
Contents

Peter Vardy Theologians should face Peter Singer's challenge	Page 3
Barry Gittins and Jen Vuk Japanese pilgrim enters the void	Page 8
Ruby Hamad Christians and Muslims exchange Middle East kindness	Page 11
Andrew Hamilton An adequate response to child sexual abuse	Page 14
Tony Kevin Ukraine endgame?	Page 16
Tim Kroenert How to trap a terrorist	Page 18
Thea Ormerod The truth about Jonathan Moylan	Page 20
Fiona Katauskas Morrison's refugee rodeo	Page 22
Gillian Bouras What will survive of us is love	Page 23
Catherine Magree Time to take on the welfare sceptics	Page 25
Pat Walsh Indonesia's new paradigm must include the past	Page 28
Tony Kelly The original orphan	Page 31
Michael Mullins The enemy is AIDS, not those who live with it	Page 34
John Warhurst All eyes on our MH17 mourners in chief	Page 36
Catherine Marshall What makes a girl beautiful	Page 38
Matthew Beard Blood, tears and ethics in Gaza	Page 41
Neil Ormerod More to tertiary education shake-up than \$100,000 degrees	Page 45

Andrew Hamilton Magnanimous memoir of a 'dead canary' bishop	Page 47
Tim Kroenert Loner's gifts to the lonely dead	Page 51
Mike Bowden Catholics face Good Samaritan dilemma on Christmas Island	Page 53
Philip Harvey Dubious heroes of Wikipedia	Page 56
Antonio Castillo Central American ganglands spark child refugee crisis	Page 59
Fiona Katauskas World woe	Page 62
Chris McGillion and Damian Grace Rules won't restore the Church	Page 63
Justin Glyn Beware of political posturing after MH17 tragedy	Page 67
Isabella Fels No longer thumped	Page 71
Tony Kevin Australia's diplomatic role amid MH17 fallout	Page 75
Andrew Hamilton Elegy for the 298 of MH17	Page 78
Michael Mullins Abbott Government blind to social capital	Page 79
Binoy Kampmark Bittersweet victory for the Mothers of Srebrenica	Page 81

Theologians should face Peter Singer's challenge

RELIGION

Peter Vardy



The philosopher Whitehead said that all philosophy is a footnote to Aristotle and Plato and he had a good point. There are not many new ideas in ethics - most theories are in some ways a revising of old ideas and the debates today would have been recognised by the ancient Greeks. Not much is new.

However, there has been an emerging challenge to traditional ethics which is not fully recognised or articulated and which strikes at the heart of all traditional religious ethics.

In some ways this challenge stemmed from Ludwig Feuerbach who argued that human beings are simply animals - 'we are what we eat', we are simply material beings who copulate, give birth, grow and die. Life has no transcendent purpose and, essentially, no meaning except that which we create.

Darwin's discovery of the means by which evolution takes place (the survival of the fittest) as well as the work of Freud, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and 20th century atheists such as Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer and others built on this insight. However it is the Australian philosopher, Peter Singer, who has done more than any other to codify and express this insight in ethical terms.

Singer is what is called a preference utilitarian - he holds that the more sentient beings can exercise choices and not suffer the better. He is passionately committed to the view that traditional religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam are speciest in holding that human beings are in an ontologically different category to animals and therefore argues strongly for the rights of animals. A dolphin or a monkey is able to suffer to a greater degree and also to experience happiness than someone with advanced Alzheimer's disease and, therefore, it is wrong to deny them rights. He is a vegetarian

and a passionate complainer for animal rights.

Traditionally Christians have wanted to hold that humans were in a different category than animals - indeed it was a heresy called Traducianism in the early Church to hold that a man and woman could have sex and make a human baby - as this would have meant we were no different from animals. God was needed to implant a soul as the soul was immortal and could not be generated by human agency.

The early Church fathers such as Augustine held that souls were implanted 40 days after the conception of a boy and 90 days after conception of a girl and, indeed, Augustine argued that if someone hit a woman and caused a miscarriage prior to these dates they were not guilty of murder as, since no soul had been implanted, a person was not really present. Islam follows this idea of implantation of souls and still holds that Allah implants a soul 100 or 120 days after conception and, after this date, the status of the foetus changes.

This gives rise to the idea of the sanctity of human life - human beings, it is held, are not simply animals - they are made in the image of God and are immortal. Singer utterly rejects such ideas as medieval and today many Christians no longer hold to the implantation of a soul. However this makes it difficult to respond to Peter Singer's challenge and the consequences of this are profound.

If the sanctity of life is rejected, then many of Peter Singer's ideas become persuasive. For instance if a baby is born badly disabled and the parents do not want it then why not, Singer argues, simply kill it and have another one? We would do this with a dog or a cat and since humans are simply animals surely the happiness and well-being of everyone would be improved if the disabled baby was killed and the couple had a new, healthy child.

For a badly disabled child, Singer says that life has begun very badly whereas if one kills it (humanely of course) then the next baby might well be healthy and would therefore have a better quality of life. 'When the death of the disabled infant', writes Singer, 'will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed.' Life that is free of suffering is to be cherished. Speaking of a baby, Singer argues in *Practical Ethics*, for the need to 'put aside feelings based on its small, helpless and - sometimes - cute appearance'.

Euthanasia would also make great sense - again we put a dog or a cat that is suffering out of its misery, so why not do the same for Granny? Religious people may react with horror to such suggestions but this is based on emotion and Singer urges us to forget emotion and be guided by reason. If humans are essentially animals, if there is no god and no meaning except that which we construct in this life, then his position becomes persuasive.

'After ruling our thoughts and our decisions about life and death for nearly two thousand years, the traditional Western ethic has collapsed.' On this note, Professor Peter Singer began his book - *Rethinking Life and Death*. He argues for a 'quality-of-life' ethic to replace what he considers to be the outgoing morality that is based on the 'sanctity-of-life'. Writing in the British journal 'The Spectator' in 1995 in an article entitled 'Killing Babies isn't Always Wrong,' Singer said of the Pope, 'I sometimes think that he and I at least share the virtue of seeing clearly what is at stake.' The sanctity-of-life ethic is the key issue at stake.

'That day had to come', states Singer, 'when Copernicus proved that the earth is not at the centre of the universe. It is ridiculous to pretend that the old ethics make sense when plainly they do not. The notion that human life is sacred just because it's human is medieval.'

Singer rejects ideas like 'sanctity-of-life', 'dignity', 'created in the image of God'. 'Fine phrases', he says, 'are the last resource of those who have run out of argument.' He sees no moral or philosophical significance to traditional terms such as 'being', 'nature' and 'essence'. What is fundamental, for Singer, is the capacity of humans and non-human animals to suffer. Human life is not sacrosanct, but certain kinds of human life can be 'meaningful'.

Surprisingly the response from religious thinkers to Singer have been muted - at least in terms of clear philosophic argument. This may partly be because the alternatives available in terms of response are limited. They include the following:

If one can hold onto implantation of souls as Islam does then this would refute Singer's claim that there is not essential difference between human beings and animals. However most modern philosophers reject this dualist approach and even the Catholic Church no longer firmly endorses this idea.

In the 1975 Declaration on Abortion, the Roman Catholic 'Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith' said that 'if the infusion of the soul [at conception] is judged only as probable to take its life is the same as incurring the danger of killing ... it is certain that even if one were to doubt whether the result of conception is already a human person, it is objectively a serious sin to incur the risk of committing homicide.'

Aristotle holds that human beings are rational animals and this is close to Singer's position as well as that taken by most modern philosophers.

It might be claimed that human beings are distinct from animals as they have greater rationality, consciousness, intelligence or the ability to feel pain than animals. This fails as an argument as there are many humans that have lesser capacities in these areas than animals. Kant, in his early years, argued that what made humans distinct from animals was their rationality and held that a non-rational person was not really human at all (the Nazis drew on this idea from Kant to justify some of their obscene policies). However later in Kant's life he recognised that this view was mistaken.

It might be claimed that human beings have greater potentialities than animals and are therefore to be valued differently from animals because of this. Singer maintains that the value of a human life is to be judged by its present capacities not by its potential - an embryo has the potential to become an adult but does not have the capacities of being a human so should not be regarded as such. Even if one maintained that potentialities should be taken into account, this would only affect some - for instance a patient with advanced Alzheimer's has limited potentiality.

Once the Sanctity of Life Principle is abandoned then there is no longer any fixed point at which human beings should be respected. Peter Singer is willing to kill an unwanted, disabled infant at 28 days after birth, but why not three months or even a year after birth? This could lead to terrible consequences with people who are intellectually or physically sub-normal being terminated against their will.

In other words it could be argued that rejecting the Sanctity of Life principle means embarking on a slippery slope with unacceptable consequences. Singer would not be

convinced by this - it would be up to legislators with the agreement of the public to impose restrictions so that unacceptable consequences did not follow.

Oxford University has established a centre for the study of Transhumanism. The aim is to develop human capacities considerably beyond where they are at present. Human beings are not seen as the end point of evolution. Separately robotics as a science is developing rapidly and the possibility of self-conscious robots (think of the film *I Robot* or the recent film *Her*) is now at least conceivable. If the human species is not distinct from other forms of life, then the application of these technologies to produce a super race is now within the bounds of what is conceptually possible. This would not trouble Singer.

Singer is a philosopher and, as such, presents cogent and rational arguments. However this does raise the question whether reason should be the final arbiter in all such matters. Instinct and emotion have a role to play in what it means to be human. The instinctive abhorrence that some people feel against killing full term babies should not be rejected on the grounds that they may not be rational. It could be argued that a denial of the Christian idea of love and a rejection of a commitment to the intrinsic worth of each individual no matter what their capacities may be rational but it is not human.

G. K. Chesterton wrote the following: 'If you argue with a madman, it is extremely probable that you will get the worst of it; for in many ways his mind moves all the quicker for not being delayed by the things that go with good judgement. He is not hampered by a sense of humour or by charity, or by the dumb certainties of experience. He is the more logical for losing certain sane affections. Indeed, the common phrase for insanity is in this respect a misleading one. The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason.'

A robot may be highly rational but is unlikely to share the emotions or instincts of human beings. This is potentially an important insight but the question remains whether the emotional reaction is an appropriate one and whether such a reaction is based on being 'speciest' as Singer holds because we have an emotional reaction to the protection of our own species.

If one believes in God, then it may be claimed that it is God who has created human beings directly. Human beings are immortal and their lives do not end in death and have far greater significance than any animal. If there is life after death, then it places the whole of this life in a completely different framework - this life is, at least in part, about preparing for the next and quality of life here is of less significance than preparing for death.

Plato argued that the task of the philosopher was to care for the soul as whilst the body perished the soul survived and would have to account for how life had been lived. This is a potentially interesting counter to Singer as it places human life in a completely different context and could justify the emotional reaction that many feel to Singer's position. It depends, of course, on an assumption (life after death) but this assumption is central to Christianity as St Paul recognised when he said that if Christ Jesus was not raised then human beings would be the most to be pitied.

The religious claim, therefore, can challenge Singer and show that his position is flawed. However this is a faith claim and one which in Australia, New Zealand and Europe is widely rejected so it is unlikely to command majority support and in a democracy this is crucial.

At the least, religious philosophers and theologians should further engage with the challenge to traditional ethics that Singer's position provides and should seek to engage with it. It is also wrong to demonise him as in the area of animal rights, care for the poor and the moral obligation of those who are wealthy to actively assist with problems in the Third World. He offers much to challenge religious believers. He gives away 20 per cent of his income and argues that this should be a minimum - how many religious believers do that?

It is important for young people (and therefore teachers) to be aware of the challenge to the Sanctity of Life that Singer provides as it is they who will have to influence future politicians in their decision making process. Singer puts forward a powerful case and it is one which, in the current climate where people seek happiness and quality of life above everything else, will find increasing support particularly with the difficulty of funding medical care for those who are old or disabled.

Increased support is not, of course, the same as saying his position is right - but that is why it is so important to engage with the issues and be clear about the basis for arguments which seek to show he is mistaken.

Dr Peter Vardy was formally vice-principal of the Jesuit run Heythrop College, University of London for twelve years. He is running a series of teacher training workshops on bioethics across all capital cities in Australia in August. Details can be obtained from Wendy Rowe, Wombat Education.

Japanese pilgrim enters the void

REVIEWS

Barry Gittins and Jen Vuk

**Colourless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage, by Haruki Murakami.
Random House, August 2014. Website**

Jen:

In his native Japan, the name Haruki Murakami has immense currency. This is a novelist who's been translated into 50 languages, garnered critical acclaim and awards, and who instils in his considerable fan base a fervent obsession (it's not unusual to see queues outside Tokyo book shops for the latest Murakami release).

Murakami's new novel is no exception. In the first week of its release *Colourless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* sold more than one million copies - an incredible achievement by anyone's standards.

First introduced to Murakami several years ago through the mind-altering *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, I was curious to see what alien and, yet, strangely familiar world the author would this time plunge the reader in.

At first glance *Colourless* seems to be Murakami scaling back on his themes and zeroing in on a life minor in scale. But, like much in the author's fiction, this isn't quite what it seems. The hapless Tsukuru Tazaki isn't what you'd call enigmatic as much as impervious. We soon learn that the reason for his 'sort of quiet resignation' is an incident that happened almost two decades ago.

In high school, Tsukuru formed close friendships with four other students, with whom he rather naively assumed he would be best friends forever. When his friends inexplicably turn on him and eject him from the circle, he's left reeling. Fast forward several years and the now 36-years-old still nurses these emotional scars. His new girlfriend, Sara, implores him to search out his erstwhile friends and embark on his 'years of pilgrimage'.

This is the only true path for Tsukuru. Christened the 'builder', it's no coincidence that Tsukuru makes a living designing train stations; the only place he feels at home. The scenes of Tsukuru watching the world literally go by are classic Murakami, where his signature struggle of buried emotions and missed opportunities plays out.

I must say that the central premise of a man's life unravelling on the back of youthful friendships gone wrong seemed to me somehow, well, juvenile. But perhaps Murakami's genius doesn't lie in the narrative (I wonder how much translation plays in this), but in the manner in which he steers his moody, psychedelic, some say Kafkaesque, themes of loneliness and alienation. 'I've always seen myself as an empty person, lacking color and identity,' Tsukuru says. 'Maybe that was my role in the group. To be empty.'

Can the same be said of Murakami's latest novel? On an existential level, perhaps. It's true that the 'absence' or 'emptiness' comes with too much conviction not to have greater purpose. When we enter the void of Murakami's making something indelible

happens. We, the reader, fill in the spaces. And somewhere between fact and fiction, we come to realise that the hopes, dreams and longing of one Tsukuru Tazaki converge with our own.

Barry:

What an intriguing ride Murakami takes us on. The book's pilgrimage towards intimacy contrasts sharply with the punishment of isolation; union (and reunion) are warded off by melancholy.

Significantly perhaps for a writer absorbed in etymology, whose own name in part means 'unevenness or irregularity' (*mura*) and 'spirits, or ghosts' (*kami*), he loads his moving story with the Japanese tradition of night terrors and supernatural bogeymen. Evil spirits latch onto people's souls, birds call out ominously in the night, events happen and do not happen, dreams are alternate truths, and assigned death tokens lend the doomed a Zen clarity of perception.

Add the dark forests and 'bad elves' of Finnish lore and we have a mystical ballgame that's balanced out by his charming stylistic flourishes. (Bellboys grin and exit rooms like clever cats, receptionists caress phones as if patting dogs' noses, taciturn buskers' dogs stare resolutely into the middle distance, etc.).

Murakami is quite the cultural magpie, with his word perfect dialogues and colour coding of characters evoking Tarantino, and the book's partial title (*Years of Pilgrimage*) tied to a work by Franz Liszt. Blink and you'll miss a wealth of references and relegated wisdom.

As for the self-doubting Tsukuru; he's an innocent; or is he? The book charts the course of this 'apostate' forced to swim friendless 'across the freezing sea at night'.

I hear your concerns about juvenile premises re Tsukuru's arrested development, Jen, but my key issue is one of narratorial reliability - Murakami has us dancing on treacherous shoals, with the presentation of mental health, reality and truth all up for grabs. A book that shelters from storms of rejection and depression, it also offers a bleak dismissal of permanence or reassurance as 'the builder' knows that to lose love is to die, and 'die in reality, or die figuratively - there isn't much difference between the two ... All will become a void.'

What initially comes off as self-indulgence and melodrama, taken in context and weighed in honest relevance, is one man staring bravely into the abyss.

Symbolism is a key tool, as opposed to fleshed-out characterisation or plot denouement. Jen, you are spot on about Franz Kafka's influence. The near-death of our self-effacing hero leads to a rebirth and, apparently, an astonishing physical change to the point of near-unrecognisability (take a bow, *Metamorphosis*' Gregor Samsa).

Coming from a traditional culture where assimilation and social order has been a historical imperative, perhaps the book's themes go beyond the intimate to acknowledge the soul-eating, conformist nature of society.

As for the convergence of hopes, dreams and longing, Jen, I'm inclined to a less cheery outlook. Murakami, brilliantly if erratically, offers an unreliable, subconscious dreamland where longing is torture and hope is just a way of prolonging the agony.

Jen Vuk is a freelance writer and editor whose work has appeared in The Herald Sun, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian, The Age and The Good Weekend. Barry Gittins is a communication and research consultant for the Salvation Army who has written for Inside History, Crosslight, The Transit Lounge, Changing Attitude Australia and The Rubicon.

Christians and Muslims exchange Middle East kindness

INTERNATIONAL

Ruby Hamad

Muslims join Christians in declaring 'I am Iraqi, I am Christian'

Hundreds rally to show support for Christians targeted by a rebel group in Iraq.

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In this Saturday, July 20, 2014 photo, displaced Christians who fled the violence in Mosul, pray at Mar Athanas church in the town of Qaraqush



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new in the Middle East. Perhaps it's the relentlessness of the 24-hour news cycle or the pervasive reach of social media that keeps the world literally at our fingertips, but events of the last few weeks give the impression that the troubled region of my birth has never been more bloody or violent.

As an Arab-Australian it's difficult to watch the events in Syria, Iraq and Gaza without a sense of guilt and shame. To outside eyes, it must appear that the Middle East is driven by hatred and bloodlust. One popular Egyptian blogger took to his Facebook page to proclaim that he is 'actually bored with the insanity of the Middle East. Israel has gone insane, Assad was always insane, ISIS is making a state out of insanity, and Egypt, well, I am not really sure how to even describe it anymore.'

Speaking of ISIS, in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, a single letter - the Arabic *nun* for 'Nazarene', an Islamic reference to Christians - was painted in red on the front doors of local Christians, leaving the small but long-established community reeling. Informed by the self-appointed theocrats ISIS that they could either leave, convert to Islam, or pay the heavy tax once imposed on religious minorities in Muslim states, the vast majority of Christians chose to flee.

And with that single act of intolerant cruelty, a 2000-year connection to the land was broken. As hundreds of Muslims rallied alongside Christians in Baghdad, declaring 'I am Iraqi, I am Christian', many of the refugees headed south and were able to find safe havens both in the homes of Muslims and in some of the holiest shrines of Shia Islam, including the shrine of Imam Ali.

Ali was the fourth caliph, the prophet Mohammed's son-in-law, and the founding namesake of the Shia strain of Islam, adherents of whom regard him as the true successor to the prophet. As well as at least 100 Christian families, the shrines are offering to house any others fleeing from ISIS violence, including Sunnis and Kurds.

Even as this tragedy was unfolding in Iraq, Israeli forces began targeting mosques in that country's ongoing pounding of the Gaza Strip. Like most Palestinian buildings it has struck, Israel claims they were being used by Hamas, either to store weapons or as hideouts.

One by one they were razed to the ground just as Ramadan was drawing to a close. And in a bittersweet turnaround, it was now Muslims who found a temporary safe haven in Gaza's churches. One young Palestinian, Mohammed Khalef, said of the experience: 'They let us pray. It's changed my view of Christians - I didn't really know any before, but they've become our brothers ... We (Muslims) prayed together ... Here, the love between Muslims and Christians has grown.'

This is the Middle East, at once unconscionably cruel and unbearably kind.

Of course, this is not the first time that persecuted members of one Middle Eastern faith have sought and found safety in the places of worship of those that are often cast as their sworn enemies.

In 2011, just weeks after a bomb ripped apart a Coptic Orthodox church in Alexandria Egypt, killing 23 worshipers, Christians joined hands in the famed Tahrir Square during the revolution that eventually toppled Hosni Mubarak. Forming a protective cordon, they made a circle around their fellow protestors, Muslims who had to take time out for their Friday prayers.

Days later, it was the Christians' turn for worship, and Muslims surrounded them as they celebrated Sunday mass. 'In the name of Jesus and Mohammed, we unify our ranks,' the Rev. Ihab al-Kharat said in his sermon on that day. When he finished, the crowd held up both a Quran and a cross, as they chanted in union, 'We are one.'

This spirit of protection goes all the way back to the time of Imam Ali. The story goes that Ali's brother Jaffar led a group of Muslim travellers through hostile territory, before finding refuge in predominantly Christian Abyssinia.

Safe havens for Palestinians are becoming fewer each day that Operation Protective Edge continues. Even UN-run shelters are not safe, and now, as I write this, there are reports that Israel has warned the Holy Family Latin Church in Gaza to evacuate. According to the church, it has 27 handicapped children, and nine elderly ladies who are not mobile, in its care. The children had recently been moved into the church because their care home, the House of Christ, was in an area earlier targeted by Israeli forces.

In his aforementioned Facebook diatribe against the Middle East, Mahmoud Salem jokingly implores those without families and obligations to leave the Middle East for their own good, to 'enjoy some peace and beauty' before they die. But for the people of Gaza, even that is not an option, thanks to the Israeli blockade.

And as the bombs rain down on what is surely the most wretched slice of land on earth, I wonder where the people will find comfort and safety when there are neither mosques nor churches left standing in the Gaza Strip.

Ruby Hamad is a Sydney writer and associate editor of progressive feminist website The Scavenger. She blogs at rubyhamad.wordpress.com and tweets @rubyhamad.

An adequate response to child sexual abuse

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

Reckoning: the Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse, written by Chris McGillion and Damian Grace, and jointly published by *Eureka Street* and ATF Press, offers a useful map of the journey that has led to the Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse. It recalls how the widespread sexual abuse of children within the Church came to prominence in Australia, outlines the variety of responses to it, and reflects on the explanations given for it.

The book is modest and even in its tone. It offers a broad perspective on the challenges that will arise from ensuring that children are safe in the future.

The dimensions of an adequate response to child sexual abuse by the Catholic Church are now fairly clear. First, children must be protected from abusive behaviour. This requires curtailing the opportunities for potential abusers to meet, groom and abuse children. It also requires preparing, monitoring and supervising church representatives who are in contact with children.

Second, the criminal gravity of sexual abuse must be recognised, and the response both to victims and offenders be proportionate to the seriousness of the crime. This requires responding professionally and transparently to accusations of abuse, excluding from public ministry those who have offended, and continuing to monitor any offenders who remain within religious communities.

Third, the serious harm suffered by people who were abused as children must be recognised. This is done by ensuring they receive the pastoral care and counseling they desire, and can claim compensation.

Finally, the Catholic Church must take responsibility for the sexual abuse inflicted by its representatives and for its concealment, and for ensuring that aspects of its culture that encourage abuse are remedied. For this, serious and independent study will be necessary.

McGillion and Grace detail the history of the often catastrophic failure in each of these dimensions. It also records considerable, if uneven, progress in some areas.

Certainly, potential offenders would find it much harder today to abuse children than they did forty years ago. Their access to children would be limited and monitored, and their behaviour would be more closely scrutinised. If their abuse were reported to their religious superiors they would face a strong risk of criminal prosecution and of exclusion from ministry.

Victims of abuse, too, now have some processes through which they may seek acknowledgment of abuse and compensation for it.

These changes, of course, are partial and are largely due to the unrelenting focus of the media on sexual abuse. But they also reflect the pressure from committed people within

the Church for change even in the face of resistance and incomprehension.

The challenges that remain are no less daunting. They are less about whether these large goals need to be realised; more about how to realise them and to enshrine them in Catholic culture. This requires a conversion of hearts as well as good process.

On the conceptual level the need to safeguard children and to treat sexual abuse as a crime seems to be generally accepted. The need for severity in dealing with offenders, for accountability in people working with children and for regulation of the contact between adults and children, is also widely accepted. The challenge is to embody these things in reflective practice.

The rhetoric of putting the victim first, of providing pastoral care and access to compensation is now generally adopted. The larger challenge is to think, feel and act out of these sentiments. It is easy to talk the talk; harder to walk the walk.

There is also an inherent tension between the need of victims to be believed and the need to establish the credibility of claims of abuse. Not simply the welfare of victims but the good name and lives of people accused of abuse are at stake and demand a process of discernment.

The proposal that claims for compensation should be decided by a tribunal independent of the institutions in which abuse has taken place has received widespread support. The challenge will again lie in the detail.

We might expect that research into the causes and history of sexual abuse will continue and increase. As part of its owning of the crimes that have flourished within it, the challenge for the Church is to take such research seriously, particularly when it touches on the part played by such aspects of Catholic life, culture and governance as clerical celibacy, attitudes to women and sexual morality, and clericalism.

Research on these things needs to be done comparatively, not to let the Church off the hook, but to provide control groups that can show which factors are significant in causing sexual abuse.

Finally a large challenge, discussed by the writers, will be how far to rely on a detailed regulatory regime. An outsider's view of governmental practice in the area of child protection suggests that a highly regulated environment can encourage ticking off boxes at a cost to children's welfare.

In dealing with people, including children, the ultimate goal must not be simply to eliminate destructive relationships but to foster good, responsible relationships.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

Read 'Rules won't restore the Church', an extract from Reckoning.

Ukraine endgame?

INTERNATIONAL

Tony Kevin

The shooting down on 17 July of MH17, some 60km east of Donetsk and just south of the Russian border, by insurgent anti-aircraft missiles has now been swallowed up in the wider drama of the fierce civil war raging in Ukraine's pro-Russian eastern region.

The Kiev government, led by President Poroshenko, on 2 July ended a ten-day ceasefire, launching an all-out military offensive from Ukraine's second-largest city Kharkiv, some 40km from the Russian border. The offensive, involving shelling, tanks and aircraft, was against the outgunned insurgent-controlled cities of Slavyansk, Donetsk and Lugansk. Poroshenko said the rebels had been using the preceding ten-day ceasefire to regroup and restock with weapons from Russia. The offensive cannot have begun without tacit Western assent.

Rebel forces withdrew from Slavyansk (150km from the Russian border) on 5 July. Donetsk, the main rebel stronghold, 50km from the Russian border, is now almost encircled by the Ukrainian Army and may fall to them within hours or days. The city is being shelled in efforts to destroy insurgent headquarters. A badly-targeted shell has destroyed an apartment building, killing one man. If or when Donetsk falls, only Lugansk to the east, 20km from the Russian border, will remain in rebel hands.

Large numbers of civilian refugees have fled their homes in the expanding war zone (which includes the currently contested MH17 crash area). The UNHCR estimated on 25 July that as of 18 July, 230,000 people, mainly from Donetsk and Lugansk regions, had fled. Some 130,000 had crossed into Russia, and 100,000 fled towards other parts of Ukraine. The UNHCR spokesman said on 25 July that the number of refugees would be much higher now. Nearly a week on, by now it would be higher still, with large numbers fleeing from Donetsk.

On 24 July, the International Committee of the Red Cross proclaimed Ukraine to be in a state of civil war, appealing to all those involved to respect the humanitarian rules of war or face later indictment as war criminals. The ICRC may have been prompted to do this by reports of indiscriminate shelling by the Ukrainian Army of civilian sites in contested areas.

The burning question now is, what will Putin's Russia do? To date, its military and political assistance to the rebels was covert and deniable. But I cannot see how Putin could ignore the major challenge to Russia's national interests and prestige if the rebels are routed, amid scenes of large-scale civilian suffering and dislocation in Eastern Ukraine. It would look as if he had abandoned the people to Russia's enemies. Recent developments may soon force his hand into overt military intervention.

The whole region is of great historical and emotional significance to Russians. The battle of Poltava against Swedish invasion took place a little to the west of Kharkiv. The Russian city of Kursk, the site of the pivotal WW2 Kursk Salient battle, in which the Red Army

first turned the tide against Nazi forces advancing towards Moscow, is only 200km to the north of Kharkiv.

While the horrified gaze of the world is focused on Gaza, Putin stands alone, facing a momentous decision. The West is tightening economic sanctions on Russia, threatening economic isolation, and preparing to celebrate Poroshenko's apparently imminent military victory in East Ukraine. I know how Russians will see this.

Remarkably, the supply line of the Ukrainian army offensive, all the way back to Kharkiv, is within easy striking distance of powerful Russian forces massed behind the nearby border. In purely military terms, a Russian attack, even on Kharkiv itself, would cripple the offensive and reinvigorate the flagging morale of pro-Russian insurgents. In political terms, it would represent a major and dangerous escalation of East-West tension.

These are dangerous times. President Obama seems to lack any sense of urgency. He has been shrugging off Putin's repeated warnings over many months that vital Russian national interests are engaged in this armed conflict on Russia's borders.

I would not be surprised in coming days to read of a major Russian-triggered overt escalation of this war. The West seems to be leaving Putin and the Russian Army no face-saving exit strategy, and I imagine Putin will be sorely tempted to strike back at Poroshenko's Ukraine before it is too late. And then what will the West do?

Tony Kevin is a former Australian ambassador to Cambodia and Poland and author of several books including [Reluctant Rescuers](#).

How to trap a terrorist

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

***A Most Wanted Man* (M). Director: Anton Corbijn. Starring: Philip Seymour Hoffman, Rachel McAdams, Willem Dafoe, Robin Wright, Grigoriy Dobrygin, Homayoun Ershadi, Rainer Bock. 122 minutes**

British novelist John le Carré's fine espionage thrillers have formed the basis for some excellent films over the past decade. The latest, *A Most Wanted Man*, joins 2005's *The Constant Gardener* and 2011's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* among those ranks. Credit for this goes to Dutch director Corbijn and Australian screenwriter Andrew Bovell, who carefully array the pieces of le Carré's narrative puzzle with a keen eye for the intricacies of plot and the pervasive moral uncertainty that are the marks of le Carré's work.

Credit, also, to the late great American actor Hoffman, in one of his final roles prior to his death from a drug overdose in February this year. He plays Günther Bachmann, a ruffled, hard-drinking intelligence operative in Hamburg who heads up a team that infiltrates the city's Islamic community, with a view to gathering information that will lead them to higher-profile suspects. Bachmann carries with him the shame of a past, badly botched operation, and Hoffman channels the weight of this disgrace into every tic and gesture of his performance. The bittersweet joy of witnessing him at work adds an accidental extra layer to an already complex film.

The German port city of Hamburg was the place where Mohammed Atta and his collaborators planned the September 11 terrorist attacks; the sense of hyper-vigilance that stems from this fatal embarrassment pervades the events of the film in the same way that Bachmann's personal disgrace pervades Hoffman's performance. Interdepartmental relationships remain terse to say the least; in particular, the patient, considered approach taken by Bachmann and his team brings him into direct conflict with one superior, Mohr (Bock), who is impatient to remove suspicious characters from circulation as quickly as possible.

Their mutual animosity comes to a head over the fate of 26-year-old Issa Karpov (Dobrygin), a half-Chechen, half-Russian immigrant, who turns up in Hamburg and starts making enquiries at a bank about a large account held there by his late father. Bachmann sees the possibility of turning the young man and his millions to the purposes of entrapping a 'big fish', Dr Faisal Abdullah (Ershadi), a respected Muslim academic and philanthropist whom Bachmann suspects of funding terrorists. Mohr grudgingly allows him 72 hours to execute his plan.

Issa in the meantime makes contact with passionate and idealistic human rights lawyer Annabel Richter (McAdams), who is deeply affected by his backstory of imprisonment and torture in both of his native countries; and of bank manager Tommy Brue (Dafoe), who is sceptical about Issa's identity and motives but is won over by Annabel's charms. Both are recruited involuntarily into Bachmann's scheme, which will involve betraying and

manipulating Issa in the short term, for a purported big-picture gain in the long-term, including for Issa himself.

A Most Wanted Man feasts on these kinds of ethical quandaries. Even Issa, who among the film's characters can be most accurately described as a victim, must weigh the costs of seeding his new life in Germany with the ill-gotten funds of his father, a brutal Russian colonel. As events unfold, betrayal is weighed against betrayal, and ethics and morality are calculated using the sliding scale of a greater good that is dubbed, not without irony, as 'making the world a safer place'. Safer for whom? Few characters emerge unscathed.

Tim Kroenert is assistant editor of Eureka Street.

The truth about Jonathan Moylan

ENVIRONMENT

Thea Ormerod



For all those who would be critical of protesters like Jonathan Moylan, let's zoom out to the big picture. 'Jono', as he is called by his friends, was given a suspended sentence last Friday 25 July. The previous day, Professor Sinclair Davidson took him and other environmentalists to task in *The Conversation* with 'Environmentalists have a right to protest - but not at all costs'. Davidson also had a go at the campaign to divest from fossil fuels.

In January last year Moylan circulated a media release purportedly from the ANZ bank that announced ANZ's withdrawal of a \$1.26 billion loan facility to Whitehaven Coal for its Maules Creek coal project. While this was an act of fraud on Moylan's part, he was not unduly penalised because the judge understood that the hoax press release was not about personal gain, but a desire to protect the planet from Whitehaven's new mine.

When it comes to deception, let's compare the beam in the eye of the fossil fuel lobby with the splinter in Moylan's. Even apart from the findings of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, it is well-known that companies regularly agree to environmental protection conditions to win licensing approvals, then fail to fulfil their commitments.

It appears that Whitehaven Coal provided inaccurate information to the NSW State Government regarding the like-for-like forest offsets that were necessary for the project to be approved. Independent ecologists have found that 'the majority of the offsets are not, in fact, box-gum woodland at all ... even the areas that are box-gum woodland are so degraded as to be very unlikely to ever reach a high quality status again.' Yet forest clearing continues and no penalty is imposed.

Likewise, even though the company committed to respecting the cultural rights of the Gomeroi traditional custodians of the area, to date, seven of their 11 sacred sites have been bulldozed. To add insult to injury, the Gomeroi are locked out of the forest even for funeral ceremonies.

Back to fossil fuel companies more generally and there are *modus operandi* which are quite legal but nonetheless ethically highly questionable. These have been detailed by former political insider, Guy Pearse, and his colleagues in their 2013 book *Big Coal: Australia's Dirtiest Habit*. For decades, the fossil fuel industry has quietly poured vast sums into supposedly 'independent' climate denial think tanks such as the Institute of Public Affairs in Australia, the Global Warming Policy Foundation (UK) and the Heartland

Institute (USA).

Large numbers of influential political lobbyists here and overseas are employed to ensure legislation is passed which limits support for renewables and maximises profits for fossil fuel companies. Attempts at regulation are met with public campaigns against either the regulation or the politicians pushing for it. We saw this with the unheralded campaign against the mining tax at the last election. When Davidson is critical of environmentalists for 'failing to convince voters', this is what we are up against.

In Australia, the public has been led to believe the mining sector creates jobs. The truth is, oil, gas and coal combined employ less than 1 per cent of the workforce. There would be many more jobs in tourism, renewable energy, energy efficiency, public transport and manufacturing if mining wasn't so politically privileged.

Regarding divestment campaigning, if anything, we need to protect those means by which ordinary people can organise to resist the distorting influence of the fossil fuel industry on our economies and political systems.

Let's now re-examine the actions of environmentalists. I speak as an insider, but happily not a stereotypical one. I am a grandmother of six, a practising Catholic and for some years was our local Catholic youth group mum. I was drawn to actions at the Leard Forest because other ways of protecting the future for my grandchildren were proving fruitless.

Any perception that environmentalists are 'coercive', feel they have 'an unlimited license to protest' or, worse, are 'violent', as alleged by the CEO of the NSW Minerals Council, are simply false. These claims do not mesh with my direct experience of the protestors at the Leard Forest or of environmentalists generally.

Having stayed with the protestors and seen them in action, I have been impressed with their disciplined dedication to an ethic of peaceful non-violence. They are locking onto equipment, blockading or perching high in tress, but the risk is only to themselves, not to others. It is not 'violence' to take these kinds of actions even if they frustrate the mine workers and annoy the police.

All plans for action are measured against principles of respect for all persons, including the police and workers. Any new people to the camp are drilled that vandalising property is unacceptable. Sexist or racist jokes are not tolerated. Drugs and drunkenness are out. Everyone must help with the work in the camp or on the farm.

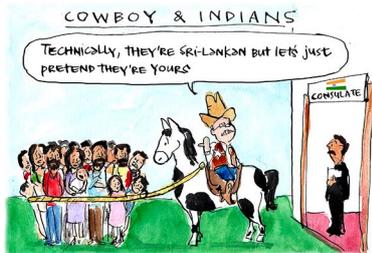
If citizens of democracies are no longer allowed to organise either civil disobedience or divestment campaigns, as suggested by Davidson, God help us. The ballot box on its own does not create a robust democracy, and it certainly hasn't proven able to rein in the power of the fossil fuel lobby. How much weaker would our democracies be without a range of means by which to champion the common good?

Thea Ormerod is President of Australian Religious Response to Climate Change.

Morrison's refugee rodeo

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

What will survive of us is love

INTERNATIONAL

Gillian Bouras



It is a privilege to revisit places. So I thought recently, while standing by a certain tomb in Chichester Cathedral. Most Cathedrals inspire awe and reverence, but people have their favourite spots within them, and at Chichester mine is the tomb of Richard FitzAlan and his second wife, Eleanor of Lancaster, both of whom died in the 1370s.

You would imagine Richard, the 10th Earl of Arundel, to have been a pretty hard-boiled sort of chap. He was a warrior knight, and one of the three principal commanders at the 1346 Battle of Crecy, a crucial battle of the Hundred Years' War, in which the English annihilated the French forces, and also proved the superiority of the longbow, rather than the crossbow, as a military weapon.

And Richard accumulated such wealth along his martial way that he became King Edward III's chief financier; he is now considered to have been the 15th wealthiest person in history. Well, \$118 billion in today's money would do that for you quite easily, I should think.

But Richard was not merely a materialist; he loved his second wife dearly, and proved it by engineering a papal dispensation in order to marry her, a measure necessary because,

things being close and cosy in the 14th century, she was related to his first wife. Eleanor was not in her first youth, and was a widow, her first husband having been killed, conventionally enough, in a tournament.

Despite the inexorable march of time, however, Richard and Eleanor went on to have seven children, one of whom became Archbishop of Canterbury. Eleanor predeceased Richard, to his great sorrow: he died four years later, and left orders for a surprisingly modest funeral that matched hers, and for this joint tomb.

So there the marble figures lie, grey and blurred, and with an infinite capacity, I think, to touch the heart. The tomb was radical for its time, in the sense that Richard had decreed that his effigy should not be higher than Eleanor's; her figure also appears to lean towards his, and most moving of all, Richard's has one gauntlet removed, so that his bare hand holds that of his wife. Her feet rest on a little pet dog, his on a small lion.

It could easily escape one's notice, but there is a type-written poem pinned to the pillar nearest this long resting-place. It is by famous English poet, Philip Larkin, who seems to have been hard-boiled in his own way: he never married his long-time lover, Monica Jones, for example, and was intermittently unfaithful to her.

Various negative labels have been attached to him and his poetry. He has been described as having 'the saddest heart in the postwar supermarket', as having 'glum accuracy' about emotions, and as being a poet of 'lowered sights and diminished expectations'.

Yet Larkin considered this tomb unique, and recorded that he found it 'extremely affecting'. His feelings eventually found expression in a marvellous poem about time and change and enduring love, the love that is as strong as death. To him, the knight and his lady prove
Our almost-instinct almost true. What will survive of us is love.

I have had this almost-instinct in a fumbling way for most of my life, and often, gratefully, see it confirmed.

Every Monday I take a bus trip to Kalamata. Every Monday I observe a black-clad older woman, a widow with a face expressive of sad resignation. Clearly on her way to a certain grave in the local cemetery, she struggles into the bus with at least two bags full of flowers.

And in Melbourne long ago, I heard of a woman who used to visit her husband's grave every week. Once there, she would give a report on her life during the last seven days: the conversation, she felt, did not have to stop simply because his corporeal presence was no longer with her.

I still talk to my own departed, especially to my mother, and I don't imagine the conversations will ever end. Not as long as I live. I would, if I could, write a poem about her.

But Larkin has done it for me, and for countless others.

Gillian Bouras is an Australian writer who has been based in Greece for 30 years. She has had nine books published. Her most recent is No Time For Dances. Her latest, Seeing and Believing, is appearing in instalments on her website.

Time to take on the welfare sceptics

AUSTRALIA

Catherine Magree



The Federal Government demonstrated its harsh attitude towards job seekers with the announcement on Monday of a new regime that will see unemployed people forced to look for 40 jobs a month and to take part in work for the dole or training for up to 25 hours a week. The Coalition's rhetoric around the issue amounted to victim-blaming, with assurances that the new rules would 'improve the prospects of job seekers' and Employment Minister Eric Abetz reviving the term 'job snobs'.

Yet evidence shows that work for the dole doesn't get unemployed people into jobs, while voters have expressed concern that the Government's budget measures will create a more unequal society.

This latest crackdown on unemployed people reveals disdain for the findings of poverty and unemployment research - an attitude that the Treasurer, Joe Hockey, displayed many times while selling the Federal Budget. Hockey and his colleagues are far from alone in implying that unemployed people are work-shy dissolutes who require hard-nosed moral reform. What's astounding is that their role as public figures doesn't stop them getting away with the kinds of views that produced the horrors of the workhouse.

Imagine how the quality of the debate would improve if those who blamed the victims of poverty and illness for their plight were publicly labelled welfare sceptics or denialists, and forced to back up their claims.

Social research academics would be thrust into the spotlight, arguments would fly furiously back and forth at dinner parties, frontbenchers who vilified the unemployed would be ridiculed, and Facebook pages would spring up to shame welfare sceptics. Most importantly, poor people in this rich country might be allowed to live with some measure

of dignity and security.

The media is continually criticised for the way it reports on the science of climate change. Yet even when it pits a climate denialist like Andrew Bolt against a CSIRO researcher like Dr Steve Rintoul, the discussion encompasses the quality of the science. While the big polluters flood the public sphere with misinformation, respected news sources such as Fairfax accept that climate scientists are the authorities in this area.

The ABC has a policy of following 'the weight of evidence' on the issue, and says it has 'well and truly moved on from the debate as to whether or not AGW is real'.

Yet public figures get plenty of leeway when it comes to ignorance about welfare issues - even when that ignorance impacts on hundreds of thousands of people. You'd never guess from the Coalition's pronouncements that a solid body of poverty research, developed over decades at postgraduate university level and in the research units of welfare groups, is at odds with their views. Sure, callous statements attract controversy, but the arguments against them are often emotive rather than evidence based.

Labor is not much better than the Coalition. With hardly a whisper from the media, Julia Gillard announced as ALP policy during the 2010 election campaign that unemployed people who did not attend their Centrelink appointments would be stripped of their benefits. Few challenged the implication that this group were lazy and unmotivated rather than battling problems like homelessness, illiteracy and mental illness.

You wouldn't know, from the major parties or most of the media, that welfare advocates and researchers don't claim that payments alone are enough to fix poverty and unemployment. They've been saying for decades that prevention is better than cure, and creating programs that have had astounding success in keeping at-risk families together and giving long-term unemployed people the resources to find and keep real jobs.

Yet income support remains an important basic right, and needs to be increased as a matter of urgency - do we really want a return to the horrors of Victorian England, where death from starvation was not uncommon?

Rarely do we hear in the broadcast media from academics in this field. This means the general public remain ignorant of the basic concepts around poverty, welfare, and disability. Worse, it is socially acceptable to make sweeping remarks about poor and unemployed people in a way you wouldn't dream of doing for any other group (we have laws against racism and sexism, but none against classism).

Welfare saves lives. The idea that it is toxic is itself toxic. It's time for the media to avail itself of the expert evidence about the causes of poverty and unemployment and how to solve them, and to dispute wild generalisations about users of the social welfare system.

They should also report on how each party's actions in this area stack up against poverty research. The Greens, for example, have renewed their demand that the dole needs to increase by \$50 a week - an increase in line with what the Australian Council of Social Service recommends.

If this issue received the scrutiny it deserves in the media there would be a sea change in attitudes to poverty, unemployment and income support over time.

Perhaps eventually we'd even become the fair society we like to imagine ourselves to be, and the public money we already spend on social research would bear fruit in a healthy,

confident generation of young Australians of all classes and backgrounds who would be eager and ready to take on the world.

Catherine Magree is a freelance writer and editor who in a former incarnation worked at the Brotherhood of St Laurence as information officer. She blogs at feministculturemuncher.blogspot.com

Indonesia's new paradigm must include the past

INTERNATIONAL

Pat Walsh



The day after the result of Indonesia's presidential election was announced, I joined crowds of excited Indonesians at the Proclamation Monument in central Jakarta to celebrate president-elect Jokowi's election as Indonesia's seventh president.

Did you see the rainbow? asked a supporter, pointing to a blurry photo on his mobile phone as Jokowi arrived to address the crowd and break the Muslim fast with them. I hadn't, but even if the heavens had opened and soaked everybody to the skin, it would have been taken as another sign that God too had voted for Jokowi.

The monument commemorates the proclamation of Indonesia's independence from the Dutch made by Sukarno and Hatta in 1945. Their statues looked down on Jokowi as he proclaimed what many believe and hope is a new era in Indonesia, including its liberation from the twitching hand of Suharto's New Order. Many Indonesian commentators feel Prabowo's bid to have the result reversed in his favour by the Constitutional Court and threats to haul the Election Commission before the Parliament are no more than the New Order's death rattles.

In his speech Jokowi did not rubbish Prabowo though he was entitled to given the dirty tactics employed against him and Prabowo's petulant claim on BBC that Jokowi was a fraud whose much lauded closeness to the people was fabricated for political purposes. The personal attack fell flat. I asked my taxi driver and a street vendor what they thought of the comment. Both said how proud they were that a *wong cilik* or little person like them could achieve the highest office in the country. It gave them hope, not just in Indonesia, but in themselves.

In fact, Jokowi did not even mention Prabowo in his speech. It was as though Prabowo and what he stood for was no longer relevant. To avoid candidates of this kind running in future elections, the respected commentator Wimar Witoelar has proposed that aspirants for high office should receive endorsements from both Indonesia's respected Commission for Human Rights and its crusading Corruption Eradication Commission. It is to be hoped that a Jokowi administration will act on this proposal. It would enhance the quality of candidates, spare Indonesia considerable embarrassment and help eliminate impunity.

The president-elect focused his comments on the contribution to his election made by volunteers, that is, civil society. His campaign achieved an unprecedented level of citizen participation that included millions of small donations from ordinary Indonesians and jealous monitoring of the count. This represents a substantial shift in Indonesia's political culture, the significance of which can only be appreciated by comparison with the Suharto era when the people were treated like children not citizens. Politics in Indonesia is no longer the exclusive domain of party machines, the elite and wealthy, or slick campaign advisers hired from the US.

Jokowi made this point eloquently. Speaking from the deck of a magnificent traditional schooner late at night after the result was announced on 22 July, he surprised many by saying, 'There is happiness and goodness in politics ... it represents freedom.' He went on to applaud the sense of responsibility and optimism that 'has blossomed in the souls of the new generation' and the rebirth of the Indonesian tradition of 'voluntarism'.

Jokowi has urged everybody to go back to work. His legions of supporters, however, are not about to vacate the scene and leave it all to him. His fans will hold him accountable.

Before he spoke at the Proclamation Monument, a respected civil society leader, standing near the president-elect, read out a long list of the promises Jokowi had made during the campaign. The list included addressing past human rights violations. Behind him, conspicuous by his dark skin and indigenous headdress, stood a proud Papuan, a silent reminder to Jokowi of his campaign commitment to Papua and that it should no longer be off-limits to international journalists and human rights organisations.

In an editorial following the election, *The Jakarta Globe* put it this way: 'Joko should dare to rewrite history and debunk the lies fed to Indonesians for far too long, while revealing the truth, no matter how bitter - including the real story behind the 1965-66 massacre and the other atrocities of the Suharto era. The victims deserve justice and Indonesia deserves to move forward into an open and more honest new era.'

Jokowi promised a *revolusi mental* or paradigm shift in Indonesia. He is no revolutionary but a significant shift has clearly occurred and can be confidently expected to continue. Whether those around him like Megawati, the Wanandi brothers and ex-military Wiranto and Hendropriyono will allow the new paradigm to include the past, including crimes in Timor-Leste, will test both Jokowi and Indonesia's civil society to the maximum.

Pat Walsh is currently visiting Jakarta. He co-founded Inside Indonesia magazine.

Photo by Pat Walsh: President-elect Jokowi (white shirt) meets his volunteers at Proclamation Monument in Jakarta, 24 July 2014.

The original orphan

CREATIVE

Tony Kelly

Coogee Beach

Languorous corporation of hazed consciousness, basking collective sprawled in undulant, pendulous embodiment, contoured in sand, or ambling to water's edge ... the limp pennant of bright towel marking each place. A sacrament of sorts, when blessed by these elements, baptised in brine, posing turns innocent and all is forgiven - though capering kids agitate the truce by throwing stuff, and tongues of foam hiss envious of this prone and pacific state: left with nothing, not even the clothes on our backs - all survivors from the ordeal of going in, stiff-kneed against the undertow, pummelled by a good natured surf - then dumped, and dragged into higher consciousness oblivious to city streets and long dry roads; then to wade out in a daze to hug the promised land, noses running salt water, sharing this hour as no friends or strangers could - every body on Coogee Beach.

Messiah

The century dies with too many deaths ...I survived, I think -though a refugee from a succession of grey Utopias, even if now hesitantly naturalised in this present place. Still, you learn something from the crash-course of history; mostly irony - after being ill-prepared, late, and too often wrong. But now, what makes me hesitate beyond clear borders of love and hate, is a gentle Jew.

Anthony

Poor old fellow, angular, pinched awkward man, taut and pink-faced, like a preserved quince; shrewd and sensitive despite his endless chatter: even now, the original orphan left at every doorstep; Everyone hesitates to take him in, wincing at his eagerness, and protecting conversation from his fantastic interruptions, his perverse skill in missing every point. His need is to construct the world in every instant from the start: recently he discovered the name of his mother, long dead, and found some brothers, and the strange world of blood relations ... Now a gush of communication after the long legal amnesia, he reports a big barbecue to celebrate the discovery of belonging after all: the heat is off us now - unless, of course, you take him as a parable ...

Other owners

Often around the bend of the river mostly in early morning and at evening, wandering amongst the flowering gums along the banks, surprising improbably bright parrots, I have a sense that this, all this still known, owned by invisible others - catching me midway between some feeble praise, and expatriate envy of those who knew by belonging ... as they dwelt in reverence's vast, tender accumulation of a whole world beyond me; As I stare untutored at flower, and tree, and at places where animals are supposed to be, I know they saw; and breathed what I glimpse, and danced what I clumsily survey. - I am where they were made to disappear; still animating the place, I think, still in cosmic dreaming ... and I mourning absence or sensing presence, beyond the reach of politics, in this teeming, shifting seeming.

Twins

They were twins, this strange pair, very hard to tell apart: they lived not far away in a great old shambling house at the very end of our longest street. They had a funny trick of startling neighbours with a sudden cry of recognition; or, one of them, waiting in the dark, would surprise some passer-by by jumping out to ask, 'Which am I?' Despite their bad reputation with the older folks, with all this nonsense and endless jokes, there is no harm in them really. Only this evening we talked: having just returned after some time away, I asked them about old friends. Their eyes brightly met: 'They're safe and doing well: so and so bought a farm and had a drought, another became famous and was then found out; this one was strong despite the heart that failed, but the other prospered after being gaoled ... Then, there was Jack who loved Jill, but Jill loved Will which proved quite a problem until ... well, Look, there is so much to tell and it is early yet - (they seemed so

delighted that we'd met)come inside and talk some more:No, its not too late!'So, the darker one opened the garden gate,and the other, so much fairer, laughing led me along the path to a great ancient door.

Strange universe

The evil is too much of course,beyond all measure.But of late -was it the winter sun this Melbourne afternoon?Or that old fellow helping that long-haired, limping girl?Or the lilies and tranquillity and the bell-birds of the Yarra billabong exploding in the laughter of two kookaburras? -I have begun to take great pleasure in this strange universe.

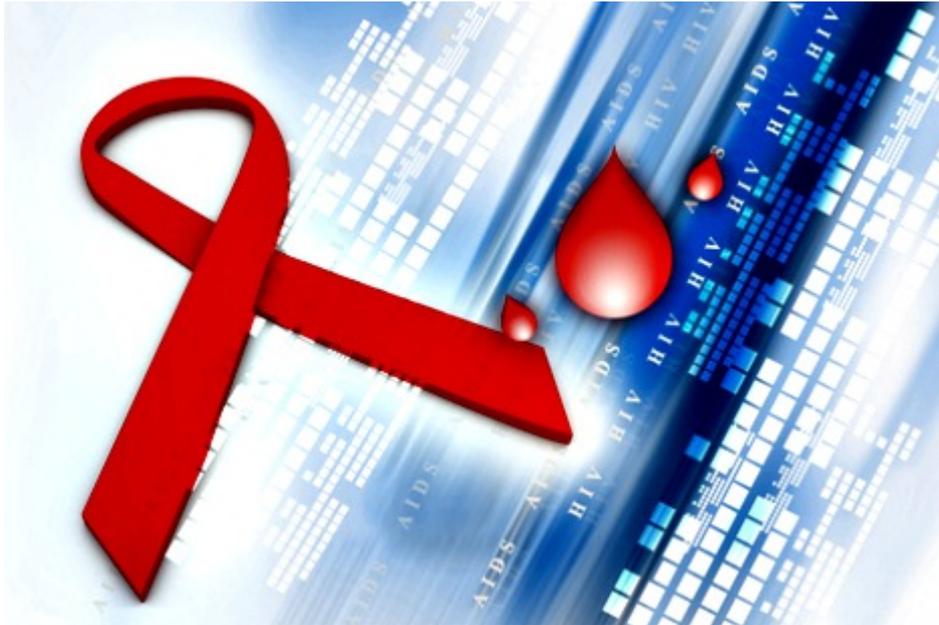
Tony Kelly's main writing over the years has been in the field of theology. He continues as a professorial fellow at Australian Catholic University, and has been a member of the International Theological Commission for the last ten years. He has also written hymns with Christopher Willcock, SJ. Read Tony's paper Poetry, and the Language of Faith in Australia.

Old man image from Shutterstock

The enemy is AIDS, not those who live with it

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins



While some groups still believe that people infected with HIV should be stigmatised as a deterrent, the majority view at this month's International AIDS Conference in Melbourne is that victims and the social groups to which they belong must be empowered. The media is being encouraged to listen to stories such as Sarah's: As a young woman, I was 21 when I was diagnosed, and it's that, it takes away your whole impression of what your life will be like. … And social stigma as well. It's really hard, like to be a young woman diagnosed, there's no education about it, you don't know how people are going to react to you. It's really scary, it's really scary. Religious groups, school teachers, and the media can all choose to be part of the problem, or part of the solution, a source of fear or hope. A few weeks before the conference, a health services practitioner in an eastern Victorian town reported that he or she was HIV positive. One media outlet played the fear card when it quoted a patient: '[I felt] pretty sick actually, very sick in the stomach'. Meanwhile the health worker had had the psychological strength to report his or her HIV positive status to authorities. This enabled them to take proper precautions, and it was therefore unlikely that any patients would contract the virus. If he or she had been overcome by fear or shame, it is doubtful the alarm would have been raised, and the population would have been placed at greater risk. Some continue to worry that infection rates are rising despite numerous campaigns, and feel that we therefore need stronger deterrence. In other words, greater stigma place on those living with HIV. The more positive way of thinking is to empower people in this situation to share their stories and experiences. Associate Professor Trevor Cullen of Edith Cowan University is an expert in health journalism and reporting infectious diseases, especially AIDS. He is currently spearheading a pilot program promoting positive media education. He's delivered media training to Conference delegates at the Melbourne AIDS Conference, and says: 'Research

has shown that if effectively used, the media can lessen fear and stigma which are the biggest obstacles to seeking information and treatment.'

Former justice Michael Kirby is arguing that law reform is also essential in the fight against marginalising groups that are vulnerable to the AIDS infection. These include men who have sex with men, sex workers, injecting drug users, prisoners and refugees. He says: 'The law can be a guardian of people who are vulnerable and who are sick but the law … can be a burden on the person and their freedom, on their ability to see the importance of getting the HIV test, and getting onto antiretroviral drugs if they turn out to be positive.'

To this end, Victorian health minister David Davis has announced a move to amend the law criminalising intentional HIV transmission. Kirby praises the reform, adding that it is important that the message 'should go to Africa, to Russia and other countries where [discriminatory] laws exist - and we should not be polite in the delivering of that message'.

Where the law and the media are prepared do stand with those living with the HIV - and not against them - there is hope that all concerned will take the necessary rational steps to contain the virus.



Michael Mullins is editor of Eureka Street.

AIDS logo image by Shutterstock.

<!--Follow him on Twitter.-->

All eyes on our MH17 mourners in chief

AUSTRALIA

John Warhurst



Our national mourning following the MH17 airline tragedy is spontaneous and scattered but also requires leadership. Some individuals must inevitably become mourners-in-chief because of the positions they hold.

The way we mourn provides perspectives not just on these individuals but also, more importantly, insights into our cultural understandings and national institutions. The current tragedy provides some opportunity to reflect on ourselves as a nation, though unusually, unlike a natural disaster, this one is such a potent mixture of international politics and grief. It is more like a wartime tragedy than one brought on by a devastating earthquake or fire.

Leading national mourning is primarily a job for our elected or appointed leaders. This means Prime Ministers and Premiers and Governors-General and Governors. At St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney Tony and Margaret Abbott were flanked in the front row by Sir Peter and Lady Cosgrove on their right and Dame Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, on their left. Opposition Leaders, like Bill Shorten, take their place but are largely ignored. The State Opposition Leaders hardly matter at all. This has clear political implications.

Our style of our mourning also clearly reflects our federal nation. The reporting of the Australian deaths was almost immediately based around categorising the deaths by state. The number of Victorians, Queenslanders, and so on, became highly important. This simple point shows how we see ourselves. The dead were not calculated by gender, ethnicity or city/country but definitely by state. Capital city-based media followed up accordingly.

This regional emphasis meant that state premiers were afforded a high profile on the breaking news and almost treated as the equivalent of our national leaders. Strikingly one of the earliest to make a televised public statement was Campbell Newman, Premier of Queensland, who spoke particularly of the impact of the tragedy on his fellow

Queenslanders. Later Dennis Napthine, Premier of Victoria, followed Newman, though he did play an additional role as the political leader of the state hosting the big international HIV/AIDS conference, handling the associated questions related to that conference. But as something above party politics national mourning constitutionally should generally be led by Heads of State not Heads of Government, though we are somewhat confused about these roles. Having a monarch represented by a Governor-General complicates relationships. In this instance the Governor-General has played a secondary role to the Prime Minister. This is perhaps explicable, given the mix of international politics and mourning and the need for a snap reaction by our leadership, but still notable. The Prime Minister has been the mourner-in-chief above all others. On later formal occasions related to the MH17 deaths the Governor-General may lead, but he has not yet done so. The prominent role of the churches has also been striking. Our public mourning has been conducted in various arenas, including work-places, schools, and football fields as well as embassies and legislative assemblies, but religious ceremonies have stood out. The most obvious example was the initial ceremonial Sunday Mass at St Mary's Cathedral. The decline of religious observance in a secular Australia is clear, but in times of mourning public religious ceremonies seem still to become paramount. Our leaders, whether personally religious or not, dutifully take part as a matter of course in these ceremonies. Those, like Abbott and Cosgrove, who are themselves observant Christians, should find such participation much easier and more comfortable than others who are not. The same is true of the common use of the language of prayer during mourning. The possible domestic political implications can't be avoided. The awful tragedy comes at a time when the federal government is lagging badly in public opinion. It will be fascinating to see how their performance is judged in the next polls. Traditionally the high-profile afforded the leaders of the day in such circumstances pays dividends for the government because it distracts from its day-to-day problems. Certainly our national attention has been switched dramatically from the fate of the Budget and an unpredictable Senate to more heart-felt concerns.

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What makes a girl beautiful

MEDIA

Catherine Marshall



Earlier this year, an image doing the rounds on social media sites whipped users into a frenzy of indignation. It was a diptych of a little girl of four or five, her hair askew, her dress slipping charmingly off her shoulder, her face radiating joy. The accompanying text read: 'The person who shared this with me said "This would never go viral, she's the wrong colour", and I wanted to punch something.'

The reverse psychology employed by whoever it was who launched this communique worked, for enraged viewers liked and reposted it in such numbers few social media users would have missed it. Actor Blair Underwood's own posting of the image on his official Facebook page received more than half a million likes, 300,000 shares and 33,000 comments.

The girl in the photograph was black, with sharp cheekbones and bright eyes the likes of which Somali models Waris Dirie and Iman would no doubt have also possessed at a similar age. The original poster's implicitly racist comment was quite obviously aimed at stirring debate. But there was something deeply worrying about the response it provoked, for those tens of thousands of commentators were focusing their collective ire not on the child's skin colour, but on her looks.

'Stunning!', 'Beautiful!', 'She could be a model!', 'Gorgeous little stunner her parents must be so proud', 'Such a rare beauty', they exclaimed, falling over themselves in an effort to fulfil the poster's mischievousness intention of making the post go viral.

It was as though the child had been called ugly rather than black. And so appearance-obsessed is our society that responders countered this racist jibe with an unintentionally

ironic, unselfconsciously sexist response.

Their comments reinforced the fact that beauty is a currency which - as *People* magazine demonstrated when it declared Kenyan actress Lupita Nyong'o its most beautiful person for 2014 - has finally caught up with the times and is now measurable and tradable and worthy of appraisal in any female, no matter her race, no matter if she is a little girl barely out of nappies.

And it's not only women 'of colour' who are now being recognised for their physical attributes: 'plus-size' role-models are lionised for their curvaceous deliciousness (think Adele and model Robyn Lawson); women who post make-up-free selfies in the name of cancer research are declared 'stunning' by their social media followers; and new mothers with their misshapen bellies and drooping breasts are stripping off to approving audiences.

There's certainly something satisfying about subverting society's idea of what constitutes beautiful: female-led campaigns that flood the media with images of representative faces and bodies reinforce the absurdity of current 'beauty' standards and the narrow definition they endorse.

But this democratisation of beauty - the notion that all women are beautiful, that they should all be focused on unleashing their inner sexiness, that they should be flinging off clothes/make-up/insecurities for all the world to see - isn't really liberating. It's a form of self-sabotage in which women have co-opted their own subjugation and reshaped it into a more accommodating and indiscriminate form.

No longer is it only the physically exquisite who can pose naked; the plain and the imperfect must be welcomed, too, into the sacred circle of female objectification.

This is an acutely worrying phenomenon, for it keeps women distracted from the intellectual and creative pursuits in which their male counterparts are romping ahead, free from the cultural expectation that their first priority is to look good. It gives them the perception that they've taken charge of their faces and bodies when in fact they've just wrested their own suppression from the hands of the powerful and turned it upon themselves.

It's a mindset to which the little girl in the viral image unwittingly fell victim: she might well be articulate, intelligent, sensitive, caring, kind, perceptive, brave, outgoing, wilful and strong. But the world focused instead on the only thing that matters, since she is a girl: her looks.

This habit of judging females on their outwards appearance, and the trend that encourages all women to market themselves as decorative objects, is a boon for marketers struggling to sell products to Photoshop-savvy consumers. Having spent decades undermining their self-esteem with images of women airbrushed to perfection, advertisers are now telling them what they intuitively know: that they are in fact good enough.

Serial offender Dove has established a Movement for Self-Esteem which holds as its most precious aim the celebration of 'real beauty'. It scolds women for adopting the very self-loathing it has spent years profiting from, and promises - through its products - to deliver them into bodies that are truly, universally beautiful.

But as long as women fall for this ploy, internalise the belief that they are the sum of their physical parts, and pursue the grand yet transitory prize of being declared 'beautiful', they will not free themselves from the scourge of gender inequality.

Like Meryl Streep, who said in a recent speech that she didn't feel 'beautiful enough' to be an actress, they will be plagued by their physicality and the fear that this overvalued currency - a mere facade which conceals the essence of their being - will forever be in short supply.

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Blood, tears and ethics in Gaza

INTERNATIONAL

Matthew Beard

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OPINION

The Virtue of a Proportionate Response: Why Israel Must Resist Personal Vengeance

By Matthew Beard

ABC RELIGION AND ETHICS | 3 JUL 2014

Comments (18)

In a chilling scene in the first season of *The West Wing*, President Josiah Bartlett asks the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "What is the virtue of a proportional response?" After being told that proportional responses are what the United States military has always done, Bartlett offers an alternate idea. He offers instead the possibility of a *disproportionate response*: "Let the word reign forth

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU WAS RIGHT TO IDENTIFY THE MURDERS OF THREE ISRAELI TEENAGERS AS BRUTAL AND ANIMALISTIC. BUT THE VIRTUOUS RESPONSE IS NOT TO INDULGE IN VENGEFUL CRUELTY AND PERSONAL HATRED.

CREDIT: CHAMELEONSEYE / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

This week in the *Wall Street Journal*, Thane Rosenbaum argued that Palestinian adults are, as a whole, legitimate targets of attack because they were involved in electing Hamas to power eight years ago. This, as Australians learned that a hospital had been targeted in the continuing devastation, missiles continue to be fired at Israel, and the ground invasion of Gaza continues to report casualties on both sides. There is no need for more blood or tears in Gaza, but there is a strong case to be made for higher ethical standards.

Earlier in this latest round of escalations, I suspected that proportionality would be the central ethical issue in this conflict, and though it has certainly been a factor, my suspicions were short-sighted. In fact, there is nary a military ethical issue that hasn't arisen in these rapidly-escalating hostilities.

Perhaps most telling, however, are two matters of frequent discussion in military ethical literature. First, the relation between the justice of a cause and those people fighting for the cause; and secondly, the extent - if any - to which military actions can justifiably cause harm to citizens.

Historically, the argument that the use of military force can sometimes, under strict conditions, be justifiable has been championed by what is known as the Just War Tradition. A watered-down, generalised form is frequently taught in introductory courses as 'Just War Theory'.

Despite great variance among thinkers, this school of thought traditionally held that *ad bellum* ethical questions - concerning whether war should be engaged in at all - should be treated separately to *in bello* questions regarding how military personnel should

conduct themselves once they were at war.

Combatants, on this view, are responsible for how they conduct themselves on the ground (or at sea, in the air, or - increasingly - online), while political leaders and higher levels of military and intelligence leadership are usually responsible for whether a cause is just or not. So long as combatants adhere to the laws of war, target only enemy combatants, and avoid civilian casualties wherever possible, they can be said to have acted well.

However, in recent times, this has been challenged by philosophers aiming to revise the traditional view of just war to say that it is logically impossible for a soldier whose actions are advancing an unjust cause to be acting morally well. Instead, only soldiers fighting for a good cause *and* who obey the laws of war can be said to be fighting well. 'Unjust combatants' who fight for an unjust cause are, at best, excused for their unjust service; but that service remains unjust.

According to this view, only unjust combatants can be legitimately killed in war. Just like, in a shootout between a bank robber and a police officer, the police officer is - all things being equal - *not* a justifiable target of killing because the bank robber is committing a crime, combatants fighting for a just cause are acting morally well and are not doing anything that makes them liable to be killed. By contrast, unjust combatants are advancing an unjust cause, and for that reason may be targeted with lethal force.

One danger with this view is that the continuity between the justice of one's cause and the moral status of those fighting on each side means discussions about the ethics of the conflict tend to be reduced to a political struggle between warring parties; in this case, Israel and Palestine. Whichever side appears to be justified is vindicated; the other side is the terrorist (a term which is being used with increasing inaccuracy). What receives less attention is that even if a cause is just, utilising unjust means as a chosen strategy in pursuit of that cause immediately renders the war unjust.

It isn't easy to wage a just war: it requires the combination of a just cause *and* just means.

Another danger of the revisionist approach, which associates *in bello* morality with *ad bellum* questions, is that any person who is helping to advance an unjust cause becomes at least partially liable to some kind of attack. Suddenly it is not only combatants who can be targeted, but any person supporting the advancement of an unjust cause. It is this form of reasoning that appears to have informed Rosenbaum's argument that the Palestinian populations' support for Hamas during 2006 makes them culpable for the current actions of Hamas, and therefore not protected by traditional non-combatant immunity.

It is also this type of reasoning which, when flipped on its head, makes it possible for Hamas supporters to argue that every Israeli citizen is liable to attack. After all, Israelis elected their government too and, given Israel's military service obligation, many Israeli citizens serve, or have served, in the IDF.

Hamas is wrong - the firing of rockets indiscriminately into civilian-populated areas of Israel is a grave violation of morality and should not be forgotten by groups who are broadly sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. However, the point is that the case for universal culpability can be made both ways, turning only on which side the viewer

believes to be justified.

Even if it were true that the election of a warring regime did render one liable to being killed in war, which it patently isn't (even revisionists would likely reject this claim, holding that even if those who voted for Hamas are culpable, they would not be culpable of a severe enough crime to warrant being killed), it would hardly render children, many of whom weren't even alive when Hamas was elected, liable to attack. How can the deaths of children be justified?

Two weeks ago, William Saletan argued for *Slate Magazine* that 'by the standards of war, Israel's efforts to spare civilians have been exemplary'. Saletan refers (problematically) to a view that has been in military ethics for some time; namely, the difference between intentionally killing civilians, and the deaths of civilians being caused as side-effects to legitimate operations.

The term 'collateral damage' is a familiar one, referring to undesirable but foreseeable fallout of a justifiable military operation. However, even when the deaths of noncombatants are side-effects, the morality of war requires that steps be taken to ensure that (i) the civilian casualties are unavoidable; (ii) attempts are made to minimise them as much as possible; and (iii) the military gains of the operation are proportionate to the tragic deaths involved. (Here, again, just war revisionism raises a question: how can any death be proportionate if it advances an unjust cause?)

However, in a case of radical asymmetry such as is the case in the Israel-Hamas conflict, I believe additional duties are incumbent on the more powerful side. The use of widespread airstrikes and artillery fire is more difficult to justify when - as we have seen in recent days - the IDF has the resources to achieve its ends using ground forces operating at closer quarters. Although this increases the level of risk to Israeli troops, the benefits in terms of reduced civilian casualties make this an overwhelmingly preferable option from a moral standpoint, and may be required by the Law of Armed Conflict according to Article 51(4) of the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts.

However, the Law of War also prohibits using civilians to protect military resources (Article 28 of Convention IV relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War), something that Hamas has been accused of doing.

When the law and morality of war clearly prohibits certain practices, why is it that they are still taking place? Because externally imposed laws and rules of morality are not, and have never been, sufficient to motivate people to act well under difficult circumstances or duress. The sheer amount of vitriolic hatred between Israelis and Palestinians is perhaps best demonstrated by a Facebook post by Ayelet Shaked, a parliamentarian of Israel's ruling coalition that borders on genocidal.

The language of right and wrong is integral to informing what is taking place in Gaza on a daily basis, but unless we can find mechanisms for internalising conceptions of right and wrong in the actual combatants, it is unlikely that we will see any improvement to a war that - based on the manner in which it is presently being conducted - is unjust on both sides.

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primary areas of research are military ethics, post-war experiences of military personnel, and applied ethics. Follow Matthew on Twitter @matthewtbeard

More to tertiary education shake-up than \$100,000 degrees

EDUCATION

Neil Ormerod



It is a cliché, but in my ten years in the university sector, the only constant has been change. It seems that every new government, every new education minister wants to leave its own on the university sector. The current minister for education Christopher Pyne is no exception. He sees himself as a person of vision, reshaping the Australian educational landscape, with a number of reviews in place for all levels of education.

Two main points are emerging in relation to his vision for higher education. The first is the deregulation of the fee structure of student places. Universities currently in receipt of a certain level of government funding per student will be able to charge whatever they like over and above that amount. While the student may be able to cover this through a student loan facility (HECS/FEE-HELP), it would allow those universities with the best reputations (the so called Group of Eight) to charge more for their courses, up to what the market will bear.

This has given rise to the 'shock' headlines regarding \$100,000 degrees. While this may happen in some areas (law, medicine, dentistry etc.) the Government argues that a more deregulated environment will ensure enough competition to keep prices down. However there is little evidence that this will be the case if the US experience is anything to go by.

The other major reform is to extend Commonwealth supported places to private providers, institutions which are currently non-government funded such as private business colleges and theological colleges. In order to fund this expansion of government funding to a broader market, the level of funding to the existing universities will be cut as

part of the process of deregulating fees.

The big debate is over what level of funding these private colleges will attract. Will they receive exactly the same level of funding as the university sector, or will it be discounted, and if so, to what level? For the Government the funding of private colleges is consistent with its attempt to promote competition in the market place and hence keep fee levels down.

If this is not enough for the higher education sector to absorb, the Government is also pursuing a more aggressive approach to the question of research funding. Drawing on results from the ERA research audit, universities are being asked why the Government should provide research funding where a university is not achieving a certain level of research excellence.

The likely outcome is that increasingly universities that do not score well will simply no longer have access to government research funding. They will become, to all intents and purposes, teaching only institutions. The big fight will be over what level of research quality will be enough!

The end result will be, if not a binary system, perhaps a ternary system of higher education. There will be the Group of Eight, research intensive universities which will continue to attract the giant's share of government research money while charging higher fees commensurate with their reputations; there will be teaching intensive universities with no access to that funding, in severe competition with the private colleges; and there will be a middle group fighting over the research funding crumbs left over from the Group of Eight.

Certainly we are likely to see the end of the unified system introduced by the Dawkins' reforms of the 1990s. There are real questions whether all our existing universities will survive in this emerging environment.

Of course much of this will depend on how the Senate responds to the legislative changes needed to bring all of this about. The Government has already suffered one defeat, with the Senate rejecting a proposed 'efficiency dividend' which would have cut millions of dollars from the sector. The fate of fee deregulation and opening up of the market to private providers is yet to be determined.

As a final observation, the proposed changes place many theological providers in an interesting situation. We have seen a number of theological colleges enter into relationships with universities to assist with their financial bottom line, in the face of falling support from their church constituencies. If private providers are to receive government funding directly, we could see some of these arrangements begin to fall apart.

Gaining direct government funding may turn out to be a better option than what they currently receive from their relationship with a university. Time will tell.

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Magnanimous memoir of a 'dead canary' bishop

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

**Benedict, Me and
the Cardinals Three**



The Story of the Dismissal of
Bishop Bill Morris by
Pope Benedict XVI

William Martin Morris

Many of Pope Francis' metaphors have to

do with smell. He has urged priests and bishops to go out of the churchy world, saying that it is better to be accident prone than to grow sick through living in fetid air. He has said the clergy must smell like the sheep. And he has remarked on the stuffy air of the Vatican administration.

In mines, where bad air could be lethal, miners used to bring canaries with them. If they fell ill and died, the miners had warning to get out. The recent [book by Bishop Bill Morris](#), replete with documentary evidence, tells the story of a canary caught in the shafts of Vatican culture. His early expiry date pointed to something amiss in the governance of the church, heralding the larger disclosures in the Royal Commission on sexual abuse.

Morris' story needs no retelling. He was Bishop of Toowoomba, sought to empower the laity and local communities, engaged in serious pastoral planning, was informal in his manner and, earlier than most, understood sexual abuse from the perspective of the victim rather than of the institution.

A small minority of Catholics hostile to him complained regularly to Roman officials and were given credence. Pope Benedict decided on the evidence of his officials that Morris' grasp of theology was inadequate and that he had to go, and after the many representations and meetings described in this book, he eventually retired.

To the outside reader the operative values of Roman governance will seem to contrast those advocated by Francis. They seem to have been to judge, not to listen; to heed malicious gossip, not to sift it; to stand on dignity and not to respect it; to seek evidence to justify a case and not to establish the truth; to demand loyalty and not faithfulness; to prize silence over plain speaking.

A small incident embodies the values of the Bishop and of his masters. When he eventually decided he must retire, he asked to delay the date so that he could offer support to the families of children who had been abused in a Catholic school, and to be with the victims of the Queensland floods that in recent days had devastated the communities in his diocese. His request was denied. He had to go immediately.

In his account Morris does not describe the Vatican representatives or his local critics as bad people. He emphasises the moments where their humanity appeared, their recognition of his pastoral gifts and their personal courtesy in prosecuting decisions whose reasons were not open to question.

The saddest feature of this story is that good people did not understand the implications what they were doing. They could not reflect on the values embedded in their way of proceeding.

In hindsight it is always easy to see why canaries in mines snuff it. It is also easy to see that Morris' representations would never receive a hearing and why those who should have spoken publicly in his defense were silent. It is also easy to understand why Francis was seen as so revolutionary when he exemplified and called for less self-preoccupation, more courage and more discernment in the Catholic Church.

In a haunting line in the Gospel Jesus asks, 'if this is done in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?' The answer is now being clinically set out in the Royal Commission into sexual abuse.

There the blaze in the dry wood is reflected in the eyes of the victims of abuse too many of whom found a Church whose representatives tried to prevent their voices from being

heard and their faces from being seen. They were often punished or ostracised if they told their story, and blamed as troublemakers if they persisted. The Church leaders to whom they spoke too often treated them as people to be managed.

Church leaders also moved the perpetrators to places where they offended again, kept their abuse secret, and did not pass on their files. These things may not have directly caused sexual abuse but they magnified the sufferings of the victims and enabled it to continue.

When set against the sufferings of those who were sexually abused Morris' dismissal seems like the death of a canary. But the disregard for truth and for people that were disclosed in his treatment are similar to those shown in the way in which many church authorities dealt with sexual abuse.

Like the canary in the mine, Morris' dismissal warned of the toxic culture. His book is magnanimous. He would surely be happy to have been the price that needed to be paid for the success of Francis' attempts to build a culture of governance properly respectful of the people it serves.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

Loner's gifts to the lonely dead

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

Still Life (M). Director: **Uberto Pasolini**. Starring: **Eddie Marsan, Joanne Froggatt**.
92 minutes

Some years ago my then next-door neighbour attempted suicide. He'd recently separated from his partner, who had moved out with their three children. His teenage son showed up unexpectedly one day to find his father hanging in the garage. To my shame I dismissed the boy's shouts for the sounds of adolescent roughhousing - they'd always been noisy kids. Luckily, another neighbour was more alert. Had he not come to the rescue - and if not for the fortuity of the son's arrival in the first place - the incident would have had a tragic outcome.

For an individual to die alone at home amid the crowd of suburbia is one of the sadder, and sadly common, scenarios of modern Western existence. Italian-born British filmmaker Pasolini explores this phenomenon in *Still Life* - a sweet and thoughtful examination of alienation and loneliness. Its hero John (Marsan), a council worker who looks for the relatives of those found dead and alone. Frequently his investigations are fruitless. Next-of-kin, if they can be located, prove to be relieved or indifferent to hear of the death of an estranged parent.

This is not merely work for John. He approaches the task with a strong sense of personal responsibility to the deceased. He writes elegant eulogies based on whatever biographical scraps he can piece together, attends their funerals as the sole witness, and reverently scatters their ashes in a park. He has a deep affection for these posthumous rituals; has in fact already purchased his own cemetery 'plot-with-a-view', and is in the habit of lying on that patch of grass, smiling at the sky from the very place where his remains will rest for eternity.

Pointedly, John, too, is one of 'the lonely'. He lives a simple, friendless existence in a sparse apartment. We see him prepare a meal, consisting of a single piece of toast and a tin of tuna scrupulously turned-out onto a plate, and arranged methodically on a table built for one. Marsan is a wonderful character actor appearing here in a rare leading role; in stillness and silence he imbues John with a palpable sense of loneliness. This is the root of John's empathy towards, for example, a dead woman so lonely that she wrote letters to herself from her cat.

But his methods breed conflict with a new manager, who demands a ruthless efficiency that allows no space for John's careful attendance to his charges' posthumous needs. He is told that his current case will be his last. John throws himself into the case with more determination even than usual, even though the man turns out to have been an unpleasant character. It brings him into contact with the man's adult daughter, Kelly (Froggatt), who is moved by John's empathy, and presents the possibility that his

loneliness might be dissolved.

It is a shame to write off a fine film based on its final few minutes. Nonetheless *Still Life's* finale hammers its point home in a way that needlessly disrupts the film's endearing gentleness. There is little doubt that selfless John would be content with the final turn of events. But as a gift to his audience Pasolini might have done well to avoid this ultimate, heavy-handed manipulation. Sometimes sad stories have happy or hopeful endings - as was the case with my neighbour, who recovered, remarried, and now lives happily. And still, life goes on.

Tim Kroenert is assistant editor of Eureka Street.

Catholics face Good Samaritan dilemma on Christmas Island

AUSTRALIA

Mike Bowden



One of my sons worked in the school on Christmas Island about four years ago for two years. So news about Christmas Island is always topical in our family. We pricked up our ears when we heard that the Catholic Education Office in Western Australia (CEOWA) had announced the opening of the Christmas Island Learning Centre on contract to the Department of Immigration and Border Security from term three this year.

To Catholics, the decision may seem to be a no-brainer. The parable of the 'Good Samaritan', after all, presents a simple plan for followers of Jesus. When you see a person in trouble, and when all those who should provide help avoid their responsibility, we are called to intervene, go out of our way to help. The asylum seeker children now stranded on Christmas Island are 'our injured traveller'.

In this spirit the executive director of CEOWA, Dr Tim McDonald (pictured) said at the announcement: 'I strongly support the [Catholic] Bishops' stance and believe that providing education to children in detention is a moral obligation as education is a fundamental human right and in keeping with the Church's long tradition of supporting the poor and marginalised.'

The chair of the Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Christopher Saunders of Broome, also commented: 'There's not much we can do to help children get out from behind the bars of detention, but we can make their time a little more pleasant and a little bit more useful.' When everyone else has crossed to the other side of the road seeking to 'not see' this seems the appropriate response.

So we should all be grateful that these helpless children will benefit from dedicated teachers. But we should also ponder deeper questions about the part church agencies should play when cooperating with government in its implementation of an unjust policy.

Should not the focus of Catholics be on ensuring these innocent children are not imprisoned? The photographs accompanying the announcement depict the children on Christmas Island behind high razor wire fences. Child psychologists have reported

endlessly the harmful effects of detention for children.

There is no justification for holding innocent children behind razor wire, as the Australian Catholic Bishops have declared. We must ask whether Catholic cooperation in providing education services in places where children should not be will make the evil of imprisoning children seem more normal and acceptable to Australians.

In the terms of Catholic moral principles, will it give scandal, in the sense of making immoral behaviour on the part of the Government seem morally acceptable? Would it be better to refuse to cooperate, to denounce the internment of children, and to leave it to the Government to find others who will provide education?

Christians will naturally shrink from this conclusion because it seems in such conflict with the story of the Good Samaritan. But when looked at in closer detail the story of the Good Samaritan is about the people who did not help as much as the one who did. Jesus' story is also about the priests and Levites who were representatives of power in Judaic society, and is addressed to them.

From this perspective the story says more than that we should be kind to the desperate. It shows that those in power are not there for their own good. They are placed in positions of authority to look after others, especially the injured, the lost, the lonely, the suffering ones in the community. The story condemns those who have been given power for their lack of oversight. Their responsibility is to keep a good lookout, to anticipate need, to plan for problems, to conduct an ongoing risk assessment and be ready at all times to respond.

The implications of the story are clear on Christmas Island. There should be no children in detention. The evil of child imprisonment is of the Federal Government's own doing. It must be shamed into remedying it.

Jesus' praise for the Good Samaritan underlines this message. The Government argues that asylum seekers are not members of the community - they are not Australians, they are 'irregular maritime arrivals'. The story of the Good Samaritan says that, because we are all human, we are all members of the human community. The Samaritan, a man from a neighbouring, hostile, enemy nation acted in an ethically correct manner in caring for a stranger, while those responsible for acting justly and compassionately traded off justice for convenience.

In the modern world Jesus would address his story to those who hold power. He would call them back to the principle of justice and care for the stranger that are integral both to religion and to politics. His story would roar out *Injustice!* to those who walk on by.

So the Catholic response to the children on Christmas Island should amplify the distant roar of injustice. It should make the Government ministers face up to their responsibilities to their brothers and sisters in need. Catholic agencies that rightly alleviate the harm done to those imprisoned should also make clear their condemnation of the evil of that imprisonment.

As Moses said to Pharaoh in the Spiritual, 'Let my people go', so we should all say: 'set the children free'.

Mike Bowden has worked as a teacher and community worker in Alice Springs and Aboriginal communities in the Top End.

Dubious heroes of Wikipedia

INTERNATIONAL

Philip Harvey



Comical, but also a warning to readers, were reports last week about the writing abilities of Sverker Johansson. He is a Swedish physicist with degrees in economics, particle physics, linguistics and civil engineering. There is no mention of whether he has degrees in Swedish, English, or Journalism.

The significant claim about Johansson is that he is, arguably, the most prolific writer of all time. It is as well the word 'arguably' is used, because we have to ask how many of the words in these articles tripped lightly from the keyboard of Sverker Johansson.

He has written over 2.7 million articles on Wikipedia since 2001, at an average of 10,000 articles a day. One report says: 'His contribution to Wikipedia's knowledge database of 30 million articles in 287 languages makes up 8.5 per cent of all the content on the site.'

Whether Johansson knows many of those 287 languages is open to question. If he did then he would be the Mezzofanti of the 21st century, his contributions to Wikipedia a mere sideshow. Cardinal Mezzofanti was a hyperpolyglot who spoke 39 languages fluently. I know this fact by reading his entry in Wikipedia, but not sure if that is due to Sverker's good guidance. It's just possible that he converted the Mezzofanti wiki into Swedish and other languages, at the press of a conversion button. Mezzofanti used his brains.

Without a need to make further enquiries, reports about the Swede continue, saying that 'his claims to authorship are contested however, as they were created by a computer generated software algorithm, otherwise known as a bot. Johansson has named his

Lsjbot.'

The verb 'contested' was taken straight from the Woody Allen rulebook of droll misuses. (Allen hasn't actually written such a book, he's too busy writing.) When we read that parts of Shakespeare's plays are 'contested' we know we are entering the intense inner world of the Jacobean theatre, where scripts are going in all directions and everyone is shouting to be heard. Whereas what is contested in this case is the exact extent of Johansson's intellectual input. He might be a bright cookie but it would take the biscuit if he really had a grasp of all the knowledge in his articles. If he did then he's in the wrong job.

The real writer, of course, is the cryptically-named Lsjbot. Wikipedia's own definition goes like this: 'A bot (derived from the word 'robot') is an automated or semi-automated tool that carries out repetitive and mundane tasks to maintain the 33,335,523 pages of the English Wikipedia. Bots are able to make edits very rapidly and can disrupt Wikipedia if they are incorrectly designed or operated.' Bots are increasingly making their presence felt in the online content domain.

We are also informed that one Phil Parker is purported to be the most published author in history. The distinction between writer and author is never spelt out, possibly because no one has time, they're so busy writing. Parker 'has successfully published over 85,000 physical books on niche topics such as childhood acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. Each book takes less than an hour to 'write'. In fact the writing is carried out by patented algorithms which enable computers to do all the heavy lifting.'

Heavy lifting in this sentence seems to mean the actual processes of thinking and writing. I will point out, it took less than an hour to write this article.

Comical, because these claims highlight the efforts some humans feel they have to make in order to meet the unreal expectations of endless information, as now provided by the internet. No one seriously believes that Johansson, Parker and company are prolific writers, let alone authors, in any normal sense of the words. Lsjbot and its friends simply do what they are told, filling out the space with impressive numerical achievements.

In this context, you or I could become the most published author, or writer depending on the day or how we feel, simply by putting out more text online than Sverker or Phil.

A warning, because neither the bots nor their human creators are in the business of doing much checking of their superabundant texts. If the humans were looking for errors and cross-editing of details they would not be making the sort of through-put we read about in the papers. The computers do not do any of this sort of work because they cannot do it. Only humans have the ability to correct text because only humans have the cognitive skills. Verification apps do not exist because verification is not in the computer's skill set.

The real work begins when self-appointed experts (and many of them are experts) get to work updating stubs and wikis and other unfinished and erroneous entries, and these real live people are the writers at work here, it must be submitted, humbly. Figures are not to hand about the numbers of these anonymous contributors.

Philip Harvey is the poetry editor of Eureka Street. He maintains a word study site, a

poetry readings site and a workplace blogspot.

Original artwork by Chris Johnston

Central American ganglands spark child refugee crisis

INTERNATIONAL

Antonio Castillo



The crossing though Mexico to the US by thousands of Salvadorians, Guatemalan, Honduran and Mexican children has shaken the governments of this region. US military bases, particularly those closer to the Mexican border, have become children refugee camps, and neither the source countries nor the US as the destination have any idea how to deal with what has to be called a refugee crisis instead of an immigration one.

The exodus of unaccompanied boys and girls to the US has become a metaphor of an impoverished region - Central America - that has abandoned its children and mortgaged its future. Pope Francis - who has a deep knowledge of this region - has demanded 'urgent intervention', and has called the US to welcome and protect the children who are risking their lives to find a better one.

El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are post civil war countries where organised gang violence is out of control and the economic violence perpetrated by US-recommended neoliberal policies has brought about poverty and social exclusion. These are some of the key reasons behind the forced exodus of children.

The US estimates that since October 2013 more than 100,000 girls and boys have been detained. According to the Washington Office for Latin America, around 34 per cent came from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. This figure is likely inaccurate, due to the fact that Mexican children detained by US authorities often identify themselves as Central Americans; it is harder to send them back to Central America than to nearby Mexico.

Also, undocumented minors from non-neighbouring countries have a higher possibility of staying in the US for years before being deported. Usually they are detained for a month and then handed over to foster families while the migration legal process continues. And

this can take years. Figures confirm this. Only 2000 out of 50,000 minors detained in the US in 2013 were deported.

Maras (criminal gangs) have taken control of large portions of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. Neighbourhoods, streets and even primary schools have become enclaves of gang feudalism. Minors are forcefully recruited. They become canon fodder, drugs carriers, sex slaves and coerced executioners. A killer who is a minor receives a jail sentence that is much shorter than for adults.

Central America is one of the most violent regions in the world. The homicide rate in Honduras is the highest in the region. In Guatemala it has risen by 70 per cent this year and in El Salvador 12 murders are committed daily, with a rising trend.

In El Salvador, the request for asylum is now higher than during the 1979-1992 civil war. It is significant that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reopened its office in El Salvador, an office that was closed at the end of the civil war.

In the last two decades, these three countries are experiencing a different kind of war: not a civil war between left wing guerrillas and the state, but a war between the maras that has left the state besieged. The government has lost its enforcement monopoly against private armed groups and organised criminal gangs.

Gang violence is not the only reason behind the exodus. There is also the economic violence that has spread in one of the most impoverished regions of the world. Economic violence is subjugation, particularly of children, indigenous people, the rural and urban poor, by exclusionary access to employment, education, health care and means of production.

This economic violence - sponsored by the US neoliberal model forced into these societies - is accompanied by the exploitation of the many by a small local economic and political elite. Any attempt to modify this model - for example to revamp the appalling taxation system - is ferociously opposed by the holders of economic power, leaving the state coffers bare and unable to invest in much-needed social and welfare policy reforms.

Ironically this Washington economic violence has forced thousands of undocumented migrants to flee to the US.

The consequences of a failed economic model are evident wherever you look in Central America. In Guatemala one indigenous child of less than five years dies every two hours due to preventable health problems. Guatemala is a country of young people - 48 per cent - yet has the worst level in the region of government funds allocated to children and adolescents. The educational system is one of the worst in the world.

The exodus of children has reinforced once again the need to reform the US migration philosophy, which has failed due to the lack of engagement with Mexico and Central American countries. Washington's demand - as expressed a few weeks ago by vice president Joe Biden in Guatemala - to Central American countries and Mexico to detain by force the departing and entering minors is unworkable and will make things worse.

Should the US compel southern neighbouring countries to do the 'dirty work' alone, it will only bring about more corruption, extortion, prostitution and human rights violations. State agencies of the region are not able to police these porous borders, which are

already under the control of organised crime.

While organised crime continues, economic violence remains unresolved and the US doesn't get its migration policy right, undocumented and unaccompanied children will keep risking their lives.

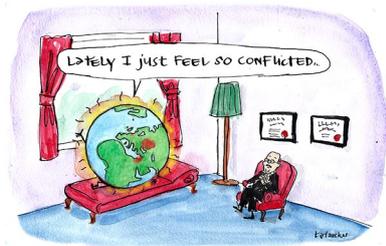
Antonio Castillo is a Latin American journalist and academic. He is the current Director of Journalism, RMIT University.

Image by ES James/Shutterstock: A Special Forces officer of the Grupo Reacion Policial guards an alley during a raid against gang members in El Salvador.

World woe

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas

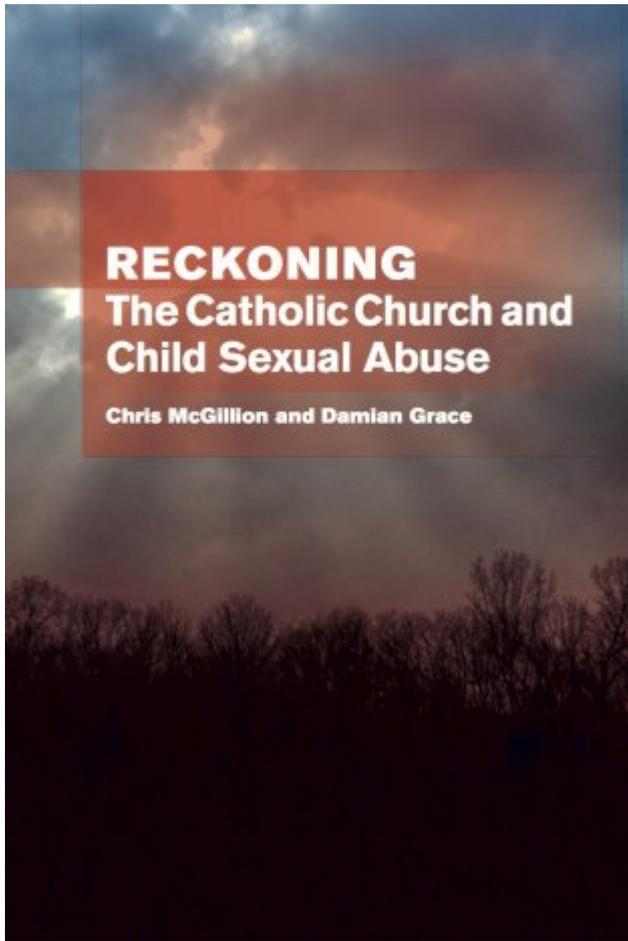


Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

Rules won't restore the Church

RELIGION

Chris McGillion and Damian Grace



It is widely assumed that rules are the

solution to transgressions such as those being investigated by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Rules without doubt are useful. They can be framed to aid compliance and deter wrongdoing. It is no argument against them to say that people will still offend, but if rules are more legal requirements than the expression of genuine morality, they will have limited effectiveness.

The most desirable form of social control is self-restraint - the work of morality. For a minority of people, morals do not have this effect, but pathologising normal conduct because we are fearful that deviants are impervious to morality and law is no way for free people to live. Indeed, moral counsel and tighter regulation are wasted because they do not work on the very people at whom they are directed. Instead, barriers are raised to protect children that distort normal responses and have their own abusive aspect.

When teachers in New South Wales, for instance, were forbidden to touch children, even to comfort them, because a few teachers had abused their office, it was the children who bore the consequences. The lesson teachers took from this regulation was that they were not sufficiently trusted to comfort distressed children. Because of an aberrant few, all teachers were regarded as suspect, and distressed children lost the comfort of a responsible adult.

This response was disproportionate and eventually came to be seen as such by the authorities.

Trust was nonetheless eroded not only by the actions of abusers but also by those seeking to protect children from abuse. Representing formal accountability as more reliable than personal trust actually destroys trust, first by making it very much a second best option when a system of checkable procedures is available, and then, as a consequence, suggesting trust is less safe than documented dealings.

The default position with others becomes distrust. If you can 'see' what everyone else is doing, there is no need to trust them.

Moreover, the effectiveness of accountability is diminished by familiarity - vigilance has its limits - and volume: too much documentation and oversight makes the aim of accountability difficult to secure. Volume can reduce information to mere data.

Resources for policing misconduct are limited but one of the great assets of a civil society is trust. While giving due regard to the protection of the vulnerable, it is important to do so in ways that preserve trust. In providing regulatory protection for children, too much confidence should not be placed in rules, procedures and surveillance. Care should be taken to avoid creating an environment in which social trust eventually falls away.

Understandably, this is not the main consideration of those who wish to protect children, and many Catholics would now prefer systematised accountability to the State to trusting the Church and relying on the personal virtue of clergy. Discussions (around the time of the announcement of the Royal Commission) of breaching the seal of confession (to extract relevant information from priests) were an early indication that such measures have come to seem reasonable.

Other measures would tie State funding of Church activities, such as welfare, schools and hospitals, to compliance with designated standards. It would not be sufficient for, say, a hospital or school to meet the professional standards of the health and education professions. Funding for such entities could conceivably be tied to the Church complying with various bureaucratic agendas, such as parish priests keeping records of all

interviews with parishioners and submitting these records for audit.

It is not fanciful to suggest that reformers of the Church, both within it and outside it, see change in terms of a more regulated and accountable operational environment. Oddly, perhaps, they wish to see a less Roman but more bureaucratic Catholic Church.

The kind of structural and cultural reform most often demanded is bureaucratic and unlikely to maintain, let alone restore, the Church's traditional function in society. The counter-cultural force of the Church historically has been tied to its spiritual mission, its conception of itself not in organisational terms but as the people of God in pilgrimage.

This conception of the Church is threatened by forces hoping to make it conform more closely to a standard bureaucratic system. Forcing the Church to adopt stricter accountability processes might satisfy the demands of a bureaucratic model, but also have the effect of further reducing its responsiveness and spontaneity.

Police checks, convoluted procedures and regular audits have already encroached upon the functioning of workplaces and public institutions such as schools, hospitals and universities. The presumption is that these places are unsafe unless a sheaf of documents certifies otherwise. Is a more cautious, risk averse and procedural church what most Catholics want?

Chris McGillion (pictured) is former religious affairs editor for the Sydney Morning Herald. Damian Grace is an Honorary Associate in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. This is an extract from their book Reckoning: The Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse. Purchase your copy here

Beware of political posturing after MH17 tragedy

INTERNATIONAL

Justin Glyn

theguardian

News | World | Sport | Comment | Culture | Business | Environme

Comment is free

Malaysia Airlines plane MH17: wars have bloomed from far, far less

Rapid and precise responses are demanded – but publicly displaying genuine empathy and leading public grieving is just as critical for world leaders, including Tony Abbott



Paul Daley
theguardian.com, Friday 18 July 2014 12.45 AEST
[Jump to comments \(1229\)](#)



A man walks amongst the debris at the crash site of a passenger plane near the village of Hrabove, Ukraine. Photograph: Dmitry Lovetsky/AP

The missile attack on the Malaysian passenger jet that has killed 298 people carries the tone of heart-reaching and deleterious nihil

The horror of the aircraft crash that killed

298 people was not a day old before blame was already being vigorously assigned by all sides. Chest-beating headlines in the English and Russian language presses screamed things like 'Obama says missile from Rebel Held Ukraine' and 'Moscow calls on Aviation Authorities to Investigate the Actions of Ukraine'.

This is deeply unhelpful and disrespectful at a time when calm and prayers for the dead should be the first order of the day, as Andy Hamilton has pointed out. In addition, however, it obscures the fact that, whatever actually happened - a question to which we still have no answer - a terrible tragedy is at risk of being compounded by the hot-heads on all sides calling for more war and escalation.

Lest we forget, this disaster comes in the context of a civil war that has already torn Ukraine apart, one in which both Russia and the United States have already firmly nailed their colours to opposing sides and in which both great powers have acted with rank opportunism.

All sides in this war have genuine grievances which are being nakedly exploited.

The present Ukrainian government's rise to power was fuelled by real dissatisfaction with the endemic corruption of the Yanukovich years. The opposition, on the other hand, notes the clamp down on Russian as an official language and the preference for the government (which includes oligarchs and groups branded by the EU itself as racist, antisemitic and xenophobic) to shoot before talking.

Russia is worried about the creeping expansion of NATO in clear contradiction of US and EU reassurances that this would not happen. The US and EU are themselves concerned by bellicose rhetoric from an increasingly nationalist and authoritarian Russia.

There is plenty of blame to go around for the events of the war, too. While Russia annexed the Crimea in a move of questionable legality, this followed a US backed coup against a democratically elected (if corrupt) government. Both the Ukrainian government and the rebels have committed atrocities.

The United Nations estimates that, as at the end of June, this conflict had claimed over 250 civilian lives and generated over 100,000 refugees. Major towns have been under siege and aerial and civilian areas subject to airstrikes and artillery bombardment (including by 'Grad' (Hail) rocket artillery), and water and electricity supplies cut off as a weapon of war.

In this context, comments like that of Paul Daly in the *Guardian* that 'Wars have bloomed for far less' in relation to the downing of the Malaysian aircraft look both aggressive and ignorant.

Worse, the media echo chambers on both sides risk ramping up the rhetoric to a point where both sides feel that they have to look tough to appease their respective public opinions. The notorious 'politician's syllogism' (as described in the old *Yes, Minister* show) runs that 'Something must be done. This is something, therefore it must be done.' When applied to decisions to go to war, the result is guaranteed to open the door to more horror.

It is worth remembering that World War I began a century ago with a series of escalations fuelled by nationalism in which each side thought a quick, decisive and localised victory could be theirs. No-one expected the drawn out, grinding war which resulted, destroying five empires, unleashing the first industrial use of chemical weapons

and killing a generation on all sides.

While Russia may not be the power it once was, there are no easy victories to be won here by bellicose rhetoric. Both NATO and Russia are nuclear armed - each possessing weapons of such devastation that they can destroy the world many times over. The consequences of a misstep here are truly too awful to contemplate. The 298 people who died will not be served by the slaughter of millions more.

It is time for governments, media and citizens to take a step back - for reflection, for prayer and for contemplation, and for the sake of the world at large.

Justin Glyn SJ is a student of philosophy and theology who holds a PhD in international and administrative law.

No longer thumped

CREATIVE

Isabella Fels

First kiss

First kiss
Was kind of crass
Like a big bite on the bottom
Not bliss
Not my idea of a wish
I could have crossed it off the list

Read the fine print

Read the fine print
Things are not glinting
I can feel myself blinking
Over the tiny fine print
I want to sprint away
From the fine print

The smell of fear

The smell of fear
Feels so strong
Like everything is wrong
I want to strike a large gong
And bring everyone along

The knock at the door

I hope to open the door
To someone who is not too much of
A bore
To help me to explore
Life outside the door
And give me goods galore

Waiting

Waiting keeps me palpitating
I can feel myself almost hesitating
How I hate waiting
As my mind keeps racing
And my body keeps pacing

Stood up

Standing you up
Yet sitting it out
So weak
Not being able to
See you properly
Yet bent over
backwards
My future incredibly bleak
Not being
Able to do obliques

No fixed address

No one can even send
Me a letter
To make me feel better

Distracted

Distracted by your reflection
Being attracted to only you
You are my projection
But also my affliction
I don't want to feel your rejection
Or to be cut up into little sections

Cake

Beautiful cake
How can I resist you
Even though others persist
Not to eat you

Love

Love is in the air
We're definitely on a dare
Our love is broadcast everywhere
We make quite a pair
As we double up on hugs and kisses

The daily news

What's new
The daily news
Nothing that I already knew
I read through the paper
Through and through
Until I finally decide to throw it out
After I find out
What everything has been about
Around town and can now do my business around town

Lamingtons

He loved lamingtons
never got tired of them
Nearly always had a packet or at least a stack of them
Better than pancakes
Even better than an ordinary sponge cake
The desiccated coconut mixed with chocolate
So naughty and wicked
Better even than the best quality chocolate or double fudge cake
Giving pleasure and sensation to his
Already superbly trained taste buds and sweet tooth

Pink carnations

Pink carnations
Soft to the touch
Although causing a big sensation
With roses as their competitor
And often picked instead
Leaving the roses for dead
Their thorns make me go ouch
Too much
As the carnations take their place

A note found

A note found
What could it be?
I found it under a tree
Beside the road
Will it be relevant to me?
And bring me luck
Or should I leave it unopened?
And throw it away
And just let a truck roll over it

Butterflies

Butterflies
Flying in the heat
Spreading themselves around
Like warm butter
As I mutter honey to my lover

High heels

High heels
In many ways a big deal
I almost want to shriek at my high heels
Hoping they may appeal
And give men a thrill
And really go for the kill
As I go up the hill
After I pay a lot of money
For them at the till

Gone

Too bad that you were just a fad
Yet I was still happy to add you to my life
You certainly gave me lots of drive
Our relationship was pure adrenaline
However now we have driven the distance
Our eyes no longer lock in an instant

Life

Life
You only get one life
For some women it's all about
Being a wife
I stay away from the conventions of life
I am my own person
On my own unique personal journey
All by myself at times
Not running with the times
However instead feeling sublime
Not having to wash everyone else's
Grimy clothes and dishes
Not even cleaning up after the dishy guy
Granting myself lots of wishes
Fishes are my only children
Just two of them will do thank you
No longer having to put up without being thanked
No longer thumped
Jumping lots of hurdles
Kicking lots of goals
All by myself
Only answering to myself

Mobile

You certainly kept me mobile
On my mobile
I was like a motor mouth
As we headed down south
However the holiday didn't last
You gave me a blast
On my mobile by never ringing me up again

I'm sure it will rain if I hang the washing out

The rain
Giving me pain
Over the pain it took for me to do the washing
Being so careful with everything
Including measuring the washing powder
Putting all my beloved clothes together
Now my clothes literally under the weather
Wet and miserable
Like *Les Mis*
Longing to be put back in the lovely closet
High and dry
Not crying
Unprotected in the rain
Ripping and dripping
Exposed to the harsh elements
Creating sentiment
Wishing all the time that they could
Gently be put back inside
The sanctity of the house

Isabella Fels is a Melbourne poet and writer.

First kiss image from Shutterstock

Australia's diplomatic role amid MH17 fallout

INTERNATIONAL

Tony Kevin



The MH17 tragedy had many fathers. Before discussing the main guilty party - Putin's Russian government - something must be said about the contributory roles of the Kiev government, the international airlines' association (IATA) and International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) members, and Malaysian Airlines.

Many airlines including British Airways, Qantas, Korean Air and Asiana had prudently stopped flying over the Eastern Ukraine conflict zone months ago. But some, including Malaysian Airlines, Singapore Airlines and Etihad, continued to do so because of the fuel savings using the minimum-distance great circle route between Europe and Dubai and Asia, which passes over Ukraine.

IATA defended this practice because it said ICAO, the international regulatory agency, had approved this route, provided Crimea was avoided (because of the risk of uncontrolled aircraft) and a 'safe' height maintained. The Ukrainian government, not wanting to lose substantial overflight fees and trying to maintain the fiction that only 'criminal bandits' were involved in unrest in the east, had assured ICAO that routes over

Ukraine were safe.

The fact that many airlines prudently decided to avoid overflying the conflict zone in Eastern Ukraine, and that over the past five weeks insurgents had shot down at least three Ukrainian military aircraft in the conflict area, suggests that the airlines that continued to overfly the area, the members of IATA and ICAO that did not speak out against this practice, and the government in Kiev, are all guilty of substantial contributory negligence.

Had they done their job, the criminals who brought down MH17 would have had no civil aircraft to shoot at. Now, of course, it is an ICAO-declared no-fly zone.

Nevertheless Moscow emerges as the immediate and main contributor. Moscow is encouraging and supplying the military insurgency in Eastern Ukraine. It is clear now that Russian BUK (surface-to-air) units had begun to shoot down Ukrainian military aircraft from insurgent-held areas of Eastern Ukraine in recent weeks.

Whether these units were staffed by Russian-trained Ukrainian soldiers, or by Russian nationals, is unclear at this stage. There is evidence published by Kiev that BUK units were hastily moved twice across the border (Russia is only 30 miles from the crash site).

It seems Russia - despite knowing international airlines were still overflying the area at height - took no safety precautions in the use of these units.

What we know, because of Australia's membership of the five-power intelligence club, comes from satellite imagery. US Secretary of State John Kerry said evidence that it was a Russian missile fired from Russian-supported insurgent territory is overwhelming, based on both satellite imagery (the most important source) and those chilling telephony intercepts (already published by Ukrainian sources days ago).

Initially I was uneasy about Tony Abbott's strong anti-Putin rhetoric from the moment news broke. Why was Australia so upfront, so early? I thought he was jumping to conclusions too soon. It is clear now though that his response was based on that same satellite imagery intelligence that Kerry and Hilary Clinton cite. He was right, and Bill Shorten has correctly supported him.

Students of the Australian-American alliance will ask whether it was Abbott's own decision to get so far out in front so early, or whether he was prompted by Washington.

The Netherlands, which lost the most citizens, was curiously reticent in the first two days. The Dutch PM finally showed real passion as reports came in of mistreatment of human remains and looting of luggage. The Netherlands, highly dependent on Russian-sourced gas, has a lot at stake in trying to maintain warm diplomatic relations with Putin. They have been the least supportive of NATO sanctions against Russia over Crimea.

Did Abbott, or did Washington, think that the Netherlands Government needed to be shamed into standing up more vigorously for its own victims?

The US itself was circumspect in the first two days, tacitly offering Putin the courtesy of time to modify his truculent public position. Now, the gloves are off in Washington too.

Australia's seat on the UN Security Council until the end of 2014, and the fact that we lost 37 citizens and permanent residents in the shutdown, gave Canberra legitimacy for active pressure on Moscow from the start. That campaign bore fruit today. In the end,

Putin had to speak to Abbott and make conciliatory noises. But as Abbott says, the proof will be in the action. Now, it is Australia's (and Julie Bishop's) moment in the UNSC.

The West's diplomatic difficulty is that satellite-gained intelligence cannot be used to establish legal accountability. It may be problematical whether the black boxes (if released untampered) and on-ground evidence can firmly support what Abbott, British PM Cameron, Kerry and Clinton have so firmly said.

But in the court of world public opinion, blame now firmly attaches to Russia for its criminal irresponsibility in arming insurgents with powerful surface-to-air missiles that could bring down an international airliner flying six miles above the conflict area; in not ensuring proper safeguards for the weapons, and possibly also trained personnel, that it supplied to the insurgents; and in not insisting that ICAO airlines stop flying over the area.

The consequences for East-West relations will be serious, though they are still hard to foresee in detail. I don't see WW3 starting over this - it isn't Sarajevo - but I do see the prospect of a new Cold War. Kerry and Cameron have both signalled that the West must re-evaluate its relationship with Russia.

It is hard to see how Putin can back down and admit fault, he has too much invested at home in his Great Russian ideological stance from which flows his sympathy for the Eastern Ukraine separatists. Washington and its newly tough European NATO partners will not let him off the hook easily.

I doubt Putin will come to G20 in Australia. He knows how unwelcome he will be. He emerges from the tragedy with a sharply diminished international reputation for him and his nation.

Tony Kevin is a former Australian ambassador to Cambodia and Poland and author of several books including Reluctant Rescuers.

Elegy for the 298 of MH17

INTERNATIONAL

Andrew Hamilton

The central story of the Malaysian plane shot down over the Ukraine is a story of people - of the 298 people who died on the plane, of their relatives, friends, fellow countrypersons, and of all who share with them a common humanity. Each person who died and each person who grieves them is a person, each with their own hopes, loving and loved by others, each with commitments and plans made null in an instant.

The deepest questions these deaths raise are the unavoidable questions that face us all: questions about the patent precariousness and vulnerability of our lives, about what matters to us when our grasp on the future is so tenuous, about the mysterious conjunction of love, loss, pain and gift, and about the capacity of the human heart for evil and the terrible consequences that follow.

These questions are best pondered in silence and shared in intimacy, not answered in a sermon. In our first response to the crash our common humanity is better expressed in sorrow than in curiosity, in sympathy than outrage, in pondering than declaration, in prayer than in cursing.

The news that many passengers on the plane were travelling to an International Conference on HIV Aids in Melbourne was especially poignant. Accompanying people with HIV AIDS also takes us into deep human places: of illness, loss, stigma, heroism and faithfulness. That people who may have given their lives to enhancing other people's lives by healing and accepting, preventing death and encouraging empathy should have their lives and their contribution to life cut short in a momentary act of violence is a dark mystery.

For some, it will confirm the conviction that altruism is futile; others will find in the lives so sacrificed a testimony to a love that is stronger than the things that make for death.

In the coming days questions about who, what, why, where and how will be pursued exhaustively. There will be time for curiosity, outrage, declaration and making plans. But if we have the resources for it, these responses are best built on a pause for grief, for fellow feeling, for attentiveness to the mystery of life, good and evil, and - if it is open to us - for prayer for people whose lives took off but then fell unexpectedly into the earth.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

Abbott Government blind to social capital

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins



The Abbott Government's abolition of the price on carbon was part of its agenda to remove or weaken regulation that is thought to place a burden on business. Aside from the carbon tax, much of the Coalition's legislative program gives priority to capital over human need. The removal of important elements of the previous government's increased protection for consumers seeking financial advice is an example.

It is significant that the Abbott Government has a popular mandate to wind back its predecessor's policies that promoted social inclusion. This is despite the fact that many of the new Government's moves are clearly contrary to the common interest of the Australian people. For instance the mining super profits tax - which it is set to abolish - was designed to direct a proportion of the revenue from the nation's mineral wealth from large, predominantly foreign owned corporations, back to the common good of the Australian people. But the Australian people apparently want the big miners to keep their super profits.

Why? One possible answer lies in the symbolic value of business entrepreneurship. This is promoted as a good that trumps others, including - and especially - the social good. The social good has even been demonised, with welfare assistance depicted as the defining characteristic of the 'age of entitlement' that must be ended.

The glorification of business entrepreneurship has quite a bit of history, with the philosophy of the 'self made man' that came to dominate life in the United States and spread to other countries of the world, particularly in East Asia. Until now Australians have been proud to think of their nation as the land of the fair go, but it seems we've been won over by the promise of individual prosperity.

The culture of business entrepreneurship is difficult to avoid because it is linked to the globalisation of financial capital. But most especially, it dominates our education system, which must prepare young people to participate in the market economy. Future generations are likely to be indifferent, or even hostile, to the common good.

This was the scenario depicted earlier this month by Fr Benny Juliawan of the Jesuit Conference of Asia-Pacific, who was a keynote speaker at the Jesuit education colloquium in Sydney.

'School management, curricula and the general atmosphere in society idealise an entrepreneurial subject which revolves around discourses of competition and enterprise ... This underlying discourse of entrepreneurship redefines traditional values such as freedom and empowerment in a highly individualised sense.'

Juliawan believes the talents and personalities of today's students are geared toward joining a profession that will fulfil the material aspiration of the middle class, and that there is a serious shortcoming in the entrepreneurial self that is crafted through our education system.

The energy and focus of the activity of creating wealth is in itself admirable. But social - rather than business - entrepreneurship promises a better world. Business entrepreneurs measure performance in terms of financial profit and return, while social entrepreneurs offer profits for society and not just themselves.

A good role model for aspiring social entrepreneurs is the Jesuit educated Australian rooftop solar pioneer Danny Kennedy, who featured on ABC1's *4 Corners* two weeks ago. To realise his ambitions he had to leave his home country and settle in the US, where paradoxically he has discovered there is more appetite for social entrepreneurship than there is in egalitarian Australia. That's because it ultimately makes good business sense.



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Bittersweet victory for the Mothers of Srebrenica

INTERNATIONAL

Binoy Kampmark



State responsibility remains a contested issue, being lodged, as it is, in ideas of comity and international law. The Dutch Supreme Court further elaborated on that idea in finding that the Netherlands was liable for the deaths of over 300 Bosniawith n Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica in Bosnia-Hercegovina in July 1995.

They had been part of a broader group of 5000 refugees, including women and children, who had been sheltering with Dutch UN peacekeepers known as Dutchbat. The action had been launched by the relatives of the victims under the umbrella grouping 'Mothers of Srebrenica'.

The Dutch-administered compound of Potocari had offered promise of haphazard security. Bosniaks were attempting to flee to it for safety. Reassurances were made that they would be protected under the broader umbrella of UN safety and international law.

The Bosnian Serb forces, under the command of Ratko Mladic, were on the offensive after three years of exhausting conflict. The racial and ethnic lines of Bosnia were being drawn up by means of military expulsion and atrocities. Their desire to acknowledge the Dutch protective presence was qualified at best.

The beleaguered Dutch peacekeepers, rattled and poorly armed, had their positions in the enclave shelled, though this took place with intensity after Dutch F-16 fighters initiated strikes at the request of Dutchbat. Mladic's forces did not take kindly to the move, threatening the slaughter of Dutch hostages and demanding the surrender of Bosniak weapons.

With the first killings of unarmed Muslims taking place on 13 July, peacekeepers exchanged 5000 Muslims in the enclave for 14 Dutch peacekeepers. A historical arrangement had been writ in blood.

The judges argued that Dutchbat should have 'taken into account the possibility' that the men in their care would have faced the threat of genocide. Surely, argued the plaintiffs, the Dutch forces should have been aware that handing over Bosniak men and boys to the Serb forces would have resulted in their deaths.

The argument there is crucial - Dutchbat became an accessory to genocide.

In the assessment of the court, 'It can be said with sufficient certainty that, had Dutchbat allowed them to stay at the compound, these men would have remained alive. By cooperating in the deportation of these men, Dutchbat acted unlawfully.'

The verdict does have one glaring weakness. It distinguishes victims. It cleaves them by means of legal distinction. In the words of the articulate president of Mothers of Srebrenica, Munira Subasic, 'The court definitely did not recognise justice for the other groups of victims.' The verdict exonerated the Dutch state over the deaths of more than 7000 men killed in and around the environs of Srebrenica.

There were those who ventured through the forests, a lethal journey termed the road of death. These were specifically exempted from consideration in the verdict - Dutchbat could not be held responsible for their plight because those refugees had not fled directly to the UN compound but 'to the woods in the vicinity of Srebrenica'.

But the point the court makes, more starkly, is that the Dutch forces could not be held liable for all refugees simply because all 25,000 or so could not have been admitted to the compound in Potocari. In some ways, there is something gruesomely ironic here - that touted logistical problem ended up seeing 'The vast majority of the refugees ... taken to safety by the evacuation.'

For all its notable weaknesses, the decision does have one cardinal point. It draws out, uncomfortably, the dark links between those who should be aware, yet proceed with wilful blindness in a course of action that does have disastrous consequences, and those who are fully wilful in perpetrating them.

The verdict also emphasises the essential role of reporting atrocities - Dutchbat, it noted, had not complied with its reporting obligations as fastidiously as it might have. But on this point, there could be no legal liability.

The shadow of the Holocaust, with its collaborative agents, be they local administrations of governments, or indifferent authorities, did perform similar acts when it came to refusing assistance to Europe's Jewry. It was far better to act with cold, rational indifference, than understanding engagement. No one ever wants to see the worst, let alone contemplating it. Folly is often the result.

An underreported fact is that the Dutch state has also been found to have acted unlawfully regarding Srebrenica in earlier Dutch Supreme Court decisions. Dual attribution, for instance, has been accepted in Dutch law - that both the Netherlands and the UN had effective control over the same conduct regarding the refugees.

The state has also attempted to make amends, albeit on a smaller scale. Last April, the Dutch Ministry of Defence announced that the government would be paying 20,000 Euros

in compensation to relatives of some Muslims removed from the camps. But it still takes individuals such as spokesman Klaas Meijer of the Dutch Ministry of Defence to remind detractors 'it was the Bosnian Serb forces who are responsible for the killings'.

The most moving feature of this legal claim is that it must, ultimately, move beyond law and into the realm of human conduct. As Subasic explains, it is through the mothers and those children that reconciliation is possible, one that is not based on the incoherent hatreds of race and political ruthlessness, but the allure that is possible with kindred spirits. Sound legal accountability can, however, help, but its steps can prove infantile.

Dr Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He lectures at RMIT University, Melbourne.