



VIRTUOSITY:

Newsletter of the ASCP

Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy

Issue 3, July 2012

Welcome to VIRTUOSITY,

the Newsletter of the ASCP

The ASCP circulated a newsletter during the latter part of the 1990s under the title “Virtuosity”. We relaunched the newsletter as a way of detailing important news and events of interest to members of the ASCP and wider Continental philosophy community in Australasia. This issue gives a summary of important events over the past year, which has been a productive period for the ASCP. Future issues of the Newsletter will include news, conference calls, new journal issues, links to reviews of ASCP authors, and other items of interest to the Australasian Continental philosophy community. We look forward to receiving contributions from members of the ASCP community and welcome ideas or suggestions for future issues. Thanks to all the contributors to this issue.

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ASCP 2012 Auckland University

We're delighted that the ASCP Annual Conference will be held in Auckland again this year (10-12 Dec). In 2008 we enjoyed three sunny and stimulating days in New Zealand's largest city, and this year promises more of the same. The conference committee is very pleased to have three distinguished keynote speakers on the programme this year. **Prof Claire Colebrook** is well known for her work on Deleuze and literary theory, and this year she is returning to her native land from Penn State to take up a research professorship at the UNSW Centre for Modernism Studies in Australia. **Prof Todd May** has written extensively on political activism and organisation, and he is known to many of us for his work on Foucault, Deleuze and, more recently, Rancière. **Prof Georgia Warnke** has worked for almost three decades at the intersection of hermeneutics, critical theory, law and ethics, and she is best known in Continental philosophy circles for her book on Gadamer which has become a classic in the field. Abstract submissions are currently being accepted (deadline 1 September). See the [ASCP website](#) for further details.

- *Matheson Russell*

AGM 2012

The AGM will be held at the conference at the University of Auckland.

Agenda items are to be forwarded to the secretary of the ASCP Executive Committee, Matheson Russell at m.russell@auckland.ac.nz by December 1.

Website

Our website at ascp.org.au has been revamped this year by James Garrett who has taken over from Simone Bignall, who kept up the site for many years. Thanks to Simone.

The website upgrade allows for conference registration and membership payments to be made online. There are now also forms online to submit upcoming events, CFPs and new publications by ASCP members.

ARC matters

There was a spirited discussion of ARC funding outcomes after the release of the 2012 ARC discovery grant successes. Changes to ARC funding, which reduced the number of Discovery grants awarded, means success rates are down in many fields. A number of ASCP members felt that Continental Philosophy projects were more adversely affected than other fields in philosophy. In order to investigate and address that perceived problem, Joanne Faulkner carried out a survey of ASCP members around this and other issues. The survey showed that many people felt they were not knowledgeable about the ARC or how to frame their work for grant applications. To assist grant applicants, successful CP ARC grants have been put on the website. In addition to assist with grant applications, Joanne Faulkner and Sean Bowden held workshops in Sydney and Melbourne respectively and linked applicants with mentors to read drafts of their applications.

- *Marguerite La Caze*



Survey of Members

At the end of 2011 we ran a survey for ASCP members, to poll opinions about the ARC results for continental philosophy, and to collect a range of other data that will inform how we can support members. The survey was well subscribed, so thanks to all who took the time to complete it. We learned many interesting things about our members, who are predominantly early-career or junior academics, only 49% of whom work in departments of Philosophy. This information will assist the ASCP in planning and addressing more effectively the interests of members. For instance, an issue that emerges as critical for members, given the early-career profile, is job opportunity: many indicated they feel it will be necessary to go overseas in order to establish a career in the sector. This finding is inflected with gender considerations, as women were less likely to see this as achievable, possibly due to family obligations. Although the survey was driven by a concern to gauge members' opinions about the ARC process, the data revealed that a sleeper issue, again related to gender, concerns funding provided by institutions: While it was already known from the ARC's and AAP's research that women fare less well in ARC funding outcomes than men, our survey showed that they do far worse in competition for funding within their own institutions: while there was very little difference between numbers of men who applied and received "non-ARC" research funding, there is a large gap for women. This means that women, in general, were less concerned by ARC results than men (perhaps because they are more accustomed to disappointment regarding funding opportunities). The critical significance of this finding, however, is that colleagues are far more likely to discriminate against female colleagues than female ARC applicants from other institutions. Raising awareness of gender biases within institutions, then, should be part of the ASCP's more general approach to thinking about funding opportunities for members.

On the whole, this exercise has yielded a lot of information that will inform ASCP executive discussions, and will help us better support members. A full report on the survey will shortly be available on the ASCP website.

- Joanne Faulkner

Report on Sydney Workshop

The Sydney workshop specifically addressed DECRA's by default, as applicants expressing interest were only applying for that scheme. Professor Paul Patton, and Drs Robert Sinnerbrink and Joanne Faulkner addressed the topics of how assessing works and the structure of ARC review (Patton), pitching interdisciplinary projects and collaborating with researchers from other fields (Sinnerbrink), and the DECRA application itself, and how to package oneself as a researcher (Faulkner). The workshop ran organically with discussion throughout; as an indication of how much participants got out of the session, what was supposed to be 2 hours became 4.

The workshop was inspiring, and personally I'm very grateful for having had the opportunity to discuss with colleagues this process. I learned a great deal. It was also sobering, however, and of the six prospective applicants in attendance — who came from various parts of NSW — none went on to apply for the 2013 round. The reason for this was that they felt under-prepared at this stage: the high bar for research outputs, and the fact that applicants only have two opportunities to apply is discouraging. This suggests to me that holding the workshops on an ongoing basis, to develop both mentoring and understanding about the ARC process, is vital to the CP community. It also suggests that applicants should start thinking about their application, and drawing on ASCP support, in the year leading into applying.

Some applicants who weren't able to attend the workshop made use of the website application library and workshop materials, as well as mentoring that was organised by the ASCP. The mentor network has also proven a valuable resource, and continuing to develop it will be an integral part of ASCP efforts to further support members and establish the CP research community. My heartfelt thanks to the workshop contributors, and to those who generously offered their time to mentoring applications.

- Joanne Faulkner



Report on Melbourne Workshop

Organized by Dr Sean Bowden, the ASCP's Melbourne ARC Workshop was held at La Trobe University on February 16. Prof. Andrew Brennan, Dr Jack Reynolds and Dr Catherine Mills kindly gave their time to speak to participants. The topics addressed included: the assessment process for Discovery and DECRA grant applications; the role of the ARC's College of Experts; strategies for establishing collaborative research projects; cultivating mentoring relationships; pitching oneself as a Continental Philosophy researcher; interdisciplinarity; and the importance of developing a coherent narrative about oneself as a researcher. A lively question and answer session followed, and the three presenters generously spoke about their own experiences with the ARC and offered a number of practical pieces of advice to applicants.

This event brought two concerns to light. The first is that there is a need for workshops for researchers in Continental Philosophy addressing questions specific to the different types of grants offered by the ARC (DECRA, Discovery, Future Fellowships, etc.). The second is that a number of ASCP members do not currently benefit from mentoring relationships with senior colleagues. The ASCP has already taken some steps towards addressing these concerns and will implement some further strategies in the near future.

- Sean Bowden

SPEP Report

For the first time, the ASCP had a satellite session at the 50th anniversary of SPEP. This is recognition of the ASCP's emerging profile in the international community and the work of Dimitris Vardoulakis in lobbying for our inclusion in his capacity as International Liaison for ASCP, both of which were made possible by the history of strong work in European philosophy coming from Australasia in the

70s, 80s and 90s. The panel of four speakers included Alison Ross, Simone Drichel, Jo Faulkner and Jack Reynolds on the theme of 'Violence, Vulnerability and Community'. Due to the congested program for the 50th anniversary of SPEP, most satellite sessions were held for the first time ever on Wednesday afternoon instead of Thursday morning. Consequently the turnout was small (about 10 participants), and mainly comprised of expatriate Australasians. Nonetheless, all of the papers had helpful and interesting question-times, and those present were able to enjoy the rest of SPEP's hospitality and intellectual rigour thereafter. On Saturday evening, Jodie McNeilly, an Australian at SPEP, was seriously injured by a truck hitting her, but we are told that she is now doing well and wish her all the best.

- Jack Reynolds

Conference Report: ASCP Annual Conference, "The Time(s) of our Lives", La Trobe University, Dec 12-15, 2011

I write this as somewhat of an outsider. In the philosophy department at La Trobe, I am one of the few graduate students whose research is not centred on continental philosophy. Given this, I felt that it would be a good idea for me to work the reception for the entirety of ASCP last year, rather than attending the talks as my fellow post-graduate students did. This gives me a bit of an insight into the nature of the conference that differs from others. In what follows, I'll give a broad account of what I saw.

The first thing I was witness to was a deluge of people! I was worked off my feet for the first few days. The interesting thing about this was not just the



amount of people, but the diversity of them. There were people aged from twenty to at eighty (at least) and all of them appeared eager to enjoy the proceedings. They had ranging concerns, from the incompatibility of a foreign sim card with a phone (that I subsequently broke), to problems with their shoelaces (which, bizarrely, I was expected to rectify). What I found genuinely interesting though, was that all of these people were all friendly to each other, and it genuinely felt like a community. This is unlike the experience that I have had at other conferences. Usually, the graduate students tentatively approach the established academics and give them a spiel about their work which the academic will barely listen to, and will not remember. Instead, I saw established academics casually approaching graduate students asking them about their work, offering to collaborate with them, and trying to motivate them. I even had people approach me about my work! This tells me, as an outsider, that with people like those that attended the conference, the continental philosophy community in Australia is alive and well. I have never seen such genuine camaraderie, and interest, and probably will not in the future. It makes me wish I'd picked a different thesis topic!

The second thing I was witness to was something that was a little more expected, and is probably reflected at most conferences. People often assume that academics - those who spend their time with the written word - are capable of reading instructions. This assumption is mind-bogglingly far from the truth. If I were to base my understanding of others purely on behaviour, from my position at the reception during this conference, I would conclude that academics cannot read. Written directions were summarily ignored after being looked at (well at least people seemed like they were looking at them!). The words 'Glenn College' and arrows directing to this location were particularly indecipherable. The only chance of arriving at the correct room was a series of elaborate hand gestures from myself, or from one of my colleagues. Moreover, after several written emails telling those presenting that they could not use projectors in the main rooms, 80% arrived there with demands for projectors. However, given the awareness of this phenomenon shared by myself and the

other post-graduates, we had several backups provided. Jack falsely had faith that others have minds like his and can read, and didn't think we needed them.... Thankfully we trusted empirical evidence and not the head of our department!

So, in conclusion, it was an interesting conference to sit at the reception for. I did get to see the keynotes, and this was an experience I was grateful for, as it provided me with some of the best techniques for interacting with the audience that I have seen. However, my role was primarily at the desk, and from that I can say it was far from what I expected, and made me totally reassess my understanding of continental philosophy in general. Hopefully it gets bigger and better with each year!

- *Lachlan Doughney*

The Conference theme was 'The time(s) of our lives'; Keynote speakers were Elizabeth Grosz, Rutgers University, James Williams, Dundee University, John McCumber, UCLA, and Amy Allen, Dartmouth College. A mini-conference on Castoriadis followed the conference. Special Issues of *Parrhesia* and *Thesis Eleven* will be published, based on conference papers.

Postgraduate essay prize 2011

The ASCP awarded a special prize for the best paper by a postgraduate, and this was won by David Rowe, for his paper 'The Eternal Return of the Same: Nietzsche's "value-free" revaluation of all values'. David is a PhD student at La Trobe University; his paper will be published in *Parrhesia* and he was awarded a \$500 prize, sponsored by ASCP.

His abstract: In this paper I argue that Nietzsche should be understood as a "thorough-going nihilist". Rather than broaching two general projects of destroying current values and constructing new ones, I argue that Nietzsche should be understood only as a destroyer of values. I do this by looking at Ni-



etzsche's views on nihilism and the role played by Nietzsche's cyclical view of time, or his doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same. I provide a typology of nihilisms, as they are found in Nietzsche—negative, reactive and radical—through a close reading of an unpublished fragment in his later notebooks, remnants of which are scattered throughout his published work. I show how the progression between the different stages of nihilism are a “necessary consequence of the ideals entertained hitherto” (WTP 28), with the eternal recurrence of the same playing a vital role in this progression. The last stage of nihilism—radical nihilism—is ambiguous between a life-denying, or passive, nihilism and a life-affirming, or active, one; but, I argue, both kinds of nihilism preclude a construction of new values.

But there is an inherent tension within Nietzsche's account of nihilism insofar as it relies on the eternal recurrence of the same. This tension is brought out nicely by Löwith and (I argue) partially resolved by Klossowski. There are at least two meanings of the eternal recurrence of the same. In one sense, the cosmological reading, it is intended to make sense of the idea that time is infinite and matter is finite by claiming that every possible combination of matter will recur infinite times. In the other sense, the anthropological reading, it is a kind of thought experiment, analogous to Kant's categorical imperative: “live in every moment so that you could will that moment back again over and over” [Field] (Löwith). There is a tension between these readings insofar as one must will to live in such a way that they will do it again, over and over (the anthropological reading), but also that what they do will make no difference, for what one decides to do has been done (and will be done) innumerable times. I argue that this tension can only be resolved by considering Nietzsche as aiming at “goal-lessness as such” and placing him as an active nihilist.

The runner-up's paper by Rory Jeff, a PhD student at Deakin University, is ‘The Future of the Future: Koyré, Kojève, and Malabou Speculate on Hegelian Time’.

Conference Report: ASCP Annual Conference, “Affect”, University of Queensland, December 3-5, 2010.

In 2010 we here at UQ were thrilled to host the annual ASCP conference. The theme of the conference was affect, a topic sparking a great deal of contemporary interest within the humanities and social sciences, as demonstrated by the enthusiastic turnout we received. In all we had over 130 participants, with papers exhibiting the influence of affect theory in fields ranging from politics to film theory, alongside an eclectic range of papers from within the spectrum of continental philosophy. The conference was capped by four stimulating papers from our esteemed keynote speakers: Anthony Calcagno, King's University College, London, Ontario, Anne Vila, University of Wisconsin-Madison in the ‘Sensibility’ stream, Paul Redding, University of Sydney, and Sara Heinämaa, Helsinki Collegium of Advanced Studies. The ASCP each year produces a lively philosophical environment and it was a great to bring that environment to the halls of UQ. See the special issue of *Parrhesia* based on the conference: <http://www.parrhesiajournal.org>

- *Andrew Wiltshire*



Books and Reviews of Books by ASCP Authors (2011-12) A long and impressive list!

ASCP Members' Books 2011

For more details view 2011 books at the ASCP website

Adam Bartlett, *Badiou and Plato: an Education by Truths* (EUP, 2011)

Simone Bignall, *Postcolonial Agency: Critique and Constructivism*, 2nd Edition (EUP, 2011)

Sean Bowden, *The Priority of Events: Deleuze's Logic of Sense* (EUP, 2011)

P. Diego Bubbio and Philip Quadrio, *The Relationship of Philosophy to Religion Today* (Cambridge Scholars, 2011)

Chris Danta, *Literature Suspends Death: Sacrifice and Storytelling in Kierkegaard, Kafka and Blanchot* (Continuum, 2011)

Joanne Faulkner, *The Importance of Being Innocent* (Cambridge, 2011)

Mark Hewson, *Blanchot and Literary Criticism* (Continuum, 2011)

Rebecca Hill, *The Interval: Relation and Becoming in Irigaray, Aristotle and Bergson* (Fordham, 2011)

Felicity Joseph, Jack Reynolds, and Ashley Woodward (eds), *The Continuum Companion to Existentialism* (Continuum, 2011)

Catherine Mills, *Futures of Reproduction: Bioethics and Biopolitics* (Springer, 2011)

Alex Murray and Jess Whyte (eds), *The Agamben Dictionary* (EUP, 2011)

Jack Reynolds, *Chronopathologies: Time and Politics in Deleuze, Derrida, Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2011)

Jon Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze* (Acumen, 2011)

Robert Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images* (Continuum, 2011)

Patrick Stokes and Adam Buben (eds.), *Kierkegaard and Death* (Indiana University Press, 2011)

Robert Stolorow, *World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2011)

Dimitris Vardoulakis (ed), *Spinoza Now* (University of Minnesota, 2011)

Ashley Woodward (ed), *Interpreting Nietzsche: Reception and Influence* (Continuum, 2011)

Ashley Woodward, *Understanding Nietzscheanism* (Acumen, 2011)

Anna Yeatman, Philip Hansen, Charles Barbour and Magdalena Zolkos, *Action and Appearance: Ethics and the Politics of Writing in Hannah Arendt* (Continuum, 2011)

ASCP Members' Books 2012

For more details view 2012 books at the ASCP website

Miriam Bankovsky and Alice Le Goff (eds.), *Recognition theory and contemporary French moral and political philosophy: Reopening the dialogue* (Manchester University Press, 2012)

Miriam Bankovsky, *Perfecting justice in Rawls, Habermas and Honneth: A deconstructive perspective* (Continuum, 2012)

Arne De Boever, Alex Murray, Jon Roffe and Ashley Woodward, *Gilbert Simondon: Being and Technology* (EUP, 2012)

Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (eds.), *Badiou and Philosophy* (EUP, 2012)



Russell Daylight, *What If Derrida Was Wrong about Saussure?* (EUP, 2012)

Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross (eds.), *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene: The Philosophy of Radical Equality* (Continuum, 2012)

Jean-Philippe Deranty and Nicholas Smith, *New Philosophies of Labour: Work and the Social Bond* (Brill, 2012)

Robyn Ferrell, *Sacred Exchanges: Images In Global Context* (Columbia UP, 2012)

Marguerite La Caze and Martyn Lloyd, eds. Special Issue on 'Affect'. <http://www.parrhesiajournal.org>

Craig Lundy, *History and Becoming: Deleuze's Philosophy of Creativity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012)

Timothy Rayner, *Life Changing: A Philosophical Guide* (wordpress.com, 2012)

Liam Sprod, *Nuclear Futurism: The work of art in the age of remainderless destruction* (Zero, 2012)

Any ASCP members who have published books please use the [online submit member's book form at ascp.org.au](http://www.ascp.org.au) or email James Garrett at: web@ascp.org.au so that they can be included in the next issue of Virtuosity and on the Website.

Book Review

Richard Hil, *Whackademia: An Insider's Account of the Troubled University* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2012), ISBN: 978 1 74223 291 1 (pbk.), 239 pp.

"Universities are knowledge department stores"
Lindsay Tanner, Former Finance Minister, now Vice Chancellor's Fellow, Victoria University

Ever since the brief reign of free tertiary education ended with the Dawkins reforms of the late 1980s, Universities in Australia have been undergoing an extraordinary period of upheaval. We are all familiar with the refrains: managerialism and marketisation,

enterprise and 'excellence', restructuring and rationalisation. Indeed, academics have long complained about the corporatisation of academe, without having done very much about it. Until recently, there has been little critical investigation of this process, which is surprising considering our passion for critique and penchant for analysis. Richard Hil's book is thus a welcome intervention in what ought to be a vigorous cultural debate about the profound changes occurring in Australia tertiary institutions. It is hardly news to observe that Universities are no longer sanctuaries of intellectual inquiry but competitors in a job training marketplace; or that the stereotypical Academic has mutated from begowned boffin to educational entrepreneur, or the student from aspiring apprentice to cynical consumer. Should we embrace the New University (if only ironically) or defend the Old (if only strategically)? Anyone concerned with such questions, whatever their position, will find much to ponder in Hil's book, though the experience of reading it might leave one feeling at once hailed and confused.

Hil begins by narrating his own experience over twenty-five years in Australian Universities, a miniature *Bildungsroman* describing the gradual transformation of academic autonomy into bureaucratic surveillance, the demotion of the academic from professional teacher/ researcher to micromanaged service provider. He canvasses the uses of complaint as a form of critical discourse, arguing that the prevailing academic culture of complaint has its roots in legitimate concerns over the imposition of a managerial ideology that is harming the intellectual life of our Universities. Increasing job insecurity, rampant casualisation, coercive micromanagement, and manipulative marketing techniques are taking over the University, reducing the life of the mind and the teaching of the next generation to the selling of a brand, delivery of a service, and capturing of market share.

Many of these complaints will be familiar to those working in our Universities today. Hil assembles many vivid examples of all-too-familiar absurdities of academic life that expose the crisis afflicting our



underfunded educational institutions. They reflect all too palpably the dispiriting demoralisation of academic staff, from the anxious casual teaching proletariat to the disaffected ranks of the jaded Professoriate. Pitched somewhere between popular intellectual polemic and quasi-sociological survey, *Whackademia* paints a depressing picture of Australian Universities, a schizoid environment in which risible propaganda/marketing techniques combine with draconian managerial practices to create an intellectual malaise that is draining the lifeblood from our institutions of 'higher learning'. Critics might query Hil's rather one-sided portrayal of contemporary academic work, or the absence of a substantial student perspective, or the repetitive nature of the complaints concerning the endless administrative, technological, and managerial demands made upon academics today. One might also question why Hil lays the anecdotal evidence with a heavy trowel but skips rather lightly over the more 'theoretical' question of what accounts for this inexorable transformation, not to mention the relatively docile response to it by otherwise critically-minded academics (overwork, 'busy-ness', anxiety over promotion, and micromanagement loom large in his account, whereas the economic and technological transformation of our educational institutions as reflecting the broader global dynamics of neo-liberalism is given short shrift).

So what is to be done? Like most polemics, *Whackademia* aims to provoke and prognosticate rather than declaim or dictate. He does offer, however, some intriguing suggestions for ways in which academics might intervene in their local workplaces. These include critical 'gadfly' questioning of policies and protocols, undermining of absurd managerial practices or discourses, strategic subterfuges that 'play' at conformity in the mode of satirical mockery, the pursuit of alternative spaces of intellectual inquiry or open communities of learning (like the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy)—suggestions that are reminiscent of some of the more ludic elements of the anti-globalisation movement. One could argue, however, that Hil overplays his hand here, harking to a more Edenic (1970s) period of academic freedom in which the evils of bureaucracy, technology, or 'pro-

ductivity' were unheard of (apparently), and where academics were free to think and write unfettered by the unpleasant practicalities of course administration, recorded lectures, student feedback surveys, or research active criteria. It would have strengthened Hil's critique considerably to have parsed the various elements in the contemporary academic culture of complaint, separating the relatively trivial gripes about form-filling and tooling-up on new software from the more serious criticisms concerning the silencing of academic dissent and the exploitation of casual teaching staff (an area of rampant social inequity to which highly 'politically correct' academics often turn a blind eye). *Whackademia* is thus a flawed but valuable polemic that exhorts us to respond creatively to the fraught future of our Universities in a neo-liberal world.

- Robert Sinnerbrink