

***biblos* – om aktuelle bøker**

For et tidsskrift som *Theofilos* spiller alltid bøker en sentral rolle, både i form av anmeldelser og lengre artikler om aktuelle bøker. I dette nummer har vi tre fyldige bokessays.

Olof Edsinger skriver om "Könsidentiteten och den unga generationen – trans, queer och normkritik". Arikkelen er basert på hans kapittel i den nye boken *Bekänna färg: Kyrka och hbtq i en regnbågsfärgad värld* (Apologia förlag 2019). Dette er et meget viktig bidrag som presenterer og analyserer den hyperaktuelle diskusjonen rundt seksualitet, her med hovedfokus på 'trans'- og 'queer'- begrepene.

Björn Asserhed skriver om boken *Kristen gudstjänst: en introduktion* (Artos förlag 2018), en innføringsbok i liturgi ment for hele det brede kirkelandskapet i Sverige. Boken introduserer perspektiver fra de ulike kirkesamfunnene, og drøfter spørsmål som er aktuelle på tvers av kirkesamfunnene, slike som deltakelse, materialitet og enhet.

Peter S. Williams skriver om Makoto Fujimura's *Culture Care* og Paul M. Gould's *Cultural Apologetics*. Williams selv har tidligere (*Theofilos* 2012-01) tegnet opp en holistisk forståelse av apologetikk som inkluderer både *det sanne*, *det gode* og *det skjønne*. Her presenterer han to nyere forfattere som argumenterer for noe tilsvarende i møte med samtidskulturen. Han kaller følgelig sin artikkel "The Apologetics of Cultural Re-Enchantment in 3D".

Fra vår meget aktive anmelder Greg Laughery bringer vi i dette nummer flere bidrag sendt oss noen tid tilbake, uten at bøkene som anmeldes er mindre aktuelle av den grunn.

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***biblos* – anmeldelser**

The Human Being, the World and God. Studies at the Interface of Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Mind and Neuroscience

Anne L.C. Runehov

Switzerland, Springer, 2016 (186 ss).

This work deals with important topics that are and will be prominent as time goes on. The pressing issues of human being, the world, and God discussed in this book are relevant to many disciplines and Runehov does an excellent job of unpacking complex questions, proposing

possible solutions, and offering viable directions for future research. The book, following its title, is divided into 3 parts: Human being, the world, and God.

Runehov opens with the subject of 'Human Being.' Part 1 comprises of three chapters: 1) A Two and Threefold Self; 2) The Human Experiencer; 3) Human Uniqueness.

The first chapter addresses the complex configuration of being human: what is it? We are introduced to this fascinating topic with a valuable discussion of the English term 'being.' Runehov suggests that this notion has a two-fold sense: to be (*esse*) and a being (*ens*). *Esse* accounts

for the cultural, religious, and personal spheres, while *ens* amounts to the DNA, neurology, and biology dimensions. Being human, Runehov argues, cannot be collapsed into *ens*, as such a view underplays a phenomenological orientation to humanness. Aiming to steer clear of reductionism, she views *esse* as opening up several possibilities including, considering the way humans live, understand self and other, God or ultimate reality. Furthermore, humans are creative and industrious, which also marks them out from simply *ens*. Thus, it is crucial to see the configuration of human being as more holistic and less a monologue.

This problematic transitions into another: a quest for 'self.' What and who is self? Such a question has several levels of complexity, including the brain/mind, and Runehov delves into these in a helpful manner. In short, following her neurological and philosophical analysis, she puts forward a proposal of a three-fold emergent self composed of an objective neural self, a subjective neural self, and the subjective transcendent self. ONS 'sustains' the subjective selves; SNS 'expresses' the neural self; and STS 'observes' the other selves, while going beyond them. Mutual causation drives these selves into a one or whole emergent self. There's plenty left to discuss here, not least the work of Paul Ricoeur and his notion of a narrative self, but Runehov has rightly attempted to build on and contribute to this massive expedition towards our understanding of being a human self.

In chapter two, the author moves on to human experience and argues that this is the center of *esse*. Humans are those 'who cannot not experience.' She then explores a variety of experiences, including near death to God or ultimate reality experien-

ces. Many experiences can be subjectively or inter-subjectively justified, others can be acceptable since they have a degree of independence from the experiencer. Runehov contends the bottom line is all human beings experience. Based on this, she maintains, it is one of the chief characteristics of human *esse*, even if there is much to sort through when it comes to establishing not merely valid, but defensible experiences based on some criteria of knowledgeable belief.

Runehov next examines the uniqueness of humans in chapter three, the closing chapter of Part 1. She suggests that due the particular repertoire of identity and intentionality humans are a unique form of social animal. Humans are culture, institution, and contract makers. They have advanced as no other animal on the planet. And this is due, according to Runehov, to three principal reasons: increasing evolutionary social and political development; a co-evolution of genes and culture; and complex group environments that spur human intelligence and recognition of the other. The rest of the chapter explores interesting subjects, such as Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (notably Androids). In conclusion, she defends human uniqueness, building off her previous discussion of *ens* and *esse*. She maintains that human *ens* could be fabricated, but this is not the case with human *esse*.

Part 2 'The World' and how humans relate to it consists of four chapters: 4) Understanding Reality 5) Mindreading 6) Free Will, Responsibility and Moral Evil 7) Human Time.

The monumental question of how to understand reality is reflected on in chapter four. Two ways of doing this, according to Runehov, are realism and naturalism. Reality, Runehov readily acknow-

ledges, is a huge and highly debatable subject. She doesn't want to get caught in the notion that humans can recount reality just as it is, or that they cannot recognize anything legitimate about it at all. That is, in her terms she is neither a 'metaphysical realist,' nor an 'anti-realist.' After discounting another alternative, 'internal realism,' Runehov proposes a different notion of realism: 'extended realism,' which concerns three spheres—'a measureable or observable reality' that includes water and DNA; 'a creational reality' which comprises human traditions and agreements; and a 'phenomenological reality' made up of internal human emotions.

Naturalism is another controversial topic. Briefly, it can be described as arguing that all of reality can be understood by nature and through science. How this actually works out for understanding reality is open to debate and as a result several types of naturalism have arisen. Runehov examines a few of these, including ontological naturalism (in her terms: comprehensive, minimalist, or extended-flexible), methodological naturalism (methods applied in natural sciences are to be used in all disciplines), and supernaturalism (someone or something 'outside' the natural world that acts upon it).

She contends comprehensive ontological naturalism holds that the physical and material, as discovered through the scientific process, is all there is to reality, while a minimalist view is that ontological naturalism is best scientifically observed within a 'realm' (or a variety of realms; each specific to the world), and extended-flexible ontological naturalism depicts the natural world as the whole of reality; that which incorporates, yet goes beyond scientific inquiry. Her view is that the latter two are more promising for understand-

ing reality, though her preference is for the last, since it is less open to the charge of reductionism and is thus more holistic in its attempt to comprise 'all' of reality.

In chapter five, which in contrast to the last chapter and its concerns for understanding reality as a whole, Runehov deals with the particular aspect of mindreading and two of its components; empathy and compassion. The field is riddled with disputes in both neuroscience and biology and Runehov covers the ground in an apt manner that is informative and insightful. This interesting discussion leads her into another: exploring mirror neuron views (closed and open) and their implications for empathy. She concludes the chapter with an inconclusive philosophical dialogue on compassion and the question of whether or not it is good or bad, suggesting further research is necessary.

Runehov next turns to free will, responsibility, and moral evil in chapter 6. These are massively complex issues and no doubt each merits and has many book length studies. Principally, Runehov aims to deal with human freedom, human moral action, and human responsibility in the context of the philosophical discussion between libertarianism (autonomous free agent; responsible), incompatibilism (determined by causes; not responsible), and compatibilism (partial freedom; partial responsibility). She posits the view that libertarianism and incompatibilism are too black and white and proposes that while each has a role to play, both require nuance, especially from the fields of psychology and neurology. The thorny question becomes: to what degree are humans responsible for their actions? While there is no clear cut answer, Runehov helpfully suggests four types of moral evil that might offer some direction

towards a response: 'pure accidental; belief-based accidental; active but not entirely responsible; active and responsible.' Thus, she attempts to find a 'middle' way between libertarianism and incompatibilism, though rightly acknowledging that these are complex issues that call for additional research, notably in philosophy and interdisciplinary studies.

Human time is addressed in chapter seven, the last chapter in Part 2. Runehov begins by asserting that time is important because it is clearly an aspect of being a human in the world. She posits numerous questions about time, the human experience of time, and the study of time. Since the days of the reflections of Augustine and up to the present the mysteries of time have been and continue to be explored. After an introductory and useful couple of pages on 'Experiencing Time,' her direction is to briefly investigate the study of time as represented by the scientific orientations articulated by Newton, Einstein, and Quantum. Runehov concludes that a quantum focus on time as 'present' is fairly close to the way humans experience time. There are some captivating observations here, but many unanswered questions left to ponder concerning time and the human experience of it. I would suggest that Runehov and her readers might benefit from a close study of an additional resource: *Temps et récit (Time and Narrative)* by Ricoeur.

'God' is the topic of Part 3, which has one chapter: 8) God-Human-God Relationship.

One of the core issues examined in this chapter is how to understand 'God or ultimate reality.' Runehov starts out with a helpful clarification of several forms of atheism, though she admits this survey is quite thin and undeveloped, as it's not her main concern. At the outset of her next

topic (God), she lays a fair amount of stress on the 'problem' that understanding the human-God relationship is personal and thus entirely subjective. This, however, she points out, has not stopped people from developing several 'models of God or ultimate reality,' including the views of consciousness, emergence, and personhood. Finding the former two less persuasive, she embraces the latter, notably that God is personal. For Runehov this means that relationality is integral to God.

Moving on from this to the subject of 'God's action in the world' she reinforces the perspective that her particular model of God is that of the Abrahamic religions and she also situates herself within 'a Christian cultural tradition,' acknowledging that she is approaching this issue from a Christian orientation. She then briefly discusses the advantages and disadvantages of deism, pantheism, classical theism, and panentheism. Her preference is panentheism and she affirms that God acts in the world from both within and beyond it, but how this takes place remains an open question with various interpretive responses. Runehov will next take this further by attempting to deal with the complications of an atemporal God acting in a temporal world. This is a fascinating discussion and, in my opinion, one of the highlights of the book. In contrast to the Newtonian or Einsteinian perspectives of time, she proposes a quantum view as an alternative possibility that might offer a potential resolution to the problem. While her position on this issue is not without difficulties, it may indeed be worthwhile to consider for any ongoing research into this complex issue.

The next major part of the chapter is focused on 'Panentheism.' After exploring several views, especially the perspec-

tive of Peacocke, she presents her own version of what she refers to as a ‘three-fold panentheism,’ which includes the notion of emergence and that humans are both similitudes and images of God. Her diagram of all this in the book is useful and offers a helpful picture of her perspective. Runehov suggests, in conclusion, that whether and how God acts in the world are questions of belief.

I highly recommend this book. The subject matter is fascinating and the interdisciplinary and holistic approach is welcome, especially considering the unfortunate penchant for reductionism and isolationism in numerous disciplines today. Runehov, and I applaud her for doing so, is dealing with some of the cutting edge issues of our times in an interesting and provocative manner.

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Paul’s Graeco-Roman Context

C. Breytenbach, ed.

Leuven: Peeters, 2015 (751 ss).

Paul’s Graeco-Roman Context is an impressive volume of essays, which are written in several languages, including French, German, and English, edited by Cilliers Breytenbach and published by Peeters in 2015. The context for these papers was a conference: the 62nd *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense* at Université Catholique de Louvain, 16-18 July 2013, which comprised an international group of scholars.

In order to write this review in a timely and efficient manner, I shall only comment on a selection of the main papers in the book, though all these contributions, in addition to the offered papers, merit serious attention and each sheds further

light on this important and stimulating topic.

For at least the last two decades research into the times, cultures, and literary repertoire of the apostle Paul has intensified and flourished. The recent work, *Paul’s Graeco-Roman Context*, makes a sterling contribution to exploring these issues more deeply. Having a clearer picture of Paul’s context and how this may have influenced him, the authors argue, is essential to a better understanding of his writings.

In her essay, “Paul et l’émergence d’un monde ‘greco-romain,’ : Reflexions sur la romanité de l’apôtre,” M.-F. Baslez discusses Paul’s Romanization. Following P. Veyne, she first of all argues that “greco-romain” cultures should not be perceived as juxtaposed, but rather in the process of being intertwined into a new identity. Further, she suggests that more recent research has brought to light the force of mediators, which to varying degrees were shaping and forging the communities of Empire. Paul, therefore, in her view, finds himself in the midst of a confluence of a political, social, and religious environment in transition. His unfolding Romanization develops through contact with the way Rome did things administratively and geopolitically, as evidenced by the use of similar terminology in his letters. Baslez contends, for example, that as the older Greek view of localities and divergent people groups was now changing, the picture of a universal and unified Empire was coming more sharply into focus. This shift influenced Paul’s vision of the world, which had salient implications for both his theology and ecclesiology.

J.C. Thom addresses the topic of “Paul and Popular Philosophy,” arguing that a philosophical climate would have been