

traditionalism due to Ronald and Donos Cortes in the political voluntarism of nationalism, exemplified by Action française (220). The paper begins with an analysis of antimodernism and the idea of decadence in virtue of which Nietzsche is a traditional thinker (220-230). This is followed by a summary of Nietzsche's attack on liberalism (230-237). Then there is a discussion of nihilism (238-246), followed by a summary of Nietzsche's attacks on dialectic (246-252), on modern mediocrity and liberal degeneration (252-246), and cultural decadence (256-263). Taguieff notes that for Nietzsche, discussion is a sign of weakness (264). The paper ends with an account of Nietzsche and Action française, a rightwing Catholic monarchist movement (276-284). The treatment of parallels between Nietzsche's thought and his influence on the thought of various rightwing movement is very interesting.

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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 an 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 opinions" (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 Sophism 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 good 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 Sophistications," 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 the 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 Gestell 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 speaks 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 taunted so much recent building.

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