

Australian National Conference 2007

The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Australia cordially invites members and non-members to:

Faith and the Disciplines

FCS Australia 2007 Annual Conference
Saturday 21 April
Campion College, Toongabbie, NSW

Programme:

9am Members' Meeting (Pérez de la Sala lecture theatre)

10am Conference Mass (Campion Chapel)

Principal Celebrant and Preacher: Rev John Fleming, President, Campion College

11.00am Morning tea (Campion Dining Room)

11.30am Opening Plenary Session (Pérez de la Sala lecture theatre)

Associate Professor James Franklin—"Natural Law Ethics in Disciplines: Abstract to Applied"

Language suggestive of natural law ethics, similar to the Catholic understanding of ethical foundations, is prevalent in a number of disciplines. But it does not always issue in a full-blooded commitment to objective ethics, being undermined by relativist ethical currents. In law and politics, there is a robust conception of "human rights", but it has become somewhat detached from both the worth of persons in themselves and from duties. In education, talk of "values" imports ethical considerations but hints at a subjectivist view of them. In the psychology and sociology of drug use, ethically thin concepts of "harm minimisation" and "self-image" dominate discussion and distract attention from the virtue of temperance and the training of character. We argue for a more forceful assertion of an ethics based on the worth of persons in these cases. Arguments against objectivity in the fundamentals may be replied to by examining the parallel between ethics and the discipline whose objectivity has been least challenged by relativist arguments, mathematics.

12.30pm Parallel Session 1 (Pérez de la Sala lecture theatre and Fr Julian Tenison Woods Seminar Room)

Dr Paul Collits —"The Unheavenly City: The Ungodly World of Geography and Planning"

*Geographers and urban and regional planners are interested in "place" and in the built environment – its forms and its patterns and drivers of development. There is generally very little evidence of faith driving its interests and research agenda. Two important recent debates in the literature exemplify the absence of religious perspectives, and the paper largely focuses on these. One relates to the emergence of the "creative class", popularised by the American author Richard Florida (*The Rise of the Creative Class*, Basic Books 2002); the other relates to the causes of rural town decline. Florida is both a creature and a champion of liberal, secular culture. He argues that the "creative class" now drives economies and determines which successful cities and regions will be "successful". In Florida's view, one measure of this vibrancy, and therefore a driver of economic success, is a place's acceptance of an openly gay culture. The second area of focus in the paper relates to causes of the decline of rural towns, and in particular, the ongoing exodus of young people from these places. Most explanations of rural decline emphasise economic considerations. Another, perhaps more powerful, explanation can be found in the embrace of modern secular culture by Generation Y, particularly women, who in*

growing numbers are seeking to lead a “portfolio life” that means “having it all”, and these opportunities simply cannot be found in small rural towns. The contemporary desire for a portfolio life has its seeds in a particular form of feminism and in the sexual revolution of the 1960s, a core element of which was the emergence of reliable birth control. The cultural revolution, steeped as it has been in secularism and relativism, has had a profound impact on all areas of life, including the geographic distribution of people and of economic growth.

or

Matthew Tan — “War of the Worlds? Trajectories of the Intersection of Religion with Peace and Conflict Studies”

Since 11th September 2001, there has been a preoccupation within government, academia and the media with violent actions perpetrated by organisations with allegedly religious leanings, and the typical pictures painted concerning this seemingly robust incursion of religion into the political sphere have often been apocalyptic ones. In such an (intellectual?) environment, many seem to think that no realistic alternative to the apocalyptic scenario exists. This overview seeks to bring to public attention to four broad intersections between religion and peace and conflict studies. The essentialist school of thought suggests that increasing incursions of religion into the public sphere must necessarily be followed by escalating levels of violence, whether physical or structural. In contrast, instrumentalists suggest a more marginal role for religion, arguing its relevance to be no more than a tool for mobilisation for the pursuit of strategic goals. This overview also explores the contribution of constructivism in providing a more nuanced argument, asserting myriad possibilities the insertion of religion into politics, where on the one hand, the construction of religiously based identities would present short term challenges due to the seeming inflexibility and the existential value attached to it, variables that could lead to escalation of violence; in the long term however, many constructivists have also speculated on the possibilities of a transformation of religious meaning that can be a resource for peacemaking projects rather than for violent action. In trying to understand how this process occurs, some like Mark Juergensmeyer argued for the need of a “cultural approach” that “constructs worldviews from within”, a call that to date has been answered only by a few. Where in depth analysis has been done, theology is seen to be far from a platonic body of knowledge unresponsive to historical reality. Rather, the analysis suggests that it performs a dual function of being an intimate companion to political action, but also a vehicle for transporting the experience of historical contingency and translating that into concrete social transformations. But at the fringes of political analysis more radical projects within the radical orthodoxy school of theology have been asserting the salience of not just theology but liturgy as a political act, creating a vehicle that allows authentic imitation of the Prince of Peace.

1.30pm Lunch (Campion Dining Room)

2.30pm Parallel Session 2 (Pérez de la Sala lecture theatre and Fr Julian Tenison Woods Seminar Room)

Dr Stephen McInerney— “Not By Faith Alone: Poetic Knowledge and the Current Crisis”

*One of the greatest challenges facing Christian teachers and scholars is to understand the extent to which our approaches to teaching and scholarship are informed by principles, rationalist in origin and with the ‘market’ and technocracy as their context and guide, which are fundamentally at odds with the natural and supernatural ends of both pursuits. Any attempt to respond to the crisis in Western education that does not go to root of the problem is destined to fail. In the face of secular modernity, faith alone, abstracted from an acknowledgement of “the complex matrix of institutions and traditions” (Rowland) that influence it in the modern world will not suffice. Drawing on the Rule of St Benedict (which seeks to establish a “school of the Lord’s service”), the work of John Senior (*The Death of Christian Culture and The Restoration of Christian Culture*), James Taylor (*Poetic Knowledge: The Recovery of Education*) and Joseph Pieper (*Leisure, the Basis of Culture*), this paper argues for the dire necessity to uncover and*

recognise the rationalist presuppositions of modern education (including contemporary Christian institutions) and so to recover what Thomas Aquinas calls “poetica scientia” – an “intuitive, obscure, mysterious way of knowing reality...a knowledge of the senses and the passions” – as the basis of the restoration of teaching and learning. As Prof James Taylor argues, “the understanding of knowledge in the poetic mode...presupposes a certain culture be present that has slowly evolved into sympathetic expressions of that knowledge, in religion, art, literature, music, architecture, manners, economics, leisure and politics”. In pursuing these themes, the paper will also explore the representations of the “Teacher” in modern film and literature (To Sir, With Love, The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie and Dead Poets Society), as positive if complex expressions of the desire we all have to be ‘educated’ (that is, from the Latin, led out of ourselves) by genuinely inspirational seekers of truth, beauty and goodness. Each of the main characters in these works responds to the destructive legacy of Cartesian rationalism by embracing (however imperfectly) the “poetic mode”, thereby intuiting the root philosophical cause of the current predicament.

or

Dr Garrick Small—“Economics, Property and God’s Will”

Catholic Social Thought (CST) has enjoyed a continuous consistent development through the history of the Church grounded on scripture and tradition informed by rational enquiry and faith up to the twentieth century. The century of social encyclicals beginning with Rerum Novarum can be interpreted as a response by the Church to novelties in social thought that crystallised into mainstream cultural practice in the eighteenth century. So called Enlightenment thought created an illusory dichotomy in social thought and the split libertine movements that are now commonly labelled as the political Left and Right. Economic thought has been caught within this dichotomy as a result of its adoption of an anthropological premise that owes more to the Enlightenment than to an authentic understanding of the human person. The late Holy Father addressed this shortcoming in several places, both with respect to the human person and to the centrality of an authentic understanding of liberty. Catholic economic thought is currently caught between emerging social realities and its own history. This rift is partly due to a methodological divide between Catholic social thought and the contemporary economics discipline. The latter has been at pains to establish an ethics free science, while CST tends to include an understanding of human action that contains an essential ethical dimension. Conceptions of the human person, liberty and ethical action informed by realist Catholic thought are shown to provide a context that can resolve the tension between economic thought and CST. This would locate positive economics as a service discipline to a more complete understanding of human action befitting the person’s relationship with the community and God. Within this framework the political left and right can be seen not as exhausting the possibilities for human action, but only providing one dimension within a multi-dimensional understanding of the person. CST and the economic principles that follow from it, can be shown to be not so much a third way, but a separate dimension of understanding that places the person before God as a steward entrusted with the freedom, power and dignity to act with charity. From this perspective the Gospel can be shown to provide the necessary starting point for an understanding of economic action that has the capacity to appropriate the valid components of contemporary economic thought while not following it into its pitfalls.

3.30pm Parallel Session 3 (Pérez de la Sala lecture theatre)

Dr Alex Reichel – “The Anthropological Option”

The suggestion is made that, in the interests of evangelisation within the learned world, and indeed in the political and cultural worlds, the emphasis should shift from philosophy to anthropology and consequently to theology. The immense contribution of Thomas de Vio to the licitness of theological language in rational terms should not be ignored, but seen as complementary to the non-rational anthropological insights of René Girard, whose research programme has blossomed in many fields, particularly theology. The centrality of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures in his oeuvre is emblematic of new life and New Renaissance. TEXT: "Christ posed the foundation of the new ethos with words which for their part demand a thorough grounding in anthropology." John Paul II

or

Dr Donald Boland – “Marx’s Small mistake”

Karl Marx's critique of capitalism in his monumental work Das Kapital, is not such a force in present day economic and political philosophy as it was for most of the twentieth century. For the collapse of the socio-political system of Communism in the Soviet Union in 1989, of which system Das Kapital was as it were the bible, diminished greatly if it did not destroy totally its intellectual standing, at least in Economic Science. In the West, especially in America, the demise of Marxian Socialism was regarded as a concrete confirmation of the truth of Capitalism, for they had long been held as the two alternative politico-economic systems in the modern world. Despite the Church's apparent hard line against both in the past, many Catholic intellectuals and academics were now prepared to come to the defence of liberal Capitalism as the best way in which an economy should be organized. Though ostensibly the argument of my paper is directed at what I see as the key deficiency in the Marxist understanding of the economy, when viewed in the light of the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of Aquinas, it seeks also to show that Marx's critique of Capitalism draws upon ethico-political concepts and analyses to be found in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics. That is to say Marx saw something in the functioning of the modern capitalist economic system which the defenders of it do not see, because he knew his Aristotle better than they do. I hope to show that, though his criticism of Capitalism is ultimately misconceived, there is a real basis for denouncing Capitalism, as the Church has done, from the application of the ethical principles to be found in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics, made especially clear in Aquinas' commentaries upon these works and in the relevant part of his Summa Theologiae.

and

Dr Brian Coman (in absentia paper) – “Environmentalism and the Catholic Church”

This paper begins with a brief description of the term ‘creation spirituality’ and traces its genesis to the writings of a group of well known Catholic commentators on the subject of environmental stewardship. These include Matthew Fox and Thomas Berry in America, and Paul Collins in Australia. Although the published works of these and certain other Catholic authors are now seen to be dated, I argue that the influence of the books in question has been widespread and enduring. I further argue that many of the ideas propounded by these authors can be traced back directly to the work of the French Jesuit and palaeontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The paper argues that an undue emphasis on creation spirituality can very easily lead to what is little more than straight pantheism. Moreover, it tends to ignore the realities of the Incarnation and Redemption as the central tenets of Catholic doctrine and bases its theology almost entirely on readings from the Old Testament. Such an approach, although emotionally appealing and in apparent sympathy with evolutionary and ecological theories, is theologically weak and ultimately harmful to both the cause of environmentalism and to the Church. It is also dangerous for any theology to link itself too closely with modern science because the latter is subject to radical and unforeseen changes. Moreover, the whole notion of ecology, although popularised as an exact science, is still beset by many practical difficulties and problems of definition. This is not to dismiss its importance, but merely to emphasise that the term ‘ecology’ as understood by practising biologists, is something very different from that portrayed by the science popularisers and TV programs. There is a need for the Catholic Church to involve itself in environmental matters, but I believe that this can be done without the need for any drastic changes in Church doctrine. The joint resources of Scripture and Tradition offer ample scope for a powerful Catholic environmental ethic. In particular, a metaphysical approach based on the philosophy of being as elaborated by the Church Fathers and especially by St. Thomas Aquinas, provides a very good starting point. This, combined with traditional Catholic moral teaching which employs an objective, ethical philosophy, offers ample scope for the development of a distinctively Catholic approach to the environmental problems which beset our age.

4.30pm Afternoon Tea (Campion Dining Room)

5.00pm Closing Plenary (Pérez de la Sala lecture theatre)

Rob Stove — “I Wish You’d Play Something Beautiful”: Confessions of an Organist

The organ was called, by Mozart, "the King of Instruments"; and organists themselves have been elsewhere described as the general practitioners of music. This paper does not aim to be a potted history of organ-playing. Rather, it simply provides one man's practical insights, from long experience, into the organist's role vis-à-vis the Church: and the assistant choir-director's role also, especially since the two roles in smaller parishes are often taken by the same person. Laugh, cry, shudder, at his anecdotes. One thing is sure: you will never look at organists in the same way again.

7.00pm Conference Dinner

Port Bar - 36 Charles Street Parramatta (Telephone: 02 9687 8823)

Cost: \$45 (2 courses, coffee & soft-drink – alcohol separately billed)

THE SPEAKERS

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JAMES FRANKLIN teaches and conducts research in the School of Mathematics at the University of New South Wales. Among his most recent publications is a book – *Corrupting the Youth: A History of Philosophy in Australia* – which was published by Macleay Press in 2003.

DR PAUL COLLITS is a Development Officer of the Campion Foundation. He is the former Manager Regional Policy, NSW Department of State and Regional Development and Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales.

MATTHEW JOHN-PAUL TANN is a Doctoral Candidate and Tutor at the School of International Relations of the University of Queensland.

DR STEPHEN McINERNEY is English Lecturer at Campion College. His book *In Your Absence: Poems 1994-2002*, was published by Indigo/Ginninderra in 2002. Stephen has published more than 30 poems in a variety of publications including *Quadrant*, *Southerly* and the *Adelaide Review*.

DR GARRICK SMALL is Associate Head of Teaching and Learning in the School of Construction, Property and Project Management, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology, Sydney. His expertise covers Aboriginal and indigenous land rights, justice and morality in economics, professional ethics, climate change, social investment, property theory, land taxation within tax reform, infrastructure funding, Aristotelian economics, and property forecasting.

DR ALEX REICHEL was Associate Professor in Applied Mathematics at the University of Sydney. He was also the Foundation Director of the Centre for Human Aspects of Science and Technology there, steering it over 6 years to be multi- and transdisciplinary in its studies. On retirement he set up the *Academy of the Word* to continue this approach to learning, initiating courses in Lay Theology and Judeo- Christian scriptures. He is a member of 'The Scientific and Medical Network' (UK), a large group of academic and professional people questioning the materialistic assumptions of contemporary scientific and medical thinking. In 1972 Dr. Reichel began the *St. Francis Community* for Christian Ministry with inner-city Sydney marginalised people, mentally ill etc. The Academy of the Word is the teaching arm of St. Francis Community.

DR DONALD BOLAND LLB (University of Sydney) PhD (Pontifical University of St. Thomas, Rome – Angelicum) practiced for many years as a lawyer. From 1970 to 1985 he taught philosophy at various Catholic Educational Institutions in and around Sydney including the Aquinas Academy under Dr. Woodbury S.M. PhD STD, the Catholic Education Centre at Hunters Hill and at the Vincentian and Marist seminaries. Since 1986 he has been a lecturer at the Centre for Thomistic Studies Inc., which conducts course in Philosophy and Theology, teaching the whole range of philosophical subjects. He has taught also at the University of Newcastle and the University of Technology Sydney. He is a founding member of the Centre for Thomistic Studies Inc. and is currently its secretary. He is the author of numerous articles upon philosophical and other subjects many of which have been published in the CTS journal *Universitas* and are available on the Internet at www.cts.org.au

DR BRIAN COMAN is a retired biologist who specialised in the study of vertebrate pests in Australia. He recently obtained his second doctorate, in the humanities, at La Trobe University, Bendigo. His thesis, entitled *Ecology, Modernity and Tradition*, covered some of the aspects dealt with in his paper. In addition to many scientific publications, he is the author of *Tooth and Nail: the Story of the Rabbit in Australia* (Test Publications. 1999) and *A Loose Canon* (Connor Court Publishing: *in press*).

ROB STOVE is an editor, writer, composer, organist and self-proclaimed narcissist! He is the author of *The Unsleeping Eye: Secret Police and Their Victims* (Encounter Books, San Francisco, 2003). Rob's articles regularly appear in the pages of *The American Conservative* (where he is a Contributing Editor), *The New Criterion*, *Chronicles Magazine*, *Modern Age*, *Coast & Country* (Australia), *National Observer* (Australia), *Oriens* ([Australia] where he is Executive Editor), *Annals Australasia*, and other periodicals. Rob's music is published by *Wirripang*, Wollongong, New South Wales. Three of Rob's compositions are now on a CD from this firm, called *Simply Songs* (2004). One of his short choral works, *O Salutaris Hostia*, received its première on May 29, 2005, in San Francisco, performed by the Schola Cantorum of the National Shrine of St Francis of Assisi. On the following August 21, *Tantum Ergo* (a companion piece to *O Salutaris Hostia*) received *its* première, with the St Mary's Singers, in Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral.

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The Conference is open to the public and welcomes registrations from members and non-members alike. Clergy attending are invited to concelebrate the Conference liturgies.

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