

DILEMMAS AND CONNECTIONS: SELECTED ESSAYS. By Charles Taylor. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 2011. Pp. 414. \$39.95.

Taylor is arguably the most important living Catholic philosopher writing in English, even though he articulates his work in modes of philosophical discourse that do not stem directly from the traditions of the revived Scholasticism deemed for much of the 20th century to be “Catholic philosophy.” He continues an active schedule of lecturing and publication in many venues, so this collection of 16 essays (eleven of which have been previously published), spanning the most recent decade and a half of his work, is a welcome pendant to the small (*Modern Social Imaginaries, Varieties of Religion Today*) and large (*A Secular Age*) monographs he published during this period. The earliest essays in the current collection stem from the mid-1990s, when he was preparing the Gifford Lectures (1999), which became the basis for *A Secular Age* (2007), while the most recent ones engage some of the discussion that has ensued from that magisterial work. The volume is organized thematically, with the first four essays grouped under the heading, “Allies and Interlocutors,” the next four under “Social Theory,” and the last eight under “Themes from *A Secular Age*.” T.’s scope is wide: there are essays on Iris Murdoch’s contribution to moral philosophy, Gadamer’s view of conceptual schemes, the poetics of Paul Celan, nationalism, human rights, violence, the axial revolution, reason, and the perils of moralism. While the topics may seem diffuse, readers familiar with T.’s work will recognize that his treatment of all of them bears upon what he has acknowledged as the central focus of his philosophical enterprise: to construct a philosophical anthropology that, by situating human subjectivity within our life as embodied and historical social agents will serve as an effective intellectual counterweight to the reductive naturalism that is pervasively entrenched in 20th-century accounts of human agency and widely influential in social practice.

The essays most likely to be useful for theological discussion include T.’s 1996 Marianist Award Lecture at the University of Dayton, “A Catholic Modernity?,” which at a distance of 15 years seems even more incisive in its prescription to look to Matteo Ricci as a model for Catholicism’s engagement with the cultures emergent in the aftermath of modernity. It is instructive to read the first essay in the volume, “Iris Murdoch’s and Moral Philosophy,” the text of a lecture given at the University of Chicago, in tandem with the Catholic modernity lecture in order to appreciate T.’s attentiveness to the level of receptivity among his audiences for engaging questions framed in explicitly religious and theological terms. The modernity lecture, delivered in a Catholic venue, surfaces the theological undercurrents running within the Murdoch lecture delivered to an audience from the “secular” academy.

Also of note for theological consideration is the longest essay in the volume, "The Future of the Religious Past," in which T. provides a provocative, multilayered account of the roles that religion has played, and continues to play, as a force in the shifting dynamics of social identity. "Notes on the Sources of Violence," while not tightly organized, provides some exploratory probes into the transformations of "the metaphysical meanings of violence." The essay moves from the forms of the "numinous violence" that has been a concern in the work of René Girard to a violence centered on the otherness constructed through modern "categorical identities," which, issuing through phenomena such as nationalism, define one's identity "in a uniform way to a whole" rather than within a rich network of relations (204).

In "The Perils of Moralism," T. takes on what he calls the "nomology" or "code fetishism" in which "the entire spiritual dimension of human life is captured in a moral code" (353). His analysis and criticism capture in brief compass key elements of his extensive treatment of "Reform" in *A Secular Age*. Although T. focuses primarily on the manifestations of nomology in the liberal societies of modern humanism, he also offers some words of trenchant criticism of how both Catholic and Protestant churches primarily stood against such humanism by all too often simply promoting a counter code. "Enchantment/Disenchantment" and "What Does Secularism Mean?" revisit and nuance two key topics treated in *A Secular Age*.

One *lacuna* in this volume is that, unlike previous collections such as *Philosophical Papers* (1985) and *Philosophical Arguments* (1995), T. does not provide an introductory overview to help the reader locate the individual pieces and their thematic groupings within the larger conceptual landscape of his previous work and the anthropological concerns that have driven it. It makes this collection less useful than it might have been as an introduction to his work, though it certainly provides a number of useful and often extensive glosses on the concepts and arguments that have been central to the most recent phase of his ambitious philosophical enterprise.

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PERFECTING HUMAN ACTIONS: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON PARTICIPATION IN ETERNAL LAW. By John Rziha. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2009. Pp. x + 300. \$39.95.

One of the most significant debates in the history of philosophy is found in Plato's *Euthyphro*. Plato argues through his fictional character that the gods must be either arbitrary to command certain rules, or they must be subject to a moral standard that is higher than they. If the gods are arbitrary, then they have imposed a set of rules that could have been