Philosophy and Its Masters

The Transformations of Philosophy in Queensland

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Three periods of philosophy in Queensland are marked out. The first, from 1911 to 1961, was a period of philosophical isolation in which philosophy was put in the service of Christian institutions. The second, from 1962 to 2001, was a period of engagement in which newly appointed staff bootstrapped philosophy into using methods and addressing issues that were current in the wider Anglophone philosophical community. During this period, two of the areas in which Queensland philosophers made a significant impact were logic and environmental philosophy. In 2001, the Philosophy Department was decreed to be defunct (along with all other academic departments) and its members were distributed through the newly formed School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics. Philosophy entered a state of limbo that persists to the present.

Philosophies reflect the interests of masters to whom philosophers are beholden. Rarely have societies, their governments and their institutions allowed philosophers the unfettered pursuit and publication of their researches. Sometimes the instruments of control are brutal: imprisonment, banishment, and execution have all made their mark on twentieth-century philosophy and in the history of philosophy. More commonly the instruments of control are indirect. Institutions decide whether to employ philosophers and in what numbers, and they define the institutional aims that they are expected to promote. These exercises of discretion are usually more effective than brutal methods in silencing philosophical views and practices that conflict with or are tangential to their employers’ projects. Moreover, they have the added advantage of leaving no martyrs in their wake.

At their best, philosophers identify the fundamental presuppositions and assumptions of the societies and institutions to which they belong. They explore their consequences, test them for consistency, and compare them with alternatives. At their best, the only master that philosophers serve is reason itself, while recognising that norms of good reasoning carry their own presuppositions and assumptions that are not exempt from scrutiny. The reluctance of philosophers to shackle their examinations of social and institutional norms and the practices based upon them can put them in conflict with the aims and projects of the institutions that employ them. These conflicts become poignant when institutions are committed to parochial aims that define boundaries philosophers are prone to ignore.

Philosophy in Queensland was beholden to Christian institutions during most of the first five decades of The University of Queensland. Special appointments were made to service the training of clergy. By the beginning of the 1960s, five of the seven staff listed in the Department of Philosophy were...
Reverend gentlemen. This was a period of isolation for philosophy in Queensland. The sub-departments of theology and scholastic philosophy dominated the curriculum while the revolutions in philosophy that occurred during the first half of the twentieth century were largely ignored. The philosophical culture at the university changed during the 1960s with the appointments of new staff. They quickly shed the sub-departments and introduced a curriculum that reflected contemporary philosophical issues and methods. These embodied and encouraged a culture of critical analysis not only in dealing with issues within academic philosophy, but also in dealing with wider matters: the organisation of the university, the roles of the university in Queensland society, racism, Australia’s role in the Vietnam War, and others. Philosophy in Queensland entered a forty-year period of engagement with the wider philosophical community in Australasia and with Anglophone philosophers internationally.

The culture of rational criticism and engagement persisted while staff came and went and while new programmes were introduced (e.g., environmental philosophy and continental philosophy). Philosophers enjoyed one of those rare periods where they could pursue their professional projects unfettered by institutional constraints. The 1990s was a period of transformation for the university. It was transformed from a guild of academics who ran its affairs (with oversight from the University Senate) to a corporate model where appointed executives ran its affairs. Academic concerns were made subservient to corporate goals and policies introduced by governments of the day. These new executives set priorities that were alien to a culture of critical analysis. The period of engagement that emerged in the 1960s came to an abrupt halt on 1 January 2001. The university declared the Department of Philosophy to be defunct, along with all the other departments in the university. The department’s members were distributed through a School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics. The eclipse of disciplinary identities that philosophers had chiselled for themselves has already begun to impact on philosophers and their work as they acquiesce to the demands of their new masters. What was advertised as a new enlightenment in which artificial disciplinary boundaries are discarded disguised a rationale for culling the humanities. That cull has placed the philosophers that remain at the university in a state of limbo. They are frequently reminded that they are expected to meet the changing goals of their corporate bosses and of just how insecure their own positions are.

In the following I distinguish three epochs in philosophy in Queensland: a period of isolation from 1911 to 1961, a period of engagement that lasts until 2001, and a period of limbo that persists today. I will conclude with some comments on philosophy’s past in Queensland and the prospects for its future.

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS: 1911–1961

Philosophy was introduced into the curriculum of the Faculty of Arts when the university first offered courses in 1911. Elton Mayo, then a recent graduate of Adelaide University who had studied under William Mitchell, was appointed to lecture the subject, and in 1919 he was made the inaugural Chair of the new Department of Mental and Moral Philosophy. Like his mentor, his interests extended beyond philosophy to the emerging field of psychology, with particular interests in social and industrial psychology. Mayo resigned in 1923 to take up positions in North America where, from his position at the Harvard School of Business, he became a seminal contributor to issues in industrial psychology. His published contributions to philosophy consisted of a brief note in the journal *Mind* and a book, *Democracy and Freedom.* In the latter, Mayo laments the failures of democratically elected governments to base policies on the ‘social will’ with the consequence that they ignore the complex civic structures through which the ‘social will’ is expressed. Democracy is ill-served, he argues, when governments take control of institutions and shape opinions along politically partisan lines.

Michael Scott Fletcher, a Methodist theologian, replaced Mayo. He did not publish any philosophy before or after his appointment. He remained in the Chair until his retirement in 1938 from whence his influence extended beyond his tenure. It was under his guidance and influence that philosophy became subservient to Christian institutions that dominated its appointments and programmes until 1961.

When Scott Fletcher retired in 1938, the Chair in Philosophy was advertised internationally. The advertisement attracted applications from Karl Popper and Friedrich Waismann amongst others. Neither Popper nor Waismann made the shortlist. The successful applicant was Marquis Kyle. Kyle had been appointed as a Lecturer in 1923, and over the next few years he published two articles on eighteenth-century British moral philosophy. In support of his application, the University Senate Select Committee noted that, ‘He is known to be free from those embarrassing fads which have in some other universities afflicted professors of philosophy and caused trouble to the governing bodies.’ The same year that Kyle was elevated to the Chair, Douglas Gasking was appointed to a Lectureship for an initial five-year term.

Gasking was a recent graduate of Cambridge where he studied with Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Wisdom. In the year following his appointment he published a widely discussed paper titled “Mathematics and the World.” In that essay, he seeks to explain the incorrigibility of mathematical propositions by taking them to be consequences of normative rules that govern the use of notations. He notes that this explanation of the incorrigibility of mathematics faces the following question: while mathematical propositions are consistent with the course of all future experiences, aren’t rules that govern the manipulation of symbols arbitrary, and couldn’t alternative systems of rules lead to consequences that were inconsistent with the formulae of arithmetic? It is built into the nature of rules that there are alternatives to them. Otherwise they are best described not as rules, but as laws. This observation led Gasking to conclude that the explanation of the incorrigibility of arithmetical propositions by reference to rules for the manipulation of symbols was literally false, but nonetheless it was informative and suggestive. What it failed to account for was the normative or prescriptive force of the rules that constrain the theorems of arithmetic. Gasking responds to this problem by simply agreeing that there are alternative systems of rules that endorse theorems that are inconsistent with arithmetic, e.g., $4 \times 2 = 12$. He further argues that such alternative systems of arithmetic could be applied in the world, or at least in worlds that are similar to our own, but whose inhabitants employ different practices of measuring or counting than our own practices. Yet, in the scenarios that Gasking describes, they conduct their practical affairs as efficiently as we do using ordinary arithmetic in the guidance of our practical affairs. Gasking’s examples help to explain the normative and prescriptive force of mathematical propositions by showing them to be an essential part of our practices of counting and evaluating when counts have erred, our systems of measurement, and the laws of nature that govern our world.

Gasking was not recommended for tenure at the end of his probationary five-year contract. C. F. Presley, Kyle’s successor in the Chair, reported that Kyle had expressed concerns about Gasking’s philosophical competence. Following an exchange of letters with philosophers at Cambridge who were familiar with Gasking’s work, the University Senate decided to offer Gasking a further five-year contract in lieu of tenure. Gasking declined the Senate’s offer. He moved to Canberra, and later to Melbourne where he was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy at Melbourne University. A collection of his essays under the title *Language, Logic and Causation: Philosophical Writings of Douglas Gasking* was published by Melbourne University Press in 1996.

C. F. Presley was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy following Kyle’s retirement in 1961. After shedding the sub-departments of theology and scholastic philosophy, Presley oversaw the appointments of recent graduates of philosophy programmes from universities in Australasia, Great Britain, and North America. They introduced a contemporary curriculum that gave prominence to formal logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and philosophy of science. Queensland’s emergence from its philosophical isolation took place in 1964 when the Annual Congress of the Australasian Association of Philosophy was held at UQ for the first time. At Don Mannison’s suggestion, a stream of papers given at the 1964 Congress was dedicated to discussing the identity theory of mind that Jack Smart of Adelaide University had formulated and defended in his essay “Sensations and Brain Processes.” Presley collected the papers that were delivered at the Congress, wrote an introduction to them, and had them published by the University of Queensland Press in 1967 under the title *The Identity Theory of Mind*. The book was a state-of-the-art examination of the problems and prospects of a materialist view of experience, thought, and behaviour. It was widely read and became a point of departure for further discussions of materialist theories of mind. By far the longest essay in the collection is Brian Medlin’s “Ryle and the Mechanical Hypothesis.” Medlin mounts a defence of Central State Materialism, this being a physicalist and causal theory of the mind, from a host of objections, including those that had been brought against it since the publication of Smart’s formulation and defence of the theory. Mannison and Medlin were among the then-recent appointees to Queensland.

The curriculum that the new department set up brought the philosophy programme in Queensland into step with programmes in leading universities in the Anglophone world. Its honours graduates successfully moved into postgraduate research and teaching positions in Great Britain, North America, and Australia. Its staff were regular contributors to journals, and books authored or edited by them made significant contributions to the topics that they discussed. As staff resigned to take up positions elsewhere, their replacements were appointed on the basis of academic merit only. The curriculum evolved to meet the interests of new staff and the needs and interests of students, and to reflect the changing agendas of philosophy itself.

While philosophy in Queensland became continuous with philosophy in the wider Australasian philosophical community, the department reflected the changing and sometimes conflicting currents within that community. Change and conflict are the fuels that drive philosophical debates. Those debates were played out in jointly taught courses, weekly research seminars, and the daily banter that occurred over coffees, lunches, and in each other’s offices. While the number of staff in philosophy was small by comparison to departments in other states, the basket of subjects on offer and the publications of its staff signalled a vibrant culture of discussion, collaboration, and engagement with the wider philosophical community. Two areas that have left an imprint on philosophy in Queensland and further afield are logic and environmental philosophy. Of course, emphasis on these areas does not exhaust what was being done, and it overlooks other areas that have left imprints. A more comprehensive survey than this one would look at work done in the area of metaphysics, such as André Gallois’s book *Occasions of Identity*, work by Roger Lamb and Deborah Brown on moral psychology in Lamb’s edited collection *Love Analyzed*, work in the philosophy of art by Presley, Michelle Walker and Gary Malinas, and work in the philosophy of science that includes Ian Hinckfuss’ book *The Existence of Space and Time*. Given these provisos, what, then, was distinctive about the programmes in logic and environmental philosophy in Queensland?

In 1979 Don Mannison organised a weekend conference in Queensland dedicated to topics on environmental philosophy. Despite the enormity of the issues that environmental problems posed for humanity, it had only been in the previous decade that philosophers turned their attention to them. Australasian philosophers John Passmore (ANU), Richard Routley (ANU), and Peter Singer (Monash) led the way. Passmore’s then-recent book, *Man’s Responsibility for Nature*, and Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* argued that Western traditions in ethics were committed to value theories that were too narrow in scope. Passmore took the value of nature to be grounded in its ability to promote human flourishing in current and future populations. He argued that while values are grounded in human experience, Western traditions had been myopic in their understanding of the symbiotic relations between humans and the natural systems on which human flourishing is dependent. That Western ethical theories were anthropocentric was not itself a fault. He argued that the appropriate attitude that needs to be taken in humankind’s relation to nature is one of stewardship over natural systems so that they served the needs of both present and future generations of people. Singer objected to the anthropocentric bias of Western ethical traditions. He argued that animals other than humans were loci of intrinsic value insofar as they experienced pleasure and pain, had preferences, and were capable of flourishing or failing to flourish. Ethical theories that failed to recognise such facts draw the circle around what is morally considerable too narrowly. He argued that utilitarian ethical theories do better than their rivals in providing resources for accommodating the intrinsic values of non-humans once these are recognised and plugged into evaluations of the consequences of acts and policies. Routley opposed the anthropocentric bias in Passmore’s conservation ethics, and in Western theories of value generally. In support of his anti-anthropocentrism, he constructed a series of examples to show that anthropocentric theories of value and the ethical theories based upon them gave intuitively wrong evaluations of possible actions. Here is a scenario where an agent faces a decision: suppose that a pandemic has killed all humans except for one survivor. There are no people after the last survivor dies, and she knows that she’s the last surviving member of her species. She has in her possession a vial of toxin that if released in the oceans will kill all of the whales, and she has at her disposal a mechanism that will release the toxin shortly after her heart and brain functions cease. Does she have any reason not to release the toxin? If anthropocentric theories of value were correct, since there are no people and will be none, it is a morally neutral matter whether she kills all the whales or refrains. Intuitively, a world with whales (even if there are no humans) has greater value than a world where whales have gone extinct due to human intervention. The pattern of argument that Routley developed can be generalised by enlarging the target of the last human’s destructive capacity: e.g., as well as whales, all other sentient creatures; as well as all sentient creatures, all plant life, leaving a scorched earth. The intuition that some humanless worlds are better than others conflicts with anthropocentric and sentience-based theories of value.

The papers that were given at the conference were published as a collection under the title *Environmental Philosophy*. The university had partially funded the conference, and the following year it funded a three-year programme to promote research and teaching in the area of environmental philosophy. Philosophers from the Queensland Department who contributed to the volume edited by Mannison et al. included Mannison, Roger Lamb, Robert Elliot, William Grey (*né* Godfrey-Smith) and Gary Malinas. Aron Gare was brought into the programme, and he and Elliot edited a collection of new essays by an international cast of authors. Courses in the area were introduced and continue to be taught.

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A sample of titles of essays by contributors to the collection edited by Mannison et al. suggests their scope. “Why Preserve Species?” by Elliot, “The Rights of Non-Humans and Intrinsic Values” by Grey, “On Ecological Ethics and its Justification” by Lamb, “Just Why is It Bad to Live in a ‘Concrete Jungle’?” by Mannison, and “Coercion, Justifications and Excuses” by Malinas. The essays address biodiversity, the treatment of animals, the values of urban life, ethical issues concerning birth control methods to regulate the size of human populations, and more generally whether there is a need for a new environmental ethic that recognises intrinsic values in animals and ecosystems. Issues that figure prominently in popular media and mainstream politics today were rarely mentioned before philosophers and concerned scientists brought them to the public’s attention.

**Logic**

Brian Medlin and Ian Hinckfuss initiated the teaching of modern logic at the university. When Medlin resigned to take the Chair at Flinders University, Malcolm Rennie was appointed to replace him. Rod Girle, who was a student of Rennie’s, joined the department following Rennie’s resignation, and when Girle moved on, Graham Priest and Dominic Hyde joined Hinckfuss to take up the baton for teaching and research in logic. The logic programme also hosted postdoctoral research fellows and visitors for extended stays. They included Risto Hilpinin, John Slaney, Brian Skyrms, Roy Sorenson, Tad Tzubka, and Crispin Wright. A suite of courses was developed that took students from a basic course in formal logic in first year to advanced topics in second and third year that were at the vanguard of research in logic. Graduates of the programme who went on to distinguished academic careers in logic include Chris Mortensen, Errol Martin, Daniel Nolan, Michael McBride and Greg Restall.

To see what was distinctive about the logic programme at The University of Queensland it will help to first briefly describe the philosophical views about logic that were orthodoxy at the time Queensland was developing its programme. The Harvard philosopher Willard Van Orman Quine published his book *Word and Object* in 1960. There he codified and defended a view that neither the sciences nor mathematics had any use for logics over and above the resources provided by quantification theory and set theory. He argued that modal propositional logics concerned with possibilities and necessities were based upon a confusion between mentioning sentences and using them to make statements. In the quantified extensions of modal propositional logics, they were wedded to an indefensible Aristotelian essentialism. By taking the natural sciences and the resources of mathematics required for the formulation of scientific theories to be the arbiters of what there is, modal logics lacked a subject matter that could be anchored to the natural world. Jack Smart and many other Australian philosophers who endorsed a materialistic view of the world shared Quine’s austere views about the scope and content of logics.

Malcolm Rennie demurred. Possibilities and necessities, the subject matter of modal logics, were topics that figured in everyday thought and talk and about which people intuitively reasoned. The job of modal logics was to formalise and to systematise reasoning about these and the concepts that are definable by reference to them. Modal logics needed no further philosophical justification than the systematic organisation that they impose on the domains to which they are applicable. In his publications Rennie provided completeness and consistency proofs for many of the modal logics then on offer, and he systematically formulated the relations between different systems of modal logic. The same motivation and justification was applicable to other areas of thought and talk about which people reasoned. Logics for reasoning about temporal relations, about knowledge and belief, and reasoning with conditional sentences all exhibited structures that were identical with or based upon the structures and consequence relations found in modal logics. Rennie incorporated the study of these into his courses. An ambitious research project that he began during his tenure at UQ was to provide a formalisation of the roles

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of predicate modifiers in natural languages, and to apply the formal methods therein developed to a
general framework for the representation of intensional logics, including modal logics and their variants
and extensions. Some of the fruits of this project were published in his monograph, *Some Uses of Type
Theory in the Analysis of Language*.16

Hinckfuss was more reticent in his philosophical acceptance of extensions of quantification theory
and the intelligibility of rivals to it. In this respect he was under the orthodox Quinean’s umbrella.
However, unlike Quine’s condemnation of modal and allied logics as born in equivocation and wedded
to bad metaphysics, Hinckfuss sought mappings of them into quantification theory, its semantics, and
set theory. He believed that many of the extensions of quantification theory, when supplemented by a
theory of abstraction, were conservative in the sense that they made no further ontological commitments
than those required by quantification theory and set theory themselves. The programme that Hinckfuss
endorsed recognised the structural virtues of modal extensions of quantification theory, and it sought
ways to preserve those structures within a less profligate metaphysics than that usually associated
with their semantics. The hard work was to be done by a theory of abstraction. Although his work
on this project was not completed, aspects of it did appear from time to time. In his essay “Necessary
Existential Dependence”17 he showed how many apparent modal connections between individuals
arose from non-modal relations between them and semantic connections between the terms that are
used to describe those relations. The following simple example illustrates the strategy of analysis that he
proposed. While it is impossible for Jack to be John’s nephew unless John is a sibling of a parent of Jack,
does the nephew’s existence logically depend upon his uncle’s existence? Yes, in a sense, but actually
no! The logical dependence here is not *in re*, i.e., a modal connection between Jack, his parents, and John.
The necessary connection between them is nominal only. It is a consequence of the meaning of the word
‘nephew.’

Rod Girle’s work on modal, epistemic, and dynamic logics continued and extended work he had
begun as a student of Rennie and Hinckfuss. Following his return from Scotland where he had taken
a PhD from St. Andrews, he and Rennie collaborated on a user-friendly text for introductory logic that
used tableaux methods as well as systems of natural deduction. Under Girle’s guidance, enrolments
in Introductory Logic grew from a healthy 100 or so per semester to over 400 in some semesters. This
ensured that the advanced subjects in logic were well-patronised. Girle also introduced a course on
critical reasoning that, while eschewing formal methods, provided a set of standards for evaluating
arguments and identifying fallacies in reasoning. Part of the popularity of the introductory subjects
was due to the unique programme of teaching logic in secondary schools in Queensland. Girle trained
teachers and developed teaching materials that they could use for introducing students to deductive
and inductive reasoning. By the time they entered university, students had already digested more logic
than was taught in some introductory courses at other universities.

Graham Priest joined the Department in 1988, the year following the publication of his book *In
Contradiction*.18 He argued that it is an untoward feature of classical logics that arguments that contain
inconsistent premises logically imply any arbitrary proposition whatsoever. From A and not-A one can
deduce B, regardless of whether B has any relevance to the premises from which it logically follows. And
from the same premises, one can deduce not-B as well. Inconsistency makes classical logics trivial in the
sense that every proposition, as well as each of their negations, logically follow from a contradiction.
Observations such as these led to the development of ‘relevant logics’ that blocked the derivation
of arbitrary propositions from premises that bore no relevance to them. A further motivation for the
development of logics that could harbour inconsistencies was that there are non-trivial inconsistent
theories in the natural sciences, and it is not the logician’s job to insist on a resolution of their inconsistent

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16. M. Rennie, *Some Uses of Type Theory in the Analysis of Language* (Canberra: Department of Philosophy, Research School of Social
Sciences, Australian National University, 1974).
parts on pain of trivialisation. On a practical note, there is a market for inference engines that do not entail everything when dealing with data that contain inconsistencies. Those relevant logics that are tolerant of inconsistencies without reducing to triviality are known as ‘paraconsistent logics.’ Priest noted that there are paraconsistent logics that evaluated some contradictions as true (as well as false), and they could be formulated within the framework of relevant logics. Most philosophers who were familiar with these systems took this to be an embarrassment of riches that needed to be culled, or at best an odd curiosity that could be ignored without significant consequence. Priest disagreed. Not only are paraconsistent logics that evaluated some contradictions as true formulable within the relevant logic framework, but, he argued, one of them is a true and correct logic that should supersede classical logics. Coupled with a robust commitment to logical realism, Priest set an agenda for logic, semantics, and metaphysics that unhinged complacencies and marked out new territories for exploration. He pursues these in a series of papers and his 1995 book, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*.

Dominic Hyde joined the Department in the late 1990s. He developed applications of logics that evaluate some contradictions as true in his treatment of vagueness and the sorites paradoxes to which vague terms can give rise. Could vague predicates generate statements that are jointly true and false of objects that fall within the penumbra of vagueness of their extensions? An affirmative answer requires paraconsistent-based constraints on entailment which can short-circuit sorites arguments that lead to intolerable inconsistencies.

This tale of logical exploration and iconoclasm in logic has been a hallmark of logic research and teaching in Queensland. At first hearing, most philosophers rejected as absurd, unintelligible, or just plain silly some of the projects that Queensland logicians have advanced. However, critics have come to take seriously views that they initially dismissed once they saw the strength of the motivations that prompted their development and the technical elegance and precision with which they are stated and defended. Shibboleths of classical logics such as the law of non-contradiction and the law of excluded middle can no longer be taken for granted as cornerstones of rational thought.

Logic and environmental philosophy are signature areas where collective efforts by philosophers in Queensland have left their mark. Individuals’ achievements in other areas of philosophy are no less important. Still, the two areas mentioned came to be associated as particular strengths of the programmes in Queensland and its graduates during its period of engagement.

**LIMBO: 2001 TO THE PRESENT**

By the late 1980s, the management model of the university began to shift from a guild of academics managing its affairs to a corporate model. Newly appointed executives took responsibility for the university’s financial, academic, and student affairs. In the inaugural lecture following his appointment to the Chair in Philosophy, Graham Priest rang an alarm bell. Concerning the actions of governments and their impact on the academy, he stated that they

> have aimed to dismantle the collegial structure of universities and to replace it with the divisive, hierarchial, and quite inappropriate corporate structure. … Universities have a responsibility that far outruns the parochial short-term interests of any particular national government. If we do not stand up for this, collectively and determinedly, the result will be the sale of our birthright for a mess of pottage.

The Philosophy Department managed to survive the changes that were occurring within the Faculty of Arts and the wider university through the 1990s. It even managed to prosper. Targets for funding research, student numbers, publications, and postgraduate enrolments were met while teaching loads and staff-student ratios increased. That these targets were met or exceeded assured the replacement of staff as they took positions elsewhere or retired. However, the rules of the game shifted when the

The department was declared to be defunct and its members were absorbed into the newly formed School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics. Philosophers as a group were disempowered, and an appointed Head of School was responsible for their affairs along with academics from other disciplines in the school. Philosophers were told what subjects to offer, what the requirements and contents of honours degrees would be, and whether tutorials would be provided or even counted as part of one’s teaching load. Even the website for philosophy was required to fit into the mould that the School provided. The then Head of School, Philip Almond, explained that these constraints were ‘processive’ and not ‘substantive.’

Resignations and retirements left the Philosophy programme with five staff on ‘continuing appointments’ at the beginning of 2001. (The word ‘tenure’ had been decreed by the university to no longer apply to the terms of appointment for academic staff.) This was half their number of a decade ago.

A brief period of rebuilding occurred following Mark Colyvan’s appointment to the Chair of Philosophy in 2002. Colyvan gained approval for a new appointment in the area of philosophy of science that was taken up by Phil Dowe, and the following year he attracted Paul Griffiths to the university. Griffiths brought with him a generously funded Federation Fellowship. Colyvan also oversaw the appointment of staff to fill a position in continental philosophy. When the ‘Leiter Report,’ a respected international survey of philosophy programmes, was published in 2004, the programme in Queensland was ranked fourth in Australia, behind ANU, Sydney and Melbourne. The report ranked the programme in philosophy of science and decision theory as one of the leading programmes in the world. For a brief period it appeared that philosophy not only survived the organisational changes that introduced the new century, but had emerged from the transition in a strong position. The reality behind the appearance was short-lived.

Executives who had made agreements with Colyvan and Griffiths reneged on their promises. In 2005 the School was instructed to conduct a ‘restructure’ – a euphemism for downsizing. Rather than acquiesce in the sacking of staff in Philosophy to meet financial demands that were unrelated to academic performance, Colyvan and Griffiths resigned their positions. The University of Sydney appointed them to chairs and made room for the postdoctoral fellows and postgraduates who followed them south. Meanwhile, the philosophy programme in Queensland is maintained by five full-time staff on continuing appointments and three staff on half-time appointments. There are fewer staff available teaching four times the number of students than were enrolled in the 1970s.

Priest had warned of the attack on collegiality and its replacement by divisive hierarchies. Prior to the formation of the school, philosophers had presented a united front in their dealings with university administrations. They met regularly and thrashed out disagreements between themselves that usually resulted in the formation of a consensus on the issues that came before them. If a consensus did not emerge, they conducted preferential ballots to settle issues. The bonds of respect for their colleagues and the respect for the decision processes they used did not alienate dissent from group decisions. Dissenters usually helped to shape the decisions that were ultimately taken, and no-one felt their views had been ignored or silenced when they did not prevail. The first casualty of the formation of the school was the scope and depth of consultation on academic matters.

A second change affected research funding and the balance between research and teaching. Annual research grants to departments ceased when departments were decreed to be defunct. Philosophers were enjoined to apply for research funding in competition with each other and with members of other disciplines. The time and care required to complete applications for research funds consumes weeks that otherwise would be devoted to the research itself. While philosophers did better than average in their applications for grants, over eighty percent of all applications for ARC (Australian Research Council) grants are not successful. Executives celebrated successful grant applicants, but remained curiously silent about the books and articles that are reliable indicators of research success. Unsuccessful grant applicants were encouraged to keep trying, and they were given the added incentives of increased
teaching and administrative work. Prior to the transformation to a corporate model, academic staff were expected to divide their time equally between teaching and research, with administrative work taking not more than fifteen percent of their time. Under the corporate model, good research often goes unfunded when people are able to make time to do it. Dividing time equally between teaching and research is a fond memory for those who enjoyed it while it lasted. In philosophy, the principal destination of funds supporting research is to recent graduates and postgraduates who take on the teaching responsibilities of grant holders. In the new system, staff conducting funded research ‘buy’ time by selling off their teaching responsibilities. This has created an underclass of teachers who work at causal rates or on fractional appointments.

While individual Queensland philosophers remain engaged with their colleagues elsewhere, the close collaboration with each other that existed over the period of engagement lapsed. Today philosophers exist in a state of limbo. There is some collaboration between philosophers, but much less than in past years. It is rare for a member of staff to give a research seminar on work in progress. Attendance at seminars is spotty and the business of postgraduate confirmation seminars takes up many of the otherwise empty time slots. On top of the erosion of the academic environment in which they work, staff are reminded that each has reason to be concerned with his or her own security of employment. Priest’s grim image was prescient. Whether philosophy in Queensland will enter a period of isolation again now depends on decisions of its new masters. In the year following the exodus of Colyvan et al., the Leiter Report did not rank Queensland in its annual survey. While individual staff that remain seek to maintain their engagement with national and international debates in philosophy through the publication of books and articles, local discussions of issues have largely retreated behind the closed doors of individuals’ offices when they occur at all.

**Philosophy’s Past and Its Future Prospects**

Rewriting the past in terms of ‘what ifs’ is glorious sport. In 1938 three of the pivotal exponents of the main currents of twentieth-century philosophy sought employment in Queensland: Waismann, a founder and exponent of the verification theory of meaning; Popper, champion of the role that falsifiability plays in the sciences and the severest critic of verificationism; and Gasking, an advocate of conceptual analysis that looked to human practices to explain the applicability of concepts and the relations between them. What would they have done as colleagues? We will never know of course. The opportunity passed without recognition.

Philosophy’s future in Queensland is even more opaque than counterfactual conjectures about what its past might have been. The logic programme has had to reduce the number of subjects it offers. Environmental philosophy hangs on, but just barely. Consultation is infrequent and selective. These are not circumstances conducive to local debate and collaboration. Possible sources of welcome change could arise from some of the reading groups that have formed with interested staff and students meeting informally to discuss texts of common interest. Might they evolve into reading and writing groups? Might such groups be recognised in the curriculum with a requisite commitment of resources? Little prospect of change exists under current models of administration and the roles that they define for academics. A challenge for philosophers is to speak publicly and as loudly as their audiences will bear on de facto methods that are no less successful at silencing them than de jure methods. Government policies promoted the imposition of a corporate model on the academy. It will not go away. The problem is to ‘restructure’ the priorities that managers have been hired to promote. Deconstructing them and restructuring them has a philosophical and a practical dimension. Philosophers might influence changes by their critiques, but the practical dimensions of change are largely out of their hands qua philosophers.