

AUTUMN 1998

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# CONFERENCE

## TO THE READER:

In your hands is issue one of the eighth volume of Conference. No doubt regular readers will notice three major changes. First, gone are many of the previous editors, some to permanent positions in academia, others to itinerant-adjunct status, a poor, hard spot between a tenure-track position and a high-paying job outside the University. Call it the curse of Herzog.

Second, and more importantly, is the modest shift in content and the addition of structure. Previously, an issue would consist of one interview of some notable thinker...or maybe two, and four or five papers on assorted subjects in philosophy or literature. The best pieces submitted to Conference were those published. Laudable though this be, the result was issues lacking in balance. Aggregation does not a good journal make. One issue might be filled with essays on epistemology while the next might center on topics in post-structuralism. The upshot, obviously, was that a few readers were delighted because the topic *du issue* was their main interest, while all other readers were alienated.

To remedy this, Conference journal has adopted a structure. Each issue will have an interview, book reviews, and sections devoted to philosophy (Philosopher's Corner) and literature (Bard). There also will be a section devoted to current affairs.

Which brings me to the third problem. By focusing so intently on hot topics in philosophy and literature, Conference unnecessarily limited readership. Like so many other scholarly journals, Conference nearly became academic in the pejorative sense, of interest only to those who kept up on these complex, cutting-edge subjects. Worse, by addressing a small clique or two of thinkers, Conference fell in line with the current trend in American universities—specialization to the point of utter fragmentation and discipline-solipsism.

The answer, obviously, is not to dumb down the journal, but to carry these pieces and articles accessible to a broader readership. This will be achieved partly by publishing articles that ask more general questions (e.g., how to make sense of this text?—See Dostoevski: Love & the Underground Man). Moreover, the addition of the Current Affairs section is designed to draw in those studying anthropology, politics, and the myriad other human sciences who are interested in matters beyond their department's walls. Fittingly, the first topics of Current Affairs, welfare reform and discourse between disciplines, are matters we all can ponder and discuss. Hopefully, in reaching out to others in the University on these topics, we can elicit their thoughts on our main subjects, philosophy and literature. Such seems the proper goal for a journal named Conference.

—Kevin R. Kosar

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