

Origin of the Centred Self?

Glenda Jackson

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During her tenure at a secondary school in Australia, one of Glenda M. Jackson's students committed suicide. This incident inspired Jackson's examination of the motivation behind people's decisions. She decided to frame her thoughts within the context of her own Christian faith and the philosophy of free will. The result is *Origin of the Centered Self?*, an accessible exploration of the subjective and objective selves.

Jackson focuses on subjective and objective life choices, positing that the objective life is important to good decision-making. She cites four traits that are important to living an objective life, "responsibility, autonomy, relationship[s], and governing selflessly," or RARGS, which is what brings humanity close to God. According to Jackson and the Bible, God created man in his likeness, but that doesn't necessarily refer to man's outer features. Instead, she suggests that "likeness" comes through in these four characteristics, which is how God manages to be within all of us. Whether or not we choose to use them is what makes our lives subjective or objective.

Jackson has a PhD in education. While her experience falls mainly in the education field, this background informs Jackson's writing. The language is easy to read and understand, making it accessible for anyone with a basic knowledge of philosophy and education. Her research comes across as a digestible lesson. There is a quick synopsis from recent philosophers about what man understands about objectivity and subjectivity. Jackson asks where God fits into all of this and from there begins her argument for how humans can make their own choices and still be governed by God.

The book pays close attention to keeping the reader engaged, especially with stories. The first chapter recounts a meeting Jackson had with a young student teacher, both having recently experienced the death of close acquaintances. The meeting creates a discussion that introduces Jackson's argument for God's involvement in man's life. Her most specific example of her thesis is the Adam and Eve story. God creates the couple in his likeness and gives them a good life. The two go against their objective selves, ignoring God within them, and there are consequences.

The book is organized into short chapters that make for easy reading. Within the chapters, Jackson makes use of headings that help integrate new information, and conclusions that explain how everything fits together.

Origin of the Centered Self? is a good read for people wanting to learn more about philosophy and religion. Jackson makes strong arguments for her view that God gave human beings the power to make good decisions. It's a fast and easy read as well as thought provoking.

MARLEE LEEBRICK-STRYKER (April 15, 2014)

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