

Sophia Editorial

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The second annual conference of the Australasian Philosophy of Religion Association (APRA) was convened at the University of Sydney on July 16–17, 2009. The association seems once more to have fulfilled its aim of providing a rich and diverse conference program, attracting both graduate students and seasoned academics from a variety of philosophical and theological backgrounds. Several papers tackled oft-debated themes in new ways, including problems to do with evil and suffering, but a number of papers coalesced around topics that are emerging as increasingly important in the field. One such area involves the status of the discipline itself, in particular the nature and future of the philosophy of religion, and how it is related to theology, non-Western religious traditions, and secularism. The conference finished on a high note, consisting of a panel discussion between Paul Crittenden, Peter Slezak, and James Franklin, on the topic of science and religion in light of the ‘new atheist’ movement.

We were especially delighted this year to have two outstanding keynote addresses, both included in the present issue (in revised form). The first of these was presented by Professor Kevin Hart from the University of Virginia. As is well known, Professor Hart is not only an acclaimed philosopher and theologian, but is also an internationally recognized poet, and during his stay in Sydney he was one of four Australian poets whose work was celebrated in The Red Room Company’s

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series of ‘The Poet’s Life Works’. His address to APRA was nothing short of a *tour de force* on ‘contemplation’, showing how the concept was understood in ancient philosophy and medieval theology, and how it has been revived in the twentieth-century schools of phenomenology and Wittgensteinianism.

On the second day of the conference, Professor John Bishop from the University of Auckland continued, as he has in previous work, looking for a religiously adequate alternative to the standard conception of God, or ‘omniGod theism’, as he puts it. After discussing some methodological problems that impact upon the search for an adequate conception of God, Professor Bishop argued that the best alternative to omniGod is a theory of ‘natural divinity’ and then made a first step toward developing such a theory.

Both presentations were rigorously argued and offered innovative and intriguing proposals, and they demonstrate—in my view, at least—what philosophy of religion, whether it be formed in the analytic or the Continental tradition, looks like at its best and most exciting. It also gave me some pleasure to note the coincidence that both Kevin and John were, early on in their careers, members of the Monash philosophy department, and who have since established themselves as Australasian philosophers of religion of the first rank.