combinations and interrelations, the social orders that comprise civil society constitute an interpretive account of social reality broadly conceived. It is thus as an exercise in hermeneutics that Madison approaches questions of human rights, representative democracy, the market economy, and globalization, all of which are presently at the forefront of political discussion in both Western democracies and the various nations around the world currently endeavoring to cast off the remnants of authoritarianism and/or colonialism. Madison argues forcefully and persuasively throughout this text for a conception of political economy that is animated by a concern for equal liberty in the several realms of human agency.

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Posts: Re Addressing the Ethical
DAWNE McCANCE

This concentrated but lucid book shows that, far from being an evasion of the ethical, deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and other postmodern projects are crucially and in an ingenerate way about addressing the ethical. That is, as McCance’s title indicates, they are re (meaning “about”) addressing, as one addresses a letter, and taking into consideration, and speaking to (as one responds to a questioner) the ethical. About re-addressing it, too: about putting it on the agenda of an age that is consciously “after” (post) and asking how it is possible to write or to signify not only after modernism but in the wake of a century that by its inability to prevent a cycle of genocidal conflicts appears to have forgotten how to address ethical issues in any credible way.

It is true that the ethical imperatives driving deconstruction were always there for anyone willing to listen for them. When Stephen W. Melville wrote that “Derrida’s achievement has been to find a new and necessary way to assert, in detail, that the task of philosophy is criticism” (Philosophy Beside Itself), he clearly meant that philosophy has to do with ethos, and the critical appraisal thereof, and not only with logos. Unfortunately too many professors of philosophy, perhaps following misleading signals about deconstruction sent out by its North American interpreters, have been happy to leave Derrida et al. to their colleagues in French, English, and Comparative Literature, assuming that deconstruction and other “French” inventions were just about style and would have nothing to say to real philosophers. But as McCance shows in her introductory chapter, literary theorists have brought their own
kinds of blindness to the institutionalization of the postmodern. McCance shows how critics as different as Linda Hutcheon, Fredric Jameson and Alasdair MacIntyre, in their haste to announce (or denounce) and define for us the arrival of the “postmodern,” have ignored the repeated refusals of Derrida, Lyotard, Lacan, Kristeva, and Foucault to associate themselves with “postmodernism” and other “periodizing terms” (2). (The use of scare quotes around terms like “postmodern” and “French” is a feature of McCance’s writing, perhaps the inevitable result of her objectives in this book. It is necessary, as McCance persuasively argues, because the habitual misrepresentation of postmodernism as “French” thinkers theorizing “American” culture constitutes a “politics of forgetting,” a closing-off of heterogeneity or of le différend [131].) North Americans have read into the work of these “French” theorists “a nostalgic rhetoric of impossibility.” “According to their North American critics,” McCance continues, “what comes after postmodernism […] must be a return to what was before: to a subject and a project, to ethics as a discourse of possibility. It’s as if ‘the ethical,’ thought otherwise, were missing altogether from the work of ‘the French’” (2). It follows that these critics can set “postmodernism” against, say, feminism, Marxism, or Christianity, as lacking an ethical and a social-political position (17).

McCance’s introduction, then, surveys some earlier accounts by North American critics of what they choose to call “contemporary French thought” (Arthur Kroker, quoted, 6), “the French text” (Fredric Jameson, quoted, 14) or “poststructuralist theory and postmodern art” (Linda Hutcheon, quoted, 17). McCance’s strategy, rather obviously, is to rend the veil: to show how previous critics have travestied “the French,” to vaporize the chimera created by Linda Hutcheon and others (that strange amalgam of poststructuralist theory and postmodern art) and then to lead the reader back, or forward, into a closer, truer encounter with the sources. Readers who want to subvert this strategy can of course go straight to the main text, but the introduction should not be skipped entirely, as it contains the crucial statement of McCance’s own (ethical) concern, which is that by beginning with postmodernism already defined and periodized, these critics stifle the impulse for change that they claim to seek: “[T]he periodizing of postmodernism, along with the concern to position things in order and to put a project in place, represents a return to modern subjectivity rather than the possibility for radical change. Linearity replaces an entire system of metaphysical (hierarchical, oppositional) boundaries which, according to ‘the French,’ must be opened to change” (18).

McCance’s first achievement — first because it dominates the chapter on Derrida and also because it is foundational for the entire work — is to demonstrate that the interrogation of (philosophic) language which is the very lifeblood and currency of deconstruction is not mere play but philosophic criticism of a profoundly ethical kind. In his paper, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone
Recently Adopted in Philosophy,” Derrida’s thesis is that (as McCance puts it) “we cannot not deconstruct.” That is, “we cannot not ask ourselves: Who is writing? To whom? And to send, to desire, to dispatch what? To what address?” It is not however Derrida but language itself, in its “apocalyptic” structure, that issues this ethical imperative (40). To Derrida’s critics, such a claim is scandalous, a call to demystify which is itself mystificatory and irresponsible, but McCance deftly shows how Derrida’s grammatological interrogation of language both echoes and differs from the Enlightenment critique which it effectively challenges along with the Kantian ethic of autonomy. The title of the Cerisy paper plays on the title of Kant’s essay “Of an Overlordly Tone Recently Adapted in Philosophy.” Derrida’s critique of this essay shows how it works to “privilege philosophy as an order of homogeneity” (26), establishing the discourse of philosophy as a pure discourse uncontaminated by “personification and the body” (quoted, 31). The inadmissible of Kant’s moral philosophy, that from which philosophical discourse must be protected, is “Isis,” a figure that McCance glosses as (among other things) “prototype of woman,” “feminine secrecy,” and “emasculating the logos.” The moral law, in the Kantian scheme, is to be placed over not the person but “the body of (as) woman” (31). Here as in all deconstructive analysis by asking what a discourse excludes, what it cannot accommodate, the critic performs the ethically vital task of showing what (or who) pays the price of that discourse.

Lyotard’s critique of the liberal concept of justice based on the principle of individual autonomy is the focus of chapter 2. Autonomy, in the liberal model, means that one is oneself “the author of the law that one pays heed to” (Lyotard, quoted, 50). Thus McCance shows how, to Lyotard, liberal justice necessarily posits a subject or “transcendental” self that can be understood as the author of law as well as its subject. Addressor and addressee are assumed to exist in a realm of “conformity,” a “rule of the Same.” In our time, the events that Lyotard, following Adorno, refers to by the synecdoche “Auschwitz” were the suspension of this conformity of addressor (author of law) and addressee (subject of law): there was in “Auschwitz” no consent, no linkage between the ones decreeing death and the ones who died. “Auschwitz” revealed the modern subject or Selbst as a “transcendental illusion”: “It becomes necessary ‘after Auschwitz’ [...] to find a principle for linking otherwise than in conformity with modernity’s I-you rule of the Same” (53).

Questions of sexuality and gender predominate in the next two chapters, on Lacan and Kristeva. Previous commentators on Lacan have erred, McCance argues, by failing to realize that what matters most to (and in) Lacan is the nonrepresentable, located in the unconscious. Lacan does not deliver an ethics, then. He can not do so, if only because, to him, the signifier, language, “signifies” other than what it says (83). But Lacan’s work has an ethical effect
in the way it dramatizes the unconscious (86). Lacan, McCance shows, “comes to locate the subject of ethics not in the realm of law or conscious reason [...] but in the field of unconscious jouissance” (74). For Lacan, the signifying subject’s limitation is that, in its quest for the imaginary unity of identity it turns away from heterogeneity or difference. Analysis, to Lacan, thus qualifies as an “ethical” activity primarily because “it endeavors to break the circular return of phallic identity by having the analysand come to realize that when s/he addresses the analyst as a subject of certainty, it is the Other that s/he is addressing” (77).

Because the subject is constantly en procès (both “in process” and “on trial”), the question of ethics cannot be raised without simultaneously questioning the status of the subject, including the undecidability of sexual identity. Starting from a distrust of the signifier as deep as Lacan’s, Kristeva’s interrogation of the ethical leads her to the position that (as McCance has it) “A textual practice is ethical when it is ambivalent [...] Only when it both posits and pluralizes, pulverizes, ‘musicates’ meaning does the text fulfill its ethical function” (95). Kristeva’s own signifying practice exemplifies the ethical function of such writing, which knows what it is “after.” Her destabilizing textual practices, such as the use of double columns and boldface inserts in “Stabat Mater,” are one instance; at a different level, there is Kristeva’s rejection of feminisms that either “dream of a distinct place for women,” outside linear patriarchal history, or that ground themselves on the ontology and morality of patriarchy “with its conscious subject and his proprietary rights” (100-01). In “Women’s Time,” Kristeva imagines a third kind of feminism, which will subvert the modern version of the social contract — “an accord among equals (equal men)” — and resist the “violent separation of sameness from difference,” which for Kristeva, as (one might add) for Lyotard, has been the oppressive, murderous price of subjectivity and the social contract under modernism (101).

Finally, the chapter on Foucault argues that his many-sided career was always driven by ethical curiosity, not in the sense of “seek[ing] to assimilate what it is proper for one to know,” but in the sense of a curiosity “which enables one to get free of oneself” (Foucault, quoted, 127). Continuing in her agenda of freeing “French” thinkers from the misrepresentations of previous interpreters, principally, in Foucault’s case, Hayden White, McCance makes a strong case that “Foucault is not an apostle of doom — although some of his critics are” (121). Aware as Kristeva and Lyotard were of the intolerable price of the humanist and modernist “identity,” Foucault saw the vocation of writing as an opening to difference, “a chance ‘to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than what one is’” (129). When power is understood, as Foucault understood it, as deeply implicated in both knowledge and pleasure, an author is in danger of colluding with it the moment s/he settles within the boundaries of the modernist subject and what
it “knows.” So the notorious inconsistencies and discontinuities of Foucault’s work can be seen as the textual enactment of an ethic of resistance, which is “catachretic” in that it “works down” from what it is assumed we can know: “[T]he knower’s straying afield of himself [...] is Foucault’s autograph. And it would be this catachretic signature [...] that makes Foucault’s work important for ethics” (127).

_Posts_ is not the final word on ethical issues raised in postmodernism, and of course it does not attempt a “history” of “postmodern thought.” Such a thing would be problematic, in any case; and the reader who wants to learn about _Tel Quel_, Lévinas’ rejection of those questions of ontology which had preoccupied Heidegger and Sartre, or Sartre’s post-Marxist discovery (in the course of writing _Critique of Dialectical Reason_) that history is after all not essential to humankind, will have to look elsewhere. Despite these necessary limitations on her topic, McCance has written a superbly well-crafted, well-focused study that should quickly establish itself as the best introduction to the ethical challenges of French postmodern thought.

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_Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays_  
HANS-GEORG GADAMER  

_Praise of Theory_ is Chris Dawson’s translation of _Lob der Theorie: Reden und Aufsätze_, published in 1983 by Suhrkamp (Frankfurt am Main). The volume contains eleven essays written by Gadamer during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and are organized around such themes as theory and practice, language and reason, science and practical philosophy, and related topics. Among the several volumes of collected essays by Gadamer that have appeared in English in recent years, _Praise of Theory_ is among the more notable collections, and undoubtedly finds Gadamer at his most engaging.

The title essay takes up the issue of theory and practice in philosophy, and pursues further a line of argument earlier advanced in _Truth and Method_ and _Reason in the Age of Science_. Recalling the Greek connotation of theory (theoria) as simultaneously observation and participation, Gadamer regards theory as fundamentally a mode of comportment that exceeds scientific and utilitarian instrumentality. “[T]heory is not in the first instance a behavior whereby we control an object or put it at our disposal by explaining it” (p. 32), but is in the first place concerned with goods that are held in common. While ultimately practical in aim, theory is not properly reduced to the order