Phenomenology in Australasia

David Rathbone
Honorary Fellow, PASI
University of Melbourne

Although Hegelians and Husserlians often repudiate one another's usage of the term 'phenomenology', an account of the history of phenomenology in Australasia in fact needs to take into account not only the Australasian reception of the specifically Husserlian program of phenomenology, but also the context of this reception as formed by the Kantian-Hegelian tradition within which it arose. This is seen most clearly in the case of W.R. Boyce Gibson (1869-1935), chair of philosophy at the University of Melbourne from 1911 to 1936, whose translation into English of Husserl's *Ideas I* in 1931 was a significant landmark in the reception of Husserl's philosophy not just in Australia but throughout the anglophone world. As Spiegelberg puts it in *The Phenomenological Movement*, Boyce Gibson "belonged to an older generation of British idealists" (1982: 253). Hegel's phenomenology of mind as the account of the inner experience of the unfolding of spirit, and Husserl's description of pure appearance freed from all ontological commitment by the phenomenological reduction, are differing but related attempts to find ways to describe what Kant called *homo phenomenon* (the mind in the world as it appears to and is known by us), without recourse to the Kantian faith in an unknowable and indescribable *nous*.

Barzillai Quaife (1798-1873), John Woolley (1816-1866) and Charles Badham (1813-1884) were the teachers of the Sydney school of idealism which prevailed in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the newly formed colony at Botany Bay. Quaife followed Hamilton's Kantian version of Reid's Hegelian philosophy, and was Professor of Mental Philosophy and Divinity in John Dunmore Lang's 'Australian College' from 1850 to 1854, publishing *The Intellectual Sciences* from his lecture notes in two volumes in 1873. John Woolley, a platonist, was the foundation Professor of Classics at the University of Sydney in 1852 and also taught philosophy, but he drowned in a shipwreck in the Bay of Biscay on a visit to Britain in 1866. Woolley was succeeded by the Plato scholar Charles Badham, who reflected the influence Hegel had had on Jowett, and did much for the study of Plato in Australia. He was succeeded in 1888 by Francis Anderson (1858-1941), a student of Edward Caird's, who himself had been a student of Jowett's at Oxford.

The University of Melbourne was founded in 1853. In 1873 Frederick Joy Pirani (1850-1881) graduated, and began lecturing in mathematics and logic, then becoming Professor of Logic and Natural Philosophy at the University of Melbourne in 1875, a position he held until August 1881, when he died after falling from his horse. His successor, Henry Laurie (1838-1922), was born in Edinburgh, and schooled at the University there in Hegel and Kant through the philosophies of Reid and Hamilton, studying mental and moral philosophy from 1856 to 1860. Laurie arrived at Melbourne University to replace the late Pirani after first running several newspapers in Warrnambool, with the printer and journalist William Fairfax, from 1867 until 1881. Laurie was an idealist in both the metaphysical and the common senses of the word, and this early connection of philosophy at Melbourne with idealism in the broader sense of the word is not insignificant. For unlike New South Wales or Tasmania, the colony of Victoria had been established by free settlers and the mood was one of idealism. From the colony's first Governor, Charles LaTrobe (1801-1875), an ardent idealist who carried a volume of Rousseau on his journeys throughout the colony he governed in the 1840s, to Alfred Deakin (1856-1919), the erudite politician who read hundreds of volumes of philosophy throughout a career as a barrister and journalist which culminated in his prime-ministership at the turn of the twentieth century, Melbourne's

intellectual climate has always struck a note of idealism. This stands in contrast to the tenor of a culture pragmatically emancipating itself from its penal past, as was the case in the prison colonies of Sydney to the north and Hobart to the south. The idealism of Melbourne shaped the way the colonists experienced their new world and interpreted their own presence in it and impact upon it.

William Ralph Boyce Gibson (1869-1935) had studied in Glasgow, Oxford, Jena and Paris in the 1890s, and was especially influenced by Rudolf Eucken in Jena, publishing two books expounding Eucken in 1906 and 1909. His essay in Henry Sturt's anthology, *Personal Idealism: Philosophical Essays by Eight Members of the University of Oxford* from 1902 aligns him closely with F. C. S. Schiller, and it was Schiller who wrote the strong letter of recommendation for his application to Melbourne in 1911 which secured Gibson's appointment (Grave 1984: 31). Gibson brought to Melbourne a strong interest in Bergson as well as Eucken, together with a burgeoning interest in Husserl, and his first appointment in 1912 was the candidate second in the running for his own appointment, J. McKellar Stewart.

Stewart (1878-1953), Australia's first native-born philosopher, was the son of a Scottish farming family at Ballangeich, near Warrnambool. He entered Ormond College at the University of Melbourne in 1903 where he studied under Henry Laurie, graduating in philosophy with first-class honours in 1906. After lecturing at Ormond College, he went to the University of Edinburgh and submitted a DPhil thesis on Bergson's philosophy in 1911, and then went on to the University of Marburg to further his researches on Kant. The result was his book, *A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy* (1913), this being a Kantian critique of Bergson. Thus when he joined Gibson at Melbourne in 1912, Stewart brought with him not only shared interests in Bergson, Kant and Husserl, but also knowledge of another new development on the German scene. This is evidenced by his lecture on "Nietzsche and the Present German Spirit", delivered in the University of Melbourne's *War Lectures* series of 1915. The lecture was a cautious but not entirely unsympathetic account of Nietzsche set in the contrasting context of Kant and Hegel, Goethe and Schopenhauer. In 1923 Stewart moved from Melbourne to Adelaide, and was replaced at Melbourne by a fellow of the University of Liverpool, J. Alexander Gunn (b. 1896). Gunn published *Bergson and His Philosophy* (1920), *Modern French Philosophy* (1922), *Benedict Spinoza* (1925), and *The Problem of Time* (1929), along with many other publications on topics as diverse as relativity theory and economics. It is an indication of the enduring relevance of Gunn's philosophical works that they have all been reprinted in various new paperback editions between 2004 and 2008.

Gibson's paper "The Real and the Ideal in the Phenomenology of Husserl" (W.R.B. Gibson 1925b) read before the second annual conference of the Australian Association of Psychology and Philosophy in Melbourne in May 1923 was probably the first many in the audience had heard of Edmund Husserl. Like Gibson, Husserl had come to philosophy from mathematics, and Gibson initiated a correspondence which eventually lead to him spending a sabbatical semester with Husserl in Freiburg in 1928. They discussed Dilthey and Frege, met with Levinas and Heidegger, and debated Gibson's central criticism of Husserl – that the self is not to be resolved into its 'unitative function' (Spiegelberg 1972, 1982: 110, 151; cf. Grave 1984: 42). Gibson's parallel interest in the science of the day is also indicated by his presidential address to the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science in 1931, "Relativity and First Principles." His set of articles for the *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy* in 1933-35 on the ethical thought of Nicolai Hartmann is a significant contribution to the phenomenological literature, as is his translation of the first volume of Husserl's *Ideas* (published in 1931). Gibson also contemplated translating *Sein und Zeit*, and discussed with Levinas the possibility of a visit to Melbourne University, unfortunately neither project eventuated before the political situation in Germany worsened. In his final years, Gibson

was dismayed when the Eucken Society in Germany, of which he was a prominent member, sent him Nazi propaganda in the mail, and he immediately resigned from the society in protest. Like Husserl himself, his premature death on the eve of the second world war saved W.R. Boyce Gibson from having to experience first hand the horrors about to unfold.

From 1923 to 1950 J. McKellar Stewart held a chair of philosophy at the University of Adelaide, publishing a pair of articles on Husserl in 1933 and 1934; sadly, the manuscript of his book on Husserl was destroyed in a house fire in 1939, never to be rewritten. Stewart served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide from 1945 to 1948, then died in 1953 (see Miller 1929, 1954). When W. R. Boyce Gibson died in 1935, he was succeeded by his son, Alexander Boyce 'Sandy' Gibson (1900-1972). Maintaining his father's pluralistic spirit, Sandy Gibson appointed a balanced and diverse collection of philosophers, including a branch of the newly formed 'analytic' school of Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, through the appointment in the 1940s of the student of Wittgenstein, A.C. ('Camo') Jackson. Although Sandy Gibson published on existentialism (A. Gibson 1948), phenomenological and idealistic thought moved temporarily into the background at Melbourne in the post-war era, to be later revived by Max Charlesworth when he completed his doctoral studies in Leuven and returned to teach at Melbourne in 1958. Charlesworth introduced the question of indigenous perspectives into his uniquely Australian take on phenomenology, his lectures and radio appearances attracting a large following (Harney 1992 : 141). He was also the first to apply the label "Continental" to his courses as an ideological rather than merely geographical designation, teaching not only Husserl, but also Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Camus and de Beauvoir (Bilimoria 1997: 40). Mary McClosky, Graeme Marshall, Jan Srzednicki, and Andrew Theophanous continued the strong Kantian tradition at Melbourne, while Catherine Berry and Maurita Harney joined Brenda Judge in maintaining Melbourne's phenomenological tradition throughout the 1960s and 70s. Berry completed a master's degree on the question of the body in Merleau-Ponty at Melbourne in 1962, also editing the collection of essays *Ten Lectures on Contemporary Continental Philosophy* that year (Berry ed. 1962; cf. Harney 1992 : 134).

The focus on idealism and phenomenology thus divided between McKellar Stewart in Adelaide and Charlseworth in Melbourne. Stewart's successor in Adelaide, J. J.C. Smart, added an analytic flavour to a syllabus including Kant's first *Critique* and Husserl's *Ideas* in Gibson's translation (Grave 1984: 111). Among the students produced by this department in the 1950s was Max Deutscher (b. 1937), who after graduating from Adelaide in 1959 studied and lectured at Oxford, Johns Hopkins and U.C. Irvine, and then became foundation professor of philosophy at Macquarie in 1964, where he was subsequently joined by Luciana O'Dwyer. Deutscher's initially analytic approach gradually evolved into the unique blend of phenomenology, existentialism and a robust commonsense characteristic of the later Wittgenstein, which he presented in *Subjecting and Objecting* (1983) and *Genre and Void* (2003). Jeff Malpas and Henry Krips are two more graduates of the Adelaide department, Malpas going to Tasmania via the ANU and UNE Armidale, and Krips to the Melbourne University History and Philosophy of Science department before moving to the USA in the 1990s, and both working extensively on Husserl and Heidegger.

Although he is not usually classified as a phenomenologist, the influence of Nietzsche must also be included in this sketch of the history of phenomenology in Australia. Nietzsche's realisation in *Twilight of the Idols* that "the inner world is an appearance too"; his incisive meditations on our concepts of appearance, being and becoming as evidenced in *Human All Too Human* (I, §§15-18), *Gay Science* (§354) and *Genealogy of Morals* (II, §16); his "pleasure in foregrounds" (*Human All Too Human* preface, §1); these and many other passages locate Nietzsche's thought squarely in the field of phenomenology demarcated by the attractions and repulsions operating between Kant and Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. This is significant, for as S.A. Grave puts it, "From the end of the nineteenth

century, for thirty years or so, Nietzschean ideas were in the heads of poets, painters and novelists" (1984: 2); ideas showing them new ways of seeing their world and interpreting themselves in it. The influence was focused upon Norman Lindsay's *Creative Effort: An Essay on Affirmation* (1920), his son Jack Lindsay's *Dionysos: Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche* (1928), and the Fanfrolico Press edition of P. R. Stephenson's 1928 translation of Nietzsche's *Antichrist*, illustrated by Norman Lindsay (see J. Lindsay 1948, Stephensen 1954, Macainsh 1975). Nietzsche increasingly gave Australian philosophers, poets and artists a new experience of the inextricable entanglement of appearance and reality, of the inseparability of being and becoming, and of the interaction of the way a story is told, with the reality it tells of. His influence cannot be ignored if the specifically Australasian developments in phenomenology are to be brought into view. Paul Crittenden at Sydeny University and Robin Small at the ANU were two notable Australian academic philosophers working on Nietzsche.

The University of Tasmania was founded in 1890, and the classicist R.L. Dunabin was foundation Professor of Mental and Moral Science from 1902, followed by E. Morris Miller (1881-1964), who arrived from Melbourne University in 1913. Miller was a working-class man who had won a scholarship to Wesley College thanks to help of the Moonee Ponds Mental Improvement Society (Franklin 2003: 120n.33), and began at Melbourne University as an undergraduate in 1900. He was taught Kant by Henry Laurie, and also came under the influence of John Smyth, principal of the Melbourne Teacher's College, author of *Truth and Reality* (1901) and also close associate of Alfred Deakin, then prime minister (Grave 1984: 34). Miller published four works on Kant's moral theory between 1911 and 1928, and was a significant figure in Tasmanian public life. In 1952, Sydney Sparkes Orr filled the chair vacated by the retiring Miller, a controversial choice as J.L.Mackie had also applied for the job, he then going instead to Dunedin in New Zealand. The controversy deepened as Orr became embroiled in controversy only one year after arriving there (see Franklin 2003: ch. 3), and as a result philosophy at the University of Tasmania fell into abeyance and the chair remained vacant, with the machinations of the Orr affair continuing until Orr's death in 1966 : a situation not entirely remedied until the appointment of Jeff Malpas to the chair in Hobart many years later. After doing postgraduate work as the Australian National University, Malpas went to Tasmania in the 1990s via stints at U.C. Santa Cruz, the University of New England, and Murdoch University, and his early work on Davidson's holism has dovetailed into his extensive subsequent work on Heidegger (see Malpas 1992; Malpas and Wrathall 2000; Malpas 1999; Malpas 2006).

A chair in philosophy was among the foundation chairs at the University of Western Australia, and in 1913 P.R. Le Couteur traveled from Melbourne to take up the position. A graduate of Melbourne and a Rhodes scholar to Oxford, he had also spent 1910-11 in Bonn studying under Külpe, a student of Wundt. Le Couteur resigned in 1918, and a disciple of Anderson's from Sydney was appointed, a dominance that lasted until 1960 and ensured the decline of phenomenology and idealism there. This was also the case at the University of Queensland, founded in 1910, with Elton Mayo being foundation professor, one of Mitchell's students from Adelaide. Anderson's analytic influence also dominated in Canberra, where his disciple Percy Partridge was appointed Professor of Social Philosophy in preference to Karl Popper in the Research School at ANU. Quentin Gibson, younger brother of Sandy Gibson, was the first full-time lecturer in philosophy at ANU on the teaching side, this school pioneering the approach of divorcing teaching from research 'centers'. Teachers with a phenomenological interest included Genevieve Lloyd, William Ginnane, Kimon Lycos, Maurita Hearney, Richard Campbell, Robin Small, Ros Diprose, Penny Deutscher, and Claire Colebrook.

Scottish idealists held the chair of philosophy at The University of Otago at Dunedin on New Zealand's south island from its foundation: Duncan McGregor from 1871 - 1886, William Salmond from 1887-1913, Salmond then being succeeded by another Scot, Francis Dunlop, in 1913. Dunlop was also a

student of Eucken's from Jena, and he taught at Otago until his premature death from heart attack in 1932, when he was succeeded by the South African born Oxford graduate J.N. Findlay (1903 - 1987). Arriving in Dunedin in 1934, Findlay had done his doctorate at the University of Graz with Ernst Mally, the student of Meinong, and translated Husserl's first work, the two volume *Logical Investigations*. He published a major study of Hegel, and also contributed an extensive forward and long post-script "Analysis of the Text" to A.V. Miller's translation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, and also published works on Kant, Meinong, Wittgenstein and Plato. When Findlay moved to a chair in the U.K. at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1945, interest in idealism shifted to Auckland on New Zealand's north island, when K.B. Pflaum moved from Europe and Clive Pearson moved from Australia to teach phenomenology and existentialism in Auckland in the 1960s. As attested by their extensive bibliographies of works on Heidegger, on Nietzsche and on Schopenhauer, Julian Young and Robert Wicks, together with Matheson Russell continue this strong focus in Auckland today.

The post-war era was a time of growth in Australia, and along with Macquarie, the University of New South Wales (UNSW) had been founded in 1949, and in Melbourne, Monash in 1959 and La Trobe in 1964. S.A. Grave (1984: 205-6) reports that A.M. Ritchie had been writing on existentialism before he came to the University of Newcastle in 1950, work carried on by William Doniela there in the 1970s after studying at Freiburg for his dissertation, while Ritchie moved to UNSW. Philosophy was established at Wollongong in 1975, and has been taught at the University of New England in Armidale since before the war, although like Perth, Canberra and Sydney itself, Anderson's dominance had had a stultifying influence. At La Trobe, the students of Lukacs', Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher joined the Icelandic emigré Johann Arnason, a student of Habermas', as professors of sociology, arriving in Australia in 1977 after fleeing the fall of Hungary to the Soviet totalitarians (along with Gyorgy and Maria Markus, who went to Sydney). The study of Hegel and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School found new life in Bundoora, until Heller in 1986 took up the late Hannah Arendt's chair at the New School for Social Research in New York. Out of this milieu arose major figures of the Australian sociological scene such as Peter Beilharz, Julian Triado, Alistair Davidson, Leslie Bodie, Jillian Robinson, David Roberts, and John Rundell. Charlesworth moved to Deakin University (Geelong campus) in 1977, and worked there with Jocelyn Dunphy and Purushottama Bilimoria. Dunphy had studied hermeneutics with Ricoeur in Paris, while Bilimoria brought a concern for Indian and comparative studies to bear upon phenomenology. In line with phenomenologists such as J.N.Mohanty and Don Ihde, Bilimoria has explored the significance of the multicultural nature of Australian society, which has in fact been multicultural ever since 1788, a phenomenon not effaced despite the various efforts to promulgate the insidious myth of a "white Australia".

In the 1980s, phenomenology and idealism moved out of the background and back into the foreground at the University of Melbourne, through the teaching of Brenda Judge, Kimon Lycos, Marion Tapper and Damien Byers in the philosophy department, and of Geoff Sharpe, Henry Krips, Kevin Hart and later John Rundell in the Ashworth Program for Social Theory, housed in the department of History and Philosophy of Science. Kevin Hart's 1988 Melbourne PhD "The Trespass of the Sign", supervised by Kevin Presa, led to his founding Monash University's Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies in the early 1990s with Elizabeth Grosz, before both Hart and Grosz left in the mid 90s for positions in the United States. The Centre continues to flourish under the direction of Andrew Benjamin, bringing together a diverse group of thinkers and writers all of whom, together with Karen Green, Robert Sparrow and Nick Trakakis in Monash's School of Philosophy and Bioethics, pursue interests related to the phenomenological and idealistic traditions in philosophy.

Phenomenology and idealism are alive and well today across many Australian universities, thanks to the efforts of Jeff Malpas, Marcelo Stamm, Undine Sellbach and Ingo Farin in Tasmania; Robin Small,

Fiona Jenkins, Bruin Christensen and David West at the ANU; Toula Nicolacopoulos, George Vassilacopoulos, Jack Reynolds and Phillipa Foot at La Trobe; Stan van Hooft, Geoff Boucher and Matthew Sharpe at Deakin; Lubika Ucknic at Murdoch in Perth; Julian Young, Robert Wicks and Matheson Russell in Auckland; Aurelia Armstrong, Michelle Boulous Walker and Margurite La Caze in Brisbane; Paul Patton, Moira Gatens, Paolo Diego Bubbio, Simon Duffy, Justine McGill, Damien Byers and John Grumley in Sydney; Paul Redding, James Phillips, Rosalyn Diprose, Simon Lumsden, Joanne Faulkner, and Miriam Bankovsky at UNSW; Robert Sinnerbrink, Nick Smith, Jean-Phillipe Deranty and Catriona Mackenzie at Macquarie; and Marion Tapper and the lecturers of the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy at Melbourne, founded by David Rathbone, Cameron Shingleton, Matt Sharpe and Jon Roffe in the summer of 2002, with courses on Hegel, Nietzsche, Zizek and Deleuze. As this long list indicates, new generations of philosophers have arisen throughout Australasia who aim to combine an awareness of the importance of the two-and-a-half thousand year tradition in idealism with an understanding of the significance of the phenomenological movement as it evolved throughout the twentieth century, and a firm grasp of the imperative to remain relevant to the actual experience of both the wider community of scholars in the academy, and to twenty-first century Australia as a whole.

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