

*“The Bold Arcs of Salvation History”: Faith and Reason in Jürgen Habermas’s Reconstruction of the Roots of European Thinking.* By Maureen Junker-Kenny. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022. xviii + 288 pages. \$99.99.  
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Maureen Junker-Kenny’s welcome volume marks the first English book-length treatment of Jürgen Habermas’s acclaimed 2019 work *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*. Following upon her earlier studies of Habermas’s analyses of religion (*Habermas and Theology* [T&T Clark, 2011]) and *Religion and Public Reason* [De Gruyter, 2014]), Junker-Kenny’s volume provides a rigorous critical engagement with Habermas’s study that situates his reconstruction of the trajectories of post-metaphysical European thought within ongoing inquiries in philosophy, theology, and biblical studies. In a time of narrowly circumscribed inquiries and increasing specialization, Habermas’s work is striking in its ambition. Spanning two large volumes, it traces the complex relationship of faith and knowledge in the Western tradition, outlining “learning processes” and “signs of history” that signal hope in the face of the “defeatism of reason” emerging in late modern thought (183).

Junker-Kenny’s text is also ambitious, outlining the significant contributions of Habermas’s argument while critically evaluating the central theoretical decisions that inform it. The volume is detailed, nuanced, and notably well organized, broadly following Habermas’s narrative while also contextualizing his argument amid relevant current discourses in theology and biblical studies. It first examines recent discussions of the study of history, historical objectivity, and method, before moving to consider prominent strands in New Testament interpretation and the foundations of Christianity in Second Temple Judaism. It then looks into the distinct theological trajectories of the patristic era and the beginnings of modernity in the medieval period. Finally, it takes up the legacy of Kant’s anthropological turn and examines post-Kantian theologies of linguistically embedded reason.

The text’s close engagement with Habermas’s study highlights a number of his insightful readings of this tradition. One example is found in Habermas’s perceptive account of late medieval developments, particularly Aquinas’s description of natural law and the new paths charted by Duns Scotus in his treatments of divine and human freedom. Another example is his intriguing treatment of Herder, Humboldt, and especially Schleiermacher as thinkers who take a decisive step toward a program of “detranscendentalized” thought by situating reason in language, anticipating post-metaphysical emphases on “intellectual activity that is situated in the social realm” (198–99).

Junker-Kenny also accentuates the ways in which Habermas's rich narrative is bound to key interpretative decisions, most notably the decisions to privilege the interpretative positions of Paul and of Augustine's theological anthropology as representing normative measures of Christian self-understanding and to frame Kant's foundational transcendental inquiry and political philosophy as responding to this Augustinian heritage as mediated by Luther's theology. Such moves, Junker-Kenny notes, come at the cost of overlooking the important "internal heterogeneity of New Testament christologies" and New Testament interpretation (80) and ignoring the plurality of theological models and the "polycentric and diverse character" of the patristic (101) as well as the medieval and modern eras.

Overall, Junker-Kenny's analysis has a number of clear strengths to recommend it. First, it gives a clear and compact summary of Habermas's expansive project, which makes clear its argument and the significance of Habermas's project for current debates in theology and the study of religion. Second, in contrast with Habermas's own narrative, it highlights the nuanced and distinct avenues of understanding pursued contemporary discourses in theology and biblical scholarship, especially in connection with themes of secularity and post-metaphysical thought. Finally, it pursues a discerning argument: in moving beyond substance metaphysics, "faith" need not be construed as an alternative "other" counterposed to (secular) reason but signals a "further determination" of reason "in its undiminished orientation to meaning" (234).

For some readers, the pace and density of Junker-Kenny's complex analysis may prove a challenge; it is not designed to offer an easy introduction to Habermas's monumental text, and it will be most rewarding for those already somewhat acquainted with his thought and with current methodological disputes in theology and philosophy. Precisely due to its complexity, however, this case study should be of significant interest to students seeking a clear and forceful analysis of Habermas's thought and to students, researchers, and teachers of theology and philosophy in modernity more broadly.

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Struggle defines Vincent Lloyd's search for the meaning of Blackness in an anti-Black world in *Black Dignity: The Struggle Against Domination*.