SPECIAL ISSUE – MAX DEUTSCHER

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Close Encounter: Max Deutscher on Genre, the Subject and Judgement
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CLOSE ENCOUNTER: MAX DEUTSCHER ON GENRE, THE SUBJECT, AND JUDGEMENT

Max Deutscher is Emeritus Professor at Macquarie University. This panel engages with his book *Subjecting and Objecting*, his book on Sartre and Beauvoir, with his essays concerning Michèle Le Dœuff’s critical epistemology, and his recent *Judgement after Arendt*. The speakers today are Michelle Boulous Walker, ‘Writing Couples’, Paul Formosa, ‘Thinking about judgement’ and Daniel Nicholls, ‘Judicious Judgement: a case for very unusual minds.’

Max was foundation professor of philosophy at Macquarie. He studied at the University of Adelaide and Oxford University and lectured at Oxford, Johns Hopkins and the University of California at Irvine as well as other Australian universities. His teachers at Adelaide included J.J.C. Smart and C. B. Martin; one of his teachers at Oxford was Gilbert Ryle. Max edited the papers from the Michèle Le Dœuff conference he held at Macquarie in 1996 for the collection *Operative Philosophy and Imaginary Practice: Michèle Le Dœuff* (2000). He has been a visiting scholar at the University of Queensland and at the University of Tasmania. It is quite appropriate that UQ should be responsible for this panel as he is an honorary professor there and he published his first book, *Subjecting and Objecting* (1983) with UQ Press. Max played an important role in the Australian Association of Phenomenology and Social Philosophy, as he has continued to play in the Australian Society for Continental Philosophy.

By way of introducing our three panellists today, I will raise the essential questions that their papers address. Michelle Boulous Walker is Senior Lecturer in philosophy at the University of Queensland. She has published *Philosophy and the Maternal Body: Reading Silence* (London: Routledge, 1998) and numerous articles on the work of Irigaray, Levinas, Beauvoir and others.

Michelle’s paper focuses on Max’s book *Genre and Void* (2003a) and on the way we continue to be fascinated by Sartre and Beauvoir as a couple, as human beings and as philosophers. She asks the question whether we can see Beauvoir as completing Sartre’s work since she outlived him and was able to present her own view of their relationship. Max’s work in *Genre and Void* (2003a) both breathes new life into Sartre’s work by making it contemporary and teasing out the ‘homely’ meanings of his terms and enacts a kind of rewriting of it, as Beauvoir’s œuvre is sometimes understood. Michelle’s paper concerns these questions: What is it about this couple Beauvoir and Sartre that so captures our imagination? What philosophical questions are better comprehended through their life and work as a couple rather than considering their work separately?

Paul Formosa recently completed his doctoral thesis called ‘Evil: From the banal to the radical’ at the University of Queensland and is now on a postdoctoral fellowship at Macquarie University. He has published numerous articles on evil, on Arendt, Kant and others. Paul’s paper tackles Max’s reading of Arendt, stressing his phenomenological approach and his reading of Arendt *qua* philosopher rather than political theorist. He raises the question of whether thinking in Arendt is a very specialised and exclusive term or is relevantly close to our ‘ordinary’ sense of thinking. Is what Eichmann is lacking a special ability that few of us have or develop or something that we all engage in? What kind of conversations with myself count as thinking in Arendt’s sense? Can I be friends with myself if I have done something wrong? Paul’s paper also investigates the distinction between the judgement of the actor and that of the spectator. Is there an important distinction between these - are they two kinds of judgement?

Daniel Nicholls gained his doctorate in philosophy at Macquarie University, where he worked on Michèle Le Dœuff’s concept of the philosophical imaginary. Max was his supervisor. He is Senior Mental Health Nurse at Austin Health and an adjunct associate professor at La Trobe University. He has published both in philosophy and healthcare publications. Daniel raises questions concerning the nature of judgement and how to achieve the balance between being too critical or uncritical and being too confident and being under-confident. What criteria could we use to make those judgements? How do the views of others affect our judgements?