

Introduction

‘I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for.’

— Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1881), Part II, Book 5, Chapter 4:
words spoken by Ivan Karamazov.

This is the ninth annual edition of my *Dictionary of World Biography* (*DWB*) to be published by ANU Press, and possibly the last: after all, I will turn 90 before the end of 2022 and ANU Press may have different priorities in 2023.

The complicated story of the *DWB*’s evolution, and its frustrating publishing history, has been exhaustively treated in earlier editions and can be easily retrieved. This edition is appropriate for some reflective, even elegiac, observations.

Inevitably, the *DWB*, my magnum opus, is highly personal and opinionated, even semi-autobiographical.

In *The Republic*, Plato describes a darkened cave, with a long entrance leading to daylight and the natural world. The cave’s inhabitants are there for life, kept in by bars, but also conditioned through habit. Shadow plays seen on the walls constitute reality to them and they are unable to explore the world outside.

The cave metaphor seemed eerily prophetic in the era, first, of film, then television, then computing, computer games, smartphones and social media.

Getting people out of Plato’s cave involves encouraging them to confront ‘the shock of recognition’ in unfamiliar, challenging phenomena, grasping the range of human diversity, trying to reconcile depth of understanding and breadth of experience, distinguishing between the macro and the micro.

‘The shock of recognition’, which I used as a book title (2016), examines the impact of self-discovery after exposure to, or immersion in, the uncanny, the challenging, the transcendental, relating the specific to the universal, the immediate to the timeless, the individual to all humanity.

I tried to pursue the concept of ‘the abundant life’, rattling the bars of the cave, escaping from a conceptual shoe box, by investing time and concentration, connecting with transcendental creativity, pursuing intellectual and aesthetic engagement—aiming to experience excitement, satisfaction, happiness, and often a sense of awe or the edge of danger. This involves taking risks. High culture, with all its complexity, can take us to places where we do not expect to go and has some aura of danger.

Tackling complexity is not just a matter of taste but an essential evolutionary developmental mechanism, which strengthens brain plasticity and capacity, wards off loss of cognition and the onset of dementia more effectively than computer games, Sudoku, crossword puzzles or jigsaws.

This suggests an analogy with cathedrals, and their two axes, vertical and horizontal.

The vertical pulls our gaze upward, looking through the vault towards the stars, reaching out for the transcendental and numinous, rapture and the unattainable—for some, Heaven. Pursuing the vertical is difficult, complex, dangerous, involving travelling alone, coming to terms with the mysterious, the aspirational, the abstract, the unique.

The horizontal is comfortable, familiar, reassuring, earthbound, physical, less challenging and safer, with no fear of falling.

In a secular, technological, materialist and self-absorbed society, there may be risk in even mentioning the cathedral analogy, since so many have been deeply alienated, even traumatised, by childhood experience of religion.

When I become preoccupied with a subject, the urge to share experience becomes irresistible, even if my audience shows palpable reluctance.

I am hidden within the pages of the *DWB*.

I often feel like Odysseus on a long voyage of discovery, making a connection between me—here—now and everyone—everywhere—all time, balancing the sublime with the quotidian, recognising the tension between the unique and the universal. It helps me make sense of my own experience and reinforces a sense of connectedness ('we are not alone') with the unfamiliar and remote.

I could be accused, as an aged white male, of being unduly Europhile in my tastes. Proffering long, complex entries for Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner and Mahler and virtually ignoring practitioners of folk music or country and western may be seen, in a deconstructionist age, as condescending, hierarchical—even patriarchal.

I concede, at once, being far more familiar with the culture of Europe (including North America and Australia) than of other continents—but I have travelled extensively, and eagerly seek out the work of Asian, African and South American artists looking for achievement comparable, say, to that of Bach, Michelangelo or Shakespeare, just as I seek their equivalents in recent centuries, anywhere.

It was painful to observe that so many had no access to the unfamiliar and transcendental. If they knew nothing of Homer, Mozart, Darwin and Einstein they were missing something potentially life-changing. If the names of Lenin, Hitler, Stalin and Mao drew a blank, then fellow humans, especially the young, would fail to grasp the context in which their world evolved. And the *DWB* gave opportunities for reappraisal of women, so often grossly under-represented in reference works: Hatshepsut, Hildegard of Bingen, Emily Dickinson, Florence Nightingale, Marie Curie, Louise Bourgeois, Simone Weil, Margaret Thatcher, Julia Gillard.

Always a very rapid and—more important—efficient reader, over many decades I devoured thousands of books, including novels, biographies, plays and poetry, as well as being an assiduous visitor to archaeological sites and ruins, art galleries and museums, a modest collector of artworks and artefacts, and a concert hall habitué. Travel was also a very important

factor, especially the periods I worked in Paris and Cambridge, and exploring France, Great Britain and Ireland, the United States, Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, Finland, Russia, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, India, China, Japan, Brazil, Peru and Antarctica.

The *DWB* projects my involvement in law, politics, teaching history, absorption in philosophy, ethics, religion up to a point, and decades of work with a disaster relief organisation and campaigns to reduce blindness.

The great French essayist Michel de Montaigne, a contemporary of Shakespeare and one of my heroes, had an extraordinary gift for making linkages—extracting from his own observations a sense of the universal, but also the infinite and inexplicable, examining the unpredictable ways his mind worked, then projecting his thoughts into speculation about the universe. And he was scrupulously undogmatic.

I don't hold myself out as a profoundly creative or original thinker, but I am good at linkages. I am gratified to have been the only person, so far, elected as a Fellow of four of Australia's five learned Academies. 'Only connect! Live in fragments no longer,' as E. M. Forster wrote.

I often see patterns and interactions long before others. In my head, from childhood, I constructed a framework of relationships between the living and the dead. This was like a sculptor's armature, a metal structure to which clay or wax is applied to produce a shape for casting as an artefact. Later, I built up similar frameworks about history, politics, geography, literature or music.

Children are often preoccupied with collecting and classifying, seashells, for example, as a way of making order out of chaos, exercising a degree of control over their environment. Trying to sort out family relations and sequences was my way of putting a complicated jigsaw together. To get a perfect fit at the end, to paraphrase the French novelist Georges Perec, if one needed an X-shaped piece, a Y would not do.

From the age of five or six, I tried to put family dates of birth in a global context, drawing on chronologies listed in *Pears' Cyclopaedia*. My great-aunt Edith Potter was born in 1878, the year that Pope Pius IX and Lord John Russell died and the car makers Chevrolet and Citroën were born. My grandmother Nana Black's birth year (1881) is shared by Kemal Atatürk, Anna Pavlova, Béla Bartók, Pablo Picasso, Alexander Fleming and Pope John XXIII. Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Disraeli, Modest Mussorgsky and Fyodor Dostoevsky all died then. I was born in the year (1932) when Adolf Hitler challenged Paul von Hindenburg and Franklin Roosevelt was elected President of the US.

It was said of me, correctly, that I never met a piece of paper that I didn't like, and I collected books and documents from an early age.

Reading about the political history of Australia, Britain, the United States, France, Germany and Russia made me conscious of the changing relationships between the living and the dead, as time's arrow flies past the procession. This approach encouraged my abiding fascination with people and their connections to institutions and events. The results can be seen in my quiz successes and my writings and speeches.

The uncomfortable truth is that my mind usually works as a giant memory bank. Getting access to material and disseminating it in a precise and comprehensive form is important and I can be unsettled by misquotations or confused dates or false attributions.

In 1950, as a student, I had been profoundly influenced by the philosopher Bertrand Russell, and observed him in Melbourne at close quarters. He said: ‘Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.’

If I am remembered at all, I would like it to be for my role in abolishing the death penalty and for being a prophet without much honour in promoting linkages between science and politics.

I was the first Australian politician, long before I became Minister for Science, to argue that climate change was an existential threat to civilisation, and to campaign about the genetic revolution, the information revolution, post-industrialism and a post-carbon economy.

On the death penalty, I read very intensively—Cesare Beccaria, Samuel Romilly, Arthur Koestler—and this shaped entries in the *DWB*.

To be better informed about the genetic and information revolutions, I went to visit Francis Crick and Claude Shannon: who better?

I wrote to Igor Stravinsky, asking him to correct inconsistencies in his biography and he obliged. I spent time with Clement Attlee, Gough Whitlam, Macfarlane Burnet, Patrick White, Henry Moore, Karl Popper, David Hockney, Isaiah Berlin, Richard Feynman, Max Perutz, Benoît Mandelbrot, John Coetzee. I met many musicians, artists, writers, philosophers and historians, researchers on climate and economics, and my interactions are expressed in scores of entries. Gus Nossal, Peter Doherty and Fiona Stanley kept me up to date on medical advances.

I had begun work on the *DWB* as a history teacher at Dandenong High School and by May 1959, at the age of 26, I completed my first draft. I retain three bound volumes of text: 837 foolscap pages with about 430,000 words and 6,000 entries.

In January 1961 I signed a contract with Penguin Books in London. Then followed 16 frustrating years, due to internal divisions and changes in personnel and policy, until Penguin paid me off in 1977. Macmillan Publishing, London, somewhat unexpectedly took the work up and it appeared, with some deep flaws, as *The Macmillan Dictionary of Biography*, in October 1981. Two editions, of which I knew nothing, were also published by Routledge and St Martin’s Press in New York. Then in 1986 Brian Stonier of Macmillan Australia took over publication and much improved editions appeared until 1989.

Michael Wilkinson, of Information Australia, later Wilkinson Publishing, published a much expanded and revised *Dictionary of World Biography* from 1994 until 1998.

After 1998 there was another long hiatus, when multi-volume or single-volume reference books such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or the *Columbia Encyclopedia* were going out of print because of the availability of millions of entries on Wikipedia.

In 2011, Garry Sturges helped to persuade the National Centre of Biography, which publishes the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, at The Australian National University (ANU) to exhume, update and revise my obsession.

At ANU, Melanie Nolan and Tom Griffiths were enthusiasts and encouragers and proposed that the *DWB* appear both as an ebook and in traditional printed form. Gareth Evans, ANU Chancellor at the time, was a benign influence.

In 2013 ANU E Press produced the work, revised and largely rewritten, in paperback and online. Michael Wilkinson published a handsome hardcover version in 2016 in conjunction with ANU Press.

The 2022 edition runs to nearly 1,000 pages in small print, about 9,000 entries and 930,000 words.

Four factors determined entry length: likelihood that the entries would be frequently consulted, availability of resource material, degree of influence that the subjects had on how we live (language, inventions, medicine, war, nutrition, religion, philosophy, exploration, education, communications, transport, economics, entertainment, the arts, architecture), and the extent of cross-referencing to other subjects in the *DWB*, indicated by *.

How tactful does an encyclopaedist have to be in writing about living subjects? Publishing serious entries on the living may inhibit discussion of sensitive issues such as sexuality, mental and physical health, addictions and obsessions, or financial links, and much primary source material will be inaccessible or embargoed. Postponing treatment of subjects still living, and presumably not eager to be eligible, gives future biographers space and time to reflect instead of rushing to judgment. I had no such inhibition with my *DWB* and emphasised linkages between past and current subjects.

I included tightly compressed anecdotes and the occasional telling quotation, such as Artur Schnabel's comment on Mozart's piano sonatas: 'Too easy for amateurs: too hard for professionals.' I reported strongly critical views: 'Handsome, imaginative, but superficial and distrusted by his contemporaries (*Alanbrooke, *Montgomery, *Templer, *Ismay), *Mountbatten's reputation has declined since his death.' I wrote of Anton Chekhov, 'His funeral was Chekhovian: the coffin was taken to Moscow by train in a refrigerated car intended for oysters, and the funeral procession was confused with a general's, accompanied by a military band.' Archbishop of Canterbury Cosmo Lang 'developed an embarrassing passion for the actress Anne Todd'. In the entry on James Joyce, I pointed to the long list of great writers who had failed to win the Nobel Prize for Literature: Ibsen, Tolstoy, Strindberg, James, Hardy, Conrad, Gorki, Proust, Rilke, Musil, Joyce, Woolf, Pound, Borges, Malraux, Greene and Auden (all with *).

Despite my long, and increasingly unhappy, career in politics, I tried to be clinically detached in my entries on public figures, and would immodestly point to entries on Harold Macmillan, Margaret Thatcher and Richard Nixon. However, I have not disguised my loathing of totalitarian systems, whether Left or Right, and entries on Hitler, Stalin,

Mussolini and Mao are obvious examples. I felt that my explanation of ideologies was a strength and over many years I tried to cover my areas of weakness, such as sport, popular music, ballet, ornithology, gardening and 14th-century Islamic tiles.

If a serious attempt was made at a global biographical dictionary, with international participation, the first problem would be choosing authors to write on controversial figures such as Luther, Kim Il Sung, Mao Zedong, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Churchill, Khomeini, Pius XII. Would editors necessarily choose a Korean scholar to write about Kim, a Chinese for Mao, a Catholic for a Pope or a Lutheran for Luther?

Who should write the entry on Jesus? A Jew, a Christian, a Palestinian, an agnostic, Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, fundamentalist, liberal, a sceptic, historian, philosopher, theologian? I could suggest possible authors, but the choice will not be mine and age alone would rule me out.

My co-worker on this project since 2013, Christine Fernon, from the National Centre of Biography at ANU, has been exemplary as an editor and encourager. I have been stunned at how much she achieves in a few days devoted each year to the *DWB*, noting slips and occasional sloppy writing and suggesting improvements—all delivered with patience (well, mostly), good humour and erudition.

The *DWB* is essentially ‘our book’ and Christine is a great asset for ANU.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Christine Fernon', with a long, sweeping underline.

Tributes

Phillip Adams AO FAHA FRSA, social commentator and broadcaster

Ninety years ago the elders on Krypton, knowing their planet was doomed by runaway climate change, sent two rocket cribs to Earth. One, as is widely known, contained a baby who, adopted by a rural US couple, was raised as Clark Kent, later becoming a journalist at Rupert Moloch's *Daily Planet*. Given superpowers that included the power of flight and x-ray vision he became famous as Superman. Less well known—the second child despatched to Earth. Raised in Geelong he is known as Barry Jones. His superpowers were mental rather than physical, as evidenced in his success in quiz shows and public life—but also in scholarship. Among his out-of-this-world efforts is his *Dictionary of World Biography*, published for many years by ANU Press. In this enterprise Barry has leapt tall volumes in a single bound and his late father on Krypton—Jor-el—would be proud of him. I know that I am.

John Coetzee, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature

Back in the 1990s, as South Africa was emerging from under the grim weight of apartheid, I received a call from the Australian embassy in Cape Town: a man named Barry Jones, on a visit to the country, wanted to have lunch with me. Out of curiosity I accepted and met him at a restaurant. I knew nothing about him, but he seemed to know everything about me. 'Why not get away from all this and come and live in Australia?' he said. I thought: *What a good idea!* And I have never looked back. In the years since then I have had many occasions to chat with Barry, as well as to explore his manifold oeuvre, but not until today have I had a chance to express in public my gratitude for the invitation that, speaking for his country, he extended to me. Congratulations on the publication of your *Dictionary of World Biography*.

Glyn Davis AC, Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

A coherent intellectual project, spanning six decades, is an astonishing feat. To combine such singular scholarship with engagement in every facet of public life, from politics to music, from poetry to human rights, is a sustained contribution rarely matched even in such a comprehensive dictionary of world biography. Barry Jones is our finest example of the best qualities extolled in the many editions of his extraordinary work.

Professor Peter C. Doherty AC, immunologist and winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

Barry is extraordinary. I'm in the science business. I first met Barry when I was an obscure professor at ANU and he was Science Minister in the Hawke Government. His exhortation then that scientists were wimps and needed to get out on the public stage resonated later, when I was the 'touring' (from the USA) 1997 Australian of the Year and science communication suddenly became part of my job description. Barry practised what he preached. He has communicated in all regards, even the history of science and the biographies of scientists. The *Dictionary of World Biography* shows yet another facet of his being a polymath. His immense knowledge has genuine depth and real practical insight. This is a great contribution. Long may he continue!

Gareth Evans AC QC FASSA FAIIA, Distinguished Honorary Professor at ANU and former Foreign Minister

Of the many contributions Barry Jones has made over his long and intensely active public life—not only to decent public policy but to making us wiser, better informed and more appreciative of the richness of the world around us—the *Dictionary of World Biography* will stand as one of the most important and enduring of all his legacies. Already a standard reference text—becoming ever more comprehensive through the course of its nine editions—it is not only scholarly rigorous, demonstrating passionate attention to accuracy and detail, but written in a wonderfully lively, opinionated and distinctive style. The *DWB* is a marvellous smorgasbord of information and comment, not just a reference volume but one to be dipped into for the sheer pleasure of discovery on every page. There are many good reasons for bestowing on Barry, in his 91st year, the mantle of living national treasure, but he would earn it for the *DWB* alone.

The Hon. Julia Gillard AC, 27th Prime Minister of Australia

Throughout his career, Barry Jones has garnered recognition and respect for his impressive intellect, exceptional perception, thoughtful nature, genuine compassion and willingness to pursue unfashionable causes. He is one of Australia's great thinkers and campaigners, and I am grateful to have the privilege of calling Barry a long-time mentor and friend. I have learnt so much from Barry. All these qualities come to bear in the *DWB*. I can hear his voice in the entries. Barry has himself acknowledged that he does not 'see many people around who look at things in quite the same way' as he does. I can't think of anyone else who could produce such a remarkable work as the *Dictionary of World Biography*. I know I am not alone in my affection towards Barry. He is much loved by the Australian community, a true national treasure. We are lucky to have the benefits of his fine mind.

Emeritus Professor Tom Griffiths AO FAHA, chair of the editorial board of the Australian Dictionary of Biography

Barry Jones is a learned connoisseur of the best (and worst) expressions of humanity. In collectively assessing whole lives he celebrates what is unique as well as universal in an individual's signature on the world. His own quest for meaning and transcendence shines through. Barry's constantly evolving *Dictionary of World Biography* represents his lifelong curation of extraordinary people, most of whom have achieved life after death through their influence. His portraits sparkle with flashes of opinion and wry judgement. This is a passionate, intensified world history with the literary power of lean prose poetry. ANU Press is blessed to be the publisher of this enduring gift of scholarship, not least because it speaks to the traditions of our own beloved *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, which has evolved through the same 60-plus years.

Janet Holmes à Court AC, company chair and philanthropist

Barry Jones is a one-off—a unique individual. I have known and admired him for a very long time as a remarkable writer, thinker, politician, lover of music and compassionate supporter of human rights. No one I know has more knowledge of more subjects than Barry, and this he imparts generously and with great flair. Nothing could better illustrate Barry's huge intellect, knowledge and tenacity than his 60 years of scholarship involved in the production of the *Dictionary of World Biography*.

Professor Melanie Nolan FASSA, general editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography

As the general editor of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* I know the hard work that goes into producing a biographical dictionary. I have the support of a team of working-party members, authors and research editors to choose subjects, write entries, and then research and edit them. Barry Jones' *Dictionary of World Biography* is all his own work. His voice is witty, ironic and sharp; it's a joy to read these beautifully crafted entries. The *DWB* is remarkable, amazing, impressive, breathtaking. I am in awe of Barry's achievement.

Fiona Stanley AC FAA FASSA, child health epidemiologist

Barry Jones' *Dictionary of World Biography* is a classic from many points of view: it is a personal journal of the people that Barry has known about and been influenced by since the age of 26, with thousands of additions of those who he felt were important—some even corrected by the subjects themselves (many famous and many now dead!). Hence not only is it a unique publication but it is incredibly useful to those of us who want to quickly check something about someone whom we have forgotten. I realise that such publications may become redundant as the internet takes over the role of dictionaries and published historical reviews, but let's cling to this wonderful creation for as long as we can. As this may be the last edition, I think we Australians need to acknowledge Barry Jones' amazing contribution—not only in giving us such information but also in the ways he has influenced our views. Thank you, Barry!

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