

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

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Philosophy for Understanding Theology, 2nd ed., by Diogenes Allen and Eric O. Springsted. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007. xxv + 252 pp. +4 pp. notes + 3 pp. suggested reading + 7 pp. index. Paperback. USD \$35.00.

A welcoming introduction to Western philosophy for theology students, this book aims at looking at Western philosophy through its impact upon several important Western theologians. Hence, the selection of materials to be included and the manner of presentation is from the perspective of Western theologians, and for the use of aspiring theologians. Apart from the introduction, this second edition is structured in thirteen chapters. The first eleven chapters represent a revised version of the first edition and are written by Diogenes Allen. The last two chapters are written by Eric O. Springsted.

Chapters 1-3 are devoted to Plato and the Platonic tradition. Using *Ti-maeus* as a pretext to study cosmogony, Allen briefly describes the Platonic

theory of Forms and the pre-Socratic philosophical view on the natural order. Chapter 2 explores the implications of the Forms regarding human beings, especially the soul/body dualism. Chapter 3 further explores the Platonic tradition, introducing the Cynic, Stoic, and Epicurean developments and focusing next on the impact Middle Platonism and Plotinus had on Christian metaphysics.

Aristotle's *Categories* and the impact of his rediscovered corpus of writings in the Middle Ages called *Novum Organum* are explored in chapters 4 and 5. Allen highlights how Gregory of Nyssa transformed the Aristotelian distinction between substances to present God as three *hypostaseis* sharing the same *ousia*. Chapter 5 tracks the influence of Aristotle through Boethius's preservation of Porphyry's introduction to Aristotle and the various responses to the problem of universals. The Aristotelian causes of things (material, formal, efficient, and final) are introduced to profile an anthropological discussion.

Chapter 6 expounds Aquinas's natural theology with its rejection by Karl Barth and its proposed replacement, Process Theology. The next chapter describes Ockham's *via moderna*, which rendered philosophy "more fluid" (p. 118) and contributed to the subsequent developments. Humanism and the scientific revolution brought by Copernicus, Galilei, Kepler, Bacon, and Newton are also presented here. Chapter 8 focuses on the rationalistic (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) and the empiricist (Locke, Berkley, Hume) treatments of God. Chapter 9 explores Kant's criticism of reason and its implications upon theological knowledge. Chapter 10 presents Hegel's view on the need of reconciling the infinite (God) with the finite (the world). The next chapter focuses on existentialism (Kierkegaard, Bultmann, Sartre, Tillich, Marcel, Jaspers), phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger), and hermeneutics (Dilthey, Gadamer). Chapter 12 tackles postmodernism, with its attack on foundationalism by Quine and Kuhn; the "linguistic turn" of Wittgenstein and Austin; and the deconstructionism of Foucault and Derrida. The final chapter focuses on moral philosophy (MacIntyre, Taylor, Gadamer) based on Lévinas's view that ethics is what constitutes "first philosophy" (p. 231).

Philosophy for Understanding Theology offers a good introduction to the impact of various philosophical views that impacted Christian theology. Various philosophical perspectives are presented in a succinct manner, explaining key and technical terms to offer a broad philosophical horizon for the reader. Complex ideas are well synthesized and connected to the theological views of important theologians. Given that it is an introduction, the authors strive to set a philosophical basis using Plato and Aristotle as test cases and exploring at length their theological impact in almost half of the book. While this is commendable, there is a felt imbalance in the treatment

of other philosophers. This imbalance is slightly attenuated by the introduction of subsequent important figures previous to their more detailed presentation. Moreover, presenting the impact of non-Western philosophy on Christianity would have greatly enriched the topic of the book.

While the synthesis of ideas is well done, contributing to the book's legibility, the fact that there are no headings or subheadings represents a major layout drawback. There are two empty lines (pp. 223 and 240) that appear to function as divisions of the text, and a question that appears to function as a heading (p. 247). Notes are rarely used, in an attempt to make the book easier to read but impeding the reader from finding the sources of the presented ideas. Moreover, the suggested reading list at the end of the book is not thoroughly updated.

Overall, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* is a useful book for those in need of a handy introduction to the impact of Western philosophy upon Western theology. The book can be used as a textbook by professors introducing Western philosophy to their theology students. It needs to be supplemented with a reading of primary sources and with a presentation of the impact non-Western philosophy had on Christian theology.

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God's Spies: The Stasi's Cold War Espionage Campaign inside the Church, by Elisabeth Braw. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019. 277 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7525-9. Hardcover US\$25.00.

Elisabeth Braw is a journalist with Swedish roots. Although she may seem less qualified to write about East German history, she has strong connections with the topic and the characters of the book. In spite of narrating a multi-thread story, the author paints an accurate picture of what it meant to be a priest or pastor or religion/theology professor in communist East Germany.

Joining her grandfather, from whom she inherited the passion for journalism, Braw visited East Germany in 1988, a year before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Fascinated by the differences between her home country, Sweden, and East Germany, she decides to explore a strange connection her father had with one of his theology professors. The main source of information for her research was interviews, through which she created an oral history. One of those interviewed was the very head of the Stasi's Department XX/4 (the department in charge of spying churches and their leaders) for the last