

BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

The Creation of the World or Globalization

Jean-Luc Nancy

Translated with an Introduction by François Raffoul and David Pettrigrew, New York: SUNY Press, 2007; 129 pages

In *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, first published in 2002 as *La création du monde ou la mondialisation*, Jean-Luc Nancy brings Marxist notions of commodification as well as Heidegger's critique of representationalist accounts of the world to bear on the unworldly, uninhabitable spaces of modernity. Nancy's arguments against a certain globalization are not new. The fact that his descriptions of globalization are mundane is itself a symptom of the idea of the *mundus* and the mundane that he wants to describe.

This is a necessary work. Though the title and Nancy's rethinking of the Christian *ex nihilo sumum* might for some mark a return in Nancy's thought to his very early work in Catholic theology, it is clear that Nancy is staking out a space for a philosophical work beyond the current "theological" turn in deconstruction and post-Levinasian Continental philosophy, deconstructing from within the thought of a beyond-world that would mark the place of the Other in contemporary discourse. Prior to any negotiation with the Other as such, Nancy has long argued for a thinking of the very relation, the very being-with equiprimordial, as Heidegger argued, with our being-in-the-world. Nancy argues for a worldly thinking unencumbered by ontotheological conceptions that serve to occlude praxis and lead to political quietism. (If the other is always violently assailed in any work of praxis, then, perhaps, a retreat from the political is in order.) This is Nancy's most incisive work to date, using his work on community and the original being-with of existence to ask if there is a space for thinking anew a world outside of the homogenizing forces of globalization, what he calls the "world-forming" of *mondialisation*.

The Creation of the World or Globalization is structured around three main essays and a series of complements that deal directly with globalization, as well as the possibility of thinking the Christian *ex nihilo* as a motif for thinking a praxis of creativity that would deconstruct the presumed world order

of globalization from within. The productive destruction of capitalistic globalization produces an “im-monde,” Nancy notes, an “unworld” in which the globe, indeed the cosmos, is mastered under the sovereignty of capital. At least since his early work on Descartes’ notion of *mundus* in an essay called “*Mundus Est Fabula*” (1976), Nancy has followed up on various conceptions of the *mundus*, of the proper and ordered world, first, in Descartes, then, in Spinoza, Leibniz and a host of other thinkers in the modern tradition, that is, not incidentally, thinkers writing on the ordering of the world at the beginnings of colonialism. This work bears fruit in the tight and breathtakingly adept review of the ontotheological conceptions of the world to be found in middle sections of *The Creation of the World or Globalization*.

Nancy can often be ponderous. He asks in one of the appendices, without context, “And if sovereignty were a revolt of the people?” And, if not? In the opening essays of the book, he shows an ability to move across a variety of thinkers on the question of world with a facility matched by few contemporary thinkers. The relation between a certain order and the world, and its anchoring in a transcendent subject (as in Descartes) or an immanent God (Spinoza), deconstructs from within, Nancy argues, ontotheological conceptions of the world that assume an ordering of the world from the vantage point of another world, a fabulous tale that nevertheless remains with us: *mundus est fabula*. That is to say, the 90s talk of a “new world order”—enforced via American hegemony—is a not-so-new fable; it is the necessary fiction at the heart of the performances of power in modernity. This fable has been integral to the West’s self-conception *at least* since the beginnings of modernity.

The political import of this ordering of the world, of giving it sense from the outside, is a gesture repeated in the rise of capitalism. Nancy argues that the hyper-accumulation of capital marks an “agglomeration,” a word he uses to set off the tightening ball of threads (*glomus*) of a certain global network from its untying in the world-forming *mondialisation*. More importantly, the “fact,” he writes, that the “world is destroying itself is not a hypothesis; it is in a sense the fact from which any thinking of the world follows, to the point, however, that we do not exactly know what ‘to destroy’ means, nor which world is destroying itself” (35). It is in the revolving of this globe that one can find the hope for what Nancy, following Marx, calls a true revolution, one which would be marked not by providing the world, finally, with its *telos*, but would rather be the revolution that would not know which way to turn. To put it another way, for Nancy, one cannot suppose that globalization will lead inexora-

bly to the world-forming of *mondialisation*, the creativity arising out of the nihilism, the nothingness of globalization.

Nevertheless, without falling into an unfounded optimism, Nancy argues that there is in globalization the chance for a rethinking of the world *as such*. After the death of God, after His auto-deconstruction in the immanentisms that foreclosed all thinking of an other-worldly deity, and the rise of capital, the question of both world and sense (and their interconnection) come to the fore. If the world is not given its sense *from outside of it* in terms of a transcendent God or other forms of transcendent Others, if the mundane is not to be thought as the barren *there* of a fallen nature or as a predetermined order, then this means that the world as it is, *as all there is* and as the “there” of the “there is” (*il y a*), comes to the fore. Concomitantly, the very equivalence of values of global agglomeration for Nancy makes apparent the very question of value itself, of an absolute value beyond commodified equivalence. Thus, Nancy connects his interest in the question of *sens*, that is, the sense, direction, and meaning, and the question of the world and globalization.

As such, the utter nihilism of globalization is but the fertile ground, Nancy argues, out of which the creation of the world can occur, bringing sense to the world, that is, new and multiple directions for it beyond the death drive of capitalism. Out of the desolation of capitalist alienation and commodity fetishism, there is nevertheless a chance for the “impossible,” a chance for a world that might begin to make sense, but whose direction cannot and should not be foretold. For those looking to this work for just such an answer, just such a political, indeed world-historical program, Nancy’s work will be found wanting. Importantly, this is all not to reduce the world to the political or vice-versa. “Willing the world, but not willing a subject of the world (neither substance nor author nor master),” Nancy writes, “is the only way to escape the *immonde*” (49). But this “willing the world” is a “passion” not assignable to the political, which would risk overdetermining both the political and the non-political at once. For those looking to Nancy for a political project, all of this might appear to venture onto the ground of another political retreat, that is, a thinking of the world that is “curious,” indeed “passionate” about the world but accepting of the world and creation as they are. This “passion” for the world begins, alas, from *within* a thinking of the West and its vicissitudes, no matter how “deconstructed” and, thus, from a thinking of the world already inhabited in a particular way, however dis-ordered in Nancy’s writing. As Nancy puts it, the task of *mondialisation* is a “struggle of the West against itself” (53). Again, this is the fabulous tale of a certain *mundus*—but Nancy is right that the task

for thought is to think the limits between “extortion and exposition,” and also between Marx’s revolution and the “one in which we are perhaps underway without our knowledge” (53).

Readers of this work will greatly benefit—not often the case with Nancy’s works—from an excellent translation and introduction by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew. The introduction sets the stage for Nancy’s essays by casting them against his work on the deconstruction of Christianity and the more general concerns in recent Continental thought with deconstructing the history of onto-theology. The original text is, at parts, all but untranslatable, but Raffoul and Pettigrew manage to keep the tone of Nancy’s style without rendering the work unreadable and unclear in English—quite a challenge given the work at hand.

“How you engage the world?,” Nancy asks, a refrain that Raffoul and Pettigrew take up in their introduction. Abandoned to it and from it, Nancy’s thought marks a need for another thinking of creation, another thinking of the world than that bequeathed by the onto-theological tradition.

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Profanations

Giorgio Agamben

Tr. Jeff Fort, New York: Zone Books, 2007; 99 pages

Agamben’s central concerns in *Profanations* are happiness and the problems lying in wait for the future political task of securing it. It can be read as a sequel to *The Coming Community* (1990; tr. 1993) for the proximity of concerns and manner of their constellation. Although there is no topic here that Agamben has not touched upon elsewhere in a different way, this collection is singular among Agamben’s books for its personal and congenial tone. Agamben begins the first essay with the topic of *Genius*, the Latin name for that divine and most personal part within every person that is also the most impersonal, something that exceeds the ego; that pre-individual element that accompanies us from birth to death; a residue that is part of “a certain non-individuated share of reality” (12).

“Indulging the *Genius*” constitutes the secret in the secret relationship each person must maintain with his own *Genius*; and it is not a matter of claiming or pretending to be one, but a matter of ‘having a relationship with’

and ultimately, of ‘submitting to’ because His happiness is really our happiness; and that if we are to be happy, we must know how to consent and abandon ourselves to the implacable demands of our own *Genius*, no matter how unreasonable. This strange, paradoxical relationship of intimacy and separation between one’s ego and one’s *Genius* founds the value and purpose of “profanation” that is at the core of the Roman practice of *religio*, which is the name, Agamben shows, for the structure of separation and removal, not of binding as the “insipid and incorrect” etymology would have it. The word, he claims, does not derive from *religare*—to bind and unite the human and the divine—but from *relegare*, “which indicates the stance of scrupulousness and attention that must be adopted in relation to the gods, the uneasy hesitation (the ‘rereading [*rileggere*]’) before forms—and formulae—that must be observed in order to respect the separation between the sacred and the profane. *Religio* is not what unites men and the gods but what ensures they remain distinct” (74–5).

By way of *religio*, then, Agamben explains profanation: a politics that allows for the returning of things that once belonged to the gods to the free use of men. If Agamben is insistent on the possibility of a politics that is “profane,” it is because he is opposed to one that is “secular” (*pace* Schmitt); because unlike secularization, which is a form of repression that merely shifts around while leaving intact all the theological concepts—God as sovereign power, for example—profanation neutralizes what it profanes. That is to say, that which was once unavailable for common use, as soon as it is profaned, loses its aura of separateness and is returned to use. In seeking a profane politics against one that is secular, Agamben is trying to champion the cause of a special kind of negligence.

Unhappily, from this point on, the line of inquiry regarding profanation as play begins to become more segmented and progressively less convincing. The examples Agamben uses to elaborate his point, which remains vague without any poetry, only further aggravate the lack of clarity. Agamben imagines by way of Kafka through Benjamin, that “(j)ust as the *religio* that is played with but no longer observed opens the gate to use, so the powers (*potenze*) of economics, law, and politics, deactivated in play, can become the gateway to a new happiness” (76).

Agamben claims that because of capitalism, all things, including ourselves, are caught between spectacle and consumption and, therefore, nothing is available to true use, which, he emphasizes, is strictly a matter of relationship. Agamben opines that capitalism, or rather the religion of capitalism, in its extreme phase aims at creating something absolutely unprofanable. That is,

something that cannot be used but only given over to spectacular exhibition or to consumption. In attempting to force the issue of how profanation would allow for a new use so that we may play with whatever it is that is supposed to profaned, Agamben cites several examples, ranging from the irrelevant to the bizarre. To wit: a cat playing with a ball of yarn “liberates the mouse from being a prey and the predatory activity from being necessarily directed toward the capture and death of the mouse” (86).

As we could have expected, pornography (and by extension, fashion shows) take the pride of place in Agamben’s indictment of capitalism for its abominable creation of the unprofanable as such. But this is a rhetorical gesture that is so sweeping as well as swiping that it is unusable in the long run. Agamben’s argument, despite its learned references, is so segmented in addition to being weird, it is difficult to make sense of the reasons Agamben gives for choosing, of all things, pornography as the paragon of the unprofanable created by the religion of capitalism.

To be sure, this work remains vulnerable to objections and criticism at multiple points. Not only can Agamben’s argument be readily countered by liberatory examples of profanation currently underway in popular culture, but for Agamben to insist so narrowly that profanation is a political task for some future generation only weakens what is potentially convincing about it. The possibility of anything, including profanation, holds sway only to the extent that its own impossibility does; and it is between these two poles of potentiality that the ethics of *bios politikos* gets vectorized *vis-à-vis* the *nomos* of politics—whether as the *polis* or the camp. There is much pleasure to be had in reading *Profanations*, but, ultimately, Agamben is not persuasive as to why or how the task of profanation should be held as a more fundamental political objective over that of any other ideal that also has a claim on the possibility of *eudaimonia*.

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The Philosophy of Edith Stein

Antonio Calcagno

Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007; 151 pages

In the Introduction, Calcagno contrasts his text with many other works available on Stein. He says that his aim is not simply to present Stein’s ideas but to

engage “them in a broader philosophical context” (xi). This is a much-needed work, and Calcagno’s vision is an important one. I think—like Calcagno—that Stein is one of the great 20th-century thinkers. Her works, however, are not frequently read, and it is part of Calcagno’s goal to help correct this oversight, showing some of the significance of Stein’s work for more recent thought.

Throughout, Calcagno does not focus on detailed studies of any particular text nor on sustained critical analysis of a single theme. Rather, he puts out an invitation to notice some of Stein’s philosophical insights and their great import for contemporary discussions. His interpretations of Stein’s life and work are provocative and important. He claims, for example, that the controversies surrounding Stein’s beatification and canonization should not be seen as fundamentally at odds with Stein’s life. Her *life*, and not simply her death, was unconventional. He also vividly brings out questions of the significance of gender for phenomenology and accounts of consciousness. He says, for example, that “[u]ltimately, she must be viewed as the first phenomenologist to introduce and develop the notion of gender in relation to the phenomenological question of the essence of the person in general” (64). He emphasizes the profound significance of Stein’s phenomenological studies of community, not simply in the works with these titles but throughout Stein’s writings. He notes, for example, that “[u]ltimately, Stein has made here two vital contributions to phenomenology that are often ignored. First, she identifies and describes the nature of the lived-experience of community. Second, in introducing this distinction, she brings to the fore a crucial difference between empathy and communal lived experiences. This distinction was not addressed fully by her contemporaries” (35). Calcagno puts Stein in conversation with Alain Finkielkraut, defending her account of human nature against Finkielkraut’s objections to the whole project of articulating a common human nature. In the process, Calcagno brings out Stein’s distinction between the *I* and the *self* and her striking account of care. And, he raises what I think is a rather fascinating question, “is the state responsible for the immortal soul of the person?”

The manuscript is well-organized. The essays are each relatively independent but organized roughly chronologically. This makes the book useful to scholars interested in one or two areas of Stein’s work, but uninterested in all the topics addressed. The range of topics is impressive: Stein’s life, her account of community in her phenomenological writings, her political thought, empathy and feminism, her account of human freedom, and her evaluation of

Heidegger. Calcagno draws from both works easily available in English and from texts not yet translated. The latter is a particularly important service for Stein studies.

Although the essays are only loosely joined together, nonetheless certain themes continually reappear. Chief among them is our dependence on one another and our nature as deeply communal. Calcagno describes us, for example, as a “multiplicity of persons” (see, e.g., p. 37) and distinguishes a three-fold meaning to this claim in Stein’s thought. This understanding of our interdependence is significant for Stein’s evaluation of Heidegger’s work, her account of our political life, her vision of the distinctiveness of the feminine, etc. But, Calcagno rightly points out that Stein never loses the individual to some greater community; she maintains a distinctive and unique individual core present in each of us, marking us distinct and individual even as we are also highly relational.

Calcagno’s concerns and questions are fresh; his interpretation of Stein is both reliable and distinctive—it will open up new lines of thought for both amateurs and specialists reading Stein; and his style is dialectical. He continually raises new questions, provides insights for answering them, and raises further concerns and questions.

Like a good dinner guest, Calcagno leaves us longing for more of his company. I wanted to know, for example, more about how Stein’s account of care compares with Heidegger’s, how the inclusion of gender might be significant for our account of the ego, and how Stein argues for the immortality of the soul. Calcagno moves through little-trodden territory. He does not wear down a clear path, but he does show that these treks would be fruitful both for Stein studies and contemporary philosophy more generally.

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Dialectics of the Self: Transcending Charles Taylor

Ian Fraser

Exeter and Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2007; viii + 205 pages

After a series of critical essays on some aspects of Taylor’s thought, published in both *Philosophy & Social Criticism* and *Contemporary Political Theory*, Ian Fraser has brought this research together in his *Dialectics of the Self: Transcending Charles Taylor*. In this work Fraser offers “an immanent and tran-

scendent critique of Taylor's notion of the self, through which [he] will demonstrate the continued relevance of the humanist Marxist tradition [Taylor] came from but ultimately rejects" (3). While Fraser does an excellent job in his early chapters of tracing out Taylor's debt to Marxist thought, it is in the end not enough to support his critique.

In his first chapter Fraser briefly lays out Taylor's view of the self and his criticism of (vulgar) Marxism as a theory which ignores human motivation in favour of economic determinants. Fraser compares Taylor's view of the self to that expressed by Marx in some of his works and shows them to be closer, at least on the social aspect of identity, than Taylor's criticism would suggest (30). On this basis Fraser concludes that class and its intersection with culture, i.e., alienation and its overcoming, must play a far more important role in the formation of modern identity than Taylor allows, a relation which Marxist thinkers like E.P. Thompson and Adorno, for example, have already traced (28-29).

Fraser does acknowledge the force of Taylor's criticism of Marx, but points out that it is a criticism that has already been taken up by certain strands of 20th-century Marxist thought; in the second chapter he offers a reason for Taylor's failure to appreciate this fully. Fraser argues that Taylor's Catholicism and his wish to provide a theistic source for the good leads Taylor to dismiss or, at the very least, undervalue non-theistic sources like those offered by Marxism (59).

It is in these first two chapters that Fraser lays the basis of his immanent and transcendent critique, immanent because of the similarities between Taylor and Marx on the self, and transcendent because these Marxist elements can only be fully developed by moving beyond Taylor's theism. Fraser's third chapter then shows how Bloch and Benjamin can give an account of transcendence from outside a theistic perspective; his fourth chapter shows how Adorno can do the same in relation to epiphanic art.

In the fifth chapter, where Fraser offers one of the first extended discussions of Taylor's more recent work *Modern Social Imaginaries*, the limits of Fraser's reading become apparent. In his previous chapters, Fraser has shown that a Marxist treatment of certain elements of Taylor's thought is possible and that this treatment does in some way resonate with Taylor's thinking, but he does not adequately deal with the question of why Taylor, despite his earlier Marxist commitments and his familiarity with the Marxist thinkers discussed, chooses not follow this line of thinking. Somewhat uncharitably, Fraser has laid the blame for this on Taylor's Catholicism and has then, somewhat

hastily, assumed that Taylor avoids historical explanations according to class struggle because of this. It is on this assumption that Fraser criticizes *Modern Social Imaginaries* for its lack of explanation according to class struggle and lauds, in his sixth and final chapter, the work of Hardt and Negri who, by putting class struggle at the centre, provide a means of understanding how the conflicts of modernity, as identified by Taylor, can be overcome (177-178).

While one cannot doubt that Taylor's thought does have a theistic dimension, one can wonder about the bearing that this has on Taylor's historical explanations. In his works, Taylor is attempting to explain modernity in terms of the moral sources which have given rise to it and that continue to enliven it, but it is difficult to see how this kind of explanation is motivated by his Catholicism, as Fraser suggests, rather than by his desire to provide a more adequate and illuminating form of historical explanation. Fraser's failure to address Taylor as an historian undermines his critique. Not only does Taylor criticize Marxist explanations, as Fraser has pointed out, but Taylor also criticizes neo-Nietzschean explanations that focus upon structures of domination and the means of overcoming them. Fraser gives no attention to Taylor's criticism of neo-Nietzscheanism. In short, Fraser has criticized Taylor's treatment of Marxism without taking into consideration its fuller and more far-reaching theoretical underpinnings.

Fraser has done much to show Taylor's early debt to Marxist thought, but his critique is, in the end, unsuccessful because of its failure to investigate properly Taylor's own historical method, a method that, quite independently of Taylor's own religious views, is able to offer a powerful, alternative vision of modernity.

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Contemplating Woman in the Philosophy of Edith Stein

Maybelle Marie O. Padua

Manilla, Philippines: Far Eastern University Publication, 2007; 129 pages

Maybelle Marie O. Padua's Master of Arts thesis in Philosophy at Far Eastern University of the Philippines earned the Atty. Lourdes L. Lontok-Cruz Award in 2006. This recognizes Padua's intellectual achievement and hails her contribution to combating the historic and scholarly marginalization of female philosophers. Indeed, this study's strengths and limitations reflect Padua's rever-

ence for Edith Stein's analysis of "woman" and determination to introduce Stein's path-breaking philosophy to a public beyond Europe and the United States.

Padua is most successful in her clear, well organized textual exposition of Stein's doctoral dissertation, *On the Problem of Empathy*, and Stein's later eleven lectures posthumously collected as *Essays on Woman*. One wishes, however, that Padua had consulted a host of other primary sources in which Stein presents her views on women, e.g., her autobiographical and biographical writings and in her correspondence. Relying extensively on Marianne Sawicki's and Emerita Quito's scholarship, Padua provides a solid account of the impact of Husserlian phenomenology on Stein's analytic assumptions and method. Padua also highlights the areas in which Stein disagreed with and expanded her thought beyond Husserl's conceptions of personhood and empathy. The main contribution of this study is the reciprocity Padua discloses that links Stein's phenomenological dissection of the question of empathy, of the intentional structure of emotions, and of womanhood.

Padua sets forth Stein's view that individual women appear in three manifestations, as human beings sharing a basic universal human nature, as individuals with a unique and mysterious core, and as "woman" with a distinctively gendered inner form. As have other scholars, Padua contends that Stein's interrogation of empathy and philosophy of women are intertwined. She elucidates Stein's views of distinctive female propensities deriving from their potential for motherhood, tendencies presumably, though evident in men, more common to women than men, specifically women's capacity for interpersonal sensitivity springing from their rich emotional center, too often derided and invoked to argue women's inferiority but indispensable to empathy. Stein interwove those characteristics with women's drive toward wholeness, as opposed to men's more highly focused and specialized direction of their energies. Although Padua affirms a widespread essentialist view of women, that their biology enables "women [to] have a richer conception of persons and they can more easily imbue human relationships with care and affection" (61), she does present Stein's view that women's overactive interpersonal acuity leads to smothering others, intrusiveness in their private experience, superficial and irrational thinking, slavish self-denial. Stein held that a good education can offset this by developing a woman's rational thinking and commitment to objective work. Women, Stein insisted, should be able to enter any sphere of labour and politics, thereby bringing to bear their enlightened empathy and holistic

orientation. In short, Padua endorses Stein's view of complementarity of gender traits and roles in a world of equal rights for both sexes.

Unfortunately, Padua does not provide us with a critical study of Stein's ideas. At no point does she point out contradictions or inadequacies in Stein's approach to gender. She does not wrestle with Stein's avoidance of complex and difficult issues in the relationship between human, individual and female forms, nor does she consider such entities as the Nazi or Ku Klux Klan mother, nurturant, interpersonally sensitive and empathic with her own offspring and with people who share her values, but decidedly not with others. Although Padua's discussion of empathy includes the key matter of how values orient one's empathic directions, she fails to connect it to her romantic treatment of Stein's views on women.

Moving to Padua's biographical and historical discussion, we come upon a mix of reliable and skimpy, often erroneous, information. Nowhere had Stein claimed that Jewish services, which she occasionally attended with her mother even after her conversion, involved "a cold gathering of people" (8). In general, the account of Stein's conversion is most misleading. Further, had Padua read Karen Offen's *European Feminisms, 1700-1950* (2000) she would not argue that "There was no ground, however, for the support of both emancipation and gender differences" (19). She would have realized that a belief in gender differences was the dominant stream of European feminist thought and politics as well as of conventional societal institutions.

In one of numerous sweeping generalizations, Padua invokes psychoanalysts and other experts to support her view that women's capacity for motherhood fostered a more ready empathy, but by not stressing *some* psychoanalysts and experts, she effaces the great number who dispute this view. Likewise, Padua leaves the term "feminism" muddy and conflates "woman" and women, using these references interchangeably. She suggests that all women with an educated heart and mind will define a given landscape as beautiful and experience it as awe-inspiring. Often, theorists with minimal historical training fail to untangle the culturally and socially constructed nature of our values, of our selective empathy, of our assumptions about biology and sexuality. Though some of Padua's cited scholars share her views on gender difference, most of them base these differences in cultural and social learning and political reinforcement.

Especially in Chapter Six, Padua exceeds Stein in drawing contemporary political and religious implications to Stein's approach to gender differences. Stein does not claim a stem cell is a human being, as Padua implies. Nor

does Stein, reared by her mother after her father died when she was two, state that a child requires a mother and a father to develop as a whole being. Nor does Stein oppose gender role reversals within the family. Padua's conservative Catholic convictions shape her inferences.

Of less importance, though reflective of a seeming haste in publishing this book, an array of technical defects appear, e.g., including multiple errors in the Bibliography (e.g., Stein is credited with authoring an essay by Mary Catharine Baseheart), misspellings, and typos. If Padua and her publishers had taken more time before bringing out this book, the strengths and contributions of Padua's study to Stein scholarship would then not be so sadly compromised.

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Deleuze and Space

Eds. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005; 245 pages.

Deleuze and Space is a collection of papers that take up Deleuze's concept of space in philosophical, political, architectural, geographical, cinematic and literary terms. The collection is a qualitative mixed bag.

Gregg Lambert's "What the Earth Thinks" deals with Deleuze's political space. Lambert convincingly argues that Deleuze's geo-philosophy is different from other political, specifically Marxist, philosophies, by developing remarkably well Deleuze's concepts of the Earth, the socius and deterritorialization. The paper also does a great job of clarifying without oversimplifying the barrage of Deleuze's other political concepts (e.g., the primitive-territorial machine, the State-form). Tamsin Lorraine's "Ahab and Becoming Whale: The Nomadic Subject in Smooth Space" approaches Deleuze's space in philosophical and literary terms. The paper is an excellent discussion, encouraged by many clear examples, of the nomadic subject's different experience of space. The paper also explicates well the meaning of and the relationship between smooth and striated spaces, the virtual and the actual sides of the real. Branka Arsic's "Thinking Leaving" discusses Deleuze's space in relation to his concept of thought. The paper argues that Henry David Thoreau's work is an expression of Deleuze's spatial thought—thought understood as a multiplicity not of some elements, but a pure multiplicity, that is, a multiplicity that is prior to and constitutive of all elements, 'a staircase with no floors.' The paper

also gives a good account of Deleuze's anti-foundational nature of selfhood and perception. Paul A. Harris' "To See with the Mind and Think through the Eye: Deleuze, Folding Architecture, and Simon Rodia's Watts Towers" deals with Deleuze's space in relation to architecture. The paper argues that due to its bottom-up rather than top-down approach to architecture, Simon Rodia's Watts Towers is the material expression *par excellence* of Deleuze's space. Even though, at times, it engages in too much unnecessary summary (e.g., the sections on Bernard Cache and Greg Lynn), this well-researched paper is an insightful and valuable contribution to the field.

Manuel Delanda's "Space: Extensive and Intensive, Actual and Virtual" discusses Deleuze's space in properly philosophical terms. The paper explains the ontological distinction between Deleuze's extensive and intensive, actual and virtual spaces. The paper provides some clear elucidations of Deleuze's space (characteristic for Delanda), but it does not contribute anything new that has not already been said in the *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. Gary Genosko and Adam Bryx's "After Informatic Striation: The Resignification of Disc Numbers in Contemporary Inuit Popular Culture" approaches Deleuze's space in historic-political terms. The paper discusses the various ways in which the North American Inuit's smooth space was striated as well as the various ways in which the Inuit responded to the striation. The paper is insightful as it provides a clear historic-political example of Deleuze's smooth and striated spaces, however, it does not go far regarding the philosophical analysis of these concepts themselves. Also, the historic-political analysis needs to be better related to and integrated with the minimal philosophical framework that the paper does provide. Claire Colebrook's "The Space of Man: On the Specificity of Affect in Deleuze and Guattari" approaches Deleuze's space in philosophical and political terms. The paper first argues that Deleuze's space, if it can even be called space, is to be understood in terms of his concept of the Outside—the multiplicity of genitive and internally differentiating forces that open life to new possibilities. The paper then discusses the ethical and political potentials of such a conception of space. While its aims are commendable, the paper tries to do too much too quickly and thus often lacks focus. For example, the discussion of Deleuze's sense, although well-executed—Colebrook's grasp of Deleuze's philosophy is clear from her many excellent introductions—needs to be better related to and integrated into the overall discussion of Deleuze's space and its ethical and political potentials. Gregory Flaxman's "Transcendental Aesthetics: Deleuze's Philosophy of Space" discusses Deleuze's space in relation to Kant's. The paper argues

that, unlike Kant, Deleuze succeeds in conceptualizing space in transcendental and yet non-representational terms—Deleuze’s transcendental empirical conception of space (spatium)—and then proceeds to develop Deleuze’s space. Despite its clear exposition and comparison of Kant’s and Deleuze’s spaces, the paper does not actually contribute anything new with respect to Deleuze’s space itself.

Ian Buchanan’s “Space in the Age of Non-Place” discusses the notion of space in relation to postmodernity. The paper does provide some useful context for the discussion of space, but other than the short oversimplified final section, it does not manage to engage with Deleuze’s space whatsoever. The paper neither argues anything regarding, nor provides any kind of worthwhile interpretation of, Deleuze’s notion of space. Other than its more general comments on the notion of space, it is unclear why this paper should even be included in this collection. John David Dewsbury and Nigel Thrift’s “‘Genesis Eternal’: After Paul Klee” discusses Deleuze’s space in relation to art and geography. The paper tries to explicate that elusive, but all important, side of Deleuze’s space—the intensive, the virtual, the immanent space. As opposed to shedding new light onto this difficult matter, or even making an attempt, the paper settles for an endless string of quotations that are never explained and that lead nowhere. The paper fails at the only task that it sets for itself. Hélène Frichot’s “Stealing into Gilles Deleuze’s Baroque House” discusses Deleuze’s space in relation to architecture. Beyond its dramatic equation, to say the least, of the architect with a pickpocket who ‘steals’ Deleuze’s concepts for architecture, it is unclear what exactly this paper is trying to do. The paper is an uninspired collection of explanations of various concepts none of which are then, save for one (i.e., diagram), related to architecture (or even to space for that matter). Réda Bensmaïa’s “On the ‘Spiritual Automaton’, Space and Time in Modern Cinema According to Gilles Deleuze” tries to discuss Deleuze’s space in relation to cinema. Other than the unoriginal, exhausted and undefended claim that cinema has the power to relate thought to the Outside, it is unclear about what this paper is supposed to be. Also, due to its various scattered and unnecessarily jargon-laden claims about the Whole rather than the set, it is unclear why this paper should be included in this collection. It seems much more concerned with time than with space. Tom Conley’s “The Desert Island” tries to discuss Deleuze’s space in relation to geography *vis-à-vis* Deleuze’s early essay “*Causes et raisons des îles désertes*.” At times, the paper seems to want to make an argument for Deleuze’s desert island as a kind of space of difference and repetition. At other times, it seems to want to develop some kind of

important relationship between mainstream geography and Deleuze's desert island. Whatever its aim, the paper fails at both things that the reader justifiably expects from it: it neither successfully relates Deleuze's early essay to his other texts nor does it provide a kind of helpful textual, conceptual analysis of the early essay. In the end, the paper reads like a bad summary of, almost a wannabe literary reflection on, the original.

Overall, *Deleuze and Space* is no more than a fair collection. It is by no means the kind of excellent book that the introduction—which, on a side note, offers too many misleading and overenthusiastic summaries of the papers, not to mention the *faux pas* it commits, i.e., opposing Deleuze's virtual to the real (7) and opposing Deleuze's two kinds of substances (8)—suggests it is.

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Jacques Derrida's Aporetic Ethics

Marko Zlomislic

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007; 357 pages

Jacques Derrida accounts for ethics, philosophy and religion in terms of each other, in such a way that many are extremely critical of him. By writing this clear, thorough and well-ordered presentation of Derrida's thinking Zlomislic not only gives an excellent introduction to Derrida but he also answers the objections of the critics, revealing in several cases their misunderstandings of Derrida's arguments. Whereas traditional philosophers tend to explain their ethics as based upon their logic, metaphysics, psychology and epistemology, Zlomislic clearly shows why for Derrida it must be the other way around. The first four of the book's five chapters show how the gift and task of Biblical ethics implies: (1) a new logic of paradox concerning the question of violence, (2) a new ethics of excess concerning the question of responsibility, (3) a new psychology of the de-centered subjectile concerning the question of personhood and (4) a new epistemology of embracing uncertainty in relation to the question of justice. So, Derrida's ethics, which focus upon questions of violence, responsibility, personhood and justice, take a Socratic aporetic, or Okhamist nominalist, or Humean passionate or Kierkegaardian existentialist approach. In this way, self contradictions can be avoided and there can be the most consistency and adequacy. In always working with truth and method

Derrida is constantly concerned with the 4 D's: (1) demonstrations, (2) definitions, (3) distinctions, and (4) dialectical testing. But, when he does philosophy as history and as literature his existential dialectic brings him to: (1) deconstructing demonstrations, (2) by disseminating definitions, (3) differencing distinctions and (4) making dialectical decisions by leaping over the abyss of undecidability.

The *aporia* or road block on a proof line is the ironic method of Socratic paradox. The paradoxical irony began with Socrates being the wisest man in Athens because he alone knew he could know nothing. He was so wise because his sceptical *aporias* opened the way for ethics. By showing how each Pre-Socratic only had theories and not facts he moved from their pretending to honesty, from pride to humility, from pompous ponderosity to humility and from prejudice to a healthy flexibility. Derrida's ethics aims to open questions with a similar *aporetic* honest, humble, humorous health, which is the starting point for the ethical.

Zlomislic presents Derrida's ethics in four chapters and dialectically responds to opponents in the fifth chapter. Each of the first four chapters has four parts in which Zlomislic shows how Derrida makes his case. Chapter One shows how ethical decisions, given the *aporias*, are made as a leap over the abyss of undecidability. Zlomislic explains this in terms of: (1) Socrates' *Aporias*: beyond shaming, (2) Plato's *Pharmakon*: beyond scapegoating, (3) Levi-Strauss' *Dangerous Supplement*: beyond bordering and (4) Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*: beyond warring. With evidence from within Socrates, Plato, Levi-Strauss and Levinas, Derrida deconstructs the violence of their systems and shows why according to them decisions can be made as leaps of faith that are informed and called forth in terms of the greatest good.

In Chapter Two, "Aporia and the Responsibilities of Dissemination," Zlomislic shows how there is a complexity in our thinking because of the very nature of signification that never lets us know something with clear and distinct ideas. A sign is that which represents to the mind something other than itself. A sign is always disseminated into unlimited signs. For example, the word "justice" will always involve more than we can ever know. With the aid of Husserl's theory of signs, Heidegger's theory of time, Hegel's theory of prefaces and Nietzsche's theory of perspectives, Zlomislic makes clear Derrida's theory of dissemination. Definitions which are needed for demonstrations should be made with the recognition of such a complexity that the mind can never connect all the dots. Because of the dissemination of all signs or the explosion of all signs into unlimited complexity, decisions can only be made

over the abyss of undecidability. This is not only a weakness but also a strength in that they are made not only in limitation but also with a leap of trust for which we can take responsibility.

Chapter Three treats Derrida's notion of differance and its implications for personal responsibility. Demonstrations depend upon distinctions as well as upon definitions, and making complicated ideas completely distinct is as impossible as clearly defining them. Distinctions are made between persons, places and things in terms of time and space. Peter is now here and Paul is now there. But every now has before and after within it just as every here has many there within it. The "a" in differance signifies the abyss of complexity in every distinction. The more a person relates to many kinds of other, the more uniquely singular he or she is. Zlomislic shows how Derrida clarifies this extremely significant philosophical notion by deconstructing (1) Heidegger's Dasein to get at personal responsibility, (2) Nietzsche's will to power to reveal the loving person of *amor fati*, (3) Freud's unconscious to uncover hidden motives and our responsibility for them and (4) Saussure's arbitrary and Derrida's messianic subject. Since all decisions are complicated by unlimited relationality, it is up to us to take responsibility with creative trust.

Chapter Four makes clear Derrida's practice of deconstructing a philosophy from within through charitable readings. Deconstruction is justice for only when we have constant deconstructions of theories and laws will they be able to apply to new unique cases. Zlomislic shows how the epistemology of embracing uncertainty lets deconstruction be (1) a mourning of never enough precedents, (2) a waiting for the never enough of time, (3) a wandering of the never enough of knowledge and (4) a choosing to decide in the urgent instant.

Chapter Five moves toward a Derridean theology by deconstructing Caputo, Critchley, Žižek and Searle on the way toward the haecceity and "dearest freshness deep down things" of Gerard Manly Hopkins. It is gratifying to see how Derrida at the end of his life discovered Hopkins with whom he is such a kindred spirit.

This book is best for professors and students working on Derrida.

David Goicochea, Brock University

Walter Benjamin's Archive: Image, Text, Sign

WALTER BENJAMIN

Eds. Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz and Erdmut Wizisla; Tr. Esther Leslie, London & New York: Verso, 2007; 311 pages.

What to make of this strange book? As a collection of the more esoteric elements of Walter Benjamin's personal archives and archivings, it is quite peculiar. It seems *prima facie* that those for whom these "remnants" might be useful could only be Benjamin scholars, to whom these materials have already been made available in German. It is perhaps for this reason that the English translation of *Walter Benjamins Archive: Bilder, Texten und Zeichen* (Suhrkamp 2006) is designated a "memoir." It is not a memoir in any traditional sense, consisting as it does of reproductions and translations of Benjamin's archival materials, arranged into thirteen chapters by four editors. These groupings are justified by the editors with brief remarks at the beginning of each chapter. This characterization may, however, be fitting insofar as it yields results for those most interested in the "life and works" of Benjamin, as much of the secondary literature is, rather than engaging in the appropriation or critique of his life-work. For those working in the former vein, this beautiful hardcover volume could very well be rewarding. As the editors note, it certainly saves one the trouble of flying to Germany to access the original material or tracking down a copy of the German original.

Each chapter is unified by a theme, which gives one an impression of *how* Benjamin thought. True to the commonly-held image of Benjamin as the idiosyncratic, melancholic collector, these chapters often seem to imply that the way he thought might serve as a satisfactory explanation for *why* he thought the things he did. These archival materials are taken to reveal the "points at which topicality flashes up, places that preserve the idiosyncratic registrations of an author, subjective, full of gaps, unofficial" (2). Of course, this citation could describe the work Benjamin managed to publish in his lifetime, not to mention the unpublished fragments and essays already collected in English in the four-volume *Selected Writings*.

I take this to be a key point for the editors. Benjamin's oeuvre already seems to be so thoroughly idiosyncratic that the most well-known pieces of Benjamin scholarship consist in competing attempts to characterize his thinking: Scholem's mystic, Adorno's dialectician, Arendt's "poetic thinker" and Habermas' redemptive critic. What this volume reveals is that the characteris-

tically ambivalent, probing and obscure aspects of Benjamin's work are by no means artifice or dissimulation. Rather, these were basic features of his thought, which render futile any attempt to assimilate it to any particular program.

Accordingly, this book is a self-conscious performative exploration of Benjamin's peculiarities. Setting the entire work in context is an excerpt from "Excavation and Memory." It suggests that this collection of fragments and scraps is not intended to provide new works of general philosophical interest, but to "yield an image of the person who remembers... the strata from which its findings originate [in this case, Walter Benjamin's work] but also... the strata which first had to be broken through [in this case, his life and its circumstances]." In attempting to mimic Benjamin's own archival propensities, while maintaining the "method" of the *Arcades Project* of simply "showing" the pieces, allowing them to speak for themselves without commentary, the hope is to present something like a memoir, a biography as Benjamin might ideally have done it himself.

As mentioned, the biographical aspects of the book could certainly be interesting to someone who already has some knowledge of the basic contours of Benjamin's life. But, is there anything of particularly philosophical interest in it? A loaded question, yes, but in a volume that includes chapters of Benjamin's transcriptions of his young son's words, photographs of Russian toys, and a cryptic final chapter consisting only of sibyl mosaics, a not entirely unjustified one. While explicit theoretical pieces are conspicuously absent from the book—the editors admit to excluding remarks on Kant and drug-influenced experience—the surprising answer is "yes!"

The first two chapters are particularly interesting. The first, with its documentation of Benjamin's obsessive self-documentation, reveals an image of a thinker attempting to maintain a coherent and complete life-work (even if not an easily classifiable one). The second, "Scrappy Paperwork," is a collection of Benjamin's notes written on prescription pads, napkins, etc. The contents of these pieces are interesting unto themselves: notes on aura and types of knowledge (previously unavailable in English), Proust and Kafka. Taken collectively, they give a sense of Benjamin's—who was normally and extraordinarily particular about his writing materials—circumstances. This chapter also has one of the more interesting editorial introductions. While it has become a commonplace that the *Arcades Project* represents Benjamin's greatest attempt at a fragmentary "materialist" historiography, the editors make clear that the dispersion and dissemination of his own work were nothing positive. The safe-

guarding of these scraps and remnants is only significant as a strategic response to the situation which prevented Benjamin from achieving the goal made evident in the previous chapter. This raises several questions: what is the goal of fragmentary historiography, and why ought it to be pursued? How does this relate to the concept of the “aura” as the historical testimony or authority of a work? What could it mean to “redeem” an historical life-work?

Regarding the rest of the work, the most interesting ideas are almost all undeveloped fragments, which will be of varying use relative to the purposes of their readers. For example, the third chapter, “From Small to Smallest Details,” is fascinating if only to see a single sheet of Benjamin’s handwriting translate into three typed pages. It also demonstrates Benjamin’s method of writing, his desire to mediate the direct flow of ideas, to delay them in order to focus them, by writing in almost incomprehensibly tiny script. Besides this, there is the tantalizing fragment, previously unavailable in English, entitled “Peace Commodity.” This polemic touches on the themes of Kantian perpetual peace, the difference between worldly- and metaphysically-grounded conceptions of peace, and actually predicts the coming European war as early as 1926 (55).

Again, this is a strange volume. As a memoir it is unorthodox, and while it certainly falls short as a “philosophical text,” it explicitly is not one. Therefore, I suppose that the proper response is to be grateful for the new resources that it gratuitously provides.

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