network of institutions for social government. This would be consistent with Ziarek's attention to Foucault's genealogy of discipline. Seeing liberalism in this way clarifies how antiessentialists like Rorty can defend versions of liberal theory that explicitly dissociate ethical practice from political governance: contemporary liberals are comfortable privatizing ethics because they bet that liberal social institutions can reliably pick up the slack. This, I take it, is the bluff that Ziarek wishes to call. By addressing antiessentialist forms of liberalism, Ziarek could further underscore the value of negotiating ethics and politics in terms that acknowledge their constitutive embodiment. It would also help clarify the way in which Ziarek's democratic political vision is (as the book's subtitle indicates) *radical*. Merely abandoning an individualist social ontology is, at this point in time, more *predictable* than radical.

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The Philosophy of Gadamer
JEAN GRONDIN
Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003; 180 pages.

Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is an intensely profound read, but one that is often made especially difficult by his frequent reference to figures and traditions that remain unfamiliar to most North American-trained students. Knowledge of these figures and traditions—for example, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Droysen, German romanticism, and humanism—is clearly integral to understanding not only the particular ideas that Gadamer conveys or critiques at any given point in his study, but also for understanding the history of the hermeneutical tradition as a whole. There are also numerous key themes interwoven throughout *Truth and Method* that can be easily overlooked or misunderstood, and Grondin consistently takes on the task of calling to our attention and explaining these themes. With the publication of Grondin's *The Philosophy of Gadamer*, the student now has a guidebook that not only provides a good deal of the historical information but also untangles Gadamer's intricate themes through careful explication and analysis. The book's table of contents is set up to correspond to the respective sections of *Truth and Method*, which makes it easy for readers to refer to specific sections for closer analysis. With Grondin's book, the student can devote less time to searching and more time to the study of *Truth and Method*.

The pervading idea informing Grondin's approach throughout *The Philosophy of Gadamer* is "that *Truth and Method* represents a privileged access to Gadamer's thought" (15). What Grondin proposes to accomplish with the text is a critical and detailed reading that takes into account the entirety of Gadamer's completed work. Grondin is well suited to this task, for not only was he personally well acquainted with Gadamer but he has also published numerous books and papers on his thought, including a recent, monumental, biography (*Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003]). Grondin also includes in the Introduction to this book a brief biography of Gadamer, and gives a helpful

overview of the historical context both for *Truth and Method* and for Gad-amer's other works.

The Philosophy of Gadamer is broken down into five chapters that map onto the three main sections of *Truth and Method*: 1) The Problem of Method and the Project of a Hermeneutics of the Human Sciences; 2) Truth After Art; 3) The Destruction of Prejudices in Nineteenth-Century Aesthetics and Epistemology; 4) Vigilance and Horizon in Hermeneutics; and 5) The Dialogue That We Are. Grondin's book maps onto Gadamer's exceptionally well, and does this in only 180 pages. The majority of Grondin's book is devoted to elucidating the central themes and ideas of Gadamer, providing historical background and the ideas of central figures in the hermeneutical, humanist, and natural science traditions, and clarifying parts of the text that can easily be misunderstood. Grondin also points out some of Gadamer's shortcomings and conceptual errors, sometimes quoting from an elder Gadamer himself (this critical addition to Grondin's study is especially helpful in approaching a balanced reading of *Truth and Method*). Grondin explains, for example, regarding Gadamer's notion of the experience of truth in art, that "[p]erhaps this aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutics is the most important, and also the most misunderstood. If it is misunderstood, it is because Gadamer in *Truth and Method* sometimes has a tendency, as he later recognized, to take an epistemological approach to the problem in talking of 'knowledge.'... He was the victim of too epistemological a connection with the problem of understanding that he wanted to unsettle" (19–20).

Grondin's book has many merits aside from these technical aspects. His writing style is relatively casual; the book reads like he is talking about an old friend—as, in fact, he is. The book also gets straight to the point, without ever losing its academic rigor. Grondin does an excellent job of illustrating the relevant figures and historical contexts that inhabit and surround Gadamer's magnum opus. He unfailingly provides his reader with the right amount of background information to understand Gadamer's main point, and also provides enough insight to be able to stand back and critically evaluate Gadamer's analyses and critiques. Grondin's book is, in short, an ideal companion to *Truth and Method*. *The Philosophy of Gadamer* is superb in its exposition of Gadamer's difficult and often complex ideas, as well as in detailing how Gadamer has advanced the modern study of hermeneutics, the philosophical problem of method, and the further development of Heidegger's ideas on language and thought. Grondin's book is essential reading for anyone who wishes to appreciate more fully both the bold general undertaking and the more subtle dialectical inroads of *Truth and Method*.

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Deconstruction and Critical Theory
PETER V. ZIMA
London: Continuum, 2002; 231 pages.

Deconstruction and Critical Theory announces itself as an important piece