

Signs and Wonders: Theology After Modernity. By Ellen T. Armour. Gender, Theory, and Religion. New York: Columbia University, 2016. Pp. xi + 323. \$105; \$35.

Armour's volume makes a significant and timely contribution with its investigation of the "theo-logic" behind modernity. Integrating the work of such seminal thinkers as Foucault, Derrida, Butler, and Spivak in her remarkably readable and even lively text, A. explores the theo-logic of modernity as a "fourfold" in which (the modern) Man is understood in relation—and opposition—to his divine, animal, raced, and sexed others. The use of "Man" here is of course intentional, reminding us that the normative concept of humanity in modernity is precisely the male, white (Northern European or Euro-American), heterosexual human. As A.'s work well demonstrates, modernity seeks this Man's mastery through the interlocking oppressions of women, people of color, and gender "queer" or homosexual people, as well as animals.

A.'s first two chapters establish the theoretical basis for her analysis of our current cultural context. The first chapter draws on the work of Foucault along with critical race and postcolonial theories to provide an unusually clear yet nuanced account of the development of modern biodisciplinary power in defense of the white, heterosexual Man presumed to represent the best of the human race. Chapter 2 similarly integrates an array of scholarly analyses to illuminate the role of the visual arts, especially photography, as an instrument of biodisciplinary power in a culture of both spectacle and surveillance.

Either of these first chapters is well worth the price of the book. Exploring racism as primarily a racism *for* Man before it is a racism *against* people deemed abnormal and even animalistic, A.'s work sheds considerable light on the current resurgence of white nationalist populism. This book helps us to see that white supremacy, eugenics, gay-bashing, and even anti-Muslim hate crimes are not aberrations in a modernity fundamentally committed to human rights, but instead are the extreme expressions of an underlying theo-logic subtly reinforced throughout our highly visual culture. Those wondering how violent oppression and abuse of other people could be widely embraced as morally good by self-professed Christians will find significant insight in A.'s account of the modern theo-logic as one in which the defense of life itself requires the "protection" of Man against his raced and sexed others.

The body of the book further develops A.'s account of the modern fourfold (Man and his divine, animal, raced, and sexed others) through scrutiny of photographs depicting a series of recent events. A.'s astute reading of these photographs clarifies why the ordination of Gene Robinson, the abuse at Abu Graib, the death of Terri Schiavo, and the governmental failure during Hurricane Katrina became important public issues. These events reveal both the ongoing functioning of the modern fourfold of Man and his others as well as the instability and limits of this fourfold at the end of modernity.

The chapter on Abu Graib is particularly insightful in its investigation of the commonalities between the photos of prisoner abuse and the postcard souvenirs of American lynching. While the snapshots from Abu Graib (like the photos of lynchings) trade in the tropes of the fourfold, Americans largely responded to the Abu Graib

pictures with shame at the depicted cruelty rather than with relief in the mastery of Man over his threatening “Oriental” other. This chapter provides a profound interpretation of our cultural ambivalence toward the Global War on Terror, and could well serve as a stand-alone introduction to A.’s theory of the modern fourfold.

Despite A.’s professed interest in what comes “after” modernity (as indicated in the book’s subtitle), the discussion of resources for a more positive future remains inchoate. In the succinct concluding chapter, A. briefly considers recent theological texts by M. Shawn Copeland, Sharon Betcher, and Mayra Rivera as disclosive of possibilities, particularly in the sense of touch, that might enable us to embrace vulnerability and finally move beyond modernity’s preoccupation with the mastery of Man.

With the exception of this final chapter, there is little that is explicitly theological here. Nevertheless, A.’s work raises crucial theological questions through its study of the theo-logic of modernity. The role of the divine other in the construction of the modern Man begs for more attention, as do the processes through which Christianity came to be widely embraced in terms so contrary to such central Christian concepts as human vulnerability and finitude in a diverse creation. We might well wonder how much else of our Christian theology has been distorted by the theo-logic of modernity, especially when biodisciplinary power is evidently operative even in postures that present themselves as Christian resistance to modernity.

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Toward Thriving Communities: Virtue Ethics as Social Ethics. By Brian Stiltner. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2016. Pp. 291. \$28.90.

This book is virtue ethics with a face, with a communal face. It provides us with a splendid text that combines theory and praxis, as it offers concrete and viable ways of cultivating virtue ethics in families, schools, work, and community service, after laying the theoretical foundation of virtue ethics theory as social ethics. Weaving theory and praxis, in the likes that have not been seen in previous books, and advancing virtue ethics to include the social dimension, beyond the personal and interpersonal aspects it has been confined to, this book has forged an original, a first in the field of virtue ethics as social ethics.

Founded on two interconnected fundamental human questions, “What is the good life for me?” and “What is good life for society?” the book is developed in two main parts: part 1, “Virtue Ethics as Personal, Communal and Social Ethics,” and part 2, “The Pursuit of Flourishing in Social Contexts.” The first part is theoretical ethics, as it lays the foundation of the book; the second part is constructive praxis-ethics as it creates actual ways of living out the theory.

The chapter which frames virtue ethics within the two ethical theories, deontology and consequentialism, is the first chapter of the book, because it establishes the place of virtue ethics in the field of ethical theories. The point of this first chapter is to show