



A Brief History of Thought – *Unfinished*

Essays and poems

By the late John Bryson

Powerful, inspirational, thought proving. A re-envisioning of various aspects of history.

A Brief History of Thought... is the fulfillment of a promise made by John's spouse Therese to publish his final words as part of his formidable legacy.

'John's journey into A Brief History of Thought... began around 2015. It excited him to commit to the process and see where it would take him. Being a man of great stamina and inexhaustible will, John didn't regard the project as daunting, but rather it energised him,' Therese O'Neill said.

Never one to write on topics that didn't stoke the flames of thought, this collection of essays and poems is testament to that, with musings on everything from the mystery of humankind to the power of philosophy and the arts, religion, and culture.

John's first book *Whoring Around*, a novella in six stories, was published in 1980 by Penguin. He went on to publish 19 books, both nonfiction and fiction, in his lifetime.

He was best known for his 1985 internationally acclaimed masterpiece, *Evil Angels: The Case of Lindy Chamberlain*, a book he described as 'a documentary in the form of a novel'.

The extraordinary writer's unparalleled examination of the 'Australian trial of the century' – which found Lindy Chamberlain guilty of murdering her baby daughter Azaria in Uluru – convinced many that the prosecution's case was full of false evidence.

This deeply Australian story helped lead to Chamberlain's release from prison the following year, and her ultimate exoneration, along with financial compensation of \$1.3 million from the Australian government.

In 1988, *Evil Angels* was made into a movie by Fred Schepisi with Meryl Streep starring as Lindy Chamberlain and Sam Neill as Michael Chamberlain.

'It was an extraordinary chronicle ... of an entire nation's obsession with a whodunit which is unique in the annals of legal history,' said American lawyer Alan Dershowitz.



Richard Leplastrier generously provided his powerful, beautiful drawings to accompany John's writing in the book. Richard drew these works for the exhibition *Eucalyptusdom*, held at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, in 2022. He drew the striking portrait of John Bryson especially for the book's cover.

To interview or speak with John Bryson's spouse Therese O'Neill please contact media publicist Nicole Webb – nicole@nicolewebbonline.com

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In the year 2000 John Bryson was named one of the 100 great journalists of the 20th Century.

A lawyer and later a barrister, born in Melbourne to New Zealand parents, John inherited wealth but was renowned for doing everything in his power to give his money to those in need.

He lectured in law, literary journalism and fiction; acted on advisory panels to the government, NGOs and universities, as well as taking part in literary judging panels.

In 2014, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for services to literature and Indigenous youth.

He had a profound interest in change and the development of human behaviour – the variations that happened along the biological path, including abstract, religious and secular paths.

As he progressed with his final essays, his dream was to turn them into a book, always believing in the vitality of literature for our development.

‘Ever since we moved to Lovett Bay, John tried his hand at everything that interested him, developed new skills and combined them with his love of writing. He built an oyster farm, made jewellery, made chutneys from home-grown produce. He could combine his hobbies with his favourite pastime THINKING, then research and write about it. The sense of achievement brought him such satisfaction,’ Therese said.

John died in Sydney on 5 February 2022, aged 86.

A Brief History of Thought... reflects what interested John in life and is now available in a limited hardcopy edition and paperback.

‘When John became ill, I questioned my ability to carry out his wish to publish this book. He nominated a few of his very dear friends who would support me. While there were many challenges along the way, I made it through and now with a heavy heart I can say: Your wish fulfilled, my love, my promise kept.’ said Therese O’Neill.

Testimonials

In its truest form. John, similarly, spent hours reducing the words until he got to their essence.

For most people, this would require an effort and probably did so for John too.

Integritas, consonantia and claritas: his style was to me, like no other living Australian author.

John spent the last years of his life grappling with the notion of consciousness – and the loss of it.

In conversation, John and I discussed whether the lack of consciousness was not a contradiction; that is, to have consciousness about the loss of consciousness.

And I remember him saying that the quantity of consciousness found in a person’s discourse was a diagnostic tool sometimes defining that person’s capacity to discern and argue.

He had a gift and he used it well.

Paolo Totaro AM

John Noel Bryson’s nickname was The Chief.

He was a poet, storyteller, rally-car driver, high-end racing sailor and rower, nature lover and a practising criminal barrister through to his middle years. A fighter for justice and the fair go.

We were close friends and talked often and at length. I asked him once why he stopped practising law. His answer was both immediate and shocking ... ‘Because every criminal barrister I knew, became a criminal.’

So, his intellectual pendulum swung towards his greatest love, the Arts. *A Brief History of Thought* is his last work, his final case. In it, he puts the case for the power of philosophy and the Arts, through history. To overturn the dead hand of conservatism and greed. It is his final cross-examination, his ultimate summing up.

Richard Leplastrier AO

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