INTRODUCTION

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The term “Australasian” is used here to refer to the community of Continental philosophers working in Australia and New Zealand. Continental philosophy has a stronger presence within philosophy disciplines in Australia, whereas in New Zealand, with the exception of the Auckland philosophy department, most Continental philosophy happens in other disciplines, such as English, politics, or sociology. As Paul Patton notes, in his history of Continental philosophy in Australia, the expression “Continental philosophy” is one that has only been widely used since the 1970s. Prior to that, designations such as existential or phenomenological philosophy were more common. Over the last decade, interest in, events, and publications in continental philosophy in the region have grown immensely. The Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy, established in 1995 to replace the former Australian Association of Phenomenology and Social Philosophy, meets each year for a three-day conference and has more than 200 members.

The brief for this special section on Australasian Continental Philosophy is broad, with authors pursuing both the Continental and Australasian aspects of the theme in different ways, some more explicit, some more implicit. Both emerging and well-established scholars are represented here. Continental philosophy in Australasia has a number of notable characteristics: one is a strong focus on relatively recent work, seen here in two papers on Derrida, Riccardo Baldissone’s and Max Deutscher’s. On the one hand, Baldissone discusses the “Cambridge affair” surrounding Derrida’s honorary degree, comparing it to the proscriptions of the thirteenth century Parisian bishop, Etienne Tempier. On the other hand, Deutscher revisits Derrida’s famous line concerning “the text” from Of Grammatology to demonstrate how an apparent mistranslation relates to the broader context of his work. Another characteristic of Australasian Continental Philosophy is a concern with “applying” or using Continental philosophy to critique existing conditions and articulate

alternatives, evident in Joanne Faulkner’s focus on nostalgic representations of aboriginal and non-aboriginal family life and childhood. This interest is also clear in Daniel Brennan’s development of the potential of Václav Havel’s distinctive political philosophy. There is also a strong tradition of involvement in taking a Continental approach to the history of philosophy, demonstrable in Matthew Sharpe’s paper, which investigates Leo Strauss’s interpretation of Aristophanes’s plays in conjunction with the Platonic Aristophanes. Furthermore, throughout the decades, Australasian philosophers have engaged closely with phenomenology, with the Australian philosopher W. R. Boyce Gibson providing in 1931 the first English translation of Husserl’s work, Ideas, and this engagement continues in W. Chris Hackett’s essay on the importance of metaphor to method in phenomenology. Recent years have produced more attention to the analytic-Continental divide in philosophy, a debate Richard Colledge’s article responds to by centring on the problem of philosophical disagreement. This collection provides an opening into the rich variety and depth of Australasian Continental philosophy.

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