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The Sacred, Religion, and Morality

DURING THE PERIOD that standard English-speaking authors refer to as that of modern continental philosophy, the trio of the “sacred,” “religion,” and “morality” became subjects of research in disciplines that developed out of or alongside classical theology and philosophy. The argument of the first half of this paper is that by and large this innovation has not been a fortuitous one for Catholic thought. For instance, it is generally agreed that August Comte (1798–1857) played a key role in the initial transformation of “religion” into what may be described as a *Time*-magazine sphere of society, that is, alongside the economy, politics, sports, theater, and so forth. His 1852 *Catechism of Positivism* supplied the founding charter for the discipline that has come to be known as the Sociology of Religion. This work, moreover, along with Comte’s other writings influenced in a broad sense the development of modern sociology.

Although born into a devout Catholic family, Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte’s own views on religion reflect the intellectual uncertainties of his period. He subtitles his *Catechism* a “Summary Exposition of the Universal Religion, in Eleven Dialogues between a Woman and a Positivist Priest of Humanity.”¹ It

should be evident that August Comte does not escape the skepticism and confusion with respect to religion that infected certain French authors during the first half of the nineteenth century. Even Friedrich Nietzsche was moved to remark on the strained ambiguity that, in his caustic opinion, was characteristic of figures like Comte and Ernest Renan: "How strangely devout for our taste even these recent French sceptics are, to the extent they have some Celtic blood in their ancestry!"²

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) played a crucial role in carrying Comte's views on religion to a next stage of reflection. Durkheim elucidated the nature of religion to be a celebration of a group's or a people's community or social solidarity.³ He postulated that common values form the cohesive bonds of society, particularly in primitive societies, although he also opined, as Mary Ann Glendon has observed, that in his own day communal religions had already lost most of their authority and effectiveness.⁴ Durkheim himself probably possessed a genuinely religious streak; his father had been the Chief Rabbi of the Vosges and Haute-Marne. Durkheim's own views on religion, however, are thoroughgoingly secular at best. Robert Nisbet, on the other hand, affords valuable insights into the analytical genius of Durkheim in his 1974 book, *The Sociology of Emile Durkheim*.⁵ I single out this author as a guide to discovering what may be profitable in Durkheim because Nisbet was a brilliant intellectual historian who saw European history in terms of the decline of morally bound groups. Durkheim's celebrated 1897 study on suicide anticipated this conclusion when the author signaled "moral poverty" and anomie as causal factors in the occurrences of suicide in nineteenth-century Europe.⁶

Max Weber (1864–1920) brought his peculiar style of idealist or antipositivist reflection to bear on the relationship between the sacred, religion, and morality. His promotion of the fact-value distinction led Leo Strauss to consider Weber the most profound exponent of values relativism in social science.⁷ The American political scientist Rogers Brubaker expounds on Weber's views and,

in general, the positivist basis of modern culture and society in *The Limits of Rationality, An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber*.⁸ Although Durkheim and Weber each develops his own approach to the role that religion plays in secular society, these two thinkers are generally accepted as the forgers of the functional empiricism that governs the epistemological outlook of the modern social sciences. This outlook today affects profoundly the way that Christian believers, especially Catholics, think about God, religion, and, to be sure, morality.⁹

One way to evaluate the influence that modern sociology has exercised on Catholics in the United States is to observe the evolution from its founding in 1938 of the American Catholic Sociological Society (ACSS) into its present-day embodiment as the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR). The ASR today describes itself as cultivating “the unique elements of its diverse heritage to support a broadly based sociology of religion relevant to many other subfields of sociology and to other scholarly disciplines.”¹⁰ This mission statement illustrates what is meant when we speak in the United States about a loss of Catholic identity in higher studies and helps to explain how easily old-line values relativism, for example in queer and gender studies, can replace the Catholic search for moral truth.

To the best of my knowledge, Bernard Lonergan is the only Catholic thinker who has been alert enough to recognize the dangers that the outgrowths of nineteenth-century positivism can pose to Catholic life and doctrine, and who at the same time has offered an intelligent and perceptive proposal to put the findings of what he called the “functional specialties” at the service of illuminating revealed truth. Many Catholic theologians and philosophers of the post-Vatican II period have chosen either to ignore the empirical sciences or, what is more widespread, to allow the methods and findings of these sciences to distort Catholic doctrine and theology.¹¹ Lonergan, on the other hand, while writing about the problem of evil, introduced an important distinction between the “context of the solution,” which he considered a legitimate purview of

the human empirical sciences, and “the systematic treatment of the solution itself.”¹² The latter, Father Lonergan always insisted, must surrender unconditionally to the hegemony of sound theological and Catholic explanation.

There are other figures who merit mention in a discussion of the modern secular academy’s appropriation of the “sacred.” These include the German religionist Rudolf Otto (1869–1936), whose 1917 book *Das Heilige* was translated in 1924 into English as *The Idea of the Holy*, and who has enjoyed a significant influence in the United States.¹³ There is also the Bucharest-born but American philosopher and historian of comparative religion, Mircea Eliade (1907–86), who, along with Otto, is mainly responsible for introducing American students to what may be described as a nontheological analysis of the sacred. His 1959 *The Sacred and the Profane* was read widely in American Catholic circles, especially after the Second Vatican Council when seminaries and universities commonly began to pay serious and sometimes uncritical attention to studies outside the patrimony of the Catholic tradition.

Father Matthew Lamb has explained how the Second Vatican Council was introduced to the Catholics of North America by media-supported “popularizers” and other pundits.¹⁴ As a result, many proposals in theological studies were acted upon without proper scrutiny in order to determine their conformity with the documents of the Council. For example, the early proponents of the hermeneutics of discontinuity argued that supplementing the study of theology with selected readings from the empirical life sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology) formed a necessary part of the updating that the Fathers of the Council had mandated. Others who discovered for the first time the Italian word *aggiornamento* claimed that an integrated or correlative approach to theology was a way of responding to the Council’s requirement that Catholic studies become more open to the world than had been the case in the theological programs of the preconciliar period. The codeword used in English was “secularity.”

This experimental turn in Catholic studies occurred well before the late Holy Father drew our attention to what he considered the profound hermeneutical significance of *Gaudium et Spes* 22 for all post-Vatican II Catholic theology.¹⁵ In retrospect, however, we may now question whether the uncritical adoption of books and articles that proceed on the methodological and substantive assumptions of the modern empirical sciences has in fact served to both promote and sustain a sound Catholic theology. One may argue that the failure by Catholic theologians over the past thirty years to observe the kind of distinction that Bernard Lonergan had clarified in the late '60s has resulted in a widespread confusion about the proper place that theology holds in evaluating religion and religious experience. This suspicion is true especially of English-speaking scholarship, a full account of which would require attention to figures such as the American savant and self-described "piecemeal supernaturalist" William James (1842–1910).¹⁶ Whereas the Church in the nineteenth century had to defend the truth of divine faith against a popular cultural rationalism that dismissed divine revelation as fantastic, the challenge today is to combat the widespread religious relativism that, as Pope Benedict XVI has reminded us, threatens to enact its own pernicious form of dictatorship. Piecemeal supernaturalism of the Jamesian variety evidently does not supply part of the solution.

In order to complete this brief survey of figures that may claim a place in the development of sociological outlooks on religion, it would be necessary to locate Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Otto, and even Eliade within the evolution of modern and postmodern continental philosophy itself. This gargantuan task must wait for another day.¹⁷ Allow me nonetheless to draw your attention to one recently published book in the United States that may assist in evaluating the influences of modern philosophy on the configuration of the sacred, religion, and morality.

David Bentley Hart is an American convert to Orthodoxy who recently published a 460-page book titled *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*.¹⁸ In the words of one especially acute

reviewer, “Hart tells the Western story of being in order to remember something western thought has labored to forget: the intrusion of Christianity into that story, and the vision of reality the intrusion enables.”¹⁹ David Hart is not a Thomist, although among Orthodox theologians today he surely can claim to be the nearest thing to a working Thomist. At the same time, Hart is sympathetic to the *ressourcement* theologians. Gregory of Nyssa supplies the principal framework for the vision of God and being that Hart works out in his massive *apologia* for Christian truth. He also draws upon Denys, Maximus, John of Damascus, Cyril, and Augustine. Hart’s impressive and scholarly work shows that making a critique of the influences that modern continental philosophy have exercised on Christian theology is not limited to those Catholic thinkers who have taken *Fides et Ratio* seriously.

In the second part of this paper, I propose some themes from Aquinas that may help to correct the reductionist distortions that a student is likely to encounter today in studying the sacred, religion, and morality to the extent these studies follow the figures of the secular academy mentioned in part one. One place to start is what recent Thomists have had to say about beauty.²⁰ In North America today, it may be noted, many students are given to think that Catholic discussions about beauty happen only among the followers of German theologians like Hans Urs von Balthasar or Dietrich von Hildebrand.²¹ This is not true. For instance, the Thomist philosopher Alice Ramos (in a recent article published in Spain) develops what the Angelic Doctor says about beauty and its relevance for the moral life.²²

Aquinas of course approaches beauty from the perspective of the deep-seated order that is resident in all that exists. Professor Ramos comments that “the metaphysical status of things is such that they are in order and this metaphysical order is, as Aquinas puts it, ‘the chief beauty [*summus decor*] in things.’”²³ Beauty for the Thomist pertains to the metaphysical structure of things. At its deepest or

highest level, this order attends the modes of being that Thomists call the transcendentals.²⁴

A Thomist approach to the sacred, religion, and morality should find its starting point with the transcendental properties of being and being itself. It is difficult to imagine a more dramatic counterpole than First Philosophy to the measuring and recording of human experience that launches the positivist in his search for the truth. This is not to admit, of course, that the starting point of Thomist reflection on being lacks empirical foundation. The ordering of the sciences in which natural philosophy precedes metaphysics is important for Thomists, at least those who remain deeply uncomfortable with using skyhooks as starting points for philosophy. In the tradition of the River Forest School, Father Benedict Ashley explains why the natural sciences are important for Thomist philosophy, especially metaphysics, in terms of the irreducibility of the sciences to one univocal science on the Cartesian model. Because being is analogous, a valid task of the metaphysician will be to identify the analogically common principles of the sciences, to distinguish the sciences, and to relate them.²⁵ Some Thomists include beauty among these principles. They may appeal justly to Aquinas himself. He acknowledges that the difference in meaning between the good and the beautiful is that while the good answers to appetite and acts like a final cause, “the beautiful answers to knowledge and acts like a formal cause.”²⁶ Thus, there are beautiful things, both material and immaterial, and man can stand on the lookout for them.

To discuss the philosophical status of beauty, most students of Thomism turn to the work of Jacques Maritain. His 1920 *Art and Scholasticism* surely inspires the above-mentioned essay by Alice Ramos. Jacques Maritain and his followers consider beauty as one of the transcendental properties of being.²⁷ While this thesis remains debated among both Thomists and non-Thomists, the fact remains that Jacques and Raïssa Maritain’s early interest in aesthetics prompted other Thomists to think about the topic.²⁸

Two English-speaking Thomists come to mind: First, the English Dominican, Father Thomas Gilby, and his 1934 *Poetic Experience: An Introduction to Thomist Aesthetic*.²⁹ Second, the North American Armand A. Maurer, and his 1983 *About Beauty: A Thomistic Interpretation*.³⁰ These books (almost fifty years apart) represent the Leonine revival of Thomism as it flourished in Great Britain and North America. Armand Maurer writes out of the Gilson-inspired initiative at Toronto.³¹ Thomas Gilby of course represents the prodigious work of the English Dominican province to make Aquinas known to the Anglophone world.³² Father Gilby drew heavily on the works of classical Thomist commentators and so, arguably, represents a different stripe of Leonine revival Thomists than do Gilson and Maritain, although he was their younger contemporary.

I begin with the most recent publication. In his chapter on “Beauty and God,” Father Maurer concludes that “we can call God beautiful, then, as the source of the world’s loveliness; but more suitably He should be called super-beautiful as containing in a superlative way all the marks of the beautiful.”³³ He goes on to suggest that the relationship of what appears radiant, ordered, and whole to the primary perfection of being is such that no purely aesthetic appreciation on the part of an aesthete can suffice to capture it. A metaphysical glance is required. Why is God “super-beautiful”? Thomists answer by pointing to the divine existence (*ipsum esse*). As Father Maurer explains, “the three notes of beauty: radiance, order and integrity, are found in God, not imperfectly as in creatures, but perfectly and supremely. Thus God is eminently beautiful, in the proper sense of the word. Beauty, however, is not the first perfection or name of God. That is ‘He Who Is.’ God’s beauty, like the beauty of all things, is but one facet of his being or actual existence.”³⁴ The measuring measure of superlative beauty then is the divine being not the human mind, a beauty of which there is, as St. John of the Cross in another context suggested, a “trace” in all creatures. Hence one recollects the lines of John of the Cross from *The Spiritual Canticle*:

Seeking my Love
 I will head for the mountains and for watersides,
 I will not gather flowers,
 Nor fear wild beasts;
 I will go beyond strong men and frontiers.

O woods and thickets,
 Planted by the hand of my Beloved!
 O green meadow,
 coated, bright, with flowers,
 Tell me, has He passed by you?

Pouring out a thousand graces,
 He passed these groves in haste,
 And having looked at them,
 With His image alone,
 Clothed them in beauty.”³⁵

While the full perfection of beauty is found only in God, yet the created trace and source for our analogical contemplation of beauty is at the heart of the sacramentalization of being that is a fixture of the Catholic life.

In marked contrast with this rich approach, Catholic theology is questionably served by approaches to the sacred that analyze human experience statistically, except to the extent that such studies illuminate the “context of the solution” that philosophy and theology may provide. Even Nietzsche recognized that there was something defective in keeping God around as an object of human investigation: “How Catholic, how un-German, August Comte’s sociology smells to us, with its Roman logic of the instincts!”³⁶

Father Maurer’s discussion of the divine beauty is a first step toward a distinctive Thomist approach to the sacred. We need further to consider what Aquinas says about the beauty of the eternal Word and the incarnate Word. One text that Father Maurer brings to our attention is Aquinas’s commentary on the second verse of Psalm 45:

“Fairer in beauty are you than the sons of men.”³⁷ Aquinas there enumerates a fourfold beauty in Christ: divine beauty, the beauty of the moral virtues, the beauty of moral behavior, and the beauty of body. The progression is familiar. Aquinas moves from being to disposition for action, then from disposition to action itself, and then from action to the instrument of human action, which is the body. We behold beauty, as it were, proceeding from the inside out.

Christ’s true fairness, however, is judged in the last analysis on the basis of his obedience and love. When Aquinas ponders the disfigurement that afflicts Christ’s body during his Passion, he replies that Christ’s wounds do not detract from his beauty inasmuch as they remain in his resurrected body the emblems of his victory on the cross. In fact, Aquinas further testifies at *Summa theologiae* III q. 54, art. 4, ad 1 that in the place of Christ’s wounds, “a special beauty [*specialis decor*] appears.” We may conclude then that the paschal mystery supplies the locus where the sacred definitively appears in the world as the superlatively beautiful. It barely needs mentioning that nineteenth-century rationalist sceptics, both Catholic and Protestant alike, found the mystery of the Cross and Christ’s sufferings on it the most difficult Christian doctrines to reconcile with their understanding of the sacred, religion, and morality.

Aquinas finds beauty in God himself, reflected in the world that God has created, and most manifest to believers in the person and mysteries of Jesus Christ. Christ and his mysteries are accessible to man only because of the authoritative communication of divine truth that we call revelation. Divine faith enables the one who believes to embrace the truth about the sacred and to discern the authentically beautiful. This embrace and discernment find their highest expression through the operation of those gifts of the Holy Spirit that Aquinas relates to the virtues of faith and charity, namely, the gifts of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Aquinas distinguishes those gifts of the Holy Spirit that strengthen the intellect from other kinds of knowledge by reason of an *instinctus* or knowledge by sympathy. Nietzsche was right: there is

something “Roman” about instinct. He had no idea of course about the origin of this instinct.

Knowledge by sympathy is a phrase employed by Father Gilby, who also recalls a line from Shakespeare that illustrates it: “Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered.”³⁸ In *Poetic Experience*, Gilby notes that mystical writers seem to favor analogies from what are regarded as “the lower and more emotional sensations.”³⁹ Sympathies, so to speak. He cites the seventeenth-century Spanish author of the *Theologia Mystica Divi Thomae*, Thomas de Vallgornera (c. 1595–1665), who compiled a list of names that spiritual authors use to describe experimental knowledge of the sacred: “Contemplation, rapture, melting, being transformed, union, exultation, jubilation, to be wrapt in darkness, taste, embrace, kiss, to conceive and bear, to be brought into the wine-cellar, to be drunk, to follow the scent, to hear a voice, to enter into the bedchamber, sleep in peace and take your rest.”⁴⁰ Thanks to the work of Father Servais Pinckaers, we are reminded that these terms do not concern only those engaged, noetically or otherwise, in mystical or ascetical theology. Sympathies of this kind are the rightful property of ordinary Christians and may inform the moral knowledge available to them.

Gilby recalls two things that Aquinas teaches about love: first, love applies itself to the object, that is, “Love goes out to the thing, not the thought of the thing.”⁴¹ Second, love becomes an informing cause of the act of knowledge: “The mind reaches out and really feels its object, as something that really penetrates it. In this way love acts on the mind as a formal cause.”⁴² Love shapes the will, and beauty draws the mind, and so there occurs an intentional union between the lover and the beautiful loved thing.

We are in a position to suggest, at least tentatively, several conclusions: first, that the most lovable object is also the most beautiful. God. The sacred. Second, that the most loveable object that has appeared on earth is known through love-infused faith knowledge. The crucified and risen Lord. He is the origin and cause of true religion. Third, that human life achieves its rectitude by embracing a moral

goodness that even in suffering never loses its attractiveness and indeed beauty. The “good and beautiful life,” as Jacques Maritain would say.⁴³ These are not the conclusions that one is likely to investigate in courses listed under the heading of Sociology of Religion. What a contemporary Thomist recognizes as lacking in the modern positivist approach to the sacred, religion, and morality is best captured by what Aquinas says in his *Super Librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus*: “Beauty establishes the integrity of things in themselves, and also their communication in the whole, each in its own style, not with uniformity. The higher are shared and the lower are ennobled by this intercourse.”⁴⁴ Everlasting Beauty is what a Thomist should look for when he or she ponders the sacred, religion, and morality.

Notes

1. The original title page of the 1852 Paris edition *chez l’auteur* reads, “Catéchisme Positiviste ou Sommaire Exposition de la Religion Universelle en Onze Entretiens Systématiques entre Une Femme et Un Prêtre de L’Humanité.”
2. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Ian Johnson, Part 3, no. 48:

How strangely devout for our taste even these recent French sceptics are, to the extent they have some Celtic blood in their ancestry! How Catholic, how un-German, August Comte’s sociology smells to us, with its Roman logic of the instincts! How Jesuitical that charming and clever cicerone from Port Royal, Sainte-Beuve, in spite of all his hostility to the Jesuits! And then there’s Ernest Renan: how inaccessible to us northerners the language of such a Renan sounds, in which every moment some nothing of religious tension destroys the equilibrium of his soul, which is, in a more refined sense, sensual and reclining comfortably!
3. The noted Dominican A. D. Sertillanges observed that Durkheim however “failed to explain the right of society with regard to the individual or the duty of society toward itself.” See his article “Four Central Problems” in *Commonweal* 44 (1946): 329.
4. For an illuminating evaluation of Durkheim’s contribution to modern Catholic social thought, see Mary Ann Glendon, *The Transformation of Family Law: State, Law, and Family in the United States and Western Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 302–6.
5. Robert Nisbet, *The Sociology of Emile Durkheim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

6. Glendon, *Transformation*, 303: “Durkheim called attention to what he believed were the human costs of the dis-integration of modern society—the loss of connections not only to other people, but to the past and the future; in short, a profound loss of meaning.”
7. For further discussion, see Nasser Behnegar, *Leo Strauss, Max Weber, and the Scientific Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
8. Rogers Brubaker, *The Limits of Rationality, An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber* (London & Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984).
9. On one account, Weber holds the importance of religious ideas, which cannot be reduced to the component of material interests (Marx) or to the social nexus and function (Durkheim). Thus, Weber says in the “Introduction” to his 1920 *Sociology of World Religions*: “Not ideas, but material and ideal [ideological] interests, directly govern men’s conduct. Yet very frequently the world images that have been created by ideas, like a switchman, have determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest.”
10. By the first half of the twentieth century, Catholics in the United States had developed an interest in the role of sociology within Catholic studies. What is known today as the ASR evolved from the ACSS:

The Association was founded in 1938 as the American Catholic Sociological Society. By the mid-1960’s, members’ interests began to focus on the sociology of religion, and in 1971 the ACSS changed its name to the Association for the Sociology of Religion. Since then, ASR has cultivated the unique elements of its diverse heritage to support a broadly based sociology of religion relevant to many other subfields of sociology and to other scholarly disciplines. To reflect this mission, our journal’s title was changed, beginning in 1993, from *Sociological Analysis* to *Sociology of Religion*. (See <http://www.sociologyofreligion.com/geninfo.htm>)
11. One of the best examples of the negative effect of the positivist studies on Catholic moral teaching is the psychological evaluation of homosexuality as a disorder. Dr. Robert Spitzer played a pivotal role in 1973 in removing homosexuality from the psychiatric manual of mental disorders. He now, however, challenges the widely held assumption that a homosexual orientation is “who one is”—an intrinsic part of a person’s identity that can never be changed. See the results of a study conducted by Dr. Robert L. Spitzer and published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32, no. 5 (October 2003): 403–17.
12. For example, see Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992):

But the solution to man’s problem of evil has been seen to lie, not in a human initiative, but in an acceptance of the solution that God has provided; and while empirical human science can lead on to the further context of the solution, the systematic treatment of the solution itself is theological. In a word, empirical human science can become prac-

tical only through theology, and the relentless modern drift to social engineering and totalitarian controls is the fruit of man's effort to make human science practical though he prescind from God and from the solution God provides for man's problem. . . . Then it is that the theologian needs the alliance of fully enlightened scientists. For the drift to totalitarianism can be stopped only in the measure that human scientists work out intelligent and reasonable solutions to human problems and theologians succeed in convincing hardheaded practical men, on the one hand, that by God's grace intelligent and reasonable solutions can work and, on the other hand, that the desertion of intelligent and reasonable solutions for "realist" policies is the operative principle in the breakdown and the disintegration of civilizations. (767–68)

13. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).
14. Father Matthew Lamb mentions popularizing at the end of a response to Margaret Farley in the *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 2–5: "Any effort to spin Papal and Vatican concern for Catholic theological orthodoxy as 'stifling scholarship' is just plain false. The dissent is not based upon serious theological scholarship but on superficial popularized distortions. Orthodox Catholic faith enlightens human intelligence. Dissent weakens both faith and intelligence."
15. The last reference to the theme is found in the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II for the Year of the Eucharist, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, no. 6: "In the Incarnate Word, both the mystery of God and the mystery of man are revealed."
16. See Linda Simon, *Genuine Reality: A Life of William James* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998). A seminal work for discussions of the Sacred is James' Gifford Lectures published in 1902 as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.
17. Other figures working in the United States would require attention, for example, Yale Professor Paul Weiss, who later taught at The Catholic University of America, gave attention to "Religion and Art" in the 1963 Aquinas Lecture series at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
18. David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).
19. Robert W. Jenson in *Pro Ecclesia* 14 (2005): 235–7.
20. For example, see Abelardo Lobato, *Ser y belleza*, with an introduction by F. Fernández Rodríguez and J. L. Gutiérrez García, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Unión Editorial, 2005).
21. For example, see the short article by Alice von Hildebrand, "Debating Beauty: Jacques Maritain and Dietrich von Hildebrand," *Crisis* 22, no. 7 (July/August 2004).
22. Alice Ramos, "Moral Beauty and Affective Knowledge in Aquinas," *Acta Philosophica* 13 (2004): 321–37.
23. See *Summa contra Gentiles* bk. 3, chap. 71, no. 3:

Perfecta bonitas in rebus creatis non inveniretur nisi esset ordo bonitatis in eis, ut scilicet quaedam sint aliis meliora: non enim implerentur

omnes gradus possibles bonitatis; neque etiam aliqua creatura Deo similaretur quantum ad hoc quod alteri emeretur. Tolleretur etiam summus decor a rebus, si ab eis ordo distinctorum et disparium tolleretur. [Perfect goodness would not be found in created things unless there were an order of goodness in them, in the sense that some of them are better than others. Otherwise, all possible grades of goodness would not be realized, nor would any creature be like God by virtue of holding a higher place than another. The highest beauty would be taken away from things, too, if the order of distinct and unequal things were removed.]

24. In a paper delivered to the Thomistic Institute at a conference in 1999 (held under the auspices of the Jacques Maritain Center at University of Notre Dame), Father Benedict Ashley succinctly explains the doctrine of the transcendentals, noting that some Thomists dispute whether beauty should be numbered among them.

The second part of metaphysics, the science proper, is the causal demonstration of the properties of the subject in terms of the quasi-definition established in the first part. These properties are designated by terms that transcend the categories established in natural science and hence are called “transcendentals.” They are not properties in the same way as the properties of material things that are included in the nine categories of accidents established in natural science, since they are distinguished from the analogical notion of being as such only by relations of reason. They are usually listed as unity, truth, and goodness, and some wish to add beauty. In fact there may be an indefinite number of such transcendentals, a question open for metaphysical exploration. Aristotle confined himself to the discussion of the transcendental unity, along with some remarks on truth and goodness. “Unity” adds to the notion of being as such only a negative note, an absence of division. Thus it would seem that this second part of First Philosophy deals with three principal topics, being as such and its relation to knowing minds (truth) and to free wills (goodness).

One may also consult the essays in *Die Logik des Transzendentalen: Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed., Martin Pickavé, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia, Veröffentlichungen des Thomas-Instituts der Universität Köln*, no. 30 (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2003).

25. The following excerpt is from the same paper delivered at the 1999 Thomistic Institute:

First Philosophy, therefore, does not have any data of its own but derives all its data from the special sciences and ultimately from natural science. It cannot reduce these sciences to a single science; however, since the various kinds of being with which these sciences deal are only analogously one. Thus its task is to distinguish and relate the various

sciences and to inquire in what way they have common principles. Thus metaphysics is an interdisciplinary science which seeks to unite all human knowledge, not by reduction to a single science, as Plato attempted by his dialectic that supposedly leads to a vision of the One, but by preserving their autonomy and empirical grounding. Thus it coordinates them in view of their ultimate, spiritual causes.

I am withholding judgment on the long dispute about the formal requisites for the abstractive existential judgment of *separatio* that, according to Aquinas, discovers the subject matter of being as being as object for a distinctive science. For those interested in what Father Ashley thinks, his book-length study of metaphysics, *The Way Toward Wisdom: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, is forthcoming. For an account of River Forest Thomism, see Benedict Ashley, "The River Forest School and the Philosophy of Nature Today," in *Philosophy and the God of Abraham*, ed. R. James Long (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), 1–16.

26. *Summa Theologiae* I a q. 5, art. 4, ad 1, trans. Thomas Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts* (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1982), 77.
27. See for example what Maritain says in chapter five, "Art and Beauty," of his *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Scribner, 1962):

Like the one, the true and the good, the beautiful is being itself considered from a certain aspect; it is a property of being. It is not an accident superadded to being, it adds to *being* only a relation of reason: it is being considered as delighting, by the mere intuition of it, an intellectual nature. Thus everything is beautiful, just as everything is good, at least in a certain relation. And as being is everywhere present and everywhere varied the beautiful likewise is diffused everywhere and is everywhere varied. Like being and the other transcendentals, it is essentially *analogous*, that is to say, it is predicated for diverse reasons, *sub diversa ratione*, of the diverse subjects of which it is predicated: each kind of being is in its own way, is good in its own way, is *beautiful* in its own way.
28. Ashley notes that only some philosophers include beauty with the customary list of transcendentals: "They are usually listed as unity, truth, and goodness, and some wish to add beauty." See note 24 above.
29. Thomas Gilby, *Poetic Experience: An Introduction to Thomist Aesthetic* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934).
30. Armand A. Maurer, *About Beauty: A Thomist Interpretation* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1983).
31. For further information, see my "Gilson, Étienne (1884–1978)" in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 227–29.
32. See Aidan Nichols, OP, *Dominican Gallery: Portrait of a Culture* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1997).
33. Maurer, *About Beauty*, 117.

34. Maurer, *About Beauty*, 115. With “He Who Is,” Maurer refers to *Summa theologiae* I, q. 67, art. 1, and to pertinent references in É. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1956).
35. *Cántico Espiritual* (“The Spiritual Canticle”) canticles 3, 4, and 5 in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD and Otilio Rodriguez, OCD (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 410.
36. See above, note 2.
37. *In Psalmos* 44:2 (RSV=45:2), ed. Vivès, vol. XVIII, 503–5.
38. Gilby, *Poetic*, 75.
39. *Ibid.*, 86.
40. Thomas Vallgornera, *Mystica theologia D. Thomae utriusque theologiae scholasticae et mysticae principis* (Barcelona, 1662), q. I, art. i.
41. Gilby, *Poetic*, 44.
42. *Ibid.*, 43, citing John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theologici*, *In Iam-2ae*. disp. 18, art. 4.
43. Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy: A Historical and Critical Survey of the Great Systems* (New York: Scribner, 1964), 36, cited in Ralph McInerny, *The Very Rich Hours of Jacques Maritain: A Spiritual Life* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 185. McInerny observes that *Moral Philosophy* “could be taken as Maritain’s farewell to philosophy. From now on, the center of gravity of his thinking becomes theological” (186).
44. Exposition, *De Divinis Nominibus*, iv, lect. 6 in *Philosophical Texts*, trans. Thomas Gilby, (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1982), 392.