

Ratzinger, Wojtyla, and other personalists. The interesting discussions of the importance of the body given by Hersch in his welcome and persistent critique of Cartesian dualism would perhaps have benefited from the contributions of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

The book is obviously a labor of many years in which Hersch has wrestled with these issues; during this period he has been in close contact and dialogue with both philosophers and psychotherapists. The result is well worth the reader's effort.—Paul C. Vitz, *New York University; Institute for the Psychological Sciences*.

HICKS, Stephen R. C. *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault*. Tempe, Arizona: Scholarly Publishing, 2005. v + 230 pp. Paper, \$18.95—The opening sentence of this instructive book declares that "we have entered a new intellectual age." "Postmodernism" is a name that some scholars give to the academic *zeitgeist*. Hicks's task is to explain the topology and the genesis of postmodernism. This is a welcome achievement since many people wonder what rationale, or lack thereof, postmodernists have used to make their case and what historical philosophical changes have caused the proliferation of postmodernists in university culture. To answer, Hicks writes six chapters. Chapter 1 describes postmodernism as a movement, trying to identify traits that give various postmodernist theories a family resemblance. The rest of the book—chapter 2: "The Counter-Enlightenment Attack on Reason"; chapter 3: "The Twentieth century Collapse of Reason"; chapter 4: "The Climate of Collectivism"; chapter 5: "The Crisis of Socialism"; chapter 6: "Postmodern Strategy"—expands the original description of postmodernism by identifying and discussing its origins and the emergence of its principal themes over the past two centuries. This explanation is exceedingly helpful to those readers who regard postmodernism as having fashioned a strange and inhospitable cultural landscape. In such an alien milieu, classically trained academics (not to mention nonacademics who sometimes encounter postmodernists) may wonder what has happened to the university and perhaps even the wider culture it influences. By the end of the book, the reader may remain ill at ease with postmodernist malaise, but Hicks's lucid account will demystify the subject.

Hicks's impressive grasp of the history of philosophy over the past few centuries enables him to explain postmodernism by identifying its signposts. He lets sensitive analysis of the memorable episodes of postmodernism speak to the essential issues that drive it. His treatment of the importance of Kant's skepticism in getting the postmodernist engine going down the track is especially instructive. However, Hicks understates, or perhaps does not see, that the origins of postmodernist skepticism are already in what he calls "modernism." Postmodernists and

historians of postmodernism often overlook this because they want to play on the device that modernism really is different in kind from postmodernism. And certainly the latter differs in its radicalization of modernist assumptions. But modernist assumptions nonetheless—whether one calls them “Enlightened” or not—are the remote reasons for postmodernism. Mortimer Adler made this point some years ago in his book, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, in which he argued that the seeds of radical irrationalism, epistemological relativism, and antihumanist nihilism were planted when Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume disconnected the intellect from real, extramental things and made ideas, states of intramental consciousness, the objects of knowledge. If anti-realism is implicit in modernism, then postmodernism is a working out of modernist assumptions, not a philosophical movement different in kind from modernist philosophies. Postmodernism unmasks modernism, making explicit and radical what is implicit and undeveloped.

But my complaint on this fine point does not detract from Hicks's overall impressive achievement. As a historical analysis, his exposition focuses on two broad lines of development, one epistemological, the other, social or moral. The epistemological line is skepticism; the social or moral is collectivism. In keeping with this twofold development, Hicks explains that postmodernism is enthusiastically antirealist. This current of postmodernism descends from Kant and his epigones. Hicks quotes Marcuse, who triumphantly proclaims that “Reason [in the Hegelian sense] signifies the ‘absolute annihilation’ of the common-sense world” (p. 188 n. 19). Moreover, postmodernism is an attack on classical liberalism and capitalism. Accordingly, it champions collectivism. This stream emanates out of Rousseau. Hicks covers these historical developments thoroughly and effectively in merely 200 pages.

His closing chapter is clever in the way he gently and almost imperceptibly lets criticisms of postmodernism percolate and emerge in his telling the postmodernist tale. By the end of the book, Hicks has made a persuasive and disturbing argument that postmodernism is not philosophy, but antiphilosophy, and offers nothing salutary for civilization. Its obsessive antirealism is a sophisticated cover for irrationalism and its adherence to collectivism persistently rationalizes totalitarianism (characterized as “reverse Thrasymacheanism,” p. 182). Postmodernist socialists claim to advocate the interests of the common people, but their advocacy seems disingenuous if they seek the “absolute annihilation” of the commonsense world.

Hicks intelligently analyzes his subject and cleverly criticizes it. These virtues he complements with (for the most part) historical acumen and clear writing. I hope that books like Hicks's become a trend. The restoration of our philosophical and cultural health depend on it.—Curtis L. Hancock, *Rockhurst University*.