
Philosophers, being a slower and more cantankerous bunch, took longer to pay attention. Still, those interested in continental thought began to take a serious look at Derrida and deconstruction. Some, such as Richard Rorty and Jack Caputo, positively celebrated Derrida as a corrective for philosophy's worst tendencies.

Anglo-American philosophers, by and large, were not so impressed by what seemed to be a literary style rather than a rigorous philosophical one. Those of us in the tradition of Classical American Philosophy, fresh from a struggle for recognition within a community whose two major niches, the Anglo-American and the Continental, left no room for us, seemed satisfied to work out our exegeses of Pragmatists without paying much attention to trends sweeping the rest of the American Academy.

As we enter the 21st century, it would be a violation of our tradition if the adepts of Classical American Philosophy would not turn away from mere exegesis in favor of both attempting constructive syntheses for the new age, and entering into discussion with the other contemporary intellectual traditions.

Derrida may not be a new Bergson to our William James, but he is a serious thinker whose strengths and limitations could be highlighted by entering into discussion with American pragmatism. The best way to begin this would be to read *Of Grammatology* or *Speech and Phenomena*. A supplementary way is to read works such as the one under review.

The book contains a series of papers which were originally presented at a colloquium dedicated to the influence of continental philosophers in the United States. Pascal Engel's "The Decline and Fall of French Nietzscheo-Structuralism" discusses Deleuze. Jorge Gracia's "Can There be Definitive Interpretations," a sensible and constructive attempt to sketch a theory of interpretation, begins as a commentary on a text by Foucault. Herman Philipse writes about Heidegger. Newton Garver's "In Defense of the French" begins by claiming that in France "philosophy" has been more generously understood than its Anglo-American counterpart. It then provides a refreshing, though too brief, overview of several French philosophers, Sartre, Foucault, Serres, Weil, which indicates how that country's thought has more to offer than Derrida.
The other six essays, though, deal with Derrida. Four of these are sharply critical. Three of the titles suggest this clearly: "The Unhinging of the American Mind: Derrida as Pretext," by Dallas Willard; "Obstacles to Fruitful Discussion in the American Academy: The Case of Deconstruction," by David Detmer; and "Textual Imperialism," by Ward Parks. J. Claude Evans' "The Rigors of Deconstruction" challenges the view that Derrida is a careful reader of the texts on which he is commenting.

Of the two remaining essays, one is a lengthy defense of Derrida by Christopher Norris, "The 'Apocalyptic Tone' in Philosophy: Kierkegaard, Derrida and the Rhetoric of Transcendence." The other strives for a balanced view of Derrida, Joseph Margolis' "Deferring to Derrida's Difference."

What to make of such a collection? Imbalance and unevenness, typical for such anthologies, are present here as well. This reviewer found Philipse's summary of Heidegger clear and enlightening. Newton Garver's overview of French philosophy is tantalizing in suggesting new people to be studied, Weil and Serres. For those inclined to be critical of Derrida, Ward Parks' essay combines clarity of exposition with sharp social criticism. The celebration of deconstruction, he claims, is the triumph of "scholarly class snobbery ... when textualist philosophers and critics celebrate writing, they are engaged in a campaign of self-promotion, since the textual field is the scene of their major professional activity and the site of their greatest mastery" (73). On the other hand, the opening essay by Willard is merely a political diatribe pitching strong, rigorous, logically sound philosophy, against the soft, mysterious, metaphorical rant of Derrida and his followers. Willard casts his net of criticism so indiscriminately as to catch some pragmatist dolphins along with the deconstructionist tunas. "In any case, from Dewey, through C.I. Lewis, and on through Quine and Sellars, the views of knowledge arrived at really differ very little—especially in outcome—from what the deconstructionists hold, though the role of history, power, and mystical factors such as Derrida's 'living present', are of less significance in the continuing American tradition" (15).

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"Pragmatism, writes Diggins, advises us to try whatever promises to work and proves to be useful as the mind adjusts to the exigencies of events. Does pragmatism itself work (2-3)?" Diggins's pursuit of an answer to this question results in a major study of the intellectual and social history of American pragmatism. In the end, while neither affirmative nor negative, his