



VIRTUOSITY:

Newsletter of the ASCP

Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy

Issue 9, November 2018

The ASCP circulated a newsletter during the latter part of the 1990s under the title "Virtuosity." We re-launched the newsletter in 2009 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, as well as thoughts on future directions of the Society. 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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Welcome

Welcome to this 2018 edition of *Virtuosity*, the ASCP's annual newsletter. As I write, the end of the academic year is fast closing in. So too is our annual conference, which this year returns to Sydney as WSU gets set to host what is shaping up to be another very fine event that will showcase the quality of research being conducted in Australasia alongside high quality international scholarship. This 2018



event follows on from the very successful conference hosted by UTas on their Sandy Bay campus last year. A report on that event, along with information on our upcoming conference, can both be found in this newsletter.

2018 has been something of a fraught year for Philosophy and the Humanities at large in the media in Australia. As this newsletter is being finalised, we find ourselves still trying to absorb the furore surrounding the decision of the former federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham, to use his ministerial discretion to veto funding for eleven of the Humanities projects (Discovery, DECRA and Future Fellow applications) that were recommended for funding by the Australian Research Council expert review process. Except for questions put by opposition spokesperson Kim Carr in Senate Estimates, it is possible that this act may have gone undetected. In the week following this revelation, the ASCP executive committee drafted a statement expressing the concern of ASCP members about this apparently arbitrary decision by the Minister, for which no justification was offered beyond a vague allusion (delivered via Twitter) as to what “most Australian taxpayers” would think about the value of such projects. The ASCP’s full media release is included later in this newsletter.

This episode recalls not only former minister Brendan Nelson’s decision in the 2004-05 round to similarly veto Humanities projects that had been recommended for funding, but also the more recent (2013) incident in which two successful grant applications by our colleagues working in the field of German Idealism were lambasted (again by ministers in a coalition government) as “wasteful”. The remarks of my predecessor as ASCP Chair, Jo Faulkner, on this incident in the [2014 edition of *Virtuosity*](#) are well worth re-reading. One wonders about the cumulative effect of such attacks on the integrity of public funding for high level Humanities research in Australia.

This year has also seen the explosion of a new front in the ‘culture wars’ involving the Humanities in Australia, with the extremely messy efforts to launch the “Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation” that hit the front pages and airwaves in the wake of ANU’s

decision to decline the considerable investment on offer by the Centre on the basis of academic autonomy concerns. This is an issue that is far from resolved, with talks continuing with several other Australian universities who are studying the proposal closely. As a discipline that is simultaneously deeply rooted in the western intellectual tradition and committed to understanding its formative structures of thought while equally strongly dedicated to its radical (root-level) critique and the opening of paths of thought toward that which is other to it, the European tradition of Philosophy is deeply implicated in the larger issues at play in this extraordinarily polarised debate.

Finally, in other ‘sector’ news, alongside ERA2018, we await the release of the first set of results pertaining to the ARC’s new Engagement and Impact (EI) assessment framework, which ([according to the ARC](#)) will “assess the engagement of researchers with end-users, and show how universities are translating their research into economic, social, environmental and other impacts.” While this exercise forms part of the Government’s National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA), there is again a level of concern for our discipline. Might ‘EI2018’ and its successor rounds end up driving a wedge *within* the Humanities between those empirical social scientific disciplines that are more able to demonstrate social and economic linkages and measurable impact, and those more fundamental disciplines that find it more difficult – I would suggest, following Aristotle, *by definition* – to determinately demonstrate their practical social and economic utility?

Here we return to a well-worn debate concerning the extent to which philosophers can and should look to enter into debates concerning the utility of knowledge and academic pursuits more generally. *Yes*, the study of philosophy assists in the development of critical thinking skills; and *yes* certain fields of applied philosophy and critical theory clearly open up new insights into urgent social problems. Yet should not governments and their research funding bodies consider also the famous words of one of those “great texts of Western Civilisation” that speaks of the enormous value of the ‘uselessness’ of philosophy:

For it is owing to their wonder that men both



now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters ... [S]ince they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end ... [F]or it was when almost all the necessities of life and the things that make for comfort and recreation were present, that such knowledge began to be sought. Evidently, then, we do not seek it for the sake of any other advantage; but as the man is free, we say, who exists for himself and not for another, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for itself. (*Metaphysics*, 982b11-982b28)

The notion of Continental Philosophy as a contestably “western” discipline was brought into sharp relief via a series of dialogues during and following our 2017 annual conference concerning race and philosophy, and also concerning the ASCP’s own engagement with non-white and non-European discourses and presences. Reflections on cultural and racial identities in contemporary philosophy, the legacies of coloniality, the meaning of “Continental” Philosophy and its cultural and geographical imaginaries all played into a series of interrogations of this theme on the APA’s “Black Issues in Philosophy blog” by conference delegate [Bryan Mukandi](#) with responses by conference Keynote [Lewis Gordon](#) and ASCP Chair [Simone Bignall](#). This is a rich area for further reflection for the ASCP (and our discipline at large) in the months and years to come.

A year into my term as ASCP Chair, a couple of things stand out on which I would like to comment. First, I want to thank and acknowledge the work and dedication not only of recent past Chairs (Simone Bignall, most recently, and before her Jo Faulkner), but also the wider Executive Committee that keeps the organisational side of the ASCP humming along in the background through the year and especially at this time of the year as activity ramps up around the conference and AGM. Vital work is done by these colleagues that enable our diverse traditions of ‘Continental Philosophy’ to have a concerted voice in the public sphere and to support and encourage early career philosophers working in our field.

In terms of the latter, this newsletter contains details, for instance, concerning initiatives in the field of equity and diversity, and the mentoring of postgraduates and ECRs as they look to navigate the difficult career pathways ahead. These challenges were brought home to me quite strongly as I read through the various applications for funding we have received to assist postgrads and ECRs with the financial impost of being involved in our 2018 conference. Funding for the [John Dalton Memorial Bursary](#) (which makes available funding to help offset some of the travel, accommodation and registration costs associated with conference participation) is made possible by ASCP membership dues that are paid either along with conference registration, or as a specific payment via our [website](#).

Finally, I have been reminded of the great service that is provided to all ASCP members and the wider Continental Philosophy community in Australasia, by those colleagues who volunteer to host and organise our annual conferences. Anyone who has organised a significant event such as this knows that while the benefits and satisfaction of hosting are significant for those involved (including postgrad assistants) and the hosting Philosophy program, it is no small task and is not something to be entered into lightly. *Yet hosts we must have* if our impressive record of collaboration through [annual meetings](#) is to continue into the future. With that in mind, in order to achieve a level of security for our scholarly community and to assist with longer-term planning, I am keen to work with our colleagues from the many departments/ programs/ schools across Australasia to develop a schedule of hosting commitments for the following two (and, if possible, three) years. That’s on the agenda for our AGM (notice concerning which can be found below), to which I would warmly invite all ASCP members.

Enjoy the conference!

- *Richard Colledge - ASCP Chair*

ASCP on Social Media

In case you haven’t already connected with the ASCP via social media, be sure to check into our [Facebook](#)



[page](#) (that has now has almost 1500 members worldwide).

Also, Twitter users should note that there is now an ASCP [Twitter feed](#).

Both avenues provide great ways to keep in touch with current events, and to network with colleagues internationally.

2018 Annual General Meeting notice

All ASCP members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held at the forthcoming ASCP Annual Conference, from 1.00-2.30pm Thursday 22 November 2018 Room, in room 01.2.26(LS), at Western Sydney University.

Members can view the agenda for the meeting at: https://ascp.org.au/images/2018/2018_AGM_Agenda.pdf.

The minutes from the last AGM can be viewed at: https://ascp.org.au/images/2017/2017_ASCP_AGM_Minutes.pdf.

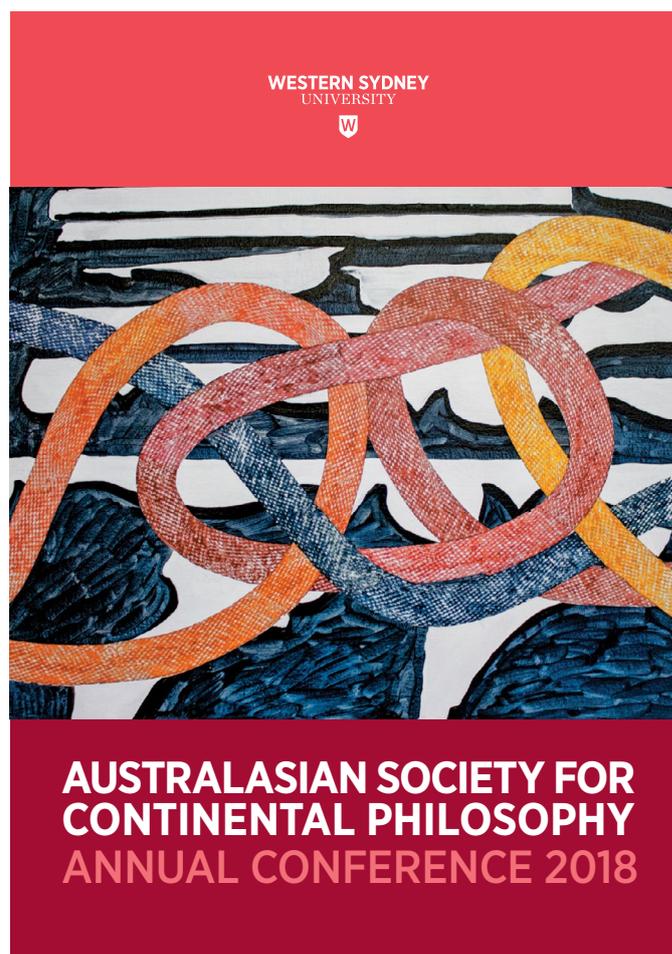
- Andrew Inkpin - ASCP Secretary

2018 ASCP Annual Conference – WSU

The [program](#) for the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy 2018 Annual Conference is now available on the conference website. On behalf of the organising committee, I would like to thank all delegates for their participation in what is shaping up to be an exciting and stimulating program.

We are delighted to announce the 2018 program features keynote presentations by distinguished scholars Peg Birmingham, Walter Brogan and James Risser, and a Special Plenary on the work of Genevieve Lloyd. Also included (on Wednesday 21 Nov) is a special Equity and Diversity Plenary Panel that will deal with the theme: *Mentoring Women for Professional Success in Continental Philosophy*.

On the day prior to the start of the conference proper (Tuesday 20 Nov), we will be hosting the 2018 ASCP Postgraduate/ECR Development Day, and we strongly encourage all postgraduate students and ECRs to attend. This day was an outstanding success at the 2017 ASCP Annual Conference (see the report below by Briohny Walker), and the 2018 day promises to be another invaluable event. Our thanks goes out to Hannah Stark, Jacinta Sassine and others for their work in organising this day.



We ask all delegates to carefully peruse the program and consider both the schedule of papers and chairs. It is important you let us know immediately if a problem has emerged. Also, if you are nominated but unable or unwilling to chair a scheduled session, to please let us know. We also ask for panel organisers to ensure that chairs are appropriately assigned and available for each of the sessions you have organised.

For those delegates who have yet to register, please do so as a matter of urgency (using the [online registration portal](#)), since your registration is now



overdue. In this way you will secure your inclusion in the program.

Information about travelling to Western Sydney University's 1PSQ campus in Parramatta City is available on the [travel and accommodation](#) section of the conference website.

For any additional information or enquiries, please contact us at philosophy@westernsydney.edu.au

We look forward to welcoming you to Western Sydney University.

- Jason Tuckwell - ASCP Conference Convenor.

2017 Annual Conference – UTas

The 2017 ASCP Conference was hosted by the University of Tasmania at its Sandy Bay Campus, on 29 November – 1 December.

The conference was immediately preceded by a dedicated postgraduate professional development and social day. (For an report on this highly successful venture, see Briony Walker's account, below.)

The conference was motivated by a desire to challenge commonplace understandings of the boundaries of scholarship in continental philosophy, with a particular focus on the role of feminist, postcolonial and ecological thought in transforming the key questions that drive philosophical inquiry.



We were excited to host keynote addresses by Lewis Gordon (University of Connecticut), "Fanonian Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis as Emancipatory Practices"; Sigi Jöttkandt (University of New South Wales), "With a Lever..": Beckett, Badiou and the Logics of Sexual Difference"; Marguerite La Caze (University of Queensland), "Judging in Times of Crisis: Wonder, Admiration, and Emulation"; and

Elaine Miller (University of Miami), "Reflective Judgment, *Sensus Communis*, and Human Relations to the Natural World".

Other than general papers, the conference also included thematic streams that dealt with "Precarity and Resilience" (convened by Briony Walker and Erin Hortle); "Art and Aesthetics (convened by Llewellyn Negrin); "Rights, Oppression, Exploitation" (convened by Louise Richardson-Self); Topographies and Ecologies (convened by Larelle Bossi and Jeff Malpas); "Dialogues" (convened by Timothy Laurie and Hannah Stark), and "Hegel and German Idealism" (convened by the Australian Hegel Society).

The conference also featured two plenary panels. The first, titled "The Work of Moira Gatens" and featuring Louise Richardson-Self, Simone Bignall, Timothy Laurie and Moira Gatens, was a fitting tribute to a valued colleague.

The conference closed with our "Equity and Diversity Panel" that was entitled "Justice and the Decolonisation of Knowledge", with a focus on interrogating and expanding the ways that equity and diversity issues are understood in relation to philosophy as a discipline, and academic knowledge production more broadly. With contributions from keynotes Lewis Gordon, Marguerite Le Caze, Elaine Miller, and Sigi Jöttkandt, the session touched on issues around disciplinary insularity, Eurocentrism and canon formation, social inequalities within institutions, and open access publishing opportunities.

- Hannah Stark and Tim Laurie

Report: ASCP Postgrad Day 2017

Any postgraduate or early career researcher must grapple with our place and the place of our work in relation to the histories of our disciplines and institutions. In addition, we must assess and develop our own capacity, within this setting, to come to terms with and meaningfully contribute to the struggles and movements of our given moment. The conversations undergone at the 2017 ASCP



Postgrad and Early Career Researcher (ECR) day at the University of Tasmania Hunter street campus provided valuable insight into these conditions and sites of struggle. I share this report as one of the organisers of the day (alongside conference convenors Hannah Stark and Tim Laurie) and as a participant in the conversations. Out of a desire to create a very conversational Postgrad/ ECR day, we planned a series of three panel discussions. I will cover the panels chronologically, while drawing out common threads.

The first panel was “On Subjectivity in Universities: Navigating Institutions and Professional Wellbeing”. This session grew from an initial desire that the Postgrad/ ECR day address the mental health crisis in higher education in a way that was constructive, forward facing and politicised. In pursuit of this, we called upon the expertise of Michelle Boulous Walker (UQ Philosophy) and Remy Low (UTS Education and Social Work). The session opened with Michelle presenting a paper called “What Becomes of Me at the University, Within the University?” The title is a quote from French writers Hélène Cixous and Cathérine Clément; Michelle swiftly rephrased it as “What remains of *us* at the university, of *us* within the university?” shifting attention to the importance of relationships and collegiality with the university. Sharing insights from her recent book, *Slow Philosophy: Reading against the institution*, Michelle described collegiality as a part of what defines “good” philosophy, as it promotes thinking and thoughtfulness and fosters philosophy as a person-to-person engagement. However, under the pressures of academic life “in the contemporary neo-liberal age” (allow me to extrapolate and list decreased funding and job opportunities, “publish or perish” mentalities, quantitative performance indicators and increased casualization) collegiality is at risk. As Michelle described, “what remains of *us* at the university, of *us* within the university is a collegiality we can only refer to as fragile, precarious”. Michelle suggested that this vulnerability ought to be taken seriously and that under these conditions, deliberate cultivation and support of collegial environments becomes a form of resistance. The joys and pleasures of collaboration and of teaching were discussed with gentleness and profundity. Pointing at how easy it is

to become “atomised” under institutionalised pressure to be competitive, Michelle urged us, “let us imagine collegiality as the ethical centre of a revival of what it means to do good philosophy today.”

Remy responded to Michelle’s paper with warmth, pointing out that, like the vast majority of postgrads and ECRs in the room, this recent configuration of the university is the only one he has ever known. Remy said, “for people of our generation... when we think of research, we do think of publications, we do think of generating material and of getting our names out there”. Acknowledging relatively recent and still ongoing progress with regard to diversity and inclusion within universities, Remy cautioned against the glorification of the past. Looking to the future, Remy asked, “is it a case that we might need to reimagine what collegiality might look like? ... different spaces for collegiality might look nothing like collegiality of the past.” He also spoke with frankness and intimacy of his own experiences in “this job”, including feelings of isolation and of the anxiety of feeling pitted against his colleagues. In agreement with Michelle, Remy touched upon how “teaching has become a space of the sharing of ideas and collaboration and the working through of ideas in relation to others and learning from one another, including with students”. Tim Laurie, mediating the conversation, pointed out the heterogeneity of stress within the university, drawing attention in particular to the exhaustion of being *underemployed*, and to the way in which these pressures impact possibilities for collegiality. In the discussion that followed, Lewis Gordon drew attention to the importance of mentorship. As Lewis attended the conference as an international keynote, his presence at and contributions to the postgrad day demonstrated clearly this commitment to mentorship and collegiality. The room went on to discuss the work we can do, as academics, postgrads and ECR, to foster collegial environments, in resistance to the neoliberal/ corporatised university. Themes of solidarity in crisis continued throughout the day and throughout the conference.

Following lunch, we moved onto the second panel: “After the PhD: Paths into Teaching, Research, and Academic Futures”. The panellists for this session were conference convenors Hannah Stark



(from UTas English) and Timothy Laurie (UTS Cultural Studies), along with Dirk Baltzly and James Chase (both from UTas Philosophy). This panel provided practical strategies for moving through the complex and changing world of the academic job market. Panellists generously shared experiences of finding and applying for academic jobs, both within Australia and abroad. Discussion developed around the vastly differing academic job markets and job application processes in different parts of the world. Themes from the previous panel echoed through: the sharing of experiences and advice is a vital part of the creation of mentorship, collegiality and more robust and supportive academic cultures.



Our final panel of the day was “Building Intellectual Communities Beyond the Academy”. This panel continued with the broad theme of the development of community, but shifted the nucleus of the conversation away from the academy. The panel brought together a group of visitors from academic and para-academic spaces in Brisbane. Elese Dowden is a community organiser and community creator, both inside and outside of philosophy. While she has since relocated to Canada, at the time of the postgrad day, Elese was undertaking her PhD at UQ, had recently participated in organising the Australasian Postgraduate Philosophy Conference and had been an organiser of fortnightly Work In Progress events at UQ Philosophy. Anna Carlson, who has since begun a PhD in Political Science at UQ, is a long-standing regular presenter of Radio Reversal, a feminist political talk show on 4zzz Community Radio, as well as a co-founder, organiser and facilitator of Brisbane Free University (BFU). BFU is a free education project based that runs a weekly radical reading group and organises free lectures in public

places. Bryan Mukandi and Laura Roberts, both scholars at UQ and co-founders of the Queensland Society of Continental Philosophy (QSCP), a Brisbane-based para-academic organisation that has facilitated numerous presentations, discussions and workshops. As a previous member of Brisbane academic and para-academic spaces (I completed my undergrad at the University of Queensland and was a founding member of Brisbane Free University and Radio Reversal), I chaired this panel, and was delighted to facilitate dialogue between my Brisbane world, my colleges at UTas, and visitors from all over Australia and beyond.

The importance of building community was a strong thread throughout the conversation. Elese spoke of building a new life upon arrival in Australia and of combining what she learned from that experience with her own “kiwi hospitality” to become a community organiser and community creator. Elese’s reflections mirrored those Michelle had made earlier in the day: practices of collegiality improve the quality of both life and philosophy. Elese said, “everything I do in my academic life, I try to combine with that drive to pull people together and make everyone a family. That’s when you get the most done, that’s where you work the best – with each other”. She spoke of her tentative creation of warm and generous tutorial spaces, providing an accessible example of how these commitments can be expressed in the everyday processes of academic life.





Anna explained that Brisbane Free University has a different focus, aiming at opening space for community discussion outside of the university. Participants in BFU talks and reading groups often aren't people involved in formal institutions of education. BFU grew from "a very urgent desire to see what the conditions of possibility might be for a different kind of political engagement"; at the core of this engagement is connectivity between participants and with the public spaces where these meetings occur. Anna spoke of the origins of BFU, started by "three white settler academics, very privileged and very much ensconced in a political and activist community that was starting to grapple with questions around decolonisation but weren't... living that daily". She went on to talk about the experience of accessing Indigenous knowledge "through the institution" realising "how few people get access to that" and wondering "what it might look like to take that into other spaces and try to build communities around that".

In turn, QSCP was described as an "attempt to create an intellectually diverse community" (Laura) in which an "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" is possible (Bryan). Laura drew attention to the value of philosophy and of "conceptual clarity" in understanding and overcoming oppression. Bryan spoke of feeling a "deep seated sadness and disappointment with what academic philosophy in Australia looks like". He said, "If you look through intro to philosophy courses... I think 'this is great if you're in France at the beginning of the twentieth century... [but] what does this have to do with thought and wisdom here and now?'... my experience of academic philosophy in Australia is not about me. I'm an African immigrant; my Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues... it's not about them either. Ten percent of Australia is Asian. At our university, we don't teach any Asian philosophy". When developing QSCP, Bryan said the question was "what things are being systematically excluded from the courses at the university, which are legitimate [but] not being viewed as legitimate". He said they sought to "create a community in which we say to [people of colour who want to study philosophy] 'the university might not realise that you come from communities who think and have interesting things to say... but... we

do'. He summarised: "it's about creating other sites of producing legitimacy".

One of the key themes that emerged from the Postgrad day was the relationship between labour and passion, and the simultaneous possibilities of exploitation and emancipation contained in the university. In the final discussion, Laura spoke compellingly of the pressures of precarious employment and the contrast between the hopefulness of finding philosophy as an undergrad and the struggles of "trying to survive" as an ECR. As a room, we considered the tensions around the free labour at the foundations of our organising work. Else referred to our "global duty as citizens living in a Western country"; she said "we are so privileged to be in this room... we just have to give back". The prefigurative and exploratory aspects of the projects were raised by Anna, who discussed the work of BFU as "testing out new possibilities", including that of an "economy of waste", and described the project as redistributing the resources of the university. Anna drew our attention to the possibilities of "alternative economies", reminding us that we "lose a lot" if we think that "capital is the only value operating" in academic and para-academic spaces. The paucity of language around "leisure and knowledge" (Anna) was also considered.

Who gives free labour matters. Laura pointed out, "if I had tenure, I would think that was part of my job, to come and speak at events. [It's different] when you are in precarious position". Laura and Bryan discussed this basis for wanting speakers at QSCP to be paid. Anastasia Kanjere (La Trobe University) agreed, pointing out that "paying people a wage for their work isn't necessarily capitalist; that can be anti-capitalist" and, while expressing her support for the work under consideration, pointed to some of the tension inherent in the free labour that everyone on the panel was contributing to their various projects: "I think you're also asking, are we being scab labour? Are we participating in a culture where we normalise these processes where we need to work for free in order to maybe one day be lucky enough to work for a wage? ... Where we have this model of academia, the only people who can get jobs are the people who can afford to work for free a lot". This point was robustly agreed with and responded to with an affirmation of the difficulty of the current political moment, the



necessity of diverse tactics, and the importance of strong community and connectivity for overcoming the challenges ahead to survive and hopefully build better worlds and better universities. Anna quipped, “if we’re looking for a politics of purity, we’re going to be screwed”.

The people present and groups represented at the Postgrad and ECR day differed in goals and focus but shared a belief in the necessity of community building, focussed around the importance (and the delight) of intellectual work for its own sake, beyond the reach of university-determined matrixes of success. The precarity and exhaustion of postgraduates, early career researchers and academic staff as a whole was acutely felt in the room. So was the commitment; frequently re-iterated was a belief that the slow, careful, shared thought-work that is at the heart of philosophy is worth persevering with and protecting. The political content of this work was constantly returned to throughout the day, in terms of who has access to philosophy, which philosophies are legitimated by academic institutions, and of the contributions that philosophy has to make to generating social change.

- Briohny Walker

ASCP Member Profile: Jessica Whyte

1. Tell us a bit about how you came to philosophy and your graduate experience.

I came to philosophy not through my university studies but through political activism. I arrived at university just as the Coalition government introduced up-front fees for domestic undergraduates, and slashed the national education budget. I became interested in political thought in the context of political organising, against cuts to higher education and also against Australia’s mandatory detention of asylum-seekers. It was in the latter context that I was introduced to Giorgio Agamben’s work. For many of us who were trying to understand the legal peculiarities of Australia’s asylum-seeker regime, with its long-term detention without charge and excision of whole islands from the migration act, Agamben’s

account of the camps as the normalisation of a state of exception seemed to offer an important analytical tool. At the same time, I was always discomforted by Agamben’s account of camp inhabitants as “bare life” and felt that such a designation was inadequate for capturing the forms of political action that took place inside the detention centres, from hunger strikes, to roof occupations to breakouts. I ended up writing an honours thesis on Australia’s detention of asylum-seekers, and, in the course of doing so, I learned much more about Agamben as well as about thinkers including Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt. With the exception of Foucault, none of these thinkers were taught at my university, so I was a bit on my own but it was an exciting exploration. I developed a keen interest in the use and the rationalisation of state violence, and in the significance of political claims made in the name of ‘humanity’. I was very struck by the fact that during protests in the detention centres, asylum-seekers would regularly call out ‘we are human beings’. This was both so self-evidently true, and so seemingly insignificant insofar as their treatment by the state was concerned, that I became a bit obsessed by trying to understand what was at stake in such claims. Many years later, I’ve just become a co-editor of the journal *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development*, which was established precisely to interrogate the political stakes of such claims made on behalf of the human, so this interest has never left me.



After completing my honours thesis, I began a PhD at the Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies at Monash University which was, at that time, the best place to study European philosophy in Melbourne. I was very lucky to be supervised by Alison Ross, who was a fabulous supervisor and helped me to deepen my philosophical background. I was also lucky to study in a very open and interdisciplinary



centre, where we were able to take post-grad level courses on topics such as ‘The Philosophers’ Antigone’ (convened by Andrew Benjamin) and where graduate students organised reading groups on Benjamin’s essays and Baudelaire’s poetry. My own PhD was initially an exploration of exceptional spaces and legal regimes, and was supposed to encompass everything from Guantanamo Bay to global migration control to Australia’s terror laws. I soon realised that I couldn’t adequately keep up with the rapid developments (few of them positive!) in so many different areas, and that trying to read all the US Supreme Court judgments on Guantanamo Bay, and all the policy reports on my other case studies while also developing a strong understanding of my philosophical sources was far too much to handle in a single thesis. In the end, my thesis was devoted to Agamben’s political thought. I was interested in the way in which Agamben’s extremely bleak vision of the concentration camp as the paradigm of contemporary politics fitted together with the redemption aspect of his thought—that is, with his constant evocations of a completely new politics and a ‘happy life’. I argued there that, far from being the pessimistic thinker he is often taken to be, Agamben’s thought is animated by the Holderlinian contention that ‘where the danger lies is the saving power also’. I showed that it was precisely in the midst of the catastrophe of the normalised state of exception that Agamben saw the possibility of a new, non-sovereign form of politics and life.

The most important aspect of my graduate experience was an Agamben reading group that ran for many years at Melbourne University. We met every second Friday, year after year, to read Agamben’s books (out loud!) and debate them. Sometimes a session would pass and we had only got through a page. I learnt an enormous amount, and I think few graduate students are fortunate enough to find a group of friends who want to discuss the minutiae of their topic as much as they do—and then go dancing afterwards!

I also taught at far too many universities to remember during the time of my PhD, and taught everything from literary theory to philosophy to criminology to media law. I also worked as a research assistant in the Faculty of Art and Design at Monash. I applied for more fellowships than I can remember, before finally

getting an Early Career Development fellowship at Monash. It was around six-months into that fellowship that I successfully applied for my current position in Cultural and Social Analysis at Western Sydney University.

2. What good do you hope your particular focus in philosophy might do for the world (or at least certain parts of it)?

I have a persistent interest in the ways in which certain lives are rendered vulnerable, exposed to violence, or abandoned by their polities. In my current research project, I examine these questions through the lens of the invention of the discourse of “collateral damage”. The project offers both a genealogy of Western moral reflection about the killing of civilians and an account of the role of human rights organisations, international lawyers and militaries, especially the US military, in shaping a moral consensus that certain deaths are unfortunate but, nonetheless, inevitable ‘side effects’ of modern warfare. My hope is that by illuminating the philosophical and legal discourses that have served to rationalise the killing of civilians, my work will contribute to making that rationalisation a little more difficult.

3. Can you share with us a technical aspect/argument in your work, why it interests you, and what hangs on it being understood?

My recently completed book *The Morals of the Market: Human Rights and the Rise of Neoliberalism*, traces the historical and conceptual relations between the politics of human rights and neoliberals from the mid-twentieth-century. In the course of researching the book, and reading far too many books by neoliberal thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises and Milton Friedman, it became clear to me that the common understanding of neoliberalism as an amoral, economic discourse is inadequate. Such a diagnosis is widely shared. In his highly-prescient and influential lectures on neoliberalism, Michel Foucault, for one, speculated that a neoliberal society would not be a moralising society of normalisation and exclusion, and that a neoliberal penal policy would eschew the attempt to discipline a pathologised criminal and would instead adjust penalties and rules



to reduce the supply of crime. It became clear to me that such accounts of the amoral economism of neoliberalism miss the distinctive morality that was central to its rise. It became increasingly clear that what distinguished the neoliberals of the twentieth-century from their nineteenth-century precursors was not a narrow understanding of the human as *homo economicus* but the belief that a functioning competitive market requires an adequate moral and legal foundation.

It was in Hayek's work that I found the clearest theoretical account of the reliance of a competitive market order on what he called "the morals of the market." I have a particular interest in what the historian E.P. Thompson called the "moral economy"—that is the set of tacit rules, values, and shared assumptions about legitimate and illegitimate action that shape popular action. It became clear to me that the neoliberal thinkers worked within a distinctive moral economy that sanctioned wealth accumulation, investment and submission to incomprehensible market dynamics at the expense of the attempt to collectively-formulate ends. I became particularly interested in the way neoliberal thinkers, and especially Hayek, appropriated the evolutionary social theory of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, such as Adam Smith and, especially, Adam Ferguson. According to Hayek, the evolution from the "small band" to the "Great Society" required the abandonment of feelings of personal loyalty and egalitarian commitments more suitable to tribal existence, and the embrace of a moral economy more conducive to competition and capital accumulation. From this perspective, any instance of solidarity and egalitarianism was understood as an evolutionary regression – what Hayek called the return of "suppressed primordial instincts" – which he argued threatened the development of civilisation. One of my key arguments throughout the book is that the neoliberal argument for the competitive market was itself moral and political rather than strictly economic.

This matters because it means we cannot simply contest neoliberalism on economic terms but need to engage with its distinctive moral agenda and its claim to foster a peaceful civil society that puts an end to the violence and coercion of politics. It also turned out to mean that some of the central commitments of

mainstream human rights organisations turned out not to be as self-evidently at odds with neoliberalism as is often assumed.

4. What do you see as the most pressing challenge for philosophy (or the ASCP) as a community?

I think there are, unfortunately, many challenges in a context in which neoliberalism is taking on a particularly authoritarian turn, and the valorisation of "Western civilisation" that was central to early neoliberalism is back with a vengeance. I think that makes it critical to devote serious thought to what it means to be studying European philosophy in this country, in a settler colonial context, and at this time. It also forces us to confront persistent attacks on the legitimacy of the humanities and to challenge the attempt to measure all research by its "impact", which is too often understood narrowly in the most instrumental terms.

- *Simone Bignall*

Report on the 2nd Australian Heidegger Studies Network Meeting

The creation of the loose configuration that we're informally calling the 'Australian Heidegger Studies Network' was the result of a couple of fortuitous events that led to the two seminars held in 2017 and 2018, hosted by the Australian Catholic University (Melbourne campus), and which has now led to an invitation to form a stream at this year's ASCP conference at WSU.

In June 2017, at the suggestion of ACU Professorial Fellow Prof Claude Romano (Sorbonne) and co-organised with Richard Colledge, ACU's School of Philosophy hosted a conference on the theme of "Heidegger and Nature". The conference also featured plenary talks by Prof David Storey (Boston College), Jeff Malpas (UTas), Ingo Farin (UTas), Justin Clemens (UMelb), Diego Bubbio (WSU), Lubica Ucnik (Murdoch) and Andrew Benjamin (Monash), as well as ten other papers, mainly from Australian scholars, in parallel session.



Again, with Claude's encouragement, the momentum was maintained this year as we tackled the theme of "Heidegger and Art", this time focused on a masterful and extended presentation by Prof Françoise Dastur (Emeritus University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis) to which a series of engaging responses were given by Jeff Malpas, Shane Mackinlay (MCD), Dennis Schmidt (WSU) and Andrew Benjamin (Kingston University/ UTS). The intention is to push on with a 2019 event of one configuration or another, inspired no doubt by conversations in the Heidegger studies stream at this year's ASCP conference at WSU.

This is an challenging time for scholars of the work of Martin Heidegger, accentuated by the publication of a series of manuscripts over the last decade and more that has helped fill out some of the details of Heidegger's involvements with the National Socialist regime in Freiberg (that came to a head in 1933-34) and his ongoing and idiosyncratic anti-Semitic convictions. Scholarship into the significance of these revelations for understanding his philosophy remains an important aspect of contemporary Heidegger scholarship. However, other areas of research are also thriving, from the interrogation of Heidegger's voluminous texts concerning key critiques and themes in his writings (extending all the way down to fundamental disagreements in the Heideggerian scholarly community about key points of interpretation of those texts), to efforts to apply Heideggerian thought to a range of pressing contemporary issues.

We look forward to re-engaging the conversations at this year's conference at WSU.

- Richard Colledge

Report on the 17th International Association of Women Philosopher's (IAPH) Symposium

The 2018 IAPH Symposium was held in August at Tsinghua University, Beijing. The theme of this symposium was "Women and Philosophy in the Era of Globalisation: Past, Present and Future".

The IAPH began as a German-based organisation

in 1976 and the symposium is now held biennially at universities around the world. Professor Xiao Wei, Tsinghua University, chaired the organising committee for the conference. IAPH has around 380 members from over 35 different countries. Venues for the conference were all near the Wudaokou neighbourhood in the northern Haidian district, where universities, research institutes and technology parks, along with restaurants and boutiques, pack the area.

The symposium opened with an exhibition of the photographer Catrine Val's work, "Philosopher, the Female Wisdom" and a buffet at Chong Coffee. Val's work involves Cindy Sherman-style photos of herself as historical women philosophers such as Hypatia and Christine de Pisan as well as contemporary women philosophers such as Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray, all posed in outdoor settings and based around a text or theme. These remarkable works can be seen here: <http://www.catrineval.com/proj/philosopher-the-female-wisdom/>

The first plenaries continued the theme of women in the history of philosophy with Mary Ellen Waithe, Cleveland State University, discussing the work of Chinese women philosophers in history in "Honorable Mothers and the History of Chinese Philosophy", and Du Jie, All-China Women's Federation, described the development of equality between men and women in China in "Theorising Women's Subjectivity in China's Development Miracle". These speeches were followed by a lavish Peking duck banquet, after which we returned to Liaoning Hotel for the rest of the conference. The forums were women in the history of philosophy, knowledge, science, and value, Marxist philosophy and women's development, and the future for women and philosophy. Papers introduced or reintroduced us to women philosophers' work, such as Czech philosopher Albina Dratvová's natural philosophy and feminism, and American Susanne Langer's philosophy of art. Topics discussed in the sessions included Buddhism, Confucianism, the ethics of care, political philosophy, a range of topics related to health, work and education, and much more. All the forums mixed Eastern and Western presenters, thinkers and topics so that genuine dialogue was fostered that could continue beyond the papers.



Nancy Tuana, Pennsylvania State University, gave the final plenary on 'The Forgetting of Race and the Anthropocene' and outlined how climate change will have and is already having worse consequences for the poor, the racially oppressed, and women in a number of countries, and chairs presented summaries of the different forums. The general assembly elected new members for the board from Germany, Mexico, and Spain and the next Symposium will be held in Paderborn University in North-western Germany. See: <http://www.women-philosophy.org/>

- Marguerite La Caze

Media Release: ASCP Response to Disclosure of Ministerial Intervention in ARC Grant Allocation Process

31 October, 2018

Members of the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy (ASCP) were concerned to learn last Thursday night that the former Minister for Education, Senator Simon Birmingham, used his ministerial discretion to veto eleven successful ARC grants in the Humanities, without providing reasons or making public this intervention.

Given that the ARC grant process is strongly guided by 'national research priorities' laid down by government, the assessment process is already weighted in favour of project proposals with a strongly applied nature that address these NRPs. Therefore, to have high-quality Humanities projects that have established their importance through stringent expert review struck down after they have been found to meet such requirements is an especially unjustified act by the former Minister that flies in the face of natural justice.

ARC Grant applicants must have confidence that unsuccessful applications fail on the basis of merit, as assessed by experts in their field, and not political intervention or other extraneous considerations. The former Minister has undermined this confidence, and has damaged the reputation of a system on which

Humanities scholars rely for research support.

He has also disrespected the applicants who invested considerable time and energy writing their applications, their collegial mentors and advisors who gave time to provide feedback, the peer assessors who volunteer to review applications, and the public servants who administer this process in good faith.

The former Minister treated all of these people, and thus the process as a whole, with disdain. The only reason he has so far provided for doing so was a vague claim, delivered by means of Twitter, about what "most Australian taxpayers" think (see @birmo: 3:25 p.m. 25 October 2018). His sneering reference to one particular project in that statement added further insult to substantial injury.

We are also troubled to have learned that the affected scholars and universities seem not to have been advised of this interference at the time, something that only adds another concerning layer to the egregious lack of transparency and due process pertaining to this whole intervention.

The overall effect is to erode confidence in our highly competitive funding environment, and thus to undermine Humanities research in Australia. The indication that one of the early-career academics affected has taken up a position overseas is indicative of the perils of such ad hoc interventions.

The ASCP is deeply concerned about this interference by the former Minister, and recommends that the following steps are taken to remedy this situation:

1. Funding should be restored to the projects that were vetoed by the former Minister;
2. Robust steps should be taken to remove the capacity of the Minister to arbitrarily override the expert judgements of assessors involved in the decisions of public research funding bodies such as the ARC, thereby ensuring that political expediency plays no part in undermining the integrity of future Grant rounds.

- *Executive Committee*

Australian Society for Continental Philosophy

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ASCP-linked Book Series

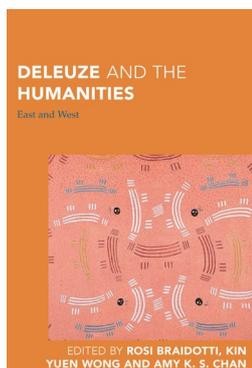
Submit your new book proposal for the ASCP-linked Book Series!

Continental Philosophy in Austral-Asia is a book series published by Rowman and Littlefield International in collaboration with the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy (ASCP). The series is co-edited by Simone Bignall, Diego Bubbio, Joanne Faulkner and Paul Patton. We encourage interested authors [to visit the website](#) and consider submitting a proposal.

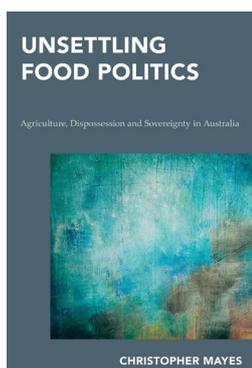
The series continues to showcase the work of our members, with exciting new titles being produced each year. Four excellent books have been published to date, and you can find details at the RLI series website:

<https://www.rowmaninternational.com/our-publishing/series/continental-philosophy-in-austral-asia/>

Published early in 2018, the series has included *Deleuze and the Humanities: East and West* as a collection of essays edited by Rosi Braidotti, Kin Yuen Wong, and Amy K. S. Chan. This volume expects to start a critical evaluation of the reception and creative adaptation of Deleuze and of other Continental philosophers in the Austral-Asian region, with special focus on China.



Most recently, Christopher Mayes's new book *Unsettling Alternative Food: The politics of food, land and agriculture in Australia* was published in October this year. This book casts a critical light on food, land use and political activism in Australia. Using a philosophical history of food and agriculture in Australia, Mayes brings contemporary alternative food discourse and practice into tension with Australia's colonial past, the dispossession



of Indigenous peoples and anthropocentric relations to the land.

These recently published books sit alongside the first titles produced in the series: Joanne Faulkner's *Young and Free: [Post]colonial Ontologies of Childhood, Memory and History in Australia* (2016); and Jane Lymer's *The Phenomenology of Gravidity: Reframing Pregnancy and the Maternal through Merleau-Ponty, Levinas and Derrida* (2016).

A further title by Millicent Churcher, *Re-imagining Sympathy, Recognising Difference*, is forthcoming in the near future.

If you would like to discuss ideas about a book that showcases European traditions of philosophy in the Australasian region, or if you would like advice towards preparing a publication proposal for this series, please contact [Simone Bignall](#) or [Joanne Faulkner](#).

- Simone Bignall

Members' Books published in 2018

We would like to congratulate the following members for books published since the last issue of *Virtuosity*:

Mark Kelly, *For Foucault: Against Normative Political Theory* (SUNY: 2018)

Marguerite La Caze, *Ethical Restoration after Communal Violence: The Grieving and the Unrepentant* (Lexington: 2018)

Marguerite La Caze (ed.), *Phenomenology and Forgiveness*, (Rowman and Littlefield International: 2018)

Christopher Mayes, *Unsettling Food Politics: Agriculture, Dispossession and Sovereignty in Australia*, (Rowman and Littlefield International: 2018)

If your recently published book does not appear on our list of recently published members' books, please alert us by filling in the [online submission form](#).