Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy

Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy
Annual General Meeting 2024 (Deakin University, Geelong), 4 December 2024

Chair's Report

Prepared by Dimitris Vardoulakis

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2024
Chair: Dimitris Vardoulakis (Western Sydney University)
Deputy Chair: Jack Reynolds (Deakin University)
Treasurer: Daniel Brennan (Bond University)
Secretary: Marilyn Stendera (University of Wollongong)
International Liaison: Joeri Mol (University of Melbourne)
Conference Officers: Joe Hughes (University of Melbourne) and Jacinta Sassine (Western Sydney University)
Communications Officer: Brigid Martin (Macquarie University)
Public Officer: Charles Barbour (Western Sydney University)
Government/Institutional Representatives: Marguerite La Caze (University of Queensland) and Lucy Benjamin (University of Melbourne)
Equity and Diversity Officer: Norma Lam-Saw (Western Sydney University)
NZ Representatives: Simone Drichel (Otago University) and Neil Vallelly (Otago University)
ECR Representatives: Thomas Corbin (Macquarie University) and Annie Sandrussi (Macquarie University)
Postgraduate Representatives: Luke Monks-Quinane (Macquarie University) and Caitlyn Lesiuk (Deakin University)
Web Coordinator: James Garrett (Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy)

1. Acknowledgement of country

The ASCP would like to acknowledge the the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the conference is taking place. We respectfully acknowledge the Elders, past and present and acknowledge their 60,000 year unceded sovereignty of these lands
.

2. The work of the Executive in 2024 (overview)

The Executive focused on

- Developing a Code of Conduct for ASCP activities
- Running the first meeting of the Advisory Board
- Establishing a robust process to deal with complains in the Constitution
- Celebrating the publication of the first ASCP issue of *Philosophy, Politics and Critique*

3. Executive update

A number of the elected members of the executive stepped down at the 2024 AGM. Specifically, the positions of Chair, Deputy and Secretary (Dimitris Vardoulakis, Jack Reynolds and Marilyn Stendera respectively) were vacated by the existed office holders.

To effect a smooth transition, the Executive secured nomination from current or past members of the Executive. Specifically, I am pleased that the positions were elected unopposed as follows:

- Chair: Charles Barbour (Western Sydney University)
- Deputy Chair: Marilyn Stendera (University of Wollongong)
- Secretary: Dean Bowden (Deakin University)

Joe Hughes has also finished his tenure as Conference Officer. Tom Corbin has agreed to replace him. Tom will share the Conference Officer role with Jacinta Sassine.

I thank all the above for the nominations and for their commitment to provide excellent service to our members.

As Chair for the last 4 years, I acknowledge the work that every member of the executive provided to the Society. I would also like to acknowledge that I worked particularly closely with Marilyn Stendera and Joe Hughes, who as Secretary and Conference Officer respectively held positions critical to the success of the Society. I thank them for their collegiality, commitment and hard work.

4. 2024 Conference

The ASCP executive would like to thank the Philosophy Department at Deakin University, the Philosophy Discipline and the Philosophy & History of Ideas (PHI) research group, and in particular Jack Reynolds and Chris Mayes, for hosting this year's annual conference of the Society that the Waterfront Campus in Geelong on 2 to 4 December.

5. Administrative Officer

Christine Polowyj was re-appointed in 2024 as part-time Administrative Officer, with particular emphasis to help with the conference. Christine has become an integral part of the team.

6. Code of Conduct

A Committee was formed to develop a Code of Conducts for activities organized by the ASCP. The CoC is now available on the "Governing Documents" page: https://ascp.org.au/executive/governing-documents Every member registering for the conference has to accept the CoC.

The Committee was Chaired by Joe Hughes and it included Marilyn Stendera, Jacinta Sassine, Norma Lam-Saw, and Annie Sandrussi. Thanks to the committee for a succinct and clear CoC that will ensure that ASCP events continue to operate at the highest standards of respectful conduct.

7. Constitution changes

There was one significant change to the Constitution. Up to now, the Society relied on the NSW Model Constitution for the process to deal with complaints made against members. The Executive decided that it could improve on the outlined process, for example, by avoiding having an appeal heard in an extraordinary AGM, which could have been a painful process for the members involved.

In consultation with Robert McCaw (Barrister at Wentworth Chambers), we have devised a new process that has been included in our constitution. I would like to thank in particular Jacinta Sassine and Joe Hughes for their work on this, as well as Marilyn Stendera, Norma Lam-Saw, and Annie Sandrussi who were members of the committee that worked on this redrafting.

8. Lodging constitutional updates

It came to the Executive's attention that any changes to the ASCP constitution need to be registered with the NSW Department of Fair Trading within 28 days of the AGM in which the changes were adopted. The Executive was not aware of this requirement previously, for which we apologize. We have now collated all previous changes in a motion passed in this year's AGM, to be lodged with the NSW Fair Trading in a timely manner. Thanks to Marilyn Stendera for her work on this.

9. Meeting of the Advisory Board

The first meeting for the newly constituted Advisory Board was held on 7 March 2024. The AB reviewed the activities of the ASCP and advised on issues such as the development of the Code of Conduct. Thanks to Professor Andrew Benjamin for chairing, and to Joeri Mol for organizing the meeting.

10. Expansion of the Advisory Board

As planned in advance, two new members were added to the Advisory Board in 2024:

- Professor Claire Colebrook (Monash University)
- Professor Ann Murphy (University of New Mexico)

We would like to thank Claire and Anne for accepting the invitation to join the ASCP Board.

The intention is to add a further 3 members in 2025.

11. ASCP affiliated journal: *Philosophy, Politics and Critique*

The ASCP celebrates the publication of the first ASCP issue in the Society's affiliated journal, *Philosophy, Politics and Critique*. As detailed in the 2022 Chair's Report, PPC will contain 1 ASCP issue per volume. It will be issue 3, to be published shortly before the annual conference. The journal website is: https://www.euppublishing.com/loi/ppc

The Assistant Editors (ECRs from the ASCP) made a significant contribution to volume 1 of the *PPC*. The Assistant Editors were Lucy Benjamin, Venessa Ercole, Scott Robinson, and Annie Sandrussi.

Edinburgh University Press sponsored drinks at this year's Bibliofête to celebrate the publication of the ASCP issue of *PPC*.

12. ECR Essay Competition

The ECR Prize is open to eligible participants to the conference. The deadline for submission is 31 January 2025. For more information, please visit
https://www.ascp.org.au/?view=article&id=939&catid=8

The Committee judging the prize from last year's conference comprised Thomas Corbin, Joseph Hughes, Dimitris Vardoulakis and Magdalena Zolkos. Despite a number of excellent submissions, the committee decided to not award a prize due to some procedural irregularity. The Committee is confident that such teething issues of the newly established ECR prize will not be an issue in the future.

13. Dalton Bursary scheme

There were several applicants for the John Dalton Memorial Bursary. The Bursaries include free registration to the conference, as well as $500 assistance for travel and accommodation. Following a selection process, the ASCP awarded the 2024 to: Dimitri Vouros, and Josh Szymanski, as well as Patrick Chester, Vincent Le and Kelly Herbison ($250 each - a recipient withdrew, so we shared the

award between the last two). Congratulations to all. Besides keeping registration fees low, the ASCP is committed to financially supporting young scholars to attend our conference.

14. ECR/HDR Mentoring Scheme

The ASCP successfully run an ECR/HDR mentoring scheme for the first time in 2023. The scheme is repeated again in 2024. During conference registration, participants were invited to opt into participation in the scheme as either mentor or mentee. The aim is to connect HDRs and ECRs with more experienced scholars in order to broaden scholar networks and facilitate career support. This initiative is a practical strategy to deliver on the ASCP's commitment to provide support for HDR and ECR career development.

15. Colloquium at the Congress/ Collaboration with AAP

Even though the ASCP decided not run its annual conference as part of the Congress of HASS in 2024, we co-sponsored with the AAP the Murdoch Colloquium, run on 28 and 29 November. The theme was "Philosophy and Indigenous Knowledges" and it was organized by Tim Flanagan, Anne Schwenkenbecher & David Scholefield. Invited speakers included Clint Bracknell, Rhonda Marriott, Anne Poelina, Fiona Stanley, and Krushil Watene. For more information and the programme, please visit https://www.aap.org.au/20th-Murdoch-Colloquium/ Both the Chair of the ASCP, Dimitris Vardoulakis, and the CEO of the AAP, Tracy Bowell, attended and addressed the Colloquium.

16. ASCP at SPEP

The ASCP satellite panel at SPEP did not run this year because there were no applicants for the panel. The reason was the timing of SPEP, which was held a month earlier this year, at the end of September instead of end of October. Thanks to thank Joeri Mol for seeking interest for the ASCP panel at SPEP.

17. Almost 30! (The need to be involved with the ASCP)

In 2025, it will be thirty years since the establishment of the ASCP. The Society has come a long way since its inception, and next year will be the right time to reflect on this long journey.

A significant moment in that journey was 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic forced the ASCP to cancel its annual conference. Through the hard work of the Executive, the Society has emerged stronger from the crisis of 2020. The achievements of the past four years listed below are due to the fortitude and vibrancy of the ASCP community. The establish a robust *framework* for the continuing operation of the Society, while they also imply an obligation on the part of our members to consider contributing by joining the Executive. The key developments that have changed the framework of the operation of the ASCP are as follows:

1. Consolidation of finances
   The ASCP is enjoying significant financial security. Specifically, fort eh financial year leading to the 2021 AGM, the Society held $33,546.45. At the 2024 AGM, the Treasurer reported that we hold $95,335.92. The improvement of the Society's financial position has been secured by finding efficiencies (such as registering to not have to pay GST or obtaining financial assistance through the Congress). This has made it possible to invest funds back to the improvement of what we offer our members. For example, it has allowed us to keep registration fees low (comparable associations, such as AAP or TASA, charge more than double for conference registration).

2. Appointment of Administrative Officer
   The Administrative Officer makes the operation of the Executive smoother and facilitates continuity. The establishment of this role has been possible due to the healthy finances of the Society. This is again possible due to the improved financial position of the Society.

3. Joining the Congress
   Besides the financial benefits, the Congress has made it possible to have free access to rooms for the annual conference. The ASCP no longer needs to rely a department offering to host the conference every year, while it retains the freedom to step out of the Congress when an offer that better suits our members might be made to the executive (as was the case in 2024).

4. Redesigning processes for the conference. E.g.
   - Establishment of a conference committee
   - Setting up the portal for submissions and registrations
   - Design of the pro forma programme and timetable
   - Ability to make independent decisions about keynotes etc.
   - Starting new initiatives such as Pint-sized Philosophy, Mentoring, and Bibliofete.

5. Operating in a way that establishes the executive power of the Executive Committee
   By having regular meetings with a formal agenda and minutes, the ASCP executive gained the capacity to exercise the executive power that it has due to its status as an incorporated association and as it is described in the Society's Constitution. Such formal process both empower the Executive to make decision for the benefit of the Society's members, and makes the Executive's decision available to scrutiny and hence accountable to our members.

6. Clear delineation of Roles
   All positions in the executive are now clearly defined in the Constitution. This also led to the policy that most Officer positions are shared so as to facilitate continuity and to allow for the expansion of the executive.

7. Policies and action plans
   The various Officers of the Executive have developed a suite of policies and action plans as the public interface of how their roles are interpreted and implemented. These are also crucial in facilitating transition between different office holders in the executive.

8. Society's journal
   The formal affiliation with *Philosophy, Politics and Critique* has given the ASCP a formal association with a journal, as stipulated in the Society's constitution. The association with Edinburgh University Press, the publisher of PPC and a major publisher in continental philosophy internationally, has elevated the international status of the Society. It has also allowed for various initiatives (see 11 below).

9. Advisory Board
   The establishment of an international Advisory Board, as stipulated by the Constitution, to assist the Executive in better serving the members of the ASCP.

10. Support for vulnerable members
    To ensure a safe environment in the activities of the ASCP, we have established a Code of Conduct as well as a detailed process for dealing with complaints.

11. Support for young scholars
    Besides ensuring that there is enough funds to continue with the Dalton Bursary that supports young scholars to attend our conference, we also established:
    a) essay prize for a junior scholar to be published at the following ASCP issue of PPC
    b) editorial assistant positions in the Society's affiliated journal to facilitate training

12. Collaboration with AAP
    Regular meetings with the AAP and various collaborations, especially as part of the Congress. E.g., we have just co-sponsored the Colloquium as part of the Congress in Perth last week.

13. Increasing membership
    All the above activities have put the ASCP in a position to increase our membership. Not only

does this put the ASCP in a stronger position to represent our members, but it also means that more scholars benefit from our services.

Besides the measurable or reportable achievements, I would like to add two more that are non-quantifiable and yet just as crucial:

a) The consolidation of a culture of respect within the executive which enabled robust debates about what is the best course of action for the Society and our members
b) Making decisions with fairness and equity as primary concerns. E.g. it would have been easier for the ASCP to hold the conference as part of the Congress, but that would not have been equitable toward our less financially comfortable members who would have not been able to afford travelling to Perth.

The framework established by the above achievements has put the ASCP in a very strong position to continue thriving in the future. But for this to continue, the executive needs staffing! Members who enjoy the benefits of the that the Society offers now have a framework that will give them the power to make decision that in turn will have an impact. I urge colleagues to contribute in this process by joining the executive committee.