

Introduction

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On 26 April 1983 the Department of Philosophy and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences of DePaul University co-sponsored a graduate student conference on contemporary European philosophy. The following essays and commentaries were presented at the conference. They were presented there and reappear here in Auslegung not solely because of their intrinsic philosophical merit, but also because of their representational value. These essays and responses manifest the high level of philosophic reflection on issues in contemporary European philosophy that graduate students are capable of achieving.

Moreover, they represent an attempt to establish a forum for graduate students working in this area. Those students whose primary interests lie in contemporary European thought frequently find themselves working in isolation. Since, with only a few exceptions, philosophy departments in the United States have an Anglo-American emphasis, many graduate students studying and writing outside of this mainstream sometimes feel disenfranchised. This conference was organized primarily with the aim of overcoming this isolation and disenfranchisement. It sought to develop--at least for a day--the sense of community so necessary for philosophic growth.

The papers themselves represent a broad cross-section of topics in contemporary European philosophy. Algis Mickunas's keynote address serves as an introduction to the principal issues currently under consideration by those studying European philosophy: the transcendental, the hermeneutical, and the semiotic. These same themes are discussed by the conference participants. Thus, while the relation of consciousness and history is a recurring theme in Marxist thought, this relation receives a contemporary reexamination by Michael Sugrue. Alan Schrift's investigation of Nietzsche's hermeneutical significance provides a new way of addressing the current interpretive problematic of relativism and dogmatism.

Sebastian Gardner's discussion of Sartre, Lacan, and Derrida helps locate these three enigmatic thinkers within a common horizon: the meaning of the subject.

The presentation of metaphor and metonymy in Lacan by Dirk de Schutter offers a clear and easily understandable (yet non-reductionist) account of Lacan's overall philosophic project. Finally, Cynthia Willett-Shoptaw's Derridean deconstruction of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations offers an indication of how contemporary European thinkers can be situated within the Anglo-American tradition.

Of course, these essays do not exhaust the list of issues in contemporary European philosophy (as the commentaries by Eric Berlin, Tony Steinbock, and Michael Greene illustrate), yet, as a group, they do offer an adequate sample of the current philosophic concerns of some graduate students. As we found out at the conference itself, these essays and commentaries provided for a rich exchange of ideas between graduate students. It is hoped that their publication in Auslegung will help continue this dialogue.