

of the controversy surrounding interpretations of Nietzsche's thought. (To my recollection, he only refers explicitly to another commentator of Nietzsche once (on page 19)—Walter Kaufmann—only to dismiss him in a few sentences; he mentions “commentators” in general on page 129.) Ignoring the ambiguity in Nietzsche and almost all the contentions surrounding his philosophy both misleads uninitiated readers and misrepresents the material in a genuine way.

Related to these problems is Haase's sporadic use of quotations and citations. Nietzsche's writing—to a greater degree than that of most other philosophers—relies on the specific style of language in a crucial way (and this is indeed a point that Haase mentions). However, the beginning of the book exhibits a dearth of verbatim quotations—granted these do become much more frequent as the book progresses. Many of Nietzsche's thoughts are only summarized, seemingly with the aim of simplification (perhaps a forgivable shortcoming for a book intended as an introduction), but still with some loss of original content. Furthermore, even where quotations of Nietzsche's original works are used, Haase often cites only the volume and page number of the complete German edition, with no mention of the title of the work in question. This makes it difficult for the Anglophone student (and probably as well for the German-speaking student without the Montinari-Colli edition of the complete works of Nietzsche) to consult the original sources.

As a whole the book is well written and serves as a good summation—keeping in mind the great difficulty of this task—of the general significance of Nietzsche's thought to the history of philosophy. However this book is less than ideal as a first exposure to Nietzsche's thought.

Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2006; xi + 291 pages. ISBN: 978-0791468425.

Review by Santiago Zabala, ICREA/University of Barcelona.

There are two groups of hermeneutic philosophers in contemporary philosophy: those concerned with the legacy of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and the ones interested in the consequences of hermeneu-

tics. Both groups contain direct and indirect disciples of Gadamer, that is, some who studied in his seminars and some who never met the German master. Although Gadamer's preference for either group is irrelevant, it is certainly interesting to notice his admiration for those philosophers (Michael Theunissen, Richard Rorty, and Gianni Vattimo) who, at his one-hundredth birthday celebration on February 12, 2000, insisted on the consequences of hermeneutics rather than on his own indispensable contribution to the discipline. Although everyone in the hall captured his interest, his response to these philosophers' talks, as well as his own exchanges during the past fifty years with thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, Ernst Tugendhat, and Jacques Derrida, indicate his curiosity toward hermeneutic encounters, debates, and dialogues with other philosophies. Despite endorsements from Richard Palmer and Jean Grondin (two fervent defenders of Gadamer), Nicholas Davey's book does not focus on Gadamer's legacy in order to recognize his contribution but rather brings to bear the conflictual and provocative stance that is inherent to hermeneutics. This must be why the author states in the first pages of the book that "this is not an essay on Gadamer per se. Though he may have coined the term *philosophical hermeneutics*, what is at play within the movement of thought it represents far exceeds his authorship." (xi)

Today, hermeneutic philosophy has moved not only beyond Gadamer's legacy but also against some of the cardinal elements that he defined and that until now were considered essential components of the discipline. Davey offers eleven theses that suggest how "philosophical hermeneutics has a provocative character more radical than is often supposed" (xiii), that is, where understanding instead of being a "quiet process" leads to an "unquiet event." These eleven theses assert that philosophical hermeneutics (1) requires difference, (2) promotes a philosophy of experience, (3) entails a commitment to hermeneutic realism, (4) seeks otherness within the historical, (5) reinterprets transcendence, (6) entails an ethical disposition, (7) redeems the negativity of its constituting differential, (8) affirms an ontology of the in-between, (9) is a philosophical practice rather than a philosophical method, (10) constitutes a negative hermeneutics, and (11) recognizes the *mysterium* of linguistic being. (xiii)

As we can grasp from theses 1, 8, and 11, the goal of Davey's book is to venture into "what the experience of understanding entails" (xiii), in other words, what happens to us when we understand some-

thing. If, as Gadamer taught us, we understand only when we understand differently, then there is a particular ontological dynamic within the process of understanding that also “deprive[s] hermeneutic consciousness of any certainty of interpretation.” (xvi) However, such deprivation and the “weakness” of hermeneutics in the face of a final interpretation, explains Davey, are, in fact, “its strengths,” (xv) given that these are what allow change into the world.

The more one reflects on this excellent book, the more it becomes evident that the intention behind Davey’s project is to bring forward the subversive nature of hermeneutics by modifying Karl Marx’s famous statement in his *Theses on Feuerbach*: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.” If Gadamer and his disciples have ignored this aspect of hermeneutics, it is because of not only the phenomenological roots of hermeneutics but also an exaggerated concern to present it as a philosophical “position.” Although Marx is absent from Davey’s text, such intention is also inherent to thesis 9 (“philosophical hermeneutics is a philosophical practice rather than a philosophical method”), where interpretation is considered a “philosophical dis-position” (xvi) instead of a “philosophical position.” Davey insists that philosophical “hermeneutics is an antimetaphysical philosophy” where “Being only presents to us as *Ereignis* (event), as an appearing, relative to us, through time.” (xiii) These problems are dealt with in chapter 2 (“Philosophical Hermeneutics and *Bildung*”), which strikes at the heart of one of Gadamer’s cardinal concepts (*Bildung*), until now considered paradigmatic, in order to present hermeneutics as a conservative philosophical position.

As all readers of Gadamer know, the German master uses the *Bildung* argument primarily to demonstrate how, alongside the scientific body of knowledge (which still dominates our general metaphysical culture), there exists another knowledge that is not constituted by the “results” of scientific experiments, technological proofs, and objective truth, but rather by the “effect” of our traditions. *Bildung* implies the formation, cultivation, and education of the interpreter, that is, a process that allows “*Bildung haben*,” that is, “becoming cultured.” Nevertheless, unlike other hermeneutic philosophers, Davey does not analyze the *Bildung* in order to accuse or defend Gadamer once again for promoting bourgeois education or political conservatism through tradition, but rather to expose the ontology that shapes the possibility of understanding. Al-

though becoming cultured (*Bildung haben*) is always enabled by our rootedness in a given culture (*Bildung*), as Davey explains, there is “a complex ontological interdependence between *Bildung haben* and *Bildung*” (40), which are both also indispensable for our ability to understand scientific, technological, or objective results. However, what is this “ontological interdependence,” hence, Being?

Bildung haben requires the prior existence of a specific *Bildung*. However, no *Bildung* or culture can sustain its being without being renewed by the various processes of *Bildung haben* which constitute it. *Bildung* is therefore also ontologically dependent on *Bildung haben*. The being that is *Bildung* is transformed by the understanding it facilitates. (40)

This significant passage of chapter 2 shows how hermeneutics is an “antimetaphysical philosophy” because it does “not posit an ‘ideal’ humanity that education should anticipate and be disciplined by,” but rather implies “that humanity is a species whose very essence is always in question.” (45) Such a species, instead of believing in a truth capable of withstanding all assaults, prefers to engage in dialogues, conversations, and fusions with different *Bildungen* in order to become transformed “by the understanding it facilitates.” (40) This is why Davey admirably explains that what “is transmitted as tradition is not necessarily received as transmitted [because] reception is interpretative.” (50) As we can see, the “ontological interdependence” I mention above is not what is transmitted or received (Being as presence), but rather the “transformative processes” (*Ereignis* of Being) that enable new understanding. However, this new understanding is not the outcome of a peaceful or quiet exchange between the Being of a hermeneutic subject and the being of a tradition’s subject matter, but rather an engagement of “critical tensions” (53) that sustain it. This is why central to the “dialogical notion of tradition,” explains Davey, “is the idea of a continuity of intellectual conflict.” (xii) The inherent ontological conflict between the *Bildung* and *Bildung haben* that this book exposes indicates not only how understanding is constantly an “unquiet event” but also how it will always be a failure, that is, how it is hermeneutical. Knowledge (through Gadamer and other hermeneutical philosophers before and after him) has become the “dis-position” of thought, that is, the recognition that truth will always be an event of interpretations rather than the result of a process.

This brief review has not analyzed several other themes (e.g., ethics), concepts (e.g., transcendence), and authors (e.g., Wolfgang Iser)

that Davey confronts and that are essential to achieving a better understanding of his eleven theses. Nevertheless, considering the recent literature in continental philosophy, Davey's exposure of the subversive, provocative, and conflictive character of hermeneutics remains the most innovative aspect of his text.

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. New York: Fordham University Press, 2010; 55 pages. ISBN: 978-0823232451.

Review by Peter Gratton, University of San Diego.

Jean-Luc Nancy first came to prominence in the early 1980s through his depiction of the "inoperative community" (*la communauté désœuvrée*), which depicted a coming politics that addressed the loss of authority and classical political foundations in modernity. Nancy posited a thinking of politics that could, generally speaking, meet two demands: (1) turn from previous accounts of the political founded on some form of sameness (nationality, race, patriotic narratives), and (2) contest the banal forms of equivalence instituted through late capitalism. First published by Galilée in 2008, *The Truth of Democracy* is, like most of Nancy's works, deceptively short, under sixty pages in the English edition. Each chapter, some as short as two pages, offers a dense meditation on the meaning of democracy, and Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, the book's translators, have rendered quite a service with an elegant translation of his notoriously thorny prose.

Nancy begins by critiquing those who castigate "May 68"—readers on this side of the Atlantic recognise much of this rhetoric in conservative reactions to the "1960s" in general—as the origin of all that is wrong with contemporary society: a general irresponsibility, moral relativism, social cynicism, etc. These apologists for "managerial capitalism," he avers, are less interested in the truth of democracy than forestalling all popular threats to their view of politics "in the service of thrifty citizen-workers." (1) Meanwhile, there is no getting around two facts: that democracy is unrivalled as a name for political aspirations the world over, while it is also used as a cover for anti-democrats who don't speak their name: freedom, as the second President Bush argued, "is on