

fad rather than a natural biological rhythm. It is highly unlikely to be the background to an ancient Psalm.

In his conclusion, Bishop's pastoral gifts are on display as his reflections helpfully touch ground in issues of ethical and practical import, offering insights worthy of more prominent treatment in the central chapters. Given its shortcomings, the value of the book lies primarily in the sources it compiles, the themes it highlights, and the questions it raises. Nevertheless, we can be grateful to Bishop for undertaking this creative and pioneering work on the subject.

AUSTIN STEVENSON
Grifton College, Cambridge

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEING IN THE ANALYTIC, CONTINENTAL, AND THOMISTIC TRADITIONS: DIVERGENCE AND DIALOGUE by Joseph P. Li Vecchi, Frank Scalabrino, and David K. Kovacs, *Bloomsbury Academic*, London, 2020, pp. 208, £85.00, hbk

Since the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, and particularly his *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (1990), we have become more sensitive to the 'tradition-constituted' character of rationality. Even if we do not accept MacIntyre's view in its entirety, we must be attentive to the ways that philosophical inquiries are always bound up in actual communities and the ways that those communities pass on questions and modes of inquiry, shaping the very intuitions of those who become and are informed by that tradition. In addition to good arguments and clear thinking, we must attend to the history of a tradition and its discourses, the actual persons who have formed what that tradition takes to be foundational, and the material elements, the specific works or texts, that either explicitly or implicitly form and inform that tradition's philosophical output.

The work under review here, while not aiming at as grand a vision as MacIntyre's, may well be seen as a practical engagement with how one might begin a philosophical discussion across traditions while being attentive to the particular history and character of each tradition. *The Philosophy of Being in the Analytic, Continental, and Thomistic Traditions: Divergence and Dialogue*, is co-authored by philosophers representing three 'rival versions' of inquiry into *being*: Joseph Li Vecchi, an assistant professor at the University of Akron, representing Thomism; Frank Scalabrino, a registered psychotherapist and professor of philosophy and psychology, representing the Continental Tradition (always presented in capital letters); and David K. Kovacs, postdoctoral fellow at Loyola Marymount

University, representing the Analytic tradition. The goal of this short book is both simple and important, namely, to provide the reader with a brief and accessible introduction to each tradition's account of the philosophy of being, while also presenting an opportunity for a brief critical engagement by a representative of each tradition with the claims about being made by the other two.

The Philosophy of Being in the Analytic, Continental, and Thomistic Traditions is organized simply and transparently. After a brief introductory chapter which outlines the scope and structure of the work, in each of the following three chapters, one of the three co-authors provides a general overview of the philosophical tradition he represents, presented here in chronological order of origin (Thomism, Continental, and Analytic) in contrast to the reverse, alphabetical order of the title. While each of these chapters has a different author with his own particular style of writing, they share in common the presentation of the historical origins of the tradition presented as well as a brief outline of the main themes which mark off that own tradition, with an eye towards the other two traditions represented in this study. In the final chapter, each author is set the task of engaging the other two traditions directly, although, as will be noted below, this task is accomplished only by two of the three authors.

Li Vecchi's account of Thomism is grounded in what he calls 'Scholastic Thomism', which he takes to have its origins remotely in the *studium* founded by the Angelic Doctor at Santa Sabina in Rome, through the commentary tradition of the later Middle Ages and beyond, and especially the Thomistic renewal after *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII. Curiously, while situating Thomism clearly within this historical context, Li Vecchi prioritizes Scholastic Thomism for its 'generally non-historical and hermeneutically neutral reading of Aquinas's texts...rather than consider their historical development and contextualization' (p.12). All the same, what he presents about the Thomistic account of being would be largely accepted by anyone who claims the name of Thomist.

Scalambrino and Kovacs are more straightforward in the historical contextualization of their respective traditions. For Scalambrino, this is crucial because he takes the Continental Tradition to be a precise and delimited tradition, distinct from continental philosophy in general. Scalambrino asserts that what is fundamental to the Continental Tradition is one thing, namely, the Transcendental Method which was invented (discovered? revealed?) by Immanuel Kant; anyone who uses the Transcendental Method is part of the Continental Tradition, and anyone who does not, is not. That said, he accepts as part of this tradition German Idealism and German Romanticism, the Homeric Contest for the completion of transcendental philosophy, as well as subsequent developments, including Existentialism, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and the Philosophy of Difference.

It is especially refreshing to see Kovacs' historical contextualization of the Analytic tradition, if only because Analytic philosophers often seem disinterested in the historical contexts and traditions which form and shape

the questions they ask, the methods they use, and even the intuitions on which their tradition relies. While noting that there is no one doctrine or method that unifies the Analytic tradition, he notes the ways that certain seminal philosophers, notably Gottlob Frege, C.J.F. Williams, Bertrand Russell, and William Van Orman Quine, even if their conclusions are no longer shared, nonetheless can be said to have set many of the questions which Analytic philosophers of being still seek to resolve.

One of the puzzling weaknesses of this work, however, is the contribution by Scalabrino. While the goal of this book is explicitly to bring three traditions into dialogue, Scalabrino insists on the *incommensurability* of the Continental Tradition with any other tradition. For Scalabrino, even if the Continental Tradition and Thomism or Analytic philosophy are looking at the same matter, only the Transcendental Method is capable of a truly *scientific* metaphysics. This commitment to the unique capacity of the Transcendental Method to yield an authentic philosophy of being can be seen in what passes for Scalabrino's contribution to the final chapter, in which the representative of each tradition was to provide both a critique of the other two as well as a positive assessment of what the others have to offer.

For their part, Li Vecchi and Kovacs reach interesting points of contact, with Li Vecchi asserting, for example, that the Analytic rejection of existence as a predicate could benefit from the Thomist distinction of *esse* and *essentia* and of *ens reale* and *ens rationis*, Kovacs accepting that there is something helpful in the Thomist notion of *esse* while cautioning Thomists about equating *esse* with what Analytic philosophy would call 'existence'. Scalabrino, in contrast, spends much of his final contribution as a sustained lament about the intrusion of 'the political-correctness of the university's culture' which is 'really a fraudulent bill of goods' (p. 139), of a commitment to 'pluralism and diversity of thought' which is in truth no more than 'cultural politics' and 'ultimately a marketing strategy in the service of money-making' (p.140). Indeed, he gives the other two traditions merely one paragraph each of 'dialogue', and this consists of asserting that Thomists only really hold to Thomism 'out of religious reverence' (p.145), 'spending their time raising families and participating in Catholic culture' (p.182, n. 46) rather than 'investigating the truth of reality' (p.145), while Analytic philosophers turn out to be 'every bit a continuation and perfection of the exercises in pure reason carried on by Scholastic monks [*sic*]' (p.145), by which he does not intend to offer them a compliment ('How many kings of France can dance on the head of a pin?').

Even so, given that the book is written in a modular way, such that one could successfully and profitably read one chapter without the others, or even an individual section of the final chapter without the others, the abovementioned flaw is not fatal to the work as a whole. If, *pace* Scalabrino, we do not take philosophical traditions as altogether incommensurable with one another, if we think that some sort of dialogue is necessary

and fruitful, surely the first step is getting to know what the other has to say on its own terms. In this respect, the work here under review is a fine contribution to lay the groundwork for just such an encounter across and between diverse traditions of the philosophy of being.

DOMINIC HOLTZ OP

Pontifical University of St Thomas, Rome

REGRET: A THEOLOGY by Paul J. Griffiths, *University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 2021, pp. xvi + 140, £22.99, pbk*

For some people the current Covid-19 pandemic has offered an opportunity for reflection, both in relation to the progress and handling of the disease itself and life in general, while it is important for those of us who have been able to do this to be aware that those who have suffered most because of it, the poorest of the world, have not had this luxury - survival has been their priority. What was wrong with the life I had before? What regrets do I have? How can I recompense anyone I might have wronged? How can my life be improved? These and other questions have been prompted by all that has happened in the pandemic, still far from over in the world.

Professor Paul Griffiths, born in England, has been a distinguished theologian in the USA (<http://ww25.pauljgriffiths.net>); this book is a stimulating and, as far as I can see, original examination of regret - what the author calls a 'theological grammar'. A phrase towards the end of the book sums it up: 'Someone who has no regrets is someone not fully human, and certainly someone not much formed as a Christian' (p.128); the overall argument of the book is that if regret is focused so much on remorse that it results in an over scrupulous and excessive examination of past mistakes then it can bring about no positive result; but on the other hand if regret entails genuine contrition then it can point to a better future.

The first chapter, 'The LORD's Regrets', is a fascinating study of biblical passages where God expresses regret for something he has done: the examples from the Old Testament are God's choice of Saul as King (1 *Samuel* 15), the creation of humanity before the Flood (*Genesis* 6), his original wish to destroy the people of Nineveh (*Jonah* 3) and a similar intention towards the people of Israel (*Jeremiah* 18); Griffiths then contrasts this with the different picture in relation to Jesus; here 'Regretful repentance occurs on the LORD's part at the stage of undoing: something, some state of affairs, must be undone in order for some damage to be redressed' (pp. 8-9) and the symbol of this is Luke's portrayal in particular of the Agony in Gethsemane. Like Christian liturgy, the tensions can