

of twentieth-century Canadian evangelicalism on the menu of Canadian religious history: this is no small achievement. Readers will be disappointed *if* they expect this volume to be the definitive work on Canadian evangelicalism; it is, as the subtitle appropriately indicates, an *introduction* to its *character*. Stackhouse also warns that the study is not designed to be a comprehensive survey, and to his credit challenges others to move beyond this work to obtain a fuller understanding of evangelicalism in Canada.

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***Political Philosophy at the Closure of Metaphysics.*** By Bernard Flynn. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992. ISBN 0-391-03739-0. Pp. vii+234.

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Flynn tackles a problem that has plagued contemporary Continental philosophy: "How can one develop a political philosophy that resists the temptation to build a system based on metaphysical dichotomy?" He assumes at the outset that today one must suspect the age-old dominions of truth over appearance, mind over matter, divine over human, being over becoming, and so on. Poised at the closure of metaphysics, we are challenged to develop a new way of understanding political systems and political action, apart from, yet cognizant of, the conceptual dominance of binary thinking.

The book is organized into two parts. The first part examines three thinkers—Marx, Habermas, and Foucault—who strive but ultimately fail to escape metaphysical determination. His critique of Marx, though thoroughly justified, lapses occasionally into bouts of postmodern jargon ("the denegation of castration"), but these excursions are rare enough to not be too distracting. The first half of the second chapter ignores large sections of Habermasian scholarship, and it is not until the latter half that Flynn puts away his straw men and attacks a sufficiently nuanced version of Habermas's thought. Both of these philosophers, Flynn claims, point toward a reality (the forces of production or communicative rationality) brought to light despite a contrary, illusory appearance (created by ideology or a limited *Lebenswelt*). Even Foucault's argument, proposing a "grid of power" that underlies juridical appearance, is accused of being unwittingly metaphysical. While all of these readings are (and have been) open to counter-argument, this critique is certainly worth some attention.

The second part moves to those thinkers—Arendt, Merleau-Ponty, and Lefort—who manage to articulate a path to political philosophy which avoids the pitfalls of metaphysics. Arendt, for example, refuses to push reason from men to Man, insisting instead that the tendency to ignore the many in lieu of the one gives rise to totalitarianism. She thereby sidesteps the temptation to subsume political reality under the domain of a singular "real." Merleau-Ponty opens a space for a political discourse at the margins of metaphysics. But Flynn offers near-categorical praise only of Lefort, whose discussion of "disincarnation" takes

place within this space opened by Merleau-Ponty. Here, Flynn's argument is most convincing.

He argues that a definitive moment of modernity is the separation of the religious and political spheres. While in pre-modernity the king embodied the coincidence of divine and human, taking on a Christ-like duality, in modernity the symbolic and divine orders are separated. The divine is no longer embodied by a king, and the symbolic order becomes dispersed into an uncertain and incoherent "the people." With this dissolution of the markers of certainty, the possibility for a discourse on the political as such becomes, for the first time, symbolically enabled. If this political science takes as its object "the real," we then need only to decide which account most effectively gets behind appearance: the ideology of technological progress, Marx's forces of production, reason, Foucault's power grid, *etc.* Lefort, however, sees the emergence of political science to be just as historically contingent as the previous lack of such discourse; it is a natural outgrowth of the disincarnation of society and no more "real" than the coincidence of divine and symbolic order in the body of the king.

If there is no discourse of the real, what remains for Lefort's political imagination? In the end, Flynn only hints at a meaning of political action by saying "it is an action hermeneutically inscribed within the flesh of the political field in which it unfolds," a sentence only marginally more comprehensible once one is familiar with his vocabulary. He offers a number of solid critiques of current political philosophy, but hesitates to set forth in clear and distinct language what a post-metaphysical political philosophy would do (apart from critique others).

The book requires a substantial familiarity with the history of modern philosophy before its most basic points can be grasped. Ultimately, however, the book moves boldly among different critiques of modernity. Flynn successfully treads the thin line between breadth and depth, between giving each of his subjects the attention they deserve and painting a broad picture of political philosophy at the closure of metaphysics.

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*In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology.* By Gordon Kaufman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. ISBN 0-674-44575-9. Pp. xv+461.

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In this substantial new work, Gordon Kaufman synthesizes and develops many of the themes which have appeared in his earlier work (although with some changes in emphasis: 478). For Kaufman, the old orthodoxies of Christianity are anachronous and unhelpful in an age of nuclear powers, ecological destruction, and advanced scientific knowledge of the universe. The theologian must abandon notions of "God" as other and as personal/relational, shifting the theological task to analysis of "God" as a socially-constructed symbol of "that ultimate point of reference in terms of which all else is to be understood and relativized" (8). Indeed, of all religious symbols, it is "God" which provides the most "powerful