

grounding not merely as an obligation following from the love of God, but in the notion that the act of loving the neighbor is the preeminent way in which we know and love God. The unconditionality of God's love for us calls forth in us a boundless response of love for the neighbor with whom God has identified. Love of neighbor is the central way of saying yes to God because human persons are the preeminent locus of God's self-revelation.

There follows a fine exposition of C.-S.'s third theme, Rahner's theology of death (chap. 4). Death, seen as the consummation of a whole human life that is both gift and task, is not only something to be passively suffered but something to be actively undertaken. A sensitive account of Rahner's understanding of Christian death as a dying with Christ highlights the true nature of Christian sacrifice, both Christ's and ours, as self-entrustment in hope to the Holy Mystery we call God. C.-S. elucidates the communal dimension by drawing on Rahner's reflections on hope: we "hope that God *is*. As we live in this hope . . . we can begin to envision the possibility we hope for . . . [and] imagine that the void ever surrounding human life is the mysterious and loving God of Jesus Christ" (137). Such hope can flourish only in a community. Dying with Christ is the final way of saying yes to the Holy Mystery we call God, the consummation of the self-surrender throughout life that characterizes true love of the other.

A final chapter brings C.-S.'s interpretation of Rahner into dialogue with critics (e.g., Fergus Kerr, Jennifer Erin Beste, Johannes Baptist Metz, Miguel Díaz, and John Milbank) chosen to express typical, important post-modern questions and concerns. After briefly characterizing "postmodernism" and astutely pointing out the importance of the influence on Rahner of Aquinas and Ignatius or Loyola (not only Heidegger!), C.-S. returns to insights and arguments presented earlier to engage the critical questions mentioned above, showing that it is difficult to dismiss Rahner as an "obsolete modernist" (208). In a final coda, she suggests how Rahner can be part of a constructive dialogue with contemporary feminist theologies dealing with theological anthropology, silence/silencing, and social justice.

Perhaps C.-S.'s analysis and interpretation will confirm more Rahner fans than convert his critics; yet her nuanced reading of Rahner responds well to the critics and questions she chose to address. In any case, this thoughtful and insightful book is a fine resource for a college seminar. It concretizes a central theme, saying yes to God, whose formulation strikes many as abstract. That is a great service.

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THE POLITICS OF POSTSECULAR RELIGION: MOURNING SECULAR FUTURES.
By Ananda Abeysekara. Insurrections. New York: Columbia University,
2008. Pp. xvi + 324. \$50.

Is there a future for democracy, especially in view of the innumerable atrocities that have been committed in its name? Can democracy be saved

and transformed from its violent, nationalist, genocidal, racist, and colonial pasts into a positive force for shaping human societies? In this provocative and well-argued work, the postmodern philosopher of religion Ananda Abeysekara uses Derridean deconstruction to challenge the conventional view that democracy can be redeemed from its unsavory legacies and transformed into a positive sociopolitical force. A. judges that the supporters of democracy, such as John Dewey, Jeffrey Stout, John Rawls, Paul Gilroy, Slavoj Žižek, and John Milbank, essentialize secular ideals of, for example, justice, law, or human rights into the substance of democracy. These thinkers, he argues, not only take for granted that democracy is a *problem* that can and must be reconstructed, refashioned, or improved, but they also uncritically assume that democratic principles such as freedom, justice, human rights, or tolerance can be retrieved, shorn of their undesirable association with historical atrocities, and be renewed and refashioned to meet the challenges and needs of contemporary societies.

By contrast, A. insists, democratic norms such as human rights, freedom of the press, the rule of law, justice, and fairness are utopian and contingent norms that can be only promised and therefore repeatedly deferred to the future. For A., the real issue is this: “We can and must only think whether we can continue to inherit such a future, not only because (as some might argue rightly) untold atrocities have been committed in the *name* of defending and sustaining the very name/identity of democracy . . . but also because democracy remains, in each of its futures, deferred, as a promise” (2). Besides questioning whether it is possible to rely on inheriting democracy as a promise that is constantly and indefinitely being deferred, A. also contends that this deferred promise of democracy conveniently glosses over the violent binaries that undergird its name—binaries such as majority/minority, Black/White, Christian/Muslim, Sinhalese/Tamil, Sunni/Shi‘a, and citizens/illegal aliens. He explains that although old laws could be repealed and new laws instituted to improve the relations between, say, Blacks and Whites or Christians and Muslims “to create a *better* climate of respect and mutual regard,” the new laws would still do nothing to question the very political and genocidal distinction between names that are defined in terms of numerical categories such as majority and minority.

A. thus redefines democracy not as a problem but as an aporia, that is, an impasse that allows no retrieval, reconstruction, renewal, or improvement. In particular, he calls for an active forgetting of history and for an uninheriting of the fundamental distinction of majority/minority that remains crucial to the idea of democracy. For A., the only solution is to deconstruct democracy in the Derridean sense, thereby uninheriting and mourning its irresolvable contradictions. To those who argue that the problems of democracy could be resolved over time, A. replies, “It is precisely because we have become so skillful in the art of problematizing our democracy and seeing it as a ‘problem’ that we today remain hamstrung and thus unable to imagine new domains of the political” (88).

A.'s use of Derridean deconstructionism, with its call for mourning secular futures, is a tour de force that paves the way for articulating new frameworks that go beyond the limitations of democracy, providing new insights and approaches for dealing with the concerns of minorities who often find themselves marginalized within existing democratic frameworks. A.'s call to "mourn secular futures" is especially poignant, since the uncritical reliance on democracy as the solution to sociopolitical problems has paradoxically exacerbated the problems, with the dominant majority seeking to marginalize the minority as the permanent "Other."

A. proposes no neat solutions beyond his contention that democracy is an aporia that cannot be resolved or improved, but only mourned and uninherited—an approach fitting well with his Derridean sensibilities. Although this conclusion may be disconcerting for some, others will find in this seminal work a useful challenge that encourages creative thinking that can take us beyond the very majority/minority binary that serves as democracy's cornerstone.

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SOZIALE GERECHTIGKEIT ZWISCHEN FAIRNESS UND PARTIZIPATION: JOHN RAWLS UND DIE KATHOLISCHE SOZIALLEHRE. By Franz-Josef Bormann. Studien zur theologischen Ethik 113. Freiburg i. Brsg.: Herder, 2006. Pp. 436. €50.

Tübingen's Franz-Josef Bormann compares social justice as understood in the Catholic social tradition with John Rawls's theory of justice, searching for possible connections between Rawls's philosophy and Catholic doctrine. In this *Habilitation* (University of Freiburg i. Brsg.) B. explores the content and reasonableness of both resulting notions of social justice (10–11). In the second half of the 20th century, philosophical discourse about justice was considerably stimulated and shaped by Rawls, while theological discourse on justice appropriated surprisingly little of his methods or content. B. goes on to explore the possibility of a responsible reception of Rawls within theology and theological ethical discourse.

In part 1, B. presents Rawls's theory in three chronological blocks: before 1971; as then presented in his 1971 *A Theory of Justice*; and in further developments up to his death in 2002. He describes Rawls's theory as a justice approach to ethics, normatively oriented, that moves toward a universal claim. Yet, as B. suggests, "problems emerge when attributes are assigned to this strict, universally conceived, moral standpoint—attributes that are quite evidently indebted to the particular, extremely specific context within which the idea of fairness originated, attributes that repeatedly threaten to discredit the very notion of a universally valid theory of justice" (102). After presenting the substance of Rawls's theory, B. outlines methodological problems, questions about content, and especially concerns about the anthropological and societal background of his thought.