

Plato's Gods by Gerd Van Riel. Routledge, 2013. 146pp., Hb. \$160.00. ISBN-13: 9780754607007; Pb. \$52.95, ISBN-13: 9780754607007.

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This is a book in which the author shows considerable knowledge both in immediate detail and in the wider context of Plato's theology, and this shines through the whole text bringing the discussion to life and the history into context. The book does all it states in the synopsis provided by the publishers. Indeed, it does more, besides providing a comprehensive study of the metaphysics and theological doctrines put forward in Plato's *Dialogues*, there is an in-depth study of many of the key modern writers who have attempted to explain the sometimes contradicting statements about the gods and religion, which Plato has put into the mouths of his characters. All the points made in this book are thoroughly contextualized both in the ancient historical perspective as well as from the viewpoints of more modern scholars.

The book has three main sections: *Plato's Religion*, *Plato's Theology* and *Theology and Metaphysics*. There is also an informative *Introduction* and *Conclusion*. A comprehensive *Bibliography*, *Index* and *References to Ancient Authors* conclude the book's schema. Each main section has a varying number of chapters leading the reader through the development of Plato's religious ideas from the origins of religion to the gods' existences as souls. There is considerable discussion throughout the text about souls and intellect, culminating in Chapter 3 of Section 3 (on *Theology and Metaphysics*). The book is written in a readable and informative style and the use of quotations from the *Dialogues* and the works of the other Greek philosophers support the points made in a very convincing manner.

While the book will inform scholars of *Implicit Religion* about the underlying religious practice and belief of the ancient Greeks, it will do much more. Here, scholars will find examples of religious practice such as visualizing the gods as being associated with the astronomical heavens or cosmology (which readers may relate to the heresies of Origen some seven centuries later). Furthermore, scholars of Christianity will find useful background material for the Greek influence on New Testament belief,

especially that developed in the Pauline corpus. In addition, scholars and students of Plato's philosophy in a more general way will do well to read this book as it leads the reader through the inconsistencies of Platonic thought; the incubation period for the author (*Preface*) has indeed born fruit of an exceptional standard.