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A COMPANION TO

PHILOSOPHY

IN AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

EDITED BY

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A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand   by Graham Oppy, N. N. Trakakis

now well-established colleagues, in the late 1980s onwards turned their attention to the 'reform' of education and launched a sustained attack on the policies of neoliberalism, managerialism, marketisation, individualism and competition driving the reshaping of schools and universities. Whether this critique blunted the sharp edge of the 'new right' agenda is hard to tell.

The current shape of philosophy of education in the early twenty-first century has become diffused. Some academics bring their work to bear in a range of disciplines including the arts, business and early childhood education. Others, and only a few, continue to keep philosophy of education alive in papers of that name where their intellectual labour is shaped by a variety of philosophical 'greats': Robin Small (Auckland) – Nietzsche; Debbie Hill (Waikato) – Gramsci; John Clark (Massey) – Quine; and Peter Roberts (Canterbury) – Freire. The recent departures of Jim Marshall and Michael Peters have robbed the discipline of their work influenced by Wittgenstein and postmodernism.

And so, what of the future? As philosophers of education age, and move on to overseas positions or retire, and are not replaced, the future is starting to look rather bleak. There is the very real possibility that the death of philosophy of education will come to pass and few will mourn its demise. If there be such a day it will be a sad day indeed.

Philosophy of History

Christopher Lloyd

Traditionally the philosophy of history has been concerned with two broad, quite distinct, forms of discourse, as famously articulated by W. H. Walsh (1967): firstly, speculative philosophising about the historical processes of the world and, secondly, analytical enquiries into the ontology and epistemology of explanation and writing. Speculative philosophy of history has been the main concern during the last century not of philosophers as such but of historians, and it overlaps a good deal with historical theory so that by the late twentieth century those two forms of discourse became indistinguishable. In addition to Walsh's separation of the two forms of philosophising, we must add a third mode of discourse—the production and critique of historical writing as a form of culturally and socially-embedded quasi-philosophical ideology that is designed to impact upon social and political beliefs and behaviour.

Analytical philosophy of history in Australia in a formal, explicit sense has always been a very small sub-discipline with few practitioners. In a less explicit sense, however, there have been and are many more scholars whose work within social science disciplines, including history, can be understood as contributing to a broader field of historical philosophy, methodology, and theory. But these social scientists and historians, often being 'unschooled' in philosophy in a formal sense, usually have little new or profound to contribute to discussions about and the solving of problems within historical explanation. They tend to be 'users' of philosophy of history rather than contributors to it. Nevertheless, there have been significant quasi-philosophical contributions to social theory that sometimes verge on being speculative philosophy of history (see below).

Analytical philosophy of history is a twentieth-century discourse internationally, especially from the 1920s and '30s onwards. In the interwar period in Europe historical enquiry and explanation were subject to some limited attention, via the same sort of rigorous analysis as other branches of empirical explanation, in the leading analytical schools of Vienna, Berlin and Oxford, among other places. These thinkers in this movement were concerned to reveal the logic of enquiry of all empirical knowledge and thereby to remove all elements of speculation and *a priori* metaphysics.

In Australia it seems to have been the radical **University of Sydney** philosopher **John Anderson** (1962) who was the first to make some formal discussions of historical explanation. He adopted a critical, sceptical, and generally materialist approach to philosophical analysis and was close to the Communist Party for a time in the 1920s (cf. Passmore 1967). Anderson was an influential figure in the genesis of the most significant group or school of Australian philosophers —the Australian analytical and realist school—many of whom were his students, including **D. M. Armstrong, J. L. Mackie,** E. Kamenka, P. Partridge, and **John Passmore** (cf. Baker 1986). Of these, John Passmore was the only one to write systematic studies of historical explanation, from the 1950s (Passmore 1958, 1962), influenced by the contemporary debate over the logic of historical explanation conducted by, most notably, Carl Hempel (1942, 1965) and William Dray (1957). Passmore was one of the founders of the leading journal in the field, *History and Theory*, but his main interests lay at a tangent, in the history of philosophy and the practical applications of philosophy to problems about human nature and humanity's place in the natural environment, rather than in the philosophy of the history of society as such (for example, Passmore 1970).

The arrival in New Zealand in the late 1930s of two central European refugees from Nazism who later became famous philosophers raised the profile of New Zealand philosophy of history:

Karl Popper at the University of Canterbury and Peter Munz, his student at Canterbury and later a professor at Victoria University of Wellington. At Christchurch during the war Popper wrote *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), a critique of what he saw as totalitarian thought, but he departed permanently for Britain in 1946. Munz studied in Cambridge and returned to Wellington for the rest of his career, and while essentially a medieval historian he also wrote several works on the philosophy of history from an Idealist perspective (Munz 1953, 1956, 1977).

More recently, several contributions to analytical philosophy of history have been made in Australia. The most important have been the extensive writings of C. Behan McCullagh of La Trobe University and Christopher Lloyd of the University of New England. McCullagh, the sole example of an avowed and 'professionally focussed' philosopher of history within a philosophy department, has produced an impressive body of careful, empirical work that falls squarely within the tradition of analysis of the logic of historical writing and methodology. McCullagh's subject-matter and the material he has dissected and analysed into its logical components has been a vast range of historical writing. Through this work he has established himself as one of the world's foremost logical critics of the structure of historical reasoning (see for example McCullagh 1984, 1998, 2004, 2008, 2009). No other contributions to the philosophy of history in Australia have been so forensically focussed on historical logic.

McCullagh's most developed theme has been to defend the possibility of historical truth against relativism and its latest manifestation as **postmodernism**. The reliability, credibility and objectivity of historical accounts have to be defended, he argues, if historical knowledge is to be taken seriously and upheld as a truth-seeking and truth-finding empirical discipline. He holds that a critical theory of truth is necessary to this task and that theory is akin to the Peircean ideal or goal of universal explanation towards which we strive. The nature of the external world makes possible at least partial knowledge of itself and we can test, verify and build on our knowledge in a cumulative manner. In 2008 he wrote:

> It is my dream that history will eventually come of age. Historians will not only think rationally, as the best do today, but come to recognise the standards of rationality that distinguish professional history. And rather than writing simply to entertain, or to create and test novel interpretations of historical evidence and historical events, they will acknowledge their obligation to help society understand itself. Then, when students see how rational and valuable history is, they will be drawn into a profession upon which the health of our civilization largely depends. (McCullagh 2008: 279)

Christopher Lloyd has primarily been an economic historian who has explored, with an aim somewhat similar to McCullagh's, the philosophical foundations and logic of socio-economic history and historical social science in a series of works (see for example Lloyd 1986, 1993, 2005, 2008, 2009). Lloyd has been a defender and interpreter of critical **realism** in historical social science and has striven to articulate the foundations of unification of the historical and social sciences, as sciences. Like McCullagh, he has been concerned with the goal of knowledge-building through the interconnection between empirical study, concept and theory-building, and new study, in an ongoing process of accumulation and improvement through constant critique. Jeff Malpas, a University of Tasmania philosopher primarily of mind and knowledge, must also be mentioned as a contributor to the analytical philosophy of history in several articles (Malpas 2005;Levine and Malpas 1994).

Other philosophical contributions have come from historians and social scientists whose prime concentrations have been on actual historical enquiry and writing. Martin Stuart-Fox, a historian of South East Asia at the University of Queensland has produced several works of analytical philosophy of history, mostly focussed on the issue of the use of evolutionary theory in historical research (Stuart-Fox 1999, 2005). Marnie Hughes-Warrington, a cultural historian at Macquarie University, has published two books on the philosophy of history: one summarising the views of fifty philosophers and historians on history (Hughes-Warrington 2000) and an important study examining R. G. Collingwood's views of history and historical education (Hughes-Warrington 2003).

Two other contributions deserve mention. First, Keith Windschuttle's vehement critique of postmodernist relativism (Windschuttle 1994), while seemingly philosophical in intent, is more a polemic than a work of careful analytical philosophising. This critique is part of his wider contribution to the recent Australian 'history wars' in which he has combated several forms of Australian scholarship that he considers to be misguided and somehow anti-Australian in virtue of their relativism and lack of archival precision about Australian history. Secondly, from an opposed perspective, Ann Curthoys and John Docker (2005) have defended a postmodern marriage of historical and fiction writing as sharing a similar methodology and purpose of story-telling.

Speculative philosophy of history, which often has a close interconnection with broad social theory and theology, has not been much in evidence in Australia, perhaps because of the resolutely empirical and materialist character of Australian culture, society and intellectual

endeavour. The most significant current of thought that could be described as speculative has come from Marxism and some of its conservative/religious opponents. But even the form that Marxism has taken in Australia has been empirical and materialist, in contrast with some of the Marxist traditions of Western Europe and the U.S. Marx was, himself, an opponent of speculative Hegelian philosophy, but in Western thought from the 'rediscovery' of the early writings of Marx in the 1960s there emerged a strong current of quasi-speculative, 'humanistic' Marxism, very critical of Soviet-style Marxism. In Britain and Australia, however, the main route taken by Marxist thinkers was closer to the thrust of Marx's central themes on historical materialist political economy and the analysis of long-run history as the foundation of the analysis of contemporary capitalism. The British Marxist Historical School of the post-war decades (including Dobb, Hill, Thompson, Hilton, Kiernan, Stedman Jones, and others) had one distinguished member in Australia in the work of R. S. Neale, an English immigrant who had his Australian career at the University of New England. In the course of researching aspects of English and Australian social history, Neale wrote at length about the Marxist methodology and theory of history that he employed throughout his work (Neale 1985).

Not all theoretical and speculative history writing is Marxist and there has always been a rich tradition in the Western world, ever since Vico, Kant, Herder and Hegel, of what can be called 'conservative' thought that examines the long-run history of the West since ancient times as a civilisation, sometimes with religious and teleological foundations. In Australia this tradition has been well represented in the work of John Carroll of **La Trobe University** (e.g. Carroll 1998, 2001, 2004), who has developed a form of anti-humanist critique of modern Western civilisation. Carroll has also played a significant role in the 'history wars' over Australia's past (see below) through his chairing of the review of exhibitions and programs of the National Museum of Australia (Carroll 2003), a review prompted by the Howard Government's discontent with the way in which the themes of settler colonisation and Indigenous dispossession were presented by the Museum.

The critique of historical writing from socio-politico-cultural points of view has grown rapidly in recent decades to now be the major form of meta-writing about historical writing and knowledge in Australia. The vigorous prosecution of debates and even 'history wars' about the place of historical writing and knowledge in national life has been concerned primarily with two overlapping issues: the sociopolitical character of the country as, variously, a settler, convict, monarchical, radical, conformist, egalitarian, Anglo or Asia/Pacific, society; and the dispossession, destruction, and marginalisation of Indigenous Australians. This first debate is a long running one, traceable back even to the early nineteenth century, taking its impetus from the British Protestant settler versus convict (significantly Catholic) nature of the early society, and continuing to the present and including the issue of republicanism. The second only rose to national prominence from the late 1960s and gathered steam in the 1990s during the Keating and Howard Governments (cf. the important salvo by Blainey 1993). Indeed, the extent to which political leaders have become participants in these debates in recent times is quite remarkable. Historical and cultural disputes over the appropriation of Australia's past for present purposes is now a central feature of Australian intellectual life, perhaps to an extent matched in only a few other countries, such as South Africa and Germany.

The history debate over the impact of settler colonisation on Indigenous Australians began with C. D. Rowley's work (Rowley 1970) and was continued by Geoffrey Blainey, Bain Attwood, Henry Reynolds, Tim Rowse, Lyndall Ryan, Robert Manne, Stuart MacIntyre, Dirk Moses, Keith Windschuttle, and others. A recent collection of essays about Reynold's contribution to Australian historiography and national consciousness (Attwood and Griffiths 2009) makes a significant contribution to the metastudy of Australian historiography and to the public role of history wars.

Philosophy of Language

Barry Taylor

From its origins in the late nineteenth century, until almost the middle of the next, Australasian philosophy followed the mainstream of the established tradition, relegating matters semantic to the second rank. Thus in one of the major centres, the **University of Melbourne**, language was treated with aristocratic Idealistic disdain. In another, the **University of Sydney**, the redoubtable **John Anderson** sketched a view of meaning as consisting in a referential relation between language and facts. While his line has obvious affinities with the *Tractatus*, the resemblances are superficial. For Anderson never develops his view in **Wittgenstein's** detail—no accident, but a consequence of the fact that for Anderson the application to meaning is a mere detail, a secondary deployment of apparatus developed to explore the primary areas of epistemology and **metaphysics,**

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