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**Preface**

Current thinking about history - the history of philosophy in particular - has become highly ambiguous. The prevailing argument is that as we inhabit a post-historical age we must learn to think post-historically. This is to mean, not that we have outgrown the historical standpoint and can set it aside, but the very converse: so inescapably confined are we by our own finite-historical condition it is quite impossible that there could be any other view of history but the one from inside it.

It follows that every pretense to a speculative overview of history must be summarily abandoned; and a good deal of post-modernist wisdom consists simply in trumpeting this banal inference. But another more devastating conclusion also follows: if there is no transgressing the limits of time and language then neither can we any longer expect to find reason even in the specifics of human history - in the arguments of books of philosophy for instance. If there *is* no 'text', and yet also nothing *outside* the text, we are bound to declare in the manner of Gorgias that there is no truth to be found in any work of philosophy, and even if there were, it would have to remain for us both unintelligible and inexpressible.

The currently preferred approach to philosophical texts is accordingly 'ironic'. They are to be forced to confess to a self-annihilating incommensurability of their principles with their project. We need only 'play' their language, 'tremble' it in Derrida's word, to see the whole inner structure of their arguments collapse. This procedure of attaining to a postmodern standpoint through 'deconstruction' of the classical philosophical works has encouraged the taking of exceptional license with the texts themselves - a license to select, misread and even rewrite them by way of enforcing interpretations that are deliberately alien to their original sense and intent.

The essays in this second issue of *Animus* are presented in three groups. "Restructuring Tradition" includes articles which explore and exemplify Derrida's deconstructive technique as applied to some traditional arguments. W.J. Hankey gives us a first-hand account of the various ways in which Derrida's counter-reading of the Augustinian *Confessions* has been appropriated by contemporary theologians on behalf of a 'postmodern Christianity'. D. Glowacka expressly adopts Kierkegaard's existential attack on philosophical ethics as a starting point and describes Derrida's refinement of it. K. Kierans offers an overview of what he believes deconstruction owes to the Hegelian and Husserlian legacies and how it might be thought in some ways to preserve and extend them.

The second set of essays, "Recovering the Text", examines the manner in which arguments from the tradition have been construed and misconstrued in defense of positions that are not as such to be found there but are uniquely contemporary; how premises and biases are in this way read back into the texts, thereby debasing and obscuring what they actually say. A.M. Stafford examines recent critical accounts of Hegel's views on woman and the family to bring out and clarify both the ambiguities and the insights of conventional feminist

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approaches to philosophical history. Then F.E. Andrews looks back on the analytic movement which, though otherwise virtually defunct, continues to exercise an inhibiting effect on the present-day understanding of classical philosophical works, due partly to the influence of its own limited logic, partly to its legacy of specious appropriation of traditional arguments.

Finally featured are three essays on "North American Freedom" which adopt a frankly speculative approach to broad political themes. The centrepiece is a signal essay by James Doull. Taking current Canadian concerns over national unity as his point of departure, he enters upon a comprehensive narrative on the origin and career of the North American states, driven by a commitment to a principle of universal freedom beyond the limited freedom of the nation state. The salient outline of the interlocking histories of the United States, Canada and the European Union is reviewed in this light. Following it are two companion pieces. D. Peddle reviews the constitutional debates during two crucial eras of American history as a means of illustrating the equally one-sided character of the contrary accounts of Rawls and Sandel. Finally, F. L. Jackson reflects on the differing forms of the North American ideal of political freedom as viewed from a Mexican perspective.