



Department for the Study of Modern Czech Philosophy cordially invites you to lectures connected with the release of the book

Hans-Herbert Kögler's Critical Hermeneutics

Eds.: Dunaj, L./Mertel, K. C.M. (Bloomsbury 2022)

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The Past, Present, and Future of Critical Hermeneutics: Some Textual and Theoretical Reflections

Abstract

In recent years, it has become possible to identify an “ontological turn” in critical theory, broadly construed. This “turn” has been taken in two main directions: a post-foundationalist political ontology grounded on the ‘political difference’ between politics and the political and a post-metaphysical social ontology that takes the communicative turn in critical theory as its point of departure. While both strands share an important theoretical resource in common – Heidegger’s hermeneutical ontology – they differ significantly in their respective readings of Heidegger, which in turn, yields equally diverging systematic approaches. Hans-Herbert Kögler’s distinctive hermeneutic-ontological mode of critique can be situated in the second camp and, since the initial publication of *The Power of Dialogue*, has evolved into a compelling approach to contemporary critical theory. In the first part of the presentation, I will provide a brief sketch of Kögler’s project. In the second, I will indicate some important textual resources in Heidegger that underwrite some of the most compelling elements of his view. Finally, I will attempt to motivate a *Destruktion* of the Heidegger-reception prevalent within the Frankfurt School by identifying some problematic, long-standing interpretive claims underlying it with a view to disclosing a more fruitful horizon for the future of the project of critical hermeneutics.



Hans-Herbert Kögler (University of North Florida):
Hermeneutic Ontology, Dialogic Recognition, and Contemporary Challenges

Abstract

Hermeneutic ontology supports a notion of reflexive agency that can mediate one's own situatedness in specific cultural and social contexts with the critical task to unmask, critique, and transcend one's power-defined identities and practices. Yet if the notion of reflexive agency establishes thus a foothold to overcome the deconstruction of the situated autonomous self—and thus enables a situated critical theory—the question arises: Can a hermeneutic phenomenology provide us with the normative grounds to recognize the Other both as a universally valuable and yet specifically situated subject? The cognitive capacity of empathy, understood as intersubjective perspective-taking, yields the dialogic recognition of the Other. Three contemporary challenges are addressed: Are situated agents even capable of orienting themselves toward such a moral stance of universal recognition? Is such a theory culturally limited or does it provide us with a potentially non-ethnocentric grounding of moral understanding? Finally, is such a reflexive ethic of empathetic recognition sufficiently rich in outlook to address the situatedness in power and domination that defines a core target of critical social theory?

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