

What's inside?

28th AAPAE annual conference update [2](#)

New research in ethics from the social sciences [4](#)

An educational concern and an alternative suggestion [6](#)

Thoughts on the morality of a recent Melbourne rally [8](#)

A national redress scheme for historical abuse against the disabled is overdue [9](#)

The beautiful fall—book review [10](#)

About the AAPAE [12](#)

Professional & Applied

- ◆ BUSINESS
- ◆ EDUCATION
- ◆ ENGINEERING
- ◆ ENVIRONMENT
- ◆ LAW
- ◆ MEDICAL
- ◆ NURSING
- ◆ POLICE
- ◆ PUBLIC POLICY
- ◆ PUBLIC SECTOR
- ◆ SOCIAL WORK
- ◆ TEACHING

Welcome to the Winter Edition of *Australian Ethics*!

This edition of *Australian Ethics* focuses on the complexity and challenge of real world ethics. It opens with details of our upcoming virtual conference in August, hosted by Griffith University's Law Futures Centre. The theme is the 'Social Licence and Ethical Practice'. The idea of the 'Social Licence to Operate' is becoming widespread in the business ethics space, and we can all benefit from being aware of—and perhaps also wary of—the ways this concept is used. With some terrific keynotes confirmed, the conference promises to interrogate this concept and its application from a wide variety of fascinating perspectives.

Alan Tapper provides our first article in this edition, giving a terrific overview of recent social science explorations of ethics, including from economics, psychology, and anthropology, describing the insights of key figures like Deirdre McCloskey and Jonathan Haidt, as well as a team led by Oliver Scott Curry (all accompanied by excellent links to further reading). Janette Desi underlines the importance of teacher autonomy and other key factors in our pursuit of the moral goals of education. Michael Schwartz reflects on the invocation and reality of apartheid as he considers the ethical issues raised in a recent rally in Melbourne. Next, the case for a national redress scheme for historical abuse against the disabled is made strongly by Joseph Naimo. Finally, Leila Toiviainen turns her hand to novel reviewing—an article which I personally read with a little trepidation. As well, for those with a philosophical background working outside philosophy departments, be sure to check out the *Ethics outside philosophy meet-up group* being organised by Jacqui Boaks.

Thanks to our wonderful newsletter editor, Charmayne Highfield, for putting it all together for us!

*One final point to note:* Like last year, we will need to have the AGM separate to the conference. Please keep your eye out for the notices when they come out to ensure you can be involved.

Happy reading to all, and I look forward to seeing you (virtually) at our conference in August.

**Hugh Breakey**

## 28<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL AAPAE CONFERENCE

To be hosted by:



### Law Futures Centre

**Wednesday 11 – Friday 13 August 2021**

Online Conference via Zoom

#### CONFERENCE THEME

### **S o c i a l L i c e n c e a n d E t h i c a l P r a c t i c e**

The idea of the ‘social licence to operate’ (‘SLO’) first came to prominence late last century in application to mining industries. Local communities judged that industries were causing too much environmental harm or social disruption, and they began resisting and disrupting industry activities. The critics claimed that the industries had lost their ‘social licence’ to conduct their operations. Over the last twenty years, the SLO concept has been applied to many industries (e.g., paper mills, banking, tourism, aquaculture) and even to public works. In some applications, the invocation of the SLO concept seems to have had good results, strengthening industry ethical standards and encouraging genuine engagement with stakeholder communities. In others, the SLO concept has itself become the subject of ethical contestation.

The Conference will explore the many ethical questions raised by the notion of the SLO:

- What is the relationship between the SLO and other more familiar ethical concepts like corporate social responsibility, triple bottom line and legitimacy?
- How can the ‘community’ that grants the SLO be determined? Is this a practical or ethical question?
- Should the SLO be employed more widely, as a way of improving industry standards and community engagement across more domains?
- Should the SLO be resisted on ethical grounds, perhaps because of its inherent indeterminacy and unpredictability for industry—or because it distracts from more democratic and demanding governance/regulatory arrangements?
- Is the SLO an entirely new form of governance regime or ethical standing, made possible through new technology and social media?

As always, generalist papers on any issues in professional and applied ethics will be warmly welcomed at the AAPAE Conference. There will also be two streams on:

1. Professional ethics & professionalism
2. Moral philosophers working outside philosophy departments

#### **BEST PhD PAPER presented at the Conference**

First prize is an award for A\$250 and second prize A\$100. Submission deadline for full papers is 28 July 2021. For further information regarding the Best PhD paper award, please email [info@aapae.org.au](mailto:info@aapae.org.au)

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Dr Michelle Voyer** is a Senior Research Fellow with the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) at the University of Wollongong. Her research focuses on the human dimensions of marine conservation and resource management, and the nexus of social science and policy. Building on a ten year career in Australian state and federal government, and marine science undergraduate training, Michelle's research now focuses primarily on ocean governance and fisheries and marine social science questions. In 2014, she completed her PhD examining the social acceptability of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), with a focus on two NSW marine parks. Since then she has been involved in a range of contract and academic research projects in Australia and overseas, looking at commercial and recreational fisheries, MPAs, Indigenous cultural fishing and maritime and ocean uses as part of an emerging 'Blue Economy'. [http://uowvivo.uow.edu.au/individual/michelle\\_voyer](http://uowvivo.uow.edu.au/individual/michelle_voyer)



**Dr Martin Drum** is Director of Public Policy and Associate Professor, Politics and International Relations at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Fremantle. Martin researches and teaches on a range of issues including public policy, voting, elections, and Australian politics. He has held senior roles at Notre Dame, including Chief-of-Staff and Director of Public Policy (current). Martin has worked to reform elections and voting in Australia, and has recently been a member of the Ministerial Expert Committee, charged with making recommendations to government about the WA electoral system. Martin contributes to local and national media, and has made submissions to a range of parliamentary inquiries.



## CALL FOR PAPERS ...

The Conference Committee warmly invites submissions for the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual AAPAE Conference from individuals (and teams) from all disciplines and professions who are interested in advancing the understanding, teaching, and practice of professional and applied ethics. As always, the annual conference atmosphere is sure to be one of collegiality and encouragement and a great space for newbie researchers (as well as seasoned presenters) to showcase their work. The call is out for abstracts and papers related to the central theme and other issues in applied ethics and the professions.

## PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITY

Authors of papers presented at the conference will be invited to submit completed papers to the AAPAE's associated journal, *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations* (REIO).

REIO is a peer reviewed journal and all submitted papers will go through a rigorous double-blind review process to determine suitability for publication. Please note submission for peer review prior to the conference does not guarantee acceptance for publication.

## REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN—FREE FOR AAPAE MEMBERS

The conference registration form can be downloaded from <http://aapae.org.au/events/28th-annual-aapae-conference>. Please email your completed form to Dr Hugh Breakey at [h.breakey@griffith.edu.au](mailto:h.breakey@griffith.edu.au) to express your interest to attend and obtain the conference link and password.

**AAPAE Members—FREE      Non-concessional—A\$30      Student & Concessional—A\$20**

## NEW RESEARCH IN ETHICS FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Alan Tapper

**What is morality?** Philosophers generally answer that question by talking about theories of morality. That, I suppose, is what philosophy does—it theorises things. But morality is a practical business, and we all engage in that sort of business. Morality should make sense to anyone and everyone. The theory of morality should speak a language anyone can understand. By and large, the language spoken by philosophers when they speak about morality is a language very different from how ordinary people speak.

Further, moral philosophy has become bogged down in trying to validate one of three competing moral theories: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory. Too much of moral philosophy reads like a three-way wrestling match between these theories. Meanwhile, however, the social sciences have been making remarkable progress in articulating accounts of morality grounded in empirical evidence. Here I sketch three such cases.

The first comes from economics. I have in mind Deirdre McCloskey's work, especially her *The Bourgeois Virtues* (2006). McCloskey is a feminist, a Christian and a distinguished economic historian, trained in the Chicago School of economic rationalists. In her book she brings this seemingly improbable combination together, in an updated account of the seven "classical virtues": justice, courage, moderation, wisdom, faith, hope and love. Modern moral philosophy lost its way when it gave up Adam Smith's account of virtues and sentiments.

The result has been a long line of contractarian theorists trying to solve the Hobbes Problem—namely,

"Can a group of asocial monsters, who have never been children and have never loved anything, never had faith or hope or justice or temperance, be shown on a blackboard to create out of rational self-interest a civil society?"

Smith is the hero in McCloskey's attempt to revive the virtues for modern ethics. She gives an account of her own intellectual journey here: [http://www.deirdremccloskey.com/docs/pdf/McCloskey\\_ApologiaProVitaSua.pdf](http://www.deirdremccloskey.com/docs/pdf/McCloskey_ApologiaProVitaSua.pdf). Reviews of her

book, and her replies to these reviews are here: <http://www.deirdremccloskey.com/academics/#bv>

A second example comes from psychology, in the work of Jonathan Haidt, especially his best-selling book, *The Righteous Mind* (2012). Haidt's work is now known as Moral Foundations Theory. It proposes that morality has five foundations:

1. Care, the basis of kindness and nurturance (with harm as its opposite)
2. Fairness, the basis of justice, rights and autonomy (with cheating as its opposite)
3. Loyalty, the basis of patriotism and sacrifice (with betrayal as its opposite)
4. Authority, the basis of leadership and followership (with subversion as its opposite)
5. Sanctity, the basis of valuing the body (with degradation as its opposite).

For Haidt, a large part of morality (but not all) is intuitive and is shown in our instantaneous reactions rather than in our cool reflections. He admires Humean ethics because he sees it as giving proper recognition of our intuitive reactions: on this view reason is the servant of the passions. This allows Haidt to count our reactions of disgust as part of morality as understood in most cultures, if not perhaps in our own.

Haidt is interested in why people have such visceral reactions to some public figures and some political views. Even in matters of politics, we react before we think. We choose sides—"Left" or "Right", conservative or liberal—not just by weighing up the merits of the issues or the personalities, but because our pre-rational minds intervene before we are even aware of the issues. This of course has its dangers, and Haidt has gone on to campaign against the rampant tribalism in academic and political cultures today.

Excerpts and reviews of *The Righteous Mind* are here: <https://righteousmind.com/about-the-book/>. Moral Foundations Theory has a website here: <https://moralfoundations.org>. His campaign in fa-

(Continued from page 4)

your of intellectual diversity can be seen here: <https://heterodoxacademy.org>.

The third case is less well-known, and comes from anthropology. A team of researchers at Oxford University, led by Oliver Scott Curry, have proposed that morality is about cooperation. Anthropologists have traditionally emphasised “the diversity of morals” and the multiplicity of kinship systems across the vast range of human cultures. This makes the idea that morality has a unitary core seem highly improbable; instead, it lends support to cultural and moral relativism.

But Curry and his colleagues (Daniel Austin Mullins and Harvey Whitehouse) think their theory is strongly grounded. On their view, cooperation is central to ethics in all cultures. In an article entitled “*Is It Good to Cooperate? Testing the Theory of Morality-as-Cooperation in 60 Societies*” (Current Anthropology, 2019) they conclude that “cooperation is always and everywhere considered moral”.

There is of course a conceptual issue here. What do they mean by “cooperation”? Cooperation, they contend, takes seven forms:

The present incarnation of the theory incorporates seven well-established types of cooperation—helping family, helping group, exchange, resolving conflicts through hawkish and dovish displays, dividing disputed resources, and respecting prior possession—and uses this framework to explain seven types of morality—obligations to family, group loyalty, reciprocity, bravery, respect, fairness, and property rights.

The 2019 article is especially valuable because it includes critical commentary by five leading academics, and replies to these criticisms from the authors. Curry, Mullins and Whitehouse nicely reply to the claim that “harm” (for example, assault) is universally seen as wrong in this way:

the moral valence of harm will vary according to the cooperative context: uncooperative harm (battery) will be considered morally bad, but cooperative harm (punishment, self-

defence) will be considered morally good, and competitive harm in zero-sum contexts (some aspects of mate competition and intergroup conflict) will be considered morally neutral—“all’s fair in love and war.” Thus cooperation explains the conditions under which “harm” is, and is not, justified.

An early summary of their work can be seen on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/HyuNLk0xaCl>. Curry’s website is here: <https://www.oliverscottcurry.com>.

Morality, as I said at the outset, is a practical business, and it should be expressible in ways that anyone can understand. The authors reviewed here—McCloskey, Haidt, and Curry—are from different academic backgrounds: economics, psychology, and anthropology, but they speak the same language of morality, and it seems to me a language that we all speak.

#### Dr Alan Tapper

Adjunct Research Fellow

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### Ethics outside philosophy meet-up group

On May 20<sup>th</sup> the first meet up of the newly formed ‘Ethics Outside Philosophy’ group took place in Leederville, WA. The main aim of the collective is to serve as a meeting and discussion group for those with a philosophy background who are now teaching ethics outside of philosophy departments with the aim to share ideas, resources, experiences, and opportunities.

The group also hopes to be a hub for collaboration opportunities between group members and with those in the private and government sectors who are interested in ethics.

The first meeting included informal discussion about topical ethical issues such as those arising from the pandemic and from cyberwar and how to facilitate discussion of these, as well plans for guest lectures and collaborative publication ideas. If you are interested in joining the discussion, please contact:

#### Dr Jacqueline Boaks

Lecturer | School of Management, Curtin Business School

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## AN EDUCATIONAL CONCERN AND AN ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTION

Janette Desi

*The function of education is to teach one to think intensely and to think critically.  
Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.*

**Martin Luther King Jr., 1947**

### Educational Purpose

The moral purpose of education is, broadly, to teach individuals how to think. While various philosophies of education can be widely debated, this remains the fundamental basis for schooling. Successful education nurtures curiosity and the seeking of deeper understanding through implementing lessons with a delicate blend of learning styles and individual programming. This promotes ongoing learning opportunities rich with applicable knowledge that holds value, eventually leading to employment pathways and healthy contributions to society. The current educational system has attempted to bend historical traditions and bring in these ideals, though less successfully. The accelerated changes in society have not been matched by educational reform, indicating the need for a far-reaching alternative.

*The pressure to demonstrate specific teaching methods for prescribed lessons undermines the capacity to innovatively respond to individual learners.*

### The Loss of Teacher Autonomy and Student Focus

Mainstream education has held a steady reliance on auditory and visual techniques. These support an increasingly standardised curriculum emphasising evidence-based teaching methods. The focus on research-based practices initiated an increase in the synchronised and systematic delivery of academic content. Scripted or regulated teaching methods provide the continuity and consistent implementation to support empiric or systematic data collection. Results are clear, objective, and undisputed when teaching is prescribed and duplicated across classrooms, though perhaps not always successful in large scale practice.

Imposed practices ultimately lead to a loss of teacher autonomy. The effectiveness of inclusive and individual programming is hindered by a lack of flexibility despite the expanding scope of student needs and interests. Teachers are frequently over-

whelmed with balancing good practice, appropriate differentiation, addressing behaviour management needs and student disengagement within a singular curriculum and limited timeframe. The pressure to demonstrate specific teaching methods for prescribed lessons undermines the capacity to innovatively respond to individual learners.

### Alternative Education

The time has come to suggest an alternative to this education system. Various alternative school programs have existed for many decades with a rise in popularity in recent years in response to the developing neoliberal market. Alternative and private

schools offer commodities not otherwise available in public systems, such as buildings and grounds, pastoral care, or access to extended learning opportunities. Limited and se-

lective student intake leads to a narrowed focus for teaching to a cohort of students with similar learning needs. Homogenised backgrounds with similar educational priorities suggest a streamlined curricular focus and targeted lessons or activities for student engagement. This supports the original moral goal of education to teach students how to think and even to enjoy the process of learning.

Public education can also offer an alternative format to more appropriately engage students and learn critical thinking skills. A basic understanding of learning styles asserts that people should be taught in a manner that matches how they learn. Students demonstrate learning preferences from very young ages, even before starting formal school. By grouping students based on learning preferences, schools are advantaged by designing lessons suited to strengths. Students taught in this manner are better

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

prepared to overcome academic challenges and develop confidence in acquiring skills and knowledge, thus practicing critical thinking skills and successful learning habits. Teacher autonomy increases as classrooms reflect student cohorts rather than attempting to be mirror images of each other. Learning strengths are used as a bridge to access all curriculum content while lessons also help to build aptitude in weaker areas, such as improving social skills among tactile introverts. The benefits of grouping to learning styles include greater mental health, student engagement, and learning outcomes, also leading to a wide range of secondary factors including attendance and potential decreased youth crime.

### Implementation

Resources are already available for this alternative educational model to be implemented in state schools. Ideally, grouping would be multi-aged to encourage students to both collaborate with more advanced learners and to provide task analysis to help less proficient students. Parental involvement increases as collaborators who are consulted to help determine ideal learning environments and assist with the generalisation of skills. All content areas within the curriculum must be presented to provide complete coverage over key learning areas, though competency may be demonstrated through different assessment practices. Schools within Queensland already employ curriculum development leaders who work to ensure adequate coverage of content, appropriate assessment measures, and maintain direction of lessons. Administrators return to the role of supporting teachers, providing professional development opportunities and modify staff by retaining quality teachers.

### Moral Link to Practice

This is merely a brief of how an alternative system may improve mainstream educational practice. The continuing moral goal of education is to produce individuals who think critically, seek knowledge, and find value in understanding. Increasing student engagement leads to improved

outcomes, eventually resulting in healthy societal contributions and general improvements in mental health. Currently, school administrators and staff scramble to demonstrate flat, evidence-based, broad practices across an increasingly diverse student population leaving too many students behind in academic gaps. Allowing students to access the curriculum through their preferred method for learning is the crux of good practice. Schools ultimately hold a moral obligation to improve educational delivery by examining current systems and re-evaluating to implement an enhanced focus on improving lessons to reflect learning preferences.

**Janette Desi**

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## Congratulations

**AAPAE member wins national award**

AAPAE member, **Dr James Page**, has been announced as joint winner of 2021 **Banjo Paterson Literary Award**, for the entry '*Out of Africa*', co-authored by former Congolese refugee and now Australian citizen, Sagamba Muhira. The short story is a memoir, and part of a wider ethnographic project, aimed at retelling refugee experience from the perspective of individual refugees. Dr Page suggests that we have a wider ethical responsibility not just to refugees but all those in countries where there is conflict. This is especially the case given conflict in these countries often can be seen to be, at least in part, due to the legacy of colonialism, and that we in the west are generally the beneficiaries of colonialism. A copy of the short story will soon be online.

## AAPAE Listserv

If you have any information or notices that you would like us to relay to your peers, please email your request (word format) to: [info@aapae.org.au](mailto:info@aapae.org.au) **The AAPAE's Listserv has over 700 subscribers locally and overseas.**

Michael Schwartz

## THOUGHTS ON THE MORALITY OF A RECENT MELBOURNE RALLY

Earlier this year, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, I watched protesters in a Melbourne rally. They looked happy. They carried placards. Their placards said that Israel is an Apartheid state. No doubt they were happy that Israel is an Apartheid state. I suspect they would be equally happy carrying placards saying that Japan is a Japanese state. Or that Italy is an Italian state. And Germany is a German state. After all, could one expect anything else from them? For them, Germany *is* a German state. As is Japan a Japanese state: and Italy an Italian state. And Israel is an Apartheid state because that is what they have been told. So why should they not be happy at walking through the streets of what was the most liveable city in the world and proclaiming what for them is the obvious? Who after all can dispute the very obvious? And free of disputes one can indeed be happy. Disputes are too stressful.

Of course Apartheid South Africa was proud to be an Apartheid state. One globally recognised saint emerged from that state and that was Nelson Mandela. Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment at *The Rivonia Trial* (1963-1964). The only whites tried alongside Mandela at *The Rivonia Trial* were six Jews: Lionel Bernstein, Denis Goldberg, Arthur Goldreich, Bob Hepple, James Kantor and Harold Wolpe. Joel Joffe, a Jew, was Mandela's lawyer. But of course for the Melbourne protestors Germany *is* a

German state. As is Japan a Japanese state: and Italy an Italian state. And Israel is an Apartheid state.

Mandela's 1994 government included a few whites. All were associated with the previous regime except for Joe Slovo, a Jew, who became Minister of Housing: But not for long. He died seven months later. Slovo and his wife—both fierce opponents of the Apartheid regime—fled the Apartheid regime to Mozambique. There, in 1982, Slovo's wife, Ruth First, a dedicated Jewish opponent of racism and oppression, was assassinated by agents of the Apartheid government. The fate of white Jewish activists who risked their lives to battle Apartheid is discussed in Glenn Frankel's book *Rivonia's Children* (New York, 1999). Meanwhile a Jewess, Helen Suzman, was the only anti-Apartheid activist elected to parliament representing a constituency with many Jewish residents. There for long years she fought alone for justice. But of course for the Melbourne protestors Germany *is* a German state. As is Japan a Japanese state: and Italy an Italian state. And Israel is an Apartheid state.

In 2019, South Africa was ranked the second most anti-Semitic country on earth (<https://global100.adl.org/country/south-africa/2019>). Personally I know that is so. The previous year I taught a black South African who had migrated to Australia with her parents. She said she was delight-

ed to have me, a former South African, lecturing her. When in a Business Ethics class, we discussed the ethical behaviour of Oskar Schindler she argued that his conduct was morally wrong. She thought the very best thing was for Adolf Hitler to murder all of the Jews. She was disappointed to discover I was a Jew. She told me she thought I was a white Afrikaner. Go figure. Mandela's ANC government still rules South Africa. Today it is one of the most inequitable countries on earth. Over 65% of the nation's income goes to the richest 10% (*Fortune*, April/May 2021 p. 65). But of course for the Melbourne protestors Germany *is* a German state. As is Japan a Japanese state: and Italy an Italian state. And Israel is an Apartheid state.

The world is not a fair place. Most victims are forgotten. Greg Sheridan reminds us in *The Australian* of how in the 1940s ancient Jewish communities in Arab lands were victims of ethnic-cleansing which caused the flight of "about a million Jews" (22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2021, pages 13 & 20). The lands they left are far from beacons of liberal democracies with human rights for all inhabitants. Indeed, according to *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East—albeit a flawed democracy ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy\\_Index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index)). South Africa too is ranked by them as a flawed democracy. Nonetheless, every

(Continued on page 11)

## A NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME FOR HISTORICAL ABUSE AGAINST THE DISABLED IS OVERDUE

Joseph Naimo

The history of disability is a sad tale of inhumane treatment across a spectrum of dehumanising practices. The litany of abuse is too extensive in kind to fully enumerate here. Though advances have been made in the last few decades to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, misunderstanding and ignorance, the main attitudinal sources of ableism, still pervade society in various institutional forms. Not least emanating from questionable clinical and care models, enabled, nonetheless, by systemic breakdown, overall impacting the lives of the disabled. For even today, persons with disabilities are subjected to continued forms of severe restrictive practices, among them chemical, physical and psychological abuse, the result of poor care and poor clinical management. The current *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability* will not act to prosecute cases retroactively, instead operates in the hope of ensuring past breaches are not re-committed. The process from the outset of this investigation is extremely limited, and even if not intended, in practice, will provide the perpetrators of relatively recent harm virtual immunity.

Nationally, the Government instrument meant to end breaches against the human rights of persons with disabilities—*The Quality and Safeguard Commission*—has now been instituted in each Australian State. Likewise, however, these state-based commissions do not operate retroactively to redress the harm that has been perpetrated on the disabled.

Nor can debilitating trauma be so easily terminated at some State Commission operational entry date. Historical abuse needs to be legally challenged by the authorities whenever possible. Though numerous people are providing their stories to the Royal Commission, many more however, will not from fear of retribution. Thus far what has been revealed by the Royal Commission can only be a fraction of the tale. Furthermore, when those submitted stories are treated as data, in one important sense, particularly when the perpetrators of harm are not challenged nor punished, those stories are instead stripped of hurt, trauma and crime. Humans are creatures of habit, and as such, as a bare minimum, to safeguard against future breaches, those abusers, if still in positions of support, care or authority over the disabled, need to be scrutinised and be required to pass a fit and proper person test. By extension, government legislators need to rethink disability governance legislation and the institutions (Statutory Bodies and Acts) meant to operate to protect the vulnerable that are instead miserably failing. It is time, albeit overdue, therefore, to earnestly start the conversation regarding a National Redress Scheme for abuse, violence, clinical and residential mismanagement perpetrated over decades against the Disabled.

### Dr Joseph Naimo

Researcher in Philosophy and Professional Ethics, Activist and Advocate for Disability and Mental Health  
email: [jnaimo@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jnaimo@optusnet.com.au)

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## THE BEAUTIFUL FALL—BOOK REVIEW

Leila Toivainen

Hugh Breakey is known as a clear-thinking and articulate philosopher to many colleagues, an ethicist who has made a contribution to many important public discourses.

It may come as a surprise to these readers that he has recently published his debut novel, a philosophical romance *The Beautiful Fall*. Some of the publicity for the novel explain its genesis; Hugh Breakey is much more than a philosopher: on the inside cover of the book we discover that his former careers include a theatre director, on the back cover the novel is characterised as “cinematic”.

The theatrical and cinematic talents of Hugh Breakey are evident from the first page of the work. For a debut novel, this is a very accomplished work of fiction that any eminent writer would be proud of, it is imaginative, suspenseful and most of all an empathetic work about ordinary people and their weaknesses and failures, as well as their strengths and resourcefulness in the face of adversity. His language is perfect in its flawlessness and apparent simplicity, there is not one jarring sentence or even a word in it.

Because of the author’s gifts, it is difficult for me to do justice to the novel in my less eloquent words, I also do not want to reveal any of the many surprising turns that the novel takes after a quiet, unassuming start, these are for the readers to work out for themselves. I would recommend it to anyone interested in other people and their lives well written.

The first-person narrator, Robbie Penfold aged 31, has a recurring neurological condition, periodic amnesia resulting in the loss of memory and personal identity. So far this has happened to him three times. As an amnesiac he is vulnerable to being lost

wandering the streets, being taken into custody and having the threat of institutionalisation hanging over him because of the authorities “duty of care” towards him.

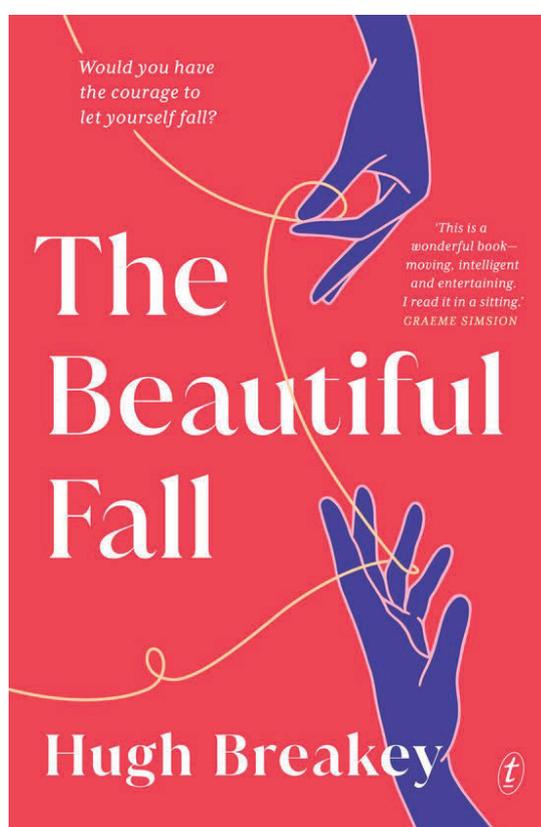
The story begins on Day Twelve before “the forgetting” destroys Robbie’s memory and identity again as he knows by now that the episodes take place at regular intervals of 157 days. He has twelve days to prepare for the inevitable by locking himself into his rented fifth-floor apartment in Brisbane, by having everything under control and in order so that his future self can take up where the past selves and

the present self have left off. He is focused on regular morning exercises, the construction of enormous spirals made up of dominoes that fill his apartment and on writing a journal to keep a record of the person that he thinks that he is at present.

Nothing in human life can be controlled and ordered by any of us to this extent; the story is about how Robbie is forced to deal with unexpected events that make him question everything in his life in these twelve remaining days.

*The Beautiful Fall* is the most intellectually and emotionally satisfying reading experience that I have had in a long time. I

began it by trying hard to note the various meta-physical issues raised by Hugh Breakey, questions of personal identity, the mind-body problem, the relation between time and space and memory, questions of freewill and choice. Robbie’s claustrophobic isolation reminded me of Kafka, the cinematic scenes of time and place of Bergson, the recurring episodes of forgetting of Nietzsche’s *Eternal Recurrence*.



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## THE BEAUTIFUL FALL CONT.

(Continued from page 10)

Only a few chapters into the novel I realised that I was far more interested in the story of Robbie and Julie, who arrives at his door one day delivering his grocery order. One of the great strengths of the book are the well-developed, fully rounded characters, real people who want to do their best in the most difficult circumstances. In other words, as a typical philosophical reader I was initially keen to make comparisons, classifications, putting ideas into genres and boxes, whether they fitted or not. Once I allowed myself to fall into the story and let the author lead me where he wanted rather than me trying to carve the path because of my past memories of other books, the reading experience became much more natural and joyful, and more emotionally engaging and moving.

As Hugh Breakey wrote the novel before the Covid pandemic, he can also be congratulated on his prescience. Robbie's intense isolation and his lack of contact with other people may have seemed extreme in the past, since the pandemic social distancing and ordering groceries online have become

mainstream. The warmth and care of the novel come from the way in which not only the major characters but others in the novel are portrayed, for instance Mr Lester the greengrocer or the woman working at the RSL club who Robbie has a brief encounter with towards the end of the novel, they are there to help him, they are genuinely good people with the interest of others in their minds.

In the beginning, as a nurse I was keen to find out what caused Robbie's amnesic episodes and ran through a list of possible diagnoses and got hung up on the death of his parents when he was young. Perhaps because of my nursing bias I also found his doctor, Doctor Varma, the least likeable of the characters; she never comes across as a real human being caring for other human beings.

The culmination of the novel is about the power of art and love to transform our mundane existences in ways that are both unique and universal to each individual. As any great novel, this is one about the meaning of life.

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[HTTPS://HUGHBREAKEY.COM/BOOKS/THE-BEAUTIFUL-FALL/](https://hughbreakey.com/books/the-beautiful-fall/)

## THOUGHTS ON THE MORALITY OF A RECENT MELBOURNE RALLY CONT.

(Continued from page 8)

other state in the Middle East is seriously flawed in so many ways and not one is a democracy. But of course for the Melbourne protestors Germany *is* a German state. As is Japan a Japanese state: and Italy an Italian state. And Israel is an Apartheid state.

The protestors at the Melbourne rally were not anti-Semites. They were anti-Zionists. In Germany, Hitler and his ilk were not anti-Jews. They were anti-Semites.

The conflicting semantics of linguistics are useful to those spewing hatred. Equally useful is targeting a vulnerable minority. Doing so allows one to avoid the challenges of reality. A former British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), described anti-Semitism as the underbelly of civilisation. Those Melbourne protestors were happy to thoughtlessly embrace the underbelly of civilisation regardless of the ethical consequences. And as long as they are we can be sure that for them *of course* Germany *is* a Ger-

man state. As is Japan a Japanese state: and Italy an Italian state. And Israel is an Apartheid state. Despite the triviality of all they claim. Of course, during World War II, Germany, Japan and Italy were the Axis powers. If they had triumphed, anti-Semitism would no longer be the underbelly of civilisation as both the Jew and civilisation would have perished.

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## Law Futures Centre

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## AAPAE Charter

**T**he broad purpose of the AAPAE is to encourage awareness of, and foster discussion of issues in, professional and applied ethics. It provides a meeting point for practitioners from various fields and academics with specialist expertise and welcomes everyone who wants or needs to think and talk about applied or professional ethics.

The AAPAE fosters and publishes research in professional and applied ethics, as well as attempting to create connections with special interest groups.

However, the AAPAE does not endorse any particular viewpoint, but rather it aims to promote a climate in which different and differing views, concerns, and approaches can be expressed and discussed.



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