

Review of: "The Uluru Statement from the Heart – A consideration from three perspectives"

Helen Myles

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

REVIEW OF: *The Uluru Statement from the Heart – A Consideration from Three Perspectives Preprint v2* -David Turnbull 2023

By Helen Myles – an Australian whose settler ancestors were Irish and Welsh.

David Turnbull's article sets out to offer the reader a framework for dialogue, involving truth-telling and justice. He uses the 'invitation' he reads in the *The Uluru Statement from The Heart*, published by the First Nations people of Australia in 2017, as the basis for his conceptual analysis.

By taking up the offer from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Australians to non-Indigenous Australians, to 'walk with us', especially, but not only, in addressing constitutional and structural reform in Australia, the author discusses three perspectives. Firstly, that of the First Nations people who drew up *The Uluru Statement From The Heart*, secondly, the perspective of naturalistic philosophy, using views of the Aboriginal philosopher Mary Graham and thirdly, the perspective of occupational scientist Ann Wilcock, whose definition of occupation includes *doing, being, becoming and belonging* as 'essential to survival and health'.

In a previous article, (Turnbull & Barnard, 2023), the authors argued for 'a need for a naturalistic philosophical interpretation of occupational science' – a relatively new, health-related academic discipline. My particular interest in this article lay in the section of interpreting the various meanings of 'occupation'. One simplified explanation highlighted by Turnbull & Barnard is 'what people do'. However, the word 'occupation', used in another form, also applies to the seizing and dominating of Australia by a colonial power.

Turnbull & Barnard utilised the analysis of philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) to detail that 'colonial society is a society of masters ruling over those deemed incapable of ruling themselves' and that 'colonial society is underpinned by violence'. In addition, a quote from Geyla Frank in Block et al (2016 pV), quoted by Turnbull and Barnard (2023), summarises the position Australian First Nations people have experienced since 1778.

To be colonized is to have control taken away, to have the cultural and material foundations of our homeland seized by an occupying power.

In this supplementary article, Turnbull refers to 'genocide, removal from traditional lands, confinement to colonially imposed regimes on missions and exposure to new infections diseases' as well as dietary changes leading to widespread

serious health conditions such as diabetes and heart disorders.

Drawing on text in *The Uluru Statement from the Heart*, Turnbull is to be praised for utilising Mary Graham's dual axioms – 'The Land is the Law' and 'You are not alone in the world' to illustrate the spiritual and relational connections of First Nations people to their land and their kin. Understanding and adhering to Aboriginal philosophical and cultural patterns is essential learning for non-Indigenous Australians to take up the invitation of 'walk with us' from First Nations people.

The parts of David Turnbull's article which I particularly applaud are:

1. Highlighting of the invitation issued by First Nations people to walk with them in this pathway to empowerment
2. The use of 'complementarity' to achieve this outcome.

There is, in fact, only one possible interest, from a settler perspective, that could count towards developing such relationships. It is to complement First Nations people in their struggle for truth-telling and justice; to follow their lead; to support and encourage and never to take control. (Turnbull 2023)

This quote underpins an article-in-progress from a cross-cultural partnership between two Australian women – myself and Daphne Naden, a Kuku Yalanji woman. It sets out what we believe are aspects of complementarity, not just in an occupational sense of *doing*, but encompassing other relational aspects of *being*, *belonging* and *becoming*.

This review provides a segue into our story and I thank David Turnbull for not only many inspirational discussions about how to 'walk with' First Nations people, but also for providing a robust framework of ideas for Daphne and myself to pursue, in our own way. By telling our own story of relational connection, we are hoping to demonstrate ways in which many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can walk together *'in a movement of the Australian people for a better future'* (*The Uluru Statement from the Heart*, 2017).

REFERENCES

Turnbull, David J. and Ross T. Barnard. 2023. On the ongoing need for naturalistic philosophy to interpret what occupational science is doing.

Qeios.<https://doi.org/10.32388/4O8TG3>