

Gresham Lectures 2017-18

Divinity Lecture 6

Facts Matter, But They Aren't Enough: Science, Faith and Meaning in Life

Alister McGrath

Gresham Professor of Divinity

Some Facts

The annual rainfall in the English city of Durham in 1870 was 604.8 mm.

Queen Victoria died in 1901.

C. S. Lewis proposed J. R. R. Tolkien for the 1961 Nobel Prize in Literature (but he didn't get it).

Mr Thomas Gradgrind



HARD TIMES.

BOOK THE FIRST. SOWING.

Mr Thomas Gradgrind

Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them.

Jeanette Winterson

“We cannot simply eat, sleep, hunt and reproduce – we are meaning-seeking creatures.”

A Definition of Meaning

The extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceives themselves to have a purpose, mission, or overarching aim in life.

- Michael Steger

Francis Bacon

“The men of experiment are like the ant, they only collect and use; the reasoners resemble spiders, who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes the middle course: it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own.”

Keith Yandell

A religion is a conceptual system that provides an interpretation of the world and the place of human beings in it, bases an account of how life should be lived given that interpretation, and expresses this interpretation and lifestyle in a set of rituals, institutions and practices.

George Herbert

This is that famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

Richard Rorty

There is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not an appeal to such a criterion, no rigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions.

End