

Book Reviews

Discourse and Reference in the Nuclear Age. J. Fisher Solomon. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. pp. xv + 298. Reviewed by Bill Martin, DePaul University.

In a 1984 essay titled, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)," presented at a colloquium on "nuclear criticism," Jacques Derrida made a turn within the linguistic turn, toward the question of nuclear war. In this essay Derrida argues that two seemingly disparate subject matters, language and nuclear war, are in fact intimately linked, inasmuch as "events" that are beyond imagination have bearing on the question of reference in more ordinary circumstances. Nuclear war can only be considered as a "fiction:": the proposition that "a nuclear has not yet happened" is the necessary presupposition for making any other statement. If indeed a nuclear war had occurred, nothing else could be said, and in fact, it would be as if nothing at all had ever been said. Nuclear war would mean the erasure of not only the future, but the present and past as well. This fictionality, however, cannot be confined solely to nuclear war, which in Derrida's view, cannot really be referred to, because of its capacity to erase all other referential statements. Rather, all other discourse is also fictionalized in being marked by the non-occurrence of nuclear war as necessary presupposition. (Derrida's essay is in *Diacritics*, v. 14, n. 2 [Summer 1984].)

Discourse and Reference in the Nuclear Age is an extended analysis of this supposed fictionality that uses Derrida's essay as a beginning point. Though ostensibly a work in literary theory, the work is philosophically sophisticated and important. Of course, the boundary between philosophy and literature is one of the inherited distinctions that is challenged both by Derrida and Solomon. Derrida's challenge—which Solomon characterizes as having gone too far at just the point where referential discourse seems problematized beyond repair—is resisted by Solomon, who proposes a "potentialist metaphysics" as a competitor to deconstruction. We will turn to this proposal in a moment.

Before turning to his response to Derrida, Solomon himself does an exemplary job of setting the context of the nuclear criticism colloquium in particular and the politicization of literary studies in general. Essays such as Derrida's have both encouraged and been encouraged by this political turn. This turn has obviously not occurred in a vacuum. However, the highly-charged political atmosphere in 1984 (when the "Nuclear Criticism" conference was held. In the context of such events as the Soviet downing of the KAL 007 commercial airliner, probably a spy plane, when a nuclear war seemed quite possible) was perhaps nothing new in itself. Solomon asks the provocative question, "Since the nuclear era is now well

over a quarter century old, one might ask why such a critical genda is emerging *now*" (p. 6). Furthermore, Solomon continues, "Implicit in such questions . . . is a further, more general one: Why are literary scholars now turning their attention to political questions at all?" (ibid.) Solomon gives a compressed but quite satisfactory account of the reluctance of American literary critics to challenge establishment politics for most of this century, especially during the first Cold War and the detente years. "What changed all this was the apparent resumption of the Cold War following the election of the Reagan administration" (p. 8). But now we must turn again, to developments within literary criticism itself, to understand how a field with "a long tradition of apolitical aestheticism" was able, finally, to make an opening to the political context of literature. (I hasten to add that Solomon's analysis applies just as well, *mutatis mutandis*, to the sterile climate that prevailed in academic philosophy during the same period.) Solomon gives credit where it is due, to structuralism and poststructuralism. These approaches take it that the essential questions of literature, language, and society are very much bound up with each other.

While applauding the rigorous establishment of this connection between literary criticism and political concerns, Solomon questions whether this particular opening has not been achieved at too high a cost. A quotation of some length serves to demonstrate Solomon's basic complaint concerning deconstruction and other poststructuralist arguments. While Solomon concedes that deconstruction might be effectively deployed in the resistance to bourgeois authority, he further argues that:

... once one begins to deconstruct, it is difficult to see where the process might stop. For, if we follow the logic of difference rigorously, we find that the articulation between gnosis and praxis, between the *word* of the critic and the *act* of the politician, is a peculiarly troubled one, fissured by an irreducible *difference* between the two that would leave us undecideably suspended between word and act at the very point of our politico-critical inauguration.

This potential aporia of politico-critical discourse is not a wholly fanciful one, for it is precisely what is suggested in Jacques Derrida's invited contribution to the Cornell colloquium By looking closely at the series of logical aporias that Derrida's essay uncovers in the face of the nuclear referent, we may find not only a challenge that a nuclear criticism might well have to take up before establishing its theory and agenda but a challenge to anyone seeking to cross unambiguously from the critical text into extracritical

reality, a challenge, in other words, to reassess historical and referential realism in a nuclear age. (pp. 16-17)

Solomon's reassessment of realism is a mixed affair. On the one hand, his characterizations of Derrida's arguments (in a chapter entirely devoted to "No Apocalypse, Not Now") are at times reductive and self-serving. The following passage is a good encapsulation of his overall argument.

... there is still something missing from Derrida's analysis of the nuclear referent, from his suspension of calculation and belief in the face of the "unheard-of." For the reality to which the nuclear referent refers, a reality that Derrida does not deny but rather suspends, is, in Aristotelian terms, a *potential* reality as well as an actual one. The nuclear referent, in other words, refers to an actual situational configuration of political and technological conditions that bear within themselves their own concrete potentialities for future development. The futurity of the nuclear referent is bound to the present not only by a tie of logical possibility but by one of empirical potentiality as well, as potentiality that *can* be calculated throughout the calculus of probability.

There is a material difference, that is to say, between modal possibility and empirical potentiality. (pp. 28-29).

Much of this argument can be countered by the analysis found in "No Apocalypse, Not Now" and other of Derrida's texts (remembering, of course, that Derrida's essay is simply a development of his general set of textual strategies and cannot be read apart from them—a fact that Solomon does not give sufficient attention to). As with his readings of other texts, whether they be literary or philosophical in the standard sense, or some other piece of the broader social text, Derrida never proposes that his own nuclear criticism cancels the significance of other forms of criticism (on the contrary, Derrida continually refers to the *parasitic* nature of his work). It is significant, however, that game theoretical arguments concerning the calculative power of nuclear warplanners almost always stress that the logic of deterrence is a losing proposition. Derrida's "suspension," rather, is of the supposed teleology of those accounts of some possible future that depend on the discourse of ends—apocalyptic discourse being a subset within this genre. It is this discourse that draws us toward the counter-possibility entailed in one possible future, that of nuclear war, the cancelation of possibility itself. Derrida's strategy is to suspend this end, to stave it off.

Solomon wonders whether the cost of suspending the end is the suspension of present realities and their subsequent development as well. His basic counterposition is between Derrida's supposed fictionalization of the present and the potential reality of *real* futures. Except on one point, it seems unimportant to carp on Solomon's interpretation of Derrida, because, despite what I think are deficiencies in that interpretation, his positive program very much merits careful examination. This one point, however, is all important: Solomon's interpretation of Derrida really must be challenged when he assumes, repeatedly throughout the book, that Derrida's claim of the fictionality of discourse in light of the nuclear referent is a form of subjectivism. This is not an unusual complaint about Derrida, but it is unfounded. Derrida never reduces categories of language and discourse to categories of consciousness—in fact, the thrust of his entire *oeuvre* has been against the philosophy of subjectivity and consciousness.

If Derrida's argument is then seen to be geared toward both the "objective" and "fictional" nature of language, it is not clear that he is so far away from Solomon's arguments for a potentialist metaphysics. While Solomon argues that the other crucial distinction between his argument and Derrida's is that the latter also seems to critique "structural ahistoricism" only by "indefinitely deferring the historical present, rather than restoring history" (p. 205, word order altered), Solomon seems insensitive to or unaware of the fact that Derrida discovers this deferral in the structure of temporality itself. Derrida would argue that it is not he who is "deconstructing" history, but rather history that deconstructs itself—as any text tends to. Furthermore, this self-deconstructing history, if "read" correctly—through a kind of activism that might be called "interpretive praxis"—opens possibilities that may have some chance of keeping the nuclear referent in the realm of fictionality. Of course there is a cost for this, but it is an unavoidable cost, in the nuclear age.

Though I find Solomon's potentialism not entirely successful as a critique or alternative to Derrida, his argument is a valuable one in and of itself, for it demonstrates what it will take to still defend a new old-fashioned realism—what Solomon somewhat tendentiously calls "objective realism." Certainly, whether an argument is a fit rival to Derrida's is not the only standard of theoretical merit, but in this case the square-off is indeed that between Solomon's realism and Derrida's "subjectivism"—what I would call Derrida's "contextualism" or even "contextual realism."

Solomon presents the case for potentialist metaphysics in chapters on Aristotle, Karl Popper, Stanley Fish, Saul Kripke, Paul de Man, Ferdinand de Saussure, C. S. Peirce, Martin Heidegger, and Marxism. This is an altogether enchanting journey, and portraits are accurate and informative. In the interests of space I will simply confine my comments to the beginning and end of this journey.

In two chapters on Aristotle, Solomon argues that material potentials, the stuff of possible futures, are actualized not so much by a "lack" that the present experiences, but rather by an overabundance that cannot finally be contained in the present. In a universe that is infinite, the context of the actualization of this overabundance is a present that is never finally closed or totalized, in a universe that is infinite. This understanding of the context of potentiality was challenged in Newtonian physics, but has been revitalized by quantum physics. Turning to Karl Popper and the prospects for realism in the age of quantum mechanics, Solomon presses the case for "extratextuality" against notions, associated with Derrida and others, of "intertextuality." Warning against the conflation of literary and scientific discourse, Solomon argues that, although each partakes of a certain indeterminacy, these indeterminacies are not all equivalent. Scientific discourse, in his view as well as Popper's, is "extratextual"; that is, this discourse refers to a world that exists "independently of ourselves." To assimilate that world to its interpreters, as in some readings of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, traps the reader in a world of "subjective speculations." Though "science makes no claim to certainty," it is supposed to contrast with literary discourse, in that it "tests conjectures against the background of reality, not discourse" (p. 101). Where philosophy fits into this picture is a question that Solomon does not raise, but one might suppose that it wavers--on good days it is with Popper and science, on bad days with Derrida and subjectivism.

There are two essential, closely-related, problems with this view. First, Heisenberg's principle is not simply the insertion of the interpreter of subjectivity into "reality," it is the introduction of the problem of meaning into a conceptual space that can ever be free of that problem. If that introduction seems to complicate science in messy and troubling ways, then I suggest that Fisher and other "realists" try to do science without consideration--on any level, mind you!--of the question of meaning. This is a point raised not only by Derrida, especially in his critique of the neo-positivism of Levi-Strauss, but indeed, and in exemplary form, in the work of the Vienna Circle (their view was that Einstein was the one who really introduced the question). The second point is that Solomon's formulas depend on definitions of "inside" and "outside" that Derrida argues are untenable. Perhaps the world does exist "independently of ourselves"--Derrida has never denied this, and I certainly wouldn't either--but so do "ourselves." Derrida's argument, contrary to widespread misconceptions, does not claim that the problem with truth, reference, and other traditional categories of metaphysics and epistemology, is that these categories must contend with indeterminate mediations that stand between the subject and the world. For Derrida, the subject, "ourselves," is no less a product of these mediations (which therefore should not be called "mediations," strictly speaking).

Solomon continually stresses both the metaphysical/epistemological and the ethical-political consequences of the confrontation between Derrida's "fictions" and realism. A passage that Solomon quotes from Popper serves well to demonstrate this aspect of the book:

... the attack on realism, though intellectually interesting and important, is quite unacceptable, especially after two world wars and the real suffering--avoidable suffering--that was wantonly produced by them; ... any argument against realism which is based on modern atomic theory--on quantum mechanics--ought to be silenced by the memory of the reality of the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (p. 83)

In other words, horrendous, avoidable suffering renders certain lines of argument no longer important or interesting. This is itself a very interesting argument, similar in tone to Adorno's claim that "After Auschwitz, all culture is garbage." Fortunately, we are relieved of the responsibility of pursuing this argument in the present context, given that Derrida is not a proponent of relativism (a better tag would be "contextualism," or even "contextual realism," though Derrida would interrogate the politics of the claim to "realism").

The legislative tone of Popper's pronouncement, however, which Solomon echoes throughout the book, is also quite interesting. In the final chapter, Solomon turns briefly to his own version of ethical-political realism. Whereas, in his view, Derrida, as well as other poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, have offered a "guerilla criticism" that looks to the margins and to difference for political energy and motivations, Solomon offers--significantly in the last paragraph of the book, which seems to say something about how much he really knows or cares about politics (yes, in the "real" sense)--the "realistic politics" of the parliamentary part of the Green Party, the Nuclear Freeze, and the Union of Concerned Scientists. He likes this last group because they present "quantifiable and testable data"--something Derrida supposedly never offers. Concerning the U.S. war against the people of Vietnam, Solomon remarks that the "antiwar margin" was heeded by the "'Silent Majority' of the Nixon years" only after "divisive opinion had come to be replaced by the incontrovertible facts of fifty thousand pine coffins" (p. 274). More hard data. That this data was generated by the efforts of a heroic, marginalized people who engaged in a guerilla war to oust an invading superpower is something that Solomon lets slip through his realistic picture. But then, it never has been exactly quantified how many Vietnamese died resisting the U.S.

Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter. Edited by Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer. Albany, NY: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1989. 352 pages. Reviewed by Ted Vaggalis, University of Kansas.

In April of 1981 in Paris, H.-G. Gadamer and Jacques Derrida engaged in an exchange of views, or so the story goes. Now an event is seldom, if ever, unambiguous and this one is no exception. In fact, in reading the accounts of both the participants and the witnesses one begins to wonder if anything of significance even took place. (4) Whatever questions there may be regarding the meaning of this event, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: the Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* provides a unique, accessible perspective on two dominant strains of thought in contemporary continental philosophy: hermeneutics and deconstruction.

Dialogue and Deconstruction is at least two texts, if not more. One text is the exchange itself between Gadamer and Derrida, along with Gadamer's subsequent responses to the encounter. The other text contains the reflections of the witnesses who attempt to interpret what happened and assess its significance. In what follows I will focus on the encounter itself, although the essays that constitute the other text are all very good, especially those by John D. Caputo, David Farrell Krell and Donald G. Marshall. Since Heidegger and Nietzsche are the two historical figures who form the backdrop to this book, the essays by Krell and Caputo provide a full analysis of the important role these two thinkers play. Marshall's essay takes the opportunity to acquaint the reader with 'dialogue' and 'écriture,' the two central concepts in the works of Gadamer and Derrida.

Hermeneutics and deconstruction appear to occupy a common ground in a Heideggerian critique of traditional metaphysics. Both deny the possibility and the necessity of a transcendental philosophy. Instead the focus is on language where the primary philosophical issue is the indeterminate nature of meaning. (1) But here all similarity ends. Gadamer and Derrida offer two very different conceptions of language. Gadamer views language as an open-ended conversation where meaning is grounded in a dialogue which aims at agreement. Derrida, on the other hand, claims that meaning is the product of language which is a system of signs caught up in a play of presence and absence which generate chains of meaning that lack any ultimate truth or meaning. The difference between these two views is so deep that the reader is faced with the possibility that hermeneutics and deconstruction cannot talk with each other. As it turns out they do not and now I would like to consider why this is so.

Gadamer begins his essay "Text and Interpretation" with a brief history of hermeneutics from its origins in theology and jurisprudence. Here the aim was to interpret sacred and legal texts in order to reach agreement on the meaning of these texts. However, during the period of

German Romanticism a transformation occurred when it became evident that it was not just texts that required interpretation and understanding, but also "the general relationship of human beings to each other and the world." (21) Thus, the fundamental presupposition of hermeneutics is that everything in language seeks to be understood. (25) According to Gadamer, understanding is achieved when there is agreement on meaning. This is the point of the the following passage:

The printed text should fix the original announcement in such a way that its sense is unequivocally understandable. Here the task of the writer corresponds to that of the reader, addressee, interpreter; that is, to achieve such an understanding and to let the printed text speak once again. To this extent, reading and understanding mean that what is announced is led back to its original authenticity. The task of interpretation always poses itself when the meaning content of the printed word is disputable and it is a matter of attaining the correct understanding of what is being announced. (35)

Now the idea of reaching agreement or accord is especially important in the context of this encounter, because Gadamer hopes to use it in order to meet Derrida's critique of hermeneutics, which rejects the notion that meaning is achieved by agreement. In fact, Gadamer wants to show that Derrida's emphasis on difference is intelligible only if there is a prior consensus or agreement.

For Gadamer, hermeneutics takes as its starting point Heidegger's analysis of understanding as an existential or fundamental way of comporting oneself towards the world. (22) As such, understanding provides a structure that does not allow for any privileged standpoint and lets beings reveal themselves for what they are. This structure displaces the subject-object dichotomy and opens up to view the world and its interrelationships that make meaning possible. (See 22-23) The model of hermeneutic understanding, then, is that of the Platonic dialogue. Here there is no privileged starting point, no dogma against which one must be measured. Rather the interlocutors find themselves in a situation where there must be agreement about what is in dispute in order to find a resolution to an issue. But this raises the problem of the literary text whose meaning has been lost or distorted or the problem of the psychopathology of everyday life where what is meant has hidden itself. How is it possible to reach agreement on cases like these that resist any attempt at understanding? Gadamer maintains that it is especially in these cases that one can find this hermeneutic interpretive structure at work. (41)

In this form of interpretation, whatever is alienating in a text, whatever makes the text unintelligible, is to be overcome and thereby cancelled out by the interpreter. The interpreter steps in and speaks only when the text (the discourse) is not able to do what it is supposed to do, namely be heard and understood on its own. The interpreter has no other function than to disappear completely into the achievement of full harmony in understanding. (41)

Now all of this anticipates Derrida who, in earlier writings as well as here, referred to the understanding achieved in hermeneutics as an extension of the metaphysics of presence. (53) Gadamer, in his explication of understanding is careful to point out that the understanding he is talking about is not to be confused as a metaphysical gesture of closure. For hermeneutics, unlike the Hegelian dialectic, there is no master concept (or presence) to constrain the play of meaning. Play is indeterminacy which cannot be mastered. And yet, it is not arbitrary because it is a play grounded in the text itself. (35)

Turning to the essays by Derrida, one comes to what may be the most enigmatic and frustrating part of the book. His responses to Gadamer are so brief and seemingly irrelevant, it is as if there is no response. (2) Yet, Derrida in his own way does answer. The reader must be prepared to read these essays with patience in order to achieve a fairly revealing view of his philosophical outlook. Most important, careful study will allow the reader to see why, according to Derrida, hermeneutics and deconstruction fail to communicate with each other.

Derrida sees language as irreducibly plural and ambiguous. The world we live in reflects this, communication is constantly being interrupted, meaning deferred and disputes left unresolved. For Derrida this experience is so common that he genuinely doubts we ever have the experience of being understood or of having our meaning confirmed by others. (53-54) The ideal of communication is simply another one of those fictions imposed upon us by the tradition of metaphysics. This is because metaphysics "presents itself as the description of experience as such, of presentation as such." (54)

Nowhere is the ambiguous nature of understanding more evident for Derrida than in philosophy. A prime example of this can be found in Heidegger's famous interpretation of Nietzsche as the "last great metaphysician." Derrida's reason for choosing this example is a strategic one. Earlier Gadamer had referred to it as a model of the kind of understanding sought by hermeneutics. (25) But he also claimed that it established the claims to rigour made by hermeneutics against the merely subjective valuations of the will found in Nietzsche's work and embraced by French philosophers like Derrida. In response to all of this, Derrida

shows that a close, careful reading will reveal Heidegger's texts to be full of misunderstandings and misreadings. What is the source of this hermeneutical misinterpretation?

Derrida's reading of Heidegger locates a "blind spot." Heidegger failed to see that the only way to save Nietzsche from a certain "biological" reading was to undercut his own hermeneutical strategy. (66) In sketching out an alternative he had to exclude phrases and key passages (or simply misrepresent them), that would count against his reading. This "selective reading" is, for Derrida, typical of all hermeneutical understanding. It ignores the undecidable nature of a signifier which always escapes the totalizing gesture of a hermeneutical reading. This is what causes the distortion, the misreading. The very categories that Heidegger brings with him subjugates Nietzsche's texts and refuses to let them speak.

This, then, is essential ambiguity!... In saving Nietzsche, Heidegger loses him too; he wants at the same time to save him and let go of him. At the very moment of affirming the uniqueness of Nietzsche's thinking, he does everything he can to show that it repeats the mightiest (and therefore the most general) schema of metaphysics. When he is pretending to rescue Nietzsche from this or that distortion—that of the Nazi for example—he does so with categories that can themselves serve to distort.... (65)

On Derrida's account, then, hermeneutic agreement is essentially misunderstanding. It represents a veiling of that difference that produces meaning. As such, hermeneutics and deconstruction cannot talk to each other. No agreement is possible given their incommensurable presuppositions. Any encounter between them will be doomed from the start.

I thoroughly enjoyed *Dialogue and Deconstruction*. It is a wonderful collection of essays that addresses the most basic, and important, issue in post-modern philosophy concerning the conditions that make understanding in general possible. While the book is engaging and challenging, it will appeal to both specialist and non-specialist. It requires a great deal of patient labour on the part of the reader; however, at journey's end one feels amply rewarded for the time and effort spent. I would add only one final cautionary note. Do not expect to find yourself prepared to take a stand either with Gadamer or Derrida. The essays are too provisional for that and leave a great deal unanswered. Instead, one should open oneself up to the ambiguity of this text and follow out its play.

The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection, by Rodolphe Gasché. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989. 348 pages. Reviewed by David Jacobs, Vanderbilt University.

Implicit in reviews of secondary texts on philosophers are standards with which scholars should use when examining major thinkers of our philosophical tradition. These standards, I assume, are built up after consulting a variety of secondary sources and by being swayed by their argumentative style and presentation. Such 'classic' secondary texts are few in number, but I think we can add Rodolphe Gasché's *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*. This book reaches the standard that should be explicitly maintained when reading, writing, and reviewing a secondary text.

The book's depth is easily apparent and I will turn to it after a brief discussion of what I hold to be minor problems in the text. Gasché begins with what appears to be an introductory overview of the 'problem of reflection'. This problem centers around what may seem to most of us as a perennial problem in the history of philosophy, but the stress here (and rightly so) is given to those thinkers who place a "systematic significance" on reflection beginning with Descartes as he makes self-reflection the foundation of his metaphysics (p. 17). Gasché gives us a "preliminary" definition of reflection:

Reflection is the structure and process of an operation that, in addition to designating the action of a mirror reproducing an object, implies that mirror's mirroring itself, by which process the mirror is made to see itself. (pp. 16-17)

The problem that arises from reflection (i.e., "self-reflection") is that in this mirroring one must mirror one's own mirroring apparatus (i.e., thinking, consciousness, etc.) as an object in order to have self-reflection. But by doing this, that which perceives is also that which is perceived; hence, different types of reflection may concentrate on different aspects of the reflective process. Through reflection, we can concentrate upon what takes place "within us" ("empirical reflection"); we can turn our thought away from our reflection's relation to objects and examine the relation among objects themselves ("logical reflection"); with "transcendental reflection," we can attempt to determine and secure "the conditions of possibility of valid cognition" (p. 19). Or, finally, with "absolute reflection," we can reflect the totality of the formal moments (i.e., Hegel's "phenomenology") of consciousness (p. 20).

I will not attempt a full reconstruction of the fine discussion that Gasché gives us on this problem. This section, constituting nearly a third

of the book, can and should be read alone by those studying reflection or consciousness from Descartes through German Idealism.

After this deftly handled opening section on the problem of reflection, Gasché then begins a very broad explication of Derrida's philosophy without a thorough integration of the problem of reflection; he does connect the discussion of Derrida to the problem of reflection a few brief times, but with this excellent introduction and the subtitle of the text one anticipates that Derrida's philosophy and the problem of reflection would be the key issue for the text. I cannot fault him with his fine interpretation of Derrida's work, but only with the connectedness of his own text as a whole.

With Gasché's concern with, and sympathetic reading of, Derrida's texts, he examines the differences between Derrida and others, almost attempting not to show Derrida's indebtedness to other thinkers. I would have preferred that he has also examined those philosophers who had a great influence on Derrida in more depth; Derrida's originality could have been, in the end, expressed better. The author does, of course, exhibit Derrida's influences, but only in a brief way. For example, after a short explication of Heidegger's ontological difference (i.e., the difference between Being and beings), Gasché quotes (p. 203) Derrida from the *Margins of Philosophy*: "There may be a difference still more unthought than the difference between Being and beings." Gasché adds that:

Considering the metaphysical concept of the name and what it is supposed to achieve [more about his below in this review], it is impossible to name this more originary difference. The name *differance*, by emphasizing the active movement of difference that is comprehended by this infrastructural construction but that does not exhaust it, economically accounts for the dissimilarity of the diverse functions that such an originary difference would have to carry out.

Again citing Derrida:

... this *differance* would be the first or last trace if one still could speak, here, of origin and end.¹

The merit of Derrida's thought withstanding, I would have appreciated it more had Gasché spelled out (in this example and elsewhere in the text), through the examination of Derrida's works, Derrida's grappling with

¹Both citations from Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 67.

Heidegger and Husserl—because there is an obvious debt *and* an obvious attempt to step beyond the thought of the latter two.

The strengths of Gasché's work easily outweigh these small objections. It compels those with only a small knowledge of Derrida to take him as seriously as a landmark philosopher of the 20th century and confronts experts of Derrida's philosophy to take into consideration this interpretation (Gasché poignantly criticizes what he would appraise to be incorrect readings of Derrida). I will illustrate one of the strengths by considering the problem of the transgression of metaphysical concepts.

"Deconstruction," Gasché instructs us, is "an attempt to account by way of infrastructures for a variety of essential differences and contradictions within the philosophical discourse" (p. 163). Predominant in the history of metaphysics and philosophy has been a conceptual network that necessarily (and usually covertly) separates a concept with its proposed other or negation.² These metaphysical oppositions result, literally, into *aporias*; when there is an attempt to think something and its negation there is *no passage* (*a-poros*) from one to the other—they cannot be thought together according to the law of non-contradiction. (In many cases, though the oppositional concepts are placed within a hierarchy, providing, e.g., for movement, generation, destruction, etc.) To deconstruct is to show that in an opposition the other (i.e., the negation, or contrary concept) helps constitute that which it opposes; it is not *merely* its opposite. The limit of a concept is that point where its opposition begins; the other necessarily comes into play, for without it a concept could not have its own meaning—its meaning is set off by its own conceptual boundary provided by its other. Without the other, a concept (from the Latin *concipere*, 'to take in') would take in everything without even distinguishing between itself and that which it takes in, which is an essential trait of a traditional concept—i.e., to be a ground for the grounded. With the other, a concept is given its limitation to what it can and cannot take in—it is given its *essence*.

How does Gasché direct this discussion? He exhibits how this examination *is* and *is not* a transgression of metaphysics. Gasché writes: "Deconstruction ... proceeds by a 'double gesture', a phase of reversal and a phase of reinscription" (p. 172). The hierarchy of conceptual binary oppositions is reversed, but not in the sense that Being's priority is switched with nothingness; it is a recasting of the traditional concept and structure of hierarchy itself (p. 171). The second step is inscription, in which "the hitherto repressed traits of concepts, or traits held in reserve, are restored to their generality, to their power of generalization, and to

² E.g., the *einai* and *ouk einai* (Being and nothing) of Parmenides which has remained as *the* oppositional structure in our history; rest and motion; and the subject and object dichotomy.

their generative force." Concepts are usually thought of as (1) self-sufficient, (2) in binary oppositions and hierarchical, and (3) standing in solidarity (p. 164). By restoring concepts to their generality, generalization, and generative force, one can view how concepts work in a conceptual network without the blanket of solidarity and closure which provides a smokescreen for metaphysical thinking—i.e., oppositions can be thought in the mutually reciprocal relationship. "With this liberation of the traits held in reserve by the concepts within philosophy," writes Gasché, "new 'concepts' erupt into the territory of philosophy" (p. 172). They are 'new' both in that they are in addition to traditional concepts and in that they cannot proceed within the confines of the traditional; they cannot be thought to be self-sufficient units, in hierarchies, and in solidarity.

This breaks down the all-pervasive attempt in philosophy at homogeneity, unity, and totality, which characterizes traditional metaphysical thinking, and, thus, opens thinking to a heterology (this is obviously a place where Gasché does connect the introduction to the rest of the text—he shows how Derrida's heterology is combatting Hegel's totalizing metaphysics). In fact, deconstruction attempts to show that traditional concepts *are* heterogeneous (as can be gathered from the discussion of a concept and its opposition). By depending on its other to be itself *as* homogeneous, a concept destroys its homogeneity by its true heterology. Gasché tells us:

Deconstruction is an attempt to account for the various and essentially heterogeneous aporias and discursive inequalities with what I have called infrastructures. These minimal structures are both the grounds of possibilities of the canonical philosophical gestures and themes and their ungrounds, that is, that which makes them 'impossible.' (pp. 174-175.)

Is this then a deconstruction of, and removal from, metaphysics—i.e., a possible transgression of metaphysics? A necessarily ambiguous answer arises: it is and is *not* a transgression of metaphysics. Deconstruction must 'enter' into metaphysics (or, better stated, must use metaphysical concepts) in order to enter any discussion at all; within this realm it uses the concepts provided but attempts to open "philosophy to its Other". (p. 176) The heterology discussed above is one such other that is always at play with traditional concepts—but of course not apparently so. Again, is this a true transgression of metaphysics? Derrida writes: "There is *not* a transgression, if one understands by that a pure and simple landing into a beyond of metaphysics...."³ To attempt to go 'outside' of

³ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of

what one is now 'inside', is to invoke a conceptual opposition which one is trying to deconstruct. "Opening the discourse of philosophy," writes Gasché:

... to an Other that is no longer simply *its* Other... is an accomplishment that makes not the end but the structural limits of philosophy's autonomy and autarchy. Philosophy comes to a close, paradoxically, because its heterological presuppositions constitute it as, necessarily, always incomplete. (p. 251)

Gasché's treatment of the problems that these theories entail is exceptional; he is always attempting to combat both those pretentious 'deconstructionists' who want to rally behind slogans without the strain of a thorough inquiry *and* unsophisticated critics who have not spent the time reading Derrida. Gasché's work masterfully explicates throughout the interconnections in Derrida's own conceptual network. Whether one is a student of philosophy, a deconstructionist, a literary critic, or any combination of the above, Gasché's work should be read as a standard in deconstructionist literature. The text would be a welcome addition to the libraries of students of continental philosophy who wish to better acquaint themselves with modern (and postmodern) endeavors.

The Crisis in Philosophy, McCarthy, Michael H. McCarthy. State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y., 1990. 383 pages. Reviewed by Greg Hodes, University of Kansas.

A cynic's response to the title of Professor McCarthy's book might be that philosophy is nearly always in crisis and that when it is not it is intolerably smug. But cynics notwithstanding, both the contemporary crisis in philosophy and what Professor McCarthy has to say about it deserve to be taken seriously. If Parmenides and Heraclitus did not see eye to eye and if Kant and Hume stood on different sides of almost every issue, nevertheless none of them doubted that the others, no matter how wrong-headed, were doing philosophy or that philosophy was worth doing. This has not been true in contemporary philosophy. It is only recently that "analytic" and "continental" philosophers have begun to speak to each other or, at any rate, that the same persons were willing to write sympathetically about both.

What Professor McCarthy brings to this situation is an insightful and vigorous application of the thought of Bernard Lonergan.¹ McCarthy is one of a growing number of Lonerganians who are at home with contemporary analytic and continental thought as well as with classical philosophy. His analyses of Husserl, Wittgenstein, Frege, Quine, Sellers, and Rorty (not to mention Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, and Kant) are worth reading even if one has reservations about the philosophical position which guides the analyses.

According to the author, philosophy has never recovered from the scientific revolutions of the 17th and 19th centuries:

The first stage of modernity attempted to subvert the epistemic claims of metaphysics and theology. In the second, historicist state, the normative disciplines of ethics and epistemology were severely unsettled. Taken in its entirety, the modern age has left philosophy in crisis, with its past discredited and its future without prospect (p. xvi).

The age of Newton rejected philosophy as speculative and its methods as rationalistic, while the age of Darwin saw both science and philosophy as natural events evolving along with other natural events. Hume and Kant were responses to the first revolution; Quine's naturalized epistemology and Rorty's pragmatic deconstruction are responses to the second. At the root of these unsuccessful maneuverings, McCarthy argues, is an unrecognized "classical consciousness" ultimately derived from Aristotle (of all places):

[The difficulty is that]...the theory of science outlined in his [Aristotle's] logic focuses not on the process of discovery but on the permanent achievement to which it leads.... Because the conclusions of science are founded on intuitively evident principles reached through inquiry, direct challenge to the truth of these principles puts the claims of science in jeopardy.... His is an innocent confidence that foundational truths exist, that they admit of eventual discovery, and that their truth and explanatory priority will compel assent (p. 7).

¹Lonergan, Bernard, J.F.: *Insight: a Study in Human Understanding*; Philosophical Library, N.Y., 1970 For an excellent introduction to Lonergan, see: Meynell, Hugo; *An Introduction to The Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan*; Harper and Row, N.Y.

McCarthy argues, successfully I think, that this assumption is shared by philosophers as diverse as Descartes, Hume, Kant, Frege, and Wittgenstein.

The essence of "classical consciousness" is said to be the presupposition that scientific and cultural foundations are to be sought in the *products* of cognition rather than in the *cognitional operations* themselves. Following Lonergan, the author argues that it is not any paradigm, theory, axiom, *a priori* concept, vocabulary, language or language game which is foundational; rather, the foundation consists in the invariant acts of experiencing, inquiring, hypothesizing, and judging which generate and evaluate these. It is the evident failure of the classicist assumption that makes the claims of Kuhn and Feyerabend seem plausible. On the other hand, to understand our own understandings and intellectual curiosity is to hold in a single view not just this or that stage of science, but scientific development itself. Moreover, it is claimed this "insight into insight" is constitutive of philosophical thought.

Only a brief sketch of Lonergan's cognitional theory and its implied metaphysics is possible here. Knowledge comes with the judgment that the evidence justifies the propositional claim. But judgment is not possible without a hypothesis about which to judge, and a hypothesis presupposes a question to which it is a proposed answer. A question, in turn, presupposes an experience into which one has inquired. This analysis of cognition is said to be invulnerable to radical revision because any such revision would necessarily employ, and depend for its credibility on employing, the very operations and motives it is attempting to put into question. (The reader is invited to try the experiment for herself.)

Corresponding to conscious experience prior to inquiry is sensible matter or, more generally, "data;" corresponding to the intelligibility that inquiry seeks in the data and expresses in concepts and hypotheses are conjugate (relational) and central (substantial) form; and corresponding to the judgment that the hypothesized intelligibility is verified in the data is the fact of existence (*esse*, what is the case). Together, these metaphysical elements are said to constitute the necessary structure of proportionate being (of sensible being); for proportionate being is just what satisfies the disinterested desire to know because it is accurately perceived, intelligently grasped and reasonably affirmed, that is, it is the content or object of the cognitional operations described above. As the main lines of cognitional structure are unrevisable, so the main lines of the isomorphic structure of the world are settled.

In this account, experience, understanding, and judgment are not related by similarity: a concept does not "look" like the content of an act of sensing or a mental image, and the *yes* or *no* of judgment does not "look" like either of these. Instead, they are said to be related functionally: One

experiences in order to inquire and hypothesize, and one hypothesizes in order to judge concerning the truth or falsity of the hypothesis. Professor McCarthy argues that the "crisis" in philosophy is the result of fixating on the product of only a fragment of the whole group of operations which are definitive of human knowing. For example, the empiricist mistakes "what is most obvious in human knowing with what human knowing obviously is," while the pragmatists, including Rorty, miss the point of their own intellectual curiosity and thus lose touch with knowing altogether.

The attempt to understand logic, science, mathematics or philosophy psychologically has gotten a bad name--'psychologism'. And deservedly so, for as Frege persuasively argued, each person's ideas, insofar as they are features of his or her individual psychological apparatus, are private and cannot form the basis of an objective science. Psychologism also fails to provide for normativeness. Obviously, no empirical account of how people actually think is relevant to *modus ponens*, but unless we grasp the validity of this argument form there can be no empirical account of anything. I think, however, that Professor McCarthy successfully distinguishes Lonergan's intentionality analysis from such psychologism. It is a crucial "psychological" fact about your desire to know, Reader, that it demands that psychologism be rejected. The core of Lonergan's philosophy is just this immanent demand for a normativeness which transcends the merely immanent. Clearly, this exigence is intrinsic to intellectual curiosity itself, directing our inquiry long before that inquiry yields any conceptual product. Indeed, one's inquiry can be successful only if it is faithful to this need.

It is also important to note that Lonergan's analysis is very different from Kant's. Lonergan does not purport to deduce the *a priori* forms and concepts which must be constitutive of our minds for mathematics and science to be possible. Rather, he offers an exposition of the acts of understanding which in fact constitute our coming to know mathematics and science. He does not set out the conditions for any possible experience, but rather puts us in touch with the conditions for knowing what is the case about any possible experience. Lonergan is a realist in the sense that he thinks we can know both sensible and non-sensible beings as they really are in themselves independently of our knowing them. But his realism is more interesting than such traditional classifications suggest; the key to it is the role of judgment. For Lonergan, the judgment which is knowing is not a synthesis of concepts or of concepts and intuitions. It is the act of cognition which, while not complicating the hypothesis intrinsically, affirms or denies correctly that what the hypothesis proposes is the case. If we cannot succeed in doing that, Lonergan insists, we cannot succeed in knowing anything at all. In the *yes* or *no* of judgment, the 'for me', 'for us', 'for our minds' is necessarily discharged. (In 'It is such and such for me', the 'for me' cannot meaningfully condition the 'is'.) For example, if we really know that we can

only know appearances, it cannot merely appear that we do; for the issue at stake is what is really the case about our knowing, not what is apparently the case. For Lonergan, what is reasonably affirmed is real not because our knowing something makes it so or makes it appear to be so, but because grasping unconditionally what is the case is the *whole point* of affirming and denying propositions—and would be the point of any denial of the claim just made. Thus, for Lonergan the appearance-thing-in-itself dichotomy is misleading. For even if we had veridical sense experience of things-in-themselves, that would not be knowing them; on the other hand, all and only what is grasped in a correct judgment is known as it is in itself.

McCarthy has untangled some of the knots responsible for the contemporary crisis in philosophy. But it seems to me that there is a deeper cause with which he has not come successfully to grips, one that has been with us from the beginning: the chronic inability of philosophy to solve its problems. It is this inability, it seems to me, that motivates, proximately or remotely, the maneuverings of Descartes and Kant, Hume and Wittgenstein, Rorty and the deconstructionists.

As an example, consider Professor McCarthy's treatment of naive realism. He insists, following Lonergan, that the existence and nature of material objects are not known merely by experiencing them. What is given in experience is neither appearance nor reality but data, and data are promoted to knowledge of being—including knowledge of the reality of the real and the apparentness of appearance—by inquiry, insight and judgment. But, presumably, he also agrees with Lonergan that, given the *quid sit* and the *an sit* of inquiry, one looks to the data of sense to justify an affirmation of the actual existence of a material object. But this leaves the skeptical problem where it was, for how do insight and judgment determine which contents of sense or imagination are veridical and which are not? Would there be a crisis in philosophy if we knew the answer to that one?

Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Edited by Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1984. 241 pages. Reviewed by Paul Fairchild, University of Kansas.

The editors of *Ethics and Politics* have compiled a collection of writings presenting perspectives on a variety of political events in the last half-century. Each document raises one or more ethical issues concerning the actions of those involved in the events. In the comments following the documents, the editors pose questions highlighting the issues and provide background on some of them as a way of leading users of the book into a further examination of the ethical questions involved. They also suggest additional readings of related philosophical and political works to provide

a theoretical framework for understanding the significance of the cases. This suggests the usefulness of the work in a course on applied ethics where the focus is specifically political.

Dividing its subject into two major topics, process and policy, the work examines issues such as the legitimacy of government violence, deception, abrogation of promises, and official disobedience as related to the first topic, and policy analysis, distributive justice, equal opportunity, and the conflicts between liberties and other values under the second. One may argue whether the subject admits of this kind of division and whether the division itself obscures the real nature of the issues presented by the events. But in a seminar to which this work could well provide a focus for discussion, these questions as well as those of the editors would have a useful place.

Among the strengths of the work are the wide variety of points of view and of situations giving rise to ethical considerations. In addition to articles by persons writing in an academic setting, some are provided by individuals and organizations with practical interests in the events and issues: Henry Stimson, Caspar Weinberger, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Joseph Califano, and the U.S. House, Subcommittee on Energy and Environment, to name some of the better known.

The closeness of some of the authors to the events may also be a weakness. The reader is not warned of the possible bias of the authors, although in some instances it may be too obvious to warrant comment. In other instances, and depending on the historical sophistication of readers of the work, some discussion could be helpful. For example, in the cases in the first chapter dealing with the decision to use the atomic bomb in World War II, the complexities of the political and military situations at the time the decision was made tended to obscure the ethical issues. It is understandable that Henry Stimson, Secretary of War in the Truman administration, in writing the article "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb" for *Harper's Magazine*, would emphasize the urgency of bringing the war to an end by the quickest means possible. But given the lack of a public debate of the issue at the time, the state of the public opinion regarding the war, and the secrecy and fascination surrounding a newly-discovered power of nature, one could argue that these were all fostered by government and influenced the decision as much as military strategy. Stimson's need to justify the use of the bomb should not cause us now to overlook the place of violence as part of a broader issue of government process: the avoidance and resolution of conflict. That the editors did so is indicated by their lack of comment on those issues and by the reduction in their comments on the question of violence to one of policy. We are asked to consider whether or how nuclear weapons differ morally from conventional weapons, whether their use was justified to end the war or to prevent Russian involvement in the region, the alternatives President Truman might have considered, and the argument that using the bomb

would bring an end to all war. This leaves out of question other issues of process such as limits on government secrecy, participation in decision-making, the uses or abuses of science, and manipulation of public attitudes during a time of war as a way to promote support for government policies, the very issue raised by the introduction of nuclear warfare and neglected in the Stimson article. This is not to suggest that the editors should attempt to treat of every issue, a clear impossibility. But some comment on the relationship between issues would have been helpful.

In some of the subtopics the issues are sharpened by bringing together conflicting views of the events or of similar events involving persons of conflicting political opinions. Of particular interest is the question of official disobedience in which the editors have juxtaposed the cases of Otto Otepka, who disclosed classified documents as a way of opposing the appointment to office of persons he considered disloyal, and Daniel Ellsberg, who released classified documents to *The New York Times* as a way of opposing the Vietnam war. Otepka tended to be supported by conservatives and his firing approved by liberals. Ellsberg was supported by liberals who saw his action as an important contribution to the ending of the war. The advantage of the juxtaposition is that it invites the reader to seek ethical principles by which the two actions can be judged without regard to the ideological position represented by the agents. The principles presumably would be neutral as to ideology or would force an examination of the ideologies. But this area, like that of government violence, could benefit from a consideration of the relationships between issues. The violation of an obligation to protect state secrets assumes the legitimacy of such secrets, a question which ought to be considered along with that of violation. A helpful exercise here might be to question the limit of government's authority to control the flow of information and the basis for such authority. The related issue of the obligation not to disclose secrets then acquires another basis than simply that of obedience. The rationality of creating secrets then serves also to rationalize their protection.

The greatest value of this work consists in the cases themselves. They provide interest and context to a subject which can easily become abstract and impersonal. Their complexity serves as an antidote to the tendency to resort to simple moral principles for determining the rightness of conduct, or to a single principle to settle a case. These show that neither approach will deal with all the relevant facts in many situations. One case concerns the "revolt" of attorneys in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice in 1969 over delay in enforcement of school desegregation. It requires weighing the obligation of public officials to obey lawful orders of their superiors against the obligation of attorneys to act for the benefit of the public and to exercise independent judgment in doing so. The moral principles appealed to for deciding a case such as this would have little application in the case of the legalization of Laetrile. That

case presents its own issues of paternalism and liberty, of the requirement to act on the basis of knowledge, and whether a legislature, presumably not qualified to deal with the medical questions posed by the issue, should refer the problem to competent agencies within or without government. The case of the bankruptcy of the City of New York presents issues of fiduciary responsibility and of its related mundane responsibility, maintaining accounting procedures that reflect the financial condition of public entities. Students of ethics, political science, and government can all benefit from the variety of these cases to broaden their view of the range of moral resources and approaches needed to confront the ethical problems inevitable in a complex society. Used alone, *Ethics and Politics* would be inadequate for gaining insights into the questions it poses. But with careful attention to the recommended readings and thoughtful discussion of the cases, the work can help organize and enliven the study of ethics.