

"Feminist Art History." Other articles that might especially interest CSH members include Galen Johnson's entry on "Maurice Merleau-Ponty," Daniel Herwitz's "Historical and Conceptual Overview" of postmodernism, Sally Banes' "Postmodern Dance," Charles Altieri's "Postmodern American Poetry," Mary Wiseman's "Poststructuralism," David Z. Salz's entry on "Theater," Robert L. Martin's "Ontology of Music," and Julie Van Camp's "Ontology of Dance."

To quote again from the promotional pamphlet:

The *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* serves students, teachers, and scholars in many fields: art and art history, anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, cognitive science, sociology, musicology, theater, cultural studies, media studies, and literary theory. The encyclopedia also serves artists, writers, performers, and others in the arts — attorneys, collectors, curators, and administrators — as an accessible source of basic knowledge.

In short, this work most definitely has something for everyone who is in any way interested in or affiliated with the arts. It will almost certainly remain the standard reference work in aesthetics for many years to come. The price of the four-volume set — \$495.00 — may render it beyond the financial reach of most individuals, but this outstanding reference work should most certainly stand at the top of the acquisitions list for every university library.

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After Modernity

JAMES RICHARD MENSCH

New York, State University of New York Press, 1996, 309 p.

Modern philosophy has long been under attack and, with it, the role of the self has also fallen under scrutiny. While Modern philosophers treat the self as a ground for knowledge, Postmodern philosophers see it as "dependent on its circumstances" (1). The ground for knowledge has shifted away from the self to history and moved towards the contingent structures of language.

But is this the best that we can do? James Mensch's book, *After Modernity*, suggests that we can do better than lament the loss of a ground for the knowledge of being. He claims that in attempting to overcome Modernity, many Postmoderns reiterate a priority given to time over being that is

characteristic of Modernity. In order to leave Modernity behind, we must rid ourselves of the claim that time grounds being: "Rather than making being depend on time, we have to make time depend on being" (153). By shifting the emphasis from time to being, Mensch proposes an alternative to Postmodernity.

Mensch traces the problem of a time-based philosophy through the works of numerous philosophers as diverse as Aristotle, Avicenna, Descartes and Sartre. He shows that Plato's emphasis on constancy as a criterion for Being does not show the relation of a thing's essence (which is constant) to its existence (or the origin of appearances) (12-15, 24). Augustine's answer to Plato is that time is the ground for Being. Time cannot be understood as a being, since it is always passing from the nonbeing of the past and to the nonbeing of the future. But our experience of being occurs in time, and must be based on time. Also, the dual nature of time, as a sequence of moments and as an overall presence to being, corresponds with the dual nature of being as existence and essence. The existence of a thing is determined by the sequence of its appearances, while the essence of a thing is revealed as a presence that persists throughout the sequence of its appearances. Being, as existence and essence, is correlated on the basis of time as sequence and presence (Chapter 2).

According to Mensch, Modernity blossoms in the work of Husserl. The concept of time was treated narrowly by many philosophers in the eighteenth century (where time was viewed only in terms of a sequence of causally related appearances). The essence of a thing, then, remained beyond our experience; it was knowable only through representations of a thing in the mind (39). Husserl restored the knowledge of essences by treating time in the same way that Augustine did. A general presence is intended by each moment in a temporal sequence because each moment is dependent on the others. As moments pass from the future and to the past, they gain their meaning as a temporal moment in relation to other moments. This means that at each moment, all of the other moments, future and past, are made present as a sense of depth. Each moment intends the other to be in a certain relation to other moments, just as our past determines the present to follow it and to be followed by the future. By virtue of this "diagonal intentionality" (44-47), no moment is seen as simply caused by prior moments, but as effecting a whole and single presence to reality. The whole presence, in turn, allows us to experience a whole object within the sequence of its appearances. By treating time as presence in addition to time as a sequence of events, Husserl is able to use time to unite the appearance of things and their essences once again and to restore time as the ground for being.

There are two major improvements that Husserl makes to the thesis that time grounds being. One is that time is not taken for granted but grounded in a timeless consciousness that precedes the temporality of the subject. In

Chapter 4, Mensch expands the idea of a timeless consciousness to claim that we already have a sense of the Other before either time or subjectivity is established. The ground for being, then, is time only in so far as time is grounded in transcendental consciousness, freeing the ground for being from the contingency of the empirical self. The other improvement is that we are able to see the essential structures of things themselves without regard for any particular appearance, by considering the formal structure of the contents of the appearances. There is a set of possible content that we share with others, an "alphabet of experiences" (80) that we appeal to in understanding the essence of what we experience. We are led not only to a timeless consciousness at the root of our experience of being, but to a structure of essences that we read like an alphabet. The ground for being, then, is a timeless opening to the essences that being presents to us.

The improvements to the thesis that time grounds being provide an ambiguous position for philosophy: from one side, being is grounded in temporal consciousness, and from another side, consciousness is timeless and an opening to being. Mensch's suggestion is that we must confront this "janus head" (191) of a timely and timeless ground for being by discarding the thesis that time grounds being and by "crossing the line" (202) from time to being. He appeals to Aristotle's conception of time as relative to changes in the appearances of substances in nature. Rather than making time primary, Mensch claims that time is the result of the actualization of substances according to their essences. The essence of an acorn is its function as a growing tree, and temporality is the effect of change as that function is fulfilled. Our experience of the tree is the function of the tree's development, so that it is an effect of the function of the tree, and not a condition for its appearance. In this way, time and consciousness are grounded in being (Chapter 11).

Mensch's solution seems to be little more than a reversal of the traditional view. His appropriation of Aristotle is very interesting, going far beyond a simple essentialism to embrace the view that being involves a complex structure of inter-related functions, out of which temporality and consciousness develop. But his renewed Aristotelian position seems to simply assume that change is prior to time, and that substances are prior to consciousness. At one point Mensch refers to 'flesh' as a reversibility between the roles of consciousness and its object, but then later dissolves the balance of the two in order to emphasize objects (as functions or essences) over consciousness (188-89). I wonder if it is not possible to overcome the problems of Modernity by treating flesh as irreducible, rather than as a janus-head to be confronted.

I would like to commend Mensch for an interesting and thought-provoking work. Rather than spelling out the consequences of the fall of Modernity, Mensch has given much thought to where we can go from here. In the

process, he provides a number of reflections on artificial intelligence, the mind-body problem, and multiple-personality-disorder, claiming that computers have intentionality and that MPD patients, in having radically severed temporal structures for their lives, literally possess different selves at the same time. Mensch also provides a refreshing interpretation of the history of philosophy, most notably in his descriptions of Husserl and Aristotle. For anyone who takes seriously the problems of Postmodernity, Mensch's book is a powerful force to be reckoned with.

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Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3

RICHARD RORTY

Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, viii + 355 p.

It is difficult to remain unmoved by Rorty's work, and that's surely his intention. In this third volume of his philosophical papers, the provocation continues, even though (or, perhaps, precisely because) the tone he strikes is decidedly un-apocalyptic. This latest collection contains seventeen essays, most of which have already appeared in print sometime in the last decade, and this serves to maximize our convenience even as it diminishes any sense of occasion. Although the conjunction in the title suggests a philosophically intimate connection between the themes of truth and progress, the table of contents reveals a somewhat less coherent study. The first eight papers read like responses or critical notices to the work of predominantly analytical philosophers like Davidson, Putnam, Searle, Dennett and other usual suspects on current debates about truth, relativism, and skepticism. The next four essays, which depart significantly from the epistemic concerns of Part One, fall beneath the heading of "Moral Progress: Toward More Inclusive Communities." As a group, these four papers are vintage Rorty; collectively they are the most philosophically wide-ranging and rhetorically free-wheeling of the entire book. The final five papers deal generally with the relationship between philosophy and human progress, but they, unfortunately, tend to read like beefed-up book reviews, where the books reviewed either deal with figures in the history of philosophy or are written by a 'Continental' philosopher (broadly construed).

Somewhat belatedly perhaps, Rorty does attempt to articulate the themes of truth and progress in his brief Introduction. He begins by reiterating his familiar complaint that Western philosophy's preoccupation with "the intrinsic nature of reality," along with the supposedly indispensable correspondence theory of truth, have only led to hundreds of years of tiresome