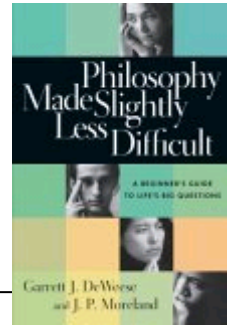


Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult: A Beginner's Guide to Life's Big Questions

Garrett J. DeWeese and J.P. Moreland



Over the last two centuries Christian confidence in the reasonableness and credibility of the historic Christian faith has met significant challenges from a number of quarters. With the widespread acceptance of a wholly naturalistic account of the origin of our species, and a growing conviction that science can explain everything about the world without the need to invoke the 'spooky' supernatural, the floodwaters of unbelief have – it would seem – been steadily rising about the Church on all sides, greedily devouring the grounds for faith and certainty. All the evidence, we are told, points to the non-existence of a benevolent God, the obsolescence of religion, and the absence of any justifiable grounds for the Christian hope of the resurrection. Or does it?

The authors of *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult* are convinced that, on the contrary, the *real* nature of the challenge that faces Christians today 'is not really scientific or theological or anthropological, but philosophical'; it is how modern man *thinks* about science and the universe that skews his view of the Christian faith as something irrelevant and outmoded. We wrestle not against evidence from laboratories, but against materialism, against scientism, against the naturalistic worldview of the West, against doctrines and ideas that have become entrenched in the modern mind largely – it must be said – through Christians' neglect of the intellectual life.

Moreland and DeWeese seek to redress this problem by making philosophy more accessible to laymen, and by providing the outlines of a Christian perspective on a number of important philosophical issues, including ethics, metaphysics, the mind-body problem, philosophy of science and epistemology – all that in a mere 170 pages!

But there are, of course, at least two kinds of pits into which a treatise of this sort may stray. On the one hand, in seeking to be accessible to *everybody* it may prove so superficial that it is really of no use to *anybody*; the content is grasped easily enough because it avoids saying anything very interesting. On the other hand, in the effort to be concise, clarity and simplicity may be dispensed with altogether; the writers dash from one difficult problem to the next, without ever explaining to anybody's satisfaction what exactly it is they are talking about.

Perhaps it is inevitable that such a project as this one should gravitate towards one of these extremes. Philosophy *is* a difficult subject, and a genuine grasp of

even the basics is not something to be had in a weekend's read. In my estimation, *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult* attempts to bite off more than can be chewed in a single paperback of these proportions, producing an uneven volume that varies noticeably in the difficulty of the content and the perspicuity of the exposition across the different chapters. Whilst some sections should be quite comprehensible for the beginner (for example, the chapter on philosophy of science), other parts will, I suspect, prove much less digestible (such as the discussion of the mind-body problem) without a prior acquaintance with the subject matter. This is rather frustrating for the beginner, who might have walked away with a better understanding of some of the issues, had the authors contented themselves with saying a little more about a little less.

Nevertheless, I do recommend this book to serious-minded Christians who are anxious to improve themselves and their witness, who earnestly seek to imitate the apostle Paul in demolishing 'arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God', and who desire to take 'captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ' (2Co. 10:4). I think a good deal might be gleaned from this volume (with some perseverance), and the helpful suggestions for further reading at the back provide welcome additional guidance, both for further exploration and for alternative presentations of the different topics presented in this text. Whilst I believe that this book does, in the end, fall short of the goal it has set for itself, this is an admirable effort to elevate the minds of ordinary Christians. I hope to see more of its kind in the future.

W.M.R. Simpson