

their meaning and importance. In weaving a context from the Middle Ages, Le Goff effectively wrote a historical text on the Contemporary Europe, tracing the roots of the latter from heaven that came down to earth.

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Burton, Neel. *The Gang of Three: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle*. Acheron Press, 2023. pp. 392. ISBN: 978-1913260422.

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Why bother with the “Gang of Three”? The author’s choice of words to title the book may somehow *offend* some since the “Three” being referred to are considered great, if not arguably the greatest of Greek philosophers. It may not sound too formal but Burton, as one reads the book, has a way to convey his message: timely and timeless philosophy which has hugely impacted western civilization need not be formal in the way we are used to in standard classical Greek philosophy textbooks. In the outset, the title may seem to imply roughness which leads to violence, dark activities which preserves authority, and power maneuverings which protect self-interests. All of these are not present in the overall message of the book. The author conveys the power of philosophy in a way that can be traced back to the great figures of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Burton communicates that anyone serious enough in doing philosophy cannot possibly bypass the “Gang of Three.” Almost all aspects of western civilization were influenced by them: religion, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, art, law, education among others. The title alone makes the readers ponder: what makes the three so impactful in the present even after centuries of death?

The author challenges the readers of his work to dig deep into the past, not for nostalgia and turning back the hands of time which lead to sadness and despair. Burton writes in a way that leads the readers to the past, the history of classical philosophy, and invites the readers to establish his roots: knowledge is good but without wisdom, it is not saved. Not everything that is good is necessarily saved. Apparent goods are goods but not paths to wisdom. The “Gang of Three” has given us points for reference to distinguish the two and thus to strengthen our roots. Here lies the contribution of the book.

This enables us to face the present with renewed vigor and fresh hope. Philosophy is not a discipline disconnected from current events and burning issues of the day. Burton explains the philosophies of the “Three” as confronting their present with so much power that their influence goes beyond even after their deaths. This goes to show that a lover of wisdom is well rooted in the present

that he becomes a catalyst of change for the society. The reader is moved to see his present reality as he goes through the pages of the book and eventually asks himself: what should I do? Also, this shows that truth is never completely imprisoned in a given time and epoch. There are elements of truth which go beyond time otherwise Burton cannot possibly write a book about a group of philosophers who lived centuries before him. The book affirms the universality of truth even while it gives importance to the past.

The future is uncertain but it should not lead us to despair. Burton's work suggests a disposition that is optimistic, i.e. a human existence that reflects a character that desires a promise and a yearning for fulfillment. The richness and depth of the thinking of the "Gang of Three" cannot possibly be encapsulated in a 200-page plus book. Notwithstanding their positive value, the readers just hope that the author articulates more ideas that show limitations that do not necessarily diminish the value of the "Three" but avenues for further explorations and studies which may complete more the seminal ideas of the great Greek thinkers, especially those relevant in the 21st century. Moreover, the endnotes at the back need more expansion and further explanation of where these ideas were derived. There is a surplus of materials related to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle which until the present, many authors experts in Ancient Philosophy continue to write and comment on.

The yearning for fulfillment can only come from "above." Behind the pages of the book, the reader can sense a desire for fulfillment. The Catholic Church, for instance, has high regards for the philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Many Catholic philosophers and theologians were influenced by the latter like Augustine and Aquinas. Commenting on the different stances of philosophy in relation to the gospel, the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, 75 says: "there is a *philosophy completely independent of the Gospel's Revelation*: this is the stance adopted by philosophy as it took shape in history before the birth of the Redeemer and later in regions as yet untouched by the Gospel. We see here philosophy's valid aspiration to be an *autonomous* enterprise, obeying its own rules and employing the powers of reason alone. Although seriously handicapped by the inherent weakness of human reason, this aspiration should be supported and strengthened. As a search for truth within the natural order, the enterprise of philosophy is always open—at least implicitly—to the supernatural." The church respects the autonomy of philosophy even while affirming its need for further enhancement. The church thus does not have an official philosophy. The text continues: "Moreover, the demand for a valid autonomy of thought should be respected even when theological discourse makes use of philosophical concepts

and arguments. Indeed, to argue according to rigorous rational criteria is to guarantee that the results attained are universally valid. This also confirms the principle that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it: the assent of faith, engaging the intellect and will, does not destroy but perfects the free will of each believer who deep within welcomes what has been revealed.” The church sees the positive value of the autonomy of philosophy which implies respect for nature and its eventual perfection when these ancient Greek philosophies (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) encountered the gospel in history.

A not so difficult book to read, Burton helped the readers to once again discover the goodness and beauty of Ancient Greek philosophy. In a world where so much polarization is experienced and truth is oftentimes presented as ideologies, Burton challenges readers to love wisdom lest we become more knowledgeable and yet not saved.

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Hewitt, Simon. *Life after Death after Marx*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. pp. 53. ISBN: 978-1-009-52684-5.

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Materialism and idealism are the two primary poles that drive Marxist movements and Marx’s thought; and Marx’s departure from the idealist movement of his time results in a direct critique of the spiritual and non-material, which includes the sphere of religion. It is undeniable that this leads to incompatibility of Marx’s doctrine and Christian doctrine. Amidst this partition and incompatibility, Simon Hewitt attempted to reconcile, if not, re-evaluate Christian theological discourse on the afterlife and the human person’s eschatological status in Marx’s philosophy in order to close the gap between the two.

The author, Simon Hewitt, is an associate professor at the University of Leeds, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures. His interest and inclination to the philosophy of religion was embodied through his discourses against those who are critical of theology, including, but not limited to, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud. By following the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas and Fr. Herbert McCabe, O.P. – a Dominican theologian and philosopher – Hewitt develops a profound claim that the negative theological claim that God is unknowable is not a statement that concedes to atheism. In his view, a positive theological claim, like “God is good,” is just an amplification of imperfection, as human beings’ thought can only cover a limited knowledge. So, to say that God is unknowable is a way to prove that God transcends human frailties and