Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy
of Traditions and Cultures 30

Peter Wong
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Considering Religions, Rights and Bioethics: For Max Charlesworth

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Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures

Volume 30

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Max Charlesworth by Lewis Miller (courtesy of the Charlesworth family)

Introduction: Maxwell John Charlesworth AO FAHA, 1925–2014

Max Charlesworth, co-founder of *Sophia* with Graeme E. de Graaff in 1962, was Foundation Dean of Humanities at Deakin University from 1975 until 1980, when Weston Bate took over. Max was then Professor of Philosophy, Chair of the Professorial Board, and from time to time Acting Vice-Chancellor. He retired in 1990. Deakin in some ways resembled the Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom, being both a distance education and an open access institution. Like the OU, it had course teams writing the textbooks. This was managed without too much friction. Less than at the OU I gather. Max himself could sum up complex issues and write them up, plainly. Someone whom I know was on the Secretariat assisting Parliamentary Committees which sat to discuss various pressing issues. Max sent an invited submission to the committee on *Dying with Dignity*. The memorandum was clear, exhaustive, and elegantly concise: 'even the pollies could understand it!' The matter was controversial: Max's paper was at once incisive and so neatly put as not to offend persons unlikely to be of his opinion.

In controversy, Max was always polite, never at all shrill, but often ironic.

Max Charlesworth was a public intellectual, widely – and deeply – read, and a prolific author. He gave the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Boyer Lectures – very prestigious – in 1989 on *Life, Death, Genes and Ethics*. Max was constantly being called on to give lectures: many of which were published, sometimes in pamphlet form, and sometimes in collections of essays. The public intellectual life was mirrored in the courses which Max devised for Deakin.

Charlesworth became interested in problems in Medical Ethics, 'getting up' a lot of technical information. There was no Deakin course on this. No doubt there would have been, but Deakin had no Medical School at that stage.

How Did Deakin Get to Be and to Be so Deakin?

Deakin was founded, in response to a local demand for a regional university, by the amalgamation of two already existing institutions: the Gordon Institute of Technology in downtown Geelong and a Teachers' Training College. 'The Gordon' had a small Humanities Department which merged into Humanities Deakin. I was delighted on first arriving in 1978 at the Waurn Ponds Campus – tiresomely inaccessible – to find that Deakin had an elegant necktie, blue (somewhere between Oxford and Cambridge blue) with little shields each with a Greek capital *delta* on it, in gold. I congratulated Max on this, but he said that the credit was due to Francis West, Dean of the *School of Social Sciences* and a classical scholar. The Gordon and the Training College came to be Deakin at the sharp point of the aspiring, Δ. The lecturers at Deakin, newcomers and the people from the older institutions, aspired too. We got on remarkably well, all in all, though the Education people tended rather to go on as before. The – new – Δ style was interdisciplinary, and this was not quite suitable for them.

Why Interdisciplinary?

The old boundaries between the 'subjects' to which people of Charlesworth's – and my – generation were accustomed were often there simply because they were convenient. By the end of the twentieth century, some of the fences were falling down. In the 'Information Age', there are flows and countercurrents of ideas: 'things fall apart', but *pace* Yeats, in a benign way, at least sometimes.

The key to the choice of mildly melding courses at Deakin lies in the width of Max's own interests. In addition, his PhD was from Louvain – as Gilbert Ryle once remarked to me – 'always a crossroads for ideas' – and Max was accustomed to the French *genre* of *haute vulgarisation*, defined in the *Micro Robert* dictionary as *le fait d'adapter un ensemble de connaissances … de manière à les render accessibles à un lecteur non spécialiste*. In Deakin English something like, 'give them an introduction from which they can go on to the harder stuff'. What was needed in the special circumstances of Deakin – its open access – was (a) neat introductions to topics and (b) good 'maps' forward. Everything we wrote courses on had somehow to start from (a) and encourage the going forward from (a). By and large we managed this. Deakin had a ration of very able undergraduates. Some students who looked unpromising turned out to be outstanding. Even the less able came away with widened horizons. And Deakin graduates found employment rather easily, despite coming from a very new university.

In the Beginning

Not being a foundation appointment myself, I do not know how the key topics for the first 'subjects' were negotiated. I moved from a 'Sandstone' to a very experimental Deakin in 1978, attracted by its novelty and promised excitement. By the time I got there, the course books – many of them – had already been written and published by the Deakin University Press. I recall Max was driving me somewhere soon after I joined Deakin. He was going to address some important meeting or others for an hour, leaving me in his car with *Images of Man*. This proved to involve existentialism and the notion of alienation, seen from both a Marxist viewpoint and from an Existentialist one. 'All', as Max used to say, '…sound of wind and limb'. It was very like a course on Sartre and Camus that I had taught elsewhere.

I was delighted to find that there was a course, led by Professor Weston Bate and Renata Howe, on *Australian Studies*. This was historical and geographical – 'Regionalism' – and involved some urbanology. As a 'foreigner' (born in New Zealand), I found this interesting and illuminating. I eventually contributed something on Australian Art, and from the undergraduate essays, of which I graded some, it was obvious that 'OzStuds' was very much to the taste of the students and of real use. With 1988 on its way, Australian nationalism needed to be addressed. And that without jingoism. Aboriginal religion was written into another course, so the invaders of the continent were not left entirely in spiritual possession of it.

This other course was something called *Religious Experience*. It was one on which, although I had never had such an experience, I taught. It raised such questions as: 'If I had a religious experience, would this be empirical proof of the existence of God?'; 'If I had such an experience, would it come in a culturally-determined form?'; 'Christ for Christians, Shiva or Kali for Hindus?'; and so on. Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, William James' *Varieties of Religious* experience and the *Bhagavad Gītā* were on the reading list. And in Purushottama Bilimoria, we had someone who could read and explain Sanskrit texts. Nevertheless the introduction to the *Gītā* came in the form of an Indian comic book written for Indian children. The study guide and essays were not comic book responses. Max had a serious interest in Aboriginal Studies and much on Aboriginal Religions featured in the course. Doctrinal controversies were left to one side, prudently. If someone had claimed to have a religious experience, Thomas Merton or Carlos Casteñeda, they were on the same *empirical* footing. And so treated. There was another course based on a thesis that the *content*, not just the financing etc of science was socially constructed. With this, I agreed to differ.

In addition to lectures, for those on campus, course books, and essays, we had, especially for off-campus students, weekend schools which were usually with important speakers from outside Deakin. I remember some Buddhist priests, a Rabbi, and the Catholic mystic Brother David Steindl-Rast. Purushottama introduced some Hindu luminaries and notably Dom Bede Griffiths, a celebrated expert

on Indian religion and culture, of whom a good story is told. In Rome as a tourist, he was summoned to an audience with the Pope: 'What do you do in India?' 'Oh, study Sanskrit, chant a bit with locals in temples; have *agapaic* meals with religious chaps, and so on.' 'But what about the Conversion of the heathen?' 'Oh, my dear, it goes on all the time, to and fro y'know, back and forth.' The reply of His Holiness nobody knows. Dom Bede was a very posh Englishman, the last man I heard pronounce the name of the subcontinent, 'Iṅjā'. The 'to and fro, back and forth' Max would have found most congenial as we all found Dom Bede.

Deakin was a 'continuous assessment' place, and one read rather a lot of essays. The policy was right: with open access, one needed to teach, in one's comments on the essays, both the subject and how to do an essay. Some students already wrote well, many needed help and some quite a lot.

Max Charlesworth and Religion

In 1936 *The Catholic Worker* had been founded by Kevin Kelly, Frank Maher and Bob Santamaria. Santamaria was eventually to become Max's *bête noir.* Max became involved in the paper in the 1940s and in the 1950s contributed from overseas. In the 1960s–1970s, he began attending editorial meetings to uphold the views of the left. Tony Coady joined Max on *The Catholic Worker* in 1971 and stayed until the paper folded in 1975. Santamaria – something of a zealot – gained the ear of the formidable Archbishop Daniel Mannix (1864–1963). Santamaria had not ill-founded fears that the communists were set to take over certain trade unions. He played very successfully on these fears with unfortunate consequences.

Santamaria was also something of a social conservative. The Labour Party split into the old Labour and the new Democratic Labour Party (DLP). This was a *retardataire* institution which kept Labour, the traditional party of Irish – and other – Catholics, out of office for a long time. Coming from a working social democratic country, New Zealand, I smelt mothballs each time I met a member of the DLP.

Max was a man of the – moderate – left in matters of religion and of politics, as his list of publications (see Appendix) testifies. A late book, *A Democratic Church: Reforming the Values and Institutions of the Catholic Church* (2008), addresses the role of Catholicism in an open and largely secular, multicultural society. And it reminds bureaucrats of the Catholic Church of the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) whose reforms and findings they had tended to wrap piously in pure linen napkins and religiously conserve in the cedar drawers of their sacristies.

In *The Catholic Worker* days, Max had been bidden to the palace of Archbishop Mannix. What transpired, Max didn't say, but he said that he still remembered faded wallpaper and the smell of dust and old men. Max did recall one of Mannix's *apparatchiks* telling him, 'What is in *The Worker* is not always in accord with the Mind

of His Grace'. Max wondered, 'Is this Mind a separate or separable entity from the Archbishop?' But he told me that, at the time, he forbore to voice the point.

In 1970 Max was appointed to the Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers, directly by the Vatican: this partly through the good offices of Don Miano who had a post there and had been one of Max's PhD supervisors at Louvain. Max had the tact, knowledge and empathy for such a job. Nevertheless, the local DLP-slanted hierarchy was scandalised at this endorsement of Max by the Vatican.

Though a left-of-centre thinker, Max was no pious follower of the then current ideology, 'the opium of the intelligentsia'. He recalled that he had friends in Paris who were Maoists and who drove Jaguar motorcars. I recall the irony in his voice and on his face as he told me this. When amused he had an oddly shark-like grin.

In hospital with TB, 1950–1952, Max did not re-read *The Magic Mountain*, instead a many-volumed history – in French – of the Catholic Church. He remarked, 'A very demystifying exercise indeed'.

I recall an Australian broadcasting service programme on which notable persons were asked about their favourite poets. Max's choice was wide. And I remember his reading Virgil, in Latin, in a very stylish way.

Max Charlesworth was very much a man of parts. In his retirement he told me that he had given away all of his books on Sanskrit. 'I think I'm too old to learn it now, but it has always been one of my projects.' When the ANU – or perhaps Canberra University – lost its lecturer in Ancient Philosophy, they flew him up from Melbourne twice a week to fill in. If – though busy – he could take this on, then why not Sanskrit?

The End of an Era for Deakin

Max and I co-wrote the course *Understanding Art*: two approaches ending up in an Aristotelian middle way – the way of virtue itself. In my time at Deakin, more courses were written, but the funding promised by the federal government to enable us to rewrite every 5 years never came through. The so-called university reforms blocked it. I stuck pins in a doll representing the then Minister for Education. It did not work.

Max and I in our retirements were supposed to write together a book on aesthetics. Like lots of good things, it didn't happen.

As an experiment, Deakin Humanities worked, and like any university in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, Deakin has now changed. New knowledge and new trends have to be caught before they whizz on by. Deakin is now much larger, and I suspect more like a standard Australian university than it was in my time there. But it was exciting to be there at the Big Bang!

When Max retired from Deakin in 1990, it felt as though some *petit fonctionnaire* had come in and switched off the lights. We had lost a man of *la plus grande distinction*.

***

I owe Max and his wife Stephanie a deep debt of gratitude for the forbearance and support which they gave me in an existential crisis in my own life.

***

Sophia, one of Max's best ideas, was originally run from the boot of his car and set up by a local printer. Max was the sole referee. It still flourishes, very much an international journal, published by Springer, Dordrecht, the house which issues the present volume. *Sophia* gets lots of interesting submissions, many canvassed by Purushottama Bilimoria, Sophia's indefatigable Editor-at-large, now at two universities in California: University of California (UC), Berkeley, and Graduate Theological Union. He is also an inveterate conference goer. All papers sent in to *Sophia* are duly refereed. Max would be pleased at the mix of philosophical, theological and religious dispositions of the people involved in getting the regular and the special issues of *Sophia* up and running. Of the current editorial team, two are from the Indian traditions, one is a Vatican II Catholic, and one is a student of contemporary religions and of medieval mysticism, and there is a Confucian-Zen practitioner: very 'Catholic', in the original, non-sectarian sense as it should be. Max himself was too Catholic for 'the Mind of the Archbishop'.

Two issues of *Sophia* have already honoured Max Charlesworth, the 1995 100th – Max having handed over his editorship to new incumbents; the second tribute issue was published in 2012. A few chapters of the present volume are drawn from the 2012 *Sophia*.

Preparation of this memorial volume began in early 2017. A few of us from *Sophia*, Purushottama Bilimoria, Patrick Hutchings, Peter Wong and Sherah Bloor, met in a Melbourne café, and the idea of putting together a collection of papers in memory of Max was raised. A list of possible persons to approach were drawn up – mostly those who have had association with Max or have written on topics to do with Max's various interests and involvements. Later, the Charlesworth family were also consulted about the project and their resounding support received.

Although Max Charlesworth was an influential writer – and person – there was no 'School of Max': he ran no line that people would inherit, stick to and propagate, no *école Max*. The essays in this volume are various – as various as the points of view of their authors. If any reader is looking for a unity – even a thematic one – hir expectations shall not be met. That is just the way it falls out. We remember Max but in different ways.

The volume is divided into four parts that are broadly to do with different aspects of Max's life and thought. Part I of this volume consists of contributions from those who have had a close personal association with Max. **Doug Kirsner**, who is a former student and colleague of Max, provides a comprehensive review of Max's intellectual contributions across a number of areas that reflect his involvement in academia, the Roman Catholic Church and significant public debates, especially in the field of bioethics. Kirsner offers insights into Max's intellectual life through exploring Max's publications, interviews and an unpublished memoir by Max.

Hilary Charlesworth recounts the experience of living with her father, the philosopher, which includes a richly detailed and intimate description of Max's earlier life that complements Kirsner's account. It both pays tribute to Max the father and provides personal context to Max the intellectual. **Alexander Linger** honours Max, his grandfather, by reflecting upon the nature of memory amidst his reminiscence of Max. Linger challenges certain accounts of memory understood as strictly personal, which he finds to be inadequate to describing his memory of Max, memory formed as a result of belonging to a family which include the memories of other members of the family. Linger posits his memory of Max is broader and richer than that conceived as episodic and direct. And finally, there are some remarks by the Reverend **Michael Elligate** on Max from his perspective as the Parish Priest of St Carthage's, Melbourne. St Carthage's is the home of Melbourne University's Catholic Chaplaincy. While pithy, this contribution reminds the reader to consider the extent to which Max's interests were motivated by his religious faith.

The chapters in Part II reflect Max's intellectual engagement to do with ethical issues within the liberal society, particularly in the field of bioethics. **Loane Skene** begins with an examination of the legacy of Max's book, *Bioethics in a Liberal Society,* in the area of human cloning and embryo research. More specifically, Skene is interested in exploring Max's contribution to decision-making in a liberal society in cases of controversial issues with divergent opinions within the community: How can public policies be formulated when there is no consensus in the community about what constitute its core values? The subsequent piece by **Jeff Malpas** acknowledges and critically reflects upon Max's development of contemporary bioethical thinking particularly to do with dying. Malpas questions whether the principle of autonomy and the notion of asserting control over one's life are adequate in addressing the issues which one faces at the end of life. For Malpas, the distinction of autonomy as a procedural principle renders it in effect an extreme expression of liberalism. **Tony Coady**'s article on the ethical thoughts of Bonhoeffer pays tribute to Max's significant contribution to the relations between religion, morality and politics. Coady focuses on Bonhoeffer's book *Ethics* and considers how the work raises question about the nature and significance of ethics. Moreover, it has implications for the notion of a Christian ethic. Crucially for Coady, doubts about an ethics that is uniquely Christian have to do with understanding the difference between morality and moralism, a distinction that finds support in Bonhoeffer's writings. This is followed by **Morny Joy**'s paper, delivered in 2015 at the Inaugural Max Charlesworth Memorial Lecture, at the Burwood campus of Deakin University. Her reflections on Paul Ricoeur and Hannah Arendt, whose writings emphasise the significance of paying attention to the world and the need to engage with it, reflect well Max's own concerns. Joy's paper covers many aspects of the continuity and discontinuity between the thoughts of Arendt and Ricoeur; discussions include Arendt's 'natality' and Ricoeur 'narrative self' and 'dialogical construction of the self'.

Part III celebrates the life of Max the philosopher. The first chapter reprints an article by **Max Charlesworth** that was published in *Sophia* in 1962. In this paper Max defends the cogency of Anselm's ontological argument and argues that it is deserving of attention. We note that this was subsequently followed by the publication of Max's translation of Anselm's *Proslogion* 3 years later. The next chapter is

by **Richard Campbell** who writes on further developments of studies in Anselm's ontological argument and offers an innovative reading of the *Proslogion*, one which requires a re-evaluation of the logic of Anselm's argument. For Campbell, this involves, among other things, clarifying the premise to his so-called ontological argument. In the final analysis, Campbell concludes that Anselm's proof of the existence of God is not an ontological argument but in fact a cosmological argument. **Maurita Harney**'s contribution on the concept of "intentionality" highlights a theme that recalls Max's interest in continental and medieval philosophy. Harney defends a view of intentionality as embodied and rejects Cartesian dualism which renders intentionality purely subjective. This understanding of intentionality is articulated in the early philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. The paper further maintains that even in Merleau-Ponty's later development on the ontology of the flesh, the notion of intentionality can be retained; this view Harney sought to justify by tracing the history of the notion of intention from Aristotle to Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroës). Intentionality thus understood restores the idea of nature as living, creative and evolving. **Patrick Hutchings** in his chapter argues that David Hume's idea that one cannot deduce an 'ought' from an 'is' is mistaken. Contrary to Hume's idea that morality is purely a matter of sentiment, Hutchings insists that reason is needed to articulate the many and particular premises that allow one to deduce particular values from particular facts. The heroine of Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* (1740) acts on *principle*: principles equal the *maxims* which Kant's categorical imperative censors. Kant's *Groundwork* of 1785 sinks Hume's insistence on the primacy of passion. If Hume in his essay of 1740 had read *Pamela* of 1740, he might have thought again. Pamela gets the point before Kant. Nevertheless, Kant's 'act only on that maxim that you could will to become a universal law' is complicated by different forms of life. Even the categorical imperative is not absolutely universal. Reason is needed all the more, but there is no easy solution. This section is rounded off by **Purushottama Bilimoria**, who highlights 'nothingness' as the preeminent notion in Eastern philosophical thought; it is celebrated by Buddhism, the instigating idea in the development of different branches of Indian philosophy, and a fundamental imagery in Chinese Daoism. Rather than Leibniz's question, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?', the Eastern tradition offers the reassurance that radical Nothingness ought not be feared: it may even have therapeutic value in the Wittgensteinian sense.

Part IV features papers on the topic of religion and religious diversity. **Constant Mews**' contribution on the songlines of Australian Aboriginals and medieval Ireland highlights a further theme that was an abiding interest of Max – religiousness in the Australian Aboriginal tradition(s). Mews sketches the phenomenon of songline in one section of Aboriginal Australia and provides a description of the use of chants and other oral traditions in medieval Ireland. While admitting that there are many points of difference between the two, Mews raises the possibility of similarity between the two through their respective commitments to the natural world and form records of a form of cultural code that is different from the written text. Next, **Graham Oppy** critically examines Max's account of the philosophy of religion in his work *Philosophy and Religion: From Plato to Postmodernism*. Oppy maintains

that despite Max's attempt at a comprehensive account of how philosophy relates to religion, there are serious drawbacks to his descriptions of the different relationships between philosophy, religion and philosophy of religion. For Oppy, given the diversity of religious worldviews, the philosophy of religion is concerned with borderline questions for which there are no agreed-upon methods of solution, so the project of philosophy of religion needs to include articulation, comparison and assessment of worldviews both religious and non-religious; it cannot confine itself to the concerns of the Abrahamic faiths. **Paul Rule** is concerned with the difference and tension between 'religion' as a universal truth and the pluralism of 'religions' as a modern human condition and how it might be reconciled. Rule begins his paper by considering Max's claim that the problem of religious diversity remains unsolved and his assertion that dialogue between believers of different religious traditions are absolutely necessary. In exploring Max's work *Religious Inventions: Four Essays*, Rule highlights and discusses the viability of Max's proposal of a credo for the religious believer as a way of promoting inter-religious dialogue. Finally, **Peter Wong** examines the viability of Max's strategy to enable 'ecumenism' among the various religious traditions of the world. For mutual acceptance or appreciation to be possible, could religious values be recognised across different religions? How can the adherent of a tradition come to appreciate another tradition as valuable? Furthermore, how can adherent of a theistic tradition come to accept the religious nature of another tradition that is not expressed in terms of belief or faith? Wong offers a description of the non-theistic Confucian tradition as a case study. He then concludes the paper by considering how someone from within a Confucian tradition could come to terms with other different and incompatible religious systems in the world.

Patrick Hutchings
(Presently an Editor of *Sophia*
and
Sometime Reader in Humanities,
at Deakin University)

Appendix Timeline of Max Charlesworth's life and a list of his most important publications from the Order of Service at his Requiem Mass at Newman College Chapel, Melbourne, 9 June 2014. So large was Max's circle of friends and colleagues that there was – in the very large chapel – standing room only for latecomers.

Max Charlesworth: A Brief Timeline

30 December 1925	Born in Numurkah in Victoria, younger son of William and Mabel Charlesworth.
1943	Law at the University of Melbourne. Transfer to BA.
1948	MA in Philosophy, the University of Melbourne.

1950	Marriage to Stephanie Armstrong.
1950–1952	In Gresswell T.B. Sanatorium.
1953–1955	Studied at the University of Louvain, Belgium.
1955	Awarded PhD (*avec la plus grande distinction*).
1956	Lecturership in Philosophy, at the University of Auckland.
1959	Appointed lecturer in the Philosophy Department, the University of Melbourne.
1948–1965	Played a major role in the publication *The Catholic Worker*.
1962	Co-established with Graeme de Graaff *Sophia: A Journal for Discussion in Philosophical Theology* (later to be variously known as *Sophia: A Journal for Philosophical Theology and Cross-cultural Philosophy of Religion; Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysical Theology and Ethics;* and currently, *Sophia: International Journal of Philosophy and Traditions*).
1963–1964	Nuffield Fellow, Courtauld Institute.
1968–1969	Visiting Professor, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.
1970	Appointed to Secretariat for Non-Believers, following Vatican II.
1972	Visiting Professor, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.
1974–1975	Chairman, Department of Philosophy, the University of Melbourne.
1975	Founding Dean of Humanities, Deakin University.
1980	Visiting Professor, *Maison des Sciences de L'Homme*, Paris.
1987–1980	Chairperson, Advisory Committee, Centre of Human Bioethics.
1991	Awarded the medal of an Officer of the Order of Australia.
1992–1994	Director, National Institute for Law, Ethics and Public Affairs, Griffith University.
2006	Visiting Professor Bioethics, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium.
2 June 2014	Died peacefully at home.

Significant Publications

Philosophy and Linguistic Analysis, Duquesne University Press, 1959.
St Anselm's 'Proslogion', Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965.
Philosophy of Religion: The Historic Approaches, Herder and Herder, 1972.
Church, State and Conscience, University of Queensland Press, 1973.
The Problem of Religious Language, Prentice Hall, 1974.
The Existentialists and Jean Paul Sartre, University of Queensland Press, 1975.
Science, non-science and Pseudo science, ABC Science Show lectures, Deakin University Press, 1982.
The Aboriginal Land Rights Movement, Deakin University Press, 1983.
Religion in Aboriginal Australia: An Anthology, Charlesworth, M. Morphy, H. Bell, D. Maddox, K. (eds), University of Queensland Press, 1984.

Religious Worlds, Hill of Content Publishing, 1985.
Life Among the Scientists, Charlesworth, M. Farrell, L. Stokes, T. Turnbull, D., Oxford University Press, 1989.
Life, Death, Genes and Ethics (1989 Boyer Lectures), ABC Books, 1989.
Aristotle: The Etic of Happiness, Deakin University Press, 1991.
Bioethics in a Liberal Society, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
Religious Inventions: Four Essays, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
Religious Business: Essays on Australian Aboriginal Spirituality, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
Thinking about God: From Plato to Postmodernism, One World, 2002.
Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings, Charlesworth, M. Dussart, F. Morphy, H. (eds) Ashgate, 2005.
Philosophy for Beginners, University of Queensland Press, 2007.
A Democratic Church: Reforming the Values and Institutions of the Catholic Church, John Garratt Publishing, 2008.

Note

Max Charlesworth's Grandson Alexander Linger has compiled an archive of Max's work which is available on the Deakin University online archives collection. This digital version is made possible through the work of Antony Catrice and his colleague David Tredinnick from Deakin's Information and Records Services. Max's archive can be accessed in https://www.deakin.edu.au/library/aotw. (Click 'Search Now' to go to a search page, and in the form displayed type in 'DUS1' in the box 'Series Number', then click 'Search' button on the bottom of the form. Locate 'Max Charlesworth papers 1957–2013' in the window below. To access individual boxes, click on the plus in the expand column. Click on the plus symbol to locate items within those boxes. Where items are digitised they can be accessed by clicking on the PDF or other file type in the Download column.)

University of Melbourne Patrick Hutchings
Melbourne, Australia

Contents

Part I
Remembering Max

Chapter 1
Emeritus Professor Max Charlesworth AO (30 December, 1925–2 June, 2014): A Philosopher in the World

Douglas Kirsner

Born in 1925 Max Charlesworth spent his last seven decades in the fields of philosophy and religion in which he spanned an incredible variety of interests in both breadth and depth. These included philosophy of religion, bioethics, social studies in science, European philosophy, aboriginal religions, the role of the Church and the liberal democratic state, the structure of the Catholic Church. Max did not see philosophy so much as a technical pursuit as a way of being, ways to understand and communicate with the wider society about the 'big questions'. Education was a primary focus for Max, both in extending the roles of the university and going beyond it by reaching out both to other disciplines and to the general public. For Max philosophy was an activity at its best when applied in the world. The pluralist 'broad Church' approach to philosophy, religion and how we can best live together in a liberal democratic society represent some of his abiding concerns. His publications spanned a very wide spectrum. A random sample: *Life, Death, Genes and Ethics*; *Philosophy for Beginners*; *A Democratic Church*; *The Existentialists and Jean-Paul-Sartre*; *Life among the Scientists – an anthropology of science and scientists at the Walter and Eliza Hall*.

Max always appreciated, encouraged and implemented criticism in the context of his phlosophically liberal respect for different views as core values in the service of flourishing and well-being. Max saw it as a crucial part of the job of a philosopher to be out in the world using critique and reflection, understanding and welcoming a genuine diversity of points of view while at the same time evaluating and critiquing them in a sympathetic yet rigorous way. He had a special capacity for understanding and communicating the main thrusts of ideas empathically to 'cut to the chase',

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expressing complex ideas in plain English. Max was simply excited by ideas, new and old. His approach was demonstrated not only in numerous wide-ranging publications but in action through contributions to higher education, especially the open campus program at Deakin University together with significant public roles over the decades. He regularly taught adult education classes and often lectured at seminaries for decades. I had the privilege and pleasure of being a student, colleague and friend of Max's since my undergraduate studies in philosophy at the University of Melbourne in the 1960s. I tutored in Max's course Contemporary European Philosophy in the 1970s, and in 1976 was appointed to Deakin University where I am now Emeritus. This chapter traces some significant aspects of Max's trajectory, approach and foci with the help of a document Max generously wrote for me, 'Some of my life and times' (Charlesworth 2012b).

1.1 University of Melbourne and the University of Louvain

Max was himself much as he described Professor Alexander Boyce Gibson, his professor in the Melbourne University Philosophy Department. Boyce Gibson was, according to Max, 'very much a pluralist in philosophy' and was interested in what Boyce Gibson termed the 'interfructification' of the two schools of positivism and metaphysics. Max often approvingly quoted Boyce Gibson describing the aim of philosophy as producing 'fruitful confusion'. Boyce Gibson's attitude to religion as involving what he saw as a 'fruitful tension' between doubt and belief became Max's too. In the now long gone age of the God-professor, Boyce Gibson could declare in 1949 that he had 'built the department out of their difference of opinion'. At the time, Boyce Gibson was contrasting pluralism with the monistic Andersonian philosophy department at Sydney University. Boyce Gibson, a Christian who was interested in existentialism, phenomenology and religion, retired in 1966 (see 1996). This is how Max described his mentor:

> Although a very shy man, Boyce Gibson showed great personal warmth and loyalty to those who knew him well. He also had a nice sense of humour. Again, despite his reserve, he loved academic life, and, as dean (1939–41) of the faculty of arts and chairman (1949–52) of the professorial board, he enjoyed the devious twists and turns of university politics. (Charlesworth 1996).

As a first year philosophy student in 1965, I was fortunate to audit Boyce-Gibson's most erudite, engaging and thought-provoking year-long set of lectures on Plato's *The Republic*. However, with the exception of some individuals like Max, by the 1970s Oxford philosophy monistically swept away virtually everything else in philosophy departments throughout Australia and New Zealand. European philosophy was often seen as 'bad poetry', guilty of Rudolf Carnap's criticism of Heidegger as making meaningless pseudo-claims such as 'the Nothing noths', which a sound training in Fregean logic would surely have sorted out. Max recalled his own

eventful early days in the Philosophy Department at the University of Melbourne where he obtained his B.A (Hon.) in philosophy in 1946 and his M.A. in 1949.

> When I began philosophy at Melbourne the Department had just been converted to Wittgensteinian 'linguistic analysis'. "Converted' is an apposite word because the change from the earlier direction of the Department was so radical. Camo Jackson and Douglas Gasking had just returned from Cambridge where they had studied with Wittgenstein and later George Paul visited from Oxford. The Head of the Department was Sandy (Alexander) Boyce Gibson who was the son of W.R. Boyce Gibson, formerly professor of philosophy at Aix en Provence in France who was a close friend of Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology in Germany. Sandy Boyce Gibson was not himself attracted by the new Wittgensteinian approach, which he thought neglected ethics and political philosophy, but he certainly aided and abetted it by appointing a number of people – Camo Jackson, Douglas Gasking, Kurt Baier, Peter Herbst, Don Gunner – who were Wittgensteinians of different complexions (Charlesworth 2012b).

Boyce Gibson was clearly a significant mentor for Max (as Max was for many, including myself) in his open-minded pluralism, interest in the philosophy of religion and Continental philosophy, as well as his kind of proactive leadership in building the Department. Max made a very significant decision when in 1949 he was awarded the Mannix scholarship for post-graduate study overseas. It was customary for philosophers to go to Oxford or Cambridge in that period and for decades later; it was almost unheard of to go anywhere else. In the late 1970s some Australian philosophers went to study in Paris and the US but were far from assured of employment at universities in Australia upon their return, as were graduates of Oxford. By the 1970s there was a new widening in higher education in Australia with the creation of new universities, which provided the opportunities for different kinds of philosophy. From his appointment in 1967 as Foundation Professor of Philosophy at Macquarie University, Max Deutscher, together with his colleagues, led the way in phenomenology and the new Deakin University provided a major opportunity for European philosophy under Max Charlesworth. But while it may not have seemed a good career move for Australians in the 1970s to study European philosophy in Europe, it must have seemed sheer madness in Max's earlier days of doctoral studies. True, Louvain was a Catholic university, which fitted religious interests. But beyond that Max had become interested in French philosophy:

> I decided to go to the University of Louvain in Belgium, which was a centre for Husserlian phenomenology. During the Second World War Husserl was targeted by the Nazis because he was a Jew and after his death his formidable wife managed to move his huge personal library as well as his own unpublished works to the university in Louvain. This Husserl Archive attracted German and French philosophers (for example, Merleau-Ponty and Gabriel Marcel) and I thought that Louvain would be a good place to do my doctorate.
>
> I was, however, persuaded by my supervisor Georges Van Riet to do my thesis on linguistic analysis since most Europeans knew very little of the Wittgensteinian movement. The thesis was successful and was awarded 'avec la plus grande distinction'. It was later published as *Philosophy and Linguistic Analysis* (Duquesne University Press 1959).

After completing his doctorate, Max obtained a lectureship in philosophy at the University of Auckland in 1956 and in 1959 was appointed as Lecturer in Philosophy back at the University of Melbourne, Senior Lecturer in 1962 and Reader in 1968.

It was a tribute to Boyce Gibson's continuing pluralism that Max was appointed as a lecturer in philosophy. At the University of Melbourne, Max recounted, 'Among other things I set up a course in medieval philosophy and I translated for my students the celebrated work of the 11th century St Anselm of Bec, *The Proslogion*'. This was published as a book (Charlesworth 1965).

1.2 Philosophy of Religion

While at the University of Melbourne he also published *St Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica, vol. 15* (1970)*, Philosophy of Religion: The Historic Approaches* (1972), *Church, State and Conscience* (1973) and *The Problem of Religious Language* (1974). Max's interest in a critical approach to religion and understanding the social, historical and cultural contexts and applications of religion are evidenced by his founding co-editorship of *The Catholic Worker* in the early 1960s, which presented a critical counterpoint to B. A. Santamaria and the 'Movement'. He participated in the conference on Belief and Non-belief in Rome in October, 1970. Max recalled, 'Being a Christian I have always been interested in the relation between philosophy and the Christian religion in its various forms. In 1966 I was appointed by Pope Paul VI to be a consultant to the newly formed body The Secretariat for Non Believers, an international body of theological and philosophical scholars' (Charlesworth 2012b). This was under the presidency of Cardinal Koenig, and Max recalls an abiding memory of the meetings held in Rome at the Vatican in 1970 is being served black caviar at morning tea.

Max's time as a visiting professor at the Notre Dame University, a Catholic University with a critical approach to religion, in the US in 1968–69 at the height of the Vietnam War had a profound effect. It further galvanized Max's open and critical approach to Catholicism and its social place and role in society at large as well as democracy within the Church. In tandem with this he also spent 1972 as a Visiting Professor at the University of Louvain.

There is a clear and abiding line of focus on the philosophy of religion. Max was the Founder and Co-editor of the journal *Sophia* (1962–90). The first issue in 1962 published by the University of Melbourne, featured an article by Peter Geach, 'Causality and Creation' an article by Boyce Gibson, 'Credal Affirmations and Metaphysics' together with articles by Dom Illtyd Trothowan, Graham de Graaf and Ninian Smart. Max Charlesworth contributed an article, 'St Anselm's Argument' to the second issue (1, 2, 25–36). In a 2007 editorial, Max reflected on the origins and context of the journal:

> As a co-founder of the journal, I must say that I am immensely proud that my brain-child has been so successful. When I joined the Department of Philosophy at the University of Melbourne, it was largely dominated by colleagues who had been influenced by Oxford/Cambridge linguistic analysis of a partly Wittgensteinian and partly logical positivist kind. In this context, there was very little interest in the philosophy of religion, as religion was deemed to be in the sphere of 'that whereof one cannot speak.' There was also some

> old-fashioned feeling within the University of Melbourne that, as it was a 'secular' body without any kind of religious affiliation, it was in some way prohibited from providing courses in religion! Those days are happily gone forever (2007, p. 109).

Understandably in this context, the first few years of *Sophia* focused on Anglo-American philosophical tradition. However, Max wanted to move the journal beyond this limited view of religion to encompass other philosophical approaches. As he stated, 'I had done some work on Australian Aboriginal religions (possibly the oldest forms of religion we know of), and I saw how irrelevant the standard analytical approaches were in this context' (p. 109). As ever, Max was following his own path as a critical pluralist and pioneering new ways of seeing and doing.

Max's longstanding interest in the philosophy of religion is reflected in his later work too: for example, *Philosophy and Religion: From Plato to Postmodernism* (One World, Oxford, 2002*), Religious Inventions: Four Essays* (Cambridge University Press *Religious Business: Essays on Australian Spirituality*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998). In addition he co-edited with Howard Morphy and Francoise Dussart, *Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings* (Ashgate, 2005). Involved with this theme, Max's long 2008 essay*, A Democratic Church: Reforming the Values and Institutions of the Catholic Church,* (John Garratt Publishing, 2008). Max commented, 'In that essay I ask what are the characteristics of a new view of the Church which would allow it to speak to the peoples of the developed world who live in democratic societies and who subscribe to the values of liberal society'. He added,

> Recently I have been interested in the question of the interpretation of religious texts and I have just published an essay on this difficult subject. (See 'The Translation of Religious Texts' (Charlesworth 2012a)). It is often said by theologians that religious faith is a God-given 'grace' quite independent of rational (philosophical) assent. But this cannot be true because a believer must have some idea that what is being proposed is possible and not self-contradictory. One cannot believe by faith something that is philosophically unbelievable (Charlesworth 2012b).

1.3 Contemporary European Philosophy

Contrary to the culture of the University of Melbourne Philosophy Department, which mostly focused upon technical issues, Max was intent in taking philosophy beyond the 'ivory tower' of the university into society at large. He was secretary of Melbourne University's Extension Committee and the Vice Chancellor's representative on the Victorian Council of Adult Education (1962–72). Max was always interested in bringing philosophy to the people outside the university and spent many years teaching Adult Education classes.

In the late 1960s Max established the course that he called 'Contemporary European Philosophy', which focused on Sartre and de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty and others. This course was very popular with students and even attracted a slew of psychiatrists who undertook the course as a single subject. Although it was by far

the most popular course in the Philosophy Department, this was a different time from now: it was not at that time regarded by Max's colleagues to be much of a bonus!

Although the philosophy department at the University of Melbourne was diverse in its religious composition and attitudes to materialism, Wittgenstein and ethics, the approach to Contemporary European philosophy was not. Max Charlesworth was pretty much a 'one man band' (Max once quipped after one of Jan Srzednicki's eruptions about Contemporary European Philosophy that he was 'certainly a Contemporary European'!)

Max was invited by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) to write three one- hour programs on 'The Existentialists and Jean Paul Sartre', broadcast in 1975 and subsequently published as a book by University of Queensland Press in1980. These very popular programs spurred the ABC to invite Max's colleague and friend, Tony Coady, to present a fascinating seven hour series, somewhat as a counter, on British philosophy, titled 'The Fly and the Fly-bottle', which included interviews with Sir Isaiah Berlin, Bernard Williams and Tom Stoppard. There were valuable contributions on all sides. Max remembered:

> When I was writing the script of these programmes I was keen to get live interviews with Sartre and de Beauvoir. The ABC's reporter in Paris, Pierre Vicary, asked me to prepare a set of questions which would make clear that our programmes were serious and not just chit chat, and he was able to cajole both Sartre and de Beauvoir to participate. Vicary's interview with Sartre at the end of his incredible life was extraordinarily moving. (Charesworth 2012b).

Max was a major innovator in bringing contemporary European philosophy to its current importance in Australia.

1.4 Deakin University

Max was Head of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Melbourne in 1974–75. At the end of 1975, literally as he turned 50, Max was invited by Victoria's fourth and newly just established university, Deakin University, to become Planning Dean of the School of Humanities in Geelong. It was an existential decision: would he spend the next 15 years in a 'good' job as Reader in Philosophy at the University of Melbourne, or would he do something quite different and less comfortable? Max opted for the challenge to help create what he often called 'the Athens of the South' at Deakin and set up the School of Humanities as interdisciplinary areas involving Philosophical Studies, Australian Studies, Literary Studies and Performing Arts. As Deakin was set up so as not to duplicate other universities, there was a licence and expectation to be different from alma maters, particularly the University of Melbourne. Another essential social mission for Deakin that aligned closely with Max's values was the innovation of off campus education with open entry for mature age students. This meant that many people over the age of 21 from around Australia who had missed out on study or were interested in further study could undertake

courses that engaged them. This was all part of Max's adventure of ideas and social contribution. The overall aim was not to train would-be professional philosophers, for example, but to bring philosophy to a wide range of people who often found it made quite a difference in their lives. The pedagogical mode was writing quite elaborate study guides with readers, taped interviews and discussions, and weekend schools. This was certainly a project of philosophy in the world. Max always insisted that philosophy was in its element when it was applied.

As Planning Dean, Max played a significant role in appointing staff, and he set up new areas of study. He loved and encouraged interdisciplinary, lateral thinking and creativity. Max was able to appoint a varied and exciting group of academics in a number of disciplines across humanities. Philosophical Studies encompassed not only philosophy proper, but the history of ideas, religious studies and social studies in science. As one of the first appointed to Deakin in 1976 as a lecturer in Philosophy and History of Ideas, I can testify to how exciting, vibrant and enthusiastic the academic culture was at Deakin. And as it eventually turned out, owing to the expansion of higher education in Australia including Deakin, it wasn't such a bad career move to undertake doctoral studies in Europe. Appointments included Jocelyn Dunphy who undertook her PhD with Paul Ricoeur, Li Veit-Brause who studied for her PhD in Germany, and Russell Grigg who undertook his PhD in Paris with Lacan's close collaborator and son-in-law, Jacques-Alain Miller.

In his role as Planning Dean of the School of Humanities, Max mandated that all units would have course teams, often interdisciplinary, on the basis that two academic heads were better than one. Despite the success of the heady days of this early team approach in units such as the interdisciplinary 'Images of Man' in philosophy and literature (Sartre, Camus, Freud, Kafka, Marx, Brecht), and 'The Australian City' in the new inter-discipline of Australian Studies at Deakin, Max later gave a paper to the School following Freud's lead titled 'The Psychopathology of Course Teams'. In academic matters, experience counted at least as much as reason did. Max was mostly infinitely patient with notoriously individualistic academic colleagues, but in the end Max himself collaborated and wrote many study guides across a range of disciplines. Max was Foundation Planning Dean of the School of Humanities from 1975 to 80 and remained Professor of Philosophy until his retirement in 1990, when he became Emeritus.

Max played a wide variety of significant roles in education, the community, and the Church. Some highlights from a long list provide a flavour: member of the Charles Strong Trust; Chairperson of the Advisory Committee of the Centre for Human Bioethics (1987–90), Member of the Victorian Government Standing Review and Advisory Committee on Infertility; member, National Bioethics Consultative Committee (1988–90).

In addition to his role as a national innovator in education, Max's contributions to bioethics were also recognized nationally when in 1990 he was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for his contributions both to education and to bioethics.