

the SOFiA bulletin january-february 2020

SOFiA exploring issues of life and meaning



Photo R Ford

Tram way at the Sydney Quarantine station

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full...
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar;
Dover Beach, Matthew Arnold

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website and archive of articles: www.sof-in-australia.org

blog: www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sofiatalk/>

Origin of SOFiA

SOFiA creates a space for people of all faiths and none to explore issues of life and meaning. Religion no longer provides satisfactory answers. SOFiA is a non-dogmatic environment in which to continue conversation.

It began in the UK in 1984 with a six-part television series on religions presented by renegade Anglican priest and academic Don Cupitt. The program's name is from lines in Matthew Arnold's 1851 poem *Dover Beach*:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full...
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

With its gentle irony, 'Sea of Faith' nicely held a tension between religion and a realisation that we humans had made it up.

Later we set up The Sea of Faith in Australia. Did two extra words undermine the irony, so 'faith' reverted to its face value? Maybe. Just in case, we de-emphasised it by using SOFiA as name and logo.

As well as *the sofia Bulletin*, SOFiA organises monthly meetings (in Queensland and Victoria), a web site, a blog, expeditions, and a one-day conference.

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Views expressed are those of each author and not necessarily those of the Editor or SOFiA.

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EDITORIAL

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the Cupboard,
To give the poor Dog a bone;
When she came there,
The Cupboard was bare,
And so the poor Dog had none.

Not much copy in the folder. We used to have a break during the Christmas holidays; we might consider in future.

The Management Committee generated a lot of email traffic on the linked issues of the June conference, bush fires and Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*. I have selected brief extracts to give you the sense of the conversation.

There are all the regular items; the crossword puzzle has an unexpected theme, Science News is its usual sideways self and the epilogue is a book review with an engaging story line.

An item in Science News encouraged me to write something on "Changing minds".

This, strangely, is considered a sign of wisdom when someone comes to share your point of view, whereas in politics it is seen as a lack of conviction. "She's done a back flip." is seldom used as a compliment.

I chose the cover photograph of the Quarantine Station on Sydney's North Head well before the COVID-19 virus emergency, but it does resonate. Just behind the photographer's position are the showers where carbolic soap tried to keep contagious illness at bay.

Can I have some copy please? Send it to any of the addresses below, in any reasonable format.

Then we'll be on our way for 2020.

Robin Ford,
Editor *the sofia bulletin*
robinford@a1.com.au
14 Richardson Street
Lane Cove 2066

In The Gaps

<https://www.theage.com.au/culture/books/christianity-still-shapes-modern-western-mortality-20191107-p5389s.html>

Dear Robin, this article really inspired me, -

Claudia

Outline of the 2020 SOFiA One-day Conference
**The Uluru Statement
And Related Issues**

Saturday 20 June 2020, 10.30am-3.00pm

South Bank, Brisbane

This is to let you know the conference is on its way so you can mark it your diary.

More details soon

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* was developed by delegates to the *2017 First Nations National Constitutional Convention* and released in May of that year.

Inter alia, the statement calls for:

...the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

The current plan is to conduct a referendum in the next few years. A 2017 Parliamentary report concluded;

Looking ahead, the success or failure of any future referendum...will hinge upon there being enough political and community goodwill to reach a position that can be supported by the majority of Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* has been met with a wide range of responses, both positive and negative, by governments, academics, non-government organizations and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The movement to acknowledge the original Indigenous ownership of Australia in the constitution has taken decades to reach its present stage. The responses to the *Uluru Statement From The heart* will touch the lives of all Australians, present and future.

SOFiA Conference Program

*We invite you to walk with us in a movement
of the Australian people for a better future.*

The Uluru Statement from the Heart

Morning

Keynote Presentation: Exploring The Uluru Statement From The Heart

- 1 What is meant by the three elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart?
 - a) Voice to Parliament
 - b) Makarrata: Agreement between the Australian government and Indigenous people
 - c) Truth-telling
- 2 What do Indigenous people hope the Statement will achieve?
- 3 What problems in getting agreement are likely to arise, whether from Indigenous or non-Indigenous Australians?
- 4 Questions

Speaker to be announced

Afternoon

Panel Sessions

Guest speakers will open up related topics of current interest for general discussion, they might include:

- Constitutional recognition or practical improvements?
- Measures to overcome the difficulties brought by colonization are urgent; but what will work? Who decides?
- As we emerge from devastating bush fires and drought, what are the lessons to be learnt from Aboriginal people's successful stewardship of the land over millennia?
- What can contemporary Australia learn from 60,000 years of Indigenous culture?

Speakers to be announced

For further information, contact John Carr (3354 3579) or Rachel Matthews (0408 193 872).

A final Note

SOFiA aims to provide a safe space in which ideas may be freely discussed. Free discussion may, on occasion, unwittingly demonstrate insensitivity. Our conference topic this year may make this more likely. But it is too important a topic for it to be off the table. We ask in advance for a dispensation as we learn.

Some Relevant Internet Links

The Statement from the Heart: https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF

The Information Bulletin from the University of Melbourne:

https://law.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/2791940/Uluru-Statement-from-the-Heart-Information-Booklet.pdf

Quick Guide from the Parliament of Australia:

https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/5345708/upload_binary/5345708.pdf

Rachel Perkins, the 2019 Boyer Lectures, 'The End of Silence':

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/boyerlectures/>

Saturday Paper Bolt and Pascoe:

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/media/2019/11/30/bolt-pascoe-and-the-culture-wars/15750324009163>

The SOFiA internet address is: <https://sof-in-australia.org/>

28 January 202

In The Gaps

“The rain is Tess the fire's Joe and they call the wind Maria.”

From Paint Your Wagon

Point of View

On Difference

By what name should we call them?

John Carr discovers a moving target as he explores identity politics.

Two closely related matters arise from recent blogs – appropriate terminology and ‘identity politics’. What should we call Aboriginals and would the Uluru Statement foster separateness rather than unity in the country? In this blog, I’ll deal only with the first. I have discussed the second on earlier occasions and I hope readers can see the connection between ‘naming’ and the fear of angry, disadvantaged groups seeking their place in the sun.

Issues like these continually arise in the community and have been explored in a number of past SOFiA events. They arise wherever there are groups of people who suffer or have suffered disadvantage, marginalisation, oppression, persecution, enslavement, torture or death because of their appearance, ethnicity or identity. The kinds of ‘difference’ that cause the maltreatment by the ‘normal’, dominant majority include characteristics like pigmentation, ethnicity, language, religion, politics, sex, gender, body shape, deformity and hair colour. (OK, red heads and blondes don’t actually experience much violence.) The discussions we had in 2017 about gender difference had much in common with those on being Aboriginal.

Different ‘others’ are often branded with pejorative names. This practice may survive even in contemporary, ‘civilised’ communities and cultures where the more extreme forms of vilification have been outlawed. While very painful for the members of the group, they may become so normalised that the dominant majority are not even aware of the pain they cause. Pejorative slang terms often sound humorous to those who use them and there is often a fine line between deliberate cruelty and simply ‘being funny’. Perpetrators often say, in self-defence, ‘I was only joking’. But if a group is seriously marginalized over a long time, even objective terms become terms of contempt, too. *If a group is seriously stigmatised in a society, it is virtually impossible to talk about them in any way that is not prejudicial.*

So with Australia’s Aboriginals. Leaving aside the many vile slang terms that were commonly used earlier in our lifetimes, what to call Indigenous peoples of Australia has always been a serious problem. I thought that the dilemma had been resolved some 30 years ago, when purists recommended that we follow normal grammatical patterns and use ‘Aborigine’ as the noun and ‘Aboriginal’ as the adjective. At the time, it was also decided that the original inhabitants of the continent should be given the common courtesy of having these terms begin with upper case A. For most of my working life, these were the styles required for publication by almost all authorities in the country.

It appears that, at some time, Aboriginals decided that ‘Aborigine’ was too demeaning and that ‘Aboriginal’ should be the term for both noun and adjective. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to provide any long-term solution. If Aboriginal people are still seen and treated as ‘other’, the preferred term will also become

prejudicial. History also suggests that longer, softer terms like 'people of colour' and 'First Nations people' are unlikely to catch on, though they will probably continue to have a role in some specific contexts. Typically, they can be used once at the beginning of a speech, but repeated use may seem forced. *The Uluru Statement*, an extremely formal document, illustrates what I think is one level of current practice: 'Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and the adjacent islands ...' In the Statement, 'Aboriginal' is used twice, always in conjunction with 'Torres Strait Islander', 'First Nations' three times.

Another linguistic pattern is worth mentioning. Throughout history, derided groups have tried to fight back against oppressors by reclaiming some terms of contempt. 'Christian' is a case in point, as are demeaning terms for military units, such as 'contemptible little army' and 'desert rats'. Now, it is quite common for ethnic- and gender-related groups to appropriate previously demeaning terms, initially among themselves, but later more generally.

A very successful Australian film and television company is Blackfella Films, founded by Rachel Perkins in 1992. This pattern, I believe, is very healthy, showing growing confidence of the 'other' groups and a degree of acceptance by the majority culture. However, when using them, everyone needs to be conscious of the context in which they are speaking or writing – Who you are, whom are you talking to, who else is listening, and what your objectives are.

Point Of View

Notes From Email Conversations Following John Carr's review of Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*

A much stronger attack on Pascoe and *Dark Emu* has been launched – Peter O'Brien's book, *Bitter Harvest: The Illusion of Aboriginal Agriculture in Bruce Pascoe's Dark Emu*, Quadrant. This has been followed by a cover article by Peter O'Brien in the December edition of *Quadrant*, *The Bogus Aboriginal World of Bruce Pascoe*. This article is introduced in an Editor's Column, *The Epicentre of our History* by Keith Windschuttle, well-known veteran of 'the history wars'.

We on the Management Committee are all outsiders to the Aboriginal community and are floundering around in the dark, trying to help and not hinder.

I was pleased to hear several of those present today speak of the need to carry non-Aboriginal Australians along on the journey. That's entirely what we are on about in this conference.

This is not to say that the *Dark Emu* critics have everything wrong. We must respect truth however and wherever we find it (if it can be found).

Of all the topics in Pascoe's *Dark Emu*, the one that strikes the loudest chord for Australian readers at this time is Aboriginal land management.

However, farmers and other land management experts know that future policy must be much more nuanced than either/or absolutes. We would not want local authorities or activist groups systematically burning the same area every year willy-nilly. Aboriginal practice certainly would have taken account of local factors like: the landscape, the vegetation, the prevailing climate, the time of year, the current year's weather, the previous years' practice and the size of the area to be burnt.

The issues can be very subtle and it is very easy for the protagonists on either side to be misunderstood.

Point of View

Is Science A Religion?

Greg Spearritt

The suggestion is sometimes heard, and was in fact floated in a recent *bulletin*, that science is a form of religion. This idea begs three questions: the obvious one, 'is it true?'; but also the fundamental questions, 'what is religion?' and 'what is science?'.
First things first.

What is religion?

How wide is a piece of string? Clearly there's a limit, since at some thickness it must become rope, but between 'thread' and 'rope' a good deal of variation is possible.

Forms of what we would want to call 'religion' vary widely. I submit, however, (and it's hardly an original thought) that religion is a set of belief-and-practice customs which, despite their differences, bear a 'family' resemblance. The hallmarks of that resemblance include such things as devotion; a sense of tribal or communal identity; conviction that there is a capital-T Truth about existence; belief in a deity or higher power; and supplication to that power to smooth the way in life. Any specific religious expression, of course, may not exhibit all of these. Like art, you generally know it when you see it, even if you can't pin it down in words.

Does science fit here?

There are interesting similarities when it comes to science. Its practitioners are (hopefully) devoted to the scientific method, and although that probably doesn't involve offerings of fruit or flowers, it can be accompanied by a more or less evangelical fervour to promote the use of, and respect for, this method. As a way of knowing it may be given a pride of place that reminds one of a higher power. At least some of those who value science seem to view it as an identity issue: it distinguishes them from the gullible who lack rigorous standards for determining what's true. Truth also, for many in the science world, is spruiked (sometimes snootily) as an alternative to the waffle of those postmodernists for whom nothing is True and every option is as good as any other. And there is a view out there that science and technology will provide the answers to the problems of our human condition.

What is science?

These similarities, though intriguing, mostly relate to a parody of science.

To be sure, science is a human endeavour. It is practiced by humans, and humans are notorious for cheating, for self-aggrandisement and for unwitting bias. It is not always practiced well.

When it *is* done well, however, it is modest about its reach. It cannot tell us about whether there is a god or about the point of existing. If an idea or proposition is testable, though, science comes into its own. The scientific method is our best shot at avoiding our apparently irresistible inclination to fool ourselves.

A reliance on empiricism, on evidence as far as possible untainted by our desires and assumptions, gives us a level of confidence in its findings, if not always in the interpretations of those results (especially when they fall into the hands of politicians and interest groups).

It's not about Truth, though. Sabine Hossenfelder of the Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics in Stockholm, observes that "Physics is not about finding Real Truth. Physics is about describing the world." It's an activity within language. It is, nonetheless, damned useful, as anyone who has ever driven a car, taken antibiotics or used a mobile phone can attest.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) is a good example of the avoidance of over-reach. Findings are rated on confidence levels rather than presented with certainty as 'facts'. Science in general sits light to its conclusions: if the evidence changes, views must change. Indeed, the best scientists are those who welcome evidence that shows their ideas may be wrong.

Is science a form of religion?

I don't know too many religious people who would welcome evidence to suggest that their beliefs were wrong (or their practices harmful). In far too many cases, religious belief is unfalsifiable and impervious to evidence that does not support the belief.

Science, in contrast, is as professor of evolutionary biomechanics John Hutchinson describes it:

The ground we walk on is that of science itself: clear, reproducible data and tools, a spirit of sharing and professionalism, and open-mindedness. ¹

Is science, then, a form of religion? Only, I suggest, in the minds of those who do not understand science.

Notes

1. Quoted by Verlyn Klinkenborg, writing in the New York Review of Books:
<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2019/12/19/what-were-dinosaurs-for/>

Announcement

SOFiA Victoria

Thursdays, 7.30pm. Gold coin donation appreciated.

Lectures are followed by questions, discussion and refreshments.

All viewpoints are welcome.

VENUE: Carlton Library Meeting Room, 667 Rathdowne Street (corner Newry Street), North Carlton.
Melways Map: 2B J2

20 February 2020

Robert Bender (Humanist Society of Victoria)
Thomas Payne, the Enlightenment and the Rights of Man.

19 March 2020

Lev Lafayette (Lightbringers)
Is Pantheism the Answer?

16 April 2020

John Noack (Carl Jung Society)
Galilean Folklore in Judaism and Christianity: Part 2.

21 May 2020

Andrew Rooke (Theosophical Society, Pasadena)
Group Souls, Soul Groups and Soul Mates.

In The Gaps

Said Hanrahan

Poem by John O'Brien

Do supporters of Climate Change come across as peddlers of un-necessary doom? Hanrahan always looked on the bleak side of life. For the past months Australians have been challenged by fire, and flood, drought and virus. For some this has brought disaster, but what about the country as a whole? What is the appropriate scale of doom?

John O'Brien was the pen name of a Roman Catholic priest

"If we don't get three inches, man,
Or four to break this drought,
We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,
"Before the year is out."

And every creek a banker ran,
And dams filled overtop;
"We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,
"If this rain doesn't stop."

here'll be bush-fires for sure, me man,
There will, without a doubt;
We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,
"Before the year is out."

Regular Items

Digitalia

Here the Editor reviews activity on the SOFiA website, the SOFiA blog, and the SOFiA Facebook page. (See the SOFiA website www.sof-in-australia.org for instructions and links on accessing the SOFiA Facebook page)

SOFiA website: www.sof-in-australia.org. The new website remains a delight. So easy to navigate. I easily found this item for my digest: [Anglican Bishop calls for 'confession, repentance' on Australia Day \(Canberra Times\)](#) Feb 2 – The Anglican Bishop of Tasmania Richard Condie is exhorting Christians to mark Australia Day with lamentation and mourning, describing the dispossession of Aboriginal people as a “festering wound in our nation”.

SOFiA blog: www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php or via the website. My selection is Heroes and villains. by [Greg Spearritt](#) 19 Jan 20 “We seem to have a need to see the world as binary. It’s been debunked many times, but it suits us to see people as straight or gay...”

Facebook: Sea of Faith in Australia: Jackie Bailey writes: Hello SoFers. I have been so depressed by the news lately. I have started writing a manuscript about finding hope. I thought I would share the draft opening in case it might make anyone else feel marginally more hopeful. Phil Roberts replied: Well said. It doesn't cheer me up but I relate entirely to your short lived attempt to cry defiance. As I get older, courage to do things becomes more and more an issue. Hence, stories like this are good to hear, mournful though they are. Thanks for sharing.

In the Gaps

War On Climate Change

Robin Ford

The war on drugs didn't make much sense to me, so why am I writing about a "war on climate change"?

When sorting out some family documents, we turned up a copy of *These Eagles, Story of the RAAF at War*, published in 1942 by RAAF Directorate of Public Relations.

How curious to produce this in the middle of a world war. The editors thought so too

While the war is still in progress, any attempt to write a history of the Royal Australian Air Force and the part it is playing in this war, would be like trying to bite an apple suspended on a string.

Yet they did produce a book, and the Chief of the Air Staff wrote a message for it that could be adapted to introduce a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Just substitute Climate Change for the enemy: Here is his final paragraph:

There is every indication that the war will be a long one, and we must prepare ourselves fully to be ready for everything; to anticipate the worst and to put all our energies into ensuring the best; to keep the offensive spirit alive and active; to study our enemy closely and be ready to strike hard at every opportunity. It will only be by persistent ruthlessness and determination that we will eventually force our will upon the enemy and attain our objective.

Continued/...

Regular Items

Science News

The intersect between religion and science is one of perpetual interest, but philosophy, ethics and the arts also figure in scientific studies from time to time. Recent scientific research may have implications for our understanding in all these fields, and more importantly (of course) for how we make meaning in our lives.

Your profile as a liar

You're busted! A recent study tells us all about you as a liar. You're apparently twice as likely to consider yourself a good liar if you're male; good liars prefer face-to-face deception (social media is the least likely place you'll lie); forty percent of all lies are told by a very small number of deceivers; the better you think you are at lying, the more lies you'll tell; and there's more!

Web reference:

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/12/191220105633.htm

Changing minds

A researcher at Stanford offers four key pathways to changing the views of climate deniers so they align more closely with the science. These involve, among other things, acknowledging and respecting people's beliefs and values.

Web reference:

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/01/200108160312.htm

Monkeys 1, Humans 0

In tests to gauge cognitive flexibility, monkeys have been found to be superior to humans. Compared to humans, monkeys in these trials "showed a greater willingness to use optional shortcuts to earn a treat compared to humans who persisted in using a familiar learned strategy despite its relative inefficiency."

Web reference:

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191015115356.htm

Emotion and culture

How people label their emotions may give a clue to how they experience the world. Emotion words from 2,474 languages spanning 20 major language families were studied by researchers at the University of North Colorado, with some interesting findings. In some languages, for instance, 'anxiety' and 'anger' overlap; in others, 'anxiety' is more closely linked to 'grief' and 'regret'; 'surprise' and 'fear' go together in some language but not others; and in the Rotuman language spoken just north of Fiji, 'love' and 'pity' are denoted by the same word.

Web reference:

www.sciencenews.org/article/some-languages-love-pity-get-rolled-into-same-word-meaning

Changing Minds

Robin Ford encounters Frederick Lanchester, Oliver Cromwell. And Dennis Lindley

“Well [my directors] seem to change their minds pretty frequently, but if I had a mind like theirs

I should change it as soon as I could” Frederick Lanchester of his directors.

Fred Lanchester – an iconoclast - designed cars from the early days and, at a time when aviation was still new, he devised what became the accepted theory of flight.

It appears that he had a problem with people who changed their minds. In our era we seem to have the opposite problem: we hold on to ideas, despite evidence that they are past their use-by-date.

Oliver Cromwell understood this problem. He wanted the Synod of the Church of Scotland to change their minds and reconsider their view that Charles II should be king:

...you have censured others, and established yourselves "upon the Word of God." Is it therefore infallibly agreeable to the Word of God, all that you say? I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.

A Wikipedia search unearthed a mathematical link – Cromwell’s rule

...if a prior probability of 0 or 1 is assigned to any hypothesis, the posterior probability will necessarily be 0 or 1. No amount of data or evidence will be able to change it.

According to the web, Dennis Lindley expressed the problem like this:

“...if a decisionmaker thinks something cannot be true and interprets this to mean it has zero probability, he will never be influenced by any data, which is surely absurd.

So if human induced climate change is considered impossible and is given a probability of 0 – then, whatever the analysis, the answer is bound to come out as a probability of 0.

Of course the same applies to supporters of climate science who assume that human-induced climate change has probability of 1, but scientists being scientists, most will speak in probabilities without *a priori* assumptions.

“A ha” say those certain that climate change is invalid. “You see, we know for sure: *you* have only got a theory.”

Again, supporters of Climate Change who give it a probability of 1 are in a similar situation.

Either way the battle is on again.

All this was prompted by Greg Spearritt’s item in *Science News* (above). I looked up the source and found an interesting article that explained the failings of a direct approach; it’s time for something new. They suggest we try encouraging people to:

...explicitly discuss their values and stance on climate change prior to engaging with climate information

It’s a tangential approach to convincing others rather than beating them over the head with data. As the article explains:

Self-affirmation is challenged when people face climate change because it requires them to consider their contribution to the problem, which can threaten their sense of integrity and trigger self-defence.

Side-stepping conflict might work. It's definitely worth a try. And it applies to both sides of an argument

Postlude

Scary Thoughts

Robin Ford glimpses a possible future reality – and it looks uncomfortable.

If all the world were paper
And all the seas were ink.
If all the trees
Were bread and cheese?
What would we have to drink?*

This nursery rhyme unsettled me. It always did. What was in the writer's mind, I wonder?

I hadn't seen it for ages. Why did it pop up in my head just now? I was sitting down to write something on Climate Change, and "Pop"! there it was.

Here's a frightening scenario:

What if the global warming predictions of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are correct?

How will Australia get by if coal mines become stranded assets, agriculture is left high and dry, and famous beauty spots are degraded and no longer attract visitors?

Until recently I could read about predictions of Climate Change with equanimity, then think "that's very interesting" and get on with my next task. But no longer.

The agreement between predictions and measurements is convincing and getting more-so as models are improved. It's got me rattled. Not that I ever denied the science; that all made sense. It's just that what used to be cerebral, now it gets me in the gut.

I have hopes that we are about to see all the governments of the world make a concerted effort on Climate Change. But with the best will in the world, this will take time. So, what can I do to speed things up? I can develop my own plans:

1. Change over to green electricity.
2. Take the option to offset carbon introduced into the atmosphere when flying
3. Carefully assess travel 'Is your journey strictly necessary?'
4. Choose the mode of travel that involves the least carbon.
5. Install photo-voltaic panels on our roof

There's nothing remarkable about this list except that each item is an action I can implement.

I have concluded that the earth is warming due in part to human induced climate change. My choices should reflect this view.

Footnote

*This strange poem at the top of this article has a curious background.

One internet source claimed that it came from a comic poem published in or after 1658, several others used it for an English Country dance, and yet another claimed that it was a parody of elaborate language in Jewish religious ceremonies.

Epilogue

***Gaia*, by James Lovelock**

Gaia appeared in an article in the New Scientist of February 15, 1975, and in various books, such as *The Quest for Gaia*, 1979.

Reviewed by Rachael Matthews

My mother introduced me to James Lovelock and his “Gaia Hypothesis” decades ago. She was one of his greatest fans and soon I was, too. I’m no scientist, but he writes so clearly about everything scientific and everything besides. If I read every sentence slowly, twice, I really understand what he is on about. And enjoy it.

My mum dropped Lovelock like the proverbial hot potato when he came out very strongly in favour of nuclear power. She went right off him. But he had planted a seed in me.

I had been thinking for a while we should revisit the whole issue. I’m no economist, but I do understand that if we stop mining [and exporting] coal, and stop fracking and mining ‘natural’ gas, and logging forests, we are going to need some export to replace them. We have plenty of uranium, and a very stable land mass. Perhaps we should sell uranium for peaceful purposes, not weapons, and bury other countries’ [carefully vetted] nuclear waste.

12 years ago at the age of 90 Lovelock wrote *The Vanishing Face of Gaia* a nice mix of Gaia theory and personal memoir. It was very poignant, reading this while the bushfires raged. He hooked me completely on the benefits of nuclear power. Read it.

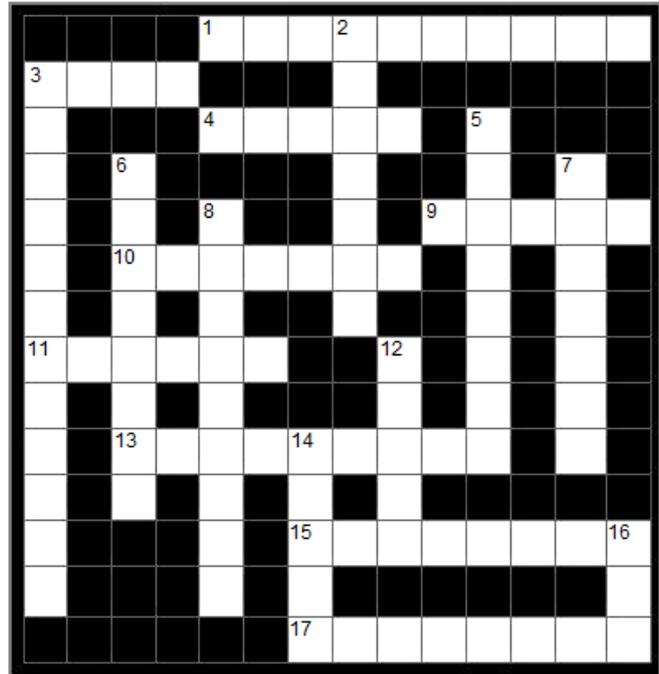


SOFiA Crossword #43



Philosophy 101
Philosophical terms

SOFiA Crossword #43 Prepared by Greg Spearritt



Across

1. An action purely for benefit of others
3. Therefore
4. Name associated with the principle that entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily
9. Purpose or end
10. Theory that mind and body are separate
11. The view that there is only one principle, essence or substance
13. Belief that nothing exists outside one's own mind
15. Self-rule
17. Study of being

Down

2. Belief that what we apprehend is actually there
3. Study of the ways of knowing
5. Idea that the most basic unit of reality is conceptual, not material
6. Pursuit of pleasure
7. Clever but fallacious argument
8. One thing leading to another
12. Argument or idea
14. Classical philosopher believed to have influenced Christianity, especially through St Augustine
16. Expression of joy at completing this damn crossword

Editor's crib sheet

When I check the crossword (a task I enjoy) I see how much I can do unaided, then I hit the web. *If you want to do it all by yourself, then read no further* but where the web alone is not enough you might find these oblique angles on Greg's clues helpful.

Most of the clues responded to a web search, for example 9A and 17A.

I found 12D surprisingly difficult to find, you might find these identified in reports and presentations by a bullet.

7D bamboozled me, so I contacted Greg and we adjusted the clue. If this still doesn't do the trick for you, it sounds like it might have something to do with our organisation's new name, but surely not!" All in all, this edition's crossword is quite educational!

SOFiA

exploring issues of life and meaning

SOFiA publishes a bi-monthly bulletin. It organises conferences, public lectures and regional meetings. Through its website it maintains an archive of articles and a blog. It also runs email discussion groups.

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 web: **www.sof-in-australia.org**, blog: **www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php**

Brisbane Acacia Ridge 3rd Sunday, 7.30pm. Contact: Rodney Eivers (07 3273 2049)

Brisbane Brookfield 1st Sunday, 7.30pm. Contact: Helen Mason (07 3870 8565)

Brisbane Bayside 3rd Monday. Contact: Judith Bore (07 3207 5428)

Brisbane CBD 3rd Sunday, 1pm to 2.30pm. Contact: Rachel Matthews 0408 193 872)

Chinchilla 1st & 3rd Thursday nights. Contact: Glen Beasley (07 4662 7738)

Melbourne 3rd Thursday, 7.30pm at the Carlton Library. Contact: David Miller (03 9467 2063).

Sydney Under consideration. Contact: Lyndell and Robin Ford (02 9427 7078)

Toowoomba Monthly on a Monday night. Contact: Greg Spearritt (sofinau98@gmail.com)

SOFiA Membership Application/Renewal New Fee Structure (AGM 2016)

From January 2017 SOFiA will have a single membership category.

The fee is *\$20.00 for ten years* (non-refundable).

Those who joined at or after the June 2016 AGM will have already paid for the ten years from January 2017.

The standard method for delivering *the SOFiA bulletin* is email. Paper versions are available on request at no additional charge (donations towards printing costs are welcome).

If your details have not changed there is no need to fill in this form. Just send your payment as described below, being sure to identify it as "SOFiA subs" with your name.

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