

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION: CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN AUSTRALASIA

Paul Alberts, Diego Bubbio, Charles Barbour, and Alex Ling

This special issue of *Parrhesia* has developed from the 2013 Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy's Conference at the University of Western Sydney. No specific theme was set for the Conference; and precisely for this reason, we think that the papers presented at the conference—of which the articles included in this collection are a small, but significant, representation—provide an interesting account of Continental philosophy in Australasia.

In the *Features* section we have collected the work of the four keynote speakers. James Martel develops an unorthodox anarchist interpretation of Walter Benjamin, placing emphasis on Benjamin's treatment of political theology, and his notion of a 'real state of exception'. Elizabeth Rottenberg's article focuses on the legacy of trauma in Freud, which reminds us of the influence that psychoanalysis still has in contemporary Continental philosophy. The interview with Graham Harman is indicative of object-oriented ontology's attempt to reverse the linguistic turn of Western philosophy by advancing a metaphysics of things that, in his view, has its roots in Heidegger and does justice to the autonomous existence of objects. Finally, and almost as counterpart to Harman's interview, Gianni Vattimo opposes the need for any (new) metaphysics, by arguing that the longing for absolute, non-perspectival truths is always related to existing structures of power and is ultimately a displaced form of violence.

The *Essays* section features ten papers, which have been selected from among the many submissions we have received for this special issue. While we cannot go through each of them here, it is worth noting the wide variety of philosophical interests (and hence of "Continental" streams) that they represent: from Nietzsche to Critical Theory (Adorno), from the Apophatic tradition to French philosophy (Camus, Foucault), from philosophy of literature (Jean Paul) to feminist philosophy, from Film Theory to speculative realism (Quentin Meillassoux). These papers show the vitality of the various streams of Continental philosophy in Australasia—which is also demonstrated by the number of articles written by postgraduate students, and is thus indicative of the excellent quality of the research work conducted by them.

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CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN AUSTRALASIA

Editing this collection prompted us to make some reflections about the status of Continental philosophy in Australasia.

Across the region, the traditions and contemporary movements in Continental philosophy are robust, maintaining strong interest from undergraduates, and encouraging our best students to pursue postgraduate research in good numbers. Academic philosophy in general shows a resilience that other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences cannot often match. In a time when the Humanities seem to be under fire from every direction, it is moreover encouraging to note that the discipline of Continental philosophy has managed to escape relatively unscathed, and even paradoxically increased in strength and numbers. To register this fact we need only point to the continuing growth and significance over the past two decades of the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy and its annual conference, with last year's UWS-hosted conference being the best attended to date. Perhaps this is because, at a time of rapid cultural internationalisation and shifting political horizons, the demands for both understanding and then challenging our conceptual frameworks and assumptions present themselves as essential critical practices. But Continental philosophy in particular offers the resources associated with figures such as Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and De Beauvoir—as well as more recent names like Agamben, Badiou, Deleuze, Meillassoux, and Rancière—which continue to 'speak to' new generations, and instigate new attempts to reshape the investigative strengths of their methods. Contrary to a very common criticism against the discipline, Continental philosophy—regardless of the specific philosophical approach in use or of the considered thinker—is not a mere historical or passively interpretative exercise: if Continental philosophy is prompted by existing philosophies, this is precisely because it shares the conviction that thought is intrinsically historical and that only by building on our intellectual legacy is it possible to contribute to a better understanding of, and effective challenge to, our current conceptual frameworks. Such renewed critical legacy, essential to the ideals and functions of higher education, means that not only do most universities in the region continue to support Continental philosophy, but they also recognize its growing attraction to students from Asian countries seeking educational experiences from Western traditions. We expect future connections and exchanges to deepen the place of Continental philosophy in the region and, as such, believe the future for the discipline remains bright.

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UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY