

Thomas Ebinger

Verkehrte Freiheit? Jean-Paul Sartres Freiheitslehre aus christlicher Sicht (Wrong Freedom? Jean-Paul Sartre's Understanding of Freedom out of an Christian Perspective). Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2010, 201 pp.

The present book has its roots in a Tübingen dissertation in Protestant theology of 2008 and has been marginally revised for publication. Most surprisingly, it is one of the first (German) monographs on Sartre and his possible impact on Christian theology and thus enters uncharted territories. Although the clearly written study is rather short, the author presents a differentiated analysis of Sartre's philosophy (with a stress on his understanding of freedom) and does not hesitate to argue for his own position – both regarding Sartre's work and the impact Christian theology can get by dealing with it.

The study contains six parts the first three of which presenting Sartre's philosophy approached genetically, phenomenologically and biographically, while the three other chapters provide the theological perspective. In the first chapter, Ebinger sketches the development of Sartre's thought until *Being and Nothingness* by tracing his references and debt to Bergson, Descartes, Husserl and Heidegger and regards Sartre's philosophy as a not totally convincing effort to combine Husserl's phenomenology with Heidegger's question for the ontology and the being of Da-Sein. The second chapter is devoted to an analysis of the works *Being and Nothingness*, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, *Cartesian Freedom* and *Notebooks for an Ethics* and the third deals with Sartre's autobiographical commentary of his philosophy thus showing how some of its characteristics are clearly rooted in his life. The theological chapters begin with a presentation of the (few) theologians who have referred to Sartre (Barth, Thielicke, Tillich, Patte, Hasenhüttl, King and Rosenau) which is followed by remarks on theological motives and connections in Sartre's understanding of freedom (understanding of God, faith, transcendence and justification). The last chapter provides the results of the study by pointing out the advantages and shortcomings of Sartre's philosophy, presenting Luther's and Schleiermacher's view on freedom and sketching a Christian phenomenology of freedom which is inspired by Sartre but also distances itself from him, e.g. by pointing out the positive aspects of a look or the importance of a touch.

Although at some points, this book would have profited from further explanations of the critique on Sartre, it is highly recommendable for anyone interested in Sartre and theology because of its pioneering work and distinct position.

(Thomas Fornet-Ponse)