

KOLB, DAVID. *Postmodern Sophistications: Philosophy, Architecture, and Tradition.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990. xi + 216 pp.

"Do we stand sufficiently above traditions that we can manipulate them and make them from some detached point of view as if they were tools for other purposes" (p.2), as modernists have claimed? Or are postmodernists right to criticize "the attempt to institutionalize and individual or social subject free from traditional restrictions" (p.6)? But neither the modernist refusal of the authority of tradition nor postmodern play with historical contents takes history seriously enough. Kolb insists that we are more essentially placed in history, even as he refuses to grant history such authority as would stifle our need and ability to change and adapt.

This thoughtful study, which should appeal to anyone interested in postmodernism, especially to architects, divides into two parts separated by thirteen illustrations. The shorter first part begins with a sketch of the "Socratic myth," which is said to have presented us with an intellectual ethics for "behaving well" on the path of inquiry: "erotic attraction to the good, communal dialogue, impartial questioning, openness, and refusal to insist on one's own opinion" (p.15). Of this ethics is born the insistence that inherited standards of belief and conduct justify themselves before the court of reason, the Platonic demand for last words that establish firm ground. This demand is challenged by the Sophistic substitution of persuasion for reasoned argument, where ancient Sophism has its recent counterpart in philosophical postmodernism, which seeks to defend humanity against what is all too easily experienced as a rationalist terrorism.

Kolb develops this opposition only to call it into question: neither Platonism nor Sophism are able to do justice to the world in which we find ourselves. If the former cannot make good on its claim to seize true reality, the latter's power of persuasion remains bound by pre-given contexts. If the one errs by thinking it possible

to rise above our inevitably historical reality to the plane of truth, the other is too ready to exchange critical reflection for a noncommittal play with historical contents. Inevitably "we find ourselves in historical situations we did not create, with goods and values we did not choose. We work at revising and correcting as we build new places for ourselves" (p.34).

Especially important is the fourth chapter, also entitled "Postmodern Sophistication," which confronts the modernism of Habermas with the postmodernism of Lyotard. Kolb steers a precarious course between the two, closer "to Lyotard's innovation than to Habermas's consensual process" (p.49). Aesthetic judgment is given a greater part than rational consensus in opening up the space for our judgments. Yet finally Kolb agrees with Habermas "that Lyotard's mode of self-criticism does not allow the mutual dialogue that is necessary for living and building in the finite spaces that we must share" (p.50).

What lets us experience building as more than arbitrary invention? By its very organization, Kolb's study invites us to explore parallels between the work of the architect and that of the philosopher. The latter has much to learn from concrete ways in which recent architects have challenged and moved beyond modernism and its presuppositions. Drawing on Heidegger, Kolb insists on the significance of history. Yet to Heidegger's gloomy interpretation of the present age's subjection to the hegemony of the Gestel and the related nostalgic celebration of place Kolb opposes an emphasis on our tradition's many different strands and voices, refusing to embed the self so completely in a particular history or language that it would become incapable of envisioning different languages and histories.

"We need appropriateness, not necessity" (p. 168). Kolb links such appropriateness to creative rereadings or misreadings of the past. But since, as he insists, the past speak with many voices, we are left with the question of what makes one reading more appropriate than another. Having only many-voiced history and the Habermasian goal of "open discussion and community

participation" to appeal to, we are left with the specter of arbitrariness that has haunted so much recent building.

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KARSTEN HARRIES

The Editors of the *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française* wish to thank Professor Karsten Harries and Professor Jude P. Dougherty, the editor of the *The Review of Metaphysics*, for permission to reprint this review.

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McBRIDE, WILLIAM L. *Sartre's Political Theory*. Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press, 1991, 246 pp. ISBN 0-253-33621-X

"Jean-Paul Sartre died in 1980 in his seventy-fifth year, having spent the better part of the last decade of his life in a painfully debilitated condition, unable to read and often afflicted by other maladies typical of the less fortunate aged. Since then, there has been a revival of interest in him, fueled in part by the posthumous publication of a number of Sartrean manuscripts, as well as by the appearance of the first comprehensive Sartre biography and of a number of other significant studies of aspects of his life, of his thought, or of both considered together; this book itself will, I hope, be a contribution to that revival. As one would anticipate under such circumstances, new images of Sartre have begun to emerge and proliferate.

... The label that I have chosen to focus the object of this study is Sartre's political theory, or political philosophy, or political thought; for present purposes I am not distinguishing among those terms. In fact I could with equal accuracy have denominated this a study in Sartre's 'social theory' or 'social and political theory,' terms for which I myself have a preference. But 'political theory' is the older and still more familiar expression, and one of my purposes in examining these aspects of Sartre's thought here is to demonstrate some of the many ways in which, in dealing as

he does with questions concerning the nature of society and history in an often unfamiliar, sometimes even eccentric, vocabulary, Sartre is nevertheless reconsidering some of the issues that have dominated Western philosophical thought about political life from the pre-socratics and Plato onward.

... What are the central themes that the reader may expect to see emerging from this study? Sometimes the most obvious answer to a question of this sort is the wisest. At the time of this return from a German prisoner-of-war camp during the Occupation period, Sartre organized a short-lived Resistance group, devoted primarily to writing activities, that called itself 'Socialism and Freedom'. These twin notions, both subject to the most important keys to the entire range of Sartre's political thought. If one of the two has a lexical priority, it is freedom."

From the "Introduction" to *Sartre's Political Theory*.

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ANNONCES ET NOUVELLES

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

The International Society for Phenomenology and Literature announces

I. XVIIth Annual Conference of the International Society for Phenomenology and Literature

DATE: April 9, 10, 11, 1992

PLACE: Cronkhite Graduate Center, 6 Ash Street,
Cambridge MA

THEME: Allegory Old and New--in Literature, the Fine Arts, Reality

KEYNOTE SPEAKER; Umberto Eco

Papers due: February 15, 1992

- II. XXVIIIth International Phenomenology Conference of the World Phenomenology Institute, a symposium on "The Poiesis of Life."**

DATE: May 30-31, 1992

PLACE: Messene, Greece

THEME: Chronos and Kairos: The Propitious Moment in Creativity, the Passions, and Intentionality

PAPERS DUE: April 1, 1992

- III. The World Phenomenology Institute with The International Society for Phenomenology and Literature, will hold its XXIXth International Phenomenology Conference**

DATE: June 15-20, 1992

PLACE: Luxembourg

THEME: Allegory Old and New: Creativity and Continuity in Culture

PAPERS DUE: April 1, 1992

Contact for these conferences is Prof. A-T. Tymieniecka, The World Phenomenology Institute, 348 Rd., Belmont, MA 0217

PROCHAIN CONGRES DE L'ASPLF: 27-31 Août 1992, Poitiers,

L'AG d'Hammamet avait retenu avec intérêt la proposition de la délégation de la Société Poitevine de Philosophie d'accueillir le prochain congrès de l'ASPLF.

Jeudi, 27 août 1992: au soir, accueil des congressistes;
Vendredi 28, samedi 29, dimanche 30 août 1992: séances;
Lundi 31 août 1992: Excursion poitevine.

Thème général: LA VIE ET LA MORT

Six sections permettront la ventilation de vos communications. La circulaire No 1 est à la composition et vous parviendra en janvier 1991. Inscrivez-vous aussitôt selon les directives que vous donneront les organisateurs de la Société poitevine.

Vous pouvez, dès maintenant, entrer en contact avec:
Prof. J.L. Vieillard-Baron, Université/Philosophie,
8, rue Descartes, POITIERS - 86000 - France

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La Société Beninoise de Philosophie annonce:

Premier Congrès panafricain de Philosophie
23-26 avril 1991
à COTONOU (BENIN)

"L'AFRIQUE à L'HORIZON 2000:
QUE PEUVENT LES PHILOSOPHES?"

Pour tous renseignements à Société beninoise de philosophie
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FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES SOCIETES DE
PHILOSOPHIE

XIXème CONGRES MONDIAL DE PHILOSOPHIE

22-28 août 1993

Organisé par la FISP à MOSCOU

"L'HUMANITÉ FACE à UN TOURNANT:
PERSPECTIVES PHILOSOPHIQUES"

34 sections prévues, tables rondes, séminaires, etc. L'ASPLF fera une réunion particulière dans le cadre des moments réservés aux réunions spéciales des Sociétés philosophiques le dimanche 22 août ou le mercredi 25 août 1993.

Tous renseignements à:

Secrétariat du XIXè Congrès de philosophie
Volkhonka 14
MOSCOU 119842

The Program Committee and the Steering Committee of the World Congress of Philosophy announces that they would appreciate receiving proposals for the following:

1. Names of possible speakers and/or chairpersons for the plenary sessions, the three symposia and the three colloquia. (They will receive travel expenses and hospitality).
2. Names of possible chairpersons for the 34 sections of the Congress. (Their expenses will not be covered).
3. Proposals of themes for workshops and round tables, with the indication of a person who is willing to organize the round table or the workshop.

4. Requests for special meetings to be organized by your society in connection with the World Congress.

In making your proposals, please follow the enclosed guide:

1. Proposals for speakers/chairpersons:

Please indicate clearly the name, institution and address of the proposed person, and give a short indication of his or her special field of research, as well as and mention his/her main publications.

2. Proposals for round tables and workshops:

Please give the title of the proposed round table or workshop, and the name of the person wanting to organize it. At the same time, this person should propose three additional participants not belonging to the same country, for the round table or workshop, so that international representation be fulfilled. It should also be clear that the Congress organizers can offer no financial support (neither travel expenses nor hospitality) to the persons so invited. However FISF can provide official invitation letters in order to facilitate obtaining funds from local institutions. All said proposals must be sent immediately (deadline date was March 31, 1991) to the President of the Program Committee:

Professor Francisco Quesada
Universidad de Lima
Avenida Javier Prado, s/n Monterrico, Apart. 852
Lima, PERU

with a copy to the

President of FISP, Professor Evandro Agazzi
Séminaire de Philosophie
Université Miséricorde
CH-1700 Fribour, Switzerland

Important dates: April 30, 1992: Deadline for contributed papers, poster session theses and proposal for round tables. Papers and other contributions received after this deadline but before September 30, 1992, may be accepted if space is still available.

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SUR L'HOMME
et le développement de ses facultés



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