

Australian

Rationalist

Journal of the Rationalist Society of Australia

EXTRA SENSORY DECEPTION

How real is the supernatural?

You are your grandparents' genes

The real art of faking love

The carbon tax betrayal

Shedding light on the Enlightenment

In defence of conspiracy theorists

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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. In addition to being published in hard copy, the Australian Rationalist is also published online, and the RSA has formal publishing arrangements with RMIT University's online website Informit. Successful contributors will be asked to agree to certain 'groundrules' which protect both parties regarding copyright. Articles should be submitted in final draft form in a recent version of Microsoft Word. As we are responsible for the material published, we retain the right to edit or abridge submitted material prior to publication. The preferred length for feature articles is 1800 or 2700 words. Shorter articles may be 900 words. Please email the Editor (editor@rationalist.com.au) for details.

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Lone wolves, stray dogs and dog whistles

What is that high pitched sound I hear?

by Colin Benjamin

Mass media coverage of the killing of Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in the Canadian Parliament, the banning of the burqa in the Australian Parliament and blockades against travel from West Africa have a common element: they are instances of an irrational blowing of xenophobic whistles.

It is especially obvious with conservative shock jocks, who collectively rush to promote an irrational fear and hatred of strangers, or foreigners, or of anything that is strange and can be seen as a likely source of threat. It has even been suggested that Islamic leaders are failing their duty to 'Team Australia' by not managing the minds of their young people. The foreign fighters legislation has been rushed forward to ban journalists reporting on counter terrorist efforts. The penalty is ten years jail.

According to *The Australian*, dozens of would-be jihadists will have their passports cancelled after the federal cabinet's Security Commission (NSC) re-evaluated the risk of "lone wolf" attacks by alienated and frustrated young men trapped in Australia.

The minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison, is seeking to expand his ministerial powers, justifying these actions on the basis that Australians might go overseas to gain experience and then pose a much greater threat to security. Better to keep them locked up and frustrated at home. Some commentators suggested that Moslem youth should be encouraged to go and not come back.

Paraphrasing a *Time* article from New York in the week of the 9/11 attack in the US, our media has made an effort to argue that home grown terrorists were 'stray dogs' rather than 'lone wolves'.

It is interesting to note that the term 'lone wolf' was popularised in the late 1990s by white supremacists Tom Metzger and Alex Curtis as part of an encouragement to fellow racists to act alone for tactical security reasons when committing violent crimes.

In 2011 Brian Jenkins of the Rand Corp., one of the USA's leading terror experts issued a report warning against exaggerating the peril they pose:

"Radicalization and recruitment to terrorism, in person or on the Internet, does not appear to be a community phenomenon; rather, it is an individual decision. In fact, a majority of the 82 cases described in this paper involve the actions of a single individual attempting to join a jihadist front abroad or plotting to carry out a terrorist attack in the United States."

"Lone wolves" is a romanticizing term that suggests a cunning and deadly predator. Some display this kind of lethal determination, but others, although still dangerous, skulk about only contemplating violence while being verbally aggressive. "Stray dogs," not lone wolves, would more accurately describe their behaviour.

The phrase "lone wolf terrorism" is being associated with Islam, an effective form of dog whistle that helps mobilise support amongst conservative forces, who are seeking to incite fear of Moslems. The reality is that most cases around the world were not associated with Islamic extremism.

Researchers Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf cite some of the infamous examples in the United States, Israel and Europe including: Baruch Goldstein, an American-born Israeli citizen who was responsible for the death of 29 Muslims praying in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron; the Austrian Franz Fuchs who used letter bombs to kill four persons and injure 15 more; and US army major Nidal Malik Hassan who is accused of a mass shooting at Fort Hood where 13 people died and 30 others were wounded.

The American mathematician Theodore Kaczynski, known as the 'Unabomber', engaged in a mail-bombing spree that killed three persons and wounded 23 others. In addition, there have been several assassinations of political leaders committed by lone wolves. Think of Yigal Amir, the assassin of Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin, or Volkert van der Graaf who killed the Dutch politician Pim Fortuijn.

The cold-blooded murder of 77 people in Oslo and Utoya (Norway) on 22 July 2011 pushed the threat of lone wolf terrorism further up on the agenda of counter terrorism officials. The 1,518 page-long manifesto of Anders Breivik is a guide into the workings of lone operator terrorism. In one part of his manifesto, Breivik explains how to publish documents on the Internet and how to use social media for recruiting purposes. He shows the tricks he used to circumvent European custom agents and describes in detail how he manufactured the explosives he used to blow up the government building in Oslo. One of the questions raised in the aftermath of the horrible killings was Breivik's explicit call to follow his example: how could what he had done be used to discover new plots, possibly by individuals? Bakker and de Graaf concluded that it was probably of little use.

The claim is that citizens must give up their freedom to protest against what government agents do in order to be protected. As a consequence, the right to free association and a free press is being compromised. By using dog whistles to focus anxiety and fear, secrecy and national security are being treated as synonymous and accountability is disappearing.

References

1. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/preventing-lone-wolf/html>
2. <http://i-hls.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Lone-Wolf-Sarah-Teich-2013.pdf>

Worry? Me?

How rational is it to be concerned?

by Martin Hirst

I'm having a bit of a crisis. I'm not sure what I should be panicking about more: the threat from Ebola; being blown up in my sleep by a "death cult", or the hordes of black-clad anarchists who were supposed to threaten Brisbane during the meeting of the G20 group of rich nations and may yet strike (somewhere).

It seems at the moment that a tsunami of panic-inducing threats is rolling towards us. Most of us are not prone to panic attacks, but all of us lead our stress-filled lives just one little incident away from the panic threshold.

Doctors and scientists will tell you that a feeling of panic occurs when our normal "fight or flight" reaction to danger is over-stimulated, triggering in response to false alarms. We tend to panic when there is actually no real danger present. Of course, panicking in the face of a real and present danger is a sound psychological response to a true alarm and under such circumstances fighting back or running away might seem like a totally logical reaction to threats.

According to researchers, the "fight or flight" response to imminent danger (real or imagined) is based on three possible scenarios:

- some of us have a biological vulnerability to anxiety, which can lead to a nervous over-reaction to events in everyday life;
- some have a generalized psychological vulnerability, which the experts say can be a reaction to being over-parented and can lead us to think that the world is a dangerous place, best avoided;
- then, there's a more specific type of psychological vulnerability which leads to a learned fear of certain objects or situations that are, in fact, not dangerous at all.

It seems to be the case that, being human, all of us are probably subject to each of these vulnerabilities at some point in our lives, often in response to a persistent external stimulus. We can learn to overcome our anxieties and to lessen our fear of external events or situations that might lead us to panic. But what can we do when all the information coming into our cerebral cortex from the media points at panic being the only rational response to a world careening out of control?

You see, it is rational to think that beyond the chemical processes in our brains there are probably social causes to the psychological distress that can lead us to panic. And, to my mind, three of them relate to fear of epidemic (Ebola); fear of imminent attack ("death cults") and fear of social breakdown (the nightmare of anarchists running loose in a major city).

But how do we know that these are things we should fear? Well, if you read certain newspapers; listen to or watch enough broadcast

news, or get sucked into the vortex of unreliable rumours in social media channels, it seems like the reasons to panic are multiplying on a daily basis.

I have a friend in Brisbane who, during the build up to the G20 described it as the "City of Fear". He became so alarmed by life in the "City of Fear" that he asked me not to use his name: so I'll call him Melcure.

Melcure was watching closely as Brisbane went into "lockdown" ahead of the November G20 meeting of world leaders. He sent me daily email missives relating stories of low-flying helicopters and widening prohibitions on residents moving around the CBD as the police and armed forces practiced their counter-terrorism moves.

The real target of the police action appeared not to be "death cult" terrorists, but a shadowy international anarchist group known as "Black Bloc". Luckily, the ever-vigilant news media was all over this story. The danger was talked up to such an extent that it seemed as if every anarchist on the planet was going to descend on Brisbane.

G20 Brisbane: What is Black Bloc? - Brisbane Times

www.brisbanetimes.com.au » Queensland » Brisbane G20
5 days ago - The **Black Bloc** isn't a structured group with key objectives. Instead, it has morphed into a style of protest has been adopted around the world at ...

G20 Brisbane: first two protesters banned - Brisbane Times

www.brisbanetimes.com.au » Queensland
4 days ago - Protesters linked to the **Black Bloc** movement targeted the G20 summit in Toronto in 2010. The first two protesters banned from **Brisbane's G20** ...

Black Bloc anarchists likely to target Brisbane's G20 - The ...

www.qt.com.au/news/black-bloc-anarchists...brisbanes-g20/2433818/ *
5 days ago - The high-profile **Black Bloc** anarchist protest group is likely to be in **Brisbane** for November's G20 Leaders' Summit, a researcher believes.

Black Rose shapes as blooming problem for Brisbane G20

www.canberratimes.com.au » Comment *
Jan 20, 2014 - In 2010, the G20 summit was held in Toronto, Canada. The protests were mainly peaceful but some protesters used **Black Bloc** tactics to cause ...

G20 anarchists vow chaos and mayhem for Brisbane's streets

www.couriermail.com.au/.../g20...brisbanes.../story-rihshf2-122677826... *
Dec 9, 2013 - Police sources have told The Courier-Mail officers are also preparing for protesters to use "**Black Bloc**" tactics, an identity-concealing strategy ...

Black Bloc tactics aim for Brisbane G20 shock and awe | The ...

www.couriermail.com.au/.../black-bloc...brisbane-g20.../story-rihshf2-1... *
Dec 9, 2013 - Wearing black clothes, masks and bandannas, **Black Bloc** protesters rioted at Toronto's G20 in 2010, trashing the city, smashing shopfronts and ...

Think about it for a minute. What single prominent feature might define the world's most dedicated anarchists? In my mind it's the fact that they probably haven't got a lot of money. Travelling to Australia from Europe or North America, just to throw rocks at dignitaries would seem to be low on their list of priorities. And consider this; anarchists are notoriously lackadaisical about organizing. The idea that they might have coordinated themselves to land in Brisbane in large enough numbers to be effective against 20,000 trained and armed riot police is laughable.

I have been on the political left for 40 years and to my knowledge the number of identifiable anarchists in Australia is

measured in the low hundreds, not the tens of thousands. My rational mind told me not to panic about anarchist hordes burning down Brisbane.

If the anarchists weren't a threat then perhaps the "death cult" terrorists of D'aesh (ISIS) might have targeted Brisbane. Should we have been worried about a secret operation by an Ebola-infected "death cult" adherent to infiltrate the G20 to spread even more panic and destruction? I wasn't sure until I heard and saw the news that PUP senator Jacqui Lambie was worried about just such an eventuality.

Senator Jacqui Lambie links Ebola to terrorism | The Courier ...

www.couriermail.com.au/.../lambie.../ebola.../terrorism/story-fnhfz2-12270...
Oct 23, 2014 - National Report said this week ISIS terrorists were purposely infecting themselves with the Ebola virus to become "suicide bombers" when they ...

Ebola May Be Coming to Australia, But Not in a Terrorist's ...

mashable.com/2014/10/22/ebola-jacqui-lambie-australia/ *
Oct 22, 2014 - Lambie: If Ebola comes to our shores it will be "claustrophobic" ... her ...
Terrorist 1: Dude dude dude I have a brilliant idea for doing terrorism.

Jacqui Lambie asks 'are we at risk from Ebola-infected ...

www.dailymail.co.uk/.../ebola-infected-suicide-bombers-moment-controversy...
Oct 21, 2014 - Palmer United Party Senator Jacqui Lambie has quizzed defence force top brass over the threat Ebola-infected suicide terrorists could pose to ...

Jacqui Lambie Is Very Worried About All Those Ebola ...

junkies.com/jacqui-lambie-is-very-worried-about-ebola.../43637 *
Oct 22, 2014 - It must be terrifying being Jacqui Lambie. Not only is she utterly convinced that Sharia law = terrorism, she's got it into her head that ISIS are ...

Ebola terrorism high on Jacqui Lambie's list of fears

www.bullshit-blog.com/jacqui-lambies-greatest-fear-ebola-infected-suicide... *
Oct 22, 2014 - PUP senator Jacqui Lambie has conjured up the new terror threat that Australians should be worried about - Ebola-infected suicide bombers.

Lambie wants scans to stop Ebola attack - Sky News Australia

www.skynews.com.au/.../lambie-wants-scans-to-stop-ebola-attack.html *
Oct 22, 2014 - Senator Lambie questioned defence force officials on Wednesday about whether there was a threat of terrorists infected with Ebola travelling to ...

This suggestion cleverly combines two panic-inducing thoughts: epidemic and terrorism. Surely, here was something that we could have sensibly worried about. You know it makes sense: Ebola is out there and it's killing people. So, too, are the "death cult" lunatics in northern Iraq and in the eastern parts of Syria. Surely they've got the resources to fly one Ebola-infected suicide bomber into Australia – specifically Brisbane during the G20 gabfest – so as to cause mass casualties and mayhem.

Yeah, I know, your rational mind says this is a bit far-fetched and Jacqui Lambie is not the sharpest chisel in the toolbox. So, perhaps we can put this one aside. However, that doesn't mean we can relax when it comes to Ebola.

The deadly virus may not get to Australia incubating inside a "death cult" terrorist, but it could still be on its way. So that's why I'm grateful that my government has once again demonstrated its commitment to Fortress Australia and locked the arrivals gate to people from Ebola-affected parts of Africa.

It is the logical humanitarian response; after all we are more important and our lives more precious than theirs.



Australia shuts borders to Ebola-affected countries

Sydney Morning Herald - Oct 27, 2014

Australia has temporarily closed its borders to people from Ebola-affected west African nations as it steps up the nation's defences against the virus. Immigration Minister Scott Morrison told parliament on Monday Australia had suspended its immigration ...

Teen triggers Ebola alert

The Australian - Oct 26, 2014

"Although what is going on in West Africa is certainly a tragic circumstance, we have to remember that here in Australia the risk of getting the Ebola virus is extraordinarily low," she said, reiterating that the virus could be spread only by direct contact with an ...

West African woman tests negative for Ebola in Australian hospital

Reuters - Oct 26, 2014

Australia has introduced mandatory home quarantine for travelers arriving from the West African countries most affected by the Ebola outbreak. Several people have been tested, but no cases of the deadly disease have been found. "The results are negative," ...



Australia: No immigration from Ebola nations

Aljazeera.com - Oct 27, 2014

Australia has suspended migration from Ebola-hit West African nations to try to prevent the virus from crossing its borders, as a teenager who arrived from Guinea tested negative for the disease. Immigration minister, Scott Morrison, told parliament on Monday ...



Aust closes door on Ebola-affected nations

NEWS.com.au - Oct 26, 2014

AUSTRALIA has temporarily closed the door to people seeking humanitarian entry from Ebola-affected west African countries. IMMIGRATION Minister Scott Morrison's department is no longer processing any applications from the affected countries, which ...

Never mind that this could be construed as racist. Never mind that the world's leading epidemiologists have condemned Australia's poor response to the Ebola crisis and never mind that brave individual Australian medical workers have volunteered to help contain the outbreak at source as recommended by the World Health Organisation. WHO are they to tell us how and why and over what we should panic?

Really, the global busybodies should leave our government and our media alone. After all, it is they who know best what is in our national interest and therefore it is they who should direct our nervous energy into the right sorts of panic. Theirs is the appropriate form of hysteria-inducing "moral panic"; the fear of the irrational that can be stirred by rousing speeches, three word slogans and a news media hungry for sensationalist headlines. A good moral panic does wonders for an unpopular leader's approval rating and it leads to improved ratings for the news media too. That is why we see such sterling collaboration between politicians and journalists and why we see such wonderful leadership on issues like fighting "death cults", stopping anarchist hordes, tackling a deadly virus and ending world poverty (the last one's especially humorous).

The clear message is that there's no need to panic, unless the government and the media tell you to. It is the only rational explanation for this headline on the 'newspaper of the year', *The Courier-Mail*. On Monday October 27. The Brisbane tabloid carried a fantastic, calming front-page story about the Ebola crisis. The message comes across loud and clear.



This is a clever front-page. Just look at that horrible virus, it's the size of a large double-headed tapeworm and it's heading our way. The take-out from this is that we need to learn to panic only in response to the right stimulus, such as scary and misleading front-page stories about epidemics, "death cults" and anarchist hordes.

So far these panic-inducing problems have only affected Brisbane. No need for me, living in Melbourne, to panic; But for the sake of Melcure in what was for a time the "City of Fear" – he's made more anxious by what he reads in the always restrained and accurate *Courier-Mail* -- I'll just keep calm and pass him the worry beads.

From the president

Occasionally I am asked to speak on behalf of the Rationalist Society (and sometimes on behalf of freethinkers; always a problem, given the diversity) at meetings of religionists.

The most recent of these occasions was a three day conference of the Australian Association for Religious Education (AARE). The AARE mostly comprises teachers of religious studies at independent or Catholic schools, and, as with the interfaith movement, members of the AARE tend to be progressive rather than conservative.

On the last day, I was part of a Panel that discussed issues of interest to the audience. One question was directed to me: "Do you agree with Alain de Botton that atheists need to get involved in social work more, do good works, and demonstrate their altruistic credentials?"

My answer went along these lines: "No, I don't agree. Atheists and other freethinkers are very much involved in good works. They participate in community organisations, they contribute time, money and effort, they volunteer in all sorts of ways. It's just that they don't identify as atheist." And I went on: "I don't mean to be offensive, but for most freethinkers, religion is simply irrelevant. We contribute because it's a good thing to do, without having to identify with some tribal loyalty."

Another question, posed by the Moderator, brought up the issue of the National Schools Chaplaincy Program (NSCP). To my surprise, all on the Panel (the Chair of ACCESS Ministries, a representative of Scripture Union, a Senior Rabbi and a director of Islamic SRI) agreed with me that the Federal Government's policy of restricting funding under this Program only to the religiously-affiliated was bad policy, discriminatory and unfair. Buoyed by such expressions of support, I took the opportunity to ask the panellists if they would co-sign a letter, urging the Victorian Minister for Education not to accept the NSCP funding unless it were made available to non-religious persons as well. They all agreed.

The next day I drafted up and circulated the letter:

"Dear Minister,

Re: National School Chaplaincy Program Funding

[intro about the conference...]

The theme of the conference was particularly well exemplified by our closing session that comprised a panel of five senior representatives of faith and freethought organisations. While articulating differing views on some issues, most notably SRI, all on the panel were agreed on the issue of National Schools Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) funding.

As a result of this agreement, the undersigned to this letter are writing to ask you, on behalf of the Victorian Government, to refuse the funding from the Federal Government for the National Schools Chaplaincy Program unless non-religious welfare workers may also be funded.

It is also fair to say the mood of the AARE conference attendees was strongly supportive of the stance of our five panellists.

We all believe the interests of children and schools should take priority in these matters.

The Federal Government's policy of restricting funding under the NSCP to religiously affiliated people does nothing to promote the cause of social cohesion; rather, it undermines what we are all seeking to achieve – a society that values and respects people of all faiths and of no faith.

We seek an urgent audience with you to discuss this important matter."

In response to my emailed draft, the Moderator encouraged: "...I personally would be happy to sign the letter ... I echo your request for a quick response ... The longer the process takes moves us away from the collective mood expressed yesterday."

However a few days later, following Panel members' consultations with their respective organisations, the Moderator sent me this:

"Thank you for sending through the draft letter on Thursday morning as a follow up to the Panel discussion around matters of faith, religious education and caring for young people in our schools, as part of the overall conference concerned with the connectedness and identity of young people in an age of religious flux.

As anticipated, Panel members have conferred with the organisations they represent, and the general consensus is that the content of the letter does not represent the intention of the conference, but is rather tangential to it, being of a political nature.

Respecting this viewpoint, we have decided that it is not appropriate to produce such a letter as an outcome from this panel."

I rang the Moderator and had a lengthy discussion with him about this turn-around. I told him that he and the other panellists were faced with a choice: loyalty to their organisation, or standing up for what they personally knew to be the right thing. I wrote:

"I am, obviously, disappointed we could not find a way to express what I believe was a shared feeling among the Panel members -- that the Federal Government's policy of restricting Chaplaincy Program funding to the religiously-affiliated only is unwelcome in Victoria and should be changed.

It was my strong sense that Panel members were speaking from the heart and on principle, recognising a discriminatory policy that only serves to undermine cohesion and promote divisiveness.

It seems, however, that organisational self-interest has overcome these principled views.

That's a shame. I do hope the good will evident among the Panel and the conference participants in general can in the future work towards genuine democratic pluralism rather than self-serving political expediency."

There are good people among religionists. But they have to learn to stand up for Justice.

– by Meredith Doig

Politics as plunder

Dear Editor,

From time to time one comes upon a piece of writing so obviously hocus pocus bogus that the contents reveal much more about the author(s)' covert motivation and desired effect of the argument than the overt message contained therein. So it is with "The borders of asymmetrical rationality" by Colin Benjamin, *Australian Rationalist*, Spring 2014.

This is a plug for a book which itself is, on the evidence presented, an ill-disguised attempt to invite citizens of the Western democracies to quietly roll over and accept the neo-feudal rule now being implemented everywhere in the West by national cabals working at the behest of the globalising corporate transnationals.

Apparently, there is a limit to asymmetrical rationality, or rather, some arbiters of rationality have determined that asymmetrical rationality is not valid beyond a limit as determined by aforementioned arbiters. We are to understand that the corollary, other arbiters determining that there are clear boundaries, beyond which the writ of this particular arbitrary determinism in favour of symmetrical rationality will not be acceptable to a substantial minority, or perhaps a majority, of the world's citizens, is not allowed into the equation.

Colin Benjamin writes that in the book by Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, it is argued that there is an emerging interplay between strategic imperatives and constitutional innovation. Well, there always was. By strategic imperatives in this context we take it, the author refers to the plans made by a particular combination of interests bent on changing existing written laws to suit the purposes of said interests and create conditions amenable to new national and international arrangements, which will serve the purposes of the aforementioned interests.

Constitutional innovation is here a euphemism for stitching up citizens of sovereign nation-states in red tape, laws, regulations and schemes of arrangement made by, or on behalf of, elected representatives whose duty it is to act in the best interest of these citizens, but who in this era covertly do the bidding of the globalising transnational corporates.

What is new here concerns the extent of the control of both government and the bureaucracies, as well as the mainstream media, by these corporate interests and the huge resources these corporate interests are able to bring to bear upon the entire gamut of published information, analysis and comment without necessarily being identified as the source, initiators and/or sponsors.

It is generally recognized that all is fair in love and war. Politics is war of sorts, or war in fact. The facts of life decree that trade, commerce, finance and politics are not so much interrelated but intertwined, bound up and mixed together to the extent that arbitrarily determined boundaries are often short-lived, and more often instituted or kept in the public eye in order to mislead the

public. The propaganda war in the media is part and parcel of the strategies employed by those who are in the business of politics and economic and financial endeavours.

Asymmetrical rationality is therefore rather a description of something aligned to asymmetrical defence by citizens against the ways and means employed by powerful entities that are legally established and/or groups conniving and scheming under the legal radar. The term asymmetrical warfare is often used to describe the kind of warfare employed by the Davids in the business of survival, as opposed to the Goliaths who command the resources available to the authorities nominally in charge of the running of nation-states. Asymmetrical rationality could thus properly be seen as a non-violent component of asymmetrical warfare.

This is not to dismiss the seemingly intractable problems mentioned by Colin Benjamin, which appear to be amenable to solution only by unilaterally overriding the interests citizens have in the maintenance of sovereignty and law and order within the unit of the nation-state as such. Nor is it to dismiss the notion that international problems -- by which we mean problems in other nation-states and other nations occupying territory which are indeterminate to a degree or the borders of which are in dispute or the geographical area of which may be subject to multiple claims -- ought to be ignored or disowned by units of nation-states which have been more successful in their organisation and management of conflict (whether within or without).

It is merely a defence of the rights of citizens of functioning nation-states to not be browbeaten into schemes of arrangement foisted upon them by interests that can be equated with international privateers who have managed to wheedle a licence to operate from political representatives of nation-states, notably in the western democracies, but whose business it is to prey upon these, and other, nation-states whose legal protection they have, even as they are bent on the destruction of nation-states in the process of grabbing more and more power and profit, hoping to establish international bodies as authorities to usurp the legitimacy of national authority whose sovereignty is based in the citizenry of the nations in question and which cannot be transferred to international bodies of some authority. Not even when citizens of nation-states, thus constituted, would agree. For the simple reason that sovereignty is of a people constituted as a nation within a state geographically defined. To offer the argument that international or federated bodies could be based on sovereignty is facile. There is no way possible for sovereignty to exist in such entities because they constitute a diverse mix of peoples and nations, which are not bonded in a national unit.

Hence, any federated or international body which is able, by hook or by crook, to usurp the sovereignty of peoples, nations and nation-states does so by force, without legitimacy. They act on the basis of the right of might, which is always and ever under challenge from the inexorable drive in humanity at large to free

itself from tyranny.

The column by Colin Benjamin and the book by Philip Bobbitt, on the evidence provided, are pathetically and disingenuously crafted propaganda in support of international robbers, bandits and pirates organised as legal businesses which have coagulated

and combined to suck the lifeblood out of nation-states at the expense of the marginalized, and who serve increasingly as human offerings on the altar of transnational corporate hegemonics serving this new breed of international feudal lords.

– *Jacob Jonker*

Beware of creeds

Dear Editor,

There are events in human history which cry shame on our boasts about civilization, and which challenge humans' imagined elevation above nature's ferocity, red in tooth and claw.

Pathos, shame and grief, along with foreboding, haunt our distress over the unspeakable genocidal holocaust of Jewish people (and Gypsies, homosexuals, the genetically disadvantaged and others) during the rampage of racist (and allegedly eugenic) inhumanity fostered by the National Socialist Party of Germany in the early twentieth century.

We experience pathos and grief because those who died were tortured, disfigured, gassed and otherwise murdered because of aberrant Nazi ideological commitment to baseless racist beliefs which paid neither heed nor interest in the humanity, worth or concerns of its victims. There was a triumphalist faith in the virtue of the "Aryan race" and its imagined destiny and a contempt for "lesser breeds". Nothing was recognised as virtue unless it was approved by such a creed as proclaimed in *Mein Kampf*. This propelled inhuman cruelty, morbid prejudices and even less worthy political, economic and greedy concerns. Triumphalist creeds are a bother.

The revulsion often expressed for the unspeakable horror that was the Holocaust is deep. It opens also a dark foreboding: a yawning pit of dread that we humans are capable of such depravity and cruelty. Not only those who starved and lashed the defenceless, or who wielded the fatal weapons and released the toxins, but also those everyday upright citizens who have been written about as "Hitler's Willing Executioners."

There is, though, a deep irony dancing in the shadows of these crimes.

The people who were subjected to this hatred, becoming the most numerous and obvious objects of its annihilation were Hebrews, the Jews, whose religious faith continues to be vested in a God sometimes called Yahweh, whose commands are set out in what Christians call The Old Testament. The Torah (the Pentateuch, the first five Books of the Old Testament sometimes referred to as Books of Moses) details much of what is believed about this God, and recounts that Yahweh promised a homeland to his Chosen People, the Hebrews.

The irony lies in this: the people so wickedly attacked and slaughtered in the name of a triumphalist Aryan racism had at the first (if the Torah is to be believed) themselves claimed their promised land in a series of genocidal attacks on the land's original inhabitants — at the express command of their God!

We need not assume that the Torah recounts actual history. Indeed there are good reasons to see much of it as mythological, to believe that Moses had nothing to do with its authorship, and to believe that while it may contain earlier fragments its assembly and format are attributable to events that occurred centuries later than it purports to represent. Nothing here, therefore, is intended to be read as anti-Semitic, or as an exculpation of the Holocaust's willing executioners. No attempt is conceivable which could condone Nazi genocide as if the perpetrators of those crimes were (as it were) the Nemesis of history. The point is that the beliefs that sustain the territorial claims of modern Israel are based on an appeal to these ancient writings as authoritative.

This is the irony.

We feel collective shame that our recent history has seen an ethnic group persecuted and subjected to an attempt to annihilate them. We empathise with Jewish grief and outrage over the Holocaust and feel horror that the nation that nurtured Goethe, Mozart, Beethoven and so much that is treasured in European culture, could produce such savagery as well. But the rationale for a Jewish State of Israel is to be found deep in a religious narrative which has at its centre a belief that the Creator of the World chose the Hebrew people as favoured tribe and endowed them with lands whose earlier inhabitants were to be not only displaced, but annihilated.

"But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded." (Deuteronomy 20: 16,17; See also: Numbers 31, and also I Samuel 15:1-3 - v.3)

I am eager to avoid misunderstanding. I affirm that it is no surprise that an ancient people should hold beliefs such as these, or that they lived in times of frequent and gory inter-tribal warfare. I believe that such Old Testament passages are merely

fallible human attempts to understand Hebrew history (or their embellished account of it) as if caused by their God's actions. What else could these ancient writings be? I do not doubt that the very notion of a God is an attempt to understand life, the universe and everything through fallible human speculation. It is the nature of the whole Bible to be just such a speculative attempt, and that the notion that it is a Divine self-revelation is public relations "spin" in support of religious propagation. The holders of any particular creed have no difficulty in seeing that this is so of rival religious holy books!

I have no interest in notions of balancing biblical accounts of ancient Hebrew history against Nazi inhumanity, no sympathy for tit-for-tat trivialisation of recent history. What concerns me is that belief systems, not only Nazi or religious, but all ideological or political creeds, can blind their adherents to simple humanity. Earnest believers can lose sight of other humans' vulnerability, pain or death in their focussed lust for conquest or control, or simply to enforce belief that they know best! Or through a need to silence difference.

Article 95 of the Treaty of Sèvres was significant in establishing the modern State of Israel after World War I.

The High Contracting Parties agree to entrust, by application of the provisions of Article 22, the administration of Palestine, within such boundaries as may be determined by the Principal Allied Powers, to a Mandatory to be selected by the said Powers. The Mandatory will be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2, 1917, by the British Government, and adopted by the other Allied Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, *it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non Jewish communities in Palestine*, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country. (My emphasis in light of later developments.)

Yet twentieth century history seems not to have softened Israeli attitudes to foes. This observation is merely to indicate that having suffered racial/religious/political repression does not insure against repressive attitudes, that victimhood does not prevent the emergence of attitudes similar to those of the victim's assailant.

Nor should we fancy that such issues are the preserve of particular ideologies. For instance, an Islamist desire for a widespread authoritative Caliphate has driven extreme terrorist activity. Sunni and Shiite sects of Islam make murderous attacks on each other. Apostates are apt to be murdered. Creed-driven ferocity is fearsome. Hindu and Moslem attacks on each other are fierce. Cambodia still bears the scars of a political ideology's implacable inhumanity. As does Russia. Not to mention the Balkans.

Not to be forgotten are Christian forays into persecution and

the execution of apostates, heretics and infidels, of witches, or the recent murders of abortionists by those claiming to be adamant believers in the sanctity of life. Centuries-long strife, often bloody in Northern Ireland, reprises the wars and mutual hostilities following the Reformation. Again, creed-driven ferocity is fearsome.

Despite confident, yet incredible, claims to have had a veil lifted, and supernatural truth smuggled into human awareness by miraculous divine intervention and inexplicable legerdemain, creeds of all kinds are fallible human constructs. Inevitably, any creed is framed in terms of the previous beliefs, concepts and value of those who propose the particular words to be made orthodox. Examination of classic creeds show evidence of being framed in the light of then-contemporary debates and disputes, and that they reflect the hostilities, rivalries and ambitions of the persons responsible for framing the creed, namely those who have achieved positions of authority and influence in the political group, or religious sect, wishing to delimit beliefs appropriate to followers or disciples.

Anyone able to contemplate killing of individuals, sects or ethnic groups because of creedal beliefs is failing as a human being. Even brute beasts do not kill because others fail to share an opinion. The whole project of human civilization depends on the development of capacities to ensure individual safety, freedom and opportunity. To flourish without detrimental consequences for the society within which that individual lives and to ensure the flourishing of that society, and its diverse groups and interests.

Any particular group, political, religious or other, is failing if it imagines that has the right to control or eliminate others merely because of difference. Nor should they imagine that Divine Providence will make all good in time.

- Ralph Robinson

The Swine Chronicles



Was Lamarck on the mark?

We don't just inherit our parents' genes, we inherit what happened to previous generations.

by Alan Sparx

There is a quiet revolution in biology that has been going on for almost ten years. It is the biggest change in our understanding of inheritance since Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species*. It represents a complete overturning of some fundamental ideas in biology that have, to some, become almost sacred. The change will affect us all, and in a more personal way than the paradigm shift brought about by *On the Origin of Species*. As Mark F Mehler of Albert Einstein College of Medicine comments, it will: "forever transform the way we understand genetics, environment, the way the two interact and what causes disease. It is another level of biology which for the first time really is up to the task to be able to explain the biological complexity of life."

Heard of by few, understood by fewer, the full implications of this relatively new field of biology, epigenetics, will take decades to unfold. For some, these new findings seem like anti-Darwinian heresy.

in its life-time will not affect the inheritance of its progeny. But it turns out that your genes are not your destiny. Genes do not control. Genes are a blueprint only. A building doesn't materialise just because its blueprint exists. It may never be built, or it may be that only a portion of it is built, and possibly only for a short time. Anyone who still believes they have cancer because they carry the gene for cancer is living in a paradigm of science past. Holding the belief that we are controlled by our genes is not merely wrong, it is unhealthy. Many wrongly perceive themselves victims of their genes. This has crept into rationalisation of social behaviour also; for example the idea that homosexuality is attributable to genes. There may be genes that may predispose an organism to homosexuality, but the environment and the epigenetic inheritance will both have the control over the expression of the predisposition.

There may be a rewriting of history. A nineteenth century

"It is clear that Darwin was not a dogmatist like many of his twentieth century proponents."

Theories in science are always modified and updated by new findings. Those interested, but not involved directly in a particular branch of science, are often left behind if the media does not find the ongoing research 'sexy'. It is likely that these new findings in the science of genetics are sufficiently controversial to get an adequate airing in the media. But the question is, 'Will the full implications be understood?' They will necessitate a major rewrite of biology texts worldwide. There will need to be a total revision of thought on the matter of heredity or genetics, as it has been called since genes were first identified.

What the emerging science of transgenerational epigenetic inheritance is revealing is that the lives lived by our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents can directly affect our wellbeing. What we eat, what we drink, whether we smoke, all can have an effect on the genetics and the lives of our children, their children and possibly even their children! The impact that the environment has on an individual organism, has been found to be multi-generational. This necessitates an astonishing revision of the twentieth century Darwinian model of inheritance and evolution. All parents, and prospective parents, will look at their lives and their bodies differently and understand that they have a newly discovered responsibility.

What is being rethought is the idea that an organism is simply the result of the code that it inherited at conception: it's genetic code. Darwinists have assumed that what happens to the organism

contemporary of Darwin may have come back to haunt those who have created an ideology, sometimes a religion, out of Darwin's beautiful science. Jean Baptiste Lamarck was a French naturalist who lived from 1744 to 1829. He, not Darwin, believed that environmental factors affecting the parent could affect the physical inheritance of the offspring. By the mid-twentieth century Lamarck's theory, which was viewed as conflicting with Darwin's, was widely condemned. He was depicted as a purveyor of nonsense advancing a discredited counter position to Darwin. Such scorn of Lamarck has lasted for over fifty years. Now, however, it seems that Lamarck and his many apologists may have the last laugh as noted in Joseph Springer and Dennis Holley's book *An Introduction to Zoology* (2012). It seems we owe a much greater debt to a man who has been almost ignored for a century. One wonders if French – English rivalry had anything to do with this.

Few know of Lamarck's tremendous contribution to biology. To paraphrase Isaac Newton, he was one on whose shoulders Darwin stood to see further. Lamarck's contribution to evolutionary theory consisted of the first truly cohesive theory of evolution.¹ It has also been forgotten that when Darwin wrote *On the Origin of Species* he did not offer any underlying mechanism for heredity. He had second thoughts on the strength of his own theory and in a later edition of the *Origin*, leaned strongly towards a Lamarckian view. This is not recognised by Lamarck's detractors and was ignored for most of the twentieth century. Darwin said, "...I have

steadily endeavoured ... to give up any hypothesis, however much beloved ... as soon as facts are shown to be opposed to it." It is clear that Darwin was not a dogmatist, unlike many of his twentieth century proponents.

maladies to be able to at least inform people of the probability that their offspring would have the same malady.

Now, because of the insights from epigenetics, it is clear that it is not going to be so simple. The characteristics expressed in an

*"the lives lived by our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents
can directly affect our wellbeing"*

It is likewise worth noting that many other biologists considered natural selection to have been a wrong guess on Charles Darwin's part. The "eclipse of Darwinism" was a phrase used by Julian Huxley to describe the state of affairs prior to the modern evolutionary synthesis when evolution was widely accepted in scientific circles. Relatively few biologists believed that natural selection was its primary mechanism.²

The next big step in our understanding of heredity came from an Augustinian Monk Gregor Mendel 1822 – 1884, known as the father of Genetics. He published his work in 1866, demonstrating the actions of invisible "factors"—now called genes—in providing for visible traits in organisms in predictable ways. Mendel meticulously studied pea types and gave us our first insight into a possible mechanism for inheritance. Using Mendel's methodology we can easily determine the probability of a child having inherited a characteristic like eye colour.

The profound significance of Mendel's work was not recognised until the turn of the 20th century (more than three decades later) with the independent rediscovery by four biologists of what we now call laws of inheritance. Once again profound work lay on the shelves unknown to the world. (One can't help but wonder how much valuable unrecognised research is even now sitting on shelves yet to be discovered. Interestingly, it appears this can happen in thoroughly trawled areas.)

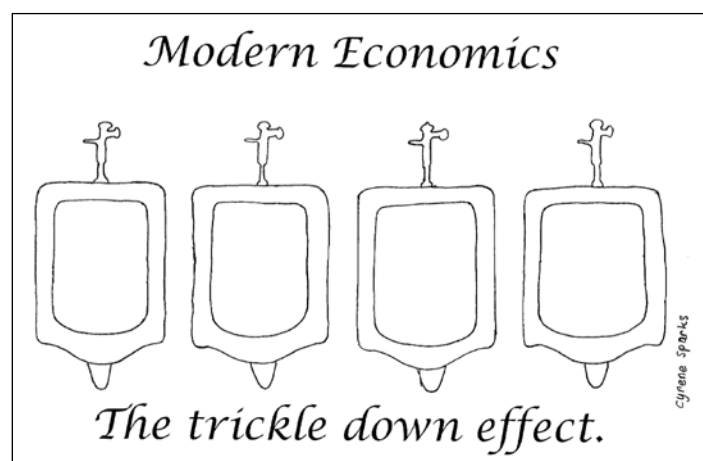
In 1848, when both Mendel and Darwin were still alive, biologists observed that cell nuclei resolve themselves into small rod-like bodies during the cell reproduction process called mitosis. Later, these structures were found to absorb certain dyes and so came to be called chromosomes (coloured bodies). It was not until the early twentieth century that biologists, using light microscopes, clarified the behaviour of chromosomes during the process of mitosis. The conclusion was drawn that chromosomes are the carriers of genes. A significant leap in the understanding of inheritance came when Watson and Crick revealed the molecular structure of DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid, the molecule which carries the genetic blueprint in chromosomes. This led to the explosive growth of molecular biology and genetics.

It soon became possible to identify a large number of mutations in genes associated with inherited diseases in humans. It was thought that once the human genome was mapped it would only be necessary to identify all the genes associated with various human

individual do not rely on genes alone. This has been revealed from studies of identical twins. If one twin had cancer and the other did not, it was presumed that there must have been some significant environmental difference that each twin was exposed to. Now, we know that it may not have been the twin that was exposed, but possibly because a parent or grandparent was exposed to some environmental factor that predisposed the twin to cancer. The complexity comes about because all humans carry a large number of genes which are never expressed in the adult. For example, during the development of the human embryo pharyngeal pouches or slits exist. They are colloquially referred to as gill slits and they disappear by the time the child is born. But the genes for the slits must still be part of our genome. So what we see in the adult human is a result of the genes that have been expressed (turned on).

The next big leap was the completion of the Human Genome Project which held the promise of discovering the source of all our genetic diseases. It seems now that this idea was a little optimistic and that understanding human disease is much more complicated than anticipated.

The most controversial of leaps forward, because it requires a full rethink of inheritance is transgenerational epigenetic inheritance. The scope of the new branch of epigenetics is enormous. It will affect many areas of biology and even alter the way we treat cancer. It will have an effect on psychology research. Twins play a large part in the study of behaviour genetics. Our understanding now is that epigenetics can play a significant role in the differences between monozygous twins, (identical twins) which till now have been viewed as mainly environmental influences rather than genetic.



It will have a significant effect on how we see ourselves in our environment. Heredity and environment have long been referred to as nature / nurture. This demarcation is no longer clear cut. It becomes blurry when we consider the nature / nurture of multiple generations at once. An environmental exposure that your grandmother had could cause a disease in you, even though you've never been exposed to the toxin, and you are going to pass it on to your great grandchildren. The complexity of inheritance didn't just double; it increases sharply. "We are changing the view of what inheritance is," comments Marcus Pembrey, a researcher from the University College in London.

The major discovery that informs this new view took place when two collaborators, Lars Olaf Bygren from the Karolinska Institute, Sweden, Pembrey, and other colleagues, studied data from the isolated municipality in north-east Sweden called Överkalix. It revealed that changes in paternal grandmothers' early food supply influences the cardiovascular health of their granddaughters. The Överkalix study was really only possible because of the genetic and geographic isolation of people in that area. The discovery was made

same in every cell, the epigenome varies from tissue to tissue, between individuals and over time. The complexity of mapping the human genome is dwarfed by the complexity of mapping the epigenome.

At the heart of this overturning of Darwinian orthodoxy is a little methyl group called CH₃. When attached to our DNA it is a significant factor in the expression or switching on or off, of our genes. It is called DNA methylation and is now a major subject of study in genetics. Our ancestors give us our genes, but we are only now discovering the full extent of which genes come to be expressed in us and what are the mechanisms involved. We are not just the product of our gene nucleotide sequences. What we are is determined by which genes have been 'switched on or off' and it may be that some genes are not switched on until we reach a certain age. An example of this in a study of identical twins would be where one twin has cancer and the other has not, while both twins experienced essentially identical environments.

What an impact CH₄ is having on the humans. Methane or CH₄ is a valuable energy resource we use for heating, cooking and

"it is clear now that a good understanding of human diseases will not be possible until the mapping the human epigenome is complete"

almost by sheer chance and in both collaborators the research was pure. It is now clear that inheritance is not static, as Darwinists were for many decades convinced was the case. Inheritance is now to be viewed as a dynamic process.

Other research, conducted by Professor Michael K. Skinner of Washington State University, has alarming implications. Once it is widely known, it may have political ramifications, especially in relation to the implications for American Soldiers and Vietnamese citizens who were exposed to chemical agents by the US military. Professor Skinner triggered similar epigenetic effects in rats by using commonly used pesticides. After treating pregnant females with the pesticide compounds unexpected results appeared within six months to a year. There were a host of unanticipated diseases, ranging from breast and skin tumours, prostate and kidney disease to immune dysfunction. The astonishing results were that without exposing the offspring to any of the pesticides, these diseases persisted to the fourth generation of rats! In other words, once the mothers had been exposed, the die was cast. The diseases persisted in offspring without further toxin exposure. They occurred in approximately 85 per cent of the progeny in every generation!

The mapping of the human genome held out the promise of many new discoveries about human diseases. But it is clear now that a good understanding of human diseases will not be possible until the mapping the human epigenome is complete. This new quest is far more complicated. Unlike the genome, which is the

transport. In Africa, its extraction and use from cow dung is reducing cancer in the population. It has a 34 times greater warming effect on the atmosphere than CO₂ so efforts are being made to either capture or reduce bovine flatulence which has a large component of methane. It is the culprit in the fracking controversy, and it lies under the sea in the form of methane hydrates, which will be released if the seas get warm enough, creating a very sudden change in climate.

Damocles molecular sword lies dormant. Its derivative, CH₃ is a significant group in organic chemistry. Now it is the turn of the methyl group to create controversy and upheaval in biology, for we now find that CH₃- can shape our health more directly than methane has to date. Little did scientists know that this little hydrocarbon molecule would be largely responsible for the overturning of one of the founding pillars of heredity.

More than ever we now have a good reason to be concerned about flagrant environmental abuses. Toxic exposure does not just affect one generation. Exxon, the US Military and everyone who works for a corporation dealing in potentially harmful substances need to hear this. Let us try to raise awareness so that maybe one day we can raise children who do not suffer from generations of genetic abuse.

Reference:

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For my Dad on his Death.

by Elizabeth Owen

So Dad is dead.

The bell lap has been run.

He has crossed the finishing line and in style!

He did not come first:

many have crossed over already;

indeed, in one sailing race,

his beloved Marlay Point,

he got the wooden spoon

making a special trip

to Gippsland for

the proud presentation.

Another time

he protested the winner,

a dispute, I think,

about giving way to starboard.

The flag was hoisted;

the committee met:

Dad's protest was upheld,

the winner disqualified.

Dad just did the proper thing:

honourable to the last

and graceful

even in dying.

Forget wonder, let's have titillation

The many fascinations of the supernatural.

The philosopher Daniel Dennett is fond of quoting author Lee Siegel, an expert on Indian street magic. Siegel says that when he explains that he is writing a book on magic he gets an odd response. He is asked if he is writing about real magic. “By real magic people mean miracles, thaumaturgical acts, and supernatural powers,” comments Siegel. “‘No,’ I answer: ‘conjuring tricks, not real magic.’ Real magic, in other words, refers to the magic that is not real, while the magic that can be done is not real magic.”

Something similar can be said about attitudes to the so-called supernatural. Belief in alleged supernatural events that defy the laws of nature are treated as matters of great mystery. Meanwhile, the mysteries of what is definitely there, the natural world, are usually treated by supernaturalists as mundane.

Viewed this way, supernaturalism can be understood as a restricted, or highly selective, sense of wonder. Rather than finding wonder in what is undeniably real – the glories of nature, or the fact that there is something rather than nothing – those who gain heightened meaning, or titillation, from what they believe to be inexplicable, paranormal, events are confining their sense of wonder to what usually turns out to be not real.

Many scientists have a sense of wonder about the natural,

have to prove it is real. It is just the way of the world I suppose.”

It is no accident that so-called supernaturalists rarely acknowledge the wonder of what science reveals. The debate about the supernatural is in large part an attack on the validity of science and the use of the rational to explain what is happening in the physical world. Supernaturalists are typically claiming that science has limits that it cannot transcend. So-called ‘sceptics’, by contrast, tend to assume that science can explain everything that happens, once there is sufficient knowledge. In truth, both sides are making a leap of faith, although the track record of science is clearly the more impressive.

Sceptics are often accused of not having an open mind, yet if anything the truth is the opposite, according to Kelly. “It is kind of ironic that most supernatural explanations are the most superficial,” he says. “You are supposed to have a sense of awe and wonder at supernatural things, but when you look at it, there is an alternative explanation. But it requires hard work.

“Scientists are often accused of lacking imagination, but it is actually the other way round. It takes a lot of imagination to find a scientific explanation. Of course, science sometimes can’t explain it, but then it will say so.”

“It was hard to compete against (belief in) ghosts and poltergeists and they don’t even have to prove it is real.” – Don Hyatt.

a point made by author Richard Dawkins. “The feeling of awed wonder that science can give us is one of the highest experiences of which the human psyche is capable,” he writes. “It is a deep aesthetic passion to rank with the finest that music and poetry can deliver. It is truly one of the things that make life worth living and it does so, if anything, more effectively if it convinces us that the time we have for living is quite finite.”

“There is so much awe and wonder in the immensity of space and what time means, and the beauty of music, or of art and literature,” says Terry Kelly, vice president of the Victorian branch of the Australian Sceptics. “You actually don’t need supernatural explanations.”

For many people, however, science is less exciting than alleged supernatural phenomena comments Don Hyatt, convenor of the Sceptic Groups of Victoria. He says he used to educate children in science when working as an education officer for the CSIRO’s Science Education Centre. It was revealing. “It was hard to compete against (belief in) ghosts and poltergeists and they don’t even

“I would hope there is not limit to the rational,” argues sceptic James Randi, who has made a career out of debunking claims about the supernatural (see interview). “Two plus four makes six. You can test that any number of ways you want, you can use automobiles or beans. It is a simple mathematical statement. The evidence is right there. I want evidence to prove what you are saying before I will invest in it. But if you aren’t curious you are not much of a human being, or even much of a rat in the attic. You have to find reason and meaning in everything.”

The debate is unlikely ever to be resolved. For one thing, the methods of science are not well suited to identifying and analysing unique events, which paranormal phenomena is claimed to be. Scientific testing involves repetition. If a phenomenon can be repeated every time, then it is deemed to be real, and it can be analysed in order to determine the underlying causes.

Consider, hypothetically, that there is an apparently explicable event, deemed by some to be supernatural, which is a ‘one-off’. Sceptics would typically ask to have the event repeated, implying

that if it cannot be repeated, then it is not real. They will also cast doubt on whether it happened in the first place.

Yet in our hypothetical example the event cannot be repeated, but it did happen. That means that it lies outside the range of science. So we have a stand off. The sceptic would tend to claim that it did not happen; the believer in the supernatural would argue that the event demonstrates that there is something beyond nature that is mysterious.

Both may be wrong. The event may have happened and be unique and could be an aspect of the natural world that is not understood, and which cannot be understood using the methods of science. The sceptics' tendency to assume that events must be repeatable to be considered real is more a statement of belief in the scientific method than a proof. "Scientism is often described as the belief the scientific method is a superior worldview to all others, but the scientific method is not a worldview, it simply informs a person's worldview", writes author Jonathan Meddings on the web site youngausceptics.com.

Yet believers in the paranormal could be equally wrong in thinking the event proves there is something supernatural. It could simply be an aspect of nature that is not yet understood. Just because it cannot be repeated does not necessarily mean it is a paranormal event.

If science has its limitations, the logical problems facing supernaturalists are greater. One difficulty is their definition of what nature is. If they claim that supernatural events are occurring, these events must still occur physically. 'Contact' during a séance, for example, still has to occur materially in this world. If this is so, how can it be known conclusively that it is in some way 'outside' the world of nature: that it is supernatural? And how is it possible to collect evidence of the supernatural when the only available evidence is in the natural world, even when it appears to flout natural laws? "In terms of the supernatural, I find the whole thing unbelievable," says Hyatt. "When you see ghost busters using infra-red to identify ghosts, how do you know that is what you are doing?"

that is not clockwork.

Routinely, there is a more sinister motive for such neat explanations. They are used to deceive the gullible. Because it is hard to conceive of a natural world that is not as predictable as clockwork, explanations of a supposedly supernatural world are also explained as the working of a different type of machine. Ironically, what supposedly supernatural events should indicate, that the universe might be inherently unpredictable, is rarely explored.

One reason for the appeal of the paranormal is people's inability to cope with the cruelties of nature, especially death and disease. When people try to get in touch with dead relatives in séances, for example, they are trying to find solace for what seems to be an irrevocably final event. Likewise, when people look for 'miracle cures' they are trying to find a way out of the onset of disease. When confronted with the brutality of nature, it is comforting to think there is something outside nature.

It is here that people are most vulnerable to charlatans and the human consequences can be severe. Some people, says Randi, never give up in their efforts to contact the dead, simply believing that it did not work because it was the wrong person to make contact with heaven or the after life.

"I have had endless encounters with people, families in some cases, who will sit in my library and just be very discouraged and they will discuss the fact that their mother or father in law or mother in law or whoever, loses control of the family finances has driven them to bankruptcy in some cases by giving away huge amounts of money on spiritual healers or such who are just milking them for every cent that they have got."

Kelly says in his activities as a social worker he has seen many people grab on to supernatural claims when conventional medicine fails. "They will clutch at straws. Even if the (alternative medicine) is unsuccessful they will see improvement even when there is no improvement.

"(With grief) it is really difficult for people to see that they will not see someone again. Often they can't cope with the concept of

*"There is so much awe and wonder in the immensity of space and what time means, and the beauty of music, or of art and literature. You actually don't need supernatural explanations." --
Terry Kelly*

Worse, proponents of the supernatural tend to suffer from a contradiction. They attack the science of the "clockwork universe", the idea that the laws of nature are as predictable as the workings of a machine. But they then replace this with a "clockwork mystification", a claim that the interference in natural laws, although 'supernatural', is predictable and readily interpreted. How can they know this? A better stand might be simply to say that the reason is unknown, that there is something going on

death. A lot of sceptics and atheists I have known have handled death very well. One said: 'I am just returning to the state I was in before I was born.' Whereas some people with a religious approach might be comforted by the idea of an after life but will be worried about what will happen there."

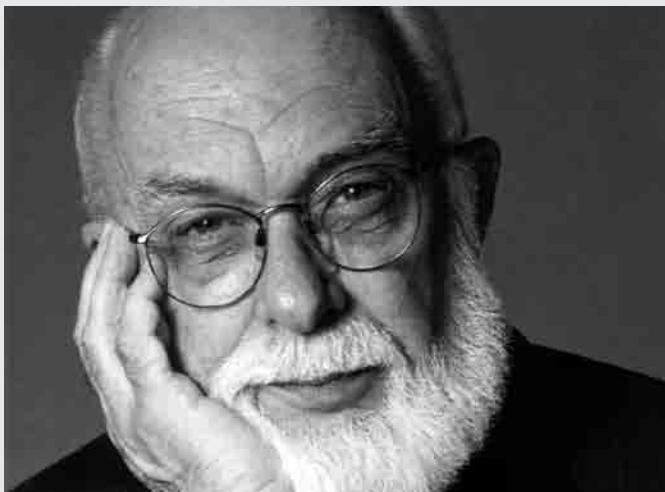
The paranormal may seem to be intimately connected to religion, but closer examination suggests the role of the supernatural is neither simple nor clear cut. In some religions,

such as animism or Voodoo, the supernatural is at the core of the belief. But because these practices usually preceded the advent of modern science, they can perhaps better be characterised as a more magical conception of nature rather than a belief that something exists outside nature.

Christianity's claims are based on the belief in a single, ahistorical and supernatural event over 2,000 years ago. The claim cannot be tested either scientifically or historically, although it can be examined for its logic. It does, however, imply that

any subsequent supposed supernatural events, such as alleged miracles, are of only secondary importance.

Other monotheistic religions, notably Judaism and Islam, have stories about supernatural events, such as claims about Moses' burning bush or Mohammed's encounters with the Archangel Gabriel. But the main stress is on the supervening power of one God and how the natural world is subject to that divine being's will. That is, the focus is not on supernatural events, but what is believed to be above nature.



Charlatans of the supernatural are often accused of indulging in "magic tricks". But former magician and scientific sceptic James Randi rejects such a description. Conjurers, he says, are entertainers. They are trying to create enjoyment. But those peddling in the supernatural are doing something much darker: playing on people's hopes in order to take advantage of them.

"A conjurer doesn't try to prove to people that he is really cutting this young lady in half with a buzz saw. No-one believes that. He or she creates illusions for entertainment purposes. Done properly, and done honestly, people are entertained very well because conjuring is an ancient art. Only rascals try to tell people it is real."

The Canadian-born Randi took up practicing magic early, studying the art when he spent 13 months in a body cast after suffering a motor cycle accident. At 17, he dropped out to join a carnival road show. In his 20s he posed as a psychic and wrote an astrological column for a newspaper randomly shuffling the columns. He subsequently worked in Britain, Europe and Asia, often witnessing tricks that were being presented as supernatural. Always a sceptic, he began what became a life-time career of exposing deception.

Some people are vulnerable to sleight of hand, he says. "They believe these things, because they are looking for answers and they like some magic if they can possibly get it. These so called

Exposed to the light

A Canadian magician has made a career out of revealing the trickery of others.

psychics and prognosticators of various kinds pretend they can do this. They say they can get in touch with dead people, they can predict the future, they can cure illnesses with incantations and such. Some folks are not ever sophisticated in that direction. They believe that this is possible."

Randi's move into exposing 'supernatural' trickery was highly successful, in part because he clearly possessed some skill at marketing, derived no doubt from his background as an entertainer. In the 1960s, he hosted a radio show in New York's WOR. He has written ten books, hosted television shows and conducted world tours. In 1973-4 he performed on rock musician Alice Cooper's Billion Dollar Babies tour, acting on stage as a mad dentist and as Alice's executioner. In the 1990s he established the James Randi Educational Foundation. A sceptic he may be, but one reason he has been a formidable foe of charlatans is that he has the same ability to entertain.

He also has a deep understanding of the media, of which he is highly critical. "Certainly the media encourage belief in this kind of thing because the media wants the story. They don't care whether the stories are true or not, or that they may harm many people. They are just interested that they elicit the reaction. It gives them an article and the minute they have put it into the paper, or the television, or the radio, they start looking for another one. It is an endless cycle. They don't care if it is true. They just care that it has some glamour to it. If it is magical, or spooky, or frightening or whatever."

Randi's skill at publicity was most evident when he went up against one of the most high profile paranormal entertainers, Uri Geller, who achieved world-wide notoriety seeming to bend spoons with some unseen force. In 1972, he publicly challenged

In many Eastern religions, there is an implicit claim that the physical world is an illusion: an idealism similar to Plato's claims that the material world is little more than shadows on the wall of a cave. This is not so much supernatural and anti-natural.

Neither is the picture any clearer for the non-religious. The dividing line between atheism and supernatural phenomena is not always straightforward. Kelly comments that some atheists believe in supernatural phenomena, such as ghosts and poltergeists. Conversely, many with religious beliefs are intensely

sceptical of supernatural claims.

So is there anything to claims about the existence of the supernatural? Not in a way that would satisfy the sceptics. In the United States \$1 million is offered to anyone who can prove paranormal power under scientific conditions. In Australia the equivalent figure is \$100,000. Nobody has ever succeeded.

Geller. Two decades later, according to Randi, Geller unsuccessfully tried to sue him for \$15 million.

"He (Geller) just had four tricks. The major one was the spoon bending thing and the secret was simply that you bend it when no-one is looking. I am 86 years of age now and I can tell you I can hold in one hand maybe 20 tea spoons. I think anyone can do that. But Geller when he picks up the tea spoon in the library, or in some place where he is giving a lecture, he has to take his hands and grab the spoon in both hands and turn away and put a bend into it and then conceal the bend with his other hand. Then turn back to them and say: 'Watch the spoon'. You just see the bowl of his spoon hanging out of his hand and he slowly edges it forward and it has a bend in it. It is that simple a trick. But the fact that he holds the spoon in both hands while he walks across the room with it seems to be highly suspicious. But I must say he has been getting away with it for decades."

Randi's scepticism does not just apply to those who claim to have supernatural powers. He has also been a life long atheist, a view he formed when he was young. "I was an atheist as a small child. I got thrown out of Sunday school, which is rather a distinction I would think, because I asked questions. I said how do you know that. They would hold up the Bible. They would say in astonishment:

"You don't believe this book?"

"No. Why should I believe this book?"

"Because it was written by God."

"But it says there John and Matthew, all kinds of names."

"Well they wrote the book for God."

"What, God can't write?"

"No, no, now you are getting nasty."

So I got thrown out of Sunday school because I asked too many questions. If someone in the street tried to sell you that bill of goods you would be highly doubtful of it. But if you walk into a Church or tabernacle you tend to believe it. 'Oh, these other people believe it'."

Randi's atheism does not involve the active rejection of belief, however. He is strictly rational in the sense that he confines

himself only to what the available evidence indicates. He is just as critical of those who claim that there is evidence of the absence of a divine being.

"I happen to be an atheist, but I don't say there is no God. I can't say that. I don't know that there is no God. But I have examined the proof for it and I don't see any good evidence, except books that people waving at me: the Koran or the Bible etc.

So I don't see evidence for God, but I don't say there is no God.

"I don't say five legged dogs do not exist; maybe there are a couple around. They are very rare -- there probably aren't any right at this moment -- but next week there may be one creature like that born. I can't argue against it. If people come to me with a five legged dog I would have to say 'I was wrong'. I just don't know about that."

"(It is why) I am against atheists who assert there is no God. I have heard them argue that but they don't have a convincing case. They can assert it. That doesn't mean they can prove it. They can assert that 2 plus 4 equals 14.

"If reverend so-and-so can touch someone on the shoulder and cure people of a disease I would be very glad about that, I guess. I have never had that experience and I have seen people who say they were healed that way. But I don't see any evidence of it. They are still limping, they have still got the warts or whatever."

Randi says he is proud of his lifetime of exposing trickery, but acknowledges that it is a losing battle in the end. Some people, he says, simply want magic or sorcery in their lives. Neither, he says, are there perceptible differences countries; it is a universal trend.

But he does feel the satisfaction of an entertainer when he is able to have an impact. "There will people coming to me with tears in their eyes, who hold my hand and say: 'Mr Randi you have made a big change in my life'. Then they tell me where they have changed the direction they were going. It makes me very proud to think that I had something to do with that. I wish them my best, and ask for no blessing. I think a wave of my hat will do it."

- James Randi will be visiting Australia in December

Maybe it does all fit

Conspiracy theories are ridiculed, but is this fair?

by Steven Pinker

In a recent interview on ABC television, the eminent Australian author and two-time Booker Prize winner Peter Carey outlined his view that the CIA had had a hand in the demise of the Whitlam Labor government. It is one of the underlying themes in his latest novel *Amnesia*. He opined that the United States “played a part” in the “perfect storm” that was the Whitlam government’s dismissal.

“This was certainly something that we didn’t want to know about, didn’t want to talk about,” Carey said. He noted that, according to Whitlam, the deputy secretary of state for the United States, Warren Christopher, assured him after he was dismissed that America would “never again” interfere in the internal affairs of Australia, a tacit admission that they had done so.

A BBC journalist, armed with the cliché *de jouer*, riposted: “With these conspiracy theories, eventually someone speaks up, it is human nature to.”

Carey’s response was as instructive as it is rare. “I really hate that term ‘conspiracy theory,’” he said. “It looks like someone is suggesting that you believe in this amazing piece of clockwork where everything works together and the result of this is ‘bingo’ the government is kicked out. Of course, nothing is like that in life.

“And also the term ‘conspiracy theory’ means that you shouldn’t believe that people conspire when we know very well that there are whole organisations with car parks and superannuation schemes where people go to work to conspire every day. So it is not as if there are not people whose job it is to do this. I do not see why they would not be working. I think the likelihood of this happening is very, very high.”

Carey added that in America there are “people worrying about these things all day long, in Washington or Virginia so why wouldn’t they be (considering the option of interfering)?”

To call someone a conspiracy theorist is, in logic, an illegitimate *ad hominem* attack: attacking the person and not the argument. It is little better than saying: “You are wrong because you are a woman, or your skin is dark” or: “I don’t like what you are saying, therefore I will demonise you as one of ‘those’ people who is barely sane and probably rather dangerous.” In a context in which Western governments are increasingly suppressing public comment when it is deemed to be against the interests of ‘national security’, it epitomises a disturbing trend.

An especially egregious example of this style of *ad hominem* attack was the British prime minister, David Cameron’s comment in a speech to the United Nations that so-called 9/11 truthers (people who believe the 9/11 attacks were demolitions) are “non-

violent extremists” who are located on the same spectrum as terrorists. Amusingly, one of these 9/11 truthers, author Nick Kollertstrom, handed himself into the police. No action was taken.

Cameron’s claims are typical of the misrepresentation that Carey decries. They are also plain wrong. Most so-called 9/11 truthers, especially the group Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth, base their claims solely on the physical evidence, calling for a better official analysis of what happened. They do not go into any conspiracy (although one of course is implied if they are correct). They mostly ask questions about fact and evidence. How did two planes bring down three buildings? Why was there no plane wreckage at the Pentagon? Why did the rubble of the Twin Towers remain hot enough to melt metal for three months? Why were remnants of military grade explosives found? There is no speculation about who conspired and why.

The conspiracy theorist is most vulnerable not when he makes little sense, but when he makes the most sense. Neat explanations, in which everything fits like clockwork, are, as Carey explains, not what happens in real life. Likewise, a straightforward relationship between what the conspirators allegedly intend and what subsequently transpires is rarely, if ever, plausible. It is the great weakness of conspiracy theorists to see correspondences everywhere, and to hanker to know why things happen when there may be little or no reason.

But to dismiss such claims just because they are deemed to be a conspiracy is a failure of rationality. For one thing, a person alleging a conspiracy can be wrong about some details -- such as who did what, and for what reason -- yet be correct about others.

There is also no reason, as Carey eloquently observes, to reject the underlying premise of a conspiracy theory -- that people conspire. After all, public servants are paid to do it all day long. They have car parks, and superannuation schemes.

There seems to be little difficulty accepting that those who are considered enemies of the state conspire. Yet there is an almost complete rejection of the idea that governments conspire, when there is overwhelming evidence that it is exactly what they do.

To assume that events are always the result of accidents, or screw ups, rather than conspiracy is irrational. Worse, it is a false dichotomy. The outcome of a conspiracy can be a cock up, and often is. All that we know for certain is that those doing the conspiring will want to remain hidden. Conspiracy theorists are often starting in the right place, even if their conclusions turn out to be wrong. To attack them for doing so is simply wrong.

THE PROCESS

A PLAY ABOUT REFUGEES IN FIVE DUBIOUS ACTS - BY IAN ROBINSON



Art Work: Maggie Millar

Franz Kafka's started his second novel, *Der Process*, in 1914, but it was left incomplete at his death in 1924, although he had written the final chapter. It was published posthumously in 1925 and is best known in the English-speaking world as *The Trial*. It has been observed that the plight of our refugees is similar to that of "K" in Kafka's novel.

In this new tragi-comedy by Rationalist Society immediate-past President, Ian Robinson, a refugee arrives in Australia by boat and is interviewed by an Immigration Officer and then a Lawyer, who both give him little hope for his future. Meanwhile, Immigration Ministers from the successive Labor and Liberal governments try to justify their draconian refugee policies. After many months in detention, the desperation of his situation has a catastrophic effect on the refugee.

LA MAMA

FARADAY STREET, CARLTON

FEBRUARY 4 – 14, 2015

WED 6:00 PM; THURS – SAT 7:30 PM; SUN 4:00 PM

The Enigma

by Jacob Hoerner

John D. Lennox (1941–1996) was an Australian artist whose career spanned four decades. He was especially prolific in the 1970s and 1980s and is best known for his landscape and figurative works. As a young man Lennox traveled through outback Australia that gave him that visceral understanding of the Australian bush. On numerous occasions Lennox also spent many months traveling throughout Europe seeing first hand the cathedrals of art in Europe such as the Louvre and the Prado Museum. In France he studied the Impressionists and Post Impressionists; he was also influenced by a number of American artists including John Singer Sargent and Andrew Wyette. His Australian influences included the key artists of the Heidelberg School, Russell Drysdale and, in his more decorative work, Rupert Bunny.

In terms of formal training Lennox was taught by the Melbourne master George Bell at the National Gallery School. Lennox then went on to consistently exhibit at numerous commercial galleries from 1972 until the mid-1990s, when his life and career were cut short in an accident at a country property in New South Wales. In recent years, Lennox' work is being looked at again and reassessed by public institutions and private collectors. In 2008 the Benalla Regional Gallery hosted a survey exhibition. That same group of works were then toured to Castlemaine Art Gallery in 2009. In 2014 Lennox had his first commercial exhibition in almost 20 years at Kick Gallery in Collingwood, to great acclaim.

The process has begun in which his work, and the ideas encapsulated within his more complex symbolic work, is now being revived -- to the benefit of Australian Art.





Undermining Australia's secular national anthem

We are not singing from the same hymn sheet.

by Max Wallace

In 1984 Australia's Labor government adopted the secular *Advance Australia Fair* as the National Anthem. This was a step in the direction of republicanism. Previously, *God Save the Queen* was the anthem, which is still sometimes played at Anzac Day ceremonies before dawn and on occasions when there is a royal visitor.

In 1988, Dr Robin Sharwood, then a lecturer in the Law School at the University of Melbourne, wrote to the Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen, suggesting a new verse for the National Anthem, to put God back into the picture. We know this because a Tasmanian Senator, John Watson, felt compelled to give us this news in a speech in the Senate on 20 October 1997. This is what he said:

"When Robin Sharwood watched the 1988 Bicentennial Australia Day celebrations of 200 years of European settlement and heard Australia's National Anthem sung, it struck him that Peter Dodds McCormack's amended words contained no references to God. Despite Christianity being an intimate feature of Australia's history and the fact that our institutions are founded on Christian beliefs, there was no acknowledgment of God in the song which was proclaimed as our National Anthem on 19 April 1984.

Mr Sharwood immediately composed an alternative verse and proceeded to obtain official status for it from the Governor-General. The words were sung with sincerity and spirit at the recent opening of the extension to the St Brendan-Shaw College in Devonport, where I was privileged to pull the curtain covering the opening tablet with the Archbishop of Hobart, His Grace the Most Reverend Dr D'Arcy.

Rather than sing the amended words for the benefit of the Hansard record I will read them. They are:

O God, who made this ancient land
And set it round with sea,
Sustain us all who dwell herein
One people, strong and free
Grant we may guard its generous gifts
Its beauty rich and rare
In your great name, may we proclaim
Advance Australia Fair!
We thankful hearts then let us sing
Advance Australia Fair!

On 18 November 2013 the NSW Rationalist Association faxed a letter to then Governor-General, Ms Quentin Bryce (now Dame Quentin Bryce) asking questions that led from Senator Watson's

speech. On 6 February 2014 the Deputy Official Secretary to the Governor-General wrote back, apologising for the long delay in replying.

He said: "the verses that were created [by Dr Sharwood] have not been proclaimed and do not have official status as an alternative the Australian National Anthem. The verses written by Dr Sharwood may be used in the context of a church service as a hymn, but may not be used as an alternative to the National Anthem on those occasions when the National Anthem should be sung."

This reply is very interesting for three reasons. The Governor-General's office contradicts Senator Watson's claim in the parliament that the Governor-General 'amended' the national anthem. The Christian verses were not proclaimed and do not have official status. In fact in any case it would appear that under the constitution the Governor-General has no power to amend the National Anthem. When *Advance Australia Fair* was adopted on 19 April 1984 it was by proclamation on the advice from government.

Secondly, what business is it of the office of the Governor-General to say that Dr Sharwood's verse "may be used in the context of a church service as a hymn"? Why should it involve itself in what might be sung as a hymn in a church? Why make any comment about this at all? I suggest this part of the answer to our queries reveals more than was intended: namely, that the office of the Governor-General feels comfortable involving itself in religious matters, as you would expect in a country that is a constitutional monarchy, where the head of state, the Queen, is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England in England.

Thirdly, the letter did not say the Christian verse may be sung in a school.

Not totally satisfied with this response, on 18 March 2014 we faxed another letter to the Governor-General's office, a Freedom of Information request, asking to see the correspondence between Dr Sharwood and Sir Ninian Stephen. On 30 July 2014 our request was denied on the grounds that the documents relate to the 'substantive functions of the Governor-General.' They were not 'administrative in nature'. There were three avenues of appeal.

If this was a matter to do with confidential matters between the Governor-General's office and the parliament, one could understand the refusal. But correspondence concerning the National Anthem? What is the big secret? Why did Dr Sharwood think a former High Court judge would fly in the face of the constitution and amend the National Anthem to allow Christian

verses? Why did Senator Watson believe that had happened?

Perhaps what the current office of the Governor-General does not want us to read is Sir Ninian's rejection of Dr Sharwood's Christian verses. That would imply, as noted above, that Senator Watson's speech in the parliament was wrong. It would also somewhat undermine the image of the office of Governor-General being associated with Christianity.

On the other hand, if Sir Ninian Stephen said the verse could be sung in a church, this would be an instance of a Governor-General, and former High Court judge, giving advice that was incorrect, for protocol reasons, discussed below.

The word 'God' does not appear in the constitution, except in the preamble where it has no legal force. The reference to 'God' in the preamble has never been used as a basis for interpreting the constitution. In other words, the constitution is inherently secular. It would seem unlikely Sir Ninian Stephen would have approved the Christian verses, because, under the constitution, as noted above, he does not have the power to amend the national anthem.

In passing, it is worth noting that much was made of Bill Hayden's atheism when he became Governor-General. However, he followed Sir Ninian who was also, surprisingly, an atheist. No one picked up on this fact as it appears Sir Ninian kept his atheism to himself for decades until an interview with his biographer on 20 December 2011, when he was aged 88. So Australia had two atheist Governor-Generals in a row.

There have been other attempts to get God back into the National Anthem. According to Wikipedia, another Christian verse was sung during the global *March for Jesus* in 1998 and again during *World Youth Day* in 2008, the latter with the eye-opening qualification that 'This is not the official verse, but a Catholic adaption of the Australian National Anthem'. The Catholic Church can alter the Australian National Anthem when it chooses?

In 2011, the question was put to the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, whether these Christian verses were acceptable. The reply was that: "Under national protocols the Anthem should not be modified and alternative words should not be used." I expect any prime minister of Australia would confirm that.

National protocols are not laws. They are procedures that the government recommends concerning symbolic activities relating to nationhood, such as how the flag is to be handled and displayed on Australia Day. But there is an issue here.

The office of the Governor-General is now saying that while Dr Sharwood's verses may not be used on occasions when the National Anthem is sung, they may be sung in a church. While the prime minister in the comment cited above did not address the question of alternative verses being sung inside a church, surely it's a bit of a stretch to say that what is against protocols *outside* a church is unacceptable, but what is against protocols *inside* a church is acceptable.

In an authoritative text on protocols in Australia, the authors

do not concede the National Anthem may be subject to alternative verses. Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that the use of alternative Christian verses is widespread in Christian, private schools for another set of Christian lyrics caused controversy in 2011. The Federal education minister at the time, Peter Garrett, himself a Christian, was adamant that alternative Christian verses should not be used.

The Australian Christian Lobby was quick to try and muddy the waters of what is a clear cut issue of protocol. However, the 6 February 2014 letter from the office of the Governor-General, cited above, which does not say alternative verses may be sung in schools, puts paid, I suggest, to the ACL's dissembling.

So, where does that leave us? In religious ceremonies, it seems, Australia's secular National Anthem is being undermined, with the approval of the Office of the Governor-General, and against the protocols advice of a prime minister and a federal minister for education.

In private, religious schools, Australia's secular National Anthem is being undermined: against the 2011 advice of a prime minister, a federal minister for education and now, it seems, the qualified advice of the office of the Governor-General.

If it is acceptable for Christians to sing their own version of the National Anthem as a hymn in religious ceremonies, as the office of the Governor-General is suggesting, surely it follows that it would be acceptable for other religions to do likewise. Australian Muslims, Jews, and others, could compose their own verses. And what about atheists and indigenous Australians? Could they have a version too? Surely the whole point of having a secular National Anthem is that it is inclusive of all doctrines. It is something to unite citizens, not divide them.

The ongoing Christian undermining of Australia's National Anthem creates two Australias. One anthem is for public consumption, on occasions when Christian versions would be seen to be politically inappropriate. The other anthem, which is mostly private versions, is deployed to keep those in the know privately confirming their belief in their own minds-- and the minds of children they are attempting to indoctrinate. It is the notion, as Dr Sharwood and Senator Watson implied in 1988 and in 1997, that Australia is a 'Christian nation'.

It seems that constitutional correctness is not an issue for public officials, and others, who use their authority to quietly undermine Australia's nascent republicanism, which found some expression in the 1984 adoption of a secular National Anthem. And when you ask hard questions about these matters they use their legal defences to deny information.

Who in the parliament will present a bill making it an offence to sing alternative verses to the National Anthem? Protocol is obviously not enough.

– Max Wallace is vice-president of the Rationalist Association of NSW.



It has taken an awfully long time to get here

A long view of some major religions.

by Ian Fry

A community does not enter into dialogue or reassess its beliefs, social values, relationships or policies unless it is under severe challenge or has an urgent need for assistance. However, the level of religion-related crisis has now reached the point at which dialogue is not sufficient. Dialogue must be accompanied by, in fact it must be led by, reassessment of the religious concepts and programs that have brought us to this situation.

The universe came into existence almost fourteen billion years ago, and the solar system and planet Earth about four and a half billion years ago. Our forebears have only been on earth, and evolving, for about 200,000 years. Current best scientific projections are that earth will be potentially habitable for at least another six hundred million years – possibly a billion. Humanity has a lot of living to do.

To explain the basis of the human epochs we must start with consideration of the covenants under which we live. The three-part core of a divine covenant consists of an undertaking, or promise, to the community that is conditional on adherence to an obligation that is to be honoured by the community and its individual members. The obligation may involve a role or roles, and not a specific act or program, and may be identified together with the call or may be latent and recognizable circumstantially. The third part is a penal clause that may be invoked in the event of disobedience or failure by the community.

Evidence of the search for an understanding of things supernatural and our relationship with the Divine Creator dates from about 35,000 years ago, well before the most recent glacial period reached its peak about 22,000 years ago. That search and the manipulation of associated mythology continued until about 4,000 years ago when the Vedic foundations of the oldest extant faith, Hinduism, were being laid and the abuse of power, such as the repeated destruction of the Eblaite centre of learning by ruthless Mesopotamian monarchs reached the point at which Abraham received a divine command to leave home. He was to establish a new community that would become the focal point for humanity's understanding of God.

In due course the source of the command was revealed to him in visions as Yahweh – God – and a covenant was imposed on him and his descendants. The context in which the covenant was imposed was the condemnation of Mesopotamia's leadership for brutal, oppressive conduct. The Patriarch's descendants were granted the territory of Canaan as a perpetual homeland: subject to them denying all other gods, maintaining specified religious

practices and conducting their affairs in an exemplary manner so that all humanity could understand and respond to the relationship between God and themselves.

There were to be no exceptions. Abraham was traumatized when told that his descendants would recognize Yahweh's authority only after failing to honour their obligation, being subject to exile, oppression and slavery followed by a reprieve and restoration to the promised land. The critical religious practice required was cultural identification or initiation by circumcision of all males born into, or brought into, the covenanted community as slaves.

Thus Abraham's descendants became the first community to be subject to a community-specific divine covenant: the Abrahamic Covenant. Their faith was Yahwism.

The grandson to whom responsibility to maintain the covenant fell, Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, failed miserably. He and his small tribal family were exiled but, as also foreshadowed, they were granted a divine reprieve. Moses was commanded to lead them out of Egypt to re-settle Canaan. En route, at Sinai, he delivered a series of laws and details of a renewed covenant: the Mosaic Covenant of Sinai. That small Israelite community thus became the second community that was subject to a community-specific covenant. The larger proportion of Abraham's descendants who had been expelled due to a family dispute was subject only to the Abrahamic Covenant.

Although the command to Abraham had initiated a process to enable people to understand their relationship with God, the search for such a relationship and meaning in life, and the development of systems of worship to bring cohesion and stability to communities in other regions had not stopped at the moment of the call to Abraham. It continued from Persia through India to China and in Egypt, Europe, the Americas and here, in Australia. Our indigenous people had already developed a sense of a covenantal relationship with a supernatural force under which they were required to care for the land and their total environment in return for security of territory and food supplies, and were to suffer dire consequences if they ignored their responsibility.

The tiny territory of Canaan or Palestine, subsequently linked with southern Arabia, was about to become the centre of religious activity. The city of Jerusalem was to become critical in the affairs of the whole world, and not only to the communities that would adhere, in due course, to three faith systems.

After a series of false starts, the Israelites honoured their

covenant for some time. They reconquered Canaan in a brutal and bloody campaign, established a monarchy, built a Temple in Jerusalem, and began committing their oral histories to written form. The establishment of the monarchy marks the opening of a period of 900 years of prophetic leadership during which the trials, tribulations and misconduct of the nation provided the inspirations for the mature Hebrew understanding of divine covenant. Concurrent with that process the network of Axial Age religious and philosophical movements sprang up circumstantially in the region surrounding the kingdoms, extending to China. Interaction between them actually contributed to the development of that prophetic understanding.

Part way through that period the Israelites again failed in their obligations and a substantial proportion of the community was exiled to Babylon. During the exile their prophets gained many insights into covenantal relationships that were incorporated into their teaching. In addition they became aware of certain Babylonian myths that enhanced their understandings of the nature of creation and humanity's subordinate relationship with God, and, upon their return, after another reprieve, these were incorporated into the foundational chapters of the Torah. Thus Hebrew Biblical teaching was not a matter of spontaneous understanding. It was a combination of inspiration, revelation and experiential perception.

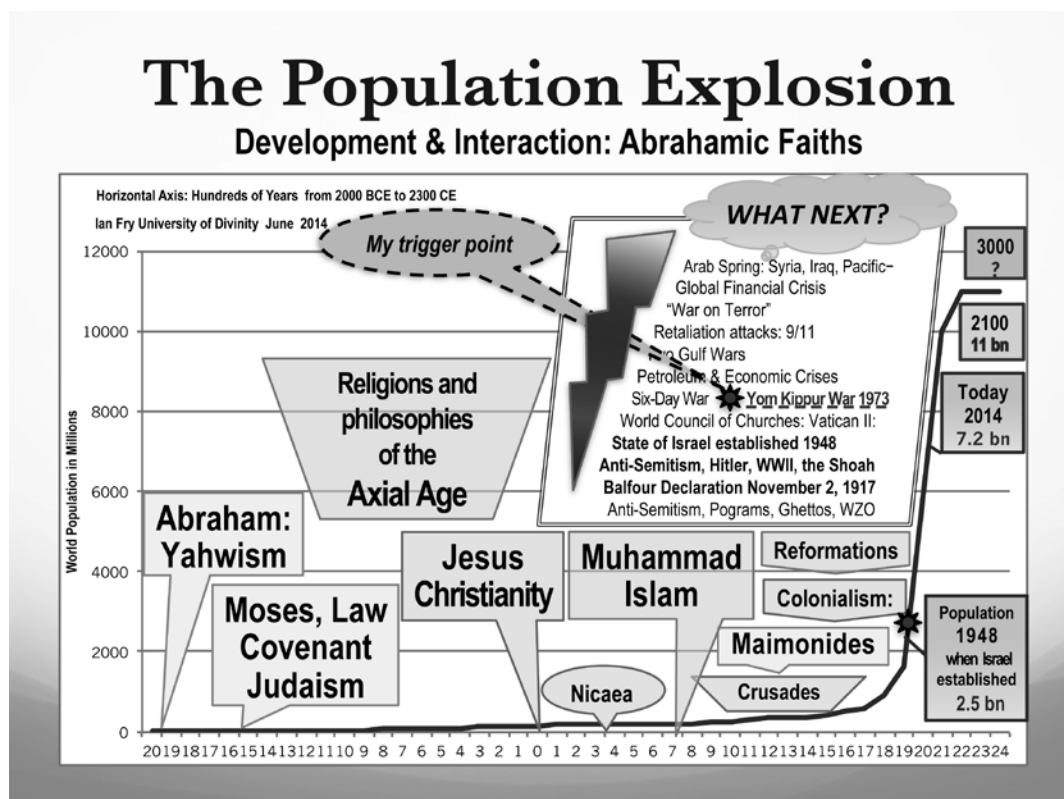
However, the developed understanding of covenantal relationships was largely ignored by the nation's leaders, and in circumstances of conflict with successive overlord powers, Persia, Macedonia and Rome, the family of the Maccabees led a successful revolt, re-established a kingdom, abused their most sacred

covenantal obligations in brutally absorbing surrounding regions and imposing Judaism by circumcision, and dragged the Jewish community into a state of decadence and religious regression. The first epoch in the revelation of divine covenant had closed.

So: how are epochs defined? An epoch is an event or conduct that is an act of abuse or rejection of a critical obligation under covenant that results in either a divine command to another person to act on a divine covenant and to take up the obligation that has been rejected, or that marks a new phase in the revelation of the nature of such a covenant. This suggests that if the Hasmonean Monarchy had not committed such abject abuse of the Mosaic Covenant, there might never have been the need for a divine command to bring into existence another covenanted faith community. On that basis I term the first epoch 'Exemplary Revelation.'

The Hebrew prophets had developed a mature understanding of the nature and implications of the phenomenon but the nation's leaders had failed to act on it. A divine covenant is imposed, non-negotiable, perpetual, and never to be annulled. It has two aspects: personal and communal. It is cyclical, with the core being repeated on the basis of default, penalty, restoration of the promise in the event of repentance and recompense for affected parties, with the possibility that the initial obligation or role may be amended and this change might not be recognized until well into the future.

Following the destruction of the Maccabean or Hasmonean kingdom a number of attempts were made to initiate reform or to replace the religious hierarchy of the day, but with little effect until, following the path of Abraham and Moses, Jesus of Nazareth responded to a divine call to lead the Jewish nation through reform



to an enlightened understanding of their covenantal obligations, both as individuals and as a community.

Jesus appears to have had reasonable success in stimulating renewed awareness of the reality of their religion among rank and file Jews during his short three-year ministry but he soon fell foul of the hierarchy and was condemned to death by crucifixion.

The few intimate disciples gathered under Jesus' leadership were unable to decide what to do in his absence. There were disputes and no common understanding about his nature and role. He had not told them to forsake Judaism and start a new institutional religion. He simply told them to go out and teach what he had taught them with a new covenant that varied from the Mosaic Covenant in only four respects. They remained within Jewish synagogue communities until some of their members were expelled for teachings contrary to the Torah. The dominant disciples thereupon struck out to teach their interpretation of Jesus' role and to start a new religious system in competition with Judaism, targeting first Greece and Rome. Some years later, when another uprising against Rome occurred the Jewish population was expelled from Jerusalem and settled across North Africa and Europe, maintaining the hope that in due course Yahweh would invoke another reprieve and they would again be enabled to return to Canaan.

Thus the second epoch is termed 'Shared responsibility,' with two covenanted faith communities working in parallel. But because of the church's dogmatic self-understanding and freedom from the restrictions of the Mosaic Covenant they were in direct competition for the protection or support of the Roman authorities. The church succeeded in engineering the status of imperial religion, which gave it the capacity to proselytise wherever the imperial Rome had a presence. Within four hundred years it had so abused its authority and acted reprehensibly in absolute contradiction of the covenantal understanding that Jesus had taught, that it plumbed the same depths as the Maccabean kingdom.

The second epoch was closing and a divine command was received by the Prophet Muhammad to preach reform and to call both Christians and Jews to return to their fundamental covenantal obligations as well as calling the pagans of his domestic community to recognize the One True God. He had no mandate or command to replace either Judaism or Christianity. He taught that both covenants were still valid and that they, together with the community of Islam gathering around him, were partners with a common obligation to work together to enable all people to understand and to respond to their direct relationship with God. He did not name a Qur'anic covenant, but the nature of it is indicated by the obligations of trusteeship and engaged surrender, and its understanding of judgement that are detailed in the Qur'an.

That third epoch, termed 'An extended network,' did not close with failure of the Muslim community but with the promulgation

of the series of Papal encyclicals that culminated in *Romanus Pontifex* and dredged the depths of human abuse. They ushered in the catastrophic era of European Colonialism and traumatic anti-Semitism, pogroms and ghettos that resulted in the establishment of the World Zionist Movement. Then came the dual abuse of covenant by Britain and the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland – the Balfour Declaration. That declaration triggered the rise of Hitler's National Socialism and, together with the rejection of Jewish migration by the White Western Christian Bloc, the Shoa. It was indeed an epoch of 'Brutal demonstration' that closed with the death of Hitler.

The opening event of the current epoch, 'Application,' was the central fact of the Common Era: the establishment of the State of Israel. We have now reached the stage where the breaches of covenant by the White Western Christian Bloc (WWCB) and the People of Israel, in the broadest sense, are quite clear, and the breach by the third partner, the Muslim community of Islam, is confirmed by its failure to rein in the terror that is wrought by suicide bombings. The fact that they are carried out by a minority in retaliation for the conduct of its partners in the triangle does not absolve it from guilt or the force of the penal clause.

The vital considerations are that the penal clause of the New Christian Covenant is being applied, and that the process involves the State of Israel and the People of Israel in the role of catalyst in the inversion of relationships between the White Western Christian Bloc and the World Majority Peoples which, superficially, is the outcome of conflict between the White Western Christian Bloc and the Muslim community.

There is little awareness – and great reluctance to acknowledge – that the capacity and authority to determine policies and practices in economic, social and governance matters is shifting irreversibly from the White Western Christian Bloc (WWCB) to the World Majority Peoples (WMP). Dynamic changes are already bringing benefit to people in regions that have been catastrophically exploited and abused by the White Western Christian Bloc; its ill-gotten and undeserved position of privilege is weakening. No actions that the White Western Christian Bloc takes by manipulation of trade and political alliances or direct military intervention can reverse the pattern, and whatever deliberate efforts it takes in an attempt to do so can only accelerate its relative decline.

Israel and its worldwide supporters, whether Jewish or Christian, will become aware that if it reaches a resolution of the territorial issue acceptable to the Palestinian people it will no longer be dependent on the US military umbrella; it will have fully honoured its covenantal obligation.

The three faiths, together, have failed. We have made a botch of things. Desperate measures are required now to secure the future for our descendants before the point of maximum sustainable human population is reached and while ecological

sustainability is still possible. We have got to change. That requires more than dialogue. It requires a fundamental reassessment of our theologies and practices with all world faiths working in

intimate collaboration.

– Ian Fry is an Honorary Postdoctoral Associate, University of Divinity (Melbourne)

Rock and roll heaven

A novel approach to tax exempt status.

by Mitchell Browne

Spreading the word of Jesus or Muhammad should be no more or less tax exempt than an AC/DC concert. Whether reciting their favourite words from the Bible, the Torah, the Koran or *Highway to Hell*, these devotees are all giving voice in a communal setting to deeply held principles that guide their lives. But while rock bands help to pay for a civilised society through the taxation system, religious promotion is subsidised by the taxpayer. Total taxpayer funding of religious institutions in this country is \$31 billion dollars annually, according to calculations by the Secular Party of Australia.

The teeming diversity of religious institutions in Australia reflects the infinite variety of methods employed in the quest

ATO's definition of a religion.

The Church of Pub Rock will be open to all who appreciate the heavenly virtues of drunken sing-alongs and tax avoidance. In order to meet the ATO's requirements for tax exempt status however, Pub Rockers will also have to accept "canons of conduct that give effect to that belief". This is too easy.

The ritualised expression of the pub rock faith has been practiced in this country for decades. When we crank AC/DC or Chisel, that's a pub rock call to prayer: Bon Scott and Barnesie our boozy muezzins. But to really formalise our new arrangements and satisfy the ATO, all pub rockers will have to attend ceremonial gatherings of the faithful to celebrate the holy songbook. The

"The Church of Pub Rock will be open to all who appreciate the heavenly virtues of drunken sing-alongs."

for that universally-sought holy grail: tax exempt status. The Australian Taxation Office confers tax exempt status upon institutions that "advance or promote religious purposes." There is no requirement for charitable works, or indeed for any activity that might benefit society in any way at all.

The ATO defines religion as "a belief in a supernatural being, thing or principle." So if an institution is working to spread claims that contradict science and are, therefore, demonstrably untrue, taxpayers will chip in and help fund their important work. It is subsidised fantasy role-play.

But what about the forgotten people? The many thousands of ordinary Australians who would also love to participate in subsidised weekend revelry, but are denied, because they insist on thinking rationally. Well, their time is nigh.

I am founding the Church of Pub Rock. I believe pub rock is the universe's way of expressing profound truths through visceral rhythm and earthy vernacular. The cosmos rocks hard. The cosmos always keeps it real. Pub rock is the microcosmic voice of the macrocosm. To perform or participate in pub rock is to channel the universe itself. Of course, the verity of my belief, while certainly an intelligible supposition, cannot be proven by any known natural law. It is, in other words, supernatural. Thus, it conforms to the

liturgical routine of these ceremonies we can simply adapt from other tax exempt religious institutions.

Rather than stand behind an altar, our priest will stand behind the sacred BBQ, tongs in one hand, an ice cold Cooper's Pale Ale in the other. As clerical vestments, he (and it can only be a he) will sport a novelty BBQ apron with big plastic tits on the front. If this is starting to sound a tad misogynistic, all the better, for that will surely only reinforce our religious credentials. Misogyny seems to be an integral component of many of the religious institutions that are already subsidised by taxpayers.

Not that we would wish to emulate all of the subsidised activities of Australian religious institutions. Peadophilia, calls to jihad, and the demonisation of homosexuality will find no sanctuary in the Church of Pub Rock.

With so many tax exempt religious institutions to choose from, there will be many truth seekers that continue to look for their spiritual home outside the Church of Pub Rock. Some of the tenets of other faiths are tempting, I know. But be warned, there are a lot of subsidised charlatans out there, and it's a long way through the crock if you want to hock your soul.

– Mitchell Browne is a writer from western Sydney, and a member of the RSA.



Fake Love to Make Love

The fine art of amorous pretence.

by Cori Wong

I've heard some people say, "Love is a verb" and others say, "Love is a choice." When they say these things, I suspect few people mean, "Love is a facade." Yet maybe it is at times. Maybe it can be.

Even for those who admit that an element of active commitment and deliberate dedication might be necessary to nurture and maintain our love for others, suggesting that love can sometimes be something that we fake when we don't particularly feel loving towards another person any longer, or at all, may strike many as an affront to our most cherished romantic sensibilities. After all, we've watched movies about epic challenges that only love could overcome, read classic tales of star-crossed lovers who died for their fated love, and listened to the sweeping rhythms of songs about unconditioned love that just wouldn't quit, even when the beloved walked away. That is to say, we've been taught to think about love through very romanticized notions of love.

According to the cultural depictions of love that we have been diligently fed and, for the most part, ravenously consumed, love is frequently anticipated as a passive experience. With the persistent hope of falling in love, we await that fateful moment when we see our beloved and are overcome with passion, swept off of our feet, bewitched, entranced, and maybe even a little dumbstruck. In such

Fake It 'Til You Make It

Although I hesitate to lean too heavily on a reductionist view of emotions and feelings, especially regarding something so precious as love, there is something to be said about the complex connections between our bodies and minds, our behaviors and feelings. On the physiological level, these connections can involve biochemical changes in levels of hormones and endorphins. More generally, in terms of our embodiment, these connections can be related to things so simple as how we comport our bodies and move through the world.

Most of the time we take for granted the causal relationship between body and mind, behaviors and feelings, such that we tend to think that how we feel influences how we act. We can easily identify examples from our experiences where actions and behaviors are expressions of how we feel in the moment. For instance, we smile because we are happy; we cry because we are sad. In these cases, how we think shapes our behaviors. How we feel influences how we act.

But just as our minds shape what we do with our bodies, the inverse is also true. Our bodily actions and behaviors can influence how we think and feel. This insight, which flips our usual assumptions about the causal relationship between how we act

"At its most basic level, love becomes something more than a feeling; love is a practice."

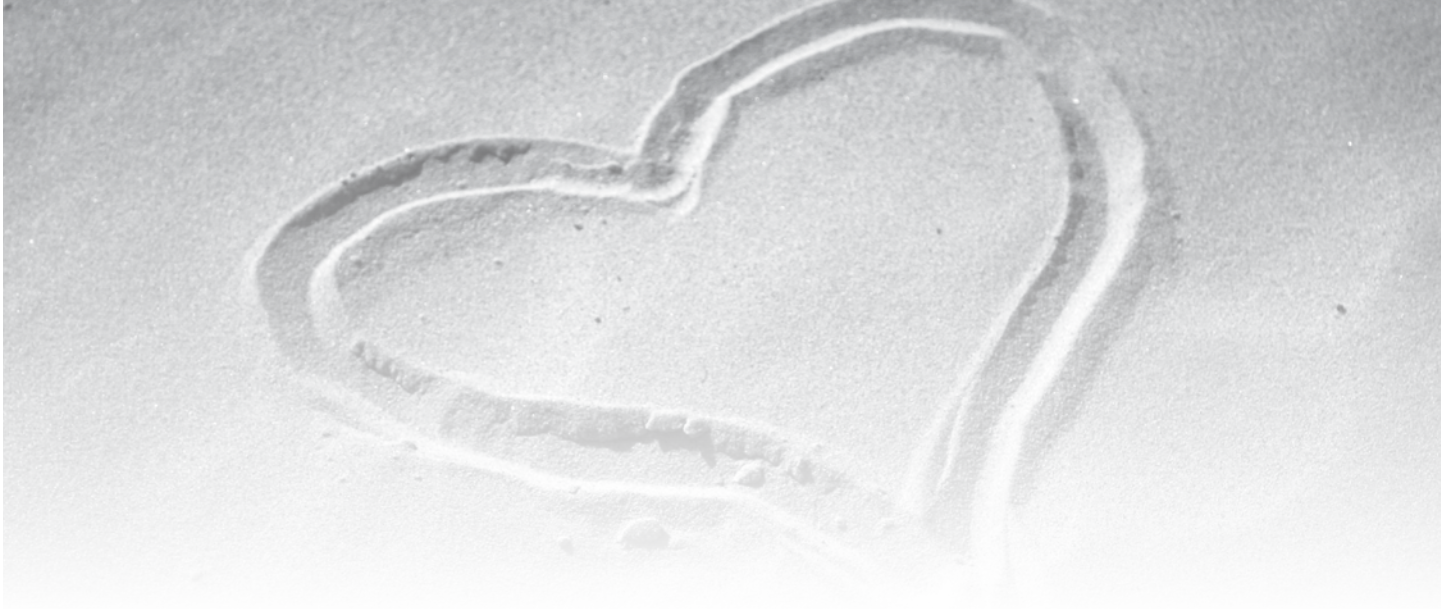
scenarios, love is not an action word that describes something of our own doing, and it's certainly not a conscious choice. Instead, love is something that happens to us.

To be honest, I hope those feelings of falling in love do happen to people, and I would guess that most people who have a lover would say that it has happened to them at least once. But like most feelings and emotions, such as elation, shame, and jealousy, the passive experience of love is fleeting. If and when it happens, it only happens sometimes. Not always. And the intensity of the feeling changes. It can even go away.

It is not the high moment of feeling overwhelmed by love that matters, but all of those moments in between. Of particular importance are the moments when love is lost, when, barring truly toxic or abusive situations, our feelings undergo a certain shift. There doesn't have to be an affair or a big fight or anything in particular that causes a diminution in our love. Our feelings just seem to change over time and begin to fade. Perhaps most important is what we can do to bring those feelings back.

and how we feel, suggests that changes in our physiological body provide the primary impetus for experiencing certain emotions. This idea was perhaps most famously discussed by William James and Carl Lange in what is now known as the James-Lange Theory of Emotion. More recently, however, people have started to explore how this insight can be applied to our everyday lives for our advantage.

Ann Cuddy, professor in the Harvard Business School, gave a brilliant and inspiring TED Talk entitled, "Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are." At the time of this writing, it has nearly 22 million views online. Cuddy's research shows that simply standing or sitting in "power poses" for two minutes can increase testosterone levels and decrease cortisol levels to help one feel more powerful and, thus, better manage stressful situations. When those stressful situations include things like a job interview or giving an important speech, standing like Wonder Woman for a short time can actually help you be more successful at landing the job and delivering a more compelling speech. In short, when you



hold your body like a champion, you start to feel like a champion, and that just might be enough to help you actually become a champion. It's a classic example of the phrase, "Fake it 'til you make it."

This may sound too good to be true, but Cuddy's findings are not unique results. They echo other studies which reveal that you don't just smile when you are happy – forcing a smile and holding it for a period of time can trigger physiological changes that actually make you feel happier. So, if posing your body as if you are powerful can make you feel more powerful, and if squeezing your facial muscles into a smile can make you feel happier, might it also be true that we can act in loving ways to actually feel more loving?

Fake Love to Make Love

Although there may not be much empirical research handy to answer the parallel question of faking love through our behaviors in order to feel more love, there are resources in philosophy that support the possibility of such experiences. When it comes to understanding the process of moving from a mere seeming to an actual becoming, Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the very best of those resources.

Over one hundred years ago, Nietzsche wrote, "If someone wants to seem to be something, stubbornly and for a long time, he eventually finds it hard to be anything else. The profession of almost every man, even the artist, begins with hypocrisy, as he imitates from the outside, copies what is effective. The man who always wears the mask of friendly countenance eventually has to gain power over benevolent moods without which the expression of friendliness cannot be forced – and eventually then these moods gain power over him, and he is benevolent" (*Human, All Too Human* 51).

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche makes a more direct connection between the process of becoming and love when he observes that "we have learned to love all things that we now love. In the end we are always rewarded for our good will, our patience, fairmindedness, and gentleness with what is strange; gradually, it sheds its veil and turns out to be a new and indescribably beauty. That is its thanks for our hospitality. Even those who love themselves will have learned it in this way; for there is no other way. Love, too, has to be learned" (334).

When we combine insights from the natural sciences with

inspiration found in Nietzsche's philosophy, we encounter an opportunity to reexamine our assumptions about how we love. Indeed, we may even begin to revise our understandings of what it means to love.

At its most basic level, love becomes something more than a feeling; love is a practice. We are not just people who instinctively or innately love. Instead, we are people who must become lovers. In other words, the action – the seeming – begets the feeling, the becoming, and the being. What if we did loving things, even if we didn't feel loving from the start? What if we met and held others in loving ways, even if we didn't already have the loving thoughts that inspired such apparently loving gestures? Rather than merely behaving in ways that express of our loving feelings in the moment, what if we used the many moments of our lives to act and behave in order to cultivate, generate, and enhance more loving feelings? What if this active, intentional, deliberate way of being in the world for love is actually a more profound illustration of what it means to love?

Critics might complain that this whole idea of faking love through actions and behaviors in order to develop and cultivate feelings of love is severely unromantic. But let us remember that the goal here isn't to stop at the level of faking. The goal is to really, literally, become more loving by reviving our capacity to love. The implication is that we need not give up on our beloved, our relationships, or ourselves when our feelings of love begin to diminish or fade. For these reasons, perhaps the idea of cultivating one's feelings of love through intentional practices is really one of the most romantic things one could do. Rather than saying, "I just happen to love you," the message shifts to, "I love you, and I do it on purpose. No angels, arrow-shooting cherubs, stars, or higher-beings need apply to take the credit."

So maybe it's true, after all, that love is a verb. Maybe love is a choice. But even underneath both of those statements is an implicit recognition that love is something that isn't always immediately or constantly felt. Sometimes it has to be performed and created. There is even a nod to the possibility that the ability to feel love, so that we might repeatedly fall in love with our beloved, is something that we can cultivate within ourselves. Indeed, perhaps we must.

– Cori Wong is an American philosopher

Science-Denial in Australian Politics

Science is being subordinated to ideology on both sides of the political spectrum.

by Andrew Tulloch

The recent political climate has suffered from an unprecedented disregard for the scientific consensus. The most obvious example of the ignorance would be the non-existence of a science minister. Absurdities have been evident on both conservative and non-conservative parties.

The parties with greater influence and access to media attention seem to have been committing the most offences. A double-edged sword emerges. Giving favour to a political party will almost guarantee that one aspect of a scientific discovery will be sacrificed in order to protect the party ideology.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has back-pedalled from his reference in 2009 that climate change is “crap” to a less obvious, but equally denying: “Australia is a land of droughts and flooding rains. Always has been, always will be” (as reported in *The Age* on April 4th 2014). He has made no public condemnation of comments by his top business advisor Maurice Newman that the Earth is not actually warming, but cooling.

and food science has deemed the GMOs that have been approved to be perfectly safe.

The confirmation bias presented by these individuals exposes their hypocrisy. Greens will gladly destroy the Coalition’s stance on climate change, citing the overwhelming consensus, yet ignore the scientific consensus supporting genetic modification. Encouraging unsubstantiated assumptions about cannabis oil may not be as offensive as linking abortion to breast cancer, but it is equally valueless.

The trend is not confined to Australia, The United States experiences similar picking and choosing of acceptable science based on whether or not it agrees with the party line. There appears to be a strong body of evidence correlating partisan Republicans with evolution and climate denial. Although Democrats seem to hold a more neutral stance on vaccines and GMOs, there appears to be a suggestion of a generalised association of an anti-vaccination/anti-GMO stance from the political left.

“The United States experiences similar picking and choosing of acceptable science based on whether or not it agrees with the party line.”

Reverend Fred Nile has supported the Coalition’s Senior Minister Eric Abetz’s baseless claims about supposed links between abortion and breast cancer, in spite of the Prime Minister stating that the Senior Minister was “sheepish about it and would not be repeating the comments.”

Such dubious public claims, which contradict overwhelming scientific opinion, are quickly condemned by opposition parties: the Labor Party and the Greens. However, representatives of both are also guilty of dismissing consensus whenever their political ideology is challenged.

Victorian Labor leader Daniel Andrews has publically endorsed legalisation of medical cannabis, and specifically mentioned the use of cannabis oil for cancer sufferers. Now multi-party representatives are working on a bill for legalisation of cannabis oil. This further perpetuates the myth that cannabis oil is a cure for cancer and an alternative to chemotherapy. It could easily result in desperate people making irrational, and possibly deadly, decisions.

The Greens Party still holds a strident anti-GMO stance. In February 2014, Senator Rachel Siewert said: “GM crops are not the answer to feeding the world, regardless of what international companies want us to believe”. The Green Party also maintains that more research needs to be conducted to ascertain GMO safety, ignoring the fact that practically every governing body in nutrition

American Astrophysicist Neil Degrasse Tyson has spoken on this issue, in an interview between him and Dan Arel on his webpage *Patheos.com*. He said:

“It’s wrong to simply attack the right for science denial. Liberals cannot claim to fully embrace science, there is plenty of science denial from the left. Liberals always assert scientific literacy, and that just isn’t the case. Funding for science under Republican administrations has been historically higher than under Democrats, under Bush, the big denier issue was stem cells. But he increased military research. Republicans just invest in things like military research instead of biology and NASA. Both sides fund scientific research they just fund different projects. If you are running the government, I care where the money is”.

This is no revelation to many who observe politics. In fact, if you ask a swinging voter who they are going the vote for, the response is more than likely going to be: “the lesser of two evils”. As defeatist as this sounds, it is an issue that will not disappear any time soon. As long as a political party establishes a party line and aligns itself with similar sub-culture ideologies, the hypocrisy will always be present. This is not in any way advocating an Anarchist Democracy worldview or the dissolution of the existing government structure. It is merely an observation of the consequences that arise from acknowledging a political identity.

The inconsistency with which science is accepted can have a tumble weave effect, whereby science denial from the public can flow into their respective parties. Strident conspiracy theorists tend to accept most conspiracy theories that are presented to them, especially in regards to anti-vaccination. It is highly likely that most people you engage in who are anti-vaxxers will be against water fluoridation and GMOs. So when a partisan Greens supporter accepts claims against GMOs they will be inclined to be drawn to others who share that worldview. They can be at risk of being misled by conspiracy theorists like Dr Mercola, Alex Jones, NaturalNews and many of the like.

There is a reversal of the relationship that can also occur in respect of science denying political ideology. The tedious *ad hominem* argument thrown by the right towards someone arguing the case for anthropogenic global warming, is, in the majority of cases: “They must be a Greeny”. When one subconsciously accepts and denies facts based solely on agreement with a political identity, an assumption is made that everyone else behaves in the same manner. It ultimately instigates distrust before any persuasion can even be attempted.

There is a hidden advantage within these flawed, arrogant and dogmatic approaches from political parties. It will give rationalists the power to persuade others away from their irrational standpoints. The advantage is that there will always be a common ground that can be reached. If one were to persuade a hardened Coalition supporter towards accepting the seriousness surrounding climate change, the answer lies in acknowledging the

shortcomings of Labor and Greens’ unscientific positions before attempting persuasion. It will give peace of mind that you are not simply “cheering for a team” and may make them more open to reason.

Of course this method is not bulletproof. As Thomas Paine once said “To argue with a man who has renounced the use of reason is like administering medicine to the dead”.

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– Andrew Tulloch is a journalist

The death of a perfectly good tax

When the Abbott government repealed the carbon tax an opportunity was lost.

by John Perkins

When the abolition of the carbon tax was passed in the Senate in July, Tony Abbott and his collaborators were triumphant. Those who had systematically peddled the populist myth that the tax was a bad thing had apparently been vindicated. If this is not the greatest political hoax, and the greatest failure of public policy ever perpetrated in Australia, then what is?

The carbon tax was working well. It had reduced carbon emissions. It had contributed relatively little to electricity price rises. Most recent price rises had been due to extensive and unnecessary over-investment in electricity distribution infrastructure. The tax had enabled cleaner energy production to be more competitive with dirty coal-fired plants. Consumers who had been disadvantaged by the price rises had been adequately compensated through other measures. The tax was working

exactly as it was meant to.

With the abolition of the tax, all this is reversed. Big coal generators will receive billions in compensation. Cleaner gas-fired electricity plants and renewable energy providers will now find it harder to compete against coal. This will happen even without any malicious tampering with the Renewable Energy Targets.

There was no damage to the economy due to the carbon tax. It was moving the economy in a positive direction. Such a tax is the textbook economic solution to dealing with pollution due to a negative externality. The cost to the environment needs to be internalised in the market. A tax is the simplest way to do it. Tony Abbott, who has studied economics, knows this.

The tax was not toxic. Its abolition is toxic. Carbon pollution will increase as a result. The budget will be worsened. Tax revenue



will now have to be raised in other ways, most likely in ways that will hit the poor and benefit the rich and the big polluters. The so-called budget emergency was just another ruse.

The campaign to abolish the tax was a cynical device to dupe the Australian public in order to win votes. Regrettably, the punters fell for it. But that, of course, was not the only motivation by the conspirators of deception. Their motivation was ideological. Market fundamentalists cannot accept that markets can fail, because the solution requires government intervention. This is ideologically abhorrent to the right wing mentality. They therefore cling to denial and rejection of scientific evidence, rather than adjusting their prejudices.

But what of the consequences of their actions, and of the long-term damage that will result? Will the climate deniers be held responsible? There have been several recent cases where former

for charges of culpability for political misdeeds. And in the case of the carbon tax abolition debacle, abundant evidence of culpability not only on the public record, has been proudly proclaimed.

But how can damages for consequent loss be apportioned in the future? Unfortunately, we must wait for a time when the consequences of climate change are so dire that the world is forced to take urgent remedial action. When it is agreed that geoengineering is needed, then the deniers will have recanted and retreated. But they will be unable to escape blame. And Tony Abbott will be the prime target.

He did not act alone: all members of parliament who voted to abolish the carbon tax are culpable. We may also include as liable all those who actively conspired and assisted in the campaign to get those members elected. It would not be hard to track down all those who were involved in the infamous campaign to ‘axe the

“The tax was not toxic. Its abolition is toxic.”

politicians have been hauled before courts and commissions to account for their actions.

One example is the well intentioned, but ill-fated, home insulation scheme. Former government ministers have been held liable for shonky workplace practices that resulted in deaths while implementing the scheme. Ceiling batts are a better solution than foil insulation, but if foil insulation was to be installed, then a basic precaution would be to turn off the power. Are ministers vicariously liable for any workplace accident, possibly involving contractor negligence, just because a program is government-funded?

While safety training could certainly have been better implemented, there was no desire to willfully cause harm in the home insulation scheme. Its haste was due to the economic emergency. With the abolition of the carbon tax, however, the desire to increase pollution is certainly willful and deliberate. Will the perpetrators of this outrage ever be brought to justice for the dire consequences of their actions?

The quest to impose political liability can stretch over a long period of time. Julia Gillard was still appearing before enquiries to answer for something that occurred in her professional life almost 25 years ago. So we may assume there is no statute of limitations

tax’. We should make note of all those responsible.

The consequences we are talking about are not the trivialities of current political vendettas. The financial damages of unchecked climate change will be vast. Increased costs and loss through more frequent natural disasters and loss of crop production due to drought and flood are only the beginning. When coastal inundation due to sea level rise starts to bite, civilisation will really be in crisis.

The cumulative financial cost, due to the willful malevolence of politicians such as Abbott, will be gigantic. Of course, the problem is global and Australia is only a small contributor. But only Australia has deliberately reversed an effective and operational remedial measure, with a premeditated and reckless desire to increase the damage.

Taking into account our coal exports, Australia causes about three percent of global carbon emissions. Therefore all those responsible and complicit in the wicked campaign of destruction and deception should be put on notice: you will be held liable for three percent of all global costs. We know who you are. The damage is your responsibility and you will pay.

– John Perkins is an Associate at the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research

Man is no machine

The bionic ear demonstrates how hard it is to mimic biology.

A common theme in science fiction is the blending of man and machine. It is easy to imagine that as machines become more complex the boundaries between the biological and the mechanical can easily be blurred.

The reality, however, is very different. The interface between the body and electronic devices is surprisingly crude and to date does not really point to a future when man and machine will be readily combined. Professor Rob Shepherd, Director of the Bionics Institute at the University of Melbourne is an expert on the bionic ear, the so-called Cochlear implants. At a talk at the Royal Society, he described advances in machines that modify or improve human biological functioning. Although advances have been made, the shortcomings are severe.

The first machine to be used widely was the heart pacemaker, which was developed in the 1950s. It resulted in a “dramatic impact on the quality of life of millions of people”.

Since that time, we have seen devices such as cochlear implants to alleviate severe hearing loss and deep brain stimulators reduce tremors associated with Parkinson’s disease. Neural prostheses, engineered devices that electrically stimulate excitable tissue in order to improve health outcomes, are also being developed, which are being used to treat conditions like epilepsy and obsessive compulsive disorder.

Shepherd says retinal prostheses have recently been commercialised, which are using technology very close to the Cochlear implant. There is still much work to be done to determine the visual pathways in the brain, however: the visual mid-brain or the visual cortex.

“We think we need over 1,000 electrodes to read a basic font,” says Shepherd. “Twenty four electrodes are not designed for reading but to identify objects.”



Cortical electrodes are being used on the surface of the brain to predict the onset of seizures, making them more manageable. Functional electrical stimulation is being used to assist paraplegics stand and walk. Deep brain stimulation is being used to treat severe depression and related psychiatric disorders. Vestibular prostheses can assist patients with severe balance disorders. Artificial limbs are being devised that incorporate recording or feedback devices, such as brain–computer interfaces.

“Biology plus electronics equals bionics,” says Shepherd. “They all have electrodes.” They are made from platinum because it is biologically inert; some are now being made in titanium.

The big breakthrough in the 1960s, which allowed such machines to be developed, was the invention of the transistor. The next major advance was the development of integrated circuits, which could be custom made for each device.

Shepherd notes that 360 million people in the world have debilitating hearing loss, most commonly because the hair cells in the inner ear have deteriorated. He says there is “no way of converting mechanical impulse into nerve information.” But it was possible to receive useful information through electrical signals.

“We were trying to replicate 1,500 hair cells with 22 electrodes,” he says. “It was the world’s most sophisticated implant. Initially, the devices worked well in a quiet room, but in a noisy environment they did not work well.”

Commercialisation remains a big challenge; Cochlear is a rare example of it occurring successfully. Shepherd estimates that demonstrating the idea is only 10 per cent of the task. “You need a huge amount of funding to drive it to commercialisation. Cochlear has 2,400 employees and 60–70 per cent of the market.”

There may have been some dramatic developments, but the machines remain crude. Shepherd says that what has to be remembered is that the plastic brain does “all the heavy lifting”: it is the biological side of bionics that is doing most of the work. “An 80 year old still has a very plastic brain.”

Neither is it just a matter of increasing the complexity of the machine. Putting more electrodes into a Cochlear implant does not improve the performance. “Why do we not put in 100 electrodes? It doesn’t matter how many electrodes you put in, you don’t get any more bang for your buck.”

Shepherd dramatically demonstrated the shortcomings of the mechanical devices. He played what it is estimated that music sounds like to a person with the ear implant. A Beethoven symphony was unlistenable static. The lesson was unmistakable. The biological world is far in advance of any man made machines. If the machines are to be effective, they must act only as supporters of the body. They cannot be replacements.

The Enlightenment: who is criticising it and why

A debate over historical terms.

by David Tribe

Apart from being a complex of concepts, the Enlightenment is an historical period. As such, it's subject to the following observations. The names for historical periods are usually given by subsequent generations, by scholars and opinion formers within these generations, and might have been generally unrecognisable by ordinary people at the time.

These names represent a broad consensus of historians and are rarely, if ever, universally accepted. There is typically considerable overlap, so each new period has forerunners in the previous period and influences the subsequent period(s). The publicity for anything significant — excluding sporting and artistic achievements — is usually given when it's widely attacked and words can change their meanings to individuals. Nevertheless, a broad consensus exists in every time and place.

To illustrate, most have a tendency to emulate Humpty Dumpty's attitude in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871): "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less." Meaningful conversation, however, would be impossible if we all took this assertion literally. An example of how this confusion relates to the Enlightenment can be seen in Bishop Richard Watson's book, *An Apology for the Bible* (1796). George III riposted: "Apology! I did not know that the Bible needed an apology."

Let us begin our consideration of this historical period with the definition given by the anonymous author of the entry for the "Enlightenment" in the 1990 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Micropaedia*: "A European intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries in which ideas concerning God, reason, nature, and man were synthesized into a worldview that gained wide assent and that instigated revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, and politics. Central to Enlightenment thought were the use and the celebration of reason, the power by which man understands the universe and improves his own condition. The goals of rational man were considered to be knowledge, freedom, and happiness."

So far, so good. Unfortunately, the rest of the entry contains questionable assertions and a few mistakes. These occur largely because the 17th-century Enlightenment was broadly different from the 18th-century one. In my essay "On Consciousness" in the Winter 2014 issue of *Australian Humanist*, I encapsulate the difference: "The 17th century is also the start of the Enlightenment's association with British Empiricists; the Enlightenment's 18th-century Age of Reason belongs to Franco-German Rationalists. Empiricism relies on observation, comparison, experimentation and *a posteriori* (inductive) thought; rationalism depends on

intuition, reflection, conceptualisation and *a priori* (deductive) thought. Confusingly, the great names of the Enlightenment are often described, or see themselves, as both materialists and immaterialists, so classification is challenging."

So much for definition. Now to the guts of the issue: "Who is criticising the Enlightenment and why?" Despite the Biblical assertion "Men loved darkness rather than light" (St John 3:19), virtually nobody admitted. The Enlightenment, like Motherhood, should have received universal approbation, sincere or not. But of course it hasn't.

While some Humanists believe, as the British Humanist Association did in the 1960s and perhaps today, that we should work with and not against organised religion in all matters, ecclesiastical and social, organised religion is an implacable critic of the Enlightenment and associated Humanist values. By "organised religion" I mean religious orthodoxy or fundamentalism, not genial and relatively dogma-free religious sects like modern Unitarianism and Universalism, which are regarded as part of the Humanist movement.

Here are some timelines of the many debates and tensions about science, religion and politics over the last 400 years. It demonstrates the complexity of the historical currents that shaped the Enlightenment and its aftermath:

- *16th century*: moralistic sects critical of aspects of the creeds, canon law and the Biblical canon, and putting religious faith behind (good) works (the Church's *magisterium* (authority) would be undermined and many clerics defrocked);
- *16th century and first 50 years of 17th century*: Protestant Reformation, especially fundamentalist Protestants who said that all individuals had direct access to God and that purgatory wasn't Biblical (no place for priestcraft and ultimately for the sacraments and the Church itself);
- *late 16th and all of 17th century*: rise of empirical science based on natural laws (implicit pantheism or deism and less need for the Bible and its interpreters, the priests);
- *end of 17th century, all of 18th and early 19th century*: explicit deism and some atheism (God not a granter or denier of prayers and no need for saints and relics with their custodial and fee-collecting priests, monks and nuns);
- *end of 18th century and intermittently during 19th and 20th centuries*: revolutions in France (1789), European revolutions of 1830, 1848, 1870, 1905 and 1917, global colonial and post-colonial revolutions (ordinary people and their new leaders rejecting the domination of Church and State);
- *all of 19th century*: "utopian socialism", with secular, albeit

unsuccessful, communes (no use for priests);

- *second half of 19th and all of 20th century*: Christian Socialism, predominantly Protestant and preaching, if not practising, social morality, but fortunately for religion allowing large segments of the intelligentsia and the media to claim that our society is living on “Christian moral capital” (no sacramental role for priests);

- *second half of 18th, all of 19th and first half of 20th century*: Utilitarianism, advancing “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” through earthly endeavours (neglecting the greatest piety through priestly endeavours);

- *second half of 19th and 20th century till 1990*: “scientific socialism”, called by the Vatican “godless communism” (no place for religion, and Marxists predicting that it would “wither away”);

- *mid-19th century to today*: Secularism, originally associated with G. J. Holyoake’s this-worldly ethics, then with Charles Bradlaugh’s atheism, republicanism and (Neo-)Malthusianism (birth control) and now with the separation of Church and State (secularity) (ethics deemed possible without dogmatic theology, atheism and probably republicanism rejecting religion, birth control not being called “embryonic murder”, family planning preventing Roman Catholics from outbreeding other groups, and the separation of Church and State not accepting that the Church should dominate the State);

- *latter 19th century and intermittently to today*: Pragmatism (proclaiming that truth is “what works”, not what the Bible and the Church preach);

- *1850 to mid-20th century*: Positivism and Logical Positivism (no place for otherworldly concerns); second half of 20th and early 21st centuries: Postmodernism (emphasis on relativity, with its claim that one culture or belief is as good as any other and negating the RC Church’s extra ecclesiam nulla salus — no salvation outside the Church).

The Church has now identified Secularism and Humanism, based on the Enlightenment values listed in the resolution passed at the 2014 Council of Australian Humanist Societies Convention, as having contributed to secularisation. The Enlightenment is associated with a decline in church-going, a loss of single-minded belief in, and adherence to, Church doctrines, and in clerical vocations.

The Enlightenment has another, perhaps surprising, critic: substantial segments of the scientific community. Their criticism is multi-faceted. It is chiefly empirical, but it also has a glint of politics.

Since the 17th century, philosophers have been debating whether human emotions or reason, however derived, are paramount in regulating behaviour. Obviously, during the 18th-century Age of Reason the consensus was clear. But change loomed. The Romantic Movement at the end of the 18th century, Utilitarianism in the 19th, Existentialism in the 20th and Postmodernism at the beginning of the 21st, put a premium on the emotions. Increasingly in academia, Rationalism came under

attack. Reason as a motivation of action proved hard to find in the chaotic world of 20th- and 21st-century wars and civil wars. Of course there were always reasons, or rationalisations, for these conflicts, but the failure to resolve them through peaceful negotiation, compromise and collaboration was concerning.

Darwinism, with its concept of “the survival of the fittest”, was seen to lead naturally to Social Darwinism, Eugenics and Economic Rationalism -- to the consternation of moral philosophers. But they, too, were embarrassed by having to admit that Adam Smith, author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) with its “invisible hand” of competition, was a professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University.

Conservative academics openly criticised the Enlightenment for its concentration on human rights to the neglect of human responsibilities. Outside academia, writers were turning from the fashionable defence of freewill to the promotion of determinism.

In my *Nucleoethics: Ethics in Modern Society* (1972) I posited that the traditional sequence of awareness-will-memory should be reversed. Realists outside, and inside, academia increasingly conceded, as did the Academic Sceptics of ancient Greece, that we do have to reach day-to-day conclusions on the basis of received opinion without (apparently) undertaking an internal rational debate on what to do. In the 21st century, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) demonstrated that parts of the cerebral cortex that control motor activity become activated around half a second before those that control cognition (awareness of this activity).

Happily, studies of neural activity in sleep demonstrated a continuum of consciousness and “unconsciousness” and a way of reconciling rationalism with empiricism. Empirical science couldn’t occur without the formulation of hypotheses to direct both observation and research, leading to the verification, or falsification, of assumptions. Thus, while our behaviour may be “impulsive” at the time it occurs, before then our rational mind has weighed up alternative actions and their likely consequences, so that for most of the time we behave sensibly and cooperatively.

In my *Words and Ideas* (2009), there are listed twelve characteristics of the Enlightenment. Only four of these — formalism, secularism, Humanism and cosmopolitanism — are specifically named in the CAHS resolution, but close examination of it reveals that all of them are implied. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry, referred to earlier, concluded: “The high optimism that marked much of Enlightenment thought, however, survived as one of the movement’s most enduring legacies: the belief that human history is a record of general progress.” It is a view evident in Thomas Paine’s declaration of *Rights of Man*, Part I (1791): “My country is the world and my religion is to do good.”

– David Tribe is the author of 13 books and founder of the University of Sydney’s Tribe Awards in fiction, poetry, philosophy, sculpture, and symphony.

The story of a courageous woman

by Dr Jocelynn A. Scutt

Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights is a valuable book, relevant to political activists, historians, feminists (who inevitably will be political activists, and often historians) and human rights advocates. It resonates globally, reaching far beyond the United States, just as feminism and feminists (including Susan B. Anthony) rarely see national borders as limiting radical demands. As Virginia Woolf so famously and rightly said: 'As a woman I have no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world.' So, too, the words and voices of feminists such as Anthony resonate the world over.

Collections, particularly those emanating from conferences, run the risk of suffering from inconsistent quality, or chapters not precisely fitting with the theme in order to flesh out a thin manuscript. Choosing Anthony as the named subject might be seen as having risks, too – for already she has several biographies, collections and numerous journal and newspaper articles devoted to her and her contribution to the Women's Movement and rights struggle. Yet *Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights* not only does not suffer from such drawbacks in nominating Anthony as the principal character, the book ensures she is placed

germane not just to the United States' battle for women's equal citizenship, to establishing and maintaining strong links between the women's cause and the cause of African Americans, and to ensuring a published record of women's historic campaign during her involvement. Anthony's focus was not solely on woman's suffrage. Nor was it on US women alone. She looked to the struggle outside the US, travelling to Europe, ostensibly for holidays, yet predictably linking with women engaged in women's rights campaigns elsewhere. Whilst in the US, too, she made connections to women campaigners visiting from abroad. In 1902 she met with Vida Goldstein, the only woman in the US at that time with the right to a national vote: fortuitously, Australian women's rights advocate Goldstein was present in the US when the Electoral Act 1902 (Cth) passed the Australian Parliament, extending voting rights in federal elections to women. Goldstein impressed Anthony (and President Truman, whom she met at his insistence), and Anthony impressed her. Despite this spur, it took almost two more decades for US women to gain suffrage – which (dying in 1906) Anthony never exercised legally.

Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights comprises

"Anthony argued that, although a pacifist, she recognised that women, like men, could do military service"

in the context of the times, the struggle and her contemporary campaigners for women's rights. The book brings new insights to its major character and her close confederates Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joselyn Gage and to other major players who worked with her, with whom she disagreed without respite, or with whom she fell out, then reconciled. It also canvasses areas of controversy and changing perceptions and structuring of arguments over the period of Anthony's engagement, bringing new insights into her life and the lives of those around her, and into the dimensions of the debate and the struggle, and the writing of history – and women's history.

Susan B. Anthony is rightly a hero of the cross-border Women's Movement. Her contribution was and remains

five sections, variously titled 'Constructing Memory', 'Anthony and Her Allies', 'Broadening the Boundaries of the Equal Rights Struggle' and 'Reconstructing Memory'. Parts 2 and 3 recount Anthony's work principally with Stanton to ensure women's suffrage alongside that of men of all races and backgrounds, including class. Here, Anthony is not always centre-stage. Hence Laura F. Free's chapter '"To Bury the Black Man and the Woman in the Citizen" ...' extracts Stanton's speeches at the New York Convention of 1867 which she and Anthony attended, with passing references to Anthony's own. This emphasises the women's strong relationship and the way their arguments complemented one another whilst adapting to refute the 'voting is male' position of anti-women's suffrage delegates. Thus, Anthony argued that,

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although a pacifist, she recognised that women, like men, could do military service, and would. Stanton derided men contending that male military service meant that men alone should vote, pointing out that few, if any, of the delegates had served – having paid \$US300.00 to send off young men to the Civil War in their place. In this recounting and assessment of Anthony and Stanton at the 1867 Convention, the way women were obliged to fashion arguments to address the often contradictory propositions made by men (and sometimes women) contesting women's rights comes through clearly.

Working together over their respective lifetimes, Stanton and Anthony made a formidable team. Yet they had different family backgrounds and circumstances. They did not always agree. 'I Pray with My Work' ...', written by Kathi Kern, highlights the principal philosophical difference between them – Stanton determinedly secular and unbound by religion, Anthony seeing radical Quakers' views of equality and rights as a solid foundation for her own advocacy and for Women Movement demands. *Susan B. Anthony* ... reflects, too, on differences between and among women devoted to women's cause, addressing conflicts between Anthony and Stanton and Frances Watkins Harper – the latter joining Lucy Stone's American Women's Suffrage Association rather than the National Women's Suffrage Association (NWSA) established by Anthony and Stanton. In 'Frances Watkins Harper and the Search for Women's Interracial Alliances', Alison M. Parker reflects upon Stanton, Anthony and NWSA's opposition to the 15th Amendment for its Black male exclusivity, contrasting Harper's view that her citizenship rights as an African American were 'about women' as well as being bound up in the struggle for African American men's rights' claims.

Just as Harper is the central figure in Parker's contribution, Leonora O'Reilly, Mary Kenney O'Sullivan and Irish-American women feature in Tara M. McCarthy's chapter 'The Ladies' Land League and the Labour Question ...'. Differences in the development of Protestant women's politicking and that of Roman Catholic women are posited as underlying the latter's labour orientated activism. Access to work, wages and decent industrial conditions was at the heart of both women's and men's campaigns in the Irish American parts of the country, particularly the north east. Irish American women's demands arose through this labour market focus, with equal pay, access to trades and professions, and the basic right of women to paid work leeching into demands for suffrage, marriage rights and freedoms, including women's economic autonomy. For Anthony, Stanton's recognition that the legal system trapped women into subservience married with Anthony's over-arching commitment to women's inalienable right to be free to 'be'. These strands met, in turn, with the right to work, so that although coming from different backgrounds, despite sometime disagreements and differences as to strategy and priorities, ultimately the Irish American women's struggle was complementary to and bolstered Anthony's women's rights agenda.

Matilda Joslyn Gage takes the running in Melissa Ryan's 'Nineteenth-Century Suffragists and the "Indian Problem"'. Ryan expounds upon the ambiguities and outright conflicts in Gage's writings on the position of Native Americans and their place in a nation ostensibly founded in equality and committed to democratic ideals. Ryan quotes Gage swinging between pitying Native Americans as uncivilised savages and as a people robbed of their right to citizenship, autonomy and independence – just as 'white' women were so denied. Ryan does not make the point that the language employed by Gage mirrors that used so often by men denying women's equal human status, yet she notes that, ultimately, Gage came to recognise – and to laud – Native American women's position as equal to Native American men's in traditional Native American culture and society. It is disappointing that this transformation is not really explained, so there remains work to be done on this very complex Women's Movement icon. Much has been written about Gage, particularly her falling out with Anthony over the *History of Woman Suffrage*. Ryan's contribution makes clear that further exploration remains.

This is very much the conclusion arising from both the introductory and the concluding chapters and parts. Lisa Tretault's 'We Shall Be Remembered: Susan B. Anthony and the Politics of Writing History' recounts the long struggle, principally by Anthony, to get the history of the Women's Movement as she knew and lived it into print. The three-volume *History of Woman Suffrage* (after Anthony's death expanded by a further two volumes) was a joint Anthony–Stanton–Gage enterprise – but Anthony was the driving force, finally taking over the project and propelling it into existence through her drive, finances and sheer will. This led to disgruntlement and disagreement, particularly on the part of Gage. However, Anthony clearly knew how important it was to record for posterity – and for the women working in her contemporary movement. Tretault brings to the reader the background to this compilation and the way in which subsequent feminist historians have drawn their own conclusions and put forward their own assessments of what lay behind the History's production. On some accounts, Anthony fares ill: she is depicted as a Trojan, even a termagant, pushing on regardless of other women's involvement in the women's suffrage cause and determined to imprint history with her footprint alone. Yet, as Tretault makes clear, this is not the whole story, if it is any real part of the story at all. Ann D. 'Knowing Susan B. Anthony – The Stories We Tell of a Life' complements this thoughtful piece well. Reading these two chapters against the backdrop of the whole work brings home the importance of researching to find 'the real' woman: being as fair as possible in assessing women of history, and remembering that, however good the research, however fair the assessment, the focus is this woman – who is she? The answers will likely remain elusive.

Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights. Editors: Christine L. Ridarsky and Mary M. Huth. University of Rochester Press, Rochester, NY, USA.

How can we know the unknowable?

by Reg Naulty

It is surprising what a male enterprise the current debate between theism and atheism is. The atheists, Jack Smart, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, A.C. Grayling, attract as opponents male heavyweights like John Haldane, Antony Flew, David Bentley Hart, and Deepak Chopra. As in other male preserves, the debate takes on a distantly grim aspect, so that it resembles an intellectual version of the gunfight at O.K. Corral.

This book is also a debate between theism and atheism, but two of the debaters are women, so it is interesting to see whether they campaign differently. It turns out that they would both have done pretty well at O.K. Corral. Jane Caro, an atheist, in reply to the Christian debater who is adamant that we need to be saved from our sinfulness, argues that this is an instance of the familiar advertising dodge of persuading people of a problem they didn't know they had, then persuading them that only your brand will fix it. Rachel Woodlock, a Muslim, in reply to the claim that Jesus died for our sins, replied that is like trying Hitler for crimes against humanity, and then sentencing Mother Theresa instead.

It would probably not reassure an atheist. The vision is presumably something going on in Muhammad's own mind. Is there anything that can be publicly inspected in religious experience? Sometimes there is. Consider the following from George Fox (1624–1691)

"After this I passed to Cambridge that evening, and when I came into the town it was all in uproar, hearing of my coming, and the scholars were up, and were exceeding rude. But I kept on my horse back and rid through them in the Lord's power. "Oh!" said they, "he shines, he glistens."

(Douglas Steere, *Quaker Spirituality*, SPCK London, 1984, p.91)

That is transfiguration. Others who were transfigured were St Dominic [1170–1221] and St Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833). It is also strongly implied by Montaigne, and is copiously illustrated in European, Islamic and Indian painting: haloes.

Of course, transfiguration is not evidence that a personal, spiritual power is the cause of the universe. For that, an argument with cosmic reach is required: for example, that the orderliness of

"There is a wide range of religious experience, and for some of them, the people who have them seek corroboration with greater zeal than even the most stringent sceptic."

Jane Caro sounds the refrain common to all the atheists in this debate: "examine all theories and beliefs critically and accept only those that live up to the test of evidence and reason" (p 28). The book does not raise the crucial question "What counts as evidence?" In the case of religious experience, there is a difference between the theist and atheist about this. It is the numinous qualities of the experience, usually its majesty and fascination, which induce the theist to spontaneously ascribe to it an other-worldly origin.

Atheists are mostly unimpressed. After all, all kinds of peculiar things go on in people's heads. Atheists think, not unreasonably, that the experience needs some further corroboration. There is a wide range of religious experience, and for some of them, the people who have them seek corroboration with greater zeal than even the most stringent sceptic. The reason is simple: they are afraid they are going out of their minds. Muhammad is a case in point. After receiving his first revelations, Muhammad thought he was one possessed, a type he had seen on his journeys through Arabia. So low was Muhammad's opinion of those people, that he ran to a cliff in order to commit suicide at once. But on his way, he saw a figure astride the horizon who hailed him as a messenger of God. That gave him the reassurance he needed.

the universe implies a designer. Such argument is not offered in this book, though it occurs in others in the current debate.

People who have read previous debates will still benefit from this one. Rachel Woodlock does well on the Sufi stream of Islam, and it becomes clear that it provides a bridge to the mystical wing of other religions. In contrast to such universalism, the picture of Christianity given by Simon Smart emphasizes its particularity, though he might not consider that a defect. Anthony Loewenstein presents a soulful version of atheism. In contrast, Jane Caro, the other atheist, always comes out fighting. Meeting someone like the numinous St Seraphim might convert her to theism, though I wouldn't bet on it.

The debate obviously arouses deep emotions in the four writers, but their civility never wavers.

For God's Sake. Jane Caro, Antony Loewenstein, Simon Smart, Rachel Woodlock. Macmillan. Sydney. 2013. \$32.99.

Time to end time

If time really did exist everything would be quite mad.

by Victor Senchenko

Recently, a person contacted me expressing how ‘time’ can supposedly be disproven by means of dimensions, where in his opinion shadows are two-dimensional. I explained to that person that shadows are not two-dimensional (as nothing in physical existence can have width and breadth, but no depth), and also that shadows do not physically exist. Shadows are merely regions of any surface that are prevented from having an exposure to light. We may describe these unexposed-to-light regions as shadows but these so-called shadows have no physical properties of their own. This is a physical fact, which can be easily proven, even though philosophers can argue against this physical fact as much as they want.

This is exactly what Dr Kristie Miller does in her article ‘Do clocks exist?’ in the Spring 2014 *Australian Rationalist*. She recounts how in the past it was considered acceptable for biologists to arrange various animals, which have some mutual commonality to lizards, into a general classification of reptiles: something that current evolutionary biologists evaluate as not existing under that moniker (it is a physical fact).

As a philosopher, her assessment of physical fact that ‘reptiles’ do not exist does not disturb her. She considers that: “Whether we say that there are reptiles or not doesn’t much matter. The point is this: just knowing the evolutionary biology is not enough to tell you whether there are reptiles.”

Physical facts matter little to her because she has her own perception based on her own belief rather than that of a rational conclusion, based on physical fact. For that reason she could easily argue that: “Whether we say that there are shadows or not doesn’t much matter. The point is this: just knowing the physical evidence is not enough to tell you whether there are shadows.”

Now for an example of physical truth. Most people would have been taught about the ‘water cycle’ in their younger school years. It depicts how water is responsible for weather cycles on Earth, by which water is transferred from oceans into air moisture and rain, only to run from land as rivers back into oceans. Simplistic? Sure. A fact? Yes. But can anyone actually follow an individual droplet of seawater through the whole cycle? Of course not. But this does not mean the cycle does not take place. This is a physical truth. While physical truth may not be proven in detail, it is undeniable because it can be examined and witnessed in its overall scope by anyone wishing to do so.

The early humans would have witnessed this physical truth, (a state of physically stable existence that the *Rationalist Journal* classifies as ‘Natural World’). It surrounded them: everything in nature occurred continuously in seasons, day after day, with no drastic extraordinary variances, such as disruptions due to the

sudden vanishing of people, or animals. There were no puzzling abstractions, or distortions, or disjoining of the same; no radical fracturing of skies or sudden displacements, distortions, or twisting of land. Some animals may have been frightening in size and shape and behavior to those early people, but those animals moved and lived in an ordinary, expected way, as all other animals always did, and do. Nobody ever materialized or disappeared at will. No animal flew and breathed fire, or had multiple heads, or had half of each other’s body.

Yet, despite this, that is exactly what early humans had devised for their own various purposes. They devised a process of mentally fabricating unreality amidst the constant reality of their surrounding environment (space).

This task was easily achieved from having the mental faculties that could enable them to do just that. They had memory recall, imagination ability, the ability to calibrate, and most importantly, a multiple consciousness (which allows humans to be aware of being aware): one could simply pretend for things to be they were not, and presto! They came to be! In this way a rock became a place where a spirit dwelled, and a god sat in judgment of men.

At the same period, human awareness of a day lived and the recall of past days allowed the imagination to reason that the day yet to come would come. And so arrived the concept of life’s continuum being comprised of the past, the present and the future: ergo: ‘time’. A life’s passage that began with birth and ended with death.

But then there was also the matter of ongoing days, which went on between dawn and dusk. This was reasoned to mean that the past, present and the future of time applied to the very land, and the Sun, and the stars. In which case ‘time’ had to be like a long stream, or river of future, on which fates of men and events had to be preordained; something that those who were capable could predict or foresee.

And so the whole construct of ‘time’ came to be. Of course, this concept of ‘time’ became a useful tool. As humans began to partition the Sun’s daily duration into segments of hours, and then minutes and even seconds – initially with structures such as sun dials, and then with mechanical devices comprising of clocks and then watches – they learned to use the segments of those hours and minutes to navigate space of Earth’s surface.

The same principle was applied to the Earth’s yearly orbits of the Sun. The yearly orbit was divided into segmented days, weeks and months, allowing humans to plan their movements well in advance, or ‘far into future’.

From those beginnings all humans today continue to move in space of Earth’s surface according to the directions of their

time-pieces – be they mechanical or digital – and calendars. When early astronomers and other kinds of ‘scientists’ came to study movements of ‘heavenly bodies’ and other unknown ‘forces’, such as gravitation, they had no reason to question the notion of ‘time’. A time-piece was a handy tool with which they could calculate movements and durations, and methods by which to set and calculate experiments.

The English Industrial Revolution, where everything had to ‘run like clockwork’, was based on mechanical innovation aiding ‘timed’ punctuality by which maximum individual human toil could be extracted to benefit the financial forces of capitalism.

And when Einstein devised his theories of relativity, he did so with full acceptance that ‘time’ is real, and which could slow down with an increasing speed of an object or a body. That is why he

Way galaxy together, just as the Sun’s gravity holds all the planets about it in what we call Solar System. Most importantly for us, life forms on Earth: our bodies have developed attuned to this gravity, so we depend on it.

Were ‘time’ to exist there would be no need for gravitation, as gravity would be redundant and even pointless considering that ‘time’ would be the prime entity, together with space (space/time remember?) that controlled everything in existence. And even if gravity did exist together with ‘time’, then every gravitation field would be controlled by fields of ‘time’.

Were ‘time’ to exist, those fields, and regions, and currents of ‘time’ would alter our gravity, so that our bodies would either need to adapt to such change or they would cease to function at all.

Point 3. On Earth, which has gravity, observe how vast volumes

“You could fall asleep in bed only to awaken with part of your body encased in masonry, because ‘time’ moved and the future has a house built where you once slept.”

chose to combine space with ‘time’, where the ‘C’ from his famous equation is representative of a presumed constant of ‘time’ and ‘speed of light’.

Despite constant claims that they want to know all the secrets of all existence, in reality humans do not want to know physical truth, because they are addicted to forming their own reality devised by their imagination. Not much different to their distant forebears who invented spirits, and gods, and ‘time’ – those in theoretical and experimental physics continue to invent and uphold notions that are physically impossible, such as time travel, matter popping-into-existence at the moment of Big Bang, and orifices in vacuum space, (although I have noticed that Professor Hawking has somewhat distanced himself from his initial concepts of black holes).

By such use of imagination humans have devised many notions, such as ‘time’, which have become so ingrained in our human perceptions that we take them for granted as physical reality. Yet it is possible to provide precise reasons why ‘time’ has no physical existence.

Point 1. We live on a planet where there are no unreal or ‘out-of-this-world’ occurrences. Everything that had taken place, and takes place, even during the devastations, has been within the realm of physical reality, as we understand it from personal experience.

Point 2. In vacuum space there are vast constellations that are known to disperse before reforming again. These are called ‘supernovas’. The reason for their reformations is their combined gravitation, or gravity for short. Our Earth has gravity, as we can all attest to. So does our Sun, the Moon, and all other large bodies in vacuum space. Gravity is also the force that holds our Milky

of gasses (air) and liquids (oceans) behave: they move, with currents and undercurrents, with elevations and depressions, with cycles, with influences from levels of heat affecting them.

Because separate large fluid and gas masses retain similar behaviour, were ‘time’ to exist it would have no firm structure. Its behaviour would be that of a flowing moving mass, spread across and around all of this Universe, never the same everywhere as there would be nothing in the vacuum space to give it constancy of mass and shape. It therefore would be more compressed, condensed and concentrated in some regions and zones and currents then in others, and thicker and thinner in others. This would make ‘time’ varying everywhere. That would also mean that where the varying ‘time’ regions intersected or touched there would be shifts in ‘time’ variations. One region would have a fast ‘time’ while the other slow. These variations in speed of ‘time’ would cause ‘time’ turbulences, ‘time’ funnels, ‘time’ sprouts and ‘time’ cyclones, causing instability of ‘time’.

And here we have another quandary: If ‘time’ exists, then what is the future? Where is the future? In what region of ‘time’ is that elusive entity resides? Perhaps next to the elusive god?

Point 4. All the physical planets, stars etc. are comprised of atomic structures, which are basically held together by their own gravitation. If examined carefully, all these atomic structures behave according to the physical actions and reactions they experience, as do the atomic particles forming us.

If ‘time’ existed there would be nothing to prevent ‘time’ in altering the physical behavior of all the particles that form all the chemicals, because their behaviour would be similarly affected by the varying regions and fields of ‘time’. So all the atomic particles, some of whose decay (dispersal) can be so precise that this is used

to maintain the function of the so-called ‘atomic clocks’, would cease to function as they currently do, but be beholden to what fields of ‘time’ would dictate.

Point 5. All life on this planet depends on our Sun for its light and heat.

If ‘time’ existed the Sun’s gravity is powerful, but not so powerful to prevent large amounts of light and gases to travel away from it. This dispersing light and matter travels in straight directions outwards – away from the Sun – and is only affected by the Earth’s gravity and magnetic fields and atmosphere that reflect some of it away and about Earth’s surface.

Were ‘time’ to exist and possess greater influence than that of gravity, then the regions and currents of ‘time’ would influence the speeds and directions of Sun’s heat and light. That would make the Sun’s light sway and distort from the overriding effects of ‘time’s’ power in its vicinity. So the emanating light and matter from the Sun would actually appear similar to the aurora borealis, or the Northern Lights instead of direct radiation. The same principle would apply to all bodies in vacuum space were ‘time’ to exist.

We have theories regarding ‘time’: an entity neither seen nor felt but which is supposed to impose the most stringent influence on everything, including our very lives. After all, our bodies age! Someone, or something, must surely be responsible for that! And how about the fact that we can recall our past days, while never being able to return into them? And how about our ability to mentally project our presumptions of what may occur in future, and make plans accordingly? It must all be due to that stream or river of ‘time’. No, no, no, never evaluate or congratulate our human ability of memory recall and mental projection ability, while having the ability to experience an awareness of being aware. Give credit for it all to ‘time’. Or god.

Miller considers that ‘time’ is a benevolent consistency, which simply somehow covers everything with its presence, allowing everything to go on without any harsh repercussions. But would that be the case? No!

All existence would comprise of horrible unreality and madness. ‘Time’ would flow in currents and tides within the mass of itself, covering all that is Universe with its time/space, not unlike an ocean on Earth, within which all objects and bodies would be influenced. That influence would distort and abstract everything, where reality as we know today would not exist.

There would be constant disruptions and distortions of everything, where a part of a body, for instance, would be in one ‘time’ zone and behaving differently to the other part of the same body. There would be sudden appearances and just as sudden disappearances of objects and bodies from and into moving fields of ‘time’. There would be body parts appearing out of nowhere, and objects and bodies being stretched and distorted beyond recognition. You could fall asleep in bed only to awaken with part of your body encased in masonry, because ‘time’ moved and the future has a house built where you once slept. Or you walk into a shop only to find yourself on some other planet. The same unreality would exist outside Earth, with appearances and disappearances and distortions of various suns and whole galaxies, affected by ravages and distortions of ‘time’.

So why is there no ‘time’? To put it simplistically: because the individual particles that form all the atoms, and cause all the atomic particles to behave as they individually do, are responsible for what I call a physical process of change. This physical process of change comes about from the actual body shapes of the individual particle, which experience physical body changes that consequently causes everything in physical existence to unite then to disperse.

“Hold on a minute, “ I hear you say, “if time has no physical existence then how do we measure periods that we called ‘time’?”

Well, this is easy: exactly as it was always done: by applying the duration of physical process of change that occurs when Earth rotates on its axis and orbits the Sun. Of course, there would nothing wrong in using the term ‘time’ to represent any duration of the physical process of change, just as long as it is not attributed to some invisible entity with mysterious properties to influence physical existence.

In expressing all physical activities in terms of a physical process of change, which all physical bodies undertake, this term should also not be mistaken for some kind of entity. It merely represents the sum total activity of all individual particles that can be viewed as this Universe. Therefore, this Universe, and all the billions to the power of billion universes that fill the infinite and eternal vacuum space, are all physical processes of change. And as such NONE have ever depended for their physical existence on ‘time’ or god.

– Victor Senchenko is the author of *Revelations of a human*



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- Publish a journal, the Australian Rationalist
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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

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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.

What menaces free discussion

We are all familiar with the epic of the age-long struggle of our forefathers to win and establish the principle of freedom of discussion – the right of the individual to criticise the beliefs of others, to argue about any question under the sun, and to express his thoughts and feelings.

In principle, in English-speaking countries, that freedom has been won. We of our generation are charged only with the responsibility of guarding it and using it. But indeed this is no nominal task. Today we are engaged in a world wide war against powers which have utterly destroyed freedom in their own countries and the lands that they have conquered. If we were also were to be conquered by Germany or Japan, all freedom of criticism and discussion would perish from the earth.

Even in our midst in our own country, there are forces which would pare away the freedom we have hitherto enjoyed, especially in the field of fundamental political discussion, and in the criticism of religion. There is a continual pressure to restore “conformity”. The Churches and the Fascist-Capitalist elements in society are definitely hostile to the expression of ideas “subversive” to the their respective vested interests.

However, it is not to these menaces that I wish to refer to now. I want to direct your attention to another menace, equally threatening to free discussion, yet less obvious, less easily recognised, and therefore perhaps even more dangerous. I mean this terrible convention that it is “bad form” to criticise the other fellow’s beliefs. I mean this damnable convention that in ordinary social intercourse, it is “the thing” to steer clear of controversial topics.

We boast of our spirit of tolerance. The Roman Catholic and the Methodist and the Rationalist can sit down and dine together, can be companions, and even close friends. How much better, we say, than trying to burn each other! So it is. But I want you to note the terms on which we preserve our friendly relations. These men of opposite convictions associate with one another – but only on the tacit understanding that they will avoid reference to any question on which they are in deep disagreement. For any of them to introduce a contentious or controversial topic would be to “drop a brick”; it would be a breach of good form, an offence against good manners, and exhibition of bad taste. That is the prevailing social convention.

I believe we have sold our birthright. If a topic is not contentious or controversial, then it is not worth discussing. On the other hand, if it is controversial or contentious, we are deterred by this social convention from discussing it with people of opposite opinions. Thus we have exchanged real freedom of criticism and discussion from freedom merely of ‘non-controversial’ discussion, a watery and useless substitute. And we have done this, not forced to it by any tyrannical Authority of Church or State, not through compulsion or repression, intolerance or persecution; but simply as a result of a tacit social convention to which we ourselves, if we

observe it, are parties. We have nobody but ourselves to blame. The only persons who can be held for any social convention are those who observe it.

There would be real freedom of discussion if Roman Catholic, the Methodist, and the Rationalist could and actually did argue with each other. There is only a sham freedom while this convention is observed. If Rationalists are among those who accept the convention – that it is bad manners the beliefs of other people (to their faces) – then those Rationalists have indeed betrayed the cause of freedom. We who have done this have sold the birthright which the Rationalists of an earlier generation fought so hard to win for us. We have sold it for the sake of being regarded as “nice” (i.e. undisturbing) people.

– A. E. Mander. Australian Rationalist, February 1943.

Confused Christianity

The war has thrown the Christian churches into hopeless confusion. There are two main bodies of thought in the Christian world. There are Christian pacifists who believe that a Christian can take no part in any war whatsoever. There are Christian leaders such as Archbishop Head who believe that the Christian should take part in this war and even advocate, as he does, compulsory service.

While our religious leaders say that this is a holy war, a war of Christianity against paganism, we find Adolf Hitler proclaiming: “For the first time in history the whole nation is making its appearance against Almighty God entreating Him to bless its struggle for existence.”

As in previous wars, each side proclaims its war to be just and approved by Almighty God. The laymen, faced with this conclusion, may well decide that both sides cannot be right, but that both may be wrong.

Belief in an almighty and loving God is hardly consistent with all the facts. The last war brought that home to many, and many more are busy learning it now.

Are there not, among rationalists, just as pronounced differences of opinion about war, its causes and consequences? Why should we stress the confusion among Christian thinkers and be quite complacent about the confusion in our own ranks?

It is because the clergy claim to be under the guidance of an all-powerful, all-knowing God. We know that we have but fallible human minds, and though reason is the guide to the truth it is subject to error. But the clergy pray for divine guidance that God will guide not only themselves but the leaders of nations along the right paths.

The clergy stand forth today as having no better sources than the rest of us. Their God has failed them. The people are ceasing to look to them for divine wisdom and enlightenment.

-- Australian Rationalist, March, 1940.

Drum Man by John Lennox

