

Michaël Biziou's contribution, "Adam Smith and the History of Philosophy," helpfully contextualizes Smith's work within both the framework of his own self-understanding as a moral philosopher and his broader, specifically Christian, intellectual milieu. So many of the more or less canonical figures in the Western tradition have been secularized by later historiography that such restoration of the substantive religious backgrounds of Smith's thought are most welcome and entirely needful. Gordon Graham's chapter on Smith and religion likewise helpfully situates Smith within a set of different conclusions about his relationship to Christianity and religion more generally. The result is that Smith was engaged in what Nicholas Phillipson in his contribution on the Scottish Enlightenment calls an "irenic approach," an attempt to articulate "a science of man to which Christians as well as unbelievers could subscribe" (108). Essays from Samuel Fleischacker ("Adam Smith and the Left") and James R. Otteson ("Adam Smith and the Right") help show the diverse, and even sometimes antithetical, uses to which Smith's thought can be put. Amartya Sen's reflections on Smith's significance for economic development show how Smith's insights continue to speak profitably to some of the most pressing challenges of political economy, and indeed life itself, today. As Sen puts it, and echoing many of the contributions to this volume, Smith's economic thought must be understood in relation to his broader moral and social vision. Smith "was deeply concerned about the incidences of poverty, illiteracy, and relative deprivation that might remain despite a well-functioning market economy, and our determination to do something about these failures demands more than the pursuit of self-interest and even self-centered prudence" (297).

Each chapter includes the author's recommendations for key sources to engage the topic more deeply, and thus this volume can serve not only as a general primer on Smith but also as a helpful guide for more substantive and specialized study. *Adam Smith: His Life, Thought, and Legacy* is a signal contribution to engaging the work and significance of a formative figure both in the history of Western civilization as well as for its future. The volume's editor, the contributors, and the publisher are to be commended for providing such valuable service.

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Karl Marx

William D. Dennison

Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2017 (144 pages)

This short introduction to Karl Marx appears in the Great Thinkers series by P&R Publishing (that is, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing). The author, William D. Dennison, is professor of interdisciplinary studies at Covenant College, the official college of the Presbyterian Church in America. Given this context—a professor from a Presbyterian college publishing a book on Marx with a historically Presbyterian and Reformed press—one should not be surprised to find that this book speaks primarily from within a subgroup of Reformed

Protestants to others in that subgroup. Dennison indicates that his study is a “Reformed engagement of, and challenge to, Marx’s historiography” and, perhaps broadening the audience a bit, he also addresses “evangelical Christians” (xvi, 4). The fact that a book would have such a context and audience does not necessarily undermine its merits. Every book is written from within a particular context and for a particular audience, and even books written for small subgroups can serve a broader audience. Unfortunately, as an introduction to and critique of Marx, and as a presentation of Marx as a great thinker, Dennison’s study is hindered by its limited scope and appeal.

Accounting for front and back matter—including a glossary, bibliography, and indexes—the substance of the book spans about a hundred pages and is divided into four chapters. The first chapter addresses the slippery issue of trying to identify what exactly Marxism is, and Dennison here includes an abundance of names and events from the Marxian tradition that developed after Marx’s death. This chapter, however, attempts to accomplish far too much in so short a span, and the avalanche of names has a disorienting effect—a fact that Dennison himself seems to recognize, as indicated by a footnote where he defends his decision to include so many names (4n5). Chapter 2 provides a sketch of Marx’s life, which in itself is helpful for situating his thought. On balance, however, in such a short study of Marx’s ideas it may not have been wise to dedicate nearly a quarter of the book to biography. In chapter 3 Dennison begins his exposition of Marx’s writings. Here he focuses on Marx’s philosophy of history as the key to understanding his thought and as the main point of conflict between Marxian and Christian worldviews (40–41). Since Marx’s view of history cannot be separated from his economic and political thought, or from his view of religion, Dennison also includes short forays into these dimensions. As a concise introduction to and interpretation of Marx’s view of history, this chapter is effective and stays close to the primary sources, but readers should bear in mind the limited scope.

Dennison’s study is also limited in its usefulness because of his fixation on heroes and arguments of his particular theological tradition. A case in point: Who are the “paramount” Christian thinkers to whom Christians should turn when they engage Marx? Perhaps Pope Leo XIII? Pope John Paul II? Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn? Michael Novak? Dennison would choose none of the above. He says that the paramount Christian figures for “grappling with Marx or any other children of the Enlightenment” are Geerhardus Vos and Cornelius Van Til, two heroes of a certain cohort of American Reformed and Presbyterian theologians (40). Curiously, Dennison presents no texts from either Vos or Van Til that show them grappling with Marx or Marxism. Might this be because no such texts exist in their corpora?

In chapter 4 Dennison presents a “presuppositional critique” of Marx’s view of history. Following in the tradition of Van Til’s apologetic method, Dennison claims that Marx is working with borrowed capital, so to speak. That is, Marx “must presuppose the truth of the Christian world” even as he attacks Christianity and offers his alternative (89). The critique in this chapter is uneven, to say the least. On the one hand, Dennison shows that Marx’s account of history mirrors or apes Christianity. He also notes some

apparent contradictions in Marx's thought, such as the way Marx depicts vices as inherent to human nature while also expecting humans to overcome these vices politically. Such assessments are rather standard fare among Marx's critics. On the other hand, Dennison's critique comes off as idiosyncratic. It descends, in effect, to Dennison preaching at Marx, declaring what Marx's system of thought "must presuppose" (82, 89), and telling Marx that his view of history is contrary to Scripture (a point Marx himself would gleefully concede). For instance, in attempting to turn the tables on Marx's view of Christianity as mythology, Dennison proclaims that Marx "should have demythologized his own imagined world in order to truly hear the good intention of the call of the gospel from the Lord of the cosmos" (86–87). This approach is more point-scoring than argument, and it likely will only resonate with those who are predisposed to argue in this way—namely, devotees of Van Til's presuppositional apologetics.

This could have been a book with a broader scope and appeal. Dennison could have achieved this even while writing for Christians, or even while writing for Reformed Christians. As it is, however, there are much better short introductions to Marx on offer. While not written from a Christian perspective, the introductions by Peter Singer and John Seed critically engage the breadth of Marx's thought and are honest about the flaws in his system. Among Reformed Christian contributions, Lester DeKoster's *Communism & Christian Faith*, while a bit dated and at times quirky, surveys Marxist ideas more extensively and addresses a broader Christian audience than Dennison's book does. In sum, Dennison's *Karl Marx* may appeal to readers in the author's theological and apologetic tradition, and it may introduce Marx's view of history to that readership, but unfortunately the book does not accomplish more.

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The Moral Economists: R. H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, E. P. Thompson, and the Critique of Capitalism

Tim Rogan

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017 (280 pages)

Before Adam Smith explored the nature and causes of the wealth of nations in 1776, he developed a theory of moral sentiments in 1759. Economists after Smith tended to focus more on the questions of wealth and the workings of the market's "invisible hand" that extracted shared benefits from selfish motivations. Their attempts to define the good using a common metric such as money or utility have never been fully satisfying to most laypeople or to other economists, even as economics as a whole focused on quantitative approaches to any number of questions about human behavior alone or in groups.