and readers should be prepared to move between Aristotle, Heidegger, modern science, and Deleuze without much provision for those not already partially familiar with the material.

Further, one cannot help but be struck by the sheer gravity of the project and the author's outrageous claim of bringing together philosophy's countless scattered identities with a transformed ontology that, in the end, does not stray far from either Heidegger or Deleuze in originality. But this is not a criticism so much as a response to the fascinating arrangement in which the author shows great command of both thinkers, including an awareness of modern science, and is able to show how all this might mean the unification of contemporary philosophy—in excess of the sciences.

De Beistegui's project is self-admittedly ambitious, and the scope of his questions makes weighing the success of the book difficult. "What of philosophy today? Of what is philosophy (still) capable? To what can it aspire" (ix)? The nature of his project caters to the perception that he is excessively naive or, more surprisingly, that his project might have merit despite its formidable ambition. His questions, of course, cannot find satisfaction in a single volume, but as a "first step" this work is a promising beginning.

JASON C. ROBINSON, University of Guelph

Challenging Postmodernism: Philosophy and the Politics of Truth
DAVID DETMER

In writing Challenging Postmodernism, David Detmer sets out four specific goals: to "write an accessible, nontechnical discussion of current philosophical controversies surrounding the ideas of relativism, objectivity, social constructionism, and truth," and which "defends the idea of objective truth and attempts to show that doing so is a matter of considerable political importance" (12); in so doing to "engage with the texts and arguments of the postmodern anti-truth squad" (11); critique postmodernism from a "politically leftist perspective" (12); and "approach these issues from a position heavily (and favorably) influenced by continental philosophy" (12). Detmer's book comprises nine chapters, titled "Husserl's Critique of Relativism," "Self-Referential Inconsistency," "The Argument from Disagreement," "Sartre's Defense of Truth," "Truth in Ethics and Politics: Sartre vs. Rorty," "What Is Objectivity? Sartre vs. the Journalists," "The Anti-Truth
Squad,” “The Limitations of Rationality and Science? Noam Chomsky, O. J. Simpson, and Alan Sokal,” and finally “Chomsky, ‘Political Correctness,’ and the Politics of Truth.” Despite its length, Detmer’s book in the end does not truly “engage the texts of the postmodern anti-truth squad” (11) at all and amounts to little more than a generalized critique of the postmodern (specifically relativist) epistemological positions espoused by a variety of contemporary sociologists, historians, scientists, and philosophers.

Detmer’s point of departure is to reiterate the criticisms leveled by Edmund Husserl in the prolegomena to his Logical Investigations against the psychologicist epistemologies of his time. Detmer espouses the contemporary relevance of Husserl’s criticisms and re-articulates them specifically to address the position of Tom Bridges, a contemporary thinker whom Detmer offers as an exemplar of the type of postmodern thinking he seeks to criticize. The point of this first chapter, and the analysis of Husserl it presents, is to establish the central concept to be employed throughout the book’s indictment of postmodern/relativist epistemologies—namely, what Detmer labels “self-referential inconsistency.” Simply put, Detmer, following Husserl, rejects positions that postulate the impossibility of achieving objective truth, for the substance of such statements precludes the possibility that they themselves could be objectively or universally true. For example, in response to the position that all truth is constructed, and valid, solely within the particular culture that articulates it, Detmer (repeatedly) poses the question, “If all ‘truth’ is merely relative to a particular culture, then is not this truth merely relative to the culture in which it is asserted?” (18) Detmer’s following chapter offers eight varying formulations of his notion of “self-referential inconsistency” along with examples to illustrate their sometimes subtle distinctions.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4 Detmer presents the bulk of his critical epistemological analysis, scrutinizing what one might call the common or pedestrian relativist position as well as more sophisticated relativist positions. Detmer cites comments made by comedian Steve Allen in a book called Funny People as an exemplary formulation of pedestrian relativism. He then takes Richard Rorty to task as an example of a more sophisticated relativist position. According to Detmer, both Allen’s and Rorty’s positions suffer from self-referential inconsistency. The only significant difference between the two positions is that Rorty anticipates Detmer’s criticism and attempts to defuse it by insisting that his claims are meant to be interpreted in terms of their ethical, rather than their epistemological, connotations. Detmer balks at Rorty’s attempt to reinforce his notion of truth by consensus through an appeal to authorial intention, and rightly so, as he mounts a wholesale rejection of Rorty’s position and his subsequent defenses of it.
The five remaining chapters of *Challenging Postmodernism* are devoted to Detmer’s critical political analysis, in which he attempts to draw out the political repercussions of the prevalence of postmodern/relativist positions. As already suggested by their titles, in these chapters Detmer draws heavily upon Sartre for his defense of objectivity with respect to both epistemological and ethical concerns, and upon Chomsky for his criticisms of the American media’s exploitation of (what Detmer would have us believe is) the naivety resulting from the prevailing relativism of contemporary Western society.

Generally speaking, Detmer is successful in his attempt to present an accessible, non-technical discussion of current philosophical controversies surrounding relativism, objectivity, social constructionism, and truth. It is this same aspiration, however, that limits Detmer’s ability to fulfill his announced goal of engaging the texts and arguments of the “postmodern anti-truth squad.” Indeed, Detmer does quote and make numerous references to the works of those figures he identifies, in Chapter 7, as members of what he calls the “anti-truth squad.” Indictments of self-referential inconsistency are leveled against such thinkers as literary theorists Michael Bérubé and Stanley Fish, as well as political scientist Walter Truett Anderson. On the other hand, only passing mention is made of figures like Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, in whose work the relativist epistemologies Detmer seeks to criticize are founded, and who occupy indisputably supreme positions of influence over postmodernists across disciplines. Given the seminal position in postmodern thought that Heidegger and Derrida occupy, the reader might expect that they would figure more prominently in a critique of postmodernism, especially one that seeks to engage postmodern texts, despite the level of abstraction, and subsequent inaccessibility, that such a treatment might require.

Despite these shortcomings, Detmer’s contribution to the ongoing debate concerning postmodern epistemologies, politics, and postmodernism in general remains a valuable introduction to the arguments, criticisms, and agendas of a few of the more popular representatives of postmodern thought.

DARRYL J. MURPHY, *University of Guelph*