THE PLACE OF THE POLITICAL IN DERRIDA AND FOUCAULT

DERRIDA & THE POLITICAL by Richard Beardsworth. London: Routledge, 1996. 174 + xvii pp.

FOUCAULT & THE POLITICAL by Jon Simons. London: Routledge, 1995. 152 + viii pp.

In the programmatic preface to Routledge's series *Thinking the Political*, general editors Kieth Ansell-Pearson and Simon Critchley state that in presenting the work of major contemporary Continental thinkers, its aim is to show how it is only in the relation between the philosophical and the political that "new possibilities of thought and politics can be activated." It is in this spirit that Richard Beardsworth's *Derrida & the Political* and Jon Simons's *Foucault & the Political* appear as volumes of this series.

At the outset of his study, Beardsworth asserts that the political dimensions of Derrida's deconstruction have been "underestimated" in the past. The reception of Derrida's thought in the 1970s in Anglo-Saxon literature departments overplayed its rhetorical side, reducing deconstruction to "a practice of literary criticism, the political orientation of which was easily advertised, but poorly elaborated" (p. 3). The Heidegger and de Man affairs in the 1980s drew out Derrida's critics, and his reputation suffered by association. Upstaged then by historicism and multiculturalism, deconstruction came to be perceived as "incapable of articulating historical making and unmaking of subjectivities." Derrida's more recent writings on politics have mitigated this view only in part. A major objective of Beardsworth's book is thus to "re-open" a discussion of the political reach of deconstruction in order to "redress" these misunderstandings. Counter to once prevailing opinion, Beardsworth maintains that Derrida's political "engagement inheres in the very 'method' of deconstruction and the political dimension of Derrida's thinking can be gauged only in respect of this 'method' " (p. 1). Not only is deconstruction politically informed; according to Beardsworth, it can even

POLITICAL THEORY, Vol. 28 No. 5, October 2000 675-689
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assist us in surmounting the "present paralysis of political thought and practice" (p. xii).

Beardsworth posits a set of principles that structures his complex and insightful reconstruction of the political implications of deconstruction. A political reading of Derrida's philosophy will show first that, at its most basic level, deconstruction is a "*genealogy* of violence," which is simultaneously a genealogy of the originary technicity of law (p. 13). And to the extent that all institutions are established by law, deconstruction can be characterized as a "radical 'critique' of *institutions*" (p. 19). That institutions are of a violently technical nature implies furthermore the aporetic character of all rational judgement; "the law of law," its ineluctable economy of violence, holds out no false hope for the reconciliation of metaphysical opposites, such as culture and nature, in a non-coercive identity of rational judgement beyond the constraints of violence. Beardsworth can thus assert that "Derrida's aporetic thinking" is "the very locus in which the political force of deconstruction is to be found" (p. xiv).

Standing in the Western tradition of ideology critique, deconstruction secondly reveals how the disavowal of originary violence by Western metaphysics leads to "greater violence" in politics. Deconstruction tracks down traces of repression in societal institutions by uncovering the hidden originary technicity of writing in speech and so forth. Where social, economic, and political institutions make claims to reconciliation, for instance, in the unity of the nation, the solidarity of workers, the "trust" (Fukuyama) of economic cooperation in late capitalism, or the ideal of "communication free of domination" (Habermas) in today's liberal democratic states, deconstruction seeks to disclose the disavowed violence hidden in these institutional arrangements. By positing the possibility for a reconciled unity of opposites in the present, Western rationality denies the ineluctable violence of law and, thereby, also disavows the "promise of the future." Whether it be in Saussure's "*natural* unity" of signifier and signified or in Hegel's *Volksgeist*, "metaphysical logic reduces the passage of time to presence." What is meant by the disavowal of the future by the metaphysics of presence can be highlighted in a symptomatic statement of Hegel's. In his Heidelberg *Lectures on Natural Right*, Hegel asserts, "in the state the universal will becomes actual; the universal has determinate existence as absolute end. Here there is no longing, nothing beyond our ken, no future; the purpose is actual and present."[1] Beardsworth can thus state that not just the disavowal of technicity but also the "disavowal of time in reflection upon the political has led to much injustice and violence," such as in "Communist, Fascist and Nazi variants of 'totalitarianism' " (pp. xiii, xvi). What adds a specific timbre to Beardsworth's book is its attempt to make Derrida's analysis of time fruitful for political theory. For if "time is violence," as Derrida states, then it is political. Or, as Beardsworth comments, Derrida's "philosophy is necessarily political *because* it is a thinking of time" (p. 150); that is, a critique of the disavowal of time and its consequences for a politics of greater violence.

Yet, like so many of his "double moves," Derrida also maintains distance from traditional ideology critique by rejecting the possibility of sublating (*Aufhebung*) the violence of law in reconciled social relationships; perceiving the ultimate danger of politics in the disavowal of the violence, technicity, and time of law, that is, in the "fiction[s] of a substantial community" or "*phantasms*" of nonviolent reconciliation in the present, Derrida asserts the aporetic character of socially constructed identity. Deconstruction therefore seeks at once both to overturn metaphysical oppositions and open them onto an undecidable position without reconciliation. Yet, rather than see in this politics "without passage" a regress to the inevitability of violence, Beardsworth insists that Derrida's aporetic politics reflects a "*radicalization of democratic thinking*," which recognizes "the 'now' of an absolute future, a non-eschatological, . . . ever-recurrent promise of the non-adequation of the present to itself" (pp. 42, 101).

For Beardsworth, then, Derrida's aporetic thinking not only describes "an essential limit to political logic"; it also situates in this present irreducibly open to the future the possibility of "democracy." Rather than the greater violence of disavowed technicity and truncated time in the phantasms of reconciliation, Derrida's aporetic politics commits itself to the promise of the future and the "justice" of "'lesser violence' in an economy of violence" (p. 12). This " 'impossible' politics of deconstruction" acknowledges the economy of violence, aporia, time, and future in the unsurpassable movement of *différance* between universal law and the singular. In sum, Beardsworth effectively portrays deconstruction as a critique of the philosophical roots of twentieth-century "totalitarianisms" and a politico-ethical "logic" of lesser violence; as such, his sustained discussion of deconstruction's genealogy of violence represents a timely and significant contribution to our understanding of Derrida's thought and its political yield.

Beardsworth's monograph is broken down into three major chapters, which respectively pursue Derrida's aporetics of language in Saussure's linguistics and Kafka's literature, the political limits of law in Kant's moral and legal formalism and Hegel's ethical life, and the aporia of time as the aporia of law in Heidegger's thought of being and Levinas's ethics.

In the first major chapter, Beardsworth sets out to show how Derrida's thought may be articulated as a genealogy of violence. After reconstructing in clear and broad strokes the deconstruction of Saussurean linguistics, Beardsworth focuses on what Derrida calls the "tertiary structure of violence." In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida names three levels of violence, which Beardsworth argues can be formalized in the following way:

> First, the originary violence of the system of differences . . . ; second, the violence of what is commonly conceived as the attempt to put an end to violence—the institution of law—but which is revealed as a violence because of the apparent suppression of originary difference; and third, the necessary (if empirical) possibility of phenomenal violence as the consequence of the inability of the law to suppress its illegality in relation to originary difference. (P. 23)

As a critique of institutions, deconstruction seeks to uncover the unrecognized tertiary structure of violence necessarily involved in an institution's "foundation, its exclusions, and its subsequent contradictions." It is this tertiary structure of violence that will inform Beardsworth's reconstruction of the Derridian deconstructive reading of the practical philosophy of Kant and Hegel.

If the first major chapter reveals the general framework of Derrida's genealogy of violence as applied to language and literature, Beardsworth's second chapter relates these insights to modern political thought by "position[ing] Derrida's work with regard to its major axis—the difference between the thought of Kant and that of Hegel" (p. 47). The choice of Kant and Hegel is not accidental; Beardsworth's interest is to show how deconstruction can move the contemporary debate between (Kantian) liberals and (Hegelian) communitarians forward. Yet, in attempting to open up a space for Derrida's political thinking between Kant's liberal theory of right and Hegel's philosophy of ethical life, Beardsworth tends to cloud their respective positions. In uncovering how Kant and Hegel disavow violence, Beardsworth underrepresents Kant's recognition of the coercive character of right as well as the conflicting difference of civil society and overidentifies Hegel with his " 'totalitarian' fate" in communism and fascism or overcharacterizes "the fate of Hegel's thought as totalitarian and terroristic" (pp. 84, 47). As a consequence, it remains unclear whether and how the method of deconstruction can make a concrete contribution to the debate between liberals and communitarians.

Beardsworth is intent to reveal how for Derridean deconstruction Kantian thought

> represents a classic gesture of "liberal" rationality which disavows its own force under the cover of naturality. . . . This disavowal cannot fail . . . to place violence *outside* the law. The violence in maintaining the limit as natural is revealed as/in the *contradictions* of Kant's thought. (P. 62)

In application of Derrida's tertiary structure of violence, Beardsworth argues that Kant's practical philosophy involves three levels of disavowed violence: (1) the disavowal of violence in the a priori foundation of universal law according to the principle of contradiction, (2) the unrecognized violence of the suppressed difference in ethics and civil society, and (3) the violence involved in suppressing the return of repressed difference in Kant's rejection of the right to revolt.

Beardsworth's opening argument is as straightforward as it is insightful. Kant grounds morality and justice in the universality of law, the coherency of which rests in its conformity to the law of contradiction. From Derrida's discussion of Kant in his article on Kafka's tale "Before the Law," Beardsworth learned that the principle of contradiction represents an "evacuation, from the domain of philosophy, of the problem of *time*. For, in formal logic, A cannot be –A *at one and the same time*. Formal logic thus denies time to constitute itself as such: it is . . . the disavowal of time" (p. 54). The principle of contradiction, which is the precondition not only for scientific thought but also the violence of "techno-sciences," reappears in ethical and political institutions. Its effects are deleterious. By "displacing the logic of non-contradiction from the field of knowledge to the ethical and political fields," Beardsworth contends, "Kant is unable to think the contradiction through between law and time. . . . The inability engenders in Kant's ethical and political writings a disavowal of the inextricable, but necessary relation between rights and violence" (p. 54). In Kantian ethics, for example, only those maxims are morally justifiable that are noncontradictory; it is the universal and necessary form of the law that determines moral integrity, not historical or empirical content. Kant's practical reason thus stands "*outside* of time and space"; it is dehistorized. Moreover, by reducing morality to the conformity of a maxim with noncontradictory universal law, Kant banishes the "risk of ethical judgement," thereby "abolishing judgement," which is "the very condition of ethical orientation" (p. 64).

The disavowal of violence is documented not only in the denial of the originary difference in noncontradictory universal law. In Kant's political theory, the initial disavowal leads to violence at a secondary level in civil society's differential relations. Modern liberal politics à la Kant expels "violence as a non-civil phenomenon from the social whole," for "it fails to recognize that struggle is inherent to human organization" (p. 76). In consequence, a third level of violence appears, in which—according to Beardsworth—Kant argues that "the right to resistance is not a right, because it is self-contradictory and, therefore, immoral" (p. 69). Disavowing the violent " 'illegality' " of universal law, Kant expels rebellion against this violence to a sphere " 'outside' the law."

Yet, while Beardsworth is correct in highlighting how by applying the principle of contradiction to morality and legality Kant disavows the originary violence and time in the a priori grounding of universal law, Kant does not deny the constraining effects of universal law altogether. On the contrary, Kant seeks to legitimate "self-coercion" in morality and "external coercion" in politics by linking the practice of constraint to the principle of universality. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, for instance, Kant identifies the universal principle of right with the "reciprocal constraint" of individuals in the state.[2] Although Beardsworth admits that Kant's "Idea of the Highest Good" mends the "division between moral subjectivity and material objectivity though constraint" (p. 71), what remains outstanding is a clarification of the difference between the violence left "unrecognized" by Kant and his discourse on moral and legal coercion. This is especially troubling, for Beardsworth identifies the constraint of abstract law with violence: "the concept of (non-contradictory) identity" is one that "violently subsum[es] the singular. This would be a philosophy of constraint" (p. 75).

This difficulty repeats itself on at least two occasions. Beardsworth argues that by disavowing violence in noncontradictory universal law, Kant is forced to adopt a conception of "political equality" that "misrecognizes" both its discrepancy with "economic inequality" and "the necessary conflict arising from this inequality as well as from the differentiation of organized human activity" (p. 76). Yet, Kant neither simply ignores the relationship between formal political equality and economic inequality, nor does he simply "fail to recognize that struggle is inherent to human organization" (p. 76). In *Theory and Practice*, Kant states that the "uniform equality of human beings as subjects of a state is . . . perfectly consistent with the utmost inequality of the masses in the degree of its possessions."[3] For Kant, this differential relation has system, for formal equality is the precondition for sociocultural difference in civil society. Thus, although Beardsworth may be correct that in Kantian ethics the noncontradictory moral will can have no truck with the heteronomy of conflicting desires, thereby exacting a "repression of contradiction," in politics the case seems more complex. Without a doubt, Kant demands the suppression of illegal behavior. But within the constricting limits of abstract right, Kant also postulates the necessity of envy, competition and difference as the fertile soil for the actualization of creative human potential, individual freedom, and the advance of human civilization; without "discord," Kant writes in "Idea for a Universal History," "all human talents would remain hidden forever in a dormant state."[4] Hence, the other side of the law-governed state's violent exclusion of illegal action is for Kant not the ideology of an harmonious civil society, as Beardsworth implies, but recognition of the coercive character of prohibitive law and the "continuing antagonisms"of civil life.

Lastly, although Beardsworth is correct to assert that Kant rejects the right to revolt, he does not state that all resistance is "immoral." Kant supports the violent suppression of political revolt by rejecting the "*legal* right to rebellion." But, as Hans Reiss explains, while Kant maintained that it is our legal duty to observe state law, he also argued that "no one should be compelled to comply with laws which require him to commit immoral acts. . . . Indeed, it is our moral duty not to abide by such commands."[5] Hence, Kant's quotation of St. Paul's injunction in Romans I, XIII, 21-22 in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* that "'we should obey the powers that be because they are ordained of God' is overridden by the command, expressly quoted by Kant, in Acts V, 29, that 'we must obey God rather than man.' "[6]

Beardsworth turns next to the relationship between Derrida and Hegel. The objective here is to show how for Derrida, Hegel's dialectical sublation of the coercive economies of Kant's moral and legal formalism into ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) leads to a "re-cognition" or "re-stricture" of repression. What is meant here? In *Dissemination*, Derrida writes that the aporia of "*différance* marks the critical limits of the idealizing powers of relief (*la relève, Aufhebung*)" (p. 6, footnote). Where Hegel posits the possibility for the *Aufhebung* of contradiction into a post-aporetic, "non-violent," differential unity of the *Volk*, Derrida rejects the offer as a ruse. Instead, deconstruction reveals how the logic of ethical life is not dialectical but aporetic, not a logic of redemption but a "logic of repression." In *Glas*, Beardsworth explains, "one of the major concerns of Derrida's text lies in . . . showing, from within dialectic, that Hegel's differential identities are *phantasms*," unities of "phantasmic repression" (p. 77). Paradoxically, Hegel's critique of the Kantian moral and legal constraint not only "resists, but also sustains, the modern violence of revolutionary politics" (p. 70).

The first-level suppression of *différance* in Hegel's dialectical logic leads to a return of the repressed and its subsequent suppression at secondary sites. According to Beardsworth, an example of this secondary region of violence is found in Hegel's treatment of the *Pöbel* (rabble). Hegel claims to sublate the violence of civil society in the ethical state. Yet in truth, Beardsworth argues, dialectical logic "forces Hegel *not* to see this stateless pocket within the state as an essential contingency of all states. The aporetic impossibility of rationalizing the 'empirical' infinity of need is hidden through the misrecognition of the state-less as 'a rabble' " (p. 93). This exclusionary practice gives rise to a third level of violence, which involves the externalization of this internal conflict in colonialism and war. Hegel's statements show that international relations are not rational but "predicated upon the fundamental irrationality of the economy," which leads to "the 'infinity' of injustice, territorial expansion and conquest" of

> colonialism. . . . His desire to think of the *Volk* as unified, to think of history as logical (the law of international contradiction, the *Weltgeist*), and to think of violence as occurring *at the limits* of a state's "own lands" leads to the misrecognition of violence. (P. 94)

Yet, while Hegel attempts to sublate formal subjectivity into concrete ethical universality, he does not abandon the "infinite right of subjectivity." Hegel sought to augment, to reinforce the power of abstract right by the hegemonic force of ethical life, not to do away with it. This is the crucial difference separating Hegel from his "terroristic" or " 'totalitarian' fates" in communism and fascism, movements with little, if any, respect for formal individual rights. Beardsworth seems to overlook this when he writes, for example, that "in the very attempt to restrict rights to their field, in order to give form to the multiplicity of life, Hegel restricts them totally" (p. 77). Let us not miss the double meaning or undecidability of the "re-stricture" of repression Derrida ascribes to ethical life. In *Glas*, Derrida attempts to reveal how the *Aufhebung* of abstract right into ethical life at once both restricts (i.e., confines) the coercion of abstract law by transcending the repressive limit between universal law and individual desire in ethical customs and restricts (i.e., tightens) the repressive force of law through the disavowal of violence, technicity, and time in the "phantasms" of ethical reconciliation. But here the notion of a *total* restriction of coercive law in the ethical community is misleading. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel acknowledged that ethical norms cannot totally sublate the conflict of civil society. While Hegel argued, for instance, that the rabble mentality resulting from poverty could be thwarted by disciplinary institutions, such as the police, he did not deny the ineluctability of economic impoverishment, as Beardsworth's arguments imply. And due to these ineluctable "contingencies," Hegel was convinced that the threat of violent sanction by the law-governed state remained necessary.

In sum, by overextending Derrida's tertiary structure of violence in its application to Kant's liberal thought and Hegel's philosophy of ethical life, Beardsworth seems to convince us less of limitations inherent in the political thought of Kant and Hegel than those given in the method of deconstruction itself.

In the final major chapter, Beardsworth takes up Derrida's "negotiations" with Levinas's ethics and Heidegger's thought of being to highlight how Derrida's thinking of "the aporia of law 'is' the aporia of time" (p. 99). Beardsworth situates Derrida between Heidegger and Levinas by claiming that

> whilst indebted to both their genealogies of the metaphysical tradition (one in terms of time—Heidegger, the other in terms of law—Levinas), Derrida's thinking can be identified with neither, because his deconstruction of metaphysics is made in terms of time and law. (P. 98)

The ineluctable violence of law is simultaneously the self-deferment of time to itself, that is, *différance*. Yet, in Heidegger's opposition between authentic and inauthentic conceptions of time and in Levinas's theory of alterity, the violence of time and law is respectively disavowed. Whereas Heidegger disavows the violence of time in the authentic temporality of the *Volk* (as opposed to the inauthentic temporality of *das Man*) and Levinas disavows the violence of law in the ethical relation to the Other, Beardsworth argues that Derrida retains the aporetic dimension by insisting on the violence of time and law: "the experience of aporia is one of time and law. The passage of time and the violence of law form two sides of the same coin" (p. 101). Symptomatic of this disavowal of violence in Heidegger's "politics of authentic 'temporality' " and Levinas's "politics of ethical singularity" is their subsequent support for the political use of violence. Whether it be Levinas's "ethical justification of the politics of Israel" or Heidegger's metaphysical "grounding of the movement," according to Beardsworth, both authors "reproduce the same 'logic' " by forgetting the " 'promise' of the future" (p. 144).

I close my discussion of *Derrida & the Political* with a question that touches on Beardsworth's concluding remarks on the relationship between originary technicity, time, and the promise of a politics of lesser violence. Throughout his complex and informative text, Beardsworth argues that it is above all the disavowal of originary violence or originary technicity of law that leads to "greater violence." In his reconstruction of Derrida's "negotiations" with Saussure, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and Levinas, Beardsworth shows how each of these philosophers fails to account adequately for the irreducible technicity of law and time; in consequence, a politics of greater violence seems inevitable. Yet, there is at least one text Beardsworth takes up that may run counter to this reading—Heidegger's *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935). In this text, written while a politically committed, if critical, supporter of the Nazi movement, Heidegger accounts for the originary violence and technicity of history. Yet, Beardsworth sees it differently. In the conclusion, he states that it is the "denial of originary technicity" and, therewith, originary violence "that informs Heidegger's engagements with Nazism" (p. 152). Admitting to the "combative" character of this assertion's premise, in a footnote Beardsworth discourages the "informed reader" from interpreting this statement as his "misunderstanding" of "the role of technics in Heidegger's thinking of the history of being" (p. 163, n.3). Beardsworth justifies his position by clarifying that throughout his work Heidegger maintained an "axiomatic distinction between *phusis* and *techne*." Yet, in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger states that "it would require a special study to explain what is essentially the same in *phusis* and *techne*" [7]; hence, he seems to reject an axiomatic distinction between the two by tracing their difference to the specific history of being. More important, however, is the fact that in his discussion of *deinon* or man as the unheimlich or violent one, Heidegger sets *techne* not simply in opposition to *phusis* but to *dike*: "the reciprocal confrontation [of *dike* and *techne*] *is*" [8]; here, being (or *phusis*) is the opposing strife between overwhelming *dike* and violent *techne*. In other words, Heidegger avoids here any flat opposition between the authentic and the inauthentic that Beardsworth detects with Derrida, for instance, in *Being and Time*. And far from disavow violence, Heidegger here exalts the originary violence of the *unheimlich* ones, such as those, like the poet, who create the institutions of the *polis*. Indeed, it is precisely this glorification of originary creative violence that seems to represent the height of Heidegger's *Verstrickung* in Nazism. As Richard Wolin writes, in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* "violence takes on the character of an ontological imperative." [9] Hence, not so much the spiritualization of national socialism, as Derrida sees it, or a disavowal of originary technicity but Heidegger's temporary suspension of his "ethic" of "letting beings be" (which Derrida associates with being "as close as possible to nonviolence") and subsequent glorification of the *law-creating violence* (Wolin) of the *unheimlich* ones in the establishment of new institutions of the German *Volk* would be the path to reconstruct Heidegger's "negotiations" with national socialism. But what then, we are left to ask, if anything, distinguishes Derrida here from Heidegger, both of whom have plumbed the depths of the violence of Western metaphysics? Despite proximity, the difference between Derrida and Heidegger here is as vast and irreducible as it is tenuous—it is the aporetic decision to commit oneself to the "lesser violence" within a general economy of violence, a contingent choice of ethico-political import that, it seems, no philosophical avowal or disavowal of originary violence can necessarily secure. Bereft of any sure footing, the practical use of theory opens onto the undecidablity of *différance*, onto Derrida's aporetic decision to adopt a politics of lesser violence, the complex structure of which we are indebted to Beardsworth for illuminating so well.

In contrast to Derrida, throughout most of his career Michel Foucault was recognized as a politically engaged thinker, even if his political commitments have remained for some obscure. Yet, despite their profound differences, the ethico-political projects of Derrida and Foucault converge in many ways on what we could term a common sensibility for the irreducible violence of discourse and the need for an open, aporetic, and agonal democracy. It is the merit of Jon Simons's book *Foucault & the Political* not only to reconstruct in general terms Foucault's oppositional critique of modern (political) rationality but also to throw further needed light on his affirmative theorization of new modes of subjectivity.

In the introduction, Simons outlines the "interpretive frame" of his study. Foucault's critique of the present tends to oscillate between what Simons awkwardly terms the "unbearable lightness and heaviness" of its seemingly contradictory commitments. Foucault is said to swing in "mood" between two "poles," namely, that our present is one of either "total constraint" or "untrammeled freedom." It is to Simons's credit that he attempts to steer a middle course between these two extremes, highlighting how "on the whole, but not always, Foucault resists the magnetism of the two poles, riding the tension by adopting unstable positions between them" (p. 3). The novel focus of Simons's book is its concentration on the question of "limits" in Foucault's political thought. Simons breaks his study down into two major sections. After an initial discussion of Foucault's methodology, Simons turns to Foucault's critique of humanism's "constricting" and "enabling" limits that both threaten individual autonomy. He then takes up an analysis of the "ethical turn" given in Foucault's later writings, which posits the possibility of individual practices of freedom that transgress the "constraining" and "subjugating" limits of the "modern humanist regime" (p. 31).

In his discussion of methodology, Simons stresses Foucault's indebtedness to Kant and Nietzsche. In his late essay on *What is Enlightenment?*, Foucault attempts to situate himself in the tradition of the European Enlightenment. Foucault agrees with Kant that the Enlightenment is an age of critique in which humanity employs its own reason and questions the illegitimate uses of reason by authority. Yet, while Kant believes the function of critique to be setting proper limits for reason's legitimate use, Foucault redefines critique as a political problem. Foucault's critical philosophy is one of limits, but—as Simons stresses—these limits are not just of reason but also of power. Hence, as Foucault states, "The point . . . is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression" (p. 17). Furthermore, in Foucault's version the limits to be transgressed are historical and contingent, not necessary and universal. Critique should thus involve a historical dimension that Foucault—in tribute to Nietzsche—terms *genealogy.* As a critical history of the present, genealogy reveals how the political question par excellence is truth; that is, how the will to truth is a will to power. The fundamental assumption of Foucault's genealogy is that "we must conceive discourse as a violence we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them" (p. 20).

In his discussion of Foucault's critique of modern (political) rationality, Simons is guided by the thesis that for Foucault "humanist theory" promotes "modes of subjectification that are simultaneously modes of subjection" (p. 68). In other words, Foucault seeks to uncover how institutions of modern societies render individuals to "subjects" who are at once both socially productive and subjected. In an interview conducted a year before his death, Foucault retrospectively perceives three axes of subjectification: truth, power, and ethics. Simons reconstructs Foucault's successive attempts to determine the limits of "the humanist regime": (1) in his work in the 1960s on the archaeology of modern epistemes, which reveals how man is placed in the "ambiguous position" of being both an "object of knowledge and as a subject that knows: enslaved sovereign, observed spectator" (p. 24); (2) in his genealogy of apparatuses of power beginning in the 1970s, which uncovers how "relations of power and scientific discourses mutually constitute one another" (p. 25); and (3) in his writings beginning in the mid-1970s on modern disciplinary institutions, such as prisons, schools, and factories, which disclose how power functions not just to repress but also positively to "enable" and "constitute" subjects that are at the same time subjected (pp. 30-31).

Simons highlights how in the late 1970s Foucault augmented his microphysics of disciplinary power with a macro-physical analysis of governmentality. Here, Foucault shows how the art of modern government becomes "demonic" by combining the individualizing effects of pastoral power to the reason of the state in the early modern period. "Reason of state," Simons explains, "relies on the technology of police to make individuals useful. The aim of the police is salvation in this world, in the form of 'health, well-being . . . security, protection against accidents' " (p. 39). This instrumentalization of human happiness for state strength represents for Foucault a central moment in the solidification of the humanist regime. Simons's book is particularly instructive in this context by showing how Foucault explains the subsequent "shift from police to liberalism" in the modern period. Once society has been constructed as a self-regulative machine by the disciplinary measures of the police, these disciplines appear to be a cumbersome form of power. In other words, once subjects have been individualized and social cohesion imposed in keeping with the imperatives of the political economy, liberalism may be articulated as the belief that "there is always too much government" (p. 56). Yet, rather than leading to the creation of a space of limitless freedom in civil society, Simons carefully points out that for Foucault, "liberalism transforms the programme of policing" into a set of practices for the constitution of subjects according to the model of individuality as an enterprise or entrepreneur of the self, subject to the demands of the political economy (p. 59). Hence, Foucault's genealogy reveals how "liberalism's stress on individuality reflects its commitment to the 'individualization' pole of the paradox of humanism. Yet liberal political philosophy obscures the price paid on the 'totalization' side of the account" (p. 59).

If "the constant correlation of individualization and totalization" reflects the ultimate danger of modern political rationality, then Foucault's affirmative strategies of transgression are designed to upset this logic of humanism. According to Simons, Foucault's promotion of new modes of subjectivity seeks to answer the question, "How can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?" Although first developed in the 1960s in relation to art, Simons discusses how Foucault returns to the idea of transgression in his later writings. For Foucault, Simons clarifies, the act of transgression does not "overcome limits, . . . but shows that what we are . . . depends on the existence of limits"; it is not the simple erasure but critical illumination of limits, forcing it to "find itself in what it excludes" (p. 69).

In discussion of Foucault's thoughts on transgressive practices, Simons concentrates first on art and ethics. Foucault not only associated modern art with the transgression of limits; through his intense study of ancient Greek and Hellenistic ethics, Foucault was capable of articulating a conception of ethics as an aesthetics of existence in which the individual strives to fashion the self as a work of art. Foucault's aesthetics of existence was designed to cultivate a nonuniversal relation of the individual to the self, which "would begin to have an independent status, or at least a partial and relative autonomy" (p. 74). In this way, Foucault believed that the individual care of the self could "disentangle the interlacement of ethics, truth, and power and thus . . . attain a greater degree of liberty" (p. 78).

According to Simons, Foucault also demarcates sites of transgression in politics. Although he believes power is ubiquitous, Foucault insists that "there are no relations of power without resistances." States of domination, in which the action of individuals is "so well determined in advance that there is nothing left to do, is a special case of power relations" and by no means the rule. Despite these qualifications, Simons claims that in Foucault's writings, "resistance is drastically undertheorized" (p. 83). Here, however, Simons's assertion seems as halfhearted as it is overstated. For his subsequent discussion of Foucault's conception of positive power relations as principally open to resistance as well as his thoughts on resistance belie the charge. Examples of the practices of resistance Foucault analyzes include not only philosophical critique, a transgressive practice by which the individual can "think otherwise, . . . to become other than what one is," but also the Greek practice of *parrhesia* or truth-telling as speaking frankly to powers that be despite its inherent dangers. Hence, it also comes as no surprise that Simons finds manifest in "Foucault's positions on liberty as practice and agonistic openness" elements of what he terms an "ethic of permanent resistance" (p. 87).

Simons concludes his study with an evaluation of the impact Foucault's writings have had on contemporary political theory. After assessing the importance of Foucault for feminist theories of identity politics as well as comparing the political thought of Foucault and Habermas, Simons recognizes William Connolly's important contributions in developing the implications of Foucault's thought for radical liberal democracy. Not only has he defended Foucault against critics such as Taylor, Connolly has discerned in Foucault's ethico-political sensibilities a new democratic ethos, an agonal form of radical liberal democracy. Committed as it is to the "openness and temporality of its constitution, laws, policies, and identity," the agonistic polity Connolly envisions carries forth the "undefined work of freedom," of which Foucault spoke (p. 122).

Not unlike Beardsworth's portrayal of Derrida's aporetic politics of lesser violence in a general economy of violence, Simons shows us how in an inescapable web of power relations, Foucault's ethico-political project is committed to games of power played with "a minimum of domination." Perhaps the time has come to investigate the parallels between these two thinkers of the political who otherwise have often been perceived to be at cross purposes in their philosophical standpoints.

—*David C. Durst*
American University in Bulgaria

NOTES

1. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science* (1817/1818), transcribed by Peter Wannenmann, edited by the Staff of the Hegel Archives, and translated by J. Micheal Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), §123.

2. I. Kant, *Kant's Political Writings*, edited with an introduction and notes by Hans Reiss, translated by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 135.

3. Kant, *Political Writings*, 74-75.
4. Ibid., 45.
5. Hans Reiss, “Postscript,” in Kant, *Political Writings*, 267.
6. Ibid.
7. M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 16.
8. Ibid., 123.
9. Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 126.

David C. Durst is an associate professor of philosophy at the American University in Bulgaria.