The "asylum seeker" has become a contentious figure in contemporary Australia -- to some, an embodiment of human need and a bearer of universal human rights; to others, a symbol of trespass and illegitimate demands. This lecture will attempt to clarify some confusing conceptual issues at stake in current debate on asylum seeker policy. The lecture will draw on the analysis of sympathy offered by the eighteenth-century philosopher Adam Smith in his work The Theory of Moral Sentiments. Smith offers there an enlightening account of the interactions of emotion, imagination and intellect in the formation of moral consciousness. He argues that sympathy is fundamental to morality; but also that there could be no sympathy without imagination. On his analysis, it is the cultivation of imagination that allows us to “enter into the situations” of others. The lecture will explore the ramifications of Smith’s treatment of sympathy for understanding some puzzling aspects of the competing narratives of compassion in current asylum seeker debate.

Genevieve Lloyd is an Emeritus Professor in Philosophy at the University of New South Wales and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She has published on the history of philosophy -- especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; on feminist philosophy; and on the relations between philosophy and literature. Her books include The Man of Reason: ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ in Western Philosophy; Being in Time: Selves and Narrators in Western Philosophy; Part of Nature: Self-Knowledge in Spinoza’s “Ethics”; and Providence Lost. Her latest book, Enlightenment Shadows, was published by Oxford University Press in July 2013.

Hobart
Date: Wednesday 27 November, 6pm
Venue: MS2 Lecture Theatre, Medical Science Precinct, 17 Liverpool Street, Hobart

Launceston
Date: Thursday 28 November, 6pm
Venue: Sir Raymond Ferrall Centre, University of Tasmania, Newnham campus, Launceston

RSVP: (please specify location) to: UTAS.Events@utas.edu.au or phone 6226 2521
Info: www.events.utas.edu.au

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