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Review: Joas, Hans. The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013. xi+217 pp. \$29.00 (paper)

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Ghazali's *Mishkāt al-anwār*. Through textual comparison, Jaffer argues that Rāzī successfully incorporates Avicennian methods and ideas, a trend that continued after Rāzī in the development of Sunnī *tafsīr*. He also illustrates Rāzī's assimilation of al-Ghazālī's theory of lights and interpretation of Qur'anic symbols. Jaffer ultimately argues that the various approaches that Rāzī employs grant canonical authority to each methodology (Avicennian and Ghazalian, philosophical and theological) within Sunnī *tafsīr*.

The fifth and final chapter of Jaffer's monograph addresses the soul and spirit in Rāzī's *tafsīr*. He focuses on Rāzī's exegesis of Q 17:85, with his own explanation of the topic following the organizational format of Rāzī's discussion. He traces the possible sources that have informed Rāzī's analysis, illustrates the innovation of Rāzī's method, and attempts to define the spirit according to Rāzī. While Jaffer's method clarifies the various schools of thought on the soul to which Rāzī refers, postulating Rāzī's respect for and possible assent to the Mu'tazilī theologian al-Nazzām's theory of spirit, it leaves ultimately unclear the questions of the distinction between the soul and spirit for Rāzī and the distinct roles of each in the life of the body. The difference between soul and spirit may very well be a confusion inherent in Rāzī's analysis, or even an intentional obfuscation by which Rāzī utilizes a verse that dictates the word "spirit" (*al-rūh*) in order to treat the soul (*al-nafs*). The final chapter, while most interesting in subject, is perhaps the least conclusive of the monograph. It also illustrates both the strength and weakness of Jaffer's approach; while he is quite successful in demonstrating the innovative and open nature of Rāzī's inquiry, his focus is not on the content itself but rather on the methodology. The reader is left with a thorough understanding of Rāzī's sources and methods of analysis but only sporadic knowledge of Rāzī's viewpoints on theological or philosophical questions.

Jaffer's writing is engaging and elegant, and the organization of the book as a whole, as well as within each chapter and subsection, makes his thesis and subpoints accessible and clear. Overall, his first published monograph, based upon his dissertation, is a pleasure to read both in form and content. Jaffer's monograph engages thoroughly and critically with previous scholarship and is, in itself, a truly excellent addition to the emerging study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the trend of incorporating philosophical methods and ideas into theological thought in the postclassical Islamic intellectual world.

NORA JACOBSEN BEN HAMMED, *Chicago, Illinois*.

JOAS, HANS. *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013. xi+217 pp. \$29.00 (paper).

On what grounds should human rights rest? How should the universality of universal human rights be understood, especially given the putative incommensurability among rival views that obtain in the contemporary world? Do human rights emerge from a particular metaphysics, for example, the idea that human beings are created in the image of God? Or are human rights sufficiently basic that whatever grounds them, for example, respect for humans as ends-in-themselves, is in fact justifiable across any and all moral, political, and religious views? These queries continue to concern both human rights advocates and critics.

In this brief dense book, Hans Joas proposes another avenue through which human rights may be grounded. According to him, existing attempts to justify human rights have tended toward one of two approaches. On the one side is the "philosoph-

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ical” approach, according to which thinkers appeal to our ability, as rational moral agents, to engage in practical reason and explicate an account of moral oughts. On the other hand is the “historical” approach, which aims to chart the genesis and history of human rights and offers a “prehistory of tentative and imperfect efforts” to instantiate human rights (1). These two approaches, however, are pursued in isolation. Philosophers ignore historical concerns regarding the genesis of their views while historians do not sufficiently grapple with the philosophical justification of norms. Given that these two approaches ignore one another, Joas believes, the foundation on which human rights currently rest is less than ideal. But what’s the alternative?

In order to bridge the divide between history and philosophy, genesis and validity, Joas draws from historically oriented sociology. More specifically, he offers an “affirmative genealogy of the universalism of values,” according to which “we may construct the history of the genesis and dissemination of values in such a way that narrative and justification are interwoven within this history in a specific way” (2). The specific history and value with which he is concerned and seeks to explicate is “sacredness.” He proposes, then, “that we understand the belief in human rights and universal human dignity as the result of a specific process of sacralization—a process in which every single human being has increasingly, and with ever-increasing motivational and sensitizing effects, been viewed as sacred, and this understanding has been institutionalized in law.” The history of human rights, he adds, “is a history of sacralization” (5).

To explicate and defend this thesis, Joas brings together sociology, history, and philosophy. In the first three chapters of his book, he concerns himself with historical and sociological matters, tracking the genesis and history of human rights. In chapter 1, “The Charisma of Reason,” he argues that contemporary human rights emerged not directly from the Enlightenment but instead in North America, and particularly from the American Declaration of Independence, emphasizing the religious commitments of its drafters. He then turns, in chapter 2, “Punishment and Respect,” to charting the ways in which the American Declaration of Independence and other such documents led to a (still incomplete) cultural transformation. In discussing this transformation, Joas privileges the “sacredness of the person” instead of the “sacredness of the individual” because the former “ensure[s] that the intended belief in the irreducible dignity of every human being is not immediately mistaken for the unscrupulous, egocentric self-sacralization of the individual and thus the narcissistic inability to break away from self-referentiality” (51). In chapter 3, “Violence and Human Dignity,” Joas argues that the motivation for respecting human rights cannot turn solely on rational motivation. Instead, human rights discourse must attend to “trauma,” whether the Holocaust or slavery in North America, in order to inform and guide moral norms. In advocating this approach, Joas joins other thinkers sympathetic to human rights (e.g., Martha Nussbaum), who attend to sociohistorical data.

In the book’s latter three chapters, Joas turns to methodological and philosophical reflection. The particular methodology underwriting his philosophical approach, which he first referred to in the book’s introduction, is affirmative genealogy. Through engaging with Ernst Troeltsch, Joas aims to bring to the fore historically embedded meaning, thereby avoiding the problems (he claims) associated with Kant’s abstract moral universalism and Nietzsche’s emphases on contingency and subjectivity. In explicating his methodology, however, I believe Joas would have profited by discussing some contemporary Kantians, for example, Barbara Herman and Allen Wood, who seek thicker descriptions about human beings. In chapter 5, “Soul and Gift,” one finds Joas making another provocative claim: “the rise of human rights represents a challenge to Christianity—and to other religious and even to secular value traditions and worldviews—in light of which their adherents must inevitably reinterpret them” (141). If he had engaged with some influential contemporary Christian thinkers, for example, Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre, who reject the idea that Chris-

tianity can be reconciled with rights discourse, Joas's argument would have been strengthened. In the book's final chapter, "Value Generalization," he "aim[s] to show that amid the plurality of competing value systems it is possible to reach agreement on new areas of common ground," citing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UHDR) as an example (174). His discussion of the UHDR's framing, however, is another example of an area in which he attends too much to history and relies too greatly on sociology without engaging with contemporary philosophical disputes.

Joas's book is an erudite and provocative contribution to omnipresent conversations about human rights, their history, and their justification. To be sure, it will prove to be demanding, especially for readers unfamiliar with his earlier work. Given the short compass of his book, there are issues with which I wish he had grappled more, for example, the legal and political institutionalization of human rights. Nonetheless, the book will be of great consequence for religious studies scholars concerned with human rights theory. The book will also appeal to scholars interested in the relationship between history and philosophy; between religion and law; between religion and morality; and among genealogy, modernity, and democracy.

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JUNCKER, KRISTINE. *Afro-Cuban Religious Arts: Popular Expressions of Cultural Inheritance in Espiritismo and Santería*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. xx+174 pp. \$74.95 (cloth).

Afro-Cuban Religious Arts offers a detailed analysis of four women's religious art practices in the twentieth century. This book offers an important corrective to the narrative of Afro-Caribbean religions, which too often emphasizes male religious leadership. Other key insights about these religious traditions are highlighted in this text, most notably the interconnectedness of Afro-Cuban religious traditions with Espiritismo and the significance of aesthetic practices in this realm. Juncker is very clear in (rightly) arguing that the Espiritismo that is the subject of this work and practiced in Cuba is not traditional Kardecian Espiritismo. Each woman is a medium who communicates with the dead and also a leader within Afro-Cuban religion. This embodies the central argument that Afro-Cuban religions cannot be studied in discrete isolation.

Juncker did extensive research in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and New York. She argues that art became a medium through which women could express their religious identity, noting that it also often remained below the radar of authorities, particularly during the time period of the women she studied (1899–1969), when Afro-Cuban religions were heavily criticized and criminalized. The religious artwork of these four women, particularly the altars, undermines the notion that one can study Afro-Cuban religions in isolation, showing instead that they must be studied in their interrelational interconnectedness. Their artwork also offers an unprecedented window into Afro-Cuban religious ritual life and practices. These women were also able to escape the more public criminalization and persecution that plagued male religious leaders, since in the authorities' eyes they were not a significant population.

The book's strength is in its documentation of women's artistic production as religious expressions within Espiritismo and La Regla de Ocha. However, Juncker is at times overly ambitious in her assessment of the implications of her research. Her argument that the photographing of altars was an intentional act of historical religious preservation is perhaps a bit too strong. Photography is a form of documentation; however, personal documentation of religious art does not necessarily imply the deliberate creation of a religious canon. It is also not clear whether the artists studied are intentionally attempting to rewrite the canon of Afro-Cuban re-