

Despite Murphy's emphasis on different kinds of justice, her methodological contextualism, and her view that justice is a "scalar concept" (12), the book's guiding vision is that of the liberal democratic society toward which all societies should ideally be transitioning. This powerful idea probably owes more to Kant and Hegel than it does Hume, and will arouse the suspicion that the supposedly new theory of transitional justice is already heading down the old and well-worn path of exporting a particular strain of Western liberalism to the rest of the world. However that may be, it is to Murphy's credit that she begs no questions about the merits of any particular existing political order, admits that "[a]ny country, the United States or Canada included, may be or become pervasively structurally unjust," and claims only that "the role of the circumstances of transitional justice is to provide the theoretical resources needed to categorize a given society" (78). The suggestion that transitional justice is not uniquely concerned with the well-documented struggles of Africa or South America, but also offers a stance from which states normally taken as paradigms of justice may be criticized, is among the many interesting features of this fascinating and important book.

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### ***Advances***

JACQUES DERRIDA

Translated by Philippe Lynes. Introduction by Philippe Lynes

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Jacques Derrida's "Avances" first appeared in 1995 as the foreword to Serge Margel's *Le Tombeau du dieu artisan: Sur Platon* (Éditions de Minuit), an extended reading of the figure of the Demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus*. It is here offered in English translation for the first time as *Advances*, without that to which it was once the foreword—though the 54-page work is now accompanied by its own 39-page introduction by translator Philippe Lynes, itself a *tour de force* of Derrida scholarship. As that introduction convincingly shows, *Advances* occupies an important if under-appreciated place in Derrida's corpus, not least for the numerous mentions it receives in other, better-known texts. Derrida had a long-standing interest in Plato interpretation, particularly the *Timaeus*' notion of the *khōra*, which *Advances* brings decisively to bear on the ethical and political concerns of Derrida's later period. Moreover, with its treatment of earth and world, the living and the non-living, the human and the non-human, *Advances* is a timely intervention in light of current trends in Derrida studies, such as eco-deconstruction and its ongoing engagements with recent speculative realisms and new materialisms.

As Derrida informs us, there are three senses of the "advance" at play. The first is chronological: something happens "in advance," beforehand or ahead of time. Thus *Advances* is a long meditation on the concept of time, an important theme for Derrida as inherited from Heidegger and Husserl, among others. Derrida is interested in reconceiving time outside or prior to its ontological and phenomenological articulations, as "the time of an absolute loss, of an originary expenditure without possible restitution" (31)—that is, as a *gift*: time as the very gift of the given or givenness. Insofar as the

*Timaeus* depicts the origins of the cosmos, it too is concerned with another time, a time before time, as well as famously with time as the moving image of eternity or omnitemporality (as Margel renders it). The analogy of the *Timaeus* with the Biblical account of creation and of the Demiurge with Christ is one Derrida purposefully invokes, while cautioning against a reduction of Plato to a mere prefiguration of Christianity. (One may wonder to what extent deconstruction itself is in the end a new species of Neoplatonism.)

The second sense of “advance” is economic: to give “an advance” is to extend a loan, to indebt the one to whom the advance is given, who in turn promises to make good on that debt. Thus *Advances* is equally a meditation on the concept of the promise, above all its constitutive *aporia*, which Derrida has repeatedly taken up in reference to performativity and speech act theory. If a promise promises only what can—in advance—be guaranteed to come to pass, then it is not really a promise at all, but rather simply a prognostic or programmatic calculation. To be a promise, it must at least have the possibility of being broken. “To be a promise, *it must be able to be unkeepable* and must thus be able *not to be* a promise (for an unkeepable promise is not promise [sic])” (27). In other words, a promise must promise the unpromisable, just as, in Derrida’s view, forgiveness must forgive the unforgivable, and the gift must give that which the giver does not have. For Derrida, interpreting Margel, we are the inheritors of the unkeepable promise of the Demiurge, which is the promise of the world that the Demiurge has crafted for us: we promise to make the world *survive* (which, in Derrida’s parlance, is neither strictly to live nor to die).

The third sense of “advance” is strategic: a seducer makes advances, an army advances its position, and so on. Thus *Advances* is concerned with querying what advances we ourselves ought to make in light of our inherited promise: “‘What to do?’ What are we going to do, what must we do with the earth, with the human earth?” (28). In light of contemporary threats to the very existence of that human earth, from climate change to nuclear war (various figures of the end times), these questions are more necessary and urgent than ever.

Lynes’ introduction, titled “Auparadvances,” articulates all this and more in significant depth, and with complete cross-references across the full breadth of Derrida’s varied career. That title, “a play on the French *auparavant* (beforehand, anteriorly) and, of course, *avances*,” follows Derrida in troubling the very concept of “origin” (xi). For Margel, there is a time that lies “*before everything and before every other time*. But to designate the ‘before,’ [‘*avant*’] the ‘anteriority,’ [‘*auparavant*’] of this precedence, Margel is bound to scare quotes. What would in fact be a time before time, a prechronological time? An anachronical time, an anachrony of time itself, a disjunction of time by time and in time, *as time*?” (22). Tackling these questions will be made a good deal easier for English readers subsequent to the publication of Lynes’ forthcoming translation of Margel, *The Tomb of the Artisan God: On Plato’s Timaeus*, also with University of Minnesota Press (noting that Lynes’ has already met the highest standards of translation in lucidly and elegantly rendering Derrida’s notoriously difficult prose). Lynes’ repeated references to Derrida’s many still-unpublished and untranslated seminars are further indication that the determination of Derrida’s place in the history of philosophy is a complex labour that may have only just begun.

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