

do and about how best to live. Looking for the hidden role of philosophy effaces the differences between the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, and the differences, within the *Politics*, between the role of political philosophy in articulating, but not settling, the permanent disputes between democratic and oligarchic justice, arithmetic and geometric equality in Book III, and its role in adjudicating between the conflicting claims of the political and theoretical lives in Book VII. The philosopher, like the *pambasileus* whose importance Pangle rates far above Aristotle's brief questioning of what to do if such a creature could ever appear, allows us to rise above the contradictions, tensions, and problems of political life. Aristotle's secret teaching is plausible only if one thinks that practical problems are indications of a defect in thinking, rather than an accurate diagnosis of a world in which we can live well by living together.

Beyond Church and State: Democracy, Secularism, and Conversion. By Matthew Scherer. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 256p. \$90.00.
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— Lars Tønder, *University of Melbourne*

This original book contributes to the debate about secularism as an ongoing process that delimits both religious and political life. Set against competing accounts, in particular those associated with Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor, the book encourages its readers to disassociate secularism from narratives of institutional separation and religious decline, and instead to approach it in a political mode—that is, as a multifarious phenomenon in which religion and politics are mixed and redefined in a manner specific to time and place. The book's attention to this process makes it relevant for scholars working in areas ranging from political theory and international relations to rhetoric and history, literary theory, religious studies, and cultural anthropology.

The core of *Beyond Church and State* is the suggestion that the figure of conversion offers the best way to understand how secularism is politics and religion at the same time. Such a suggestion may seem counterintuitive, if not unfounded. But as Matthew Scherer notes in the Introduction, although it may seem as if nothing can be gained from turning to the figure of conversion, in particular when we consider the figure's history and religious connotations, this impression may also be a symptom of the success that secular discourses have had in covering up their own reliance on sensibilities and tropes that we normally associate with religion (p. 5). Challenging this cover-up, mocking the all-too-simple image of secularism as the separation of church and state, the author thus focuses on the figure of conversion in order to disrupt secular discourses on their own terms. He pursues this

ambition in two steps. First, he uses the figure of conversion to uncover the complexity of secular discourses, suggesting that secularism is neither as smooth nor as self-sufficient as its proponents tell us. Second, he uses the figure of conversion to invoke its own transformation, changing the terms of discussion, associating secularism's own commitment to freedom and pluralism with nothing less than what the American philosopher Stanley Cavell calls "a reform of consciousness" (p. 170).

Approached as a reform of consciousness, the study of secularism works in tandem with the study of the spiritual exercises that, in particular, the early Christians emphasized in their conversion experiences and pursuit of true religion. Tracking this history through three chapters that deal with Augustine, Bergson, and Cavell, respectively, Scherer develops his account of conversion by distinguishing between a clear-cut jump from an old state of confusion to a new state of clarity—what he calls the "authorized view"—and then the lived experience of conversion as a multifaceted process that compresses a variety of never fully settled tendencies—what he calls "the crystalline view" (p. 13). The great insight of the book is its attention to the ways in which the former view entails the latter. Thus, in the case of Augustine, Scherer demonstrates how the *Confessions* draws on allegories, dramatizations, and other tools of narration in order to bridge the gap between the lived contradictions of a young sinner becoming a true believer and the way this conversion is represented and authorized almost a decade later from a position of power. As the author sees it, the erasure of this gap does not delegitimize Augustine's account of his own conversion to Christianity but, rather, alerts us to the slippages between experience and narrative, authenticity and representation (p. 61). These slippages are even clearer in the case of Bergson for whom conversion never is finished but always already in the process of bringing forth something new, something untold. It is the attention to and appreciation of this openness that *Beyond Church and States* wants to nourish in its readers. As Scherer puts it, conversion "represents the intersection of the divided tendencies of conservation and innovation inherent within *life* itself, at both an individual and a social level" (p. 112).

Still, some might find the connection between secularism and conversion unconvincing, if not scandalous. But that is the point, argues Scherer, reminding his readers that scandal in its traditional theological sense refers to a "stumbling block" of some sort (p. 133). The stumbling block that this book wants its readers to trip over is the recurrence of religious sensibilities and tropes in the study of secularism, as well as in secular discourses more generally. True to his interest in rhetoric,

in particular as it is deployed within the university, the author looks for traces of these sensibilities and tropes within landmark texts by political theorists such as Locke, John Rawls, and Taylor. In all three cases, Scherer foregrounds what other analyses tend to disavow—for Locke, the rhetoric needed to transform the meaning of both religion and politics (p. 83); for Rawls, the use of a conversational style that exudes a reasonableness of its own and that subsequently has elevated him to a saint-like person within the liberal tradition (p. 132); and finally for Taylor, a conversion narrative that minimizes the complexity underpinning the emergence of secularism in Europe and elsewhere (p. 68).

At this point one might wonder whether the author assumes too much of a direct link between the interpretation of texts and the depiction of secularism as having emerged from a break with a religious past that secular discourses nonetheless continue to shape and feed off in the present. In the terms suggested by the book itself, the concern here is that establishing such a link would require both *more* and *less* attention to the rhetoric of political theory: more because the link hinges on the broader rhetorical situation and how it affects political theory, something *Beyond Church and State* leaves untouched, focusing instead on either the internal hermeneutics of the chosen texts, or, in the case of Rawls, on the author's biography and its place within a significant yet relatively small community of liberal scholars in the United States. Insights into both of these aspects are surely important, but they do not necessarily say something in general about the way that secularism functions in relation to Christianity and other faith-based communities. And this might also be why establishing the link would require less attention to the rhetoric of political theory and more to how other experiences than the ones privileged in this book contribute to the way in which democratic societies imagine the figure of conversion in a so-called secular age. If the figure of conversion is so generative for the relationship between religion and politics, then how does it appear in not just academic discourses but also, for example, in art and education where claims about political life appear with equal importance? Although crucial for the Scherer's argument, this question, too, remains untouched, making the "reform of consciousness" that the author (via Cavell) associates with the ennobling part of secularism less inspiring than it could have been.

Notwithstanding these remarks, *Beyond Church and State* is an important book marked by profound creativity. Scholars working on secularism in all its disguises should welcome it as an important and imaginative contribution to the ongoing debate about the relationship between religion and politics in a world of deep pluralism.

The Virtuous Citizen: Patriotism in a Multicultural

Society. By Tim Soutphommasane. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 263p. \$97.85 cloth, \$30.59 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592714002825

— Alice Hearst, *Smith College*

Tim Soutphommasane has written an elegant defense of patriotism in a liberal society. The central question in *The Virtuous Citizen* has vexed political thinkers for centuries: To what extent ought citizens be bound by common beliefs about, and loyalty to, the nation to which they belong? This issue has particular salience in liberal polities facing pressure both to respect the diverse beliefs of national minorities and to open their doors to immigrant groups whose beliefs may conflict with the dominant culture of the admitting nation. As the author notes, the challenge lies in "retriev[ing] a patriotism defined by reason rather than hysteria, and a model of civic virtue in which good citizenship is defined as much by negotiating differences as by conforming to shared values" (p. 4). To this end, he endorses a model of patriotism that recognizes the values of loyalty and tradition but is open to revision and adaptation. As Soutphommasane reminds us, Charles Shurz did not simply say "My country, right or wrong"; he continued by observing that "if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right" (p. 229).

The liberal nationalism espoused here envisions a deliberative democracy in which national culture is self-consciously considered and reconsidered by all members of the polity, where "an expansive love of country complements civic virtues such as tolerance, mutual respect and reasonableness" to create "a form of national attachment that might successfully reconcile solidarity and diversity" (p.5).

Throughout, the author considers—and dismisses—objections to this form of patriotism from diverse quarters. Attentive to the need to avoid xenophobic forms of patriotism, he crafts a patriotism grounded in public debate and accommodation (p. 18), requiring active citizenship rather than blind political attachment. Recognizing that loyalty typically derives from an identity tied to a nation's particular history, he argues forcefully that respecting one's national history does not mean ignoring the less savory aspects of that history or becoming cynical about its aspirations (p. 140). This patriotism involves an attachment to fair treatment, impartial laws, and an inclusive, ongoing dialogue that promotes stability, social justice, and democratic deliberation (p. 30).

A patriotism so conceived neither requires a surrender of liberal autonomy nor precludes a concern with the world at large. While loyalty to one's nation means that