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Philosophy and Literature

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Choose from the following options. This item will not be graded.

iClicker Question

Which one of these does NOT belong to the interpreter's credo?

- A ▶ I believe in hermeneutic realism
- B ▶ I believe in hermeneutic restoration
- C ▶ I believe in hermeneutic responsibility
- D ▶ I believe in hermeneutic rationality

Choose from the following options. This item will not be graded.

iClicker Question

Which philosopher is known for the idea of “deconstruction”?

- A ▶ Friedrich Nietzsche
- B ▶ Augustine
- C ▶ Soren Kierkegaard
- D ▶ Jacques Derrida

Kierkegaard's Three Parables

- “the error of coming to inspect the mirror instead of to see oneself in the mirror” (15) Vanhoozer's double reading
- the lover's letter in a strange language: reading vs toiling and moiling with a dictionary
- the royal ordinance and its interpretations

Incredulity Towards Meaning

Hermogenes (the conventionalist), Cratylus (the postmodernist), and Socrates (the Platonist). Vanhoozer wants to sustain Plato's concern to defend the possibility of speaking truly. This is a contrast to, for example, Joseph Margolis, who maintains that

... what we take to be determinate reality is actually an effect of our linguistic practices

for example

- Canada (political practice)
- Marriage (social practice)
- God (religious practice)

The Literary Turn in Contemporary Philosophy

According to Margolis, interpretation produces not commentaries, but the text (18). There are criteria for interpretation, but they depend on cultural practice.

- “The rise of hermeneutics parallels the fall of epistemology” (19).
- “With the waxing of texts came the waning of facts” (20).

Hermeneutics, however, undermines itself. Under its rule, philosophy becomes a branch of literature. The literary nature of Derrida’s writings and Searle’s critique from the standpoint of analytic philosophy.

The Literary Turn in Contemporary Philosophy

Philosophers typically distinguish their own talk about the world from other kinds: for instance, philosophy works with logic and seeks literal truth and the light of clear and distinct ideas, while literature plays with metaphors and other cloudy figures of speech under dark rhetorical skies. Derrida would have none of it. (21)

Is language the “means humans use creatively to colonize a meaningless world” (Nietzsche)?

A critique of logocentrism (priests and their Word of God; philosophers and their Reason/Truth/Meaning).

Where is the priority: are questions of power answered within framework of truth (“the truth will set you free,” John 8:32); or are questions of truth answered within a framework of power (Nietzsche)? (21)

“text” now covers everything from written works to our individual histories to reality itself (21)

Three Ages of Criticism

metaphysics	epistemology	ethics
author	text	reader
realism	rationality	responsibility
non-realism	relativism	freeplay
F. Schleiermacher	new criticism/structuralism	S. Fish

The Theological Dimension

It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence. (W. K. Clifford, 32)

By contrast, the interpreter's credo (31):

- I believe in hermeneutic realism
- I believe in hermeneutic rationality
- I believe in hermeneutic responsibility

Augustinian hermeneutics: the principle of charity.

The Golden Rule, for hermeneutics and ethics alike, is to treat others—texts, persons, God—with love and respect. (32)