the welfare of human beings.

His recent book *Dangerous Allies* is a manifestation of his interest in the fate of Australian citizens. It is best read leaving local partisan opinions aside. All Australian political parties, he argues, ought to consider our precarious international position. We are in danger of being seen as lap dog of the US. Mr Fraser's voice in opposition to the Iraq war was amongst the significant in the worldwide opposition to that conflict. He was not aligned with the Liberal party, who appeared to take an 'All the way with GWB' approach that was strongly reminiscent of another of Australia's alliance follies; engagement in the Vietnam War.

Mr Fraser observes that America's involvement in Vietnam was an "unmitigated failure", and that the US was either "derelict

in their duty to inform us of the true situation" or "deceitful". He reminds us of America's preparedness to "murder" former political allies when it suited them.

"What faith can a nation have in an ally that believes it is within its right to remove the nation's head of state?" asks Fraser. Mark Beeson, professor of international politics at Murdoch University, responded in his review of the book for *The Conversation*: "It's a good question, and one that might have been addressed to Australia's own constitutional coup and the rumours that persisted about CIA involvement in Whitlam's downfall. Of this possibility, however, there is notably no mention." It should be noted that former CIA data handler Christopher Boyce of *The Falcon and the Snowman* fame was only released from prison in 2002, having completed twenty four years behind bars for daring to be a whistle blower about the CIA's probable conspiracy in The Dismissal. He was a former Edward Snowden.



The Vietnam fiasco had Australian people, for the first time, questioning our reliance on 'great and powerful friends' for national security and for direction on our foreign policy. We had not learned from our experience with the British Empire. Australia's pursuance of a policy of strategic dependence may be no longer the best policy to ensure our security and prosperity.

This is Melbourne University Press' (the publisher's) summation of Fraser's argument:

Dangerous Allies examines Australia's history of strategic dependence and questions the continuation of this position. Since

the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States has also changed dramatically, making it less relevant to Australia and a less appropriate ally on which Australia should rely.

Malcolm Fraser argues that Australia should adopt a much greater degree of independence in foreign policy, and that we should no longer merely follow other nations into wars of no direct interest to Australia or Australia's security. He argues for an end to strategic dependence and for the timely establishment of a truly independent Australia.

How is this case to be assessed? One of the concerns about Australia becoming more independent is that we would need to increase our military expenditure. But this does not necessarily need to be a bad thing. The future of defence can be seen in the US, where up to thirty thousand drones are expected to be deployed by 2020. We in Australia will no doubt have a large number of controlled drones for defence purposes to cover our enormous country. As Australian electronic engineers know, we have a well-established and respectable knowledge of remote controlled aircraft. There is no reason why our soon to be decommissioned car manufacturing plants could not be established as drone aircraft factories – other than it would upset our ally. We would need less of their obsolete jet fighters. Let our increased military expenditure go, for once, to creating more Australian jobs instead of American jobs. There is even the possibility of an export industry.

Mr Fraser is not recommending a complete break with our most powerful allies, as some mainstream reviewers misleadingly imply. *The Spectator* offered a less than fair, and certainly disingenuous, representation of Mr Fraser's position, with the front page offering a caricature of Mr Fraser as an old hobo / hippy with the requisite peace symbols.

But that is not what Fraser is arguing. He writes: "If America was prepared to wear ANZUS as ANZUS was written and born in 1951, which was a consultation if there were an attack on the armed forces or the territory of either country...in the Pacific theatre, if that's what ANZUS said and that's what ANZUS meant, then I'd be very happy to keep it. But America has persuaded us over the years to interpret ANZUS as meaning so much more than that: Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan have nothing whatever to do with ANZUS."

Some argue the book is a waste of time. Why? Beeson offers one reason, "While I am sympathetic to many of the arguments Fraser develops, I have no expectation that they will have the slightest impact in Canberra."

Perhaps Philosophy can offer some useful pointers.

The philosopher David Hume asked, "Why is it so easy for the few in power to govern the many?" Opinion, he concludes. Opinion the many hold about the legitimacy of those who rule, keeps the many from throwing off their rulers even when the rulers openly work against the interests of the many and instead work for a wealthy elite. So a minimal force is required by the rulers to keep the many in line.

To paraphrase the American writer Gore Vidal: 'What controls the opinion of the many?' The media, which is controlled by the elite who want to control the opinion of the many. It seems like something that Captain Yossarian might have said in Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*.

It is the perennial question posed by political philosopher Edmund Burke: 'who guards us from the guardians?' While Mr Fraser is doing his best to guard us from the guardians it seems few are listening. Perhaps public opinion is too well massaged by our elite controlled media.

Although the Internet offers a flood of choices for ways to become better informed, when you add a little fear, we are left with a docile population. Many feel they cannot choose and simply hand over the reins to their masters. It is perhaps why in recent times the quality of our leaders has been so poor. It is certainly to be hoped that some influential Australians will run with the message Mr Fraser offers us. It is time for Australia to grow up, leave adolescence and virtual unilateral agreements behind.

It is easy to understand Mr Fraser's disenchantment with the United States; he is far from alone. The contemptible behaviour of the U.S. since September 11 has earned it a truly odious reputation. One of those American critics is Paul Craig Roberts, economist and former United States Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy. Roberts published in March of 2014, his latest book *'How America was lost: from 9/11 to The Police Welfare State'*. It offers an enlightening collection of his essays on American issues not usually heard in mainstream media.

The insight and candor of Roberts is inspiring and was exemplified in a recent interview when he claimed that the Big Banks want to go into the Ukraine to loot it. The US military wants to put their bases in there. Roberts says that the neocons are still the power behind President Obama and that their aim is U.S. hegemony and world domination. Current U.S. Government policies are strongly reminiscent of Orwell's 1984 slogans, 'War is Peace', 'Freedom is Slavery' and 'Ignorance is Strength' – doublespeak that I am sure is well understood by Afghan, Iraq and U.S. Citizens (perhaps for Iraq and Afghanistan 'death is freedom' might be more appropriate).

Roberts says: "American media is the 'Ministry of Propaganda' and they wouldn't dare challenge anything the White House said." Then he adds something I am sure many have thought but not said: "There has been a massive coup d'état in the United States."

What kind of ally are we supporting? Most Australians would hate the description of themselves as a lapdog. Surely it is time we stood up to the opinion setting elites. Let's lose the label of lapdog once and for all and have *Dangerous Allies* not be a waste of time.

Dangerous Allies by Malcolm Fraser with Cain Roberts. Published by Melbourne University Press, 2014.

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- 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 Bertrand Russell Case

"If indeed the world in which we live has been produced in accordance with a Plan, we shall have to reckon Nero a saint in comparison with the author of that Plan. Fortunately, however, the evidence of Divine Purpose is non-existent; so at least one must infer from the fact that no evidence is adduced by those who believe it. We are, therefore, spared the necessity for that attitude of impotent hatred which every brave and humane man would otherwise be called upon to adopt towards the Almighty Tyrant."

Bertrand Russell (Earl Russell) is one of the most famous living Englishmen. He is noted as a philosopher and a mathematician. With Whitehead he wrote the "Principia Mathematica", a book which founded a new branch of mathematics. He has written many works on sociological problems and has been hailed by the former Dean of St. Paul's, Sir W.R. Inge, as one of the keenest intellects of our day.

He has also been admired for his great moral courage. This has been severely tested on a number of occasions. The most recent of these occasions has caused a great fluttering in the academic dove-cotes of the U.S.A.

Recently a Board of Higher Education of the City of New York appointed Russell Professor of Philosophy and Mathematics at City College, N.Y. He was to lecture in mathematics and logic and the appointment was to become effective in February, 1941.

The appointment was barely noticed in the public press until the New York Sun ran an editorial criticising the appointment and quoting passages from his writings on religion and morals.

This stirred Bishop William T. Manning (episcopal) who may well be termed an Archbishop of Reaction and he launched an attack denouncing Russell as the enemy of religion and morality.

The fight was on. Forces were railed to attack the appointment. Organisations on this side included the Knights of Columbus, the Columbiettes (female knights), Legion America, National Committee for Religious Recovery, American Youth League, Mothers' Societies, Daughters' Leagues, and the Greater New York Federation of Churches.

Such is the manifestation of religious bigotry and intolerance in this 20th century. Russell was not left to face the ravaging pack alone. Amongst the famous men who urged the Board not to yield were the following: Albert Einstein, Prof. John Dewey (world famous philosopher), professor Morris Cohen (philosopher), W.A. Nielson (formerly professor of English at Harvard University, now president of Smith College), R.M. Hutchins (President of University of Chicago), Professor J.W. Angel (economist of Columbia University), Professor Raymond Pearl (biologist), Professor Chas A. Beard (historian) and Professor A.N. Whitehead (philosopher).

Organisations also rallied to defend academic freedom from the attacks of clerical obscurantists. These include the American

Philosophical Association (200 professors), the American Civil Liberties Union, American Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Woman's City Club.

Newspapers entered the fray.

The editorial policy of the Evening Post favoured Russell. The Sun issued editorial after editorial opposing him.

At a special meeting of the Board of Higher Education the appointment was confirmed by a vote of 11 to 7. Russell had won the first round.

Immediately, Mrs. Jean Kay, of Brooklyn through her attorney, former magistrate Joseph Goldstein, filed a suit bringing the action of the Board before the Court of Review and annulment.

The case came before Justice McGeehan (name of ill omen).

It was alleged that the appointment was illegal and an abuse of the powers of the Board on three grounds.

1. Russell was not a citizen, nor had he declared his intention to become a citizen.
2. The appointment did not comply with an article of the Constitution of the State of New York with reference to appointments in civil service on the basis of merit and fitness.
3. The appointment was against public policy because of the teachings of Bertrand Russell and his immoral character.

Without traversing the legal arguments in connection with each of these connections, we may state that the petitioner succeeded. The Court (Justice McGeehan) held that the appointment was an insult to the people of the City of New York, that the acts of the Board of Higher Education of New York City in appointing Dr. Russell to the Department of Philosophy of the City College of the City of New York to be paid by public funds was in effect, establishing a chair of indecency and, in doing so had acted arbitrarily, capriciously, and in direct violation of the public health, safety and morals of the people. The appointment was revoked and Russell was discharged from his position.

It is too soon to say whether this is a heavy body blow or the knockout. We are informed a New York correspondent that there may be an appeal against Justice McGeehan's decision.

It seems that there has been a great outcry over this judgement as it represents a serious trend in American society at present. The forces of reaction are powerful and, in the modern world are playing on all sorts of emotional prejudices and narrow sectarian hatreds. Progressive thought faces a difficult period not only in America but here also. Red herrings are dragged across every trail. Misunderstandings and confusion, not all of which are innocent, prevail amongst the people.

Morality is not an absolute, handed down by divine fiat, but a matter of harmonious social relationships. It is this truth that rationalism has to treat contemporary society.

- The Rationalist, May 1940.

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~ Barbara Tuchman ~*



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