

# A U S T R A L I A N E T H I C S

DECEMBER, 2010

## FROM SYDNEY TO BERGAMO PRESIDENT'S REPORT BY MICHAEL SCHWARTZ

### ETHICS: APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL

- ◆ Business
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Engineering
- ◆ Environment
- ◆ Law
- ◆ Medical
- ◆ Nursing
- ◆ Police
- ◆ Public Policy
- ◆ Public Sector
- ◆ Social Work
- ◆ Teaching

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The Australian Association of Professional and Applied Ethics 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference was hosted by the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Sydney from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, 2010. The conference convener was Dr Betty Chaar. Betty organized a truly wonderful conference and we are all in her debt for the obvious hard work and dedication

which made such a conference possible. The conference included innovations such as the Authors' Sessions which were most beneficial. We were most

fortunate to have as keynote speakers Stacey Carter, Ian Kerridge, Simon Longstaff, Ron McCallum, Gael McDonald, Geoff Moore, Alan Saunders, Peter Singer and Colin Thomson. I am sure that everyone who was present would agree that Professor McCallum's explanation of his escape from a future of basket weaving, because he thought life must offer something more, was inspirational. Peter Singer's address as to our obligations with regard to global poverty was also excellent as were the others. The AAPAE was privileged to have such keynote speakers.

Furthermore, Betty's addition to the conference with the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science & Research of a

workshop exploring the ethical challenges of new technologies and the risk and responsibility in Nanotechnology, Biotechnology and Synthetic Biology took us into a future which as ethicists we cannot ignore. Although personally I have always been more comfortable contemplating the past. For that reason I was most appreciative of the welcome cocktail

**"Undoubtedly envy is a sin, but for most of that conference I was a sinner."**

Betty organized in The University of Sydney's 150 year old Nicholson Museum. I have visited The University of Sydney before but I never realized that the University

had a museum housing the largest collection of ancient artefacts on the Australian continent. These artefacts are from Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Egypt, and the Near East and Middle East. Many of the speakers I heard at the conference were inspirational but with no disrespect to them some of these ancient and very silent artefacts were even more inspirational. Not that I am suggesting that we could ever substitute one for a keynote speaker! Betty, along with her diligent team, also had two additional allies at that conference. One was the weather which was perfect. The other was their campus. Undoubtedly envy is a sin, but for most of that conference I was a sinner. The University of Sydney is beautiful.

## EMULATING OPPENHEIM (CONT'D)

To be on such a campus is wonderful. Betty, to you and your colleagues our heartfelt appreciation laced of course with envy. Thank you, Betty.

We had during our last teleconference some discussion of how the AAPAE might further its links with similar organizations. I was fortunate enough after our AAPAE conference to attend another. The people who organized this conference would well be worthwhile fostering further links with. They are truly excellent people. This conference was at the beginning of July. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bergamo-Wharton Joint Conference and its theme was Stakeholder Theory(ies): Ethical Bases, Managerial Applications, Conceptual Limits. This conference was held in the Italian city of Bergamo. Bergamo is a fascinating city. Although to all intents and purposes it is two cities. There is the old city of Bergamo at the top of a hill which is a medieval walled city. It is a most beautiful place with stunning views of the surround-

ing countryside which includes the foothills of the Alps. The city is also filled with magnificent towers and ancient squares. Below it is the modern city of Bergamo. I gave a paper on stakeholders and was somewhat unnerved to discover that the session I was presenting at was being chaired by Ed Freeman who virtually created stakeholder theory. I had never met Ed Freeman previously. Fortunately he is a kind and good man! This conference was the first time I visited Europe. It was also the very first time my wife ever accompanied me to a conference. That had its advantages which includes the fact that she speaks Italian. The conference was organized by Silvana Signori, Gianfranco Rusconi and Alan Strudler and they also organized a wonderful and inspiring conference which was a pleasure to attend. Not that in going to Bergamo I had left Sydney very far behind. Amongst the attendees at that conference was a colleague who lectures business ethics at The Uni-



versity of Sydney.

Bergamo boasts a disproportionately large representation amongst the *I Mille*, those 1,000 volunteers who fought alongside Guiseppe Garibaldi for Italian unification. Initially I did not understand why this was so. However the reason is simple. Bergamo then was the centre of the Italian silk manufacturing industry. And many in it sided with the *Risorgimento*, the forces for Italian unification. They did so for a simple reason: they wanted to get rid of tariffs and establish a common market in which to sell their products. Such a motivation is certainly not unrelated to applied ethics. Amongst such motivations there must be enough material for at least one applied ethics conference. Yet, whilst undoubtedly the motivation of many in Bergamo was to support the *Risorgimento* and to be actively involved in the temporary government of 1848

there is something more. Bergamo's silk industry was devastated by a silkworm disease in the early 1850s. That provides something else: at least enough material for one good conference on moral luck.



Mark your diaries!

**The 18<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AAPAE CONFERENCE**  
*Strengthening our Ethical Practices*

*June 2011*

Tuesday 7th – Thursday 9th June, 2011  
 The University of Tasmania, School of Philosophy.



**Keynote Speakers**

**Barbara Etter**

CEO of the Integrity Commission

**Professor Jeff Malpas**

School of Philosophy UTAS

**Professor Haydn Walters**

Head of Melbourne Clinical School, University of Notre Dame, Melbourne.

**Kiros Hiruy**

Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts, PhD student with the Institute for Regional Development, School of Management, UTAS.

**Call for Papers:**  
*Strengthening our Ethical Practices*

The theme is to be interpreted broadly; papers are welcome from both academics and practitioners in all areas of professional and applied ethics. Past conferences have had streams in:

- \* Bioethics
- \* Moral Philosophy
- \* Political Philosophy
- \* Public Policy
- \* Media Ethics
- \* Police Ethics
- \* Business Ethics
- \* Medical and Nursing Ethics
- \* Social Work Ethics
- \* Military Ethics



Submission of papers for the peer-refereed stream of the conference are due by Friday, April 1st 2011. Abstracts of approximately 250 words for the non-refereed stream are required by April 29th, 2011.

Please submit papers and abstracts to the conference convener: [Leila.Toiviainen@utas.edu.au](mailto:Leila.Toiviainen@utas.edu.au)

## Business Ethics: Paradox or Parable?

A/Prof Sandra Lynch & Matthew Beard

Although the stocks may have leveled, and many of the jobs regained, the spectre of the global financial crisis still lingers in the minds of most Australians, and people worldwide. Why did it happen? Could it happen again? What is the solution? In the words of *Wall Street's* Gordon Gecko, is greed, for lack of a better word, good?

These questions and more were posed to an expert panel at an event titled: *God and Mammon: Need or Greed in the Big End of Town?* Hosted by one of The University of Notre Dame, Australia's research centres: *The Centre for Faith, Ethics & Society*, the event included a lunch followed by a discussion panel, chaired by columnist Miranda Devine. The members of the panel included Telstra Chief Executive Officer

David Thodey, Catholic Archbishop Cardinal George Pell, marketing expert John Moore and business consultant and former Wallabies captain John Eales, who discussed how business and ethics could interact in today's economy.

Major talking points included the salaries of corporate executives, a topic which, if it had the potential to make David Thodey feel uncomfortable, did not appear to do so. Cardinal Pell stated clearly his view that the exorbitant salaries of some executives should raise the eyebrow of anybody with an interest in ethical business practice. Also unethical, Pell argued, were the offering of low-document loans to those who have no chance of repaying. Businesses, Pell argued, existed to serve the common good, not simply to make profit, and these loans represented profit at the expense of the common good. However, profit and common good are not enemies for business, Thodey suggested. "You can make profit for the common good, but it's when you make excessive profits that it comes unstuck."

On the subject of bank loans, Thodey took a sympa-

thetic approach toward the corporate world. In light of the government's criticism of the Commonwealth Bank's rate rises, he suggested that often decisions were examples of "letting the market decide one way or another". He explained his view that many decisions were less ethical than they were made out to be, and that the market was a more determinate factor than many might think. To this he added that he didn't think business depended on pleasantries or on one's reputation as a person for success: "[it's] not about being a nice guy or not – you have to have the strength to make the right decision." But what that right decision might be, Thodey suggests, was most often up to the market.

Another view was offered by John Moore, whose comments suggested that the distinction between the public and private sphere –

between private ethics and "corporate citizenship", as Thodey called it – was hazier than what

**"Many decisions were less ethical than they were made out to be, and the market was a more determinate factor than many might think."**

### GOD AND MAMMON NEED OR GREED IN THE BIG END OF TOWN?

#### Business Ethics Lunch

Q & A Panel Discussion  
Thursday November 11, 2010

## Business Ethics: Paradox or Parable? (Cont'd)

might have been suggested. One's personal view of morality can, and should, affect the way one interprets and responds to market influences. Moore's view is that the market is a causal force like any other, but how people respond to that causal force is an entirely moral question. Just because the market opens up chances for massive profits, doesn't mean businesses ought to follow it there. It's Moore's view that ethical responses in the public realm must be informed by thoughtful personal reflection.

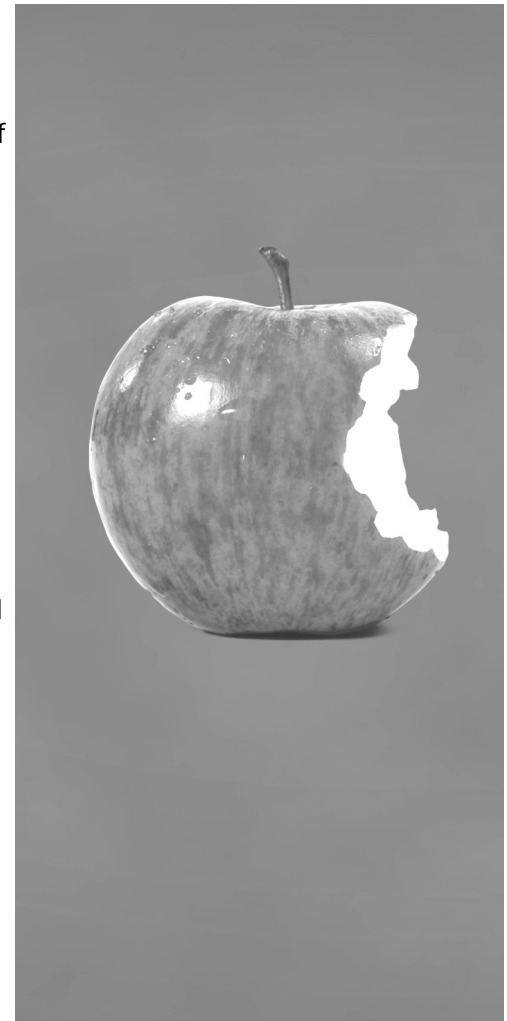
However, this was not taken to imply that profit-taking is inherently ethically questionable. As Cardinal Pell argued, citing Margaret Thatcher, "No-one would remember the Good Samaritan if he'd only had good intentions; he had money as well!" The emphasis was on profit as being necessary, given that it is accumulated wealth that can fund philanthropic activity.

"The market is a causal force like any other, but how people respond to that causal force is an entirely moral question..."

John Eales echoed Moore's opinion that ethical and unethical behaviour is a choice of businesspeople, not an inevitable effect of

the operation of market forces. He expressed his belief that in business, as in sport, the participants knew what the rules were, but some players chose to cheat. Both businesspeople and sportspeople needed to draw a line regarding what they would and wouldn't do, based on their own principles. Everyone draws a line somewhere: the difference between the ethical and unethical person is where they draw that line. He playfully cited AFL legend Leigh Matthews who, when asked what he wouldn't do to win a game, responded (hopefully tongue-in-cheek) "I probably wouldn't kill anybody."

The Centre's Director, Associate Professor Sandra Lynch, said the event generated vibrant and well-focused discussion on a variety of issues. "Such issues as the balance between achieving profitability and contributing to the common good ought to be debated in a civilised society. We hope that ongoing debate of this kind will raise the level of ethical awareness in our communities and influence the decision making which occurs in business and the political sphere of life."



"The Centre for Faith, Ethics and Society intends to follow-up this lunch and discussion panel with other events in 2011 which will continue this important conversation," said A/Professor Lynch.

*The Centre for Faith, Ethics and Society is an initiative of the University of Notre Dame, Australia. For more information, visit [www.nd.edu.au/cfes](http://www.nd.edu.au/cfes) or email [nd.edu.au/cfes](mailto:nd.edu.au/cfes).*

## European Business Ethics Network (EBEN)

### Annual conference, Trento Italy

Report by Howard Harris

The EBEN conference was held in the northern Italian city of Trento. It ran from Thursday morning 9th September to lunchtime Sunday 11th Sep.

There was a welcome reception on Wednesday evening put on by the local tourist office with wine cheese and meats. It ran for an hour and mostly attracted international (non-continental) participants

Trento was the city where, early in the Reformation, the Council of Trent was held. Initially to be a meeting of the protestants from Germany and the Catholics from Rome and beyond, debate over the location lasted 6 years. And then the Germans did not come and the Council saw the planning of the Counter-Reformation in the 1550s.

There were 100 papers and 5-6 streams in each of the paper sessions. There was a plenary at 10:30 each morning with two speakers, lasting one-and-a-half hours all up.

Friday was a long day, starting at 8:30, with sessions running to 6pm and the bus for dinner departing at 7. The return bus left the dinner venue at midnight.

Some participants and papers duplicated from the SBE Society for Business Ethics conference in Montreal the previous month (or from AAPAE in June).

On Saturday morning was a concluding plenary with non-academic speakers, chaired by Alejo Sison the chair of EBEN. Participants were the CEO of a bank, President of the major multi-national food company Barilla, research director from the relevant EC program, former CEO now president of a Foundation to promote catholic social teaching, and one other. Each spoke for 15 minutes, and then there were questions from the floor. It was very effective, if long.

The conference perhaps had a greater economics flavour than at AAPAE, and was less philosophical than either SBE or the other American applied ethics conference APPE.

There were many references by the Italian keynote speakers to the moral elements in classical economic works, such as Keynes and Marshall.

There were two Australians beside myself, Lorraine Carey from U Canberra, and Sabina

Leitmann from Social work at Curtin.

Three recognizable Americans were present – Pat Werhane, Laura Harman from DePaul and Michael Hoffman from Bentley. There were around ten from the UK, including Geoff Moore who delivered a keynote address.

Registration was €250 for members: including two lunches, four morning/afternoon teas and the six-course dinner.

EBEN is a network with 12 national chapters, averaging 25-30 members each, apart from a 700-strong German chapter. EBEN holds both an 'annual conference' (this one) and a research conference each year. The 2011 annual conference will be in Antwerp.



# RMIT University Commits its MBA TO CSR And Ethics

Report by Dr Michael Segon

The RMIT University will be one of the first Australian Universities to ensure that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Ethics are part of its MBA programs.

As of 2011 The University's MBA and the MBA Executive will feature compulsory subjects in CSR, Governance and Law.

The MBA programs are offered through the University's Graduate School of Business and Law, which was one of several business schools that participated in the Australian Research Institute for Environment and Sustainability's (ARIES) research program designed to increase the presence of CSR and Sustainability in MBA programs. The lead researcher and long time AAPAE member Dr Michael Segon developed key research and educational engagement strategies with MBA students and other faculty members. As part of this research an extensive review was con-

ducted into how to best teach business ethics and CSR both from a subject matter and educational design perspective.

"The research into how ethics

**"We had to challenge the position of what we taught in our MBAs and ask ourselves..... Do we actually teach greed?"**

and CSR should be taught suggested that most business schools adopt an embedded approach or offer the subjects as electives. We found that this actually resulted in very little ethics content as discipline-expert faculty – i.e. accounting and marketing professors etc – were uncomfortable with teaching outside their expertise and typically reduced the amount of ethics or dealt with it superficially. From a pedagogical point of view, we found no support for treating ethics different

by advocating embedding it versus a standalone course." Dr Michael John Segon.

The Graduate School's inaugural Head of School, Professor John Toohey instigated a review of the University's MBA programs in 2009.

"We had to challenge the position of what we taught in our MBAs and ask ourselves..... *Do we actually teach greed?*

We concluded that a more proactive approach was required and that we needed to challenge our MBA students – the leaders of the future, around ethics and corporate responsibility issues... to seek a balance between the financial objectives of the firm and the interests of society."

The Graduate School of Business and Law's new Head of School Professor Margaret Jackson continued the program reviews and supported the recommendations to include courses in CSR, Governance and Law as compulsory subjects in the MBA programs.

The changes take effect as of semester 1, 2011.



## EVOLUTION IN THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF ETHICS

BY PETER BOWDEN

The countless books that have come out in recent years on the impact of our evolutionary history on our moral habits have almost outdone Harry Potter. They have all claimed, to a greater or less degree, that our moral habits and beliefs can be attributed to human evolution, and in particular to the selection process that enabled us to rise above other animals competing in the same environment. They appear to be written, in roughly equal numbers, by moral philosophers or evolutionary biologists. Some books, with *Why are we Moral?* or similar titles, attribute a near complete moral sense to the evolutionary process. Others, more conservative, only argue that higher degrees of cooperation are the result of evolution.

Darwin himself first made the claim. In a much discussed passage, he wrote, in *The Descent of Man*:

*It must not be forgotten that although a high standard of morality gives but a slight advantage or no advantage to each individual man and his children over the other men of the same tribe . . . [t]here can be no doubt that a tribe includ-*

*ing many members who, from possessing in a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedi-*

**“Many authors, and even our own observations, would confirm this dual nature of mankind...”**

*ence, courage, and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes; and this would be natural selection.*

The method by which the selection process works is not without some controversy. Darwin's passage indicated a belief in group selection, although a more widely held belief would appear to be in individual or genetic selection. Several writers however, have noted the vigorous advocacy of philosopher Elliott Sober and evolutionary biologist David Sloan Wilson, among others, for group selection. Maynard Smith and

ESS (evolutionary stable strategies) illustrated with hawks and doves, the prisoners' dilemma, and the impact of genetic mutations, any of which give a reproductive advantage, are all parts of the discussion.

The process has not resulted entirely in a one-way path to cooperation and everlasting justice. Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*, has put the argument that the self-centered nature of mankind is also an evolutionary product. Peter Singer has presented a similar argument. Many authors, and even our own observations, would confirm this dual nature of mankind. What is far from clear, or agreed, however, is under what conditions these dual positive or negative natures come to the fore.

It appears to this writer that our own human history gives us an answer – that provided self interest or self-centeredness do not dominate, the great bulk of human beings are instinctively cooperative. Cooperation on an on-going basis, however, requires that we continually attempt to help others in the group and avoid harming them. Natural selection also dictates that we strive for the greater in-



**EVOLUTION IN THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF ETHICS (CONT'D)**

dividual and collective benefit. I believe that we do this both individually and in groups. Darwin's arguments are, in effect, sound – that as genetic mutations produce both self-interest and cooperation, they also produce an ever-increasing cognitive ability. The brain realizes the benefits of cooperation, the benefits of undisputed leadership, and of institutions that strengthen one group in the endless conflicts with other groups.

**“It is evidence that those who seek this more just, more ethical society have, albeit with many back-sliding periods of crisis, held an advantage of over those who seek to serve their own interests.”**

The result is the development of social practices and institutions that make for cooperation within societies, and the gradual development of a more just society. And that justice and fairness is the underpinning, not only for a more effective, more competitive society, but for ethical behaviour

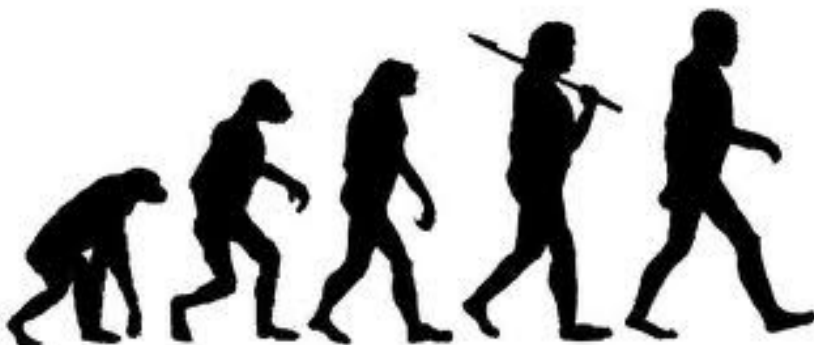
within that society. It would take a long, and perhaps tedious argument to support the contention that our history illustrates that evolutionary development has resulted in more ethical societies.

A simple example, however, might convince. Why have we gradually, over the ages, introduced laws that seek to eradicate wrongdoing; and punish wrongdoers? It is evidence that those who seek this more just, more ethical society have, albeit with many back-sliding periods of crisis, held an advantage of over those who seek to serve their own interests. Another simple example is the change in government that Australia experienced recently. It was undertaken through a process that many regarded as unethical. But that change in government was bloodless. It will also be

bloodless in most civilized countries around the world. It has not been that many years however, since the succession to power, in the long history of these same countries, has not been without bloody conflict between rival contenders.

Perhaps another example to use in the argument that institutional change has resulted in a more ethical stance is the fact that the Western European powers have not experienced an internal, internecine war since World War II. Those sixty-five years have been the longest period without war since the Roman Empire. It is near inconceivable that these powers should now have a war between any of them.

So that is the conclusion – one result of the evolutionary process is that in most societies, those seeking a just society, for whatever reasons they seek it, have held a numerical advantage, with an associated power advantage, over those seeking to further their own interests. We can now put that conclusion to work in both the teaching of ethics and in the employment of those concepts in practice. In short, we can attempt to answer the question as to what extent,



**EVOLUTION IN THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF ETHICS (CONT'D)**

in our many organizations and institutions, do we take into account that a greater number of the people involved are instinctively striving for a more ethical institution?

This writer sees six areas where that conclusion will affect ethics in practice, and the teaching of that practice:

*One:* There will be a number of people in any group who will wish to pursue their own self-interests. This self-interest will encourage unethical behaviour. It is behaviour that is often exhibited by those with greater influence or power within the organization or group. The teaching and practice of ethics must therefore provide the remainder (those who wish to take an ethical stance) with the knowledge, the skills and the confidence to put their ethical objectives into effect.

*Two:* Codes of ethics, if developed by the people in an organization who are affected, will reflect their actual experiences and ethical concerns. Greater participation by those affected will also create greater commitment to seeing that the codes are observed. Such participation will be more effective

than if the codes were superimposed by those in authority.

*Three:* There will also be a number willing to speak out against wrongdoing. As speaking out usually ends in some retaliation by those whose wrongdoing is exposed, self-interest demands that all who observe the wrongdoing

**“The teaching and practice of ethics must provide the remainder (those who wish to take an ethical stance) with the knowledge, the skills and the confidence to put their ethical objectives into effect.”**

stay quiet (except perhaps the most courageous). The need for social and legal responses to prevent this retaliation, that encourage speaking out, plus training in ways to minimize the retaliation, are imperative.

*Four:* Laws, principles, and policies reflecting institutional change at a national and international level intended to encourage ethical behaviour, will continue to grow. This change is already at an “exponential” rate, as a director

of one of these ethical institutions (a newly established police integrity commission), has described them. Knowledge of these changes by prospective and current employees is also an imperative.

*Five:* Of these institutional interventions current even now, answers need to be found on which policies, which legislation, what theories and other interventions have been, or could be effective, in minimizing unethical behaviour. A major input into the classroom, and in the workplace, therefore, will be skills in evaluation research, as well as knowledge on what conclusions current evaluations have already reached.

*Six:* The endless debates on which philosopher provides the optimum moral theory will eventually be deemed irrelevant. The selection process, the struggle for survival, will kick in when the realization comes that resources could be more effectively used. Replacing the debates will be empirical research into combinations of several theorists - on which approaches provide effective responses to the ever increasing complexity of today’s ethical issues.

Peter Bowden.

## A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand

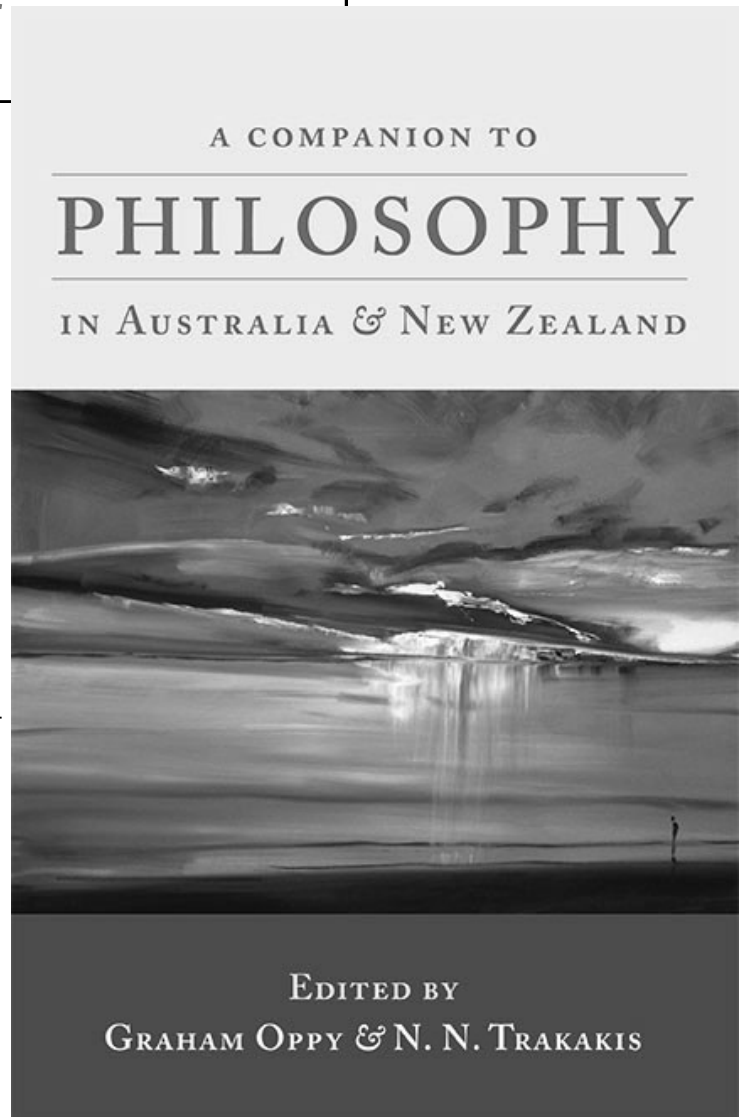
edited by Graham Oppy and N N Trakakis

*Monash University Publishing*

Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand has for some time now been experiencing something of a 'golden age'. The richness of Australasia's philosophical past, though less well known, should also not be forgotten. Australasian philosophy, although heavily indebted to overseas trends, includes much distinctive and highly original work. The *Companion* contains a wide range of articles contributed by prominent philosophers and scholars, and includes biographical essays on selected philosophers, topics and controversies, as well as shorter entries on associations, research centres, departments, journals, pedagogy, and international links. Important philosophical contributions made by those working outside of the academy are also included, along with philosophy's recent inroads into the wider community – in primary and secondary schools, community-based forums and 'philosophy cafés'.

*A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand* will provide scholars and the wider community, in Australia, New Zealand and beyond, with a greater appreciation of the philosophical heritage of this region, and will be a standard work of reference for many years to come.

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"Making the right moves...."

# AAPAE

## AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL AND APPLIED ETHICS

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The broad purpose of the AAPAE is to encourage awareness of, and foster discussion of issues in, applied and professional ethics. It provides a meeting point for practitioners from various fields and academics with specialist expertise and welcomes everyone who wants or needs to think and talk about applied or professional ethics.

The AAPAE fosters and publishes research in applied and professional ethics as well as attempting to create connections with special interest groups. The AAPAE does not endorse any particular viewpoint, but rather aims to promote a climate in which different and differing views, concerns, and approaches can be expressed and discussed.

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