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## Introduction

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The papers collected in this volume arise from a recent meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy held at Villanova University in Villanova, Pennsylvania. As the title of the volume indicates, these papers represent a certain transition in the development of Continental philosophy. If one traces the beginnings of Continental philosophy in North America from the 1940s, and its emergence as a research program in its own right from the 1960s, one finds a project not dissimilar to its historical antecedents. It is a project that is both foundational and Cartesian at least in this respect, that it remains firmly centered upon theoretical issues in epistemology and ontology. These themes remain predominant from the time of Husserl to the period of structuralist activity in France in the early 1960s. Although discussions concerning issues in ethics, political theory, or aesthetics were not absent during this time—indeed, it was often claimed that what made phenomenological and existential philosophy interesting was the safe harbor it provided for research in these areas against the antimetaphysical and antiidealist tendencies of positivism—it remained true that here too such concerns remained, to invoke the terms of metatheory, “regional.” Phenomenologists, it was proclaimed, steadfastly refused to abandon first intentions for second ones. Nevertheless, even “Continentalists,” as they came to be called during this time, still seemed obliged to render first an account of ontology or epistemology to make these “regional” investigations credible. Even now there are those who speak of Continental philosophy as “coming of age” and fulfilling itself in this respect.

It is no longer clear, however, that those sorts of claims are fulfillable. Nor is it clear that Continental philosophy simply inherits such a clear and univocal research program—any more than have its theoretical competitors, for example, analytic philosophy, differing views of pragmatism, or neo-Thomism. Rather, it is perhaps more true that such constraints have themselves turned paralogical, that the outlines of such classical

research programs themselves have collapsed. If, for example, we cannot do without Husserl and Heidegger, many of our colleagues, as this volume testifies, no longer feel compelled to be responsible to them or to their foundational or *Wissenschaftliche* pretensions. And this is so for reasons that, although perhaps never simply theoretical, remain nevertheless theoretical in implication. Such is, of course, always the case with paradigm changes, as historians almost everywhere have recognized. Both Husserl's and Heidegger's questions, however, although never simply irrelevant—as this volume likewise testifies—clearly no longer dominate recent thought as they once did.

It is not, of course, that there are no antecedents for such moves, even within Continental philosophy and even in its classical authors. Not only can one invoke the “romantic” or “antimetaphysical” discourses of Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, but even such an apparently “classical” figure like Scheler was not centered upon such issues. And yet, too often it is claimed that this arises simply out of a disregard for rigor. The point, however, is that “first philosophy” no longer binds. It may not be clear at all what “ethics is first philosophy” might strictly mean in this collapse, any more than it is clear what it would mean for feminist theory to make itself “foundational,” but it is clear that neither of them will take second place to antecedent tracts on the hermeneutic inventory or the transcendental articulation of the categories. As the papers on Husserl and Heidegger included here likewise attest, however, this distance also facilitates a certain renewal of these classical sources, a certain rewriting and reappraisal of the movement that they themselves originate. This is perhaps most indicative of the status of this transition.

It has been said often enough that we have abandoned grand theory. Perhaps it is better to acknowledge that this too is neither true nor false. Rather, grand theory is being written “otherwise”: locally, perhaps more empirically, but without turning simply reductive; without, that is, turning to empiricism. And this seems to be true whether the thought originates from Paris or Frankfurt, or from Stony Brook, Nashville, or Evanston. Now the demonstrations are woven between counterdiscourses and concrete interventions, complicated in the relationship between theory and practice—or to speak classically, in the transition [*Übergehen*] between concept and determination, idea and intuition, the ontic and the ontological, experience and judgment.

It is just in this sense that such regional discourses extend beyond their localities, that discourses on art, politics, or feminist theory impinge upon strictly delimited domains and categories of inquiry, without simply dissolving them—that psychoanalysis impacts on epistemology, art on metaphysics, ethics on its classical absorption within ontology, or feminist theory on all of these. The result, however, must be seen to

be anything but reductive or totalizing in effect, for example, the “aesthetization” or “politicization” of Reason, but instead must be seen to be a transformation of those domains. And this effect again itself delimits the horizons of a certain practice of philosophy as “Continental,” one that no longer can be understood to fulfill the transcendental or idealist traditions from which it emerged, but rather one that can be understood to rewrite and to challenge—often doubtless both against and despite themselves—those very resources.

We find this rewriting and challenging at work from the outset of this volume. In the first chapter of this part, which addresses political themes, Philip Buckley reflects upon the implications of Husserl’s *Kaizo* articles. Buckley discusses the call that Husserl made in these articles for a renewed affirmation of the possibility of a rational life as the goal of authentic humanity and considers what role philosophers and phenomenologists may have to play in this renewal. Buckley also examines the relationship between this call, originally uttered in the shadow of Weimar Germany, and the far-ranging political and social changes that swept Eastern Europe in 1989.

Peg Birmingham’s paper examines the accusations levied against Foucault and Arendt that claim that their conceptual commitments cause them to be unable to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate uses of power. While tracing the lines of agreement that exist between these two thinkers, Birmingham argues that each has a conception of power as multiple—as in and of the plural—that gives support to an understanding of the legitimate power of law that is grounded on the principle of publicness.

The inquiry into the texts of Foucault continues in Ladelle McWhorter’s chapter. Focusing on the text *Discipline and Punish*, McWhorter explores the possibility that Foucault’s texts may themselves be self-overcoming. While examining the suggestion that the human individual is a product of power relations and disciplinary techniques, McWhorter argues that Foucault causes us to place into question not only our will to know ourselves, but also our drive to know anything at all—even Foucault’s texts.

The chapter by Stuart Barnett completes this part of the volume. In this chapter, Barnett challenges the tendency to receive Foucault’s critique of subjectivity in such a way that it is understood to be in accord with a Habermasian conception of politicized self-representation. By undertaking a broad overview of the works of both Habermas and Foucault, Barnett explores how Habermas’s conception of an objective reality that is free of history or historical transformation is in direct conflict with Foucault’s attempts to understand the historical origins of the power relations that infuse different discursive spaces.

The second part of the volume includes papers devoted to feminist theory. It begins with a revised version of the plenary address presented by Michèle Le Doeuff. In her chapter, Le Doeuff reflects upon the concept of the "pact" that was said to exist between Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre. Here she illuminates the domineering or tyrannical role that Sartre played in both de Beauvoir's personal and philosophical endeavors. Within this work, Le Doeuff questions whether the concept of a "pact" can or does provide an example of an appropriate and fruitful mode of philosophical sociability—challenging feminists and philosophers all to reconsider their manner of interaction.

In a rich and far-reaching essay, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan discusses the foundations for and implications of an ethics based upon Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. Tracing the connections and diremptions that exist between Lacan and Freud and Aristotle, Ragland-Sullivan notes that Lacan's interest in the particularness of desire led him to explore the emergence of repetitive actions that function as a futile attempt to regain the consistency, wholeness, or unity that one feels is lacking in one's life. Insofar as these repetitions may be paradoxical, serving themselves as a barrier to change or to health, Ragland-Sullivan posits that an ethics based upon Lacanian analysis may allow us to gain the freedom to divest ourselves of inappropriate repetitive tasks and rituals and thereby allow us to attend to the recovery from both individual and societal ills.

Kelly Oliver's chapter also explores the possibility of the development of a new ethics. Focusing on the work of Julia Kristeva, Oliver examines how Kristeva has challenged the insights of Lacan that suggest, first, that language is the result of lack and, second, that there is a fundamental connection between the Father and Law. Oliver discusses how the discourses of poetry, psychoanalysis, and maternity have grounded Kristeva's inquiry into the question of alterity within identity. She also reflects upon Kristeva's conception of a "herethics," an ethics based upon love that may enable us to forego what has traditionally been a rejection or "sacrifice of either mothers or women."

In the first of three chapters that consider the thought of Luce Irigaray, Tamsin Lorraine discusses how the perception and anticipation of the experience of body boundaries influences the construction of the subject. Lorraine first describes how the masculine subject may be said to deny the experience of the merged and fluid body boundaries of the child and mother, codifying instead the experience of the woman-other under the category of the maternal-feminine who exists only to serve as an affirmation of the masculine-subject. She then explores the strategy of feminine subjectivity that can entertain the possibility of a porous relationship with the other—a relationship that eschews traditional categories in favor of an ever-changing and informing relationship with an other

who is also in the midst of growth and change—and that can thereby ground a new ethics.

Elizabeth Grosz's chapter invites the reader to consider Irigaray's sometimes disturbing conception of the divine. Placing Irigaray's work on this concept into the context of her movement from a consideration of "the problematic of the interdependence, autonomy, and difference of the sexes" to an examination of the "conditions and possibilities of the modes of exchanges between the two sexes," Grosz proposes that the nature of the divine—properly reconsidered—can provide women with an ideal self-image that is perceived to be necessary for the achievement of positive interaction between men and women. Grosz's discussion of Irigaray's work on the ideas of the elemental, of female autonomy, and of sexual exchange enables her to suggest what this positive interaction might look like.

Although she approaches the questions from a different perspective, Eléanor Kuykendall continues the consideration of Irigaray's conception of the divine and the implications that it has for the possibility of the development of a new ethics. Focusing on Irigaray's reflections on the birth and the death of gods as well as on the feminine Christ, which are presented in the third part of *Amante Marine*, and on Irigaray's more recent work in applied linguistics, Kuykendall ponders how a new articulation of sexual difference could function as the cornerstone for this new ethics. In addition, Kuykendall raises interesting questions regarding the implications of Irigaray's inquiry into French linguistic practices for readers and speakers of English.

In the third part of the volume, three very different essays on aesthetics are included. Yifat Hachamovitch's rich and challenging chapter combines aesthetic reflection with a knowledge of classical and contemporary phenomenological scholarship in order to examine the lived experience of human culture and its ties to the movement of earth and sea, wind and need. Drawing upon the still life paintings of seventeenth century Spain, and examining carefully Samuel Baks's painting "Pears," Hachamovitch contributes reflections on aesthetics, metaphysics, and politics in her inquiry into the subsoil of intentional structures and constituting life.

Kristin Switala's chapter brings the philosophical debates concerning the nature and stability of a text and its interpretation into the domain of music. In her examination of the debates that surround the authentic performance and appropriate interpretation of Baroque musical scores, Switala provides insights into the inherent fluidity and multilayered nature of a (musical) text. She also discusses how historical and contextual situations, including economic and political factors, can affect the creation, performance, and interpretation of various texts.

Having touched upon the domains of painting and music, this part ends with an essay devoted to a literary form, viz., autobiography. Kate Mehuron's chapter examines Christa Wolf's autobiography in order to consider the possibilities and implications that reside in the empathetic witnessing of women to themselves and to each other. By exploring the dynamics of shame that are revealed to be at work in the telling of one's story, and in dialogue with a number of other authors including Irigaray and Lyotard, Mehuron challenges her readers to reexamine the tension and potential inherent in the attempt to reveal one's unspeakable knowledge of one's self.

The fourth and final part of this volume is devoted to ethics. The opening essay by Fred Dallmayr provides the reader with an opportunity to consider once again how the work of Martin Heidegger may contribute to current discussions of ethics and politics. In this chapter, Dallmayr presents a survey of three of Heidegger's works, the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, the Schelling lectures, and "The Anaximander Fragment." Tracing Heidegger's consideration of the *Seinsfrage* through these texts, Dallmayr shows how this concept functions as a key element in Heidegger's consideration of the distinction between good and evil and between justice and injustice. In addition, he indicates how the ideas presented in these works can be brought to respond to some of the recent criticisms directed against Heidegger.

In the second essay focused on the work of Heidegger, John van Buren suggests how the insights gained by the young Heidegger as he attempted to deconstruct and to demythologize metaphysics can be used to come to terms with the work of the later Heidegger—especially insofar as this later work itself can be read as being in need of a certain demythologizing. Combining sweeping sketches of the thought configurations of both the early and the later Heidegger with insightful questions and challenges, van Buren indicates a path of thought that will undoubtedly prove provocative for both current and future inquiries into Heidegger's work and meaning.

Thomas Anderson's essay includes a consideration of two of the three systems of ethics that Jean-Paul Sartre presented during his lifetime. Anderson suggests that the first ethics, based primarily on the ontology of *Being and Nothingness* and articulated in the *Cahiers*, was founded upon a naive, and therefore unsatisfactory, conception of radical human freedom. The second ethics, articulated in Sartre's 1964 Rome lecture, can be seen to differ from the first insofar as it recognizes how one's physical and historical circumstances can proscribe one's freedom. While examining the different sources, goals, and methods of justification attributed to each of these systems of ethics, Anderson reveals the implications that each system has for positive intersubjective relationships.

The next chapter, by Brian Caterino, examines the work of Jean-François Lyotard. In his essay, Caterino first shows how Lyotard has drawn upon and been in dialogue with Aristotle, Kant, and Levinas as he has constructed his conception of morality. Caterino then takes a critical stand against Lyotard's (and Levinas's) work, arguing that there is an autonomous rationality in the moral realm that is rooted in the necessary intersubjectivity of those who inhabit the social domain. In addition, Caterino explores Lyotard's understanding of the role of prescriptives and descriptives in the achievement and articulation of knowledge.

Jerome Miller's essay invites the reader to reflect thoughtfully on the very possibility of an ethics and ethical behavior in the midst of postmodernism and deconstruction. Rather than concluding that these contemporary critiques have destroyed the possibility of an ethics insofar as they have done away with its foundation, Miller suggests that one should contemplate the possibility of an ethics without a foundation. Thus he proposes that deconstruction should not be viewed as something that one does to others; rather it should be understood to be something that one's self undergoes. Undergoing deconstruction, Miller argues, will allow one to face one's destitution and nothingness, not as a prelude to overcoming it, but as the first step in embracing it. Once one has embraced one's own destitution and released one's self-interest and concern for self-preservation, one is able to recognize that the good of the other has precedence over one's own good.

In the first of two chapters on Levinas, Wendy Farley considers the two primary metaphors that Levinas employs in his work: command and desire. Farley argues that, although the metaphor of command is used by Levinas to critique totalizing philosophies, it is unable to be employed positively in his restatement of ethical obligation. It cannot be used positively because it fails to get beyond the violence of dominance; command simply reverses the relationship of dominance, thereby excluding the desire for the (good of the) Other that cannot be commanded. Farley concludes that the metaphor of desire can be employed positively because desire is understood to fill one with a longing for the Other as Other, thereby preserving the asymmetry of alterity while not reestablishing a dominating or hierarchical relationship.

Jill Robbins presents the final chapter of this volume. Robbins explores Levinas's concern with the figural, both in its manifestation as figural interpretation of the Old Testament and in its manifestation as theatrical representation. While examining how the Judaic and the Christian reading of the Old Testament differ insofar as the Judaic may be said to eschew figural readings whereas the Christian overflows with them, Robbins suggests that the Christian interpretation may result in a petrification of individuals and of their relationships with others. This petrification

of individuals can be characterized as a loss of face—one of whose essential characteristics is mobility—and thus can be said to do violence to the very possibility of an ethics.

As is evident from these essays, what is occurring here is an ongoing and developing discourse that both challenges and revitalizes the tradition in which it has its origin. It is not our intention to suggest that this volume captures all of the depth and breadth of this challenging transition. It is our belief, however, that these essays attest to the rich possibilities that may yet develop.