Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy Annual Conference 2010

The University of Queensland
December 3–5, 2010
The question of affect is at the heart of philosophy, a question at the nexus of ethics, aesthetics, the ontology of the real, the nature of knowledge, the phenomena of experience, the composition and function of the mind, and the structures of living. The conference calls for papers on the theme of the philosophy of affect, as well as general papers.

The tradition of philosophies of affect is deep and wide, encompassing both denigration and celebration. For the Stoics, passions such as yearning, spite, grief, and fear are incorrect judgements which are excessive and contrary to reason and nature. However, not all affects are maligned: joy, caution, and goodwill, are to be cultivated. For Descartes the passions were associated with the animal spirits. If properly trained, they contribute to the good life. Socrates, understanding the affective power of art, banishes the poets from Plato’s Republic. Yet, famously, Plato found the origin of philosophy in wonder and the love of wisdom in erôs. In Nietzsche’s hands the denial of passion was rewritten and became a philosophy of affirmation. For Spinoza all human activity including cognition produces, and is produced by, affect. His account of the actions and passions of the human mind was crucial to his task of showing the connectedness of humans to nature, and so in the naturalising of moral concepts. Spinoza’s move towards materialism was hastened in the French Enlightenment as thinking matter was itself thought. The French Enlightenment is the subject of a proposed specialist stream, Sensibilité: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment (see below for details).

The tradition took a decisive turn in the twentieth century, through the work of philosophers such as Deleuze, Guattari, Merleau-Ponty, Irigaray, Foucault, and many others. Affects, according to Deleuze in his uptake of Spinoza, are independent of their subject. With Guattari he developed an anti-Œdipal philosophy of desire, and theorised art as a bloc of sensations, a compound of perceptions and of affects. Merleau-Ponty recognised that as different cultures variously express love, they express a variance to archetypal Western conceptualisations and this difference of affect is a difference in the very emotion itself. The space between conscious emotion and affect in its non-conscious guises is the space for the unconscious. The psychoanalytic tradition reads the life of the body into that of the mind: libido is in part embodied drive. For some feminists, between the lips and the phallus a philosophy of embodied difference emerges. Irigaray links wonder to an ethics of sexual difference. And for Foucault, far from being a mere descriptor of emotional states, affect is nothing less than the site of the production of the modern soul. Can affects enable us to theorise particularity and difference? Do the affects oppose rationality and ethics or are they central to both? What do the affects tell us about the relationship between embodiment and cognition? Papers are invited to engage with these and other questions about the affects.
**Suggested Streams**

Art and its Affects  
Philosophy and the Sexed/Gendered Body  
Deleuze's Philosophy of Affect  
Affect: Literature: Emotion  
Embodied Imagination  
Philosophies of Hope  
The Affect of the Other  
Merleau-Ponty: The Phenomenology of Affect  
Libidinal Affects  
Affect in Politics  
Mimesis and Embodiment  
Psychoanalytic Affect: Freud, Klein, Lacan

**Specialist Stream**

*Sensibilité: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment*

In conjunction with the Centre for the History of European Discourses (CHED) we present a specialist stream, concerned with Intellectual History and the History of Philosophy, and focusing on the embodied epistemology of Enlightenment thought.

In mid- to late-eighteenth century thought, particularly in France and in the thought of the philosophes, materialism and atheism were seriously considered both publicly in the writings of, for example, d’Holbach, and privately by others such as Diderot. The 1743 treatise *Le Philosophe* presents the philosopher in materialistic and mechanistic terms as a human thinking machine that reflects on its own motion. In the context of vitalist medicine, this, however, is far from a mechanistic description in the modern sense. Sensationism was the highly idiosyncratic epistemology of the period—formalised and systematized by Condillac, the system was widely shared including by Rousseau, Diderot, Voltaire, and Sade. Sensibility is an embodied epistemology briefly flourishing in a period before “the theory of knowledge” was taken as a discrete field of philosophical inquiry. Hence sensationism was heavily influenced by the philosophical anthropologies of the day and by medical science. This is evident in the highly contested work of La Mettrie but also in the work of Roussel, Tissot and Rousseau. Rousseau was a dualist, a
sensationist and a theorist of virtue, and purity of the heart. The violence of passion was itself an enemy, the unnatural product of modernising society. Sade was a materialist, a sensationist and a theorist of vice, cruelty and lust. For him the purity of the heart was an impediment to pleasure. Here the philosophical novel’s power to affect makes it the philosophical genre of choice. The Enlightenment notion of sensibility provides a paradigm that integrates such diverse fields as physiology, medicine, philosophy, ethics, anthropology, aesthetics and literature.

One of our keynote speakers, Anne Vila, will link the general conference theme and the CHED specialist stream.

**Plenary Speakers**

**Antonio Calcagno**

Antonio Calcagno is a member of the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at King’s University College, London, Ontario. He has special interests in twentieth- and twenty-first century continental European thought as well as medieval and renaissance thought. He also works on questions of community and intersubjectivity, statehood, consciousness, humanism and post-humanism. His publications include: *Giordano Bruno and the Logic of Coincidence* (Peter Lang, 1998), *The Philosophy of Edith Stein* (Duquesne University Press, 2007), and *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events and their Time* (Continuum, 2007). He is also the editor of *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy/Symposium : Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale*.

**Sara Heinämaa**

Sara Heinämaa is an Academy Research Fellow at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki, Lecturer in theoretical philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, University of Helsinki, and Professor in theoretical philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, Uppsala University. Her research interests include phenomenology, metaphysics, and feminist philosophy, in particular the work of Beauvoir, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty. Her publications include *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), and she has edited several collections including *Consciousness: from Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy* (Springer, 2007) and *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation: Phenomenology in the Nordic Countries* (Springer. 2003). She currently serves on the editorial boards of several high-profile journals including *Hypatia: a Journal of Feminist Philosophy, Sats: Nordic Journal of Philosophy*, and *Continental Philosophy Review*. 
Paul Redding

Paul Redding is the Professor of Philosophy at the School of Philosophical and Historical Studies, the University of Sydney. He works mainly in the areas of Kantian philosophy and the tradition of German idealism. In particular he is interested in the relationship of the idealist tradition to the later movements of analytic philosophy and pragmatism, and in issues in idealist logic, philosophical psychology and philosophy of religion. He is the author of *Hegel’s Hermeneutics* (Cornell University Press, 1996), *The Logic of Affect* (Cornell University Press, 1999), *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and *Continental Idealism: Leibniz to Nietzsche* (Routledge, 2009).

Anne Vila

Anne Vila is Chair of the Department of French and Italian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She specialises in the eighteenth-century French novel, theatre, and intellectual history; the body in literature and medicine; the culture and philosophy of the Enlightenment. Her book *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) focused on the conjunction between scientific and literary/philosophical writings during the French Enlightenment, working against the tendencies of nineteenth and twentieth century notions of epistemology to obscure that which preceded them. She has also published “*Penser par le ventre: The Gastric Embodiment of Thought and Feeling in Eighteenth-Century France,*” and “*Sex and Sensibility: Pierre Roussel’s Système physique et moral de la femme,*” as well as papers on Tissot, Rousseau, and Diderot. She is currently working on a manuscript provisionally entitled *Singular Beings: Passions and Pathologies of the Scholar in France, 1720–1840.*

Conference Convenors

Dr. Marguerite La Caze
Dr. Michelle Boulous Walker
Mr. Martyn Lloyd
Mr. Chad Parkhill

If you would like to submit an abstract, or if you have any queries about the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy Annual Conference 2010, please contact the convenors at ascp2010@gmail.com. Abstracts should be no longer than 250 words. Please include a short biography (100 words) including institutional affiliation.
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http://www.uq.edu.au/

School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics @ UQ:
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