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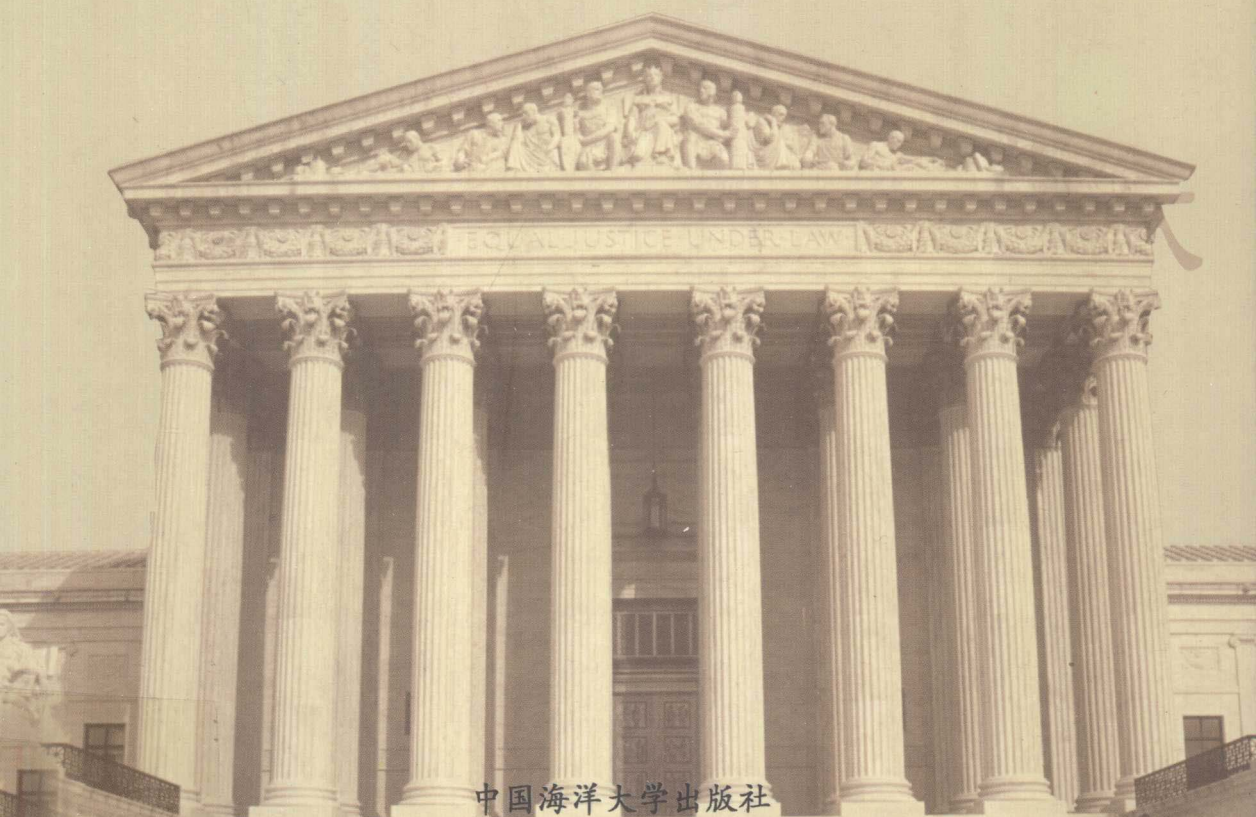
A Critical Guide

欧洲批评和理论导读

Edited by Julian Wolfreys



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出版前言

经过一段时间的酝酿，这套“英文原版文学理论丛书”终于陆续和读者见面了。我们出版这套丛书的初衷主要有以下两个方面：(1)我国的外国文学研究有两条战线、两支队伍，一支在文学院，一支在外语学院。改革开放以来，由于国内外交流的推进和学科研究的发展，两支队伍逐渐靠拢，比较文学的队伍在渐渐扩大。高等院校外国文学专业不但有很多本科生，而且建设了许多硕士点和博士点。文学理论(通常叫西方文论)是该专业的主干课程之一，但国内过去引进的这类外文原版书很少，有的(包括某些教材)文字太难，师生反映这方面的参考书太少，尤其是适合中文系该专业师生阅读的此类书更少。我们引进这套丛书，就是为了满足广大师生教学科研的迫切需要。(2)随着全球化的到来，国内外的学术交流越来越快地向深广发展。要进一步促进这种交流的发展，需要做好三个方面的工作，一要较快地提高广大师生的外语能力，达到用外语进行学术交流的水平；二要深入了解国外该学术领域的最新研究成果和发展动态与趋势；三要有目的有计划地将我们国内的研究成果介绍给国外的同行。我们引进的这套丛书可以在这三个方面发挥很有效的作用，尤其是在提高用外语撰写专业论文与学术著作的水平方面，最有效的方法就是研读该专业国外原版著作，因为这样既能较深入地了解外国同行的研究成果，同时又能潜移默化地提高使用外语的水平。

在确定书目时，我们的原则是先介绍基础理论方面的著作和最新研究成果，再介绍专题研究，着重从国外主要学术出版社中进行选择。**丛书的读者对象是外语学院与文学院外国文学专业和比较文学专业的教师、研究生和相关研究者。**必须指出的是，我们介绍国外的文学理论，并不表明我们完全赞同其观点。有了解才有继承与批判。我们希望读者诸君在全面了解国外同行研究成果的基础上，吸收其有益的成分，摒弃其片面甚至错误的成分，促进文学理论研究在我国的健康发展。

在出版过程中，杨自俭教授从学科建设的高度提出了指导性意见，左金梅教授协助我们确定了部分出版书目，邓红风教授提供了宝贵的技术支持，丛书诸位学术顾问给予了无私的帮助和鼓励，在此谨致谢意。我们迫切希望更多的文学理论研究者加入到这套丛书的引进中来，使我们这套书的规模越来越大，质量越来越高。

Preface

Modern European Criticism and Theory offers the reader a comprehensive critical overview of the widespread and profound contest of ideas within European 'thought', focusing primarily on the major voices in poetics, philosophy, linguistics and psychoanalysis, as well as those in what have become in the twentieth century literary and cultural studies from the Enlightenment to the present day. Examining how conceptions of subjectivity, identity and gender have been interrogated, over fifty essays critically assess the ways in which we think, see and act in the world, as well as the ways in which we represent such thought psychologically, politically, and philosophically and culturally.

Focusing on a broad range of singular critical voices, and to a great degree attending to the major conceptual interrogations, reorientations and, subsequently, movements and transitions in thought that have taken place as a result of the irreversible effects occasioned by those particular voices, the present volume offers successive narratives of transformation and translation. Charting various radical interventions in thinking concerning fundamental philosophical, political and poetic issues related to matters of being, meaning and identity, the essays provide themselves an intervention in and a continuation of that radical tradition. The narrative that unfolds from the essays of this volume and their interwoven yet discontinuous threads amounts to the unravelling of a cultural, historical and epistemological tapestry by which the most fundamental matters of ontology and the poetics and politics of being have come to be perceived. Whether presenting itself in terms that are primarily linguistic, psychoanalytic, political or philosophical, the historical narrative of critical discourse in and across Europe and its subsequent translation into the practices and discourses of modern criticism and theory, so-called, reveals itself here as one of continuous upheavals, shifts and processes of decentring contest. What is at stake in such contest, tension and conflict are the very grounds of thinking about thinking, in historically and culturally grounded and material ways concerning how the human subject can speak of its specificity, its experience and its singular encounters with all that inform and articulate its subjectivity.

While foregrounding the practice and theory of literary and cultural criticism in many of its historically specific guises, the present volume also provides extensive critical coverage of the related contextual discourses that inform those issues, and out of which criticism has developed in the guises that it now assumes. What the reader will therefore come to understand is that criticism cannot be thought separately from the many forms and traditions of thought, whether scientific or poetic, political or rhetorical, semantic or epistemological, which have been sustained in so diverse and fruitful a fashion as this

collection suggests. The essays of this collection recognize the interanimation between discourses and cultures of thinking, and so explore matters of hybridity, translation and border crossings between discourses and cultures, between disciplines and forms of analysis and investigation. There is, in European thought, no one identity, no one articulation that seamlessly and homogeneously gathers together in undifferentiated form a discourse that could, itself, be described as European; and yet it is perhaps the very resistance to such ontological homogeneity and *in-difference* that is a strikingly 'European' feature of that which goes by the name of critical thinking, as these essays intimate.

Each of the essays thus chart and trace processes of translation and transformation, of hospitality to the other as well as attempted assimilations of that very alterity. In welcoming the other into one's home, across the threshold, boundary or border as a gesture of hospitality and welcome, there are also signs, if not of hostility, then of a hermeneutics of suspicion. Intrinsic to this welcome, inextricably tied up with any such act, is a desire to render the foreign, the other, that which is different, less strange or threatening perhaps. Hospitality assumes both tolerance and neutralization, and it seeks to maintain a degree of mastery through taking in just enough of the other into its system, immunizing itself if you will, in order to allow it to carry on with business as usual. What goes here by the name of 'European' thinking, or 'European' critical discourse, is shown by the critics who have contributed to this volume to be both negotiations of the very kind just outlined and yet, simultaneously, on the part of many of the critics, poets, writers and philosophers of whom they speak, a rigorous critique, and, occasionally, a 'deconstruction' of the very grounds on which the accommodation of difference and otherness takes place.

Such incorporations are not without consequences, without the rise of contest and conflict; and also, not inconsequent to the encounters are the misreadings and misperceptions, the avoidances, the non-reception, and even occasionally the hostilities that provide some of the more visible punctuations within the history of criticism and what we misname theory. The articles in the present volume chart and reflect on the accommodations and resistances, the tolerances and intolerances. In this, each article concerns itself not only with the formalist contours and epistemological parameters of a particular discourse, it also acknowledges the cultural, historical and ideological specificities of the emergence and transformation of criticism. The reader of this collection will not – *not necessarily* – learn how to read like, say, Paul Ricoeur or Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva or Michel Foucault (though each of the critics chosen to write about their subjects have been selected for their recognized ability to be faithful to the contours of the other's thought in its translation for the purposes of the present volume). The reader will, however, come to recognize *how* such thinkers have made it possible to open oneself to the most generous of accommodations while, at the same time, questioning what arrives so as to maintain its spirit, while effecting radical change.

Together and individually, the essays offer to the reader a view of the extent to which the discourses of philosophy, poetics, politics, aesthetics, linguistics and psychoanalysis have become part of the densely imbricated textures of critical practice. Furthermore, while remaining aware of the importance of the various contexts within and out of which criticism has grown, the essays herein also concern themselves with the equally important issue of cross-fertilization between the various academic and intellectual cultures under consideration. *Modern European Criticism and Theory* thus provides the reader with a comprehension of the key issues with the intention of demonstrating that those issues and the fields into which they are woven are marked by, even as they themselves re-mark, an

unending and vital process of hybridization – of methodologies, disciplines, discourses and interests. In this, when taken together the essays comprising the present volume can be seen to question implicitly the very condition of the practice and theory of criticism itself or indeed, any propadeutic separation of notions of theory and practice.

In presenting the various facets of critical activity, there have been omissions, doubtless. This is true of the shaping of any narrative. Even so, it is hoped that the overall contours of critical thinking and discourse in Europe are not misrepresented, and that, concomitantly, the dominant hegemonies and cultures of thought in their particular historical and cultural moments are neither distorted nor in some other manner misrepresented (beyond, that is, any inescapable and inevitable translation process). It has to be said that if there is no such thing as a pure discourse, self-sufficient and closed off from influences, confluences and even contaminations, there is also no such thing as a finite determination, context or group of contexts. One obviously cannot speak of either purely national, conceptual, or universal determinations; equally one cannot ascribe to critical thinking a finite or unchanging condition. The very definition of literary criticism implicit here is of an identity always in crisis, and always accommodated as such in its mutability. Intellectual cultures, like literary genres, have moments of historical ascendance, ideological transformation, and hegemonic dominance. Appearing to lose that dominance, going 'out of fashion' as is sometimes perceived in the more journalistic of interpretations, traces, influences, remain, continuing to be transformed, and so to effect the cultures of criticism in which the reader is presently situated. It is with such issues, such processes and cultures of transformation and translation that *Modern European Criticism and Theory* is purposely involved.

Julian Wolfreys

Contents

1. René Descartes (1596–1650) and Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677): Beginnings

In his 1949 essay, 'The Mirror Stage' (1966), Jacques Lacan, attempting to take his distance from existentialism, divided philosophy into two camps: those that took the *Cogito* as their starting point and those that did not (this statement was repeated many times after, including by some of France's most important thinkers, among them Foucault and Canguilhem). With such a statement, Lacan located the origins of French or even European philosophy not in Husserl, Hegel or even Kant, but in the conflictual field of seventeenth-century philosophy, specifically in the opposing doctrines of René Descartes and Baruch Spinoza. This may come as a surprise to the Anglo-American reader for whom the only conflict associated with the seventeenth-century is that between rationalism and empiricism and for whom Spinoza is a secondary or even tertiary figure, a minor Cartesian only recently admitted into the canon of philosophers deemed worthy of scholarly attention. Further, while Descartes's *Meditations* is well-known even outside the field of philosophy, his name is primarily associated with his proof of God's existence and, through Locke, the doctrine of innate ideas, neither of which are particularly relevant to the concerns of modern French philosophy and theory. How then are we to understand the sense in which the conflict between these two philosophers (assuming that their relation is one of conflict) constitutes a 'beginning'?

There is no question of identifying a French or even continental reading, or readings, of Descartes and Spinoza which would then become the correct interpretation in counterposition to the Anglo-American. Nor is it a question of simply multiplying readings as if, without any true relation to their object, they can never be any other than projections of the culture or historical moment in which they emerge. Instead, we will argue that specific historical moments impose on philosophical texts a historically determined (and therefore identifiable) grid that in turn determines what in a text is visible or invisible, what is compelling and what devoid of interest. There are thus no readings independent of texts and no texts independent of reading. Both the text and its history are equally real, equally material; both must be explained.

Let us begin with Descartes: what did twentieth-century French philosophy select from Descartes and what determined this selection? The fact that Lacan could use a declension of a Latin verb, *cogito* ('I think'), as a noun, suggests very clearly the importance of the first two Meditations. In a very important sense (and Lacan himself, among others, would later have occasion to comment on this), the first two sections of the *Meditations* were abstracted

from the text as a whole and even more importantly from the chain of arguments in which they were simply a preliminary step, the nature of which would be modified in the course of the demonstration. Indeed, the meticulous reconstruction of Descartes's 'order of reasons' by Martial Guéroult in a famous commentary many times the length of the *Meditations* themselves, showed beyond any doubt the impressionistic sketchy quality of such readings. The fact remains, however, that the reduction of the *Meditations*, or even Cartesian philosophy as a whole, to 'the Cogito' was not simply 'false', that is without any relation to the text, and it remains to be seen to what extent such a reading was authorized by the *Meditations* themselves.

One might simply read the first paragraph of the *Meditations* to discover what made Descartes so controversial in his own time and so much a contemporary of the twentieth century: the ubiquity of the first person pronoun 'I'. A work devoted to the establishment of the 'first philosophy', that is to the construction of an adequate foundation for philosophical and scientific inquiry, would customarily have avoided reference to the individuality of the philosopher, his fears, hopes and feelings, for fear of being dismissed as outside the universal. Indeed, a tradition dating from Aristotle, and which includes medieval Christian, Jewish and Islamic philosophy, regarded rationality or truth as necessarily collective in nature, residing in the totality of an ever present archive of authoritative works. An individual, in order to escape the particularity of individual existence, had to accede to and participate in this archive to formulate universally valid propositions. Descartes shocked his contemporaries by declaring the necessity of precisely the opposite course, that is of 'demolishing completely' and rejecting as false everything contained in this archive. Instead of referring to a tradition of inquiries and findings, he would begin his reasoning from a position of absolute certainty, not simply the position agreed upon by a majority as valid or true, but a position that could not be doubted.

What is perhaps even more significant is not merely that Descartes regarded it necessary for him as an individual (and it must be as an individual, since the mere existence of other minds – how does he know that the people he sees are not automatons? – and, at the extreme, anything outside of himself must be regarded as illusory until proven otherwise) to cast off all prior knowledge and learning, but that such an action was even possible. 'I am here quite alone,' he announces at the outset of the *Meditations*, a kind of Robinson Crusoe in philosophy, but who, unlike the hapless sailor, has by an act of will removed himself to an island far from others where he can reconstruct a world of knowledge from zero, sure of the foundations that he himself has built. Here it is necessary to step outside the *Meditations* and refer to a later work, *The Passions of the Soul* (1646), that explains in detail what is presupposed in the *Meditations*, namely the ability of the soul (*l'âme* or *mens*) to free itself from the world that envelopes it. Such a freedom is not easily won: 'my habitual opinions keep coming back, and, despite my wishes, they capture my belief which is, as it were, bound over to them as a result of long occupation and the law of custom' (*Meditations*, 15). In this way, the milieu or context of the philosopher is conceived of as external to him, to be accepted or rejected in part or as a totality by a mind endowed with the proper strength of will. Indeed, there is an ethical and even political dimension to the act by which one frees oneself from comfortable illusions and displays the fortitude necessary to endure the absolute solitude that is the necessary, if temporary, consequence of systematic doubt. This is what might be called the heroic moment in Cartesian philosophy: at least it would be regarded as such by philosophers as important to twentieth-century thought as Husserl and Sartre.

He will undertake to destroy the very foundations that support him, risking, as his critic Pascal noted, falling into an abyss in his attempt to find that one certain point from which adequate knowledge can be constructed and without which all hope of distinguishing truth from falsehood is lost. First, the evidence of the senses: although sometimes faulty, do they not present some indubitable truths? In a passage that occasioned a lively debate between two of France's most important philosophers (Derrida and Foucault), Descartes argues that it would appear 'quite impossible' to doubt 'that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands' (*Meditations*, 13). Impossible, unless he entertains the idea that he is one of those madmen who believe that they are kings even as they languish in a dungeon. While such a notion might appear far-fetched, does not everyone, sane and mad alike, experience as real what upon awakening is revealed only to have been a dream? Are we not compelled then to doubt all that we glean from the senses? Fortunately (or so it appears for a brief moment), the subtraction of that which is derived from the senses leaves an important body of truths remaining. Surely, two and two equal four whether I am sane or mad, awake or asleep, just as a square necessarily has four sides? Here, Descartes will call upon God to sustain him in his doubt: if there is an omnipotent God, may it not be possible that He has only made it appear to our philosophical pilgrim that there is an earth, sun, sky, extended things, shapes, lines and places when in fact there are none? And if God in his infinite goodness could not be capable of such deception, is it not equally possible to entertain the idea of an evil genius, as powerful as God, but as evil as He is good? He now finds himself in the midst of a boundless, bottomless sea. Or so he fears: in fact, as is well known, doubt presupposes something that doubts. If I doubt, or think, I must exist. I may not have a body, there may not be an external world, but I nevertheless exist as a thinking thing. Descartes has not only established the priority of the individual over the collective, but of the mind over the body.

There is nothing as revolutionary in Cartesian philosophy as the notion that the knowledge of the soul must precede not only a knowledge of other bodies, but even our own body. From now on, we cannot know anything without accounting for how we know it: how do we know that we know? A study of the physical world must therefore begin with an inquiry into the soul, specifically into how it forms clear and distinct, i.e. adequate, ideas. As we have seen, the soul can know itself only by experiencing its independence from extended substance, Descartes's term for the material world; it must understand itself as a substance essentially free from space and time, and from the determinations proper to physical existence. The universe is thus comprised of two substances, the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*, thinking substance and extended substance or thought and matter. While Descartes's ecclesiastical adversaries charged him with having thus rendered spirit (and God) irrelevant to the physical world, he argued that this freedom allowed for the possibility of the mind's mastery over itself and the bodily impulses to which it was subject.

These positions proved decisive for European philosophy. No longer was it possible to know the world without first understanding the mind that knows, which thus might appear as either the condition of or impediment to knowledge. As Guéroult has argued, some of the major currents in the subsequent history of philosophy are defined by their response to this problem. Kant argued that we cannot know the things in themselves independently of the mind that knows them; instead we must remain content with the world as it appears to us, the phenomenal world. Husserl's phenomenology 'solved' this problem by means of a 'bracketing' (*epoche*) of the world independent of our knowledge and experience, and

positing an original agreement between the world as it is and the world as it appears to us. Further, the idea of a self, the 'I' of the 'I think' (*cogito*), finally separate from the world and free, as spiritual substance (*res cogitans*), from merely material determinations and able thus to direct itself, was central to the development of existentialism, especially that of Sartre.

As one of France's most important Spinoza scholars has argued, from the point of view of the perspective just outlined, Spinoza can be seen as Descartes's other, opposing his philosophy point for point. Unlike Descartes, Spinoza begins his major work, the *Ethics*, not with the I that thinks, but, on the contrary, with a set of propositions designed to prove that thought and extension or spirit and matter cannot be separate substances. The topic of Part I is, significantly, not the individual or even man, but God. Spinoza's arguments, nominally devoted to a proof of God's perfection, struck nearly all his contemporaries as a thinly disguised atheism. Drawing on theological controversies, many of which had their origins in medieval and early modern Judaism (Spinoza was born into the Sephardic community in Amsterdam, was educated in its institutions and was finally excommunicated for heresy in 1656), he argued that the notion of God as spirit, prior to matter, creating the material world and endowing it with meaning, was incompatible with the idea of God's greatness. How could spirit 'create' matter out of itself (especially if matter was regarded as inferior to spirit)? How, indeed, could there have been a moment of creation if God were truly omnipresent and all-powerful, that is a moment prior to which a part of God did not exist? How could what is eternally perfect have been lacking? Referring to a distinction between the actual and the possible, as if the latter were a kind of pre-existence, did nothing to solve the problem. The eternal and infinite has no origin, no beginning; all that can exists does: thus, 'whatever is, is in God and nothing can be or be conceived without God' (*Ethics* I, 15), just as God has no existence prior to or outside of creation. God is, according to Spinoza, an immanent cause, entirely coincident with what exists, his will nothing other than the necessity that governs nature as a whole. At the beginning of Part IV, Spinoza would go so far as to use the phrase that made him infamous: 'God, or nature', (*Ethics* IV, Preface), treating the two terms as interchangeable. It is not difficult to see how Spinoza's numerous critics regarded him as having made God disappear into creation, essence into existence and spirit into matter.

As if this were not enough to earn the enmity of theologians from all faiths, Spinoza, in the Appendix to Part I, seeks to explain the causes of the faulty conception of God that is so common and indeed so powerful that it will likely hinder the comprehension of his argument. People insist on regarding God as a transcendent cause, a cause that existed before the world and which brought the world into being to fulfil a pre-existing purpose. Such an idea is common precisely because it constitutes a projection of human experience on God (or Nature): we tend to imagine God in our own image. Spinoza, however, does not stop at the idea that the nearly universal conception of God is nothing more than an idol of human creation that reflects not the divine but the image of its creator. What philosophers in the latter half of the twentieth century have found so provocative in Spinoza's work is the argument that this projected belief in human beings as creators whose actions are undertaken with an end in view is itself false, an illusion heavy with consequences not simply for philosophy but for political and social life as well. We believe we are the causes of our actions and words, Spinoza argues, only because we are conscious of our desires to do or say something, but ignorant of the causes of our desires. We so need to feel that we are masters of ourselves in the face of a world consisting of an infinite concatenation of causes and effects whose course is indifferent to us, our welfare and