

Graham Oppy
N.N. Trakakis
Editors

History of Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand



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With 14 Tables

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Graham Oppy
School of Philosophical, Historical, and International Studies
Monash University
Clayton, VIC, Australia

N. N. Trakakis
School of Philosophy
Australian Catholic University
Fitzroy, VIC, Australia

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Preface

This is a two-volume history of philosophy in Australia and New Zealand. The first volume presents a chronological history, with chapters devoted to each of the decades from the 1920s onwards (though the emphasis of the first chapter is on the full period up to the end of the 1920s). The second volume presents a thematic history, with chapters devoted to many of the major sub-disciplines of philosophy: logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, aesthetics and so forth.

Prior to this work, there have been at least three significant contributions to the recording of the history of philosophy in Australasia: Grave, *A history of philosophy in Australia* (1984), Szrednicki and Wood (eds), *Essays on philosophy in Australia*, and Franklin, *Corrupting the youth: A history of philosophy in Australia* (2003). We have aimed for a more comprehensive coverage than any of these previous works; we have also aimed to avoid taking sides in partisan disputes (though readers will need to decide for themselves how far we have succeeded in this aim). Since some of the chapters in this volume were finalised two or more years ago, we do not pretend that this work gives a complete picture of this history right up to the point of publication; and, in any case, we are well aware that there is much more to be done to complete our understanding of the history of our discipline in Australasia. Apart from anything else, there are clearly thematic chapters that might have been included (some of which were initially solicited but failed to make it through to production): for instance, the history of philosophy (taking in ancient, medieval, modern and recent); philosophical method, including experimental philosophy and methodology; legal, political and social philosophy; and Asian and Indigenous philosophy.

Acknowledgments

This history of philosophy in Australia and New Zealand was produced under the auspices of a broader project that also saw the production of a *Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand* (eds. Oppy and Trakakis, Monash University Publishing, 2010) and two volumes of interviews with, and public lectures by, philosophers in Australia and New Zealand (*The Antipodean Philosopher*, eds. Oppy and Trakakis, Lexington Books, 2011). That broader project was funded by a large grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC, DP0663930), and by smaller grants from the Myer Foundation and the William Angliss Charitable Trust.

There are many people who have supported and assisted the production of this volume, and who are appropriately acknowledged here.

First, we are grateful for the efforts of the project team that was assembled with the support of the ARC funding. Lynda Burns, Steve Gardner and Fiona Leigh all made significant contributions to the overall project. In particular, we should note that Steve played a leading role in the administration of the broader project during its second year—2007—when Nick Trakakis took up a 12-month postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

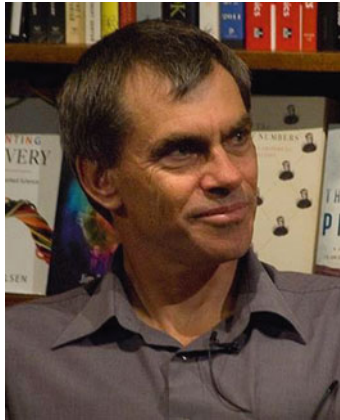
Second, of course, we are grateful to all of the people who contributed materials to our wider project, and, in particular, to the philosophers who contributed material to the present volumes. Some of the chapters in the present volumes are team efforts; some—most notably the chapter on History and Philosophy of Science—involved contributions from a large number of people.

Third, we wish to acknowledge the support that we have received from our colleagues at Monash University, from within the Department of Philosophy, the School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, the Faculty of Arts and the University at large. We have been fortunate to have undertaken this project against the background of very widespread collegial support. In particular, we are grateful to our colleagues in the Monash Department of Philosophy: Dirk Baltzly, Linda Barclay, John Bigelow, Jacqui Broad, Sam Butchart, Monima Chadha, Justin Clarke-Doane, Karen Green, Toby Handfield, Jakob Hohwy, Lloyd Humberstone, Andy Lamey, Mark Manolopoulos, Josh May, Justin Oakley, Michael Selgelid, Jack Smart, Rob Sparrow and Aubrey Townsend. Nick would also like to acknowledge the support of his new group of colleagues in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University.

Fourth, we are indebted to the team of people at Springer who were involved in the production of this work, including Floor Oosting and Annalea Manalili.

Finally, as always, we express our enormous debts to friends and family who have endured what turned out to be a somewhat ambitious undertaking. From Graham: to Camille, Gilbert, Calvin and Alfie, with love. From Nick: to my family and friends, with gratitude and affection.

About the Editors



Graham Oppy is Professor of Philosophy at Monash University and Chair of Council of the Australasian Association of Philosophy. He is author of *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* (1996), *Philosophical Perspectives on Infinity* (2006), *Arguing about Gods* (2006), *Reading Philosophy of Religion* (2010, with Michael Scott), *The Best Argument against God* (2013), and *Reinventing Philosophy of Religion* (2014) and editor of *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion* (2009, with Nick Trakakis), *A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand* (2010, with Nick Trakakis), and *The Antipodean Philosopher* (2011, 2012, with Nick Trakakis, Lynda Burns, Steve Gardner, Fiona Leigh, and Michelle Irving).



N.N. Trakakis is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University. He works primarily in the philosophy of religion, and his publications in this area include *The God Beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil* (2007), *The End of Philosophy of Religion* (2008), and, as coeditor with Graham Oppy, *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion* (in five volumes; 2009). His editorial collaboration with Graham Oppy has also included *A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand* (2010) and *The Antipodean Philosopher* (in two volumes; 2011).

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Contributors

Ruth Barton Department of History, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Ismay Barwell Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

John Bigelow School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

John Bishop Department of Philosophy, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Ross Brady Department of Politics, Philosophy and Legal Studies, La Trobe University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

John Burnheim Sydney, NSW, Australia

Lynda Burns School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Philip Catton Department of Philosophy, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

Paul Crittenden School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, The University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Martin Davies Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Brian Ellis School of Communication, Arts and Critical Enquiry, La Trobe University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

John Forge Unit for History and Philosophy of Science, The University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Peter Forrest School of Humanities, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia

Stein Helgeby Department of Finance and Deregulation, Australian Government, Canberra, ACT, Australia

Stephen Hetherington School of Humanities and Languages, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Roderick Home School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

Keith Hutchison School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

Justine Kingsbury Philosophy, Religious Studies and Ethics, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Frederick Kroon Department of Philosophy, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Catriona Mackenzie Department of Philosophy, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Graeme Marshall The School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

Freya Mathews Department of Politics, Legal Studies and Philosophy, School of Social Sciences and Communications, La Trobe University, VIC, Australia

Chris Mortensen Department of Philosophy, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, South Australia

Robert Nola Department of Philosophy, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Justin Oakley Centre for Human Bioethics, School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

David Oldroyd School of Humanities, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Graham Oppy School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Ken Perszyk School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

John Quilter School of Philosophy, Australian Catholic University, Strathfield, NSW, Australia

Denis Robinson Department of Philosophy, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Matheson S. Russell Department of Philosophy, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Howard Sankey School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

Brian F. Scarlett School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

Elizabeth Schier Departments of Philosophy and Cognitive Science, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Robert Sinnerbrink Department of Philosophy, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

John Sutton Department of Cognitive Science, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Neil Thomason School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

Aubrey Townsend School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Mark Weblin Queensland, Australia

John Wilkins School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

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This introduction is a thumbnail sketch of the story that is to be told in much greater detail in the two volumes of this work.

Indigenous Philosophies

Human settlement of Australia occurred more than—perhaps much more than—40,000 years ago. The indigenous inhabitants were semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers who developed tribal traditions that became the Dreaming: a web of beliefs, practices, rules and social structures grounded in stories of creation and naming that feature creator ancestors travelling across the land. Human settlement of New Zealand dates to around 1280 CE, with the arrival of groups from Eastern Polynesia. The Maori also developed rich and distinctive tribal traditions based in the belief that all things are connected by common descent and share a life force. In the wake of colonial settlement, one major focus for indigenous philosophy in both countries has been questions of identity: what is “being Maori” or “being Koori”

(or “being Anangu”, or “being Bama”, or “being Murri”, or “being Nunga”, or “being Nyoongar”, or “being Palawah”, or “being Wangai”, or “being Yolngu”)?

In this work, there is no further investigation of indigenous philosophies. This is not because there is nothing further to be said about indigenous philosophies; rather, it is because the primary focus of this work is the history of academic philosophy as it has been pursued in departments of philosophy in universities in Australasia. For historical reasons, the pursuit of academic philosophy in Australasia has primarily—indeed, perhaps almost exclusively—adopted and explored Anglo-American and Western European traditions. For better or worse, our story commences in the period after colonial settlement of Australia and New Zealand.

A False Start

Life after colonial settlement was not easy for the colonial settlers in Australia and New Zealand. Philosophy—and the life of the mind in general—was not initially a high priority at any levels of society. However, it was not very long before some turned their attention to questions of the cultivation of inquiry.

John Dunmore Lang (1799–1878) was a Presbyterian clergyman and pioneer educator. His first attempt to establish a school in Sydney in 1826—the Caledonian Academy—foundered almost immediately, and the Australian College that he established in Sydney in 1832 was only marginally more successful. However, during the final 2 years of the Australian College—before its ultimate demise in 1852—Lang employed a Congregationalist minister, Barzillai Quaife (1798–1873), to teach philosophy and theology. Because Quaife was unable to gain any subsequent academic employment, this episode turned out to be a false start for academic philosophy in Australasia.

Universities and Departments

There were no universities in Australia and New Zealand—and so no departments of philosophy in universities in Australia and New Zealand—until the second half of the nineteenth century. The earliest universities emerged in the largest cities: the University of Sydney (1850), the University of Melbourne (1853), the University of Otago (1871), the University of Adelaide (1874), the University of Auckland (1883), the University of Tasmania (1890), Victoria University Wellington (1899), the University of Canterbury (1901), the University of Queensland (1909) and the University of Western Australia (1911). In almost all of these universities, the teaching of philosophy commenced not too long after foundation, and departments of philosophy were relatively quickly in place.

After this initial flurry, there followed a lengthy period in which no new universities—and so no new departments of philosophy—appeared on the scene. The origins of some institutions that now have departments of philosophy can be traced to this period: some universities emerged from pre-existing institutions, as,

for example, in the case of the Australian National University (1931) and the University of New South Wales (1949); and other universities had their origins in branch campuses of already established universities, as, for example, in the case of the University of New England (1938), and the University of Newcastle (1951).

From the mid-1950s, there was an explosion of new universities and new departments of philosophy: the University of New England (1954), the University of New South Wales (1960), Monash University (1961), the University of Newcastle (1965), Flinders University (1965), the University of Waikato (1965), Macquarie University (1967), La Trobe University (1967), Massey University (1969), Swinburne University (1973), Murdoch University (1974), the University of Wollongong (1975), Deakin University (1977), the University of South Australia (1987), Charles Sturt University (1990), Victoria University (1990), Australian Catholic University (1991), the University of Notre Dame (1992), Ballarat University (1994) and the University of Lincoln (1994).

It is perhaps not surprising that the first five of the universities established—Sydney, Melbourne, Otago, Adelaide and Auckland—have played very significant roles in the history of philosophy in Australasia. More recently, despite its much more recent inception (1949), the Australian National University has also had a central role, because of the special provisions governing the Philosophy Program in the Research School of Social Sciences (RSSS) in the Institute of Advanced Studies. Of course, many of the other departments of philosophy in universities in Australasia have had moments in the sun, sometimes for better and sometimes not.

Seeds

The first academic philosophers in Australasia were mostly educated elsewhere, almost always in the UK. A large percentage of these early academic philosophers were Scots. In particular, among the early—and mostly long-reigning—Chairs there were: at the University of Sydney, Francis Anderson (1890–1921) and John Anderson (1927–1962); at the University of Melbourne, Henry Laurie (1886–1910); at the University of Adelaide, William Mitchell (1895–1922) and John McKellar Stewart (1923–1949), who was succeeded by Jack Smart (1950–1972); at the University of Otago, Duncan McGregor (1871–1886), William Salmond (1887–1913) and Francis Dunlop (1914–1932); at the University of Auckland, William Anderson (1920–1955); and at Victoria University Wellington, Hugh Mackenzie (1899–1930). Apart from the Scots, other early long-reigning Chairs included, at the University of Melbourne, William Boyce Gibson (1911–1934), who was succeeded by his son Alexander Boyce Gibson (1935–1965).

While there was a broadly idealistic tenor to most philosophy in Australia and New Zealand prior to the early 1930s, one distinctive feature of the philosophical scene was its eclectic nature. There was widespread interest in the ideas of European thinkers, including prominently, among others, Bergson, Eucken and Husserl. There was widespread interest in religion and morality: many of the early academic philosophers in Australasia were interested in “improvement”.

Finally, there was extraordinary breadth of expertise amongst the earliest Chairs of philosophy in Australia and New Zealand: many were simultaneously engaged to teach economics and/or psychology and/or history and/or theology, and/or education and/or English literature and so forth. Indeed, one of those early Chairs—William Mitchell—memorably observed that his appointment was more Sofa than Chair.

Few Australasian philosophers prior to the early 1930s made much of an impression on the world stage. Many of those who had longstanding Chairs published next to nothing; many of their departments had reputations for being “intellectual backwaters”. Of course, there were some exceptions. Samuel Alexander—who left Australia for Oxford after 2 years as an undergraduate at the University of Melbourne—was widely regarded as a national hero; his *Space, Time and Deity* was a formative influence upon British philosophy in the 1920s. William Boyce Gibson’s rendition of *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* pioneered the translation of Husserl’s writings into English. William Mitchell’s major works—*Structure and Growth of the Mind* (1907) and *The Place of Minds in the World* (1933)—had an international audience, but were regarded as the difficult and obscure products of an isolated writer. Despite these—and other exceptions—it remains the case that, at least up until the middle of the 1930s, the community of philosophers in Australasia was very small, and the members of that community were not very well-connected (either to each other or to the wider community of philosophers in Europe, the US, the UK and elsewhere in the world).

Around the War

In the years prior to the Second World War, there were some auspicious appointments and developments in philosophy in Australasia.

In New Zealand, John Findlay held the Chair at Otago from 1934 to 1939, and Karl Popper held the Chair at Canterbury from 1937 to 1945. Findlay played a pivotal role in the education of Arthur Prior; Popper spent his time in New Zealand writing *The Open Society and its Enemies*. After Popper’s return to Europe, Prior was appointed to the Chair at Canterbury, which he held from 1947 until 1959. At Wellington, George Hughes held the Chair from 1951 to 1984. He appointed Michael Hinton and David Londey soon after his arrival and, collectively, they oversaw the development of a vibrant group of students (including, among others, Graeme Marshall, Richard Sylvan (*ne* Routley) and Patrick Hutchings).

In Australia, George Paul—a one-time student of Wittgenstein—arrived in Melbourne at the outbreak of the War, and—in concert with other students of Wittgenstein such as Douglas Gasking, Stephen Toulmin and Helen Knight—contributed to the development of a very fine group of philosophers, including both “local” students—such as Camo Jackson, Don Gunner, Michael Scriven and Alan Donagon—and German and Austrian refugees—such as Kurt Baier, Gerd Buchdahl, Peter Herbst and David Falk. In Sydney, a formidable group of students developed under the influence of John Anderson: this group included philosophers such as Ruth