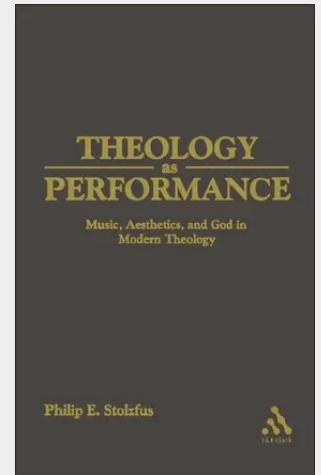


Theology as Performance

Music, Aesthetics, and God in Western Thought

An examination of the musical aesthetics of Schleiermacher, Wittgenstein, and Barth and the ways that these aesthetics provide a foundation of their theologies of performance. Theology as Performance breaks new ground in the ongoing conversation between modern theology and philosophical aesthetics by arguing that significant moments in the development of the modern concept of God have been deeply influenced by concepts and approaches borrowed from the discipline of musical aesthetics. The Western theological tradition can be shown to have already had a long-standing latent connection to musical reflection, in particular as represented in the figures of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Each thinker develops radically different ways of writing about God that can be shown to have been in significant respects derived from each one's reading and writing about music. Could it be that three significant developments in the modern theological project-Schleiermacher's so-called 'subjective' turn, Barth's 'objectivist' reaction, and Wittgenstein's 'language-game pragmatism'-- can only be understood fully from within the context of the musicological discourses that give rise to them? In this intellectual history, Stoltzfus constructs two 'trajectories' with which to trace briefly theological reflection upon music at several points throughout the pre-modern period: the traditions of Orpheus and Pythagoras. This relatively non-controversial discussion of textual evidence arranged in historical sequence then sets up the reader to be able to consider Schleiermacher's aesthetic approach as a modern representative of the 'Orpheus' trajectory and Barth's approach as representative of the 'Pythagoras' trajectory. The chapter on Wittgenstein offers a critique of these two trajectories, as well as their modern theological proponents, and advocates for a third, 'performative,' theological-aesthetic method. Theology as Performance offers a provocative rethinking of the nature of theology.

breaks new ground in the growing conversation between modern theology and philosophical aesthetics. Stoltzfus proposes that significant moments in the Western development of the concept of God, in particular as represented in the figures of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, have been deeply influenced by concepts and approaches borrowed from the discipline of musical aesthetics. Each thinker develops fundamentally different ways of writing about God that have in significant respects been derived from each one's reading and writing about music. The aesthetic implications of Schleiermacher's so-called subjectivist turn, Barth's objectivist reaction, and Wittgenstein's language-game pragmatism can thus be fully understood only by attending to the musical culture and distinctly musicological discourses that gave rise to them. Stoltzfus constructs two trajectories of thought with which to trace theological reflection upon music throughout the pre-modern period: the traditions of Orpheus and Pythagoras. Schleiermacher's aesthetic approach, then, becomes a modern representative of the Orpheus trajectory, and Barth's approach a representative of the Pythagoras trajectory. Stoltzfus interprets Wittgenstein as putting forward a radical critique of these trajectories and pointing toward a third, "performative" theological-aesthetic method. Theology as Performance offers a provocative rethinking of the aesthetic roots of modern theology.



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