

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

different—which suggests that they are whimsical and so cannot be trusted. If the gods must consult a higher standard of goodness before issuing their commands to humanity, then the gods are superfluous and have no significant role for human morality. Across the centuries atheists have been notorious for using Euthyphro’s dilemma to dupe the theist.

In response to this perennial challenge Rziha argues that we split the horns of the dilemma by showing that God *is* the good. God is necessarily just, wise, and holy. Since creatures do not have being by nature, they must participate in God. Participation refers to sharing in a perfection (the proper actions of a creature) that something else has by nature (29–112). Chapter 3 explains how human participation in eternal law is both moved and governed by it (113–83). Though all created beings participate in God, persons participate in the eternal law in a special way: cognitively, having a limited but true knowledge of the eternal law (184–256). The first principles of morality, far from being capricious, perfectly embody God’s perfection. *Euthyphro’s* dilemma is only a challenge for the divine voluntarist, not for the traditional Thomist.

Aquinas’s metaphysics of participation allows for a natural theology that begins with the first principles of morality but does not rely on the divine command theory for its overall formulation (see, for instance, the “Fourth Way” in the *Summa theologiae*). Since persons can only be good by participation, their goodness must eventually derive from something that is law by nature. Whenever something has perfection by participation, then ultimately that perfection must come from something that has that perfection by essence. The life of moral goodness cannot be predicated of humans substantially (for not all persons are morally virtuous), but only by participation. Hence there must be something whose essence is goodness itself, that which is the cause of human virtue.

The book concludes with a discussion of how Aquinas’s participation metaphysics is a better foundation for understanding morality than the anthropocentric project of the Enlightenment (257–86). While the distinction between divine command theory and natural law might seem unimportant to some theologians and moral philosophers, advocates of the natural law position are at a distinct advantage in reaching the atheist who merely appeals to human nature to determine what is objectively moral. R.’s book is therefore most welcome for providing a foundation by which moral theologians can include both God and human nature in search of the moral point of view. Because atheistic moral realists appeal merely to human nature to determine what is objectively moral, they prematurely conclude that there is no need for God. At the other end of the extreme, divine command theorists hold that to retain moral objectivity, we must act in response to God’s commands, which reside above and beyond human nature. Otherwise, they say, we are left with ethical relativism.

Following the lead of R.'s retrieval of human participation in eternal law, theologians should contend that both of these positions have significant insights, and that a *via media* should be taken. A reflection on human nature helps individuals know what is objectively moral, but this necessarily presupposes the existence of a Divine Lawgiver. Otherwise it would not make sense for the atheist to refer to a universal human nature as the basis for objective morality. In response to divine command theorists, Thomistic natural lawyers insist that human nature is a necessary but not sufficient condition for morality. Thus R.: "Thomas's moral thought cannot be separated from his metaphysics, his theology of God, and his anthropology. The notion of participation in eternal law touches on all of these subjects" (5).

R. makes an important contribution to the contemporary literature on Thomistic natural law and participation metaphysics. Not only is the book accessible for the educated nonspecialist, but it will also serve the seasoned scholar with a stirring treatment on the relationship between the existence of God and morality. R. succeeds in helping moral theologians have a more complete understanding of the philosophy Aquinas presumed in his vision of the person as a moral agent in relation to God.

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Correction: We regret that in proofreading our December 2011 issue, we did not catch a misspelling on p. 928: we omitted the final letter ("o") from the name of reviewer Rafael Luévano. Our apologies to him and our readers.