

Reviews & Notices

Topping, Ryan N.S. *Happiness and Wisdom. Augustine's Early Theology of Education.* Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012. 265 pp. ISBN 978-0-8132-1973-8.

Topping lends credible justice to a stubborn, nowadays almost forgotten topic. Anything worthwhile on Augustine must take into consideration his love and understanding for the Ancients (*Chapter 1 – Liberal Arts Prior to St. Augustine*). He was known for his recognition of the wisdom of the Ancients, and rightly so, he drew a lot of his inspiration from them. But if he did, he rightly gave them credence because he went beyond them towards more sublime heights.

The understanding of the latter is not an easy burden to deal with, which makes any serious opus on Augustine not a facile dream to conjure. Augustine is the iconic Father of the Church who has laid the foundations on several traditions which are as yet honored and treasured today. Augustine's manner of dealing with the Ancients emphasizes the crucial point of discovering and appreciating both the treasures and talents hidden in with what is present, and recognizing that humbling but august respect for our predecessors. Topping notes that John Dewey's absence or negation of tradition made his theory of education on *discovery* at odds with tradition, to say the least. Obviously, Dewey's discovery brand molds a different kind of learner. But that is altogether another involved issue.

This opus deals with the value of tradition, though necessarily, the discussion touches on the nature of humanity. We live to be happy, and happiness is one objective that identifies humanity's rationality in a very particular and distinct way. Despite the variety of packaging strategies which humans through centuries have succeeded to innovate and diversify; whatever the currency we encounter notwithstanding, we will grasp the same fundamental motivation of human happiness at its bottom line.

Happiness in its genuine form is most elusive. Not everyone who has what he wants is happy, Augustine notes. In the context of moral life, happiness deals with *what* good we should want (discernment); and contemporaneously, we need to know *how* that good can be obtained in the practical level (*Chapter 2 – Education in Augustine's Moral Theology*). The emphasis here lies in the importance of the questions on *What* and *How*. The solution to these critical issues on happiness leads to the importance of the need for/of Christian Education. These are shades

of Augustine's previous exposures to and from the Ancients, e.g. Pythagoras, Plato, Isocrates, et. al. towards the idea the attainment of the Good (*Chapter 3 - The Perils of Scepticism*). There lies the vital importance of an appropriate intellectual preparation which Augustine nurtured at Cassiciacum. This roadmap and practice involved the rise of the corporeal to the incorporeal, from the linguistic to the mathematical, from the present to the future, which meant to be trained to be able to recognize the elementary principles in theology (*Chapter 4 – The Liberal Arts Curriculum*). It also meant the distinction between utility and enjoyment. Some things are just meant to be used; others, which are of greater value, are meant to be enjoyed. No wonder, Wittgenstein dabbled on Augustine so well that the former is inspired in his formulations of his semiotics and epistemology. Discernment therefore plays a very important skill and grace in the liberal art education theory of Augustine. Thus his liberal arts education theory is circumscribed within his moral theology (inspired by Cicero and Plato) which Topping describes in chapter 2 as we indicated above. Education must touch the spirit (*Chapter 5 – Pedagogy and Liberal Learning, Chapter 6 – Authority and Illumination*)! It is essentially a process of acquiring moral and intellectual virtues, the recognition of the primary cause, and the development of the habit of obedience (authority). Note that these points of emphases are precisely the things which the current order of human history are negating.

Learning for Augustine is a development of the virtue of friendship, motivated by the love of God and of neighbor, a dialogic sharing of dialectical inquiry. It is process which counters the dangers and external pressures of Ciceronian skepticism and Manichean dualism. The mind's ability to grasp the truth is both bedrock milestone and lighthouse in Augustine (chapter 3), and as ever, happiness is the final end of education (chapter 4).

Abbreviations on classical and patristic works follow the conventions of the Oxford Classical Dictionary. It is worthy to note that Topping constructs all translations he needed unless otherwise indicated and footnoted. Nothing less of an awesome linguistic versatility will suffice when one plans to undertake any serious study on Augustine. The footnotes are copious, and the selected bibliography bears a veritable treasure trove. We congratulate the author for what appears to be a solid book on Augustine's liberal education, no doubt very scholarly, readable and engaging. Here is a topic which is direly needed nowadays when there seems to be a blinding rush to undo what the geniuses of yesteryears have painstakingly woven and nurtured.

Norberto M. Castillo, OP

Bray, Gerald. *The Church: A Theological and Historical Account*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. 278 pp. ISBN 978-149-340-255-7.

The History of the Church is full of ups and downs, success and failure, achievements and scandals, and acceptance and division. Even up to this day, these are still present. The Church is always in need of reform (*Ecclesia semper reformanda est*). This book written by Gerald Bray, an Anglican priest and a British ecclesiastical historian, depicts to its readers the mystery of God working in the entire history of the Church from the Old Testament up to the present generation. This shows that even in the great scandals of the Church, Jesus is still faithful to His promise that "...even the gates of the nether world should not prevail against it [Church] ..." (Mt. 16:18).

Bray, in this work, reviews the history of the church for the purpose of understanding the effective methods and unexpected errors of the past to avoid repeating them; of inculcating these methods to the modern-day Church; and of making theological accounts to answer the question: *What should the church be?* Bray however informs his readers that before he provides an answer to his main question, it is also important to first ask: *What is the Church* (definition)?, and *What was the Church* (History)? These three questions are the skeletal framework of this book.

What is the Church (definition)?

The definition of Church in this book, though written by an Anglican, is the same with the definition of *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, which defines the Church as “the people of God.” This is an inclusive definition. This does not refer only to the Roman Catholic Church but also the Orthodox Church (1054), the Church of England (1534) and those denominations created after the Protestant Reformation (1516) up to this day. This is more preferably called *Christian Church* to emphasize its inclusivity. However, Judaism is not considered as part of this Church. Hence, there is no such thing as Old Testament Church in the context of this definition. These are the reasons: First, the Christian Church absorbed the Jewish Scriptures as its own, but in a different way. Christians interpret the Hebrew Bible in the light of Christ (Messiah) who has already come, whereas Jews do not. Second, Ancient Israel (like its modern counterpart) was secular, human nation with its own traditions, culture, language and territory comparable to those of other nations around it while the Christian Church is not a nation in the usual sense of the word; membership is open to everyone and the miracle of the Pentecost was intended to demonstrate the universality of the message. Lastly, Ancient Israel’s spiritual life centered on the Jerusalem temple and especially on the great atoning sacrifice, which was made there once a year by the high priest. By contrast, the Christian church’s spiritual life centered on worship in gathered communities. Hence, all those Christian community who acknowledge that Christ is the Messiah are part of this Christian church.

What was the Church (History)?

This book depicts detailed accounts on the history of the church from the new testament church (33 AD) up to the reformation (16th – 18th centuries). It argues that the church in the past is divided into four phases, namely: New Testament church (33 – 64 AD), Persecuted Church (64 – 313 AD), Imperial Church (4th to 16th centuries) and Reformation (16th onwards). Each of these phases had a focal point but it doesn’t mean that the specific focal point of each phase was not present in the other phases, only that because of the situation of each phase a certain characteristic was intensive. The New Testament church was focused on *mission*. Mission to evangelize the Gentiles as seen in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. The Persecuted church was more on *persevering*, amidst the persecution, in the faith handed down by the apostles. The Imperial church was the liberal phase of Christianity. Christianity was legalized (313 AD) and became the official religion of the Roman Empire (380 AD). For these reasons, the successor of the apostles had more time for *organizing doctrines, rituals and community*. The fourth was the Reformation due to the abuses and scandals that arose in the Imperial church. These caused some members of the church to question the authority of the Magisterium and worse the doctrines and beliefs of the Imperial church. It was in this phase where the church was divided in doctrine and authority. Mission, perseverance, organization and reform: these four

accounts of the past may answer the question what should the church be, amidst division and misunderstanding, in this modern generation.

What should the church be?

Christian communities should not focus on the differences of one another. Instead, they should appreciate the commonalities that they have. The Christian church has one mission: to proclaim that Jesus had come, been born, been crucified, resurrected and will come again. The church perseveres amidst division and misunderstanding. She has one organization: an organization of believers aspiring to enter heaven. She is always in need of reform: a reformation of understanding and inclusivity. Jesus is always in the *Christian church*, in every denomination. All in all, the author emphasizes that each Christian must be universally welcoming to one another despite differences of doctrine and authority.

This book is like any other historical books about the church. What makes this peculiar are the solutions made in the last chapter about what should the church be in this modern era. The solution are inclusive and do not favor any church denomination as the only true religion. It is very timely that the Church in the Philippines will celebrate the year of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue this year. Perhaps, this book can provide important insights that will make us appreciate more the importance of this celebration.

Rey John E. Gayta

Natividad, Maria Lucia. *Teaching The Faith: Renewal in Religious Education in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, 2018. 288 pp. ISBN: 978-621-426-019-5.

The curriculum of education in the country is affected both by a shift of mindset and by a shift of the center. Through a shift of mindset, the addition of two years to the training of students is necessary in order to address the issues of being “schooled” let alone the issue of being “educated.” By a shift of the center, the present-day nature of school does not anymore play with the teacher as the “sage on stage” but a “guide on the side.” In this regard, the teaching of the *Christian Living* classes in many Catholic Schools is affected by such changes especially in teaching an authentic experience of the faith without compromising sound doctrine. With this, Maria Lucida Natividad produced a crucial work bridging the gaps of the new curriculum and the instruction of the Catholic Faith entitled, *Teaching The Faith: Renewal in Religious Education in the Philippines*.

Introducing the book are the documents of the Catholic Church about the instruction of the faith. In this manner, the author showcases the solutions forwarded in paper coming from the Church. In these presented solutions, the author underscores the role of catechesis and religious instruction in kindling the flame of faith among the faithful and would-be-faithful. To emphasize the flame of faith among people, it is important to be creative in the use of imagination inside the classroom. In this use of imagination inside the classroom, the day-to-day life of the person should be understood as a way of witnessing the divine. It is only fitting to understand the day-to-day life of any believer by looking at the role of Scriptures which contain the everyday

struggles of the witnesses of God. In this way, one can see how God revealed himself to the history of humankind.

Maria Lucia Natividad is a relevant scholar in Religious Studies especially in the pedagogy inside the classroom beset with the K+12 program and the primacy of the learner-centered shift inside the classroom. To say that this work is not a *magnum opus* is an injustice given the breadth and depth of her knowledge about the topic and the field. No wonder, she won the Best Book in Ministry Award in the 12th Cardinal Sin Catholic Book Awards. This work is a product of love with many references in the footnotes showing the wisdom and weight behind her words.

Beaujorne Sirad A. Ramirez

Sia, Marian and Santiago Sia. *From Education to Life: A Review of Its Role and Tasks*. England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. 197 pp. ISBN: 978-1-5275-2214-5.

Combining their insights from their fields of specialization (i.e., Literature and Philosophy), Marian and Santiago Sia presented a rich and well-crafted discourse in their book, one that is not merely theoretical or speculative but is also perceptively practical. The authors have fused their expertise so that the book becomes accessible for any ordinary reader. The book is divided into three parts, composed of three chapters each. Another chapter for ‘further observations’ and an appendix are also added at the end of the work.

The first part opened with a discussion on “The Agora and the Academy: Reviewing the Marketplace and Academia Today” where the authors set out the discourse by making a reference to the tension between the academy and the agora in ancient Greece. While the agora facilitates the commercial and economic affairs of the state, the academy serves as venue for intellectual discourses. Often, as it happens in our contemporary culture, the emphasis on the agora eclipses the importance of the academy to the detriment of the holistic development of the human person. The authors will convince the readers to see how our contemporary practice in education is geared primarily towards the market so that the products of schools are formed primarily if not solely to respond to the quickly-expanding needs of industries, corporations and employers in the market. Governments and the labor market exploits education and its institutions as a breeding place for people who can fulfill the standardized requirements so that they will be able to find solutions for the fast-paced demands of our now highly technological and innovative world. The authors echoed a classical reminder that has already been articulated even by the great minds of ancient Athens: the primary task of education is the holistic development of the human person which integrates not only the subject-specific competencies but more so, the capacity to pursue wisdom. Graduates should not simply be treated as workers who have undergone tests and series of assessments in order to form competencies that make them effective pieces in the workplace. If they are to serve humanity well, graduates should have been trained to seek wisdom that would lead them to live meaningful and good lives, a life that should not be seen as contrary to being effective, productive, and innovative workers.

The authors then continued with a note on ‘education for life’ (Chapter 2) that features the protest of children from Budapest, Hungary who criticized what they thought as

the backward and futile system of education in their country. The students bring to the streets their demands for an education that is geared towards life, critical thinking, and creativity. This is a thought-provoking scenario because the students themselves are the ones who vent out their frustrations over educational institutions that are employing a pedagogy that simply spoon-feeds “inert” information and requires the students to memorize and store up ideas in their heads without critically utilizing, testing, and producing novel ideas. The authors saw the importance of philosophical thinking that is grounded in the learners’ sense of wonder which ignites them to question and reflect out of the implicit knowledge, prior experiences, schema and encounters with their societal setting. As a quest for wisdom, philosophy enables the learner to re-exteriorize bodies of knowledge and information into concrete and actual applications to realities of life. The authors have also magnified an existentialist view of education which deals with the learners, not as objects which are molded in order to conform with an established notion of what they *should* be, but as unique individuals and subjects who have the personal responsibility to choose the way by which they can live life with fulfillment and meaning. The learner is an “originative instinct” (term coined by Martin Buber) who is an active author or producer of things. As an originative instinct, the individual is a solitary man or woman. Hence, it is the role of education to guide the learner towards the “instinct of mutuality” which allows her or him to dialogue and be responsible in relating with others.

Closing the first part, the authors talked about “Schooling and Beyond: The Vision and Mission of Education,” where readers are greeted with an awe-inspiring and relevant analogy that originated from the thought of Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead remarked that educators should “see the wood by means of the trees.” Marian and Santiago Sia wonderfully relate this analogy to *education* (wood) and *schooling* (trees) where the former is the primary aim or the overarching vision that teachers and students ought to attain and the latter is the mission or the particular means that help them realize the vision. Schooling should not serve as the be-all and end-all of teaching whereby students ought only to fulfill academic requirements and get a job that satisfies their needs. Education is life-long and is geared towards developing the human person in pursuit of wisdom. To concretize further the insights on vision and mission (on education and schooling), the authors gave special attention to the opulent contributions of Confucius, a revered teacher and a renowned philosopher in ancient China. His teachings reflect the role of education in cultivating the humanity and moral character of human persons who do not merely gain training and instruction in order to accumulate knowledge and thus, be qualified to render civil service. Education is geared, first and foremost, to the inculcating of virtues, especially one’s consciousness of human others whom he or she coexists and interacts with in the society. By strengthening the humanity in persons, learners do not live for themselves alone but through their awareness of their being part of the society, they become benevolent, righteous, and honorable individuals.

The three-chapter second part of the book features the following titles: Moral Development, Moral Reasoning, and Moral Sensitivity: Lessons from Psychology (Chapter 4); *Discimus Docendo: Learning from the Other* (Chapter 5); and *Crown, Town, Gown: Some Issues and Challenges for Faith-Based Education* (Chapter 6). The last title was first read at the *Symposium on Society and the Christian Message* held in 2018 at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines and was published in this journal.

The chapter on moral development is anchored on the thoughts of Lawrence Kohlberg who posited that the cognitive-developmental theory of moralization describes how human individuals move forward in six stages and are directed towards a sense of *justice* (of being given what is due). Individuals tend to move from one stage to another through social stimulation. The movement to another stage in moral development is realized when one finds a contradiction in values that he or she holds as they are juxtaposed with those of others in the community. Marian and Santiago Sia however presented their critique of Kohlberg's theory which were propounded by Carol Gilligan and Craig Dystra on the grounds of some "neglected dimensions or voices" in the moral development of a human person. First, Gilligan criticized Kohlberg's theory as being focused or limited on the male sexuality in his notion of the sense of justice. Positing the "ethics of care," Gilligan elucidated that moral development does not merely rest on the cognitive or cerebral aspect of the human person but it also encompasses the affective or emotional aspect. Both the cognitive (*justice*) and the affective (*care*) form the "harmonious whole." Dystra on his part viewed Kohlberg's developmental theory as dealing with human individuals as objects or means rather than as ends. Dystra supposed that awakening the moral consciousness involves religion which has a strong relation to character-building. The moral agent does not simply aim to solve problems or seek strategies but he or she encounters a mystery before him or her. Religion provides a community of people who are "inter-subjectively bound" and are united by a common worldview.

Talking about *discimus docendo*, the authors asserted that differences among human individuals are very conspicuous in reality. With diversity in worldviews, backgrounds, and other modes of individuation, the human individual can assert his or her uniqueness, alongside the otherness of the other. The authors, however, emphasized that differences only make us "distinctive, not separate." While each of us can maintain our distinctiveness, it does not impede us from encountering the other, meeting the other in our commonalities, awakening our prior bonds, and realizing a harmonious co-existence. The difference between *individualism* from *individuality* was then highlighted. Hence, the educator can learn while teaching (*discimus docendo*).

The chapter on the challenges for faith-based education reflects an Irish concern on the relations between and among the Christian message, the State and education. The concern however is not unique of Ireland and not even of the European civilization as it also affects other cultures, hence reading this lecture first in a symposium in Manila, Philippines. It primarily talks about how a faith-based educational institution can affirm the credibility of its *ethos* amid the secularized society where there are myriads of messages brought about by advancements in information technology, the explicit denial of God's existence or relevance, and the emphasis on the capabilities and autonomy of man to create and make his or her own history in the here and now. The authors provide a philosophical understanding of the role of faith-based education and the affirmation of the Christian message by utilizing Aristotle's thought on *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. First, based on Aristotle's notion of *logos* as a mode of persuasion in the art of speaking, faith-based education should show the reasonableness of its message. Second, *pathos* directs the focus to the listeners whose emotions and judgments are stirred by the message. And lastly, *ethos*, according to the authors, is the "most helpful" in affirming the Christian message because it pays attention to the speaker who manifests credibility through the consistency of his message

and his witnessing. The authors concluded with an assertion that the Christian message and the secularized society are distinctive but are not separate.

The third and last part of the book provides the authors' reflections over their experiences in the classroom. They remind their readers that educating students in the classroom must be an opportunity for us to talk about not only of 'the ends' that we have in this fragile and vulnerable life but also of the 'final end,' which serves as the vision or primary goal upon which all our undertakings are directed. This general plan of action is what they call as the "life-map" which guides us in our search for meaning and wisdom. The authors have further pondered on the relation between *text* and *context*. The text is not simply a bundle of words which appears to the reader but it also involves the connected meanings, interpretations, and experiences that are behind it. Just as the text has not only an explicit but also an implicit meaning, so should life be not simply seen as a routine that is to be undergone stage-by-stage or a set of specific life-situations that are to be experienced. Life is a journey that is driven by a larger vision that leads to the realization of meaning and purpose in the human person.

The authors then proceeded to reflect on the 'grammar of life,' where they spoke of the need to take reflective pauses in one's life by alluding to the role of punctuation marks, such as the comma, in allowing the reader to make sense out of the text. The authors compare life with a book that contains blank pages for us to write on and a book that contains some "scribbling" which is not of our making. They pointed out the complexity of life such that one needs to take pauses in order to look back at the past, re-examine priorities or even change directions at times. Hence, comma-moments, as meaningful and reasonable pauses, do not solely involve *kronos* or the measured time that passes in seconds, minutes, and hours. They are found in *Kairos* or the special time that is manifested in momentous events. Education therefore should provide opportunities for studies to reflect not only on bodies of knowledge put forward by academics but also on what is going on in their lives and the lessons that such events endow.

This brings them to the theme on 'pedagogical strategy for living.' They argue that the educator has to look into the ultimate vision in the holistic development of the learner as a person and not simply into the infusion of static knowledge or information which Whitehead calls as "inert ideas." They invite their readers to look at life as a journey towards meaning and purpose. They provided the acronym E.P.I.C. which stands for *evoke*, *provoke*, *invoke* and *convoke*. To *evoke* means to stir up the senses or awaken the attention and interest in the learner—who already has implicit knowledge—so that he or she may desire the good and call out a sense of wonder. To *provoke* means to provide divergent positions or perspectives so that the stagnant ideas in the learner will be unsettled and will therefore enable a transition or moving on to strive for more and to seek for improvement from the unchallenged status quo. To *invoke* is to call on resources that would help the learner in addressing the provocation by means of recognizing the views of other people who have more sufficient knowledge and skills. Finally, to *convoke* means to call together what has been learned and to synthesize it with other fields or disciplines, with other topics or research, and with applications in concrete situations or life-experiences. Such synthesis is geared towards the realization of the overall plan of pedagogy.

From Education to Life: A Review of Its Role and Tasks is a work that invites our engagement. We reflect as we read the text and we dialogue with the authors on the many themes both in

education and life that they make explicit in this work. The references to a variety of names and schools of thought make the work more inclusive although other perspectives could still make the discourse more fruitful. An explicit mention of the thoughts of free-school advocates such as Emma Goldman, Leo Tolstoy, A.S. Neill, and Wilhelm Reich could perhaps test the ideas that the Sias are providing here. After all, one of the key steps in the pedagogical strategy which the authors formulated is to *provoke*. Perhaps, the free schools' radical point of view (that is, their rejection of moral instruction in the educational setting and of any sort of imposition of ideas and ideals on the student) can be juxtaposed to the position of Marian and Santiago Sia on the vision of education which is to lead human persons towards their holistic development. Hence, it could be a colossal yet insightful project to analyze the instruction of morality and religion in faith-based educational institutions through the lens of divergent and radical philosophies such as those of the free-school thinkers.

Perhaps the radical viewpoint of the free-school has something to impart to institutions which aim to ascertain their credibility within a secularized society. Faith-based education cannot be anti-institution for it has its principles and values which have endowed meaning into the lives of people for many generations. Hence, radical thinkers may see this type of education as intrinsically like "wheels in the head" since it already consists of a stable set of doctrines that are geared towards reality, driven by the complementary relationship between faith and reason. However, it is the task of this institution as well to continuously re-think and re-examine its structures which may pose risks, control or detriments to the human person. It should be an aim of faith-based educational institutions to rekindle its positive contributions to the society and to show that amidst its mission of instilling values into its students, the freedom and autonomy of human persons are not violated.

Looking at the broad framework of contemporary Western culture, we can find a unique yet enlightening point of view—molded in concrete experiences and profound reflections—from the book of Marian and Santiago Sia. Such point of view can serve as a response to the genuine crisis of meaning in our post-modern world where, in the words of the Dominican Fr. Michael Mascari, OP, "men and women are looking for something of value, something of permanence, something with a sense of purpose, something to which they can commit themselves."

Our world today has construed schooling as a means to particular ends such as the goal to satisfy the demands of the labor-market thereby producing schooled individuals that are treated like machines. Children are being sent to schools so that they may land a job, attain success in their careers, and gain their place in the society. Marian and Santiago Sia, however, presented a different view of education. They see education as a larger vision of the journey of life in which there is a continuous search for meaning and purpose. Immersing into their reflections on the value of education, I have come to recognize a clarion call in their essays which is to let the learners, enriched by their distinctiveness and individuality, to resist the crisis of meaning in the exhausting activities and transitory ends in their daily lives. Even amid the presence of myriads of voices in the society, faith-based and holistic education—which embraces not only the intellect, skills, and aptitudes but also the emotional, psychological,

moral, and even the spiritual aspects of the human person—has indispensable contributions for the good of humanity. It should not be spurned as manipulative or repressive of individual freedoms. Rather, it can harmoniously co-exist with a wide array of worldviews in avenues for dialogue and a joint search of meaning, purpose and truth.

John Alfred F. Rabena

Gricoski, Thomas. *Being Unfolded: Edith Stein on the Meaning of Being*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020. 268 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8132-3258-4.

Benedictine by religious profession, Thomas Gricoski has done an in-depth and critical study into the metaphysics of the philosopher turned disalced Carmelite martyr St. Edith Stein who is being proposed as a possible Doctor of the Church.

Gricoski's published work is his doctoral dissertation in philosophy in the Higher Institute of Philosophy, K.U. Leuven (Belgium) and written under the competent supervision of Prof. William Desmond. The latter's foreword, included in the publication, gives the reader a warm welcome and a glimpse of how the adviser has heavily influenced Gricoski, as proven by themes in metaphysics developed by Desmond and which were eventually incorporated into Gricoski's published doctoral dissertation. Moreover, Desmond himself cannot help but give praise to his doctoral student and point out the latter's courage in undertaking this work: "Thomas Gricoski offers us an admirable work *in* metaphysics. It is a difficult task to undertake an investigation of a metaphysical theme in an age not always sympathetic to such themes" (p. xiv). In writing this book, Gricoski *did* metaphysics and not just talked about it.

More than being admirable, the book is both challenging and provocative!

Challenging can be an apt word to describe this publication. The author has the knack for expressing his ideas in dense yet straightforward sentences. Consider this one example: "Stein interrupts the identification of being with existence" (p. 80, underline mine). To those schooled in traditional (read Thomistic) metaphysics, this claim poses a lot of thought-provoking reflections. How come a Jewish philosopher formed under the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and who sought dialogue between phenomenology and scholasticism, particularly the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, would assert that a comprehensive investigation into the problem of the meaning of being is incomplete if the inquiry into being is framed exclusively within the traditional distinction between *esse* and essence. The thoughts of the Angelic Doctor heavily influenced Stein. She expresses her indebtedness to the latter by likening herself to a "beginner" and a "disciple" to St. Thomas in the preface of her opus *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent into the Meaning of Being* (FEB). *Finite and Eternal Being*, written in the Carmelite Monastery of Cologne, is Stein's contribution to the ongoing debate and discussion on the *aporia* of being. Here what she began in her supposed habilitation thesis entitled *Potency and Act* (PA) was continued and amplified. What did she see that she went beyond Aquinas? What method did she use to dialogue phenomenology and scholasticism and subsequently to say that the distinction between *esse* and *essence* in metaphysics can never be enough to account for a sought-after comprehensive meaning of being? It is at this point where Gricoski's book becomes exciting and challenging.

What is the meaning of being, and what would account for a complete and comprehensive explanation of the meaning being? What is the meaning of being for Edith Stein? The author is fair enough to note with total clarity that it is not only Aquinas whom Stein wants to distance herself from. Besides Aquinas, the list includes Husserl, Heidegger, and even her friend and godmother Hedwig Conrad-Martius. Gricoski expresses lucidly his astounding discovery as he inquires into his subject matter: “Stein’s sense of being is of such character, however, that she apparently found Husserl’s transcendental *Wesensphilosophie*, Heidegger’s *Existenzphilosophie*, Conrad-Martius’ *Realontologie*, and Aquinas’ *esse* ontology each unable to describe all the types and modes of being she discovers by investigation” (p. 42). But this does not mean that Stein would like to start from scratch *ala* Descartes. True to her realism, “rather than allowing either actual-ness or essential-ness to serve as the ultimate mark of being, it is the relation of unfolding between essence and actuality that reveals the more comprehensive meaning of being” (p. 52). This Stein did, according to Gricoski, by “borrowing elements from each philosophical tradition, retaining and amplifying what matched with her senses of being, and correcting and delimiting what conflicted with them, Stein forged the outline of a unique theory of being as unfolding” (p. 42), showing that Edith Stein is an independent and critical thinker.

To those formed in the traditional Thomistic metaphysics of the distinction between *esse* and essence, the book dares them to think twice for the meaning of being. According to Edith Stein, being as unfolding cuts through the traditional thinking of *esse*/essence and suggests another way without compromising the distinction. Based on the study of Gricoski, the stress is not so much on either *esse* or essence but on the modes of being and their corresponding relationality. The *esse*/essence distinction is too reductive for Stein. But as someone whom Aquinas influenced, Stein does not deny the distinction. Stein, however, challenges traditional metaphysics by framing being as unfolding.

According to Gricoski, Stein’s understanding of essential being and essences as influenced by Husserl’s phenomenology is crucial in seeing being as unfolding. In the way Stein dialogues scholasticism and phenomenology, she sees essences as the common ground between the two philosophical schools of thought. Gricoski traces the development of Stein’s notion of essential being, rooting the issue in realism and the *aporia* of being followed by his treatment of actual, material, and mental. Not to be missed is the author’s excellent chapter on how to account for the proper relationship between essential being, essence, and the origin of meaning, i.e. God. As the book shows, Gricoski gives essences and essential being a positive place in the history and development of metaphysical thought. Not only that, readers should not miss how Gricoski describes God as the “*original phenomenologist*” (p. 120) in his reading of Stein’s metaphysics.

A crucial question arises: Is Stein guilty of the *essentialism* charge? More concretely, is Gricoski propagating an essentialist image of Stein? We will let the readers decide. Suffice it to say that the whole published work elicits provocation, and many insights are waiting to be uncovered.

Gricoski uses terms and phrases which are insightful and would be a joy to unpack in

future investigations. Expressions such as *metaphysics of irremediable finitude* (p. 46), *correlational realism* (chapter 1), *Stein's ontology is crowded with essences* (p. 21), among others.

Also, the book furthers the idea that Stein's ontology can be seen as her contribution to the problem of the universals and her participation in the ongoing discussion on the phenomenological theory of essences. This is something that is seldom inquired in Steinian scholarship. It is time to highlight something obvious: Stein has a significant place and an essential contribution in the continuing discourse on metaphysics and the meaning of being.

On a personal note, the book is dedicated to another Benedictine, Cyril Crowford, who gave the author the main problem of this research: what then is the meaning of being for Edith Stein? A proof that research is never an isolated manner bereft of the community's importance.

A much-awaited sequel is desired so that a more explicit articulation of the ontologies of Stein and Heidegger may see the light of day. Such is the intent of Gricoski since the scope of the present work and the space provided can no longer accommodate a confrontation between the two philosophers. Besides, an initial evaluation and interpretation of Stein's ontology are needed before a comparison to Heidegger is made, which this book provides. Several works were already published concerning the metaphysics of Stein and Heidegger, but a closer investigation is still a significant undertaking if seen in the light of several metaphysical problems that are still unanswered.

There is no doubt that the book is a significant contribution to the ongoing research on Stein's metaphysics. Anyone who studies Stein's ontology in the future cannot possibly bypass Gricoski's work. Moreover, anyone who would like to deepen and broaden traditional metaphysics may want to look into the conclusions of Gricoski.

It is essential to underline that it is not only Carmel that has an influence in the thought and spirituality of St. Edith Stein. The Benedictines, too, have a place in her life and heart. She usually goes to the Benedictine Abbey of Beuron to participate in its liturgy, and one of her spiritual directors is Dom Raphael Waltzer, a Benedictine. Therefore, it is not surprising that, after her entrance into the Carmelite Monastery of Cologne, she took "Teresa Benedicta a Cruce" (literally, Teresa Blessed by the Cross) as her religious name. *Teresa* obviously is in honor of St. Teresa of Avila, whose *Life* profoundly contributed to her decision to enter the Catholic Church and *Benedicta*, in memory of St. Benedict of Nursia, the founder of Western Monasticism and the Benedictine Order. It is only proper and appropriate that a Benedictine writes this book. Behind its pages, one can feel the principle that guided the Benedictines (and Edith Stein) right from the beginning of its foundation: *Ora et Labora*. We hope that future readers too can see that the book is a work born out of prayer, and at the same time, a prayerful activity realized in work, couched, of course, in philosophical language. It is not by accident that the author places a quotation from Psalm 119 (118): 130 at the beginning of the book. "*The unfolding of your word gives light, and teaches the simple*" is a biblical verse that serves as a guide for the readers. The *simple* has a mind broad enough to receive even things that apparently shake its usual way of thinking. Reading the work is not only philosophically provoking but also spiritually nourishing as well.

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