



title: Postmodernism and Continental Philosophy
Selected Studies in Phenomenology and
Existential Philosophy ; 13

author: Silverman, Hugh J.

publisher: State University of New York Press

isbn10 | asin: 0887065228

print isbn13: 9780887065224

ebook isbn13: 9780585092362

language: English

subject Philosophy, Modern, Postmodernism.

publication date: 1988

lcc: B790.P67 1988eb

ddc: 190

subject: Philosophy, Modern, Postmodernism.

Postmodernism and Continental Philosophy

Selected Studies in Phenomenology
and Existential Philosophy 13



Board of Editors

Ronald Bruzina, University of Kentucky
David Carr, University of Ottawa
Edward S. Casey, SUNY-Stony Brook
James M. Edie, Northwestern University
Don Ihde, SUNY-Stony Brook
William L. McBride, Purdue University
Calvin O. Schrag, Purdue University
Hugh J. Silverman, SUNY-Stony Brook
Donn Welton, SUNY-Stony Brook
Bruce Wilshire, Rutgers University
Richard M. Zaner, Vanderbilt University

Executive Committee
1983-86

Harold Alderman, Sonoma State College
Arleen B. Dallery, LaSalle University
Thomas R. Flynn, Emory University
Joseph J. Kockelmans, Pennsylvania State University
Graeme Nicholson, University of Toronto

Postmodernism and Continental Philosophy

Edited by
Hugh J. Silverman
and
Donn Welton

State University of New York Press

Published by State University of New York Press, Albany

© 1988 State University of New York

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

For information, address State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Postmodernism and continental philosophy.
(Selected studies in phenomenology and existential
philosophy ; 13)

1. Philosophy, Modern. 2. Postmodernism.

I. Silverman, Hugh J. II. Welton, Donn.

III. Series.

B790.P67 1987 190 86-30068

ISBN 0-88706-521-X

ISBN 0-88706-522-8 (pbk.)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
<i>Hugh J. Silverman</i>	
I. Psychoanalytic Discourse of the Speaking Subject	
1. "On Melancholic Imagination"	12
<i>Julia Kristeva</i>	
II. Language and Desire	
2. "Substitution"	26
<i>Alphonso Lingis</i>	
3. "Desire: Language and Body"	34
<i>M.C. Dillon</i>	
4. "Engorged Philosophy II"	49
<i>David Farrell Krell</i>	
III. The Limits of Representation	
5. "Representation and Its Limits in Descartes"	68
<i>Dalia Judovitz</i>	
6. "Hegelian Dialectic and the Limits of Representation"	85
<i>Deborah Chaffin</i>	
7. "Heidegger and the Limits of Representation"	96
<i>Dorothea Olkowski</i>	

IV. Overcoming Metaphysics and the Revaluation of Values	
8. "Heidegger on Nietzsche: The Question of Value"	110
<i>Dick White</i>	
9. "Devaluation and Destruction: On the End of Metaphysics and the Revaluation of All Values"	121
<i>Richard Taft</i>	
10. "Foucault and Nietzsche: Affectivity and the Will to Power"	134
<i>Garth Gillan</i>	
V. Re-writing Patriarchy	
11. "Women Recovering Our Clothes, Perhaps"	144
<i>Iris Marion Young</i>	
12. "Logic and Patriarchy"	153
<i>Craig R. Vasey</i>	
13. "(Re)Writing Patriarchical Texts: The Symposium"	165
<i>Barbara Freeman</i>	
VI. Archaeology of Deconstruction	
14. "Rereading Deconstruction (Today?)"	180
<i>Christie V. McDonald</i>	
15. "Genealogy and/as Deconstruction: Nietzsche, Derrida, and Foucault on Philosophy as Critique"	193
<i>Alan D. Schrift</i>	
16. "Deconstructing, Fort/Derrida"	214
<i>John O'Neill</i>	
VII. The Future of Postmodernism	
17. "Postmodernism: It's Future Perfect"	228

Andrew J. McKenna

18. "Postmodernism's Short Letter: Philosophy's Long Farewell..." 243

Wilhelm S. Wurzer

	Page vii
Contributors	251
About the Editors	255
Index	257

INTRODUCTION

Hugh J. Silverman

What is the relation between Postmodernism and Continental Philosophy? And why should this relation be a matter of importance now? In the North American context, a volume on such a topic would have been practically inconceivable ten years ago. Something important has taken place in the development of continental philosophy that its relation to postmodernism should now become relevant. Something important in the development of cultural criticism has taken place such that postmodernism enters into the context of continental philosophy. Indeed the question might well be asked at the present stage: is postmodernism anything other than continental philosophy, and is continental philosophy anything other than postmodernism?

To answer the latter question affirmatively and unequivocally would doubtless be extreme. However, that the question is even possible is indicative of a significant reformulation and consolidation of thinking in the 1980's. Continental philosophy has become the name for that whole orientation in thinking that appeals to certain trends in European philosophy since the late nineteenth century. Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, and Kristeva have become the textual context out of which continental philosophy is moulded. These figures (among others) unquestionably mark the domain characterized by continental philosophy as it is practiced in the English-speaking world.

Contrary to what one might expect, continental philosophy does not refer to whatever thinking takes place or has taken place in Europe. Indeed, many currents of thought originating from and practiced in Europe would not be considered to be within the frame of continental philosophy.

Rather, continental philosophy constitutes a general network of communication and dialogue in which common concerns, identifiable issues, and a recognizable language prevail in the practice of philosophy. This does not mean that all continental philosophers agree with one another. Not by any means. However, the basis of their disagreement can be articulated and identified. Criticism, debate, and disagreement have a context and a space in which philosophizing takes place. Sometimes one can translate these concerns into alternative modes of philosophical research. In the end, however, the real task is to advance research within the domain of continental philosophy *per se*. To the extent that translation and cross-communication is possible all the better, but current research and new strides in the field must necessarily continue independently of their reformulation into alternative practices.

It is sometimes thought that continental philosophy has a restricted domain, that it is limited to matters of metaphysics, aesthetics, philosophical psychology, and political theory. One need only look at the tables of contents of former volumes in this series, such as *Descriptions* and *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (edited by Silverman and Ihde), to see the breadth of concerns from philosophy of science to philosophy of language to philosophy of literature exhibited by those working in continental philosophy particularly in North America.

And what of postmodernism? Originally formulated in the context of architecture even by some architects who were former proponents of modernism postmodernism has become a broader concern in the arts and culture at large. What was modernism in literature, in painting and sculpture, in fashion, in science, and in philosophy is reread in relation to the limits of such modes of thinking. Taking modernism to its extremes, to its margins, to its frames is to rethink modernism altogether.

Modernism in philosophy goes back a long way: Bacon, Galileo, Descartes pillars of the modernist conception of the fashionable, the new, and the innovative, in short, all that is a break with classical and ancient tradition. Here philosophy attempted to be "scientific," to appeal to a rigorous method and not to authority. With Kant, modernism took on a new shape: it combined the rationalism of Descartes and the empiricism of Locke and Hume. Modernism in philosophy could now be defined in relation to a transcendental and an empirical aspect particularly where the transcendental could offer a unification of the manifold of experience by rational means. An '*Ich denke*'

which could prescribe what was presented to it would set the limits to apper-

ception. With this coordination of the subjective and the objective, the groundwork for a modernist philosophy was established solidly for Western philosophy in general. What European philosophers did with this ground was to formulate a notion of subjectivity that would not only become the place of retreat but also the condition for all knowledge.

This double strategy reformed modernism in such a way that it could be consistent with the literary and artistic movements that would later carry the same name. What Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Husserl to name three diverse examples did with the concept of subjectivity made a theory of consciousness possible. And it was some variety of this theory that various writers such as Kafka, Joyce, Woolf, and Proust found indispensable for a proper view of the world. The proper worldview was also a complexed one: Freud, Bergson, and James all presented a theory of the pure ego, of temporal experience, and of consciousness as separate from the objective view of things. The only way for modernism to gain its ground was to abstract itself from the external world. Heisenberg and Gödel found ways to incorporate uncertainty and indeterminacy, Tarski and Russell sought to provide a theory of descriptions which would not be contaminated by natural language, and Klimt, Klee, Dely, and Matisse escaped into a world of fantasy and design. Modernism established itself by assuring itself of a transcendental view of things, a *pensée de survol* that would be indubitable, a meta-language about which multiplicity could be understood and explained. Modernism's optimism was combined with a deadly despair. Modernism's aspirations were mixed with the horror that the very idea of fascism, namely the dominance and overcoming of the whole world, could even be attempted.

In response to and corresponding with the development of fascism in Europe, modernism also elaborated an artform that sought to express the anguish, despair, frustration, and exaggerations of human experience at that time. German expressionism as in Beckmann, Nolde, and Munch showed that the powers of a transcendental view of things, where all could be put in order, where rules could replace human existence, where a plan could resolve all confusion and disharmony was exceptionally dangerous and horrifying. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* dramatizes the particular effects of such attempts to actualize a certain utopia, one whose effect was fundamentally dystopian. The Charlie Chaplin *Modern Times* film (from which Sartre *et al* devised an ironic title for their journal in 1945) depicts with humor the stultifying effects of over-technologization without thought and mechanization without

humanization. The con-

text was one of supernaturalism and political blackmail in the face of extreme economic threat and unemployment.

The philosophical response of a Heidegger was to reject the transcendental overview and to replace it with an account of our being-in-the-world as a relation of beings to Being. Interpretation, understanding, and authenticity were called for. To hear the call of Being was to situate oneself in a context in which despair and related emotions could be meaningful but not oppressive. Return to thinking, return to the fields and countrypaths, return to the Greek philosophers these were effectively Heidegger's aspirations. Meanwhile Sartre picked up on the phenomenology, but in its existentialized version. While Sartre agreed with the basic response to a transcendental view of the self, of subjectivity, of knowledge, he also found something worrisome in it. Correspondingly he offered an account of consciousness that had no content, no rules, no form, no ordering of the world. In consciousness was freedom. In consciousness was negation. In consciousness was the constitution of self as other. Not that Rimbaud did not already say "*je est un autre*," but Sartre made philosophical sense of the claim. In the face of oppression, occupation, and human destruction everywhere, he offered an account of freedom. We are free. To be free meant to be able to choose even when it looked as though no choice were possible anywhere, where it seemed that constraint was the only possible interpretation of things. Sartre was not alone in this view. Malraux, Camus, and many others also called for political action, resistance, refusal to follow orders, to mould to the modernist view offered to them. With this refusal and theoretical account of freedom, it became possible to think of a philosophical, theoretical, and political practice based on rebellion, anti-self-reification, and ultimately choice and reaction. These were the signs of modernism in crisis.

What Merleau-Ponty offered and what the others were unable to develop effectively was a theory of embodiment. From the end of the Second World War in 1945, the modernism of the interbellum period, of despair, of anguish, of escape into fantasy or off to America, of anti-authoritarian consciousness and yet an obsession with the existentialization of consciousness as the only resource now took on new shape. Experience was not just projectively free, unconstrained, and unbounded as Sartre had been proposing. With Merleau-Ponty, it was clear that experience is embodied, lived, and imbued with signification. It was not until after Merleau-Ponty produced his first major work the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) that he realized how important

a theory of language was for his account of the lived body.

His reading of Saussure and the linking up of phenomenology with semiology was the first indication of a new way of thinking about modernism.

Wittgenstein was right: language is important. For a long time, the European phenomenologists could not see it, not that Merleau-Ponty learned it from Wittgenstein any more than did Heidegger who also turned to language in the post-war period. Similarly the early American commentators on phenomenology and existentialism in the 1950s did not grasp the importance of language. For them, the existential, experiential, consciousness-based epistemology along with a theory of perception and a way to read literature intelligently were the primary interests. Even Merleau-Ponty's own accounts of a phenomenology of language were largely ignored until the 1970s. The growth of structuralism in the 1960s, however, made such negative attitudes toward language effectively impossible in the succeeding decade.

In the 1950s, signs of the breakdown of modernism could be seen in the theatre of the absurd, in the new French novel of surface presentations, in the very idea that science might not be cumulative, and in the appeal to language in philosophical thinking. Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Simon, Duras, Butor the list seems almost unending were the marks of a new way of thinking about human experience. Officially "absurd," effectively "realistic", these writers sought to express the decline of modernism by offering something radically other a sense of repetition, conformity, accumulation, meaninglessness, aimlessness, enigma, complexity, ambiguity, dramatic intensity, and perceptiveness. To be modern was fundamentally to be new, *à la mode*, excitingly different. In this sense, the 1950s were not devoid of modernism. One might even say that there was new hope in novelty. But the character of novelty had changed. As Beckett's character in *Malone Dies* reports: "I must go on, I can't go on, I will go on . . ." The end of modernism would not mean that everything stops and the world comes to an end. Yet the fear of such a cataclysmic destruction was paramount in the 1960s. By contrast, however, there was as yet no way to think apocalypse without the postmodernist incision.

The confluence of structuralism, phenomenology, marxism, and psychoanalysis in the 1960s brought about the phenomenon known as post-structuralism. In America, structuralism can be dated from the time of the famous *Structuralist Controversy* conference at Johns Hopkins in 1967. Shocking to literary scholars in the United States, the aftershocks of the controversy about structuralism did not hit philosophers until much later.

Many phenomenologists were at first

quite hostile. While Merleau-Ponty was close friends with Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, American phenomenologists were loath to accept the affinities between phenomenology and structuralism despite their many differences. With the *Schizo-Culture* conference at Columbia University in 1974, new light was shed on this conflict. Post-structuralism began to take shape in America. While Lacan and various Lévi-Straussians had been speakers at the 1966 Hopkins event (and Derrida, who was effectively unknown in the United States, presented his now celebrated "Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences" and concerned primarily the writings of Lévi-Strauss), the principal names at the 1974 Columbia conference included Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Lyotard, R. D. Laing, and Arthur Danto. With the Schizo-Culture conference, poststructuralism in America was born.

This history of landmark conferences in America has itself become an item of notice, at once a spectator sport and a colosseum. The 1976 Stony Brook conference on "The Post-Structuralist Enterprise: Reading(s) of Jacques Derrida" was the first in America to both incorporate Derrida and concentrate on his writings. Perhaps the particular confluence of some Stony Brook philosophers and literary scholars with "continental" tendencies (including Jan Kott, who had been a participant at the Johns Hopkins conference a decade earlier) made such an event possible. Here figures such as Gasché, Garver, Hillis Miller, *et al.* showed that structuralism had entered a new phase and most importantly this new phase included a rapprochement with phenomenology on the one hand and analytic philosophy on the other. The interest in post-structuralism gradually became a preoccupation with the significance and practice of deconstruction. Here the Derridean mark had become unmistakable. And the International Association for Philosophy and Literature (IAPL) conference on "Deconstruction and its Alternatives" in 1983 (again at Stony Brook) was one of its dominant expressions. The dimensions of the debate around deconstruction had become enormous. Advocates of Derridean readings of texts, differences between Derrida and De Man, and the impact of Heidegger on Derridean practice were juxtaposed with debates about the differences between deconstruction and Frankfurt-style critical theory, pragmatism, Althusserian marxism, and post-structuralism in general. Here the voices of Donato, Spivak, Allison, Gasché, Wood, and De Man *in absentia* were the most marked. But finally with the Loyola (Chicago) conference on "Deconstruction and Philosophy" in 1985, the question of the role of deconstruction in

