

thinkers as Heidegger, Lévinas, Gadamer, Vico, Wittgenstein, and Cavell. However, the works of Vico, Wittgenstein, and Lévinas are not significant for any of the contributions in the volume. A more preferable approach to this Introduction might have been to introduce the volume either through a brief sketch of the historical neglect of the fields of rhetoric and hermeneutics or through a discussion of the influence of a single thinker who is central to all the essays (e.g., Aristotle or Gadamer). As it stands, the editors do not provide a sufficient unity to the collection as a whole.

The disjunction between the editors' discussion and the contributions appears most sharply with regard to the investigation into the ethical dimension of the intersection between rhetoric and hermeneutics. The Introduction suggests that the ethical concept of conscience provides a "Atopical 'first principle' for both disciplines" (2) that underlies all rhetoric and hermeneutic activity. Insofar as Part IV of the volume is introduced as the section that treats the ethical dimension of rhetoric and hermeneutics, one would expect to find this claim to be elaborated there in greater detail. For the reader, it is then quite disappointing to find that while the contributors indeed deal with the ethical dimension of rhetoric and hermeneutics, none of them mention the concept of conscience at all. The thematic disjunction between the Introduction and the essays leads the reader to conclude that the editorial efforts were misplaced. In the Prologue and Introduction, the editors are more concerned with developing their own ideas than with their editorial duties, in particular, the duty to introduce the essays by providing an appropriate contextual background for the reader. The collection could have been very significant, either if the editors had chosen articles to fit their personal interests, or if their efforts were spent in the interest of unifying the essays into an organic whole.

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### ***Working Through Derrida***

GARY B. MADISON, Editor

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Over the last decade Rodolphe Gasche, Christopher Norris, and David Wood have published books that attempt to illustrate the philosophical seriousness and rigor of Jacques Derrida's work. Such publications have sparked a renewed interest in the philosophical significance of Derrida's writings. Despite the initial rejection of his work in much of Anglo-American philosophical circles, Derrida's thought has indeed proved to be an enduring inspiration for contemporary continental thought. Whether one is a critic or

supporter of Derrida, it is becoming increasingly clear that his work is worthy of serious attention, and this requires rising to the challenge of "working through Derrida". In this volume, Gary Madison has gathered together several of the most important essays written on Derrida over the past several years. The contributors range from significant philosophical thinkers in their own right to some of Derrida's most knowledgeable and severe critics. For the newcomer to Derrida, this volume serves as a helpful guide through the confusing maze of Derrida's oeuvre. For the advanced scholar, this book brings together several key, but hard-to-find and out-of-print, essays in one volume.

The essays can be divided into roughly two categories: (1) sympathetic elaborations, and (2) incisive critiques of various aspects of Derrida's writings. The former grouping includes pieces by Barry Allen, Richard Kearney, Drucilla Cornell, Robert Bernasconi, Richard Rorty, John D. Caputo, Richard J. Bernstein, and David Hoy; the latter is made up of essays by Nancy Fraser, Dallas Willard, John Searle, and M. C. Dillon. I begin here with the latter grouping.

Nancy Fraser's 1984 essay, "The French Derrideans," does not directly address Derrida's writings, but those of his two most important French 'disciples,' Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, both of whom have since become quite well known in Anglo-American philosophical circles. Her essay focuses on papers presented at a colloquium held in 1980 at Cerisy, France around Derrida's essay "The Ends of Man". Her particular interest lies in the "Political Seminar" directed by Heidegger scholar Christopher Fynsk, and Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's contributions to this seminar. Fynsk's essay calls attention to what he sees as a 'retrait' of the political in Derrida's work. This *retrait* is a double gesture: it is an avoidance, or withdrawal from, direct engagement with political questions on the level of politics (*la politique*), but is at the same time a praxis on the level of the political (*le politique*), a questioning concerning the essence of the political. This distinction was echoed by Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe at the seminar and during subsequent meetings at the Center for Philosophical Research in France. Fraser finds this use of Derrida's work important but limiting. She applauds the critical analysis of politics from a deconstructive standpoint since it allows social theorists to raise a number of important questions concerning links between politics, economy, and larger social justice issues. Fraser argues, however, that there are limits to this form of political praxis, challenging Derrida and his followers to leave their 'transcendental safe house' and join the ranks of those engaged in a form of more direct political praxis.

The most disappointing essay from Derrida's critics is John Searle's "The World Turned Upside Down," in which he criticizes Derrida through Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction* (a move reminiscent of Habermas in

*The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*). No matter how useful Culler's book may be, it is not a substitute for engaging with Derrida's actual writings. Fortunately, this deficiency is remedied by two excellent essays that critique Derrida's work from an informed and balanced position. Dallas Willard performs a phenomenological critique around the theme of intentionality in Derrida's earlier writings on Husserl. M. C. Dillon's "The Metaphysics of Presence" presents patient and meticulous readings of Derrida's essays "Ousia and Gramme" and "Differance" in order to locate an alternative phenomenological conception of time, language, and presence that avoids Derrida's criticisms of Husserl and the larger phenomenological tradition. While more orthodox Derrideans will likely take issue with Willard's and Dillon's critical remarks, these two essays clearly pose strong challenges to Derrida from within the phenomenological tradition that are worthy of a careful and considered response.

One means of formulating a response to such challenges is to return to Derrida's earliest writings on phenomenology and language (*Introduction to the Origin of Geometry*, *Speech and Phenomena*, and *Of Grammatology*) and offer charitable readings of them. Anyone familiar with these texts will know that they are some of Derrida's most difficult writings to decipher. Barry Allen's essay eases this task considerably by cogently tracing the linguistic heritage of Derrida's earlier works on language. He explains the importance of Saussure's and Heidegger's theory of language, and takes elements from Derrida's 1988 "Afterword" to *Limited Inc.* to clarify some of the stickier issues in his theory of language.

In "Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?," Richard Rorty takes up his by now familiar position of de-philosophizing and paring down Derrida's more 'serious' philosophical efforts. Rorty's response to criticisms such as those of Willard and Dillon is to stop taking Derrida's early work so seriously. Rorty finds that the attempts to legitimize Derrida's work by demonstrating its philosophical significance (and here he opposes not only Derrida's more philosophically inclined critics, but supporters such as Gasche, Norris, and Wood who defend the philosophical seriousness of Derrida's writings) overlook the more playful, private side of Derrida's recent writings that Rorty finds more enjoyable and therapeutic. John Caputo's lengthy response to Rorty's reading of Derrida ("On Not Circumventing the Quasi-Transcendental") demonstrates the limits of Rorty's reading in a fairly convincing way, but it will ultimately be up to the reader to decide for herself which reading of Derrida is the better of the two.

The issue of Derrida's ethics and politics taken up by Fraser in her 1984 essay has since become perhaps the most discussed aspect in studies of Derrida. Essays by Richard Kearney, Drucilla Cornell, and Robert Bernasconi each deal with important aspects of the ethico-political dimension of Derrida's work. In "Derrida's Ethical Re-turn," Richard Kearney detects

a shift in Derrida's work after 1972 to more explicitly ethical themes. According to Kearney, this shift is coterminous with a move away from Heidegger's influence to a more Levinasian position. Kearney defends his reading through an analysis of Derrida's "Comment ne pas parler," "Circumfession," and "Force of Law". He finds in these texts an attempt by Derrida to develop an increased and more exacting sense of ethical responsibility, as well as strong evidence against the charge that Derrida's writings lead us into the abyss of moral nihilism.

Drucilla Cornell's extended reading of Derrida's "Force of Law" in her "The Violence of the Masquerade" also takes up a similar line of defense of the ethical and legal importance of Derrida's texts. She applies her reading of "Force of Law" to the legal case of Bowers vs. Hardwick, in which Cornell finds evidence of the force of law, violence, and the aporia of justice of which Derrida writes in his essay. Like Kearney, Cornell maintains that Derrida's writings on ethics do not result in nihilism, but rather a more nuanced conception of justice and the infinite responsibility entailed by undecidability.

Robert Bernasconi continues this type of defense of Derrida's ethico-political writings in his "Politics Beyond Humanism". Bernasconi, who is perhaps best known for his fine essays on the relation between Lévinas and Derrida, turns his attention here to Derrida's politics and writings on the topic of race. Bernasconi deals with two important texts by Derrida that have received little attention in the secondary literature: "Racism's Last Word" and a piece on Nelson Mandela entitled "The Laws of Reflection". Despite the fact that Bernasconi is not altogether in agreement with Derrida's reading of Mandela, and although he worries about the possible debilitating effects of deconstruction on politics, he ultimately supports Derrida's gesture of interrogating metaphysical humanism as a response to the call of the other. Bernasconi notes, however, that there may come a time when political gestures other than deconstruction will be necessary.

The volume concludes with two essays on the Habermas-Derrida debate. To call the exchange between these two important thinkers a 'debate,' however, is somewhat misleading. First of all, Habermas's two essays on Derrida in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* show little more than a hasty reading and passing familiarity with Derrida's work. Secondly, Derrida himself has written very little directly on Habermas except for a few passing remarks in a footnote to the "Afterword" of *Limited Inc.* and *The Other Heading*. Thus, it has been up to other authors to construct this debate on their own, constructing hypothetical exchanges between the two thinkers. David Couzens Hoy's "Splitting the Difference" takes up this exact strategy, pitting hypothetical Habermasian and Derridean positions against one another on the topics of modernity/postmodernity and the politics of deconstruction. Richard J. Bernstein's "An Allegory of Modernity/Postmodernity" also does much to get this debate off the ground by offering exemplary readings of the

political thrust of both Habermas's and Derrida's work. Although Bernstein ultimately weighs in with the Habermasian position, this does not prevent him from presenting Derrida's work thoroughly and charitably. For readers interested in approaching Derrida through their familiarity with Habermas, there is no better starting place than these two essays.

Overall, Madison's collection of essays provides a valuable research tool for all those contending with Derrida's writings. After spending some time working through Derrida, one will appreciate having these essays at hand so that one's study can continue from a broader, more informed critical perspective. While not intended as a substitute for actually reading Derrida, the essays in this collection go a long way in rendering this often challenging task a great deal easier.

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### ***Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics***

JEFF MITSCHERLING

Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1997, 245p.

The Polish philosopher, Roman Ingarden, is best-known for his work in aesthetics found in *The Literary Work of Art*. However, as the title of Jeff Mitscherling's book indicates, we are meant to view Ingarden in a new light. According to Mitscherling, Ingarden should be considered as an ontologist *first* and an aesthetician *second*. In fact, it is Mitscherling's thesis that we cannot understand Ingarden's work in aesthetics without first grasping how it is meant to ground his realist ontology (1). Mitscherling devotes the first chapter of his book to a brief biography of this little-known philosopher, concentrating on Ingarden's career and those events which informed it. Ingarden was a student and life-long friend of Husserl who, early in his career, became convinced that Husserl's phenomenology was committed to a dangerous idealism. Mitscherling paints Ingarden's entire philosophical career as an attempt to lay bare Husserl's idealist position only to refute it.<sup>1</sup>

Ingarden's interpretation of Husserl is the topic of chapter 2. Mitscherling takes a stand against Ingarden's critics who claim that Ingarden simply misunderstood Husserl in so far as he incorrectly took Husserl's transcendental idealism as implying a metaphysical idealism.<sup>2</sup> These critics generally believe that Husserl was an *epistemological* idealist while remaining a *metaphysical* realist (49). According to Mitscherling, these critics miss Ingarden's point. While Husserl believes that the world of physical objects exists independently of consciousness, he does not consider this world to be the *real* world: "For Husserl [...] there exists no autonomous in-itself that