

vision embodied more in images than in letters' (p.v). In the conviction that the materials covered in this *Handbook* 'are important, even essential, for understanding much of what is at issue in contemporary relationships between Russia and the West' (p.xxvi), let us hope that it will promote also a further 'exchange of gifts' between Russian and Western thinkers, a requisite on the path towards Christian unity.

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YOUR WHOLE LIFE: BEYOND CHILDHOOD AND ADULTHOOD by James Bernard Murphy, *University of Pennsylvania Press*, 2020, pp. 253, £50.00, hbk

The beautiful cover illustration of this book, Edvard Munch's 'Four Stages of Life', well represents its content. In every sense this is a beautiful book: its lucid prose, the coherent construction of its argument, its learned and open engagement with other disciplines, the originality and range of its philosophy, its empathy and humanity, and both the profundity and practical nature of its implications. James Bernard Murphy's theme is summed up in his title: we can only understand ourselves, as individuals and as human beings, by seeing our lives as a whole. To do that means integrating every stage - childhood, adolescence, maturity and old age - and giving each due weight. It also means integrating our biological, psychological, and narrative selves.

The first half of the book explores four theories of childhood, each originating in embryology. 'Recapitulation' imagines that over the course of our lives we each pass through the kinds of lives lived by whole classes of creatures: in the womb we are like plants, as children like animals, in middle age we become fully human. Our personal biology, we might say, relives our evolutionary biology. A historical version of this sees us as mirroring the stages of human cultural development, from 'savage' to 'civilised'. 'Preformation' thinks of the embryo as already containing all that will become the adult: toddlers are just smaller, weaker versions of our later selves. Finally, 'neoteny' envisages us as primates that have never grown up: in our playfulness, restless questioning and creativity, and even in our hairlessness, weakness and facial features, we resemble baby rather than adult apes.

Murphy's first stroke of genius is to bring these theories into conversation with four classic accounts of childhood. Aristotle was, of course, a biologist himself, and his philosophical account of the ages of humankind deliberately builds on biological recapitulation. A possible disadvantage is that life becomes centred on middle age: childhood becomes a mere rehearsal, old age a decline from, the primary purpose of living. In

Rousseau's version of recapitulation, focused on history, the young Emile is compared to primitive peoples in his natural innocence. Adolescence brings with it the dangers and vices of so-called civilised society. For Rousseau, unlike Aristotle, adulthood is deeply ambiguous. St Augustine, by contrast, sees children and adults as playing the same kinds of games: even babies display rivalry and selfishness, while the imperial career ladder was just the playground writ large. Biological and social development do not in themselves bring true maturity. (Against this background, the power of grace to effect dramatic changes in the various lives described in *The Confessions* is especially striking.) Few influential thinkers have championed neoteny, or juvenilisation, but Jesus is the exception. Some argue that he presented children as an example only because of their weakness and dependence. Murphy's careful exegesis shows how Christ implicitly highlighted also their unselfconscious humility and spontaneous, affectionate, seeking of his company.

Are our lives, then, just for the sake of being grown-ups? Or just for trying to stay childlike? And does old age - traditionally associated with wisdom - have any value of its own? Murphy argues that we need to learn from each of these theories: what matters is the whole of our life. How, then, do we see our lives as a whole?

Some psychologists answer this by exploiting yet another theory of embryology. 'Epigenesis' holds that development moves through fixed stages, each totally dependent on the successful completion of the previous stage. Following Freud, Erik Erikson and George Vaillant tried to apply this to our growth through childhood, adulthood, and old age. While accepting their insights, Murphy also explores the limitations of insulating the stages from each other: while children and the elderly find it easier to be good at different things, what they are good at is good for any human being. Most importantly, we ourselves want to see our lives as a whole. We are story-telling animals, and our stories interpret events in the light of their antecedents and consequences. The disasters of youth can be redeemed; disasters at the very end of life remain tragic. What, then, gives unity to our lives? Murphy first carefully distinguishes two questions: 'What am I?' and 'How do I persist over time?'. Human beings in their essence are neither mere animals nor pure persons: 'animals all the way up and persons all the way down' (p. 123); indeed, our rationality both makes sense of and is rooted in our specific biology (think, for example, of our extended childhood, which allows our distinctive rationality to develop). Such psychological unity as provided by our memories does not then (*pace* Locke) constitute, but rather depends upon, our identity as animals with an intrinsic, directed, potential for rational personhood. That personhood, Murphy argues, is something intrinsically relational: 'To be a person is to be both self-possessing and self-giving' (p. 133).

Murphy is now ready to ask his third question, 'Who am I?' His argument for our psychological unity over time employs contemporary scientific analyses of memory to show how we experience the present not as

discrete moments, but as a ‘now’ thick with both memory and imagination. In other words, every short section of our lives is part of a narrative, one that we are constantly revising and adapting. From science, then, to literature: what finally gives me my identity as *me* are the stories that are told about me, implicitly and explicitly. It is important that these stories are told by others as well as by myself: indeed, I can only know myself fully through the stories of others, supplementing, shaping and correcting my autobiographical thoughts and words. One again, Murphy does not just combine, but integrates his key ideas. While other philosophers argue over whether the unity of our lives lies in biology, psychology or narrative, he explains how these unities nest inside one another, our narratives depending on our memories, imaginations and psychological development, and these in turn depending on our organic continuity.

The main thesis apart, the book is packed with perceptive, subtle details, often summarised in memorable one-liners: ‘The best way to prepare a child for adulthood is to protect him from it for as long as possible’ (p. 90); ‘Maturity waxes and wanes throughout adulthood,’ (p. 111); ‘Our bodies remember long after our minds forget’ (p. 167); ‘We eat food as rational persons and we write books as rational animals’ (p. 178); ‘A kitten does not look forward to being a cat; a dog does not fondly recall his puppyhood’ (p. 179); ‘Practical wisdom is the capacity to bring to bear the whole of our lives to the challenge of each moment’ (p. 175).

Your Whole Life has profound implications, and not only for our treatment of the unborn, the elderly, and the frail. Its concrete ambitions become clear in the conclusion, which offers his readers practical tasks for reflecting on their own biographies. ‘This book will fundamentally change the way you think about your own life,’ Murphy claims boldly on page 2. He is right.

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T&T CLARK READER IN POLITICAL THEOLOGY edited by Elizabeth Philips, Anna Rowlands and Amy Daughton, *Bloomsbury T & T Clark*, London, 2021, pp. xiv + 721, £ 144.00, hbk

This excellent reader in Political Theology is a welcome companion to Elizabeth Philips’s 2012 *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. It can also be used independently. The editors hope that the *Reader* can function more as a manual than as a historical textbook. They hope to encourage students and others who are interested in Political Theology to learn ‘how to examine our assumptions about what political arrangements are for and the roots and power of our organizing political ideas and