

On the Reception of Nicene Dogma in Modern Ontological Categories: The Notion of Person and Contemporary Analytic Parlance*

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Introductory Remarks

This paper addresses the notion of *person* as understood within analytic philosophy and asks whether analytic understandings of personhood can contribute to Trinitarian theology. It is important to address topics like this. A philosophy colleague of mine has pointed out the following anomaly: If you want to become a Catholic priest, you need to study at least as much philosophy as would be required to get an undergraduate major, but if you want to become a Catholic theologian, there's really nothing that prevents you from passing your entire career without doing any philosophy at all. Perhaps this is an unintended and unforeseen side-effect of opening up theology to laymen. If so, then it is like many other unintended and unforeseen side-effects in being bad. There is a lot of bad theology out there, and much of its badness grows out of the weakness of its philosophical underpinnings. Theologians need to do philosophy, and they need to do it well.¹

Our question, again, is whether analytic philosophy has a concept of

* The original version of this paper was presented at the 2023 meeting of the Academy of Catholic Theology in Washington, DC. I have made little attempt to modify its oral style.

¹ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 5, *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, trans. Oliver Davies et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991),

person that is useful for Trinitarian theology. Perhaps some readers may be balking already at the implication that there is *a* way that personhood is understood within Trinitarian theology. After all, even within the limits of orthodoxy, there are multiple Trinitarian theologies, and multiple ways of thinking about Trinitarian persons. I can only agree, although I would add, perhaps at risk of stating the obvious, that Trinitarian thinking is not *so* polymorphous that no coherence can be found. If it is really true that two theologies, while being different, are both orthodox, then they must be somehow commensurable—if not, then I cannot understand how both could be orthodox.

Is there a single notion of personhood in analytic philosophy? A prior question is this: is there a single notion of *anything* in analytic philosophy? Let me begin by suggesting, in a jesting manner, that there is no such thing as analytic philosophy at all. To put the point more seriously, what I mean, first, is that there is no such thing as The Analytic School™—if that means views or doctrines shared among analytic philosophers in a way that sets them apart from other, non-analytic philosophers. Some analytic philosophers are atheists and some are theists; some are, rather famously, Catholic. Some analytic philosophers are materialists, some are dualists, and some are hylomorphists. Some are nominalists, while others are very strong Platonic realists. (Almost none are logical positivists.) Some deny free will; others affirm it. Some deny universal moral norms, and some affirm them. And so on and on.

Likewise, The Analytic Method™ does not exist. Some analytic philosophers obsess about language, but others do not. Some use the techniques of modern formal logic, but others do not. Some put little numbers in front of the propositions that they wish to discuss, but others do not. It is true that, in analytic philosophy, clarity, argumentative rigor, and good writing are highly prized, but if that is what makes for analytic philosophy, then Aquinas too is an analytic philosopher.

Nor is it true that analytic philosophers are always people who know nothing about the history of philosophy. That might almost have been true for a while, but it was not true at the beginning of analytic philosophy, and has not been true for decades.

When I am in a certain kind of mood, I wonder whether analytic philosophy is not merely a question of style. Compare these two passages, both of which involve the concept of depression:

655: "Metaphysics is not a ware which can be bought and sold ready-made: we must ourselves think."

We speak of behaving in a depressed way (of depressed behaviour) and we also speak of feeling depressed (of a feeling of depression). One is inclined to argue that feelings can be felt but not observed, and behaviour can be observed but not felt, and that therefore there must be room here to drive in a logical wedge. But the concept of depression spans the place where one wants to drive it in.²

When one's Being-in-the-world has been threatened and it concerns itself with the ready-to-hand, it does so as a factual potentiality-for-Being of its own. In the face of this potentiality one backs away in bewilderment, and this kind of forgetting oneself is what constitutes the existential-temporal meaning of fear. Aristotle rightly defines fear as *lúpê tis ê tarachê*—as “a kind of depression or bewilderment.” This depression forces Dasein back to its thrownness, but in such a way that this thrownness gets quite closed off.³

Which of these passages makes you want to keep reading is, perhaps, a clue to whether or not you are an analytic philosopher.

More seriously, now: Analytic philosophy is a mere historical aggregate. If you have read or studied with people who read or studied with people who read or studied with people like Saul Kripke, or Willard Van Orman Quine, or Donald Davidson, or John Searle, or P. F. Strawson, or J. L. Austin, or G. E. M. Anscombe, and farther back, Bertrand Russell, or Ludwig Wittgenstein, or Gottlob Frege, and if you continue to interact with ideas that came to you in that way, then you are an analytic philosopher, at least in part—even if you think that most of the ideas in question are in dire need of refutation. This—but only this, and it is not very much—is what “being an analytic philosopher” comes to. I have occasionally been asked, quite innocently, a question of the form, “What would ‘the analytics’ say about X?” There's almost never an answer to a question like that.⁴

Given these introductory remarks, you will not be surprised to hear me say that there simply is no such thing as “what analytic philosophers think about personhood.” There is, rather, a very wide range of views or attitudes

² Peter F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Routledge, 1964), 108.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie (New York: Harper, 1962), 392 (H [page in later German editions] 342).

⁴ The only thing that all analytic philosophers have in common, besides belonging to the contingent historical jumble just mentioned, is that they do not refer to analytic philosophers as “analytics.”

towards personhood found among analytic philosophers. It is not easy to present the great mass of material available. For one thing, the question of what persons are, or what personhood is, sometimes arises within analytic philosophy as a question subordinate to some other question. For one example, analytic philosophers sometimes discuss what personhood is because they are interested in the question of diachronic personal identity—the conditions under which I am the same person today as I was last week. For another example, sometimes analytic philosophers ask about personhood essentially for moral reasons: because they want to know which entities are persons, and therefore worthy of ethical protection, or bearers of moral responsibility.⁵

Even when analytic philosophers are more or less straightforwardly addressing the central issue “What is a person?” and treating it for its own sake, they not only give different answers, but also pose the question differently. Sometimes the question is whether persons are immaterial, material, or some combination of the two. Sometimes the question is whether a person is simply a bundle of metaphysical constituents or instead involves an underlying substrate—a substrate which might or might not amount to a Cartesian ego. Sometimes the question is whether “a person” is a kind of entity, or whether instead *being a person* is a feature that some entities have (a feature that an entity might perhaps gain or lose over the course of its life).

In what follows, I will discuss some analytic treatments of personhood under the following headings: reductionist and/or eliminativist views; views that see personhood as an accidental category; and views that see personhood as a substantial category. This will not cover all the views, and it is not the only way to organize them, but at least it is *a* way. And of course I will discuss these various approaches with one very specific question in mind: whether they can be useful for Trinitarian thinking. Then I will say a few things about analytic discussions of God, including analytic discussions of the Trinity. I will then say a few things about why anyone should care about the notion of personhood at all. Finally, I will comment on why, at least for some people, it might be fruitful to incorporate analytic philosophy into their thinking. My overall conclusion will be that having a good philosophical theory of personhood is important for Trinitarian theology, but that it does not get us as far as we might hope;

⁵ For a discussion that relates these two questions, see David Shoemaker, “Personal Identity and Ethics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, fall 2021 ed., plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/identity-ethics/ (esp. section 2.1).

and that looking to analytic authors for inspiration is a good idea, but not one that everyone should feel obliged to take up.

Reductionist/Eliminativist Accounts

One way of thinking about personhood involves seeing persons as somehow reducible to components or constituents that are not themselves persons. For example, if you think of a person as what you get when a number of thoughts or mental occurrences are connected to one another by relations of remembering, then you seem to be saying that persons are reducible to thoughts.⁶

Reductionistic views are not always bad. I, for example, am a reductionist about stacks of coins: I think that a stack of coins is nothing but the coins, arranged in that special way we call “stacking.” Importantly, however, reductionism always flirts with eliminativism: If a stack of coins is “nothing but” the individual coins plus their relations to one another, why does that not mean that the stack is not really there at all—what is really there is just the coins, related in such-and-such a way? (Of course it would remain extremely convenient to keep using the word “stack!”)

Must a reductionist view of persons collapse into an eliminativist view? Hard to say. Presumably it depends on the type of reductionism involved. But it does not really matter for our purposes. To make a long story short, a reductionist view of persons—even a non-eliminativist one—cannot work for God, because divine persons cannot be reducible to anything. Views like these, it seems to me, are irredeemably useless for Trinitarian purposes, and indeed for talking about God at all.

Accidental Accounts of Personhood

Another way of thinking about personhood involves seeing it as being, in some sense, an accidental property of some substance—an animal, let us

⁶ The sort of reductionist view just described is closely related to the question of diachronic identity: its understanding of personhood is tied up with an understanding of what it means to be *the same person over time*. As such, it has clear Lockean roots, roots which have sprouted into a rich and tangled garden of neo-Lockean refinements, at war not only with non-Lockean accounts but also with each other. For discussion and references, see Jessica Gordon-Roth, “Locke on Personal Identity,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, spring 2020 ed., plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/locke-personal-identity/; see also Shoemaker, “Personal Identity and Ethics.”

suppose. Let Frank be a human being. When Frank was very young, one might say, he had no rational powers. Then Frank acquired rational powers. Finally, in old age, Frank lost his rational powers. Suppose now that being a person means being a substance with reason. On that basis, someone might say that Frank was not a person when he was very young (say, when he was a fetus); then he became a person when he acquired the power of reason; then finally he ceased to be a person when he lost his power of reason. This would make being a person an accidental feature of Frank: Frank would be essentially human, but only contingently and accidentally a person.⁷

Just to be clear, the claim here under discussion is not that persons are accidents. Not at all: on the sort of view I am sketching, everything that is a person is a substance. It is simply that the personhood of a person is an accident, not a substantial kind. This is like saying that every professor is a substance, but being-a-professor is not a substantial kind.⁸

This approach is quite hopeless for theological purposes: the very idea that there can be a division between substance and accident in God is already problematic—or to put it a bit more bluntly, disastrous.

Substantial Accounts of Personhood

The last category of personhood theory I want to mention sees personhood as a substantial category: to be a person is *ipso facto* to be a substantial kind of thing—roughly, a thing with reason.⁹ Some analytic philosophers adopt a Cartesian-inflected version of this approach, seeing a person as

⁷ For a developed account (differing in some respects from the one just sketched) according to which we are essentially animals of a certain sort, but not essentially persons, see David DeGrazia, *Human Identity and Bioethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁸ The point just made is, or might be, the thought behind the trend to say (for example) not “slave” but “enslaved person.” It is a fact that, in English, we standardly use nouns to indicate substantial kinds—giraffe, human, electron—and adjectives to indicate accidents—spotted, tall, charged. Transforming slave-language from noun to adjective reduces the chances that we will, as Wittgenstein warned against, allow our language to bewitch our intelligence by leading us to suppose that some people are essentially slaves. (How serious a danger this is, and how much linguistic elegance should be sacrificed for the sake of averting it, are different questions, of course.)

⁹ I here glide by questions about the precise sense in which “person” can be the name of a real genus; for relevant discussion, see Gregory T. Doolan, “Aquinas on Substance as a Metaphysical Genus,” in *The Science of Being as Being: Metaphysical Investigations*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 99–128.

being, essentially, a mind or thinking subject.¹⁰ Others take what amounts to being a rather more Aristotelian and hylomorphic line, thinking of a person—or a human person, at any rate—as a rational animal.¹¹

Segue to Theological Issues

Approaches of this last variety—approaches that take personhood to boil down to the idea that a person is a substance belonging to a rational substantial kind—are potentially useful in theology. And, given that such an approach to personhood is essentially Boethian, you will not be surprised to hear that analytic philosophers who adopt it are, often enough, influenced by Aristotelian-Scholastic philosophy.

We have made progress, then. But how much? Most analytic philosophy about personhood bears on human persons: even if it ends up defining “person” in a way that makes room for non-human persons, like angels or Martians, the interest still comes mostly from relevance to human persons. There is nothing wrong with that, of course. But it is important to realize that starting from human personhood means that whatever you come up with is going to be of very limited usefulness for discussing God.

To give the most obvious example, discussions of human personhood need to say something about physicality and the animal side of human nature, but that needs to be removed, or abstracted away from, when we get to God. To even get started on thinking about God, then, we need a notion of personhood that has been significantly modified from its original anthropological version. I have mentioned the question of physicality, but there are other issues as well. And this holds true not just of analytic theories of personhood, but of all theories of personhood. The general problem is a big theme in pseudo-Dionysius, as is well known.

Unless you are Kant, then probably your only reason to develop such a

¹⁰ For a recent exploration of substance dualist approaches, see *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose et al. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018).

¹¹ Authors whose thought can be characterized in this way include David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and Strawson, *Individuals*. It should be noted, however, that there have been a significant number of “neo-Aristotelian” attempts to understand substance that turn out to be not very Aristotelian; such accounts would, by extension, give rise to not-very-Aristotelian accounts of personhood. For discussion, see Anna Marmodoro, “Aristotle’s Hylomorphism without Reconditioning,” *Philosophical Inquiry* 37 (2013): 5–22; Howard Robinson, “Substance,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, fall 2021 ed., plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/substance/ (esp. section 3.4).

de-anthropologized notion would be that you want to think about God. Nor is this just some theoretical possibility: some people *do* want to think about God. And some of *those* people are analytic philosophers. So let us take a quick look at some relevant aspects of analytic philosophy of God.

Analytic Understandings of God

There is an entire literature of analytic approaches to philosophical theology, with a lot of debate and variety. I think it fair to say that all analytic philosophers recognize that God is not just like a human being. But it is also fair to say that there is a lot of disagreement about *how big* the difference is.

Some analytic philosophers are advocates of “classical theism,” which emphasizes a robust list of divine attributes like immateriality, omniscience, omnipotence, eternity, simplicity, and so on. For obvious reasons, analytic philosophers who are into classical theism are, often enough, also into reading authors like Aquinas and Scotus. Other analytic philosophers, however, are—alas—not so hardcore. They advocate what is sometimes called “neo-classical theism,” in which one tries to get along without some of the divine attributes prized by classical theists. For example, one might insist that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent, but then allow that God is not entirely simple, or that the divine life involves a temporal succession of mental states, or whatever. I do not mean to be judgy here. If you have ever tried to think through, say, divine simplicity, and how to defend it against sophisticated objections, you will have sympathy for someone who wants to abandon it. But it is possible to sympathize with something you cannot accept, and for me, this is one of those cases.¹²

Now, it *might* be the case that someone fails to see why God is atemporal, say, because he has an incorrect notion of personhood—perhaps because he thinks that temporality is essential to the notion of personhood. But it seems to me that, often enough, the problem is not the notion of personhood as such. The usual reason why people defect from classical theism

¹² For a start on the contrast between classical and neo-classical theism, see section II (“Classical Theism”) and section III (“Neo-Classical Theism”) in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, ed. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher (Dordrecht: Springer 2013). See also section II (“Divine Attributes”) in *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). For a recent monograph that focuses on the very difficult and all-important topic of divine simplicity, see James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011).

is because—to continue with the example of temporality—it turns out that divine atemporality is really difficult to understand. At some point, they decide that the difficulties are insoluble. My point is that, to repeat something said earlier, while it does help to have a good notion of personhood, acquiring that notion is going to get you only a small part of the way towards an understanding of a *divine* person. All theories of personhood, whether analytic or medieval or whatever, need a lot of stretching and rethinking if they are to be applied outside of the created realm. I rather doubt that someone will develop, for its own sake, a notion of atemporal personhood, and then discover that it helps him understand God. It will almost surely happen the other way around: someone will realize that God has to be atemporal, and that will influence his notion of personhood. In short, there is only so much to hope for from a theory of personhood as such. Having an adequate notion is a necessary condition of doing theology well, but it falls very far short of being a sufficient condition.

By the way, let me briefly comment on a phrase you may have heard in an analytic context: “perfect being theology.” This is not so much a claim about what God is—the perfect being—as it is a strategy for thinking about God: you take as your starting point the idea that God is the perfect being, and you work from there to figure out what such a being must be like. If this sounds a bit Anselmian—it is.¹³

Analytic Approaches to the Trinity

Although this talk is not, strictly speaking, about analytic approaches to the Trinity, it would be slightly strange to say nothing about them.

A large percentage of analytic discussions of the Trinity have been aimed at dispelling the appearance of contradiction in Trinitarian doctrine: How can there be only one God if the Father, Son, and Spirit are all God and yet distinct from one another? Unsurprisingly, analytic approaches to the Trinity generally run the same risks that other Trinitarian theologies do: if you emphasize the oneness of God, you have to be careful not to fall into modalism or otherwise under-appreciate the distinctness of the persons, and if you emphasize the distinctions between the persons, you

¹³ See, for example, Katherin Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000). I differ from Rogers insofar as I would not call Aquinas a “perfect being theologian,” for the reason that he does not *start* with the notion of God as a perfect being, even though, obviously, he does hold that God is perfect.

have to be careful not to fall into tritheism or otherwise under-appreciate divine unity.¹⁴

To put the question as I just did is to ask how we can speak consistently of all three persons as one God while holding to the distinctions among them, simply taking as our starting point that the three persons are, so to speak, already there. In other words, framing the question in the way that I have abstracts from questions about generation, procession, and so forth. It would not be right to say that analytic approaches to the Trinity have entirely failed to address these questions,¹⁵ but I suspect that they need to become much more central, and that work on the Trinity that has not focused on such questions needs to be reassessed in light of them. That, I suspect, is because thinking them through properly is in fact a necessary condition of avoiding contradiction in Trinitarian theology.

To bring this back to the question of personhood: to the extent that one thinks that notions like generation and procession are best understood as analogous to human psychological operations, such a deepening of Trinitarian theology would simultaneously be an intensification of its relationship to the notion of personhood. Inasmuch as analytic Trinitarian theology, and analytic theology generally, is increasingly open to moves of a *ressourcement* sort, there are grounds for hope here.

I have distinguished among various analytic approaches to personhood, and I have suggested that the substantial/Aristotelian approaches are the most fruitful. I have further argued that, even with the best account of personhood, we have a long way to go; in conjunction with that, I have gestured briefly at analytic understandings of God and of the Trinity. In what remains, I would like to raise two questions: Why bother with the notion of person at all, and why bother with analytic philosophy?

Why Are Anthropology and Doctrine of God Not Enough?

Why do we need to develop an adequate notion of *person*? Let us suppose we have a good theory of human persons. And let us suppose further that we have a good theory of divine personhood. And, just for fun, let us then suppose we even have a good theory of angelic persons. Well, if we have all

¹⁴ For a helpful overview of recent analytic approaches, see Thomas H. McCall, "The Trinity," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology*, ed. James M. Arcadi and James T. Turner (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 181–94.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Mark Makin, "God from God: The Essential Dependence Model of Eternal Generation," *Religious Studies* 54 (2018): 377–94; William Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chapter 26.

of that, what does it matter whether we have a good theory of *personhood in general*? Why do we need a notion common to all three of these cases?

One answer, of course, is that, if there *is* a commonality to all the cases, then we should name it and think about it. But I think there may be something else going on. I propose that we need to hang on to the idea that man is made in the image and likeness of God. There needs to be a connection between our idea of divine personhood and our idea of human personhood.

Now, one reason for saying so might be the idea that, after all, theology is really about us. We had better get our theory of God right, lest we end up with a distorted notion of human beings. Well, no. Theology is not, after all, really about us. There is a reason we call it “theology”—namely, that it addresses God. Yes, it is also about creatures in their relation to God, but that “in their relation to” part means that the connection to God is crucial. So that is not my reason for saying that our way of thinking about God and our way of thinking about human nature should not run on entirely separate tracks.

My reason is instead that, in raising our minds to God, we inevitably do start with thoughts about the persons we know best, namely, human beings. We cannot avoid doing this, and even if we could avoid it, we should not, because, as mentioned before, we are made in God’s image and likeness. Shocking as it may sound, human nature is actually a clue to what God is like. We start with a notion of human personhood and adapt it to attempt to arrive at a notion that is adequate to God. To accomplish this, we need to think through not only what is required for being a human being, but also which elements of human nature we should abstract from and which elements we should not. Bodiliness has to go, but intellect and will (in some sense of those words) do not—and in proceeding in this fashion, we are, willy nilly, working with a notion of personhood as such.

It could be objected that our thinking here should not be based on a notion of personhood, but instead on biblical revelation about divine persons. In truth, however, the line cannot be drawn as sharply as one might think. It is impossible to derive all one’s ideas from Scripture, for the Bible itself presupposes that its readers know quite a few things (for example, what fish are, or boats). More particularly, someone who entirely lacked a notion of personhood, at least an implicit one, could not follow even the simplest biblical narrative. So, although we must indeed allow the Bible to refine our understanding of personhood, bringing such an understanding with us to the Bible is unavoidable. The only question is whether we bring a

good one or not. (Of course, our encounter with the Bible can and should refine our notion of personhood, but that is a different question.)

Earlier I mentioned that some analytic philosophies of personhood have a rather Cartesian flavor. I also mentioned that any theory of personhood needs to be stripped of physicality to be useful in a theological context. One might wonder, then, whether it would not be more efficient to just start from the notion of a Cartesian ego. Some of the work will already be done!

Well, if we could start from the notion of an angel, I bet this strategy would work. But the notion of a Cartesian ego is not really the notion of an angel. Angels have intellectual knowledge in the sense that their knowledge is not discursive; a Cartesian ego, it seems to me, is discursive. (At the very least, Descartes's own personal ego, as it expresses itself in the *Meditations*, is very discursive indeed.) So although I cannot actually give you any examples of things you will get wrong about God if you start from the notion of a Cartesian ego, it seems to me like a risky strategy. Cartesian egos do not exist, and we should not start with something that does not exist and try to infer what God is like from there. We should start with something that actually does exist, namely, human beings. The analogy of being is the analogy of *being*. Even if the road is longer and harder, it is more likely to lead to the destination.

Why Bother with Analytic Philosophy?

Finally, why bother with analytic philosophy? And if it is true, as I suggested earlier, that some of the more helpful strands of analytic philosophy are the ones that are intertwined with classical and medieval philosophy, why not just go straight to Aquinas and Aristotle?

Maybe you should. Life is short, and you have to make choices. Also, not everything works equally well for every person. Some people get a lot out of reading Martin Heidegger, while others do not. Different strokes for different folks. I have no desire to insist that everyone draw on analytic philosophy. But I will offer a few reasons why it might be helpful, and perhaps some of them will apply to some of you.

First, it is just a fact that a lot of people do philosophy in an analytical way. If you want to be able to talk to them, it helps to have read some of the texts they have read, to be conversant with their questions and terminology, and so on.

Second, analytic philosophy has certain virtues in terms of its

style—clarity, rigor, explicitness, a culture of argument and reply, and so on. Many people could stand to grow in these virtues.

Third, if it is good to read Aquinas, it is also good also to read people who read Aquinas; and some of them are analytic philosophers or analytic theologians.

Fourth: Your mileage may vary, but at least for me, sometimes there are Thomistic ideas that do not jump out until you see them explored somewhere other than in a work by Aquinas. I know a very intelligent Thomist who never really understood the point of saying that matter is the principle of individuation until she read Kripke.

Fifth: Some things have been learned since 1274, and even since 1308. It is just possible that there is something new to discover. Maybe even in analytic philosophy.

Let me sum these gentle recommendations up in the following way: some aspects of analytic philosophy are really just further elements of the long tradition of perennial philosophy. They might not be in Greek or Latin, or even German; they might not be written in a manner that looks traditional to us; but they are attacking the same problems, and developing the same themes, sometimes in new and insightful ways. N.V