

6-1-2000

Critical Theology and the Challenge of Jürgen Habermas: Toward a Critical Theory of Religious Insight, by Marc P. Lalonde

Paul F. Lakeland
Fairfield University, pflakeland@fairfield.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/religiousstudies-facultypubs>

Peer Reviewed

Repository Citation

Lakeland, Paul F., "Critical Theology and the Challenge of Jürgen Habermas: Toward a Critical Theory of Religious Insight, by Marc P. Lalonde" (2000). *Religious Studies Faculty Publications*. 28.
<https://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/religiousstudies-facultypubs/28>

Published Citation

Lakeland, Paul F. "Critical Theology and the Challenge of Jürgen Habermas: Toward a Critical Theory of Religious Insight, by Marc P. Lalonde." *Theological Studies* 61.2 (2000): 392-393.

This item has been accepted for inclusion in DigitalCommons@Fairfield by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Fairfield. It is brought to you by DigitalCommons@Fairfield with permission from the rights-holder(s) and is protected by copyright and/or related rights. **You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses, you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.** For more information, please contact digitalcommons@fairfield.edu.

ogy. In striving to be even handed J. presents a confusing smorgasbord of reflections and theories without apparent evaluation. For example, presenting the attempt to reconcile the six days of creation with the fifteen billion years of the universe by invoking Einstein's theory of relativity adds nothing to the understanding of Einstein and detracts from the solid contribution made by J. in the first two sections of this worthwhile book.

TIMOTHY E. TOOHIG, S.J.
Boston College

RELIGION AND THE SPIRITUAL IN CARL JUNG. By Ann Belford Ulanov. New York: Paulist, 1999. Pp. iv + 269. \$24.95.

Ulanov, a therapist and professor of psychiatry and religion at Union Theological Seminary since 1977, has lectured and written widely on the relation between Jung and Christian faith. This is a collection of essays written and delivered to different audiences over 20 years, yet they do not repeat one another. U. is one of many scholars who find Jung's psychology a striking context wherein to understand religious practices and mystical experience. Each essay has an original approach; e.g., Tillich's anxiety of being is considered together with Jung's accounts of patients' avoiding self-knowledge. She treats of prayer and Christian education, and she argues that Thérèse of Lisieux was not a masochist though she refused painkillers.

U. admits to a "strong bias" for Jung, but she also teaches alternative maps of the psyche. Her familiarity with Jung is profound and enables her to think original thoughts in his context. Yet she can criticize the master: whereas Jung took issue with Christians for dismissing evil as a *privatio boni*, U. maintains that he himself "did not recognize one of the greatest evils in history [the Holocaust] when it confronted him in its immeasurable brutality." This is treated as part of a stunning and original reflection on scapegoating.

Though U. never directly explains Jung, those not familiar with him can profit from the present work. Jung

called himself a Christian and wrote studies of many religious texts; he claimed that among his patients over 35 none was healed without adopting a religious outlook. Yet many have questioned Jung's Christianity (God is both good and evil, etc.). U. does not deal with such controversies, but shows how easily Jung's psychology can be used by more orthodox Christians. She warns that the concreteness of Jesus stands boldly opposed to the ways we "make use of him for cause, party or platform as we abstract his particularity to illustrate our values." Those involved in spiritual direction or the relation of religion to psychology and society will find fresh insights in U.'s study.

THOMAS M. KING, S.J.
Georgetown University, D.C.

CRITICAL THEOLOGY AND THE CHALLENGE OF JÜRGEN HABERMAS: TOWARD A CRITICAL THEORY OF RELIGIOUS INSIGHT. By Marc P. Lalonde. Studies in Religion, Politics, and Public Life. New York: Lang, 1999. Pp. 118. \$41.95.

This book seeks to develop what Lalonde calls "a critical theory of religious insight." The greater part of the short text examines three religious thinkers for whom critical theory is important—Charles Davis, Helmut Peukert, and John Milbank—and Jürgen Habermas's vision of religion as beyond the pale of critical theory, yet a valuable assertion of the humane. L.'s discussion focuses on the question: To what degree for truly critical religious thought can theology any longer be "the logos of the theos"? Because the answer is negative, Habermas and Davis are preferred over Peukert and Milbank. Critical theory is affirmed and religion is not smuggled in to rescue it. But what must happen to both, if they are to speak to one another?

L.'s constructive proposal emerges in a final chapter, in which elements of Foucault, Levinas, and Charles Taylor are drawn together into something more redolent of pragmatism than critical theory. His position, only sketched out in a few pages, is that both critical theory and theology must be more open

to one another's worlds. Human beings often inhabit multiple social worlds simultaneously, and this does not negate their capacity to be critical. There is no radical separation between the secular and the religious, but both converge and are changed from their former relationships through attention to compassion, finally, then, to a particular kind of moral-practical reason.

This is a courageous and well-argued first stab at a project much too large for this short work, and one which may profitably irritate both critical theorists and theologians.

PAUL LAKELAND
Fairfield University, Connecticut

THE TRIPERSONAL GOD: UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING THE TRINITY. By Gerald O'Collins, S.J. New York: Paulist, 1999. Pp. 234. \$16.95.

O'Collins has produced a clear and contemporary introductory-level presentation and defense of classical Thomistic trinitarian theology, complete with a glossary and bibliography. As contemporary, it takes a genetic approach to the development of the doctrine. A survey of the Old Testament focuses on the names and images of God as Father, Word, Wisdom, and Spirit available to the New Testament interpretations of Jesus' significance. A chapter on the history of Jesus looks for hints of God's tripersonal reality in Jesus' virginal conception and baptism, in his experience of the Spirit and of special sonship, and in his conception of his mission. Two further chapters on NT authors eschew anachronism while grounding trinitarian discourse in the Pasch along with a strong reading of the preexistence texts.

The book's middle section patiently leads the reader through major pre-Nicene authors, carefully noting each significant development at its point of origin, lays out the conciliar movement from Nicaea to Constantinople I, and concludes with a sweep of theologians from Athanasius to Aquinas. At the end of this section, O. pauses to insist on the subordination of philosophy to biblical

revelation and adverts to medieval popular and liturgical devotion.

Very brief considerations of the Reformation and Enlightenment combine with mention of such 20th-century influences as personalism and emancipatory movements to establish the modern setting in which O. addresses three special questions. First, biblical data secure the personal existence of the Holy Spirit. Next O. defends the usage of "person" for each member of the divine triad, to be understood analogously as three subjects of a single divine consciousness, and appeals to Aquinas to conceive the trinitarian actions *ad extra* as common in action but distinctive in term. Finally, after a critique of recent proposals for renaming the Trinity, he appeals to Jesus' nonpatriarchal use of "Abba" to vindicate the traditional appellations while professing openness to non-male names as well. The last chapter of this serviceable if not adventurous dogmatic primer seeks to recapitulate the whole by scanning a number of trinitarian analogies and images, traditional and modern.

WILLIAM P. LOEWE
Catholic University of America, D.C.

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOD DOING? RE-IMAGING SPIRIT AND POWER. By Lee E. Snook. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999. Pp. vii + 171. \$17.

Snook, professor emeritus of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, contends that Spirit and power, the sacred and the secular, are disconnected in Western culture. The Spirit is largely imagined as private, inward experience, while power is associated with the public sphere and with the ability through organization and direction to achieve palpable results in the social order. S. sets about developing anew the relationship between power and Spirit: the Spirit of God is the power of God at work in the world.

He begins the process of re-imagining the relationship in Trinitarian theology with a balanced focus upon scriptural considerations. Through a creative integration of resources that are theological as well as drawn from literary criticism,