deep intellectual content of the often innovative visual imagery of these salvation encyclopedias. The titles of both these manuscripts involve botanical metaphors, and even in the post-Enlightenment academic world these emphatically medieval Christian works continue to nourish intellectual growth.

—*Adam S. Cohen*

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Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 237 pp.

Chapters 1–4 of this thought-provoking study address secularism—the idea that nonreligious regimes deal best with religious differences within states—and chapter 5 deals with secularity: the subjective dimension occupied by the norms and values upheld by citizens within that state. While the primary focus of the first four chapters is the contemporary Egyptian experience (the travails of the Coptic and Baha'i minorities), the author reinforces her general argument—that secularism exacerbates rather than nullifies religious frictions—by also drawing on legal cases affecting Muslim minorities in Western secular regimes. The fifth chapter addresses the public debate over a recent and prizewinning novel (involving events in the early history of Christianity) that engaged Christian and liberal intellectuals in Egypt and that exhibits in clear terms the ongoing influence of religious narratives on public consciousness. Overall, the author challenges the "common wisdom," which says that, if religious minorities in Egypt (or in other countries in the Arab world) continue to suffer under secular regimes, the answer lies simply in more secularism. As she tries to show (from cases both in Egypt and in secular Western societies), the profoundly religious background cultures in all of these polities manage to slip into and reinforce themselves in the legal instruments and laws of those societies—in the Western hemisphere, through the legal but precarious distinction between religious belief and religious display; and in Egypt, through laws still informed by a hegemonic Muslim jurisprudence. The study is groundbreaking and richly researched, bringing into view and synthesizing elements from different fields that together present a coherent and forceful argument.

In the end, some readers, however, may feel that they still need an answer to this question: if not secularism, then what? If no alternatives exist, would secularism not be better than the systems it has replaced? The author quotes Feuerbach and then Marx on the nature of (liberal) states, as if to intimate that the ultimate fault lies in the very concept of the state as a (modern) human-centered edifice. Thus, minority problems may be inherent in the structure of liberal-democratic

regimes encompassing significantly diverse cultural elements, while attempting to modulate private and public goods and rights. If the author believes that *even* secularism cannot resolve those problems, then hers is an eminently reasonable argument, amply demonstrated, throughout her study, to be the case.
—*Sari Nusseibeh*
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Giorgio Agamben, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 75 pp.

Civil war is the dark shadow, the evil twin, the disturbing doppelgänger of ancient and modern politics. It reveals the unity of a community at the point of its breakdown and shows the limits to managing conflict before its descent into collective violence. Despite this proximity to politics, civil war has proved oddly resistant to theorization, as Agamben notes at the beginning of *Stasis*. His brief work comprises lightly revised versions of two seminar papers given at Princeton shortly after 9/11: they thus preceded what Agamben calls "the passage into the dimension of global civil war" since then. The first essay, drawing on the work of classicist Nicole Loraux, examines the Greek conception of internal conflict, (*stasis*) as it reveals "the threshold of politicisation and depoliticisation" between the household (*oikos*) and the city (*polis*). Unlike Loraux, who rightly distinguishes *stasis* from later Roman conceptions of civil war, Agamben conflates the two and obscures what may be truly revealing about *stasis*: that it is not civil (it does not take place among fellow citizens, or *cives*), nor is it war (*polemos*), as the Romans themselves were aware. The longer second essay, in dialogue with Carl Schmitt, works outward from the frontispiece of Hobbes's *Leviathan* to reconstruct his political theory of the people, his idea of the state, and the relation of each to Christian eschatology, to propose that the Leviathan is to its people as Christ is to his *ekklēsia*. Agamben's wide learning and artful exegesis cannot conceal that for Hobbes the contention of all against all—in the pre-civil state of nature, as also after any collapse of the *civitas*—may approximate to war but is still not civil. Citizens do not exist before the institution of the commonwealth, and they disappear with its dissolution; their struggle is, we might say, an "omnial war" (*bellum omnia contra omnes*). Suggestive though these two pieces are, they rest on a historical category error. Taken together, Agamben's two blurred snapshots of the long, tortuous genealogy of civil war are necessarily inconclusive. As such, they achieve one of his goals for the book—precisely *not* to provide a theory of civil war.
—*David Armitage*
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