

Among the issues that pervade throughout the book is Ratzinger's constant opposition to the dictatorship of relativism (DOR) in all its forms. Readers and researchers can find various arguments and insights offered by the contributors on how the Bavarian Pope argued against DOR.

Another theme is the issue of historicity and the universal validity of objective truth. In this regard, the piece of Thomas Guarino on Vattimo and Ratzinger are expected to motivate readers to study this thorny issue more deeply.

Big names such as Immanuel Kant, GWF Hegel, Romano Guardini, Josef Pieper, F. Nietzsche, R. Spaemann, J. Habermas, and Martin Heidegger each were given substantial attention as well as A. Comte, J-P. Sartre, A. Camus, K. Popper among others.

Another volume hopefully would follow which aims to show how the eastern way of thinking and philosophy deepened Ratzinger's thought.

The use of the word *Dialogue* in the book's title is fitting for it manifests Ratzinger's openness even among those who do not side with him. It is also noteworthy that the title of the book mentions Joseph Ratzinger's name and not his title and position in the church as cardinal and pope which goes to show that the work is not to be taken as an imposition or a lessening of academic freedom. On the contrary, the book should be seen as a catalyst for future studies in the many sided thoughts of this man who once described himself as a "humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord."

We congratulate all who made this work possible.

**Jose Adriand Emmanuel L. Layug**

**McEvoy, James. *Love and Friendship in the Western Tradition: From Plato to Postmodernity*. The Catholic University of America Press, 2023. pp. 409. ISBN: 978-0-8132-3669-8.**

**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/1013pslx181br4>**

Imagine a journey through the overwhelming landscape of Western thought, following the evolution of two of the most fundamental human experiences: love and friendship. This is precisely what James McEvoy offers in his book "Love and Friendship in the Western Tradition: From Plato to Postmodernity." The work is divided into five distinct parts, each reflecting the depth of McEvoy's lifelong philosophical engagement with a theme central to both personal and communal human existence. More than a mere historical survey, McEvoy's book is a philosophical reflection on how the notions of love and friendship have not only evolved over time but also shaped and re-shaped the Western culture.

McEvoy begins his exploration by tracing the philosophical roots of love and friendship back to classical antiquity, highlighting the ways in which Christian thinkers selectively adopted and adapted these ancient Greek ideas. He pays particular attention to Aristotle and the Stoics, noting, "Christian thinkers in their turn were not slow to make adaptations of the ancient conceptions of friendship" (p. 4). This nuanced observation

underscores how the notion of friendship underwent dynamic changes to accommodate the evolving ethical demands of the Christian worldview. Concepts like *philia*, *amicitia*, and *caritas* were inherited from Greek and Roman traditions and given new theological meanings in the hands of Church Fathers such as Augustine. McEvoy's careful hermeneutical analysis provides readers with an understanding of how friendship functioned not just as an interpersonal bond but also as a theological ideal deeply rooted in divine love.

As McEvoy continues, he presents perhaps the most crucial part of his work: laying the philosophical groundwork for understanding the evolution of friendship from antiquity through the medieval period. In his discussion of Plato and Aristotle, McEvoy skillfully contrasts their foundational ideas with those of medieval thinkers like Augustine and Aquinas. For Plato, friendship was seen as an extension of the erotic quest for the good, whereas for Aristotle, it was characterized as a form of virtue—a genuine wish for the good of another (p. 67). Augustine, by contrast, reoriented this concept towards God, framing it as a conduit for divine love. McEvoy notes that “*Philia-amicitia*, the human ideal of relationship between the mature, has become translucent to the *agapē* of the New Testament.” (p. 144). By the time of Aquinas, friendship had been explicitly integrated into Christian theology, synthesizing Greek thought with Christian revelation to form a love that was both human and divine.

A deep dive into Augustine's reflections on friendship reveals an intriguing development from a more secular, Ciceronian view to one thoroughly transformed by Christian faith. Augustine's definition of friendship as “agreement in all things divine and human” underscores the spiritual unity that he believed to be at the core of true friendship, highlighting its communal and participatory nature (p. 144). McEvoy captures the tension in Augustine's thought—the struggle to reconcile the earthly emotional ties of friendship with the infinite, all-encompassing love of God. This tension is emblematic of Augustine's larger philosophical project, which sought to reconcile the finite nature of human relationships with the infinite demands of divine love.

Moving forward into the medieval period, McEvoy explores the key role of friendship in monastic life. His analysis of Aelred of Rievaulx and Thomas Aquinas is particularly insightful. For Aelred, friendship was seen as an image of the divine love shared within the Trinity, a notion that emphasizes the role of friendship in personal holiness and as a reflection of divine communion (p. 179). Aquinas expanded upon Aristotle's *amicitia*, incorporating divine love to elevate friendship to something beyond mere human virtue. (p. 228). This synthesis is essential to understanding how medieval scholars balanced Aristotelian ethics with Christian theology, seeing friendship as part of the divine order.

In examining modern and postmodern approaches to friendship, McEvoy contrasts Kant's notion of friendship—which emphasizes moral duty and universal love—with the skeptical stance of postmodern philosophers like Derrida. He argues that “in Kant's eyes, friendship represented the highest human moral achievement and was in a way the highest expression of the moral duty to love others.” (p. 287). This critique suggests that the modern view of friendship often sacrifices personal connection for abstract ethical principles.

McEvoy's analysis of postmodernity, particularly Derrida's assertion that friendship is always haunted by an inherent impossibility, reveals a broader existential uncertainty that characterizes contemporary thought. McEvoy laments the marginalization of friendship in modern discourse, advocating for a return to understanding it as a fundamental component of the good life.

James McEvoy's "Love and Friendship in the Western Tradition" is a great exploration of two fundamental relationships that shape human existence. By weaving together historical, theological, and philosophical threads, McEvoy constructs a mind-provoking reflection showing how love and friendship have evolved and influenced Western culture. His engagement with key thinkers—from Plato and Aristotle to Augustine, Aquinas, and Derrida—reveals both the continuity and enduring relevance of these ideas over the millennia. McEvoy challenges readers to reconsider the importance of friendship not only in their personal lives but also within a broader cultural and philosophical context, making a convincing case for why friendship remains a vital aspect of human flourishing amidst the challenges to it.

**Blaise D. Ringor**

**Edelheit, Joseph, James Moore, and Mark Wallace, eds. *Refiguring the Sacred: Conversations with Paul Ricoeur*. London: Lexington Books, 2024. pp. 232. ISBN: 9781666919097. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/1014pslx181br5>**

Sacred has become one of the important themes of the current milieu, especially in the occasion of one's realization of his full potential as human being without the recognition of the Divine. This eventually leads man to pursue everything, even the profane, with the justification that it is towards the progression of man's mastery of oneself. In line with this, opening a new "conversation" on the sacred must take place. For this reason, Joseph Edelheit, James Moore, Mark Wallace, and other scholars of Paul Ricoeur emersed themselves in a conversation with what Ricoeur already stated in his work *Figuring the Sacred* – opening the possibility to dialogue the established ideas of the philosopher to other facets of reality. The book primarily ventures on the recognition of the sacred in line with the pre-established discourse set by Paul Ricoeur.

The first part of the book was divided into five chapters. First, among these chapters was Steven Kepnes' work entitled *Paul Ricoeur's Biblical Theology and Jewish Theology*. In this essay, Kepnes aims to provide an understanding how Ricoeur's biblical theology can be put into discourse with the Jewish theology by seeking for the implication of the former to the latter. Accordingly, this chapter is a good starting point for the readers to assess whether Ricoeur's stand on biblical text is philosophical or not, because Kepnes provides a clear distinction and stand between philosophical sense and religious sense of truth. Yet, he clarifies that there is still an effort to understand it, which makes sense by saying that, like any other text, biblical text is a text that needs 'work' to be understood. From this point on, Kepnes provides some points of connection between Jewish Theology and Ricoeur's claim on Biblical Theology. Alongside, Kepnes stated one important reality that can be useful for the deeper understanding between God and the sacred text, that biblical text as literature