The Meaning of “Beauty” and Its Transcendental Status in the Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas

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This dissertation investigates whether “beauty” is a transcendental in the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas. For Thomas, a transcendental is a term that expresses a distinct attribute of every being insofar as it exists, and which therefore reveals something unique about the nature of all reality. Hence, the question of whether beauty is a transcendental for Thomas has important implications not only for his metaphysics, but for his thought in general.

The Introduction argues that the question we are investigating actually consists of two questions, a historical one and a systematic one: “Did Thomas himself consider beauty to be a distinct transcendental?” and “Does Thomas’s thought imply or entail that beauty is a distinct transcendental?” Furthermore, since beauty cannot be a distinct attribute of every being for Thomas unless it has a distinct meaning, neither question can be answered in isolation from a third question: “What is the meaning of ‘beauty’ in Thomas’s thought?”

Chapter One examines the historical question regarding beauty’s transcendental status, namely whether Thomas himself considered beauty a transcendental. The chapter proceeds by extracting from his writings the characteristics that distinguish the transcendentals from all other terms, and then determining whether he attributes these marks to beauty.

Chapter Two begins our investigation of the systematic question regarding beauty’s transcendental status, namely whether Thomas’s metaphysics implies or entails that beauty is a transcendental. The chapter examines the attempts of certain contemporary Thomists to prove either that beauty is a transcendental or that it is not.
Our examination of the systematic question concerning beauty’s transcendental status continues with an analysis of Thomas’s opinions on both the subjective factors of aesthetic experience, i.e. a person’s perception of and delight in beauty, and the objective factors of that experience, i.e. the ontological conditions for beauty in a being. Hence, we investigate the nature of aesthetic perception in Chapter Three, the nature of aesthetic pleasure in Chapter Four, and the nature of beauty’s conditions in Chapter Five.

The sixth and final chapter uses these findings to formulate a conclusion regarding the meaning of beauty and its transcendental status in Thomas’s metaphysics.
This dissertation by Michael J. Rubin fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in philosophy approved by John F. Wippel, Ph.D., as Director, and by Gregory T. Doolan, Ph.D., and Kevin White, Ph.D., as Readers.

John F. Wippel, Ph.D., Director

Gregory T. Doolan, Ph.D., Reader

Kevin White, Ph.D., Reader
To Mom and Dad,

and to Meghan, Stephanie, Kolbe, and Joseph
“So I think, Hippias,
that I have been benefited by conversation with both of you;
for I think I know the meaning of the proverb
‘beautiful things are difficult.’”
—Socrates, in Plato’s *Hippias Major*, 304e
CONTENTS

Illustrations ........................................................................................................................................ ix

Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................................... x

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................. xii

Introduction ............................................................................................................................................ 1
   A. The Transcendentals for Thomas Aquinas ................................................................. 1
   B. Beauty for Thomas Aquinas ...................................................................................... 6
   C. The Phrase “For Thomas Aquinas” ........................................................................... 16

The Structure and Significance of the Present Work ................................................................. 17

Chapter One: The Historical Question

Introduction ............................................................................................................................................ 21
   A. Thomas’s Texts on the Transcendentals ................................................................. 21
      1. In Sent. I, 8.1.3 ............................................................................................................ 23
      2. In Sent. I, 19.5.1 ad 3 and corpus ............................................................................ 28
      3. De veritate 1.1 ........................................................................................................... 34
      4. De veritate 21.1 ......................................................................................................... 43
      5. De veritate 21.3 ......................................................................................................... 51
      6. Texts before and after the In De divinis nominibus ............................................. 65
   B. Thomas’s Texts on Beauty ............................................................................................ 68
      1. In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4 ................................................................................................. 69
      2. In De divinis nominibus 4.5 .................................................................................... 71
      3. Summa Theologiae I, 5.4 ad 1 and I-II, 27.1 ad 3 .............................................. 79

Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 82
Chapter Two: The Systematic Question

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 88

A. Transcendentalist Arguments for Beauty’s Being a Distinct Transcendental .......... 92
   1. Beauty Is the Synthesis or Unity of Other Transcendentals ............................. 93
   2. Beauty Is Being as Related to a Third Power of the Soul ............................... 95
   3. Beauty Is Being as Related to Both Intellect and Will ................................... 98
   4. Beauty Is Being as Proportioned to the Intellect by Its Perfection ..................... 101
   5. Aertsen’s Guideline Is Based on a Deficient Account of Adding to Being ... 106

B. Aertsen’s Arguments against Beauty’s Being a Distinct Transcendental ............. 116
   1. There Is No Third Power of the Soul to which Beauty Can Relate ................. 117
   2. Goodness Ends the List of Transcendentals as “The Ultimate” ....................... 120
   3. Beauty Is an Attribute of Goodness, Not Being .............................................. 123
   4. Truth Already Adds to Being What Beauty Adds to Goodness ....................... 131
   5. Beauty Is “The Extension of the True to the Good” ...................................... 133

Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 144

Chapter Three: The Vision of the Beautiful

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 150

A. Thomas’s Theory of Knowledge ....................................................................... 157
   1. The Nature of Knowing for Thomas ............................................................... 157
   2. The Process of Human Knowing for Thomas ............................................... 169

B. Candidates for Aesthetic Visio ........................................................................ 181
   1. Pre-abstractive Sense-Intellectual Intuition ...................................................... 184
   2. Connatural Knowledge .................................................................................. 187
   3. The Return to the Phantasm .......................................................................... 194

Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 200

Chapter Four: The Delight of the Beautiful

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 211
## A. Candidates for Aesthetic Pleasure

1. Pleasures of Sense ................................................................. 214
2. Pleasures of Intellect .............................................................. 221
   i. Pleasure in the Act of Knowing ......................................... 221
   ii. Pleasure in the Thing Known ......................................... 232

## B. Confirmations That Aesthetic Pleasure Is Delight in the Object Known

1. The Pain of Ugliness ............................................................. 238
2. Non-aesthetic Pleasure in Knowing ...................................... 240
3. Connatural Knowledge and Aesthetic Judgment .................... 243
4. The Exclusion of the Lower Senses from Aesthetic Experience .... 245

## Conclusion ................................................................. 261

---

### Chapter Five: The Objective Conditions for Beauty

#### Introduction ................................................................. 270

#### A. The Three Conditions for Beauty ................................................................. 275
1. Beauty’s Conditions in Themselves ........................................... 276
   i. Integrity or Perfection (*Integritas vel Perfectio*) ................... 277
   ii. Harmony or Due Proportion (*Consonantia vel Debita Proportio*) ... 283
   iii. Brightness (*Claritas*) .................................................... 286
2. Beauty’s Conditions in Relation to Each Other .................. 301
   i. Their Order according to Nature ..................................... 301
   ii. Their Order according to Generation .............................. 313

#### B. Beauty, Brightness, and Possession through Vision .................. 321
1. The Nature of *Comprehensio* ............................................... 322
2. The Cause of *Comprehensio* ............................................... 331
3. Confirmations That Beauty Causes *Comprehensio* ............... 335

#### C. Beauty in Thomas’s Metaphysics: The Extension of the True to the Good? ........ 346

## Conclusion ................................................................. 356

---

### Chapter Six: The Meaning and Transcendental Status of Beauty

#### Introduction ................................................................. 361
A. The Meaning of “Beauty” ........................................................................................................ 361

B. Beauty and the Marks of the Transcendents ................................................................. 364
   1. The General Mode of Being Expressed by Beauty ......................................................... 365
   2. Beauty and the Marks according to Reality ................................................................. 376
   3. Beauty and the Marks according to Meaning .............................................................. 378

C. The Last Transcendental ................................................................................................ 380

Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 389

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 396

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 408
ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>The Traits of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Writings</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>The Derivation of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Writings</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>The Traits of the Relational Transcendentals in Thomas’s Metaphysics</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>The Derivation of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Metaphysics</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>The Circle in the Acts of the Soul</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>The Tightening of the Circle in the Acts of the Soul by Beauty</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>The Circularity of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Writings</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>The Circularity of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Metaphysics</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

Primary Texts
All subdivisions are listed in proper order without preceding designations except when necessary for clarity. Book numbers of commentaries and the parts of the Summa Theologiae are listed in Roman numerals and followed by commas. Other subdivisions, such as distinctions, questions, articles, lectiones, and chapters, are given in Arabic numerals and separated by periods.

Contra Gentiles Summa contra gentiles
De 108 articulis Responsio ad magistrum Ioannem de Vercellis de 108 articulis
De anima Quaestiones disputatae de anima
De malo Quaestiones disputatae de malo
De perfectione De perfectione spiritualis vitae
De Potentia Quaestiones disputatae de potentia
De regno De regno ad regem Cypri
De spiritualibus creaturis Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis
De veritate Quaestiones disputatae de veritate
De virtutibus Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus
In I Corinthios Super primam Epistolam ad Corinthios lectura
In II Corinthios Super secundam Epistolam ad Corinthios lectura
In I Timotheum Super primam Epistolam ad Timotheum lectura
In De anima Sentencia libri De anima
In De caelo In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio
In De Causis Super librum De Causis expositio
In De divinis nominibus In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio
In De hebdomadibus Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus
In De sensu Sentencia libri De sensu et sensato
In De Trinitate Super Boetium De Trinitate
In Ethic. Sententia libri Ethicorum
In Galatas Super Epistolam ad Galatas lectura
In Hebraeos Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos lectura
In Ioannem Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura
In Iob Expositio super Iob ad litteram
In Isaiaam Expositio super Isaiaam ad litteram
In Jeremiam In Jeremiam prophetam expositio
In Mattheaeum Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura
In Metaphysic. In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio
In Peryermeneias Expositio libri Peryermeneias
In Psalmos In psalmos Davidis expositio
In Physic. Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis
In Politic. Sententia libri Politicorum
In Post. An. Expositio libri Posteriorum
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Sent.</th>
<th>Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Symbolum</td>
<td>In Symbolum Apostolorum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quodlibet</td>
<td>Quaestiones de quolibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabula Ethicorum</td>
<td>Tabula libri Ethicorum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Editions**

**Busa**


**Leonine**

*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, opera omnia, iussu impensaque Leonis XIII P.M. edita*. Rome: S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1882–.

**Mandonnet**


**Marietti**

*Opera omnia*. Turin/Rome: Marietti (dates vary).

**Parma**

*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, Ordinis Praedicatorum Opera omnia*. Parma: Typis Petri Fiaccadori, 1852–1873.

**Saffrey**

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INTRODUCTION

Is beauty a transcendental for Thomas Aquinas? The question is not a simple one since beauty and the transcendentals are both easily misunderstood areas of Thomas’s thought and the phrase “for Thomas Aquinas” has two possible meanings. Thus, we cannot even understand the question, much less begin to answer it, without a basic grasp of Thomas’s thought on beauty, his doctrine of the transcendentals, and the two meanings of the phrase “for Thomas Aquinas.” We will begin with the transcendentals since they provide the general context for our question.

A. The Transcendentals for Thomas Aquinas

In a groundbreaking study from 1963, Stanislas Breton declares Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentals to be “classic and yet poorly known.”¹ Fortunately, this verdict is no longer true, thanks to the diligent exposition and reconstruction of this doctrine by scholars since then, and especially by Jan Aertsen, whose masterpiece on the transcendentals in Thomas’s thought will be the primary guide for this study.² Even so, some common misconceptions of the transcendentals still persist, which we will therefore try to correct in the following paragraphs.

For Thomas, a transcendental is a term, such as “being,” “one,” or “good,” that expresses


² Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), hereafter cited as The Transcendentals. Aertsen has also recently published a book on the transcendentals in medieval thought in general: Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 107 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), hereafter cited as Transcendental Thought. I will mainly be quoting from the earlier work since it is Aertsen’s most comprehensive discussion of the transcendentals in Thomas’s thought in particular. Nevertheless, I will supplement my quotations of The Transcendentals with references to Transcendental Thought since the latter work contains the most recent conclusions of Aertsen’s research; moreover I will sometimes quote from Transcendental Thought when it makes points that The Transcendentals either does not contain or does not state as clearly.
a general mode of being (*modus entis*). 3 While all terms express modes of being (since anything that we think or speak of is a being of some kind), 4 what most terms express are special modes of existing (*modi essendi*), i.e. certain kinds of being, and so can only be truthfully predicated of whatever has this kind of being; for example, the word “horse” expresses the specific kind of being that horses have, and can thus only be truthfully predicated of horses. The transcendentals, however, can be truthfully predicated of all beings since they express modes that follow on a being precisely insofar as it is a being, and which are thus called general modes of being because they belong to beings in general. For example, since no being can exist if its parts are divided from one another, every being is necessarily one, or undivided in itself 5; therefore, the term “one” expresses a general mode of being, i.e. indivision in itself, and is thus a transcendental.

Because the modes expressed by the transcendentals are ones that follow on being insofar as it is being, they are sometimes thought of as properties of being, i.e. qualities that all being has by its very nature, and so are sometimes referred to as “the transcendental properties of being.” 6

As Aertsen observes, the problem with speaking in this way is that, while a thing’s properties or *per se* accidents necessarily accompany its essence, they are still distinct in reality from it; to use Thomas’s favorite example, “risibility,” or the ability to laugh, is a property of man, rather than his essence, because being able to laugh necessarily results from his essence, i.e. rational animal, but is not identical with it. 7 The transcendentals, however, cannot be distinct in reality from being since there is nothing other than being, so strictly speaking the transcendentals are not

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3 See *De veritate* 1.1 [Leonine 22/1.4-5:95-161] and our discussion of it in Ch. 1.
4 Even things that do not have existence in reality, such as negations, nevertheless exist in the mind apprehending them, and are therefore “beings of reason.” See, for example, *Summa Theologiae* I, 16.3 ad 2 [Leonine 4.210].
5 *Summa Theologiae* I, 11.1 [Leonine 4.107].
properties of being, but rather identical with being—i.e. a thing’s unity and goodness are the same in reality as its being. While it is thus incorrect to call the transcendentals “properties” of being, one could call them the “attributes” of every being since an attribute is merely something that is attributed to something else, whether or not it is distinct in reality from that to which it is attributed; hence, precisely because they are identical in reality with being, the transcendentals can be truthfully attributed to every being, and are therefore attributes of all beings.

The transcendentals are so named because they transcend or “climb over” (scendere trans) the ten categories of being, but it is easy to misunderstand how they do so since there are in fact two ways of transcending the categories. The first is to leave them entirely behind and thus “climb beyond” them, while the second is to be present in all of them and thereby “climb across” the divisions between them. Consequently, in order to distinguish these two ways of transcending the categories, Scholastics in modern times have used the term “transcendent” to designate what transcends the categories in the first way, and “transcendental” to designate what transcends them in the second way. God alone is called “transcendent” because He, unlike His creatures, does not fall under the categories of universal being (ens commune), but rather stands outside of them as their cause, Subsisting Existence Itself (ipse esse subsistens). Predicates such as “being,” “one,” and “good,” however, are called “transcendental” because, as attributes

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8 For example, “the son of Sophroniscus” is an attribute of Socrates, even though they are identical in reality.
10 Thomas gives another example of transcending in the sense of “climbing beyond” when he says that “the intellective soul is a form transcending (forma transcendentis) the capacity of the body,” and thus “has its being elevated above the body.” De spiritualibus creaturis 9 ad 3. Leonine 24/2.96:358-61. “Et tamen, quia anima intellectiva est forma transcendens corporis capacitatatem, habet esse suum elevatum supra corpus . . .”
11 It is in this sense that we refer to certain values as “transcending” culture, nationality, or politics: not because they are not found in any culture, nation, or political movement, but because they are common to all of them.
of every being, they are found in all the categories of being,\textsuperscript{14} which Thomas confirms when he describes them as the terms that “run through all being (circumeunt omne ens)”\textsuperscript{15}; for example, “one” is found in all ten categories of being, and so transcends them, because every being is one, or undivided in itself. Thus, the categories of being are transcended by the transcendent and the transcendental in ways that are not only different but even mutually exclusive: God surpasses the categories by being present in none of them and thus beyond them, whereas the transcendentals surpass the categories by being present in all of them and therefore common to them.\textsuperscript{16}

Nevertheless, some scholars have thought that the transcendentals surpass the categories in both these ways because the transcendentals are also attributed to God as some of His Divine Names, and therefore appear not only to run through the categories but even to go beyond them and include God.\textsuperscript{17} What these scholars do not recognize is that the meanings of these terms as Divine Names are very different from (though analogous to\textsuperscript{18}) their meanings as transcendentals: as Divine Names they signify the utterly unique and unlimited perfections that belong solely to God and are identical with His Essence while, as transcendentals, they signify the common and limited participations in those perfections that all creatures have; thus, for example, while every creature is a being and a good, God is Being Itself and Goodness Itself.\textsuperscript{19} What follows is that

\begin{itemize}
\item \noindent 14 Ibid., 93; cf. Transcendental Thought, 18.
\item \noindent 15 De virtutibus 1.2 ad 8. Marietti 712. “[I]stud fallit in transcendentibus, quae circumeunt omne ens . . .”
\item \noindent 16 As Aertsen puts it, the two kinds of transcending “cannot obtain at the same time” since “what runs through all the categories does not go beyond them.” Aertsen, “The Concept of ‘Transcendens,’” 149-50. Emphasis Aertsen’s.
\item \noindent 17 For example, Jorge Gracia writes that a term is a transcendental if its extension “is greater than and includes” all of the categories. “The Transcendentals in the Middle Ages: An Introduction,” in Topoi 11/2 (1992): 115. Likewise, Joseph Owens says that each transcendental “runs through all the categories and extends beyond to their first cause.” An Elementary Christian Metaphysics (Dallas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 111. Emphasis Owens’s.
\item \noindent 18 For Thomas, names applied to both God and creatures are said neither univocally (with the very same meaning) nor equivocally (with entirely different meanings), but analogously, i.e. with a meaning that is partly the same and partly different. For a discussion of analogy in the naming of God, see John F. Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 543-572.
\item \noindent 19 See Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 378-87; cf. Transcendental Thought, 265 and 266-71.
\end{itemize}
the transcendentals do not include God but rather are caused by Him since, when said of God as His Divine Names, these predicates are no longer transcendental, but transcendent.

The last but also most pervasive misconception regarding the transcendentals is that, because they are named for their transcending of the categories, this characteristic must be what is essential to them, so any term that transcends the categories is by definition a transcendental. This view seems to be held by many scholars who argue that beauty is a transcendental solely on the grounds that it is an attribute of every being. The most obvious problem with this view is that “transcendental” is not the only name for these terms, since Thomas also calls them the “most common” attributes (maxime communia) due to their being shared by all beings, as well as the “firsts” (prima) on account of their being the first conceptions of the mind. In any case, what truly defines the transcendentals is their expression of general modes that follow on every being since, as our first chapter will show, it is what distinguishes the transcendentals from all other terms for Thomas, and is also the feature from which all their other traits, including their transcending of the categories, are derived. Hence, while their running through all the categories is the characteristic of the transcendentals that is most apparent to us, their essential function in Thomas’s thought is to help reveal the richness of what it means to be a being, by expressing modes of being that follow on every being but which are nevertheless not expressed by the word

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20 Ibid., 372-78; cf. Transcendental Thought, 264-65 and 270.


22 In fact, as Aertsen notes, the term “transcendens” is only used to describe these terms “fourteen times in Thomas’s work,” and “half of these loci are concerned with ‘multitude’ (multitudo).” The Transcendentals, 91.

23 E.g. In De hebdomadibus 2. Leonine 50.270:12-13. “. . . maxime communia, que sunt ens, unum et bonum . . .”

“being.” As Aertsen puts it, “the other transcendentals explicate conceptually what being is.”

What follows is that, for a term to be a transcendental, it is not sufficient that it merely transcend the categories. In order to contribute to the explication of being, as is the function of the transcendentals, a term must express a general mode of being that is not already expressed by “being” or by any other transcendental. Furthermore, because the transcendentals express unique modes of being, these terms are not merely identical in reality, but distinct in meaning, and thus express the same reality, i.e. being, but according to different aspects or “angles,” as Umberto Eco has put it; consequently, to be a transcendental, a predicate must also have the feature of distinction in meaning from the other transcendentals, as well as two other conceptual traits that follow from this one and which will be discussed in the first chapter: adding to “being” in a strict order, and including prior members of that order. Nor does a term’s transcending the categories guarantee that it has these other traits of the transcendentals since, as we will learn in the first chapter, there is a kind of term that extends to all the categories, but does not express a unique general mode of being, and therefore is not a transcendental. Thus, a term can be transcendental, or an attribute of every being, without also being a transcendental, or a distinct attribute of every being—a fact with great significance for the debate over beauty’s transcendental status.

B. Beauty for Thomas Aquinas

However much Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentals has been misunderstood, his thought on beauty has caused even greater confusion since, as is often observed, Thomas writes only in passing of the beautiful. Hence, this section will proceed in the same way as the last one,

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by raising and correcting common misconceptions of Thomas’s thought on beauty.

One of the easiest errors to make regarding Thomas’s philosophy of beauty concerns the very heart of this theory, which is the definition that he gives of the beautiful in two texts from his *Summa Theologiae*. The first of these tells us that “those things . . . are called beautiful that please when seen (*pulchra . . . dicuntur quae visa placent*),”27 while the second states that “the beautiful . . . is said to be that the mere apprehension of which pleases (*pulchrum . . . dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet*).”28 Thus in both passages beauty is defined as that which pleases simply by being seen or apprehended. This definition is often thought to make beauty a purely subjective phenomenon rather than an objective reality since it implies that a thing is beautiful simply because someone happens to delight in seeing it. Hence, even a scholar as insightful as Eco objects to this definition on the basis that it “introduces a subjective condition for beauty.”29

As Aertsen observes, this conclusion “does not take into account the peculiar character” of this phrase as “a definition *per posteriora*,”30 which is the same kind of definition that Thomas gives of something that is undoubtedly objective for him, i.e. the good. Like all transcendentals, the good cannot be defined in the strict sense—that is, in terms of the genus containing it, as “human being” is defined as an “animal” (its genus) that is “rational” (its specific difference). The reason is that there is nothing more general than being, with which the transcendentals are coextensive, and so these “firsts” (*prima*) can only be defined “by what follows from them (*per posteriora*), as causes by their proper effects.” Thus, since the good is the proper cause of love,

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29 Eco, *The Aesthetics*, 44.
30 Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 337.
it is defined as “that which all desire (quod omnia appetunt),” which, as Aertsen notes, “does not mean to say that something is good because it is desired but rather the converse: something is desired because it is good.” Thomas actually mentions this definition of the good just before giving his definition of beauty in each of the texts from the Summa Theologiae cited above. In doing so, Thomas indicates that the latter definition, like the former, is per posteriora.

This impression is confirmed by Thomas’s statement that “something is not beautiful because we love it” but rather “is loved by us because it is beautiful and good,” as well as other texts where Thomas makes clear that beauty exists independently of our subjective reactions to it. Hence, “Thomas’s definition does not introduce a subjective condition of beauty so much as it determines the beautiful from its proper effect,” namely the pleasure that it causes when seen, and so, in the words of G. B. Phelan, beauty is “not relative, but . . . relational,” like the true and the good. Moreover, that Thomas gives the same kind of definition to both the good and the beautiful suggests that beauty, like goodness, is one of the “firsts” (prima) or transcendentals.

Against this possibility, however, it is occasionally objected that beauty cannot be an attribute of all beings for Thomas because his definition of beautiful things as those “that please when they are seen” confines beauty to the domain of the visible. This view draws support from

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31 In Ethic. I, 1. Leonine 47/1.5:153-60. “Prima autem non possunt notificari per aliqua priora, sed notificantur per posteriora, sicut causae per proprios effectus. Cum autem bonum proprie sit motivum appetitus, descriptur bonum per motum appetitus. . . . Et ideo dicit quod philosophi bene enunciantur, bonum esse id quod omnia appetunt.”

32 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 300.

33 Ibid., 337

34 In De divinis nominibus 4.10. Marietti 143-44. “[N]on enim ideo aliquid est pulchrum quia nos illud amamus, sed quia est pulchrum et bonum ideo amat a nobis.” Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 338.

35 For example, there is the amusing text where Thomas says that “the beauty of feet is not known so long as they are covered by shoes,” which, as Francis Kovach and Cyril Barrett observe, demonstrates that for Thomas a thing is beautiful even when it is not being known and enjoyed by us. In Matthaeum 3.1. Marietti 43.

36 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 338.

texts where Thomas says that beauty is a bodily disposition (*habitus*), and specifically the due proportion in a body’s shapes and colors, i.e. its visible qualities.\(^{38}\) Hence, as recently as 2010, Horst Seidl has argued that beauty is not a transcendental because it is said properly of visible realities and only metaphorically of spiritual ones, and so cannot be an attribute of every being.\(^{39}\)

The answer to this objection is simply that there are two kinds of beauty for Thomas: one that cannot belong to every being, and one that can. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas tells us that “bodily beauty” consists in a man’s having “well-proportioned members of the body, with a certain brightness of a due color,” while “spiritual beauty” consists in a man’s conduct or actions being “well-proportioned according to the spiritual brightness of reason.”\(^{40}\) Whereas the former beauty is the perfection merely of a thing’s visible qualities, and is thus found only in material beings, the latter is an intelligible beauty, and so is called “spiritual” because it is found most of all in purely intelligible beings, or spirits;\(^{41}\) nevertheless, this “spiritual” beauty can also belong to material beings since it consists in the intelligible brightness of something’s form (or nature) shining in and through parts that are proportioned to it,\(^{42}\) and all beings, even material ones, have forms. Hence, Thomas tells us that “there is nothing that does not participate in the beautiful and

\(^{38}\) E.g. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 49.2 ad 1. Leonine 6.311. “Unde et ipsae figiae et passibles qualitates, secundum quod considerantur ut convenientes vel non convenientes naturae rei, pertinent ad habitus vel dispositiones: nam figura, prout convenit naturae rei, et color, pertinent ad pulchritudinem.” It should be noted that the shapes, passible qualities, and habits or dispositions mentioned in this text are all species of quality; hence, the kind of beauty that is discussed in this text is evidently also restricted to the category of quality, and is therefore not transcendental.


\(^{40}\) *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2. Leonine 10.147. “Unde pulchritudo corporis in hoc consistit quod homo habeat membra corporis bene proportionata, cum quadem debiti coloris claritate. Et similiter pulchritudo spiritualis in hoc consistit quod conversatio hominis, sive actio eius, sit bene proportionata secundum spiritualis rationis claritatem.” See also In I Corinthios 11.2 [Marietti 1.346] and Contra impugnantes 2.6 ad 22 [Leonine 41.121:1342-52].

\(^{41}\) In one text, Thomas even implies that intelligible beauty belongs exclusively to pure spirits, when he says that “bodies are beautiful with a sensible beauty” while “spirits are more beautiful with an intelligible beauty”; still, this text does not go so far as to deny that bodies have intelligible beauty. In Sent. I, 3.1 prooemium. Mandonnet 1.89. “Sed invenimus corpora esse speciosa sensibili specie, spiritus autem speciosiores specie intelligibili.”

\(^{42}\) See Ch. 5 for our discussion of the conditions for intelligible beauty.
the good, since each one is beautiful and good according to its own form.”

Nor is this intelligible beauty solely metaphorical because it is invisible to the bodily sight and consequently cannot “please when seen.” As Thomas himself observes, while the word “seeing” originally signifies the “act of the sense of sight,” nevertheless, because of “the dignity and certitude of this sense,” the word can also be used to describe any other kind of knowledge, including that of the intellect. Hence, when Thomas defines beautiful things as those “that please when seen,” he is not restricting beauty to the domain of the visible since, if he were, then sounds could not be beautiful, which is not only patently false but expressly denied by Thomas; rather, he is saying that the beautiful is what pleases merely by being apprehended with either the senses or the intellect, as Thomas confirms when he says that “it pertains to the nature of the beautiful that in the sight or knowledge of it the appetite is stilled.” Thus, since being is the proper object of the intellect, every being can be intelligibly beautiful.

While there is thus a kind of beauty that every being can have, it is commonly objected that this beauty is not in fact an attribute of every being, and so is not a transcendental, for two reasons. First of all, there are many ugly beings, so, since ugliness is the opposite of beauty, not every being is beautiful. Second, there are many beings that, while not ugly, would not be called beautiful either; for example, a person can fall short of physical beauty simply by being plain in

43 In De divinis nominibus 4.5.355. Marietti 115. “[B]onum et pulchrum sunt idem, . . . quia nihil est quod non participt pulchro et bono, cum unumquodque sit pulchrum et bonum secundum propria formam.”

44 Summa Theologiae I, 67.1. Leonine 5.163. “Sicut patet in nomine visionis, quod primo impositum est ad significandum actum sensus visus; sed propter dignitatem et certitudinem huius sensus, extensum est hoc nomen, secundum usum loquentium, ad omnem cognitionem aliorum sensuum (dicimus enim, Vide quomodo sapit, vel quomodo redolet, vel quomodo est calidum); et ulterius etiam ad cognitionem intellectus, secundum illud Matth. V: Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.” Cf. In Matthaeum 5.8 [Marietti 69-70].


46 Ibid. Ibid. “[A]d rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus.”

47 Summa Theologiae I, 5.2. Leonine 4.58. “Unde ens est proprium obiectum intellectus . . .”
appearance rather than ugly, while a person who performs good actions with difficulty has neither the spiritual ugliness of vice nor the spiritual beauty of virtue.

One scholar has replied to this objection by making a distinction between “transcendental beauty,” i.e. the beauty that a being has insofar as it is a being, from “aesthetic beauty,” i.e. the beauty that a being has once it gains the accidental perfections that it should have, and thereby due proportion and brightness. According to this view, ugliness is the contrary only of aesthetic beauty, a quality that belongs solely to especially perfect beings, while transcendental beauty is a “baseline” or minimal beauty that every being has and to which no ugliness is opposed.48 The problem with this answer is that, as we noted earlier, the transcendentals are identical in reality with all being, and a being’s accidents are part of its being; hence, if so-called “transcendental” beauty does not include a being’s accidental perfections, or “aesthetic” beauty, then beauty is not a transcendental.

In fact, these objections to beauty’s being a transcendental can be given the same answers that Thomas offers when they are raised as objections to the good’s being a transcendental. Like beauty, goodness is vulnerable to the first objection because it has a contrary that is found in many beings, i.e. evil. As is well known, Thomas’s answer is that evil is not a being, but rather a privation of being, i.e. the absence of some being that ought to be present in a given subject49; thus, beings are still good insofar as they are beings since they are only evil insofar as they lack

49 It follows that not every absence of being and goodness is an evil since, if the good that is absent is not supposed to be there, its absence will be only a negation, not a privation. Hence, the lack of sight is an evil for animals, but not for stones. Summa Theologiae I, 48.5 ad 1. Leonine 4.496. “[Q]ui malum privatio est boni, et non negatio pura, ut dictum est supra; non omnis defectus boni est malum, sed defectus boni quod natum est et debet haberi. Defectus enim visionis non est malum in lapide, sed in animali: quia contra rationem lapidis est, quod visum habeat.”
some being that they ought to have. Since Thomas also frequently observes that ugliness is merely a privation, the existence of ugliness does not contradict beauty’s being an attribute of every being insofar as it is a being because, like evil, ugliness is a mere privation of being.

The good is likewise vulnerable to the second objection since a being’s goodness also requires its having accidental perfections (e.g. a human being must possess moral virtue in order to be good). Nevertheless, this fact does not contradict the transcendentality of the good, which, while it does mean that every being is good, does not mean that every being is equally good, as Thomas makes clear in *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.1. There Thomas argues that the good is identical in reality with being because the meaning of the good is the desirable, and “everything is desirable insofar as it is perfect, since all desire their perfection”; thus, because “everything is perfect insofar as it is actual,” it follows that everything is good “insofar as it is a being” since “existence (esse) is the actuality of every thing.”

In his reply to the first objection, however, Thomas makes an important qualification: because the good and being are not merely identical in reality but also different in meaning,

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50 *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.3 ad 2. Leonine 4.59. “[N]ullum ens dicitur malum inquantum est ens, sed inquantum caret quodam esse: sicut homo dicitur malus inquantum caret esse virtutis . . .”

51 Thomas’s strongest statement on this point is *In De divinis nominibus* 4.21.554. Marietti 206-7. “Requiritur enim ad pulchritudinem et claritatem forma et commensuratio quae ad ordinem pertinet. Utrolibet autem privato, sequitur turpitudo. Nec tamen ita est malum in corpore quod omnino privatur forma et ordine, quia si totaliter tolleretur omnis forma et omnis ordo . . ., nec ipsum corpus remanere posset et per consequens neque turpi tudo corporis.”

52 It is important to stress, however, that, simply because evil and ugliness are privations of being, it does not follow that they do not exist in reality. While Thomas explicitly denies that evil is a being (*ens*), he also points out that it does exist in the sense of being present in a subject, and thus owes its reality to the being (*ens*) in which it inheres. For example, see *De malo* 1.1 ad 19 [Leonine 23.8:468-77]. Hence, as Maritain notes, the fact that evil is only a privation “does not mean that evil does not exist, or is merely an illusion”; rather, “evil is real, it actually exists like a wound or mutilation of the being” in which it is found. Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, trans. G. Andison (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1942), 1-2. We can thus likewise say of ugliness that, while it is not a being (*ens*), it nevertheless exists in reality as a privation that has some being (*ens*) as its subject.

“something is not called ‘a being absolutely (simpliciter)’ and ‘good absolutely’ in the same way.” Since “being” expresses a thing’s actuality, which is distinguished from potentiality, a thing “is called a being absolutely on the basis of what first distinguishes it from what is merely in potentiality,” namely its “substantial existence”; hence, every actuality that a thing receives in addition to its substantial existence only makes it a “being in a certain respect (secundum quid).”

For example, the accident whiteness does not make something a being, but a white being. Goodness, on the other hand, expresses being’s desirability, so, since a being is desirable insofar as it is perfect, “that which is ultimately perfect is called good absolutely,” while “that which does not have the ultimate perfection that it ought to have, although it has some perfection insofar as it is actual,” is only called good “in a certain respect.” Hence, according to its “primary” or “substantial” being, “something is called a being absolutely and good in a certain respect, i.e. insofar as it is a being,” but according to its “ultimate actuality,” a thing “is called a being in a certain respect, and good absolutely.”54 The good’s identity with being therefore does not mean that every being is good absolutely (simpliciter), but that every being is at least good in a certain respect (secundum quid), and only to the degree that it possesses the being and therefore perfection that it ought to have.

What these remarks on the good prove is that, for a term to express an attribute following

54 Summa Theologiae I. 5.1 ad 1. Leonine 4.56. “[L]icet bonum et ens sint idem secundum rem, quia tamen differunt secundum rationem, non eodem modo dicitur aliquid ens simpliciter, et bonum simpliciter. Nam cum ens dicit aliquid proprie esse in actu; actus autem proprie ordinem habeat ad potentiam; secundum hoc simpliciter aliquid dicitur ens, secundum quod primo discernitur ab eo quod est in potentia tantum. Hoc autem est esse substantiale rei uniuscuiusque; unde per suum esse substantiale dicitur unumquodque ens simpliciter. Per actus autem superadditos, dicitur aliquid esse secundum quid, sicut esse album significat esse secundum quid: non enim esse album auert esse in potentia simpliciter, cum adventiat rei iam praeeexistenti in actu. Sed bonum dicit rationem perfecti, quod est appetibile: et per consequens dicit rationem ultimi. Unde id quod est ultimo perfectum, dicitur bonum simpliciter. Quod autem non habet ultimam perfectionem quam debet habere, quamvis habeat aliquam perfectionem inquantum est actu, non tamen dicitur perfectum simpliciter, nec bonum simpliciter, sed secundum quid. Sic ergo secundum primum esse, quod est substantiale, dicitur aliquid ens simpliciter et bonum secundum quid, idest inquantum est ens: secundum vero ultimum actum, dicitur aliquid ens secundum quid, et bonum simpliciter.”
on every being, it is not required that this attribute is found equally in every being, but only that it is found in every being *insofar as it is a being*, i.e. insofar as it has existence or actuality. Now, for Thomas beauty requires not only perfection or integrity, as the good does, but due proportion and brightness as well; thus, as with goodness, a being is only beautiful absolutely (*simpliciter*) when it is fully perfect, as Thomas himself notes. Yet, as we will see in Chapter One, he also makes clear in many texts that a being fulfills the conditions for beauty to the degree that it has being, and so every being is beautiful at least in a certain respect (*secundum quid*). It follows that for Thomas beauty is indeed an attribute of every being insofar as it is being, as he confirms when he says that beauty is identical in reality with goodness, which is identical with being.

A being’s beauty is thus the same as its being, which means that, as Osvaldo Lira notes, there is no difference between “transcendental beauty,” or the beauty of a being insofar as it is a being, and “aesthetic beauty,” or the beauty that a being has when it acquires its ultimate perfection, since that ultimate perfection is still part of its being. Rather, there are beings that are “absolutely beautiful” (*pulchrum simpliciter*) because they have all the being and thus perfection that they can possess, and beings that are only beautiful in a certain respect (*pulchrum secundum quid*) because the only being and perfection they have is their substantial being. Hence, what

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56 *De virtutibus* 1.9 ad 16. Marietti 2.733. “Ad hoc autem quod aliquid sit bonum simpliciter, requiritur quod sit totaliter perfectum; sicut ad hoc quod aliquid sit pulchrum simpliciter requiritur quod in nulla parte sit aliqua deformitas vel turpitudo.”

57 E.g. *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5.349. Marietti 114. “[C]laritas enim est de consideratione pulchritudinis, ut dictum est; omnis autem forma, per quam res habet esse, est participatio quaedam divinae claritatis; et hoc est quod subdit, quod *singula* sunt *pulchra secundum propriam rationem*, idest secundum propriam formam; unde patet quod ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur.” Cf. *In De divinis nominibus* 4.6 [Marietti 118].


Greif calls the distinction between a being’s “transcendental” and “aesthetic” beauty is actually the distinction between a being’s “substantial beauty,” or the beauty that it possesses just from its substantial being, and its “accidental beauty,” or the beauty it has from the accidental perfections that it gains. Both of these would be included in a thing’s “transcendental beauty,” or ontological beauty, which is the beauty of all the being that something has, both substantial and accidental.

While it is therefore clear that for Thomas beauty is an attribute of every being insofar as it is a being, and thus transcendental, it is not yet clear that beauty is a distinct attribute of every being, and thus a transcendental. After all, as we saw, the defining feature of the transcendentals is that they express unique general modes of being that follow on being, and so, as Aertsen notes, “the question as to the transcendentality of the beautiful cannot be resolved until it has become clear what universal mode of being the beautiful expresses that is not yet expressed by the other transcendentals.” Furthermore, as we will see in our second chapter, some scholars, including Aertsen himself, have argued that because beauty pleases when known, its meaning is merely the combination of goodness, i.e. that which pleases, and truth, i.e. that which is knowable, and so does not express a mode of being that is not already expressed by these two transcendentals. Hence, the only way to settle whether beauty in fact expresses a unique general mode of being, and therefore whether it is a transcendental or not, is to first determine the meaning of beauty.

It might seem strange to say that the meaning of beauty for Thomas is unknown since one of the most well-known parts of Thomas’s thought on beauty is his definition of it as “that the mere apprehension of which pleases.” Yet, as we saw at the beginning of this section, this is a definition of beauty in terms of its proper effect; hence, as Aertsen observes, this phrase “defines the beautiful not through its essence but through what is posterior to it,” and so “does not say

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what the beautiful itself is.” It is therefore the goal of this dissertation, as indicated in its title, to determine not only whether beauty is a transcendental for Thomas but also what the meaning of beauty is for him since the former question is inextricably linked to the latter.

C. The Phrase “For Thomas Aquinas”

The most obvious meaning of the phrase “for Thomas Aquinas” is simply “in the opinion of Thomas Aquinas.” When understood in this way, the phrase serves to distinguish the question “Is beauty a transcendental for Thomas Aquinas?” from the question “Is beauty a transcendental in reality?” The importance of this distinction is obvious enough since, just as one should not conclude that something is the case in reality simply because Thomas thinks it is, so one should not conclude that something is the case in Thomas’s opinion because it is so in reality.

There is another, less obvious meaning of the phrase “for Thomas Aquinas,” namely “in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.” When the phrase is understood in this way, the meaning of the question “Is beauty a transcendental for Thomas Aquinas?” is “Does the metaphysics left behind by Thomas entail that beauty is a transcendental?” This question differs not only from whether beauty is a transcendental in reality but also from whether it is one in Thomas’s opinion since, as Jorge Gracia has noted, philosophers “are not always aware of the implications of what they hold,” and thus “historians of philosophy should maintain a clear distinction between what the authors they study hold and the implications of what those authors hold.”

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62 Ibid., 338.
scattered remarks to the beautiful; consequently, he may very well have been unaware of what his thought implied regarding beauty’s transcendental status. Thus, whether Thomas considered beauty a transcendental and whether it is one in his metaphysics are two different questions.

Nevertheless, few participants in the debate over beauty’s transcendental status explicitly distinguish these questions. This is an unfortunate oversight. After all, as Gracia notes, “the failure” to distinguish an author’s views from their implications “has unfortunate consequences for historical interpretation” since it can result “in the attribution of views to authors who did not, and sometimes could not, have held such views”; conversely, it can also result in scholars denying that something is implied by a philosopher’s thought simply because he did not clearly hold that view himself. The only way to avoid these outcomes is to recognize that the question “Is beauty a transcendental for Thomas Aquinas?” in fact consists of two questions: the historical question regarding beauty’s transcendental status, i.e. “Did Thomas himself hold the view that beauty is a transcendental?”, and the systematic question about beauty’s transcendental status, i.e. “Does Thomas’s metaphysics entail that beauty is a transcendental?”

The Structure and Significance of the Present Work

Since the question we are trying to answer actually contains two questions, we will give each one the independent treatment that it deserves. Furthermore, since one can only determine the implications of a thinker’s metaphysics by deducing them from his explicitly held positions,

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64 I could only find two scholars who do so: Travis Cooper, “Does St. Thomas Aquinas Consider ‘Beautiful’ to be a Transcendental?” (Master’s thesis, Catholic University of America, 2005), 75-77, and Michael Waddell, “Truth Beloved: Thomas Aquinas and the Relational Transcendentals” (Ph.D. diss. University of Notre Dame, 2000), 313-14. Aertsen implicitly distinguishes the questions of what Thomas thought and what is implied by Thomas’s thought when he says that a “clarification” of beauty’s transcendental status “is not to be found in Thomas’s writings” but goes on to conclude that, in fact, “the beautiful is not a distinct transcendental” in Thomas’s metaphysics, and instead is “the extension of the true to the good.” The Transcendentals, 351, 354, and 359.

it is clear that, before we investigate the transcendental status of beauty in Thomas’s thought, we
should first determine whether Thomas himself had a definite opinion on the issue.

Thus, Chapter One will examine the historical question regarding beauty’s transcendental
status, namely whether Thomas considered beauty a transcendental. The chapter will proceed by
extracting from Thomas’s texts the characteristics that distinguish the transcendentals from all
other terms, and then determining whether he attributes these marks to beauty in his occasional
treatments of it. Chapter Two will then commence our investigation of the systematic question
about beauty’s transcendental status, namely whether Thomas’s metaphysics entails that beauty
is a transcendental, by examining the attempts of certain contemporary Thomists to demonstrate
that the beautiful is a transcendental, as well as the attempts of others to show that it is not.

Our examination of the systematic question concerning beauty’s transcendental status
will continue with an analysis of Thomas’s views on both the subjective factors of aesthetic
experience, i.e. a person’s knowledge of and delight in beauty, and the objective factors of that
experience, i.e. the conditions for beauty in a being. Hence, we will investigate the nature of
aesthetic knowledge in Chapter Three, the nature of aesthetic pleasure in Chapter Four, and the
nature of beauty’s conditions in Chapter Five. The sixth and final chapter will use these findings
to establish the meaning of beauty in Thomas’s thought, and thereby to arrive at a definitive
conclusion regarding whether beauty is a transcendental in Thomas’s metaphysics.

The significance of answering this question has been contested. According to Eco, “if
beauty is a transcendental, there are two fundamental consequences, one having to do with being,
the other with beauty itself”: first, the “various determinations of being are affected” since “the
universe acquires a further perfection, and God acquires a new attribute,” while “beauty, for its
part, acquires concreteness and a quality of necessity, an objectivity and dignity.” According to Kevin O’Reilly, however, it does not matter whether beauty is a transcendental since, even if it is merely the combination of truth and goodness (as O’Reilly in fact holds), beauty will still be “coextensive with them,” and thus “wheresoever they reside there also resides the beautiful”:

God and the universe are beautiful regardless of the transcendental status of beauty. Furthermore, as a function of truth and of goodness and as coextensive with them, beauty necessarily possesses “a concreteness and a quality of necessity, an objectivity and dignity.” Thus, the fact that the beautiful is not a transcendental property of being has absolutely no metaphysical or aesthetic ramifications, contrary to Eco’s belief.

Against Eco’s claim that it matters whether beauty is a transcendental, O’Reilly has brought up an incontrovertible fact: whether or not beauty has a distinct meaning from truth and goodness, there is no question that it is an attribute of every being. O’Reilly thus raises a serious objection to our whole inquiry: if every being is beautiful insofar as it exists for Thomas and beauty is thus definitely transcendental, then why does it matter whether beauty is a transcendental or not?

The best response to this question is another question: certainly, the statement “every being is beautiful” is true whether beauty is a transcendental or not, but what is the meaning of that statement? After all, the essential function of a transcendental is not just to be an attribute of every being, but to express and reveal a unique general mode of being. Thus, if beauty is not a transcendental, it will only repeat what truth and goodness have already expressed about being, but, if it is a transcendental, then it will reveal something new about being.

Hence, Eco is right that the question of beauty’s transcendental status matters since, in answering it, we will learn something not only about beauty, i.e. what it means to be beautiful,

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but also about being, i.e. what it means that every being is beautiful. Moreover, because beauty expresses a relation to the human soul, which it delights when seen, this inquiry will also teach us something about ourselves. Finally, since “beauty” is also one of the Divine Names, we will also learn something about God, namely what it means when we say that He is Beauty Itself.

Such growth in our knowledge of being, ourselves, and God will occur even if it turns out that beauty is not a distinct transcendental but rather merely the combination of goodness and truth since our understanding of these transcendentals will be enriched by knowing that beauty is identical in meaning with them. Of course, if beauty is a transcendental, then we are going to learn something about being, God, and ourselves that is not already expressed by any of the prior transcendentals. Since there is thus no way of knowing at this point what we will learn from determining whether beauty is a transcendental, we will not know the significance of answering this question until we have answered it.
CHAPTER ONE
THE HISTORICAL QUESTION

Introduction

Answering the historical question of beauty’s transcendentality for Thomas—i.e. “Did Thomas himself think that beauty is a transcendental?”—is a daunting task since he never even mentions beauty when discussing the transcendentals. Nevertheless, we may be able to discern his opinion by comparing his treatments of beauty and the transcendentals in order to determine whether he clearly attributes or denies to beauty the traits of a transcendental. This chapter will therefore begin by examining Thomas’s texts on the transcendentals and then proceed to analyze his writings on beauty. Finally, with the help of the secondary literature, we will compare the two treatments and formulate a conclusion as to the status of beauty for Thomas.

A. Thomas’s Texts on the Transcendentals

Discussions in the secondary literature have revealed four questions that we must answer in order to determine whether beauty is a transcendental for Thomas, and which we consequently must keep in mind during our examination of his texts. Since we can only conclude that beauty is a transcendental for Thomas if he clearly ascribes to it the necessary and sufficient conditions for being such a term, our primary task in this section is to answer the question “What are the traits that distinguish the transcendentals from other terms for Thomas, and which beauty must therefore have in order to be a transcendental?” This task will also require establishing whether three of the terms listed by Thomas as transcendentals, namely “thing,” “something,” and “true,” are actually such in his metaphysics since their status as transcendentals is questioned by several
Thomists. After all, so long as we are uncertain about whether these terms are transcendentals, we will not know when a term fulfills the conditions for being a transcendental, and will therefore be unable to determine with any certainty whether beauty is a transcendental or not.

The second question to be considered is whether it is possible for a predicate that is not a transcendental to possess any marks of the transcendentals; in other words, can a term have some but not all of the characteristics of the transcendentals, or must it possess either all or none? The significance of this question for our inquiry is clear: if one can prove that for Thomas no non-transcendental can possess any marks of the transcendentals, then his ascribing of even just one such mark to beauty would prove that he thinks it is a transcendental; on the other hand, showing that certain features of the transcendentals can belong to non-transcendentals would prove that there is a place for beauty outside the order of transcendentals even if it possesses some of their characteristics. Hence, we will also try to establish in this section whether non-transcendentals can possess any of the marks of the transcendentals, and if so, which ones.

A third question we must examine is whether Thomas intended any of the lists of transcendentals he presents to be exhaustive since his doing so would necessarily entail that he did not consider beauty to be a transcendental. As many have pointed out, this question can be raised because Thomas does not give the same list of transcendentals in each text; however, it is still possible that one of them, particularly the most inclusive one in *De Veritate* 1.1, is complete.

1 The complete lack of attention to this question in the secondary literature only confirms its need to be addressed since much of the disagreement on the issue stems from scholars assuming different answers to this question. For instance, Aertsen evidently thinks a non-transcendental can have certain transcendental marks since he recognizes that beauty has real identity with and conceptual distinction from another transcendental (namely, the good), but still denies that it is a transcendental. Most scholars who think beauty is a transcendental for Thomas, however, justify this conclusion simply by pointing to its universal extension, and so take the implicit stand that only transcendentals have traits of the transcendentals. Kovach seems to be the only transcendentalist to explicitly state this view, but he does not argue for it either: “... all concepts really identical and convertible with being and with each other are transcendentals and no non-transcendental concept is really identical or convertible with the same.” Francis Kovach, “The Transcendentality of Beauty in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Scholastic Challenges to Some Mediaeval and Modern Ideas*, ed. Francis J. Kovach (Stillwater, OK: Western Publications, 1987), 85.
Hence, we will examine each of these lists for evidence that Thomas intends it to be exhaustive.

The final question to be investigated is whether we could explain the absence of beauty from all the lists of transcendentals if we supposed Thomas did positively consider beauty to be a transcendental. Finding such an explanation for beauty’s absence would increase the probability that he did consider it a transcendental, while the absence of such an explanation would prove either that Thomas considered beauty a non-transcendental, or that he had no opinion. The only explanations proposed by the secondary literature that might be valid are Eco’s suggestion that Thomas was hesitant to change the established list of transcendentals, and Francis Kovach’s hypothesis that Thomas did not consider beauty a transcendental until after his commentary on the Divine Names of Pseudo-Dionysius, and thus after writing his lists of the transcendentals. Consequently, while reviewing Thomas’s texts on the transcendentals, we will look for signs either of a development in his doctrine or of a hesitation to change the list of transcendentals.

1. In Sent. I, 8.1.3

Thomas first discusses the transcendentals in his Scriptum super libros Sententiarum, written from 1254/55 to 1256. What is most astonishing about this early work is that it presents in rudimentary form all but one of the marks of the transcendentals, thus indicating that Thomas

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2 The only other explanations offered by scholars contradict Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentals. For instance, Winfried Czapiewski argues that Thomas had to leave beauty off the list of transcendentals “in order to preserve the completeness and order of the transcendental list.” Winfried Czapiewski, Das Schöne bei Thomas von Aquin (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 128. Yet De Veritate 21.3 (as will be discussed later in the chapter) makes apparent that a term must fit into the order of transcendentals in order to be one. Likewise, Jacques Maritain argues that beauty is not mentioned with the other transcendentals because “it can be reduced to one of them,” i.e. the good. Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism and The Frontiers of Poetry, trans. Joseph Owens (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 172, n. 66. As Aertsen observes, “this argument is not very convincing” since if beauty is to be a distinct transcendental it “must add a value to being conceptually that cannot be reduced to another transcendental.” Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 336; cf. Transcendental Thought, 174.

3 Eco, The Aesthetics, 44.

4 Kovach, Die Ästhetik, 75-76, 183.

did not change the essential features of his doctrine of transcendentals, but only developed them.

In *In Sent.* 8.1.3, Thomas asks whether “He Who Is” is first among the divine names. Thomas starts his response by observing that “‘being’ and ‘good,’ ‘one’ and ‘true’ . . . precede the other divine names in the order of understanding” because of their “commonness”; however, these terms can also be compared with one another in two distinct ways. If compared according to their subject (*secundum suppositum*), then “they are convertible with each other, and are the same in subject, nor do they ever abandon one another.” If, on the other hand, they are compared according to their meanings (*secundum intentiones*), “thus simply and absolutely ‘being’ is prior to the others.” The reason for this priority is that “‘being’ is included in the understanding of these and not vice versa” since “being” is what the intellect first conceives and “without which nothing can be apprehended” by it. Thus, Thomas has found his answer: “being” is the first divine name because of its absolute priority in the logical order.

The order among these names does not end with the primacy of “being,” however, since the other three are arranged according to what they add to “being,” which in each case is “not in fact some nature, but a meaning (*ratio*).” The name “one” adds the meaning of indivision (i.e. the undividedness of being from itself) and “because of this it is the closest to being, since it adds merely a negation,” and “true and good, however, each add a certain relation.” The relation that “good” adds is to the end or final cause, while “true” adds a relation to the exemplary form since “anything is called true” because it either “imitates a divine exemplar,” or has “a relation to the cognitive power.” For example, we call gold true if it actually possesses the nature it presents to any...

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6 Mandonnet 1.199-200. “Respondeo dicendum, quod ista nomina, ens et bonum, unum et verum, simpliciter secundum rationem intelligendi praecedunt alia divina nomina: quod patet ex eorum communitate. Si autem comparemus ea ad invicem, hoc potest esse dupliciter: vel secundum suppositum; et sic convertuntur ad invicem, et sunt idem in supposito, nec unquam derelinquant se; vel secundum intentiones eorum; et sic simpliciter et absolute ens est prius aliis. Cujus ratio est, quia ens includitur in intellectu eorum, et non e converso. Primum enim quod cadit in imaginatione intellectus, est ens, sine quod nihil potest apprehendi ab intellectu . . .”
the senses, and so enables one to make a “true judgment” about it on the basis of its appearance. “True” and “good” do not seem to be in any order, though in the causal order “good” is the first and thus prior even to “being” since “the end is the first cause in the order of causality.”

Aertsen notes that this early text gives “Thomas’s most complete analysis of the relations between the transcendentals” because it classifies these relations on the basis of whether they are relations according to subject (suppositum) or according to meaning (intentio). This division is founded on Thomas’s theory of predication, in which every name (nomen) signifies the mind’s conception (ratio) of a thing in reality (res); thus, as Aertsen observes, for Thomas “words do not signify things immediately, but through the conception of the intellect.” The subject of the predication (suppositum) is thus the thing to which it refers (res), while its meaning (intentio) is the conception it expresses (ratio). Hence, when Thomas writes that the transcendentals can be compared according to suppositum or according to intentio, he means according to the thing in reality that they signify or according to the conception by which they signify that thing.

The transcendentals have three relations according to subject: they “are convertible with

7 Mandonnet 1.200. “Alia vero quae diximus, scilicet bonum, verum et unum, addunt super ens, non quidem naturam aliquam, sed rationem: sed unum addit rationem indivisionis; et propter hoc est propinquissimum ad ens, quia addit tantum negationem: verum autem et bonum addunt relationem quamad: sed bonum relationem ad finem, verum relationem ad formam exemplarem; ex hoc enim unumquodque verum dicitur quod imitatur exemplar divinum, vel relationem ad virtutem cognoscitivam: dicimus enim verum aurum esse, ex eo quod habet formam auri quam demonstrat, et sic fit verum judicium de ipso. Si autem considerentur secundum rationem causalitatis, sic bonum est prius; quia bonum habet rationem causae finalis, esse autem rationem causae exemplaris et effectivae tantum in Deo: finis autem est prima causa in ratione causalitatis.”
8 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 95, 101-02; cf. Transcendental Thought, 222.
9 Summa Theologiae I, 13.4. Leonine 4.144. “Ratio enim quam significat nomen, est conceptio intellectus de re signifcata per nomen.”
10 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 94;
11 Hence, in later discussions of the transcendentals, Thomas uses the phrases “in subjecto” and “secundum rem” in the place of “secundum suppositum.” Cf. Summa Theologiae I, 5.1 and II-II, 109.2 ad 1 [Leonine 4.56 and 9.417].
12 De veritate 21.3 ad 5. Leonine 22/3.599:126-27. “. . . intentio sumitur pro ratione quam significat diffinitio.”
one another, and are identical in subject, nor do they ever abandon one another.” 

For Thomas, two terms are convertible if each can be affirmed of the other since they are thus predicated “conversely,” i.e. in either direction; hence, truth and goodness are convertible according to subject because “every true thing is good, and every good thing is true.” Meanwhile, if a predicate’s subject is the thing in reality that it signifies, then the identity of the transcendentals according to subject means that they signify the same reality, i.e. being. Finally, Thomas’s statement that the transcendentals “never abandon one another” is the same as saying they are coextensive, and thus can be predicated as widely as “being.”

Utterly contrary relations hold among the transcendentals according to meaning. Whereas in reality the transcendentals are convertible and so interchangeable, according to their meanings “‘being’ is simply and absolutely prior to the others.” This order continues with “one,” which “is the closest to ‘being,’ since it adds merely a negation,” i.e. the notion of indivision. The first relation according to meaning of the transcendentals is thus an order among themselves, starting with “being” and proceeding from those that add the least to “being” to those that add the most. Hence, because “true” and “good” add relations to the exemplary and final causes, they come at the end of this order, though apparently in no order between themselves.

Because the transcendentals are ordered on the basis of their additions to being, the relation of conceptual order depends on two prior relations that each of the transcendentals has to “being.” First, the reason for the primacy of “being” in their order is that “‘being’ is included in

13 Mandonnet 1.199. “Si autem comparemus ea ad invicem, hoc potest esse dupliciter: vel secundum suppositum; et sic convertuntur ad invicem, et sunt idem in supposito, nec unquam derelinquunt se . . .”
14 De veritate 1.2 obj. 2. Leonine 22/1.8:15-16. “. . . converti enim est conversim praedicari . . .”
16 Mandonnet 1.199. “. . . vel secundum intentiones eorum; et sic simpliciter et absolute ens est prius aliis.”
17 Mandonnet 1.200. “. . . sed unum addit rationem indivisionis; et propter hoc est propinquissimum ad ens, quia addit tantum negationem . . .”
18 Ibid. “. . . sed bonum relationem ad finem, verum relationem ad formam exemplarem . . .”
the understanding of these and not vice versa,”\textsuperscript{19} i.e. “being” is presupposed in the concept of every following transcendental. Secondly, each of the later transcendentals adds “not in fact some nature, but a meaning” to “being,” and is thereby conceptually distinguished from it.\textsuperscript{20}

Hence, even in his very first text on the transcendentals, Thomas lists six marks of the transcendentals in two classes. According to the subject that they signify, the transcendentals are (1) convertible, (2) identical, and (3) coextensive, while according to the meanings by which they signify that subject, they (4) include “being” in their meanings, (5) are distinguished by their conceptual additions to “being,” and (6) have an order that commences with “being” and progresses from those with the smallest additions to “being” to those with the greatest. Thomas will revise and develop these marks more fully in later texts, especially the ones according to meaning; nevertheless, all of these remain marks of the transcendentals throughout his corpus.

While this text gives us a running start on this section’s primary question, (1) what features are distinctive of the transcendentals, it is not as helpful with our other three questions. Thomas does not indicate here (2) whether a non-transcendental can have any of the marks of a transcendental, or (3) whether the list of four transcendentals that he presents here (“being,” “one,” “true,” “good”) is exhaustive. As for (4) possible reasons that beauty does not appear in this text, this list is identical to the one that is presented in the \textit{Summa} attributed to (but not solely written by) Alexander of Hales, and is likewise the same as the lists given by Thomas’s teacher Albertus Magnus and by Philip the Chancellor in his \textit{Summa de Bono}, the first medieval text to discuss the doctrine of the transcendentals.\textsuperscript{21} The absence of beauty from this treatment of the transcendentals is therefore not problematic since Thomas is here only discussing the list that he

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. “Cujus ratio est, quia ens includitur in intellectu eorum, et non e converso.”
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. “... bonum, verum et unum, addunt super ens, non quidem naturam aliquam, sed rationem...”
\textsuperscript{21} See Aertsen, \textit{Transcendental Thought} for the accounts of the transcendentals presented by Philip (ch. 3), the \textit{Summa Halensis} (p. 135–46), and Albert (ch. 5). Cf. Aertsen, \textit{The Transcendentals}, ch. 2 passim.
has received from others, rather than generating a new list of his own.

2. In Sent. I, 19.5.1 ad 3 and corpus

Later in the same work, Thomas mentions the transcendentals again in a reply to an objection, which goes beyond the first text by attributing the transcendentals’ convertibility to their real identity, and their real identity to a new mark that will prove to be central to Thomas’s doctrine. Meanwhile, the body of the article raises an issue that might seem to imperil the status of truth as a transcendental: the distinction between truth of being and truth in the intellect.

In Sent. I, 19.5.1 addresses the question of whether truth is the essence (essentia) of a thing. The third objection argues that they are the same both in reality and in meaning on the grounds that “whatever differs from being according to meaning is constituted from an addition to it,” and “whatever is constituted from an addition to something contracts and determines it, just as man stands in relation to animal.” Truth, however, is convertible with being, and so does not contract it; thus, “it seems that truth differs from essence neither in reality nor in meaning.”

Thomas replies that, while truth does add to being, as is also the case with goodness and unity, “none of these add some difference contracting ‘being,’ but a meaning which follows on every being.” He then lists the conceptual additions that these three make: “one” adds the notion of indivision, “good” the notion of the end, and “true” the notion of a relation to knowledge.

“And therefore,” Thomas writes, “these four are convertible, being, good, one, and true.”

This text shows signs both of continuity with the first text and of going beyond it. On the
one hand, it confirms two of the six marks that were presented in *In Sent. I*, 8.1.3, though in different ways; while it only explicitly mentions convertibility, it implicitly confirms that real identity is also such a mark since it does not correct the objection’s statement that truth does not differ from being according to reality. On the other hand, it phrases the conceptual additions of true and good differently since it describes good as adding “the meaning of the end” instead of “a relation to the end,” and true as adding a relation to knowledge rather than to the exemplary form. The latter difference obviously does not indicate a change in Thomas’s thought since, as he said in *In Sent. I*, 8.1.3, the exemplary form to which every being is related is the “divine exemplar” by which God both knows and creates it\(^{24}\); still, it is an important clarification since Thomas will from now on consistently hold that what defines truth is its relation to knowledge. The reformulation of the good’s conceptual addition is more significant, however, since it means that being’s innate goodness primarily consists not in being ordered to an extrinsic end, or useful, but in being an end in itself, or good *per se*—a view Thomas confirms later in *De veritate* 21.1.\(^{25}\)

Yet this modification is not a break in Thomas’s thought either since *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.3 makes clear that anything existing for the sake of an end becomes good in itself, or “a good worthy of honor” (*bonum honestum*), precisely by being ordered to its end, i.e. useful; as this text observes, “even virtue itself, which in itself is worthy of honor (*honestum*), is referred to another as its end, namely happiness.”\(^{26}\) Thus, that all created beings are good in themselves does


\(^{25}\) Leonine 22/3.594:207-14: “Sic ergo primo et principaliter dicitur bonum ens perfectivum alterius per modum finis; sed secundario dicitur aliquid bonum quod est ductivum in finem, prout utile dicitur bonum . . .”

\(^{26}\) Leonine 10.148. “Ipsa etiam virtus, quae secundum se honesta est, reftetur ad aliiuicd sicut ad finem, scilicet ad felicitatem. Et secundum hoc, idem subiecto est et honestum et utile . . . sed ratione differunt.”
not contradict, but rather results from, their being ordered to a single ultimate end, i.e. God.  

The main contribution of this text is that it quietly introduces the last but by no means least important characteristic of the transcendentals: (7) each adds to “being” a “meaning which follows on every being,” rather than a “difference contracting” it. Moreover, he indicates that this new mark explains the transcendentals’ convertibility: “and so these four are convertible.”

Thomas’s reasoning seems to be that, because transcendentals add meanings that follow on being instead of contracting it, they are really identical with being, and so convertible with it and each other. Hence, the convertibility of the transcendentals results from their real identity, which itself results from their non-contracting conceptual additions.

This discovery of logical dependency relations between certain characteristics of the transcendentals implies they are necessarily connected, and thus that no non-transcendental can have any of them. Indeed, Thomas’s statement that “these four are convertible” seems to assert that only transcendentals can be convertible with each other, as Kovach claims. At the same time, the phrase “these four” also suggests that there are only four transcendentals, and thus that the list presented here is complete. Hence, the text seems both to increase beauty’s chances as a transcendental by denying that non-transcendental can have transcendental characteristics, and to diminish those chances by giving an apparently exhaustive list. Luckily, Thomas’s doctrine is still developing here, thus leaving the hope that these ambiguities will be removed in later texts.

Thomas not only builds on his doctrine of transcendentals in In Sent. I, 19.5.1, but also

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27 Thomas explicitly affirms that God is the end of every creature in multiple places, such as Summa Theologiae I-II, 1.8. Leonine 6.9. “. . . Deus est ultimus finis hominis et omnium aliarum rerum.”

28 Mandonnet 1.488. “Nullum tamen eorum addit aliquam differentiam contrahentem ens, sed rationem quae consequitur omne ens; . . . et ideo haec quatuor convertuntur, ens, bonum, unum et verum.”

29 That the mark of convertibility logically follows from the mark of convertibility is also noted by Cooper in “Does St. Thomas Aquinas Consider 'Beautiful' to be a Transcendental?”, 28.

30 Mandonnet 1.488. “. . . haec quatuor convertuntur . . .” Emphasis mine. Kovach, “Transcendentality of Beauty,” 85. “Consequently, all concepts really identical and convertible with being and with each other are transcendentals and no non-transcendental concept is really identical or convertible with the same.”
introduces a theme with great significance for that doctrine: the distinction between truth of being and truth in the intellect. In his response to the article’s question of whether truth is identical to the essence of a thing, Thomas states that truth exists neither wholly outside the mind (like human beings or stones) or wholly within the mind (like dreams or chimeras); rather, truth “has a foundation in reality but its meaning is completed through an act of the intellect.” The reason, according to Thomas, is that it is only “in the very act of the intellect grasping the esse of a thing as it is” that the adequation of mind and reality is completed, “in which the nature of truth consists.” Consequently, just as health is primarily said of the animal who is healthy, though secondarily of heat, cold, and other causes of health, so “truth is primarily said of truth of the intellect,” but secondarily of “the thing insofar as it is a cause” of truth in the intellect.\footnote{Mandonnet 1.486. “Similiter dico de veritate, quod habet fundamentum in re, sed ratio ejus completur per actionem intellectus. . . . [E]t in ipsa operatione intellectus accipientis esse rei sicut est per quamdam simulacionem ad ipsum, completur relatio aadequationis, in qua consistit ratio veritatis. . . . Unde dico, quod verum per prius dicitur de veritate intellectus . . . ; de re autem dicitur, inquantum est causa.”}

As John F. Wippel observes, “if we were to end our investigation of Thomas’s theory of truth at this point,” we would still be left wondering whether truth is “formally and intrinsically present in things themselves or only in the intellect” since in this text “truth is assigned to things only analogically because of their ability to cause truth in the intellect.”\footnote{John F. Wippel, “Truth in Thomas Aquinas,” in Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II, vol. 47 of Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2007), 68-69.} Yet, if truth is not intrinsically in beings, it cannot be a transcendental since transcendentals are really identical with being. Thus, truth’s status as a transcendental seems cast into doubt by the ambiguity of this text, as well as by a change in Thomas’s discussion of truth that Lawrence Dewan claims to have found in the Summa Theologiae. In his article “Is Truth a Transcendental for St. Thomas Aquinas?”, Dewan argues that, in the Summa Theologiae, Thomas no longer mentions a truth of things in relation to the human mind, or an intrinsic form of truth identical with a thing’s being;
in this text, things are only true in relation to the Divine Mind. Hence, for Dewan, the answer to his article’s titular question is that truth is a “logical transcendental,” meaning that truth is an intention formed of all beings by the mind, but not an actual attribute of every being.

The transcendental status of truth has not only considerable significance in itself, but also for our own inquiry since beauty’s being a transcendental depends in two ways on truth’s being one as well. First, if truth were not a transcendental, despite Thomas’s repeated statements to the contrary, it would follow that there is, if not a contradiction, at least a complexity in Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentals that would make it difficult to declare beauty or any predicate to be a transcendental since it would no longer be clear when a term fulfilled the necessary and sufficient conditions for being a transcendental. Moreover, as we will see later in this chapter, beauty, like truth, has a relation to knowledge, so if that relation places truth in the mind and not in things, it does the same for beauty, in which case beauty is not really identical with being, and not a transcendental. In short, if truth is not a transcendental, then beauty cannot be one either.

Fortunately, the objections to truth’s transcendentality are easily answered. First of all, Thomas evidently considered truth to be formally present not only in the mind but also in things since he remarks on both kinds of truth throughout his career. For instance, Summa Theologiae I, 16.3 ad 1 distinguishes the two kinds of truth according to how each is convertible with being: while the truth “that is in things” is convertible with being “according to substance,” the truth “that is in the intellect” is convertible with being merely “as that which manifests is convertible with what is manifested.” For Thomas, then, truth must be intrinsically present in things since one of its two senses is convertible with being according to reality. What is more, Thomas is so

34 Ibid., 17.
committed to affirming the truth of being in *Summa Theologiae* I, 16.3 that for support he appeals in the *sed contra* not to Augustine, who actually defined truth as “that which is,” but to Aristotle,\(^\text{36}\) whom Thomas has already quoted in the *sed contra* of article 1 as saying that “true and false are not in things, but in the intellect.”\(^\text{37}\) As Aertsen notes, “precisely by appealing to the same philosopher” to support both that truth is primarily in the mind and that it is genuinely present in things, “Thomas suggests that the two conceptions of truth belong together.”\(^\text{38}\)

How, then, do we reconcile Thomas’s commitment to truth of being with his saying that beings only cause truth? Wippel notes that “this seeming inconsistency may be resolved if we take Thomas as distinguishing between a strict or proper understanding of an attribute . . . and intrinsic and formal possession of the same.”\(^\text{39}\) Since truth consists in an adequation of mind and thing, truth is “formally present” in things “insofar as they are adequated to an intellect, whether this be the divine intellect by which they are measured or the human intellect in which they can produce knowledge of themselves.”\(^\text{40}\) Nevertheless, truth of being is truth understood broadly (*improprie*) since what completes the meaning of truth is an act of the intellect,\(^\text{41}\) so truth is strictly (*proprie*) found only there.\(^\text{42}\) Thus, since truth’s being properly in the mind does not prevent its being formally in things, *In Sent.* I, 19.5.1 poses no danger to transcendental truth.

Nor do Dewan’s objections to truth’s transcendental status succeed. Thomas’s emphasis in the *Summa Theologiae* on the truth of beings in relation to the divine intellect only confirms that beings are formally and intrinsically true since all beings depend for their very existence on

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37 Leonine 4.206. “. . . Philosophus dicit, VI *Metaphys.*, quod verum et falsum non sunt in rebus, sed in intellectu.”
40 Ibid.
41 *In Sent.* I, 19.5.1. Mandonnet 1.486. “. . . et in ipsa operatione intellectus accipientis esse rei sicut est per quamdum similationem ad ipsum, completur relatio aadaequationis, in qua consistit ratio veritatis.”
42 *De veritate* 1.4. Leonine 22/1.13:153-54. “[V]eritas proprie invenitur in intellectu humano vel divino. . .”
the divine intellect, so every being has within itself “a real relation to its divine measure.”\footnote{Wippel, “Truth in Thomas Aquinas,” 91.} It is for this reason that Thomas says creatures are true only accidentally (\textit{per accidens}) in relation to created intellects, but in themselves (\textit{per se}) in relation to God’s Intellect.\footnote{\textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 16.1 [Leonine 4.206].} Thomas therefore does not abandon his view that truth is also in things in the \textit{Summa Theologiae}. Moreover, as Aertsen notes, truth’s being a logical transcendental “does not exclude at all that the true (\textit{verum}) also is a metaphysical transcendental” since there are two senses of truth.\footnote{Jan Aertsen, “Is Truth \textit{Not} a Transcendental for Aquinas?” in \textit{Wisdom’s Apprentice: Thomistic Essays in Honor of Lawrence Dewan, O.P.}, ed. Peter A. Kwasniewski (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2007), 4.} In fact, the passage quoted above from \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 16.3 ad 1 seems to be saying precisely that both truth in the mind and truth of being are transcendentals, though in different ways: truth of the intellect is only convertible with being as manifesting it, and is therefore a logical transcendental, while truth of being is convertible with being in reality, and is thus a metaphysical transcendental.\footnote{See note 35 above for \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 16.3 ad 1.}

It is therefore clear that truth is a metaphysical transcendental, but also that its status as a transcendental can only be understood in light of the distinction between truth of being and truth in the mind. The truth that Thomas calls a transcendental is \textit{not} its primary sense, i.e. truth in the mind, but truth of being, i.e. being’s intrinsic aptness to be known insofar as it exists.\footnote{\textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 16.3. Leonine 4.210. “Unumquodque autem inquantum habet de esse, intantum est cognoscibile.”} Having confirmed that truth does indeed belong to the order of transcendental, we can now proceed to Thomas’s development of that order in \textit{De veritate} 1.1, a text that provides further evidence of the intimate link between truth and Thomas’s doctrine on the transcendental.

\section*{3. \textit{De veritate} 1.1}

Thomas’s \textit{Quaestiones disputatae de veritate}, or \textit{Disputed Questions on Truth} (written
from 1256 to 1259),\textsuperscript{48} is of course primarily concerned with truth, but it is also where he writes at the greatest length on the transcendentals. In fact, the very first article of the work gives his most extensive treatment of these terms, which boldly expands their number from four to six.

The article begins by telling us that the question it will investigate is “what is truth?”\textsuperscript{49} which implies that Thomas’s goal here is a definition of truth. As Michael Waddell observes, however, “the article is no sooner underway than Thomas seems to shift direction,”\textsuperscript{50} since the objections all argue that truth is “altogether the same as being,” while the arguments \textit{sed contra} support the opposite view that truth is distinct from being. Hence, Aertsen concludes that “it is evident from arguments pro and contra that the question actually disputed in 1.1 is whether truth is altogether the same as being.”\textsuperscript{51} As we will see, the issue of which question Thomas intends to answer in this article is vital for our inquiry, and is not as easy to resolve as Aertsen suggests.

Thomas begins the article by noting that, “just as in demonstrable matters a reduction must be made to certain principles that are known to the intellect in themselves (\textit{per se}), so it is in investigating what anything is” for the reason that “otherwise in both cases one will go to infinity, and thus the science and knowledge of things will entirely perish.”\textsuperscript{52} Here Thomas is drawing a parallel between two kinds of intellectual knowledge, demonstrating the truth of a proposition and defining what something is. In the former, one proves a proposition by showing that it follows necessarily from another that is previously known, but this process cannot go on indefinitely, or none of the steps in the proof will be known with certainty; thus, the process of

\textsuperscript{48} Torrell, \textit{Saint Thomas Aquinas}, 328.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{De veritate} 1.1. Leonine 22/1.3:1-2. “Quaestio est de veritate. Et primo quæritur quid est veritas?”
\textsuperscript{51} Aertsen, \textit{The Transcendentals}, 106-7; cf. \textit{Transcendental Thought}, 222.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{De veritate} 1.1. Leonine 22/1.4-5:95-100. “Responsio. Dicendum quod sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri reductionem in aliqua principia per se intellectui nota ita investigando quid est unumquodque, alias utrobiue in infinitum iretur, et sic periret omnino scientia et cognitio rerum . . .”
justifying conclusions by their premises, or resolving the former to the latter, must terminate in a first principle that is known in itself.\footnote{\text{Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 74-78; cf. Transcendental Thought, 211-14.}} Likewise, a thing’s definition also reduces it to something previously known since one always defines a thing in terms of something more general—e.g. one defines “human being” as an “animal” that is “rational.” Hence, just as a demonstration cannot give true knowledge of a proposition unless it is “reduced” or led back to a proposition known in itself, i.e. a first principle, so a definition cannot give true knowledge of what a thing is unless it is likewise reduced to a notion that is known in itself, i.e. a first conception of the mind.\footnote{\text{Ibid., 78-79.}}

What, then, is this first conception of the mind? According to Thomas, “that which the intellect first conceives as most known and into which it resolves all its conceptions is being.”\footnote{\textit{De veritate} 1.1. Leonine 22/1.5:100-102. “. . . illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit est ens, ut Avicenna dicit in principio suae Metaphysicæ.”} As Aertsen notes, Thomas does not explain why being is first in this text, but he does in the \textit{Summa Theologiae}, where he says that “everything is knowable insofar as it is in act”\footnote{\textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.2. Leonine 4.58. “Primo autem in conceptione intellectus cadit ens: quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est, inquantum est actu.”}; hence, “the priority of being has an ontological basis,” i.e. “its actuality.”\footnote{\text{Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 169-70; cf. Transcendental Thought, 214-15.}} It is important, however, to note Thomas’s statement that being is that “into which [the mind] resolves all its conceptions,” which shows that the priority of “being” is in the order of resolution or explanation—i.e. it is the conception that enters into the explanation of every other conception, but does not itself require explanation by some prior notion.\footnote{\text{We saw Thomas make this point in \textit{In Sent.} I, 8.1.3. Mandonnet 200. “[I]sta nomina, ens et bonum, unum et verum, simpliciter secundum rationem intelligendi praeceudent alia divina nomina. . . . Si autem comparemus ea ad invicem, hoc potest esse dupliciter: vel secundum suppositum . . . vel secundum intentiones eorum; et sic simpliciter et absolute ens est prius alii. Cujus ratio est, quia ens includitur in intellectu eorum, et non e converso. Primum enim quod cadit in imaginatione intellectus, est ens, sine quod nihil potest apprehendi ab intellectu . . .”}} Hence, being need not be, and is almost certainly not, the
mind’s first conception in the temporal order, i.e. what it happens to think of first. 59

Thomas now tells us that, because “being” is the first conception of the intellect, all other conceptions must be attained through some addition to being. This addition, however, cannot be something extrinsic to being, in the way that “a difference is added to a genus or an accident to a substance,” since “every nature is essentially being” and so there is nothing outside being for one to add to it. A notion can thus only add to being by expressing “a mode of being itself that is not expressed by the name of ‘being,’” which occurs in two ways. First, the mode expressed may be “some special mode of being,” as is true for the categories of being, which express “various modes of existing”; for example, Thomas tells us that the notion “substance” (the first category) expresses “a certain mode of existing, namely ‘being in itself.’” 60 For Thomas, however, truth is not such a notion, and so must add to being in a different way.

That other way is to express “a general mode consequent on every being,” which can follow on being either “in itself” or “in relation to another”; moreover, a mode of being in itself can be expressed either affirmatively or negatively. Now, because “nothing is found predicated absolutely which can occur in every being except its essence,” the only transcendental expressing an affirmative mode of every being in itself is “thing” (res), which differs from “being” (ens) in that, while “being” is taken “from the act of existing” (ab actu essendi), “the name of ‘thing’ expresses the quiddity or essence of a being.” Meanwhile, the negation following on every being

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59 As Aertsen puts it, “being is so familiar to us that it usually remains hidden to us that human knowledge is principally a connection with being. Only in reflexive analysis does it become clear that ‘without being nothing can be apprehended by the intellect.’” The Transcendents, 84; cf. Transcendental Thought, 213-14.

60 Leonine 22/1.5:104-123. “[U]nde oportet quod omnes aliae conceptiones intellectus accipientur ex additione ad ens. Sed enti non possunt addi aliqua quasi extranea per modum quo differentia additur generi vel accidens subiecto, quia quaelibet natura est essentialiter ens . . . ; sed secundum hoc aliqua dicuntur addere super ens in quantum exprimunt modum ipsius entis qui nomine entis non exprimitur, quod dupliciter contingit. Uno modo ut modus expressus sit aliquis specialis modus entis; sunt enim diversi gradus entitatis secundum quos accipiuntur diversi modi essendi et iuxta hos modos accipiuntur diversa rerum genera: . . . sed nomine substantiae exprimitur specialis quidam modus essendi, scilicet per se ens, et ita est in aliis generibus.”
is “indivision,” which is expressed by the term “one.” Evidently, truth does not express a general mode of being in itself since “thing” and “one” are the only terms that do so.

If the mode expressed is one following on every being in relation to another, the relation can be either “according to the division of one from another” or “according to the conformity of one being to another.” The division of every being from all other beings is expressed by the term “something” (aliquid) since the very word aliquid “expresses as it were ‘another what’ (quasi aliud quid).” The term “something” is thus the converse of “one” since “just as being is called ‘one’ insofar as it is undivided in itself, so it is called ‘something’ insofar as it is divided from others.” As for a relation of conformity that follows on every being, such a relation “cannot exist unless there is something whose nature is to conform with every being.” That something is “the soul, which, as Aristotle says in his De Anima ‘is in a certain way all things’”; hence, there are two transcendentalss corresponding to the soul’s two powers: the term “good” (bonum) expresses “the conformity of being to the appetite,” and the word “true” (verum) expresses “the conformity of being to the intellect.” The article’s question has found its answer: “truth” expresses a general mode of every being in relation to the soul, specifically the conformity of being to the intellect.

What makes this article the central text for Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentalss is

Leonine 22/1.5:124-142. “Alio modo ita quod modus expressus sit modus generalis consequens omne ens, et hic modus dupliciter accipi potest: uno modo secundum quod consequitur unumquodque ens in se, alicis modo secundum quod consequitur unum ens in ordine ad aliud. Si primo modo, hoc est dupliciter quia vel exprimitur in ente aliquid affirmative vel negative; non autem invenitur aliquid affirmative dictum absolute quod possit accipi in omni ente nisi essentia eius secundum quam esse dicitur, et sic imponitur hoc nomen res, quod in hoc differt ab ente . . . quod ens sunitur ab actu essenti sed nomen rei exprimit quidditatem vel essentiam entis; negatio autem consequens omne ens absolute est indivisio, et hanc exprimit hoc nomen unum . . .”

Leonine 22/1.5:142-161. “Si autem modus entis accipiantur secundo modo, scilicet secundum ordinem unius ad alterum, hoc potest esse dupliciter. Uno modo secundum divisionem unius ab altero et hoc exprimit hoc nomen aliquid: dicitur enim aliquid quasi aliquid quid, unde sicut ens dicitur unum in quantum est indivisum in se ita dicitur aliquid in quantum est ab alis diversum. Aloo modo secundum convenientiam unius entis ad aliud, et hoc quidem non potest esse nisi accipiatur aliquid quod naturum sit convenire cum omni ente; hoc autem est anima, quae «quodam modo est omnia», ut dicitur in III De anima: in anima autem est vis cognitiva et appetitiva; convenientiam ergo entis ad appetitum exprimit hoc nomen bonum, ut in principio Ethic. dicitur quod «bonum est quod omnia appetunt», convenientiam vero entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen verum.”
that it derives the order of these terms from their primary trait: their expression of general modes of being. That this mark is the principal one for Thomas is evident first of all from his use of it here to distinguish the transcendentals from all other notions, which only express special modes of being. Moreover, Thomas has changed his description of this mark from “adding a meaning that follows on every being” to “expressing a general mode that follows on every being,” presumably because in its second formulation this mark communicates better than any other that the transcendentals are both logical and ontological since what they express are modes of being.

Finally, it is also evident that the other traits all derive from and depend on this first one. The transcendentals are only identical, convertible, and coextensive with being in reality because they express “a general mode following on every being”; likewise, it is because they express “a mode of being itself that is not expressed by the name of ‘being’” that, according to meaning, the transcendentals not only presuppose and include being but also add to it (thought not of anything extrinsic to it) and are consequently distinct from it; finally, their order according to meaning is determined by how much and how closely each one adds to being. In short, the three marks of the transcendentals according to reality—(1) convertibility, (2) identity, and (3) coextension—and the three according to meaning—(4) inclusion of being, (5) distinction from being and each other, and (6) order—all flow from their last mark, (7) expressing general modes of being, which is thus evidently the essential function of the transcendentals in Thomas’s metaphysics. As Aertsen puts it, the transcendentals “manifest the different ‘faces’ of being” and thereby give “an explicitation of being according to the aspect of its reality (res), indivisibility (unum), division from others (aliquid), knowability (verum), and appetibility (bonum).”

*De veritate* 1.1 also makes a slight revision to Thomas’s order of transcendentals and to

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his account of it. In the earlier In Sent. I, 8.1.3, “one” was closest to “being” because “it adds merely a negation,” so the order proceeded from negation to affirmation; here, however, the order proceeds from terms expressing general modes of being in itself to those expressing modes of being in relation to another. “One” is still closer to “being” than “true” and “good,” but only because it is said of being in itself, not because it adds a negation; moreover, “one” is now listed after a new transcendental, “thing,” even though “one” expresses a negative mode and “thing” a positive one. Thomas has apparently decided that what essentially makes a transcendental closer to being is not how little it adds to being, but how directly; hence, a mode following on being in itself is closer to “being” than one following on being in relation to another, and a positive mode of being in itself is closer than a negative one. This choice seems appropriate since for Thomas “thing” (res) is even implied in the very definition of “being” (ens) as “that which is” (quod est), which “thus appears to signify both a thing (rem) from the fact that I say ‘that which’ (quod), and to be (esse) from the fact that I say ‘is’ (est).”64 “Thing” therefore deserves its place right after “being” and before “one” in the order of transcendentals because, as Aertsen notes, “it is the only transcendental based on an element in the complex concept of being itself.”65

The order changes even more profoundly after “one.” As Aertsen notes, the addition of “something” (aliquid), a new relational transcendental expressing being’s division from others, suggests that “division” is “the first condition” of the relational transcendentals,66 since “one could see this notion as expressing what is presupposed in the idea of relational transcendentals,” namely “that there is something else (aliquid)” to which one can relate.67 Moreover, now it is not
only “true” that relates to a power of the soul, but also “good.” Thomas has thus embraced his final position that positive relational transcendentals must express relations to the human soul.68

Because *De veritate* 1.1 derives the transcendentals in such a systematic way, it strongly implies that Thomas intends the list presented here to be exhaustive; moreover, it is hard to see where one could add to it. “Thing” and “one” are the only transcendentals said of being in itself, and “something” is the only negative relational transcendental, so the only place left is among the positive relational transcendentals, which must express a relation of being to the soul. Yet, besides the conformities to intellect and will expressed by “true” and “good,” what other relation to the soul could there be? Finally, if Aertsen is correct that *De veritate* 1.1’s “intended goal” is “the doctrine of transcendentals,”69 then Thomas must have meant the list to be exhaustive since the article would therefore be a small treatise on the transcendentals, and the only one he wrote.

As weighty as these points are, they are not enough to prove that the *De veritate* 1.1 list is exhaustive, for the following reasons. First, there is the simple fact that Thomas does not tell us whether the list is exhaustive, so the most one can say for certain about this list is that it appears to be exhaustive, which of course is not sufficient to prove that it is so. Second, Thomas neither affirms nor denies the possibility of a further relation between being and the soul in this text, so whether there is one is a systematic question that must be considered in Chapter Two.

Finally, as Waddell shows, there is extensive “textual evidence that Thomas’s primary intention at *De Veritate* q. 1, a. 1 was to investigate the nature of truth,” rather than to present his

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68 "Thomas’s important innovation in the doctrine of the transcendentals is the correlation he introduces between *anima* and being. He understands the transcendentals ‘true’ and ‘good’ in relation to the faculties of a spiritual substance, man. His doctrine, we might say, manifests an ‘anthropocentrism.’” Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 257; cf. *Transcendental Thought*, 225-27.

69 Ibid., 165.
doctrine of transcendents.\footnote{Waddell, “Truth or Transcendents,” 215.} First of all, “in spite of the fact that the objections emphasize the problem of what truth adds to being, the corpus concludes precisely where the opening question would seem to lead, namely, with a consideration of the quiddity of truth”\footnote{Ibid., 205-6.}; to this point, one could add that it is no surprise to find the objections and arguments \textit{sed contra} disputing whether truth is altogether the same as being since the definitions that Thomas receives from Augustine, Aristotle, and others differ precisely over whether they place truth entirely in being, entirely in the mind, or in the conformity between the two.\footnote{Leonine 22/1.6:176-200.} Furthermore, that Thomas has “the definition of truth in sight” in his derivation of the transcendents is evident from the fact that he reverses “the proper ontological order whereby true precedes good,” which he presumably does “so that his discussion will culminate with the \textit{ratio} of truth.”\footnote{Waddell, “Truth or Transcendents,” 207. That the true precedes the good in the order of transcendentals will become clear in the next two sections on \textit{De veritate} 21.1 and 21.3.} Hence, it turns out that \textit{De veritate} 1.1’s primary question is exactly what Thomas says it is, namely to determine “what is truth?”

As for Aertsen’s objection that, “if Thomas were merely interested in a logical definition of truth, we are left with no explanation as to why he unfolds the doctrine of the transcendents in precisely this text,”\footnote{Aertsen, \textit{The Transcendentals}, 107; cf. \textit{Transcendental Thought}, 222.} Waddell observes that the definition of truth has “embedded within it certain alternative (onto)logical possibilities” from which Thomas must distinguish truth. As a general mode of being in relation to the intellect, truth must be distinguished from special modes (the categories), general modes of being in itself (“thing” and “one”), a general mode of being as divided from others (“something”), and a general mode of being as related to the will (“good”); hence, the list of transcendents “looks strikingly like a sketch of the options through which
Thomas must navigate in order to formulate” his definition of truth. Thomas admittedly “fills out his sketch . . . a bit more fully than his task of defining truth might demand,” but the presence of non-essential elements does not disprove that it is essentially “an attempt to define truth.” Since the doctrine of the transcendentals is therefore not Thomas’s main concern in this text, it remains possible that he never intended the list presented here to be exhaustive.

What else does this text have to say for our inquiry? De veritate 1.1 does imply that a non-transcendental cannot have the marks of a transcendental since it states that a term can only express either a general or a special mode of being, and the latter kind of term lacks all the marks of the transcendentals. As for whether beauty’s absence from this list could be due to hesitation on Thomas’s part, Aertsen argues that De veritate 1.1’s presentation of six transcendentals only “ten years after Alexander’s Summa,” which gave the traditional number of four, proves that Thomas had no qualms about adding to the list. On the other hand, as Aertsen himself observes, the fifth chapter of Avicenna’s Metaphysics presents “something” as a synonym of “being,” and “thing” as not only a transcendental but the first one. Hence, these two transcendentals may have been easier for Thomas to add to the list than beauty because they “have an Arabic patrimony.”

4. De veritate 21.1

Thomas devotes the twenty-first quaestio of his work on truth to “the good,” due to their close relationship, and starts this inquiry in much the same way that he began his quaestio on the true: by asking “whether good adds something to being.” In answering this question, he presents

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76 Ibid., 212-13.
77 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 349; cf. Transcendental Thought, 79-100 on the transcendentals for Avicenna.
78 Ibid., 102.
another derivation of the transcendentals that elaborates on the nature of their additions to being.

Like *De veritate* 1.1, this text lists three kinds of conceptual addition. The first is to add to a thing “some reality which is outside the essence of that thing,” which is how “white” adds to “body.” The second is to add to that thing “in the way of contracting and determining” it, which is how “man” adds to “animal” since “that which is determinately and actually contained in the meaning of man is implicitly and, as it were, potentially contained in the meaning of animal.” The third way is to add to a thing in meaning alone, which happens “when something belongs to the meaning of one that does not belong to the meaning of the other” but is “nothing in reality.”

No term can add to “being” in the first way since, while one can add to “some particular being” something that is “outside the essence” of it, “there is no natural being that is outside the essence of universal being.” One can add to “being” in the second way, however, as happens

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79 Leonine 22/3.592:89-114. “[T]ripliciter potest aliquid super alterum adder: uno modo quod addat aliquam rem quae sit extra essentiam illius rei cui dicitur addi, sicut album addit aliquid super corpus, quia essentia albedinis est praeter essentiam corporis. Alio modo dicitur aliquid addere super alterum per modum contrahendi et determinandi, sicut homo addit aliquid super animal . . . . . quia id quod determinate et actualiter continetur in ratione hominis, implicite et quasi potentialiter continetur in ratione animalis. . . . Tertio modo dicitur aliquid addere super alterum secundum rationem tantum, quando scilicet aliquid est de ratione unius quod non est de ratione alterius, quod tamen nihil est in rerum natura . . .”

80 Leonine 22/3.592-93:124-29. “Non autem potest esse quod super ens universale aliquid addat aliquid primo modo, quamvis illo modo possit fieri additio super aliquod ens particulare; nulla enim res naturae est quae sit extra essentiam entis universalis quamvis aliqua res sit extra essentiam eius eius.” D. C. Schindler claims that this sentence makes the notion of positive relational transcendentals into a paradox since it denies that there is anything outside of universal being, but a positive relation “means that there is something ‘in addition’ to being, that being has a genuine, positive other to which it relates.” According to Schindler, this text also prevents one from avoiding the paradox “by pointing out that any particular being may have an other, which still remains within the scope” of “universal being,” since in this sentence “Aquinas himself raises this interpretation, but dismisses it as a solution to the problem.” In fact, however, Schindler is misreading the text, which does not dismiss the possibility that there is something to which universal being can relate, but rather is focused entirely on denying that “something adds to being in the first way” [emphasis mine], i.e. by adding some reality that is outside its essence. It therefore does not reject the conceptual addition of a positive relation to being, but simply requires that this relation be nothing in reality. Nor is Schindler right that a positive relation had by all of being requires something outside of universal being to which it can relate since, even if universal being is only related to a particular being within it (namely the soul), the relation to that being is something outside of universal being (and thus a true addition to being) so long as it is merely conceptual and therefore nothing in reality, as Thomas also says in *De veritate* 21.1. The existence of positive relational transcendentals therefore does not require, as Schindler concludes, that being “both has and does not have an other to itself” and thus “includes genuine otherness within itself”; rather, these transcendentals simply require that there be “something whose nature is to conform with every being,” namely the soul, as *De veritate* 1.1 says. D. C. Schindler, “Beauty and the Analogy of Truth: On the Order of the Transcendentals in Hans Urs von
with the ten categories since each of these adds to “being” not some accident or difference from outside of it, but “a determined mode of existence.” Nevertheless, “good” cannot add to “being” in this way since “good,” like “being,” is found in all ten categories, and thus does not contract being, as it would if it added something real to being; hence, “good” must add either nothing to “being” or something merely conceptual. If it does the former, it is a synonym of “being” since “being” is first in the conception of the mind, so every term either means the same as “being” or adds to it conceptually. “Good” cannot be a synonym of “being,” however, because “‘being’ is not called ‘good’ redundantly,” as happens when one predicates one synonym of another, e.g. “the freezing is frigid.” Therefore, “good” must add something merely conceptual to “being.”

According to Thomas, a merely conceptual addition can only be “a negation” or “a kind of relation” since “every absolute positing signifies something existing in nature.” Hence, the merely conceptual addition that “one” makes to “being” is the negation of division, while “true” and “good,” since they are said positively of being, must add a purely conceptual relation, which occurs when “that which is said to be referred does not depend on that to which it is referred, but vice versa.” For example, “the relation by which knowledge is related to the knowable is real” but “the relation by which the knowable is related to knowledge is merely conceptual” because “knowledge depends on the knowable, but not vice versa”; moreover, such is the case with “all other things that are constituted as measure and measured, or perfective and perfectible.” Hence,


81 Leonine 22/3.593:129-152. “Secundo autem modo inveniuntur aliqua addere super ens quia ens contrahitur per decem genera, quorum unumquodque addit . . . determinatum modum essendi . . . Sic autem bonum non addit aliquid super ens, cum bonum dividatur aequaliter in decem genera ut ens . . . Et ideo oportet quod vel nihil addat super ens vel addat aliquid quod sit in ratione tantum . . . Cum autem ens sit id quod primo cadit in conceptione intellectus, ut Avicenna dicit, oportet quod omne aliud nomen vel sit synonymum enti, quod de bono dici non potest cum non nugatorie dicatur ens bonum, vel addat aliquid ad minus secundum rationem: et sic oportet quod bonum ex quo non contrahit ens addat aliquid super ens quod sit rationis tantum.”
Thomas concludes that “true” and “good” add to the notion of “being” a relation of perfecting. 82

Since there are two principles to consider in every being—i.e. “the very nature of the species (ipsam rationem speciei)” and “the very existence by which it subsists in that species”—“any being can be perfective in two ways.” First, it can perfect “according to the nature of the species alone,” which is how being perfects the intellect since it “perceives the nature of a being” but does not have the being present in it “according to natural existence.” It is this mode of perfecting that “true” adds to “being” since “truth is in the mind,” as Aristotle says, “and every being is called true insofar as it is conformed or conformable to the intellect.” Being can also be perfective of another “not only according to the nature of the species, but also according to the existence that it has in reality,” which is the way that good perfects since, as Aristotle says, “the good is in things.” Now, that which perfects another according to its natural existence “has the meaning of an end with respect to that which is perfected by it,” which is why Aristotle says the good is best defined as “that which all desire.” Thus, “primarily and principally” the meaning of “good” is “being as perfective of another in the manner of an end,” but secondarily a thing is called good if it leads to or follows upon the end. 83

82 Leonine 22/3.593:153-178. “Id autem quod est rationis tantum non potest esse nisi duplex, scilicet negatio et aliqua relatio. Omnis enim positio absoluta aliquid in rerum natura existens significat. Sic ergo supra ens, quod est prima conceptio intellectus, unum addit id quod est rationis tantum, scilicet negationem: dicitur enim unum quasi ens indivisum; sed verum et bonum positive dicuntur unde non possunt addere nisi relationem quae sit rationis tantum. Illa autem relatio . . . inventitur esse rationis tantum secundum quam dicitur referri id quod non dependet ad id ad quod refertur, sed e converso . . . , sicut patet in scientia et scibili . . . : scientia enim dependet a scibili sed non e converso. Unde relatio qua scientia refertur ad scibile est realis, relatio vero qua scibile refertur ad scientiam est rationis tantum. . . . Et ita est in omnibus alius quae se habent ut mensura et mensuratum, vel perfectivum et perfectibile. Oportet igitur quod verum et bonum super intellectum entis addant respectum perfectivi.”

83 Leonine 22/3.593-94:179-209. “In quolibet autem ente est duo considerare, scilicet ipsam rationem speciei et esse ipsum quo aliquid subsistit in speciei illa. Et sic aliquid ens potest esse perfectivum dupliciter: uno modo secundum rationem speciei tantum, et sic ab ente perfectitur intellectus qui percipit rationem entis, nec tamen ens est in eo secundum esse naturale; et ideo hunc modum perficiendi addit verum super ens: verum enim est in mente ut Philosopher dicit in VI Metaphysicæ, et unumquodque ens in tantum dicitur verum in quantum est conformatum vel conformabile intellectui. . . . Alio modo ens est perfectivum alterius non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in rerum natura, et per hunc modum est perfectivum bonum; bonum enim in rebus est ut Philosophus dicit in VI Metaphysicæ. In quantum autem unum ens secundum esse
Although *De veritate* 21.1 does not give us any new marks of the transcendentals, it adds to our understanding of those we have seen. The conceptual distinction of the transcendentals means that “something belongs to the meaning of one that does not belong to the meaning of the other,” while their real identity means that this “something” is nevertheless “nothing in reality.” The coextension of the transcendentals with “being” and each other entails that the good—and thus all the transcendentals—are found in all ten categories, just as “being” is; hence, the trait of coextension is identical with the transcendentality from which these terms receive their name since it is because they never abandon “being” in reality that they “transcend” all the categories of being. The article is most instructive regarding “true” and “good” as it distinguishes them not by the powers of soul to which they relate (as in *De veritate* 1.1), but by the principles of being according to which they perfect: the specific nature or the act of existence. Aertsen notes that this difference between the two texts is not a sign of “Thomas’s hesitancy to formulate his doctrine” or “development in his views” since “‘true’ and ‘good’ are relational transcendentals,” so “they can therefore be viewed from each of the two terms of the relation.” *De veritate* 1.1 presents them from the side of the soul because its subject is truth, which is “in the mind” and is thus “the end-term of a movement of things toward the soul.” The subject of 21.1, however, is “good,” which is “in things” and is thus “the end-term of a movement of the soul toward things.”

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suum est perfectivum alterius et consummativum, habet rationem finis respectu illius quod ab eo perficitur . . . : unde Philosophus dicit in I Ethicorum quod «bonum optime diffinierunt dicentes quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt». Sic ergo primo et principaliter dicitur bonum ens perfectivum alterius per modum finis; sed secundario dicitur alicuius bonum quod est ductivum in finem, prout utile dicitur bonum vel quod natum est consequi finem . . .”

84 Leonine 22/3.593:110-15. “Tertio modo dicitur alicuius addere super alterum secundum rationem tantum, quando scilicet alicuii est de ratione unius quod non est de ratione alterius, quod tamen nihil est in rerum natura sed in ratione tantum . . .”


86 *De virtutibus* 1.2 ad 8. Marietti 2.712. “. . . in transcendentibus, quae circumvent omne ens.”

87 Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 103.
so it is fitting for this article to present the relational transcendentals from the side of being.\textsuperscript{88}

By leaving “thing” and “something” off of its list, \textit{De veritate} 21.1 appears to contradict \textit{De veritate} 1.1, which included both of these terms in its list. As we said at the beginning of this chapter, if we cannot be certain whether these predicates are transcendentals for Thomas, then we cannot know when a term fulfills the conditions for being a transcendental, and thus cannot know whether beauty fulfills them. Hence, the uncertain status of “thing” and “something” is a major obstacle to determining whether beauty is a transcendental for Thomas.

Fortunately, the list given by \textit{De veritate} 21.1 is open to the insertion of both “thing” and “something,” whose status as transcendentals is thus secure. “Something” can be easily fit into \textit{De veritate} 21.1 since this article does not say that a relational transcendental cannot express a negative relation, as “something” does. “Thing” poses a more difficult problem since Thomas says here that “every absolute positing signifies something existing in reality”\textsuperscript{89} and so a merely conceptual relation to being can only be a negation or a relation. Thus, since “thing” expresses something that is said of “being” affirmatively, namely the essence, it might appear that “thing” does not make a merely conceptual addition to being, and therefore cannot be a transcendental.\textsuperscript{90}

In fact, however, “thing” does make a merely conceptual addition to “being,” for two reasons. First, as Thomas himself notes, “thing” is implied in the very definition of “being” as “what is” (\textit{quod est}) since the essence, which “thing” expresses, is signified by the word “what” (\textit{quod}).\textsuperscript{91} “Thing” therefore does not add some new nature to being, but rather adds (to quote

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 262; cf. \textit{Transcendental Thought}, 229-30.
\textsuperscript{89} Leonine 22/3.593:153-155. “Omnis enim positio absoluta aliquid in rerum natura existens significat.”
\textsuperscript{90} Aertsen himself worries that res “does not fit well into Aquinas’s systematization.” \textit{Transcendental Thought}, 224.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{In Peryermeneias} I, 5.20. Leonine 1*-1.31:363-65. “[Q]uia ‘ens’ nihil est aliud quam ‘quod est’, et sic uidetur <et> rem significare, per hoc quod dico <‘quod’>, et esse, per hoc quod dico> ‘est’.”
Aertsen again) “an element in the complex concept of being itself,”92 which is thus implied by the word “being” but not expressed by it since, as De veritate 1.1 states, “‘being’ is taken from the act of being,” not the essence.93 Hence, “thing” fulfills the condition for merely conceptual addition to “being” that De veritate 21.1 stipulates since something belongs to the meaning of “thing” which does not belong to the explicit meaning of “being” but is nothing in reality.94

Secondly, the addition made to being by “thing” is not truly an “absolute positing,” and therefore not disqualified from being merely conceptual, because what “thing” affirms of being, its essence, is in fact a kind of non-being. As Wippel has shown,95 Thomas holds that since a creature’s essence is distinct from its act of existence, and since nothing can differ from being except non-being, the essence must in some sense be non-being; hence, while the essence is certainly not absolute nothingness or non-being, it is non-being in a qualified or relative sense since it is the negation, not of a being in its entirety, but only of its act of existence (esse).96 Thus, “thing” actually does meet De veritate 21.1’s conditions for a merely conceptual addition to being—namely, by adding either a negation or a certain kind of relation—since, while it does express something affirmatively of being, what it affirms of being is a kind of negation, namely the essence, which is “the principle of relative nonbeing within every finite being.”97 The status of “thing” as a transcendental is therefore not contradicted by De veritate 21.1.

The ability of De veritate 21.1 to accommodate both “thing” and “something” confirms

92 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 198; Transcendental Thought, 224.
93 Leonine 22/1.5:134-39. “. . . ens sumitur ab actu essendi sed nomen rei exprimit quidditatem vel essentiam entis.”
94 Leonine 22/3.593:110-15. “. . .dicitur aliquid addere super alterum secundum rationem tantum, quando scilicet aliquid est de ratione unius quod non est de ratione alterius, quod tamen nihil est in rerum natura . . .”
95 Wippel, Metaphysical Thought, 177-83 and 186-90.
97 Wippel, Metaphysical Thought, 189. Nevertheless, as Wippel hastens to point out, it is important to remember that “for Aquinas essence is not to be identified with absolute non-being” since “the essence principle has its own formal content, and is an intrinsic constituent of the existing entity.” Metaphysical Thought, 190.
the coherence of the derivation in 1.1, and so increases the chances that it is exhaustive. On the other hand, *De veritate* 21.1 seems not only to assert the completeness of its own list, but to do so more forcefully than *De veritate* 1.1. While *De veritate* 1.1 says that a general mode of being “can be in two ways,” it says that a merely conceptual addition to being “cannot be except in two ways,” which precludes the possibility of additional transcendentals far more strongly.

Yet *De veritate* 21.1 cannot be exhaustive if either “thing” or “something” is a transcendental, and Thomas declares “thing” to be one later in his career. What follows is that not even the appearance of completeness can be used to argue that the list in *De veritate* 1.1 is exhaustive since *De veritate* 21.1’s list is not complete but still looks like it is. Hence, *De veritate* 21.1 shows that textual analysis alone cannot prove that the list in *De veritate* 1.1 is complete.

One question that *De veritate* 21.1 resolves is whether a non-transcendental can possess any marks of the transcendentals. Here Thomas says that since “good” does not contract being, “it either adds nothing to being or it adds something that is merely conceptual”; then, a few lines later, he writes that, “since ‘being,’ however, is what falls first in the conception of the intellect, it is necessary . . . that every other term either is a synonym of ‘being’ . . . or adds something at least in terms of meaning.” Thomas has thus made clear that, in addition to terms that contract being (i.e. the categories and all terms falling under them) and terms that add a mere notion to it (i.e. the transcendentals), there are synonyms of “being,” which add nothing to “being” at all. Such terms would not express a general mode of being that is not already expressed by “being,”

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100 *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.3 ad 3. Leonine 4.400. “. . . hoc nomen res est de transcendentibus.”
and would therefore lack the defining trait of the transcendentals; moreover, they would lack the marks according to meaning since they would not have meanings distinct from that of “being,” include “being” in those meanings, or have their own places in the order of the transcendentals. Nevertheless, synonyms of “being” would have the marks of the transcendentals according to reality: identity, convertibility, and coextension with being and the other transcendentals.

Hence, we have found a group of terms for Thomas that are not transcendentals but still have some of their marks: synonyms of “being.” Moreover, this discovery suggests another kind of term that could have this “semi-transcendental” status: synonyms of the other transcendentals. A synonym of “good,” for instance, would be really identical, convertible, and coextensive with the transcendentals, but would not express a general mode of being or possess the marks of the transcendentals according to meaning because it would be identical in meaning with the “good.” This reasoning does not prove there in fact are such terms for Thomas since he never gives an example of a synonym for any transcendental.102 Nevertheless, we have shown that, if there is a term that is transcendental (in the sense of transcending the categories) but not a transcendental, then it must be a synonym for either “being” or one of the other transcendentals.103

5. De veritate 21.3

The last text on the transcendentals in the De veritate is Question 21, Article 3, which asks “whether the good is prior to the true according to meaning.” Thomas answers that, when they are considered in themselves, i.e. according to their meanings, truth is prior to goodness,
but, when considered “on the part of what is perfected by them,” the good is prior to the true, “for two reasons”\(^{104}\): the good perfects more beings than the true, and those beings that are perfected by both truth and goodness “are perfected by the good before being perfected by the true.”\(^{105}\) In the course of proving the conceptual priority of truth, Thomas expands one of the marks of the transcendentals in a way that has unmistakable importance for our inquiry.

Thomas writes that “the true is prior to the good according to meaning, since the true is perfective of something according to the nature of the species,” while the good perfects “not only according to the nature of the species, but also according to the being which it has in reality.” From this mere repetition of *De veritate* 21.1, Thomas now draws a momentous conclusion:

> And so the meaning of “good” includes more in itself than the meaning of “true,” and is constituted in a certain way through addition to it; and thus “good” presupposes “true,” while “true” presupposes “one,” since the meaning of “true” is perfected in the apprehension of the intellect; everything is intelligible, however, insofar as it is one; for he who does not understand one thing,

\(^{104}\) *De veritate* 21.3. Leonine 22/3.598-99:40-67. “Considerando ergo verum et bonum secundum se, sic verum est prius bono secundum rationem. . . . Si autem attendatur ordo inter verum et bonum ex parte perfectibilium, sic e converso bonum est naturaliter prius quam verum duplici rationale . . .”

\(^{105}\) *De veritate* 21.3 [Leonine 22/3.599:67-93]. The reason underlying both of these arguments, as Thomas explains, is that truth perfects by causing knowledge of itself, while goodness perfects by causing love for itself. Thus, since only some beings are capable of knowledge (i.e. animals, human beings, and angels), only some beings are perfected by truth; however, all things have a natural desire for (or inclination toward) preserving and perfecting their being, and thus can be said to love that being (though not consciously, of course). Moreover, even those beings that are capable of knowledge, and thus of being perfected by truth, are perfected by goodness first since they must exist before they can know, and therefore have a natural love for their being before they have knowledge of anything. See also *De veritate* 21.2 and 22.1 [Leonine 22/3.596-97:61-96 and 22/3.611:16:1-383]. According to Waddell, “the striking thing about these arguments is that they are both wrong” since “if non-rational beings . . . are said to ‘desire the good’ insofar as they participate in the ordering of goods that God effects through His creative Will, then the same beings can be regarded as ‘knowing the true,’ insofar as they participate in the ordering of truths that God effects through His creative Practical Intellect.” What is more, “since the intellect naturally precedes the will, natural things’ participation in the order of God’s providence would seem to be prior to their participation in the order of God’s willing.” Hence, Waddell concludes that “even when ‘true’ and ‘good’ are considered with regard to the things that they perfect, then, ‘true’ seems to be prior to ‘good.’” “Truth Beloved,” 277-80. In my opinion, Waddell reaches this conclusion because he fails to distinguish between how a being is true and good in itself, i.e. by being known and loved by God (and by being knowable and lovable by human beings) and how it is perfected by the true and good, i.e. by knowing and loving something. Thus, while all beings are true (i.e. are known by God), not all beings are perfected by truth (i.e. have knowledge of something); on the other hand, all beings are perfected by good since they have an innate inclination toward preserving and perfecting their being, and can therefore be truly said to love and desire the good. In any case, Thomas considers and answers the very objections raised by Waddell in *De veritate* 22.1 ad 1 and ad 2 [Leonine 22/3.614:208-24 and 225-46]. The response that I have given to Waddell in this footnote is more or less the same as the response that Thomas gives in those replies.
understands nothing, as the Philosopher says in the fourth book of the Metaphysics.

From the conceptual presupposition just described, Thomas concludes to a strict necessity in “the order of these transcending names,” which, “if they are considered in themselves, is this”: first “being,” then “after ‘being’ is ‘one,’ then ‘true’ after ‘one,’ and then ‘good’ after ‘true.’”

We already saw that Thomas’s first text on the transcendentals gives them the mark of including “being” in their meanings, but this passage makes clear that each transcendental adds to and includes not just “being” but all the transcendentals that precede it. The reason seems to be that, as Thomas says in the Summa Theologiae, “a multitude . . . proceeds from one thing in a certain order”; consequently, since transcendentals express modes that follow on being, i.e. logically result from its meaning, and since the meaning of being is one, there can only be multiple transcendentals if each follows on the one immediately preceding it in their order. Hence, each transcendental does not add to being independently of those prior to it but builds on them: the good adds to the true because its way of perfecting things includes the way that truth perfects, while truth adds to unity because nothing is known unless it is one.

Consequently, this small passage allows us to complete our understanding of the marks of the transcendentals and the logical order among them. As we saw, the essential characteristic of

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106 Leonine 22/3.598:40-63. “[V]erum est prius bono secundum rationem cum verum sit perfectivum alicuius secundum rationem speciei, bonum autem non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in re: et ita plura includit in se ratio boni quam ratio veri, et se habet quodam modo per additionem ad illam. Et sic bonum praeusupponit verum, verum autem praeusponit unum, cum veri ratio ex apprehensione intellectus per便民tur; unumquodque autem intelligibile est in quantum est unum: qui enim non intelligit unum nihil intelligit, ut dicit Philosophus in IV Metaphysicae. Unde istorum nominum transcendentium talis est ordo, si secundum se considerentur, quod post ens unum, deinde verum post unum, et deinde post verum bonum.”

107 Mandonnet 1.200. “Cujus ratio est, quia ens includitur in intellectu eorum, et non e converso.”

108 This claim might be questioned on the grounds that De veritate 21.3 mentions neither “thing” nor “something,” which Thomas says are transcendentals in De veritate 1.1 and elsewhere. As we will see in the rest of this section, however, the addition of both “thing” and “something” to the conceptual order described by De veritate 21.3 is not only possible but necessary if that order is to be complete and coherent. See pp. 55-65 below.

109 Summa Theologiae I, 77.4. Leonine 5.243. “. . . ordine autem quodam ab uno in multitudinem procedatur . . .”
the transcendentials is (7) their expression of general modes following on every being. From this defining feature results (2) their identity with being and with one another according to reality, but also (5) their distinction from being and each other according to meaning because of the various conceptual additions that each of them makes to “being.”

These two diverging traits in turn generate further marks according to reality and to meaning. From the real identity of the transcendentals follows (1) their convertibility, as seen in In Sent. I, 19.5.1, where Thomas concludes to the latter from the former. Furthermore, although Thomas never explicitly argues in this way, coextension is obviously the logical consequence of convertibility since the reason that each transcendental is found wherever the others are found (i.e. in all of the categories) is that each instance of one is also an instance of all the others. To use Thomas’s example, it is because “every true thing is good, and every good thing is true”\(^{110}\) that truth extends to all the categories that goodness does, and vice versa. Hence, from the convertibility of the transcendentals is derived (3) their coextension or transcendentality.\(^{111}\)

The conceptual distinction of the transcendentals similarly gives rise to two additional marks according to meaning. Because the additions to being by which the transcendental are distinguished are rooted in and follow on the nature of being, the transcendents (6) make these additions to being in a strict order, from which it follows that these terms do not all add directly to being. Rather, (4) each of the transcendental adds to and includes the additions of all the

\(^{110}\) *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 109.2 ad 1. Leonine 9.417. “. . . omne verum est bonum, et omne bonum est verum.”

\(^{111}\) One cannot, however, derive these characteristics in the reverse direction, i.e. identity from convertibility and convertibility from coextension. After all, as we saw above (p. 33-34), truth in the mind is convertible with being, but not according to substance, and is thus not identical with being in reality. Furthermore, as we mentioned in our Introduction (p. 5, note 22), Thomas often describes “multitude” as “transcendent” because it also is found in all of the categories and so transcends them; nevertheless, “multitude” is neither convertible nor identical with being since a being is not a “multitude.” Since it is thus possible to have the mark of coextension without convertibility, and convertibility without identity, once cannot deduce identity from convertibility, or convertibility from coextension.
terms that precede it in their order, as *De veritate* 21.3 has just shown.

Hence, if we number the marks of the transcendentals in the order of logical priority rather than the order in which Thomas’s texts happened to mention them, we can list them as follows. The first is their (1) expression of general modes following on every being, from which ensues their (2) identity, (3) convertibility, and (4) coextension according to reality, as well as their (5) distinction, (6) order, and (7) inclusion of prior transcendentals according to meaning.\(^{112}\) The marks of the transcendentals thus have a necessary order, as depicted in Figure 1 on p. 87.

While *De veritate* 21.3 has thus settled the question of what characteristics distinguish the transcendentals from other terms, it leaves “thing” and “something” off of its list, and so puts in jeopardy once again the transcendental status of these two terms. What is more, the article states that each transcendental adds to the one before it, and that “true” adds to “one” and “one” adds to “being”; thus, inserting “thing” and “something” seems even more difficult than it was with *De veritate* 21.1, if not impossible. Hence, many Thomists have concluded that “something” and “thing” are not actually transcendentals, and have thus attempted to reduce both of them to terms that are, though these scholars do so with varying degrees of success.\(^{113}\) The most compelling

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\(^{112}\) It is interesting to note that the marks of the transcendentals according to meaning are not merely different from but even the opposites of the characteristics according to reality since each of the marks according to meaning is the contrary of one of the marks according to reality. This correlative opposition is most obvious between the first members of each group, identity and distinction; however, the second members of each group are also opposed since convertibility means that the transcendentals can be predicated in either direction, which is the opposite of order. Finally, inclusion, the third trait according to meaning, is the opposite of coextension, the last mark according to reality, since the latter characteristic means that no transcendental exceeds another in the subjects to which they extend, while the former means that the later transcendentals include and add to the earlier ones conceptually, and therefore do exceed them in meaning. Hence, the traits of the transcendentals according to reality and according to meaning mirror each other since each mark has the same position in its own group that its opposite has in the other.

\(^{113}\) For instance, Andrew Woznicki has argued there is “in the transcendental order of being a twofold mode of signification, i.e. the logical and the ontological”; the list of transcendentals includes “thing” and “something” in the former mode but not in the latter since, while these two terms express distinct intelligibilities, they do not express distinct “entitative properties of being.” Hence, “in the order of transcendentals so considered,” i.e. ontologically, “*res* would be understood as identical with *ens*, and *aliquid* with *unum*.” *Being and Order: The Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas in Historical Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1990), 113-14.
hypothesis is that of Francisco Suarez, the great sixteenth century philosopher-theologian, who claims that “something” is reduced to “one” and “thing” is reduced to “being,” on account of the obvious closeness between these notions in Thomas’s thought.

Even so, the absence of “thing” and “something” from De veritate 21.3 does not disprove their transcendental status, for three reasons. First, “one” is left off of a similar list in the Summa Theologiae that derives the transcendentals “from the perspective of human understanding”:

Something is prior in meaning (ratione) insofar as it falls earlier into [the apprehension of] the intellect. Now, the intellect first apprehends being itself; secondly, it apprehends that it understands being; thirdly, it apprehends that it desires being. Hence, the meaning of “being” is first, that of “true” second, and that of “good” third . . .

As in De veritate 21.3, in this text Thomas attributes a necessary order to the transcendentals, yet


115 That “being” contains “thing” in its meaning is plausible because Thomas himself says that “thing” is to be subsumed under one or both of bonum and verum, i.e. considered as related, is “comprised in either bonum or verum,” which are “positive expressions of the same.” “The Grammar of Esse: Re-reading Thomas on the Transcendentals.” Thomist 44 (1980): 14. While the division of the transcendentals into absolute and relational is certainly a part of Thomas’s thought, that two terms fall into one of these categories together does not seem adequate grounds for conceptually reducing one to the other; after all, if it were, why not reduce the true to the good, or vice versa?

116 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 261; cf. Transcendental Thought, 225. De veritate 21.3 does not disprove that two terms fall into one of these categories together does not seem adequate grounds for conceptually reducing one to the other; after all, if it were, why not reduce the true to the good, or vice versa?

117 Summa Theologiae I, 16.4 ad 2. Leonine 4.211. “[S]ecundum hoc est aliquis prius ratione, quod prius cadit in intellectu. Intellectus autem per prius apprehendit ipsum ens; et secundario apprehendit se intelligere ens; et tertio apprehendit se appetere ens. Unde primo est ratio entis, secundo ratio veri, tertia ratio boni . . .”
he does not include “one” in this order, even though in this work he obviously considers “one” to be not just a transcendental but one important enough to deserve its own inquiry.\textsuperscript{118} It follows that, even though the list in \textit{De veritate} 21.3 seems to be derived exhaustively, the absence of “thing” and “something” from that list does not demonstrate that they are not transcendentals for Thomas since he may have simply judged it unnecessary to mention them, just as he apparently judged it unnecessary to mention “one” in this text from the \textit{Summa Theologiae}.

Secondly, \textit{De veritate} 21.3’s claim that “true” adds to “one” and “one” adds to “being” does not necessarily mean that there are no transcendentals between these terms since Thomas frequently describes the transcendentals as conceptually adding to terms that do not immediately precede them in their order. In \textit{De veritate} 21.6 ad 2, for example, he says that “the meaning of ‘good’ includes the meaning of ‘being’ and of ‘one,’ and adds something”\textsuperscript{119}—that is, “good” adds its own meaning to the meanings of “being” and “one.” This statement obviously does not mean that “good” adds directly to “one” and “being” since, as Thomas says only a few articles earlier in \textit{De veritate} 21.3, “good” also adds to “true.” Moreover, in nearly all of his texts on the transcendentals, Thomas describes them as adding to “being,” which likewise cannot be taken to mean that each adds directly to “being.” There is thus a good chance that \textit{De veritate} 21.3 is not claiming that “true” adds directly to “one” and that “one” adds directly to “being,” in which case there could be other transcendentals between these terms to which they do add directly.

Finally, and most importantly, inserting “thing” and “something” into \textit{De veritate} 21.3’s list is not only possible but even necessary in Thomas’s metaphysics. “Thing” must be inserted

\textsuperscript{118} See \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 11.1-4 [Leonine 4.107-113].
\textsuperscript{119} Leonine 22/3.609:157-58. “. . . ratio boni includit rationem entis et unius, et aliquid addit.”
before “one” because “one” adds to being the negation of “division,” which itself presupposes “thing” because “thing” expresses a being’s essence and “anything created is distinguished from others by its essence.”

The reason that a being’s division from others presupposes its having an essence is that a being is divided not only from non-being but also from all other beings; yet, as Thomas says in his commentary on Boethius’s De Trinitate, it is “not possible . . . that being is divided from being insofar as it is being” because “nothing is divided from being except non-being,” and thus “this being is not divided from that being except from the fact that in this being the negation of that being is included.”

As Aertsen observes, this text proves that two beings “are opposed, not as being as such but insofar as they have determinate modes of existing” since “every determination involves a negation.” What limits and determines a being, however, is its essence or quiddity, which is why Thomas etymologically derives “thing” (res), the term expressing that being has an essence, from the word ratum, which means “determinate, stable, and valid”; hence, “only if ‘being’ is considered as ‘thing’ can one being be formally divided from another being.” “One” therefore follows “thing” in the order of transcendentals since “division,” which “one” presupposes, is derived directly from “thing,” not “being.”

As for the position of “something,” while Thomas presents it as coming after “one” and

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121 In Sent. I, 19.4.1 ad 2. Mandonnet 1.481. “Cum enim unum sit quod est indivisum in se et divisum ab aliis, unumquodque autem creatum per essentiam suam distinguatur ab aliis; ipsa essentia creati, secundum quod est indivisa in se et distinguens ab aliis, est unitas ejus . . .”

122 In De Trinitate 4.1. Leonine 50.120:96-100. “Non potest autem hoc esse, quod ens dividatur ab ente in quantum est ens; nihil autem dividitur ab ente nisi non ens, unde et ab hoc ente non dividitur hoc ens nisi per hoc quod in hoc ente includitur negatio illius entis.”

123 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 223.


125 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 223.
before “true” in De veritate 1.1, Aertsen claims that “something” actually precedes “one” in the order of transcendentals because “it expresses in a transcendental way the division of one being from another,” and is therefore presupposed by “one,” which adds the negation of “division” to being. Aertsen argues for this opinion while discussing Thomas’s views on the genesis of the intellect’s primary notions, in which the first conception of the mind is “being,” the second is the negation of being, and the third is “division” since, when we understand that a being “is not this being,” we grasp “that it is divided from it.” According to Aertsen, “the transition from the second step (negation of being) to the third (division) does not seem compelling, for division presupposes a moment of alterity that does not simply result from the negation of being”; still, Aertsen thinks that the account can be saved if one remembers that in De veritate 1.1 “‘being’ is called aliquid insofar as it is divided from other things,” which is “the same phrase” that “is used here by Thomas in his description of the third step.” Aertsen concludes that “aliquid must be incorporated into Thomas’s sketch of the genesis of the primary notions” at its third step; thus, since the intellect only attains the notion “one” at the fourth step of this derivation, it follows that “something” is prior to “one” in meaning, and therefore also in the order of transcendentals.

In fact, Aertsen is wrong on this point: although “division” precedes “one” conceptually, “something” does not, as shown by the “interesting distinction between division and diversity” made by Thomas In De Trinitate 4.1. In direct contradiction of Aertsen’s view that “division
presupposes a moment of alterity” and so “does not simply result from the negation of being,”¹³² this text claims that “division precedes plurality” because it is constituted “by affirmation and negation,” and thus “does not require that each of the divided things is a being.”¹³³

Thomas’s meaning here is clarified by a later statement in the same commentary that we have already mentioned earlier: “nothing is divided from being except non-being,” from which it follows that “this being is not divided from that being except from the fact that in this being the negation of that being is included.”¹³⁴ As this text shows, the reason that division does not require each of the divided things to be a being is that division arises primarily and essentially between a being and and its negation. Hence, for example, “this cat” is divided from “not this cat,” even though only the former is a being while the latter is an indefinite notion that includes both non-being and all other beings; moreover, “this cat” is only divided from another being, “that cat,” because the former includes in its meaning the negation “not that cat” and the latter likewise includes “not this cat.” It is for this reason that the mind grasps “division” simply by understanding that “this being is not that being”¹³⁵—i.e. by understanding that “in this being the negation of that being is included”—and therefore, just as Thomas says, the notion of “division” follows directly on the negation of being. For Thomas, then, division is primarily not of one being from another, but of being from non-being, which is why it does not presuppose plurality.

Diversity, on the other hand, “requires each” of the divided things “to be a being,” and thus “presupposes plurality.”¹³⁶ The reason is that, whereas division is essentially the division of

¹³² Aertsen, Transcendental Thought, 248; cf. The Transcendentals, 222.
¹³³ In De Trinitate 4.1. Leonine 50.121:142-45. “. . . diuisio precedat pluralitatem. . . quia diuisio non requirit utrumque condiviusorum esse ens, cum sit diuisio per affirmationem et negationem.” Emphasis mine.
¹³⁴ Ibid. Leonine 50.120:96-100. “[N]ichil autem diuiditur ab ente nisi non ens, unde et ab hoc ente non diuiditur hoc ens <nisi> per hoc quod in hoc ente includitur negatio illius entis.”
¹³⁶ In De Trinitate 4.1. Leonine 50.121:142-47. “. . . quamuis autem diuisio precedat pluralitatem
being from non-being, diversity is defined as the division of one being from another, as Thomas indicates when he says that “one of many diverse things is said to be related to another because it is not that other.” Now, *De veritate* 1.1 says that “being is called ‘something’ insofar as it is divided from others”; moreover, even the word “something” (*aliquid*) shows that it implies “something else” (*aliud*), and so presupposes plurality, just like diversity. It is thus clear that the negative relation expressed by “something” is not division absolutely speaking, which is only of being from non-being, but rather diversity, i.e. a being’s division from other beings.

If “something” expresses diversity and not division, two conclusions follow. The first is that “one” does not presuppose “something” because what unity presupposes is not the division of beings from each other, but division in its primary sense, i.e. of being from non-being. Once the intellect grasps that “nothing is divided from being except non-being,” and that a being is therefore only divided from its negation, it understands that a being could only be divided from itself if it included the negation of itself; in other words, to be divided from itself, a being would have to both *be* and *not be* itself, which is a contradiction. Thus, it necessarily follows from the division of being and non-being that being is undivided, or one, in itself. Since “one” therefore does not conceptually presuppose the division of beings from each other, but merely the division of being from non-being, it follows that “one” does not presuppose “something.”

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137 Ibid. Leonine 50.121:129-31. “[I]deo enim unum plurium diversum dicitur alteri comparatum, quia non est illud.”

138 Leonine 22/1.5:147-50. “[U]nde . . . ens . . . dicitur aliquid in quantum est ab aliis divisum.”

139 In *De Trinitate* 4.1 [Leonine 50.120:96-100], cited in note 134 above.

140 It is thus with good reason that one scholar has recently defined unity as “the internal non-division of being into being and non-being.” Piotr Jaroszynski, *Beauty and Being: Thomistic Perspectives*, trans. Hugh McDonald, vol. 33 of the Etienne Gilson Series (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2011), 160.

141 This conclusion fits with *De veritate* 1.1’s statement that “one” is said of being “absolutely,” or “in itself”; after all, if “one” negated “division from others,” then a being could not grasped as “one” unless it was already known to be divided from another being, and thus, like “something,” “one” would be said of being “in relation to another.” Leonine 22/1.5:126-28, 139-42. “. . . uno modo secundum quod consequitur unumquodque ens in se . . . [N]egatio autem consequens omne ens absolute est indivisio, et hanc exprimit hoc nomen unum . . .”
The second conclusion that we can draw is that “something” presupposes “one.” After all, if “something” expresses diversity, it follows that “something,” like diversity, “presupposes plurality”\textsuperscript{142} or a multitude of beings; in fact, for Thomas “something” could even be defined as “a member of a multitude” since he tells us that the word “something” (\textit{aliiquid}) “expresses as it were ‘another what’ (\textit{aliud quid})”\textsuperscript{143}—i.e. just one being among many. “Something” therefore presupposes “multitude,” but, as Thomas explains in \textit{De Potentia} 9.7 ad 15, “multitude” in turn presupposes “one” for the reason that, “however much certain things are understood as divided from each other, a multitude is not understood, unless each of the divided things is understood to be one.”\textsuperscript{144} While at first it is hard to see what Thomas means when he speaks here of divided things that nevertheless do not constitute a multitude, he is clearly referring to the foundational division between a being and its negation, which do not make up a multitude because a negation is a non-unity just as it is a non-being.\textsuperscript{145} Consequently, “one” is presupposed by “multitude” because things are only many if they are not only divided from one another but also undivided in themselves, or one, while “multitude” in turn is presupposed by “something” because things are only diverse if they are many. “Something” is therefore preceded by “one” in the order of the transcendentals, just as Thomas presents them in \textit{De veritate} 1.1.

Finally, “true” presupposes “something,” as is clear for two reasons. First, “true” adds to being a relation to the soul, and, as Aertsen observes, “something” (\textit{aliiquid}) expresses “what is presupposed in the idea of relational transcendentals”: that “there is something else (\textit{aliud})” to

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{In De Trinitate} 4.1 [Leonine 50.121:142-47], cited in note 136 above.
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{De veritate} 1.1. Leonine 22/1.5:146-47. “. . . dicitur enim aliquid quasi aliud quid . . .”
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{De Potentia} 9.7 ad 15. Marietti 2.244. “. . . divisio est prior, secundum rationem, quam unum; sed multitudo posterius. . . . Qua tumcumque enim aliqua intelligatur divisa, non intelligetur multitudo, nisi quodlibet divisorum intelligatur esse unum.”
which one can relate. Secondly, in explaining why “true” presupposes “one,” *De veritate* 21.3 says that “everything is intelligible . . . insofar as it is one, for he who does not understand one thing, understands nothing, as the Philosopher says in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics.*” Thomas gives a fuller explanation of this dependence of “true” on “one” in *De veritate* 2.15:

According to the Philosopher in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics*, he who does not understand one thing, understands nothing. Something is one, however, in virtue of the fact that it is undivided in itself, and distinct from others; wherefore, it is required that *whoever knows something knows its distinction from others.*

This text shows that a being is intelligible not only insofar as it is undivided in itself, but also insofar as it is divided from others, which makes sense in light of Thomas’s fondness for saying that we only know contraries by distinguishing them from each other. Consequently, in this passage “one” does not have its strict meaning of “that which is undivided in itself,” but rather the broader meaning that Thomas occasionally gives it of “that which is undivided in itself and divided from others.” Of course, this extended definition is merely a composite of the proper meanings of “one” and “something” since, “just as being is called ‘one’ insofar as it is undivided in itself, so it is called ‘something’ insofar as it is divided from others.”

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147 Leonine 22/3.598:54-59. “[V]erum autem praesupponit unum . . . ; unumquodque autem intelligibile est in quantum est unum: qui enim non intelligit unum nihil intelligit, ut dicit Philosophus in IV Metaphysicae.”
148 Leonine 22/1.94:43-49. “[S]ecundum Philosophum in IV Metaphysicae, qui non intelligit aliquid unum nihil intelligit; per hoc autem aliquid est unum quod est in se indivisum et ab aliis distinctum; unde oportet quod quicumque cognoscit aliquid quod sciat distinctionem eius ab aliis . . .” Emphasis mine. Cf. In *Metaphysic. IV*, 7. Marietti 171. “Sed si non intelligitur unum, nihil intelligitur; quia oportet quod qui intelligit ab aliis distinguat.”
149 Thomas goes so far as to say that “one contrary is the principle (ratio) of knowing another.” *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 35.5. Leonine 6.244. “[U]num contrarium e[ ]st ratio cognoscendi aliud.” Thus, not only is a being known more clearly when distinguished from its contrary, but contraries cannot even be known at all without being distinguished from each other, at least to some degree. Cf. In *Sent. IV*, 50.2.4.1 [Parma 7/2.1258], *Contra Gentiles*: I, 71; II, 50.7; II, 76.9 [Marietti 2.83; 2.171; 2.223]; *Summa Theologiae*: I-II, 35.5 ad 2; I-II, 64.3 ad 3 [Leonine 6.244; 6.415]; In *De memoria* 5 [Leonine 45/2.121:114-15]; In *Metaphysic. XI*, 1 [Marietti 509]; In *Ethic. V*, 1 [Leonine 45/2.265:94-95].
151 *De veritate* 1.1. Leonine 22/1.5:147-150. “. . . unde sicut ens dicitur unum in quantum est indivisum in se ita dicitur aliquid in quantum est ab aliis divisum.”
presupposes “something” in the order of transcendentals since a being’s intelligibility requires not only that it is undivided in itself, or one, but also that it is divided from others, or something.

It can thus be demonstrated from Thomas’s metaphysics not only that the derivation of the transcendentals in his thought proceeds in precisely the order that *De veritate* 1.1 describes, but also that this derivation manifests a remarkable necessity and coherence, which can be seen in Figure 2 on p. 87, as well as in the following summary. The first transcendental is “being” (ens), or “that which is” (quo est), which is the mind’s first conception in the order of resolution because it expresses being’s existence or actuality, and everything is knowable insofar as it is actual. Then comes “thing” (res), or “that which is determinate” (quo est ratum), which follows immediately on “being” because it expresses the essence that receives and determines a being’s existence, and which is implied by the “that which” (quo) in the description of “being” as “that which is” (quo est).

After “thing” comes “one” (unum), or “that which is undivided in itself” (quo est indivisum in se), since it is due to being limited and determined by its essence that a being is divided from its negation, but is undivided in itself. Fourth is “something” (aliquid), which means “that which is diverse, or divided from others” (quo est diversum, vel divisum ab aliis), and which thus follows on “one” because it is in virtue of their intrinsic unity that beings form a multitude, and consequently are divided not only from their negatives but from beings that are truly other. Next is “true” (verum), or “that which is knowable” (quo est cognoscibile), which expresses the conformity of being to the intellect, and which follows on “something” because a being is only intelligible insofar as it is distinguished from others. The sixth and last

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152 We should add that, while “thing” is not preceded by any transcendental other than “being,” it is preceded by the negation of being, or “non-being” (non ens). After all, as we mentioned above (p. 49), Wippel has shown that for Thomas the essence, which “thing” expresses, is a kind of non-being, not in an absolute sense, but in a qualified or relative sense because it is distinguished from a creature’s act of being. As a result, “thing” is not derived directly from “being” in the genesis of the primary notions because the essence is a principle of relative non-being that every being has, and thus “thing” presupposes “non-being.” Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 177-192.
transcendental to be derived in Thomas’s writings is the “good” (*bonum*), or “that which is desirable” (*quod est appetibile*), which expresses the conformity of being to the will, and which thus follows on “true” because knowledge is the cause of love.

Since “thing” and “something” are confirmed as transcendentals, they can and must be added to *De veritate* 21.3’s presentation of the conceptual inclusion of the transcendentals, in which each one adds to and includes the term immediately prior to it. It follows that, according to meaning, “thing” adds directly to “being,” while “one” adds to “thing,” “something” adds to “one,” “true” adds to “something,” and “good” adds to “true.” Thus, when fully drawn out in this way, *De veritate* 21.3 only confirms the elegant necessity of the list that *De veritate* 1.1 gives of the transcendentals. Nevertheless, like *De veritate* 21.1, *De veritate* 21.3 gives the impression that it is exhaustive, even though it is not, and so confirms that we cannot conclude with certainty that the list in *De veritate* 1.1 is exhaustive simply because it appears to be so.

6. Texts before and after the *In De divinis nominibus*

Thomas gives his last derivation of the transcendentals in his reply to the sixth objection of question 9, article 7 in his *Quaestiones disputatae De Potentia Dei* (written 1265 to 1266). This text is almost a condensed version of *De veritate* 21.1 since it says that the transcendentals, in order not to contract “being,” must add to it “something according to meaning (*rationem*) only,” and such a merely conceptual addition is “either a negation, which ‘one’ adds,” or a “relation to something whose nature it is to relate universally to ‘being’; and this is either the intellect, a relation to which ‘true’ signifies, or the appetite, a relation to which ‘good’

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signifies.” Like *De veritate* 21.1, this text presents only two kinds of purely conceptual addition (negation or relation), two relations that can be added (to the intellect or to appetite), and thus four transcendentals; in fact, *De Potentia* 9.7 ad 6 only differs from the earlier text by deriving “true” and “good” from the powers of the soul to which they relate, rather than the principles of being according to which they perfect the soul. Hence, like *De veritate* 21.1, this text gives an apparently exhaustive list that nevertheless cannot be exhaustive since it excludes “thing” and Thomas explicitly states in the First Part of the *Summa Theologiae* (written 1266-1268) that “‘thing’ is one of those that transcend.” As a result, this text confirms what *De veritate* 21.1 and 21.3 taught us, that it is impossible to declare with certainty that the list of transcendentals in *De veritate* 1.1 is comprehensive on the basis of its appearance alone.

Thomas never wrote another derivation of the transcendentals, which is convenient for Kovach since it allows him to explain beauty’s absence from Thomas’s lists of transcendentals in two ways. First, Kovach says that Thomas only realized that beauty is a transcendental while writing his longest treatment of the beautiful in his commentary on the *De divinis nominibus* of pseudo-Dionysius, which is why beauty is not on any of the lists written before this commentary. Second, Kovach argues that beauty is never mentioned as a transcendental after this commentary because Thomas never again discussed the issue of the transcendentals in depth.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{154} *De potentia* 9.7 ad 6. Marietti 2.243. “[I]nter ista quatuor prima, maxime primum est ens. . . . Oportet autem quod alia tria super ens addant aliquid quod ens non contrahat. . . . Hoc autem esse non potest nisi addant aliquid secundum rationem tantum; hoc autem est vel negatio, quam addit unum . . ., vel relatio, vel [correction: ad] aliquid quod naturae sit referri universaliter ad ens; et hoc est vel intellectus, ad quem importat relationem verum, aut appetitus, ad quem importat relationem bonum . . .”

\textsuperscript{155} *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.3 ad 3. Leonine 4.400. “. . . hoc nomen res est de transcendentibus.”

\textsuperscript{156} Kovach, *Die Ästhetik*, 75-76, 183. Barrett gives the following summary of Kovach’s theory: “It may be objected that beauty is not in the classical list of six transcendentals . . . enumerated in *De Veritate* 1.1 and that it is never spoken of as a transcendental. But when this list was drawn up St. Thomas had not worked out his own theory of beauty (this came with his commentary on *De divinis nominibus*; previously he had borrowed the accepted doctrine from others) and, with the possible exception of ST 1, 93, 9 (where only *ens*, *verum*, and *bonum* are mentioned) he never drew up a list subsequently.” Barrett, “The Aesthetics,” 121.
Adding strength to Kovach’s theory is a relatively new discovery that has finally determined when Thomas wrote the Dionysius commentary. As recently as 1996, “the precise date of the composition for the *expositio* of Pseudo-Dionysius’s *De divinis nominibus*” was still “uncertain” since it was unclear whether it came “from the sojourn in Orvieto (1261-1265) or the following period in Rome (1265-1268).”\(^{157}\) So long as this uncertainty remained, Kovach’s argument was of dubious validity since, if the *In De divinis nominibus* had come from the earlier period, then the commentary would have pre-dated the *De Potentia*; as a result, Kovach’s theory that Thomas only discovered beauty’s transcendentality while writing the Dionysius commentary would not have been able to explain the absence of beauty from the list in *De Potentia* 9.7 ad 6. As R. A. Gauthier has shown, however, the *In De divinis nominibus* must actually come from the later period since it cites a translation of Aristotle that was not finished until March of 1266.\(^ {158}\) It therefore turns out that the Dionysius commentary not only post-dates all of the texts that give derivations of the transcendentals, but may even come after the articles that Thomas devotes to the transcendentals “one,” “true,” and “good” in the First Part of his *Summa Theologiae*. Hence, Gauthier’s discovery makes it much easier for one to argue, as Kovach has done, that Thomas’s treatments of the transcendentals pre-date his discovery of beauty’s transcendent status.

Nevertheless, there is a problem with arguing this way since, while the absence of texts on the transcendentals after the *In De divinis nominibus* can be interpreted as evidence in favor of beauty’s being a transcendental for Thomas, it can also be seen as evidence against it. After all, the scant discussion that Thomas gives to the transcendentals near the end of his career can be

\(^{157}\) Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 346. What Torrell says here regarding the Dionysius commentary was written for the first edition of his book, which came out in 1996 and thus before the discovery that determined the work’s date. In the second edition, which we have been citing, Torrell includes a series of additions and corrections, one of which mentions the newly fixed date of the *In De divinis nominibus*, and which we have cited below (see next footnote).

\(^{158}\) Ibid., 434.
seen not only as silence on the number of the transcendentals, but also as indicating that Thomas was satisfied with his earlier treatments of them.\textsuperscript{159} If true, this interpretation would still not prove that Thomas thought beauty \textit{is not} a transcendental since, as we have seen, it is impossible to demonstrate that any of the lists are exhaustive. Nevertheless, the possibility that Thomas was content with those derivations makes it difficult to affirm, as Kovach wishes to do, that Thomas actually held the opinion that beauty \textit{is} a transcendental.

In any case, Kovach’s argument can only succeed if it can be shown that, after writing the \textit{In De divinis nominibus} and thus after writing his derivations of the transcendentals, Thomas in fact began to hold that beauty is a transcendental, which can only be determined from an analysis of his texts on beauty. It is to these passages that we now turn.

\textbf{B. Thomas’s Texts on Beauty}

Having studied Thomas’s chief writings on the transcendentals, we will now examine those of his texts on beauty that are relevant to the question of whether it is a transcendental. As in the previous section, we will be looking for possible reasons to explain why Thomas does not include beauty in the lists of transcendentals, such as a change in his understanding of beauty. Our primary task, however, is to determine which marks of the transcendentals the texts attribute or deny to beauty since these are the only basis for determining its transcendental status.

\textsuperscript{159} Cooper presents a version of this interpretation in his master’s thesis “Does St. Thomas Consider ‘Beautiful’ to be a Transcendental?”, 72: “After \textit{In De divinis nominibus}, Thomas speaks of the transcendentals only in passing and never provides a \textit{derivation} of them; he gives only \textit{lists} of the transcendentals. This indicates that to discover Thomas’s thought on the nature and number of the transcendentals one must look to his discussion of them prior to \textit{In De divinis nominibus} (primarily in \textit{De veritate} 1.1). But, in these texts “beautiful” does not so much as come up in connection with the transcendentals, much less appear as a transcendental itself. This strongly indicates that, as regards the status of “beautiful” as a transcendental, those texts prior to the commentary on pseudo-Dionysius (especially \textit{De veritate}), in which “beautiful” is entirely absent, are the final word of Thomas.”
Thomas first treats of beauty is in his Sentences commentary, which as we saw is also where he first discusses the transcendentals. It is significant that, in the very same book where he enumerates six marks of the transcendentals, he seems to attribute two of those six to beauty.

In Sent. I, 31.2.1 asks whether St. Hilary the Church Father gives a fitting list of Trinitarian appropriations. For Thomas and other Christian theologians, while the three Persons of the Trinity have a single Divine Essence and therefore share all the attributes of that Essence, nevertheless one of these essential attributes can be “appropriated” to a Person if it has a likeness to the proper attributes of that Person—e.g. while God’s Power is His Being and thus belongs to all three persons, “power” is still appropriated to the Father because “power has the nature of a principle” and the Father is the principle from Whom the Son and the Spirit proceed. In this way Hilary assigned “eternity” to the Father, species to the Son, and “use” to the Holy Spirit. Following a tradition that goes back to Augustine, Thomas interprets species as “beauty,” then defends its appropriation to the Son on the basis that He has a likeness to the three factors that belong “to the meaning (rationem) of beauty”: harmony (consonantia), brightness (claritas), and magnitude (magnitudo). Since Thomas also gives brief explanations of these requirements, we will return to this text when we explore beauty’s objective conditions in Chapter Five.

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161 As Aertsen notes, Thomas himself mentions this fact in De 108 articulis 57. Leonine 42,288. “... Augustinus autem speciem interpretatur pulchritudinem.” Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 339.

162 In Sent. 31.2.1. Mandonnet 1,723-24. “[I]n appropriatione Hilarii... ponuntur tria appropriata, scilicet aeternitas, quam dicit esse in Patre sicut appropriatam sibi: et species, id est pulchritudo quam dicit esse in imagine, id est in Filio, qui proprie imago est... et usus, quem dicit esse in munere, scilicet in Spiritu sancto, qui donum est. Ratio autem hujusmodi appropriationis haec est... Ad rationem autem pulchritudinis duo concurrunt, secundum Dionysium... scilicet consonantia et claritas. ... His duobus addit tertium Philosophus... ubi dicit, quod pulchritudo non est nisi in magno corpore; ... Et secundum haec tria, pulchritudo convenit cum propriis Filii...”
As helpful as the body of the article is for Thomas’s thought on beauty, it is his reply to the fourth objection that has significance for beauty’s transcendental status. The objection notes that “according to Dionysius, the beautiful and the good follow on each other,” as is even shown by the words for “good” and “beautiful” in Greek: “for the good is called calos, the beautiful is called callos.” On these grounds, the objection argues that since goodness is appropriated to the Holy Spirit rather than to the Son, beauty should be as well. Thomas replies:

Beauty does not have the meaning (rationem) of desirability except insofar as it takes on the meaning of the good; for in this way even the true is desirable: but according to its own meaning it has brightness and those things that were mentioned, which have a likeness with the properties of the Son.

Eco claims that “this passage is quite clear” in giving beauty “its own distinct logic (ratio),” and thus the mark of (5) conceptual distinction from the transcendentals, because it conceptually distinguishes beauty from both goodness (whose meaning beauty must assume in order to be desirable) and truth (which becomes desirable in the same way). This conclusion is premature, however, since conceptual distinction is not a transitive relation, so beauty’s being distinct in meaning from two transcendentals does not prove that it is conceptually distinct from them all; moreover, while Thomas does say in this text that beauty has “its own meaning,” he does not say what this meaning is, so it is impossible to say whether this meaning is in fact distinct from those of all the transcendentals. It therefore cannot be discerned from this early text alone whether beauty has the mark of (5) conceptual distinction for Thomas, though it might be possible to do so from later texts that discuss beauty’s meaning in greater depth.

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165 Eco, The Aesthetics, 32.
2. *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5

Thomas’s longest treatments of beauty are found in the four lessons (*lectiones*) on beauty (lessons 5 through 8) in the fourth chapter of his commentary on the *De divinis nominibus*. The first of these lessons is especially helpful since, while lessons 6, 7, and 8 discuss the effects of the divine beauty, lesson 5 discusses how beauty is attributed to God in Himself, and thus tells us more about both the reality and the meaning of beauty. We will therefore analyze this lesson step by step, while connecting it with other texts in the commentary and in the rest of Thomas’s corpus, in order to determine precisely what marks it attributes to beauty.

Even Thomas’s explanation of beauty’s place in Dionysius’s work is informative. The fourth chapter as a whole concerns the divine name of “Good” and all notions related to it. For Thomas, beauty falls in this category because “the good is what all things desire,” so “whatever things possess of themselves the meaning of desirability are seen to pertain to the meaning of ‘good,’” and “of this nature . . . are light and the beautiful.”166

This sentence might seem to contradict Thomas’s statement in *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 ad 4 that “beauty does not have the meaning of desirability except insofar as it takes on the meaning of ‘good’”; nevertheless, the sentence’s context makes clear that it is reconcilable with the earlier passage. After all, “light,” which is also said here to possess of itself the meaning of desirability, has the meaning of “visibility” and “manifestation” for Thomas, and therefore does not include desirability in its meaning168; consequently, when Thomas says that light and beauty “possess of

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166 *In De divinis nominibus* 4.1.266. Marietti 87. “Item, cum bonum sit quod omnia appetunt, quaecumque de se important appetibilis rationem, ad rationem boni pertinere videntur; huiusmodi autem sunt lumen et pulchrum, de quibus etiam in hoc capitulo agit.”

167 Mandonnet 1.725. “[P]ulchritudo non habet rationem appetibilis nisi inquantum induit rationem boni.”

themselves the meaning of desirability,” he must simply mean that, although they do not include desirability in their meanings, each has the character of a good by its very nature, and is therefore intrinsically desirable. This interpretation is confirmed by a text in the *Summa Theologiae* where Thomas says that, “from the very fact that truth is the end of contemplation, it has the meaning (rationem) of a desirable and lovable and delightful good.” Thomas obviously does not mean here that truth includes desirability in its meaning (since “good” adds the notion of desirability to “truth,” as we saw in *De veritate* 21.3), but rather that, precisely because of its nature as what perfects the intellect, truth is a particular good (namely the good of the intellect), and is therefore desirable. Thus, Thomas’s statement that light and beauty “possess of themselves the meaning of desirability” does not contradict what he says in *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 ad 4, but rather builds on it: although beauty is only desirable insofar as it takes on the aspect of “good,” it always has the aspect of a good and so is always desirable, just as is the case for light and truth.

Lesson five begins by noting that Dionysius’s first step in explaining how beauty is attributed to God is to show “that ‘beautiful’ and ‘beauty’ are attributed differently to God and to creatures”: while “in creatures the beautiful [being] and beauty differ, God nevertheless contains each in Himself as one and the same.” The reason is that in creatures “the beautiful is said to be that which participates in beauty,” as “the beauty of the creature is nothing other than a likeness of the divine beauty participated in things”; therefore, since God does not participate in beauty, He does not differ from His Beauty. Thomas’s claim here that creatures participate in God’s

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169 *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 180.1 ad 1. Leonine 10.424. “[E]x hoc ipso quod veritas est finis contemplationis, habet rationem boni appetibilis et amabilis et delectantis.”

170 See pp. 52-53 above.

171 *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5.335-37. Marietti 113. “[P]aemitter quod differenter attribuitur Deo et creaturis pulchrum et pulchritudo; . . . [I]n creaturis different pulchrum et pulchritudo, Deus tamen utrumque comprehendit in se, secundum unum et idem. . . . [D]icit quod, . . . pulchrum dicitur hoc quod participat pulchritudinem; . . . pulchritudo enim creaturae nihil est aliud quam similitudo divinae pulchritudinis in rebus participata.”
Beauty, Which is identical with Him, mirror his statements elsewhere that creatures participate in God’s Existence, and thus already suggest that for him beauty is identical in reality with being.

According to Thomas, now that Dionysius has shown that “beauty” and “beautiful” do not differ in God, he can explain how each one is attributed to Him. God is called Beauty “on account of the fact he gives beauty to all created beings,” which He does according to the nature of each since “there is a certain beauty of spirit and another of body, and another of this and that body.” Dionysius then explains that God is the cause of beauty in all things “insofar as He is the cause of harmony (consonantiae) and brightness (claritatis) in all things” since “everything has beauty insofar as it has the brightness of its genus, either spiritual or bodily, and insofar as it is constituted in due proportion.” As for how God causes beauty’s conditions, Dionysius says that He causes brightness by giving “a share in his luminous radiance” to “all creatures,” and causes harmony by “calling all things to Himself” and thereby bringing about “the order of creatures to God,” which in turn produces “the ordering of them to each other.”

So far, then, this lesson has established that beauty is found, not just in every kind of being (physical as well as spiritual), but even in every being; still, the question remains of whether beauty is identical with being.

Thomas begins to answer this question in his section on how “beautiful” is attributed to God in two ways, the first being according to excess. Thomas observes that one can exceed a

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172 For an example of such statements, see Quodlibet XII, 4.1. Leonine 25.2.404:16–25: “Sciendum ergo quod unumquodque quod est in potentia et in actu, fit actu per hoc quod participat actum superiorem: per hoc autem aliquid maxime fit actu, quod participat per similitudinem primum et purum actum; primus autem actus est esse subsistens per se . . .” For an overview of participation for Thomas, see Wippel, Metaphysical Thought, 94-131.


[U]numquodque dicitur pulchrum, secundum quod habet claritatem sui generis vel spiritualum vel corporalem et secundum quod est in debita proportione constitutum. Quomodo autem Deus sit causa claritatis, ostendit subdens, quod Deus immittit omnibus creaturis, cum quodam fulgore, traditionem sui radii luminosi. . . . Deus sit causa consonantiae in rebus; . . . prima quidem, secundum ordinem creaturarum ad Deum et hanc tangit cum dicit quod Deus est causa consonantiae, sicut vocans omnia ad seipsum, inquantum convertit omnia ad seipsum sicut ad finem, ut supra dictum est . . . ; secunda autem consonantia est in rebus, secundum ordinationem earum ad invicem . . .”
genus in two ways, either by being the greatest within it, or by being entirely above it, “which is signified by the addition of the preposition ‘above’ (super).” For example, in medieval physics, fire exceeds within the genus of hot things because it is hottest, while the sun exceeds that genus entirely because it is the cause of heat, but is not hot itself, and thus “is not called ‘hottest,’ but rather ‘above hot,’ because heat is not in it in the same way, but more excellently.” While these two kinds of excess “do not come together in caused things at the same time,” they do in God, Who is both “the most beautiful and above beautiful,” not because He is in a genus, but “because to Him are attributed all that are in any genus.” The reason that every beauty in every genus is attributed to God is found a little later in the section where Thomas explains why God is called “above beautiful.” There Thomas writes that God “has within Himself and before all others the font of every beauty” because “every beauty and every beautiful thing” preexists in Him “not indeed dividely, but unitedly, in the way that multiple effects preexist in their cause.”

Of particular interest to us, however, is Thomas’s section on why God is called “most beautiful,” which says that since a thing is “more beautiful through the removal of a deficiency in beauty,” God is the most beautiful because he utterly lacks “the twofold deficiency of beauty in creatures.” First, certain creatures have a “variable” beauty, namely “corruptible things” or material beings, and, secondly, all creatures have a “particularized” or limited beauty “just as

174 Ibid. 4.5.341-43. Marietti 114. “Excessus autem est duplex: unus in genere . . . ; alius extra genus, qui significatur per additionem huius praepositionis: super; puta, si dicamus quod ignis excedit in calore excessu in genere, unde dicitur calidissimus; sol autem excedit excessu extra genus, unde non dicitur calidissimus sed supercalidus, quia calor non est in eo, eodem modo, sed excellentiori. Et licet iste duplex excessus in rebus causatis non simul conveniat, tamen in Deo simul dicitur et quod est pulcherrimus et superpulcher; non quod sit in genere, sed quod ei attribuuntur omnia quae sunt cuiuscumque generis.”

175 Ibid. 4.5.347. Marietti 114. “. . . ostendit qua ratione dicatur Deus superpulcher, in quantum in seipso habet excellenter et ante omnia alia, fontem totius pulchritudinis. In ipsa enim natura simplici et supernaturali omnium pulchorum ab ea derivatorum praeexistunt omnis pulchritudo et omne pulchrum, non quidem divisim, sed uniformiter per modum quo multiplices effectus in causa praeexistunt.”
they also have a particularized nature.” Significantly, each deficiency in beauty seems to result from a deficiency in being—variability in beauty from the corruptibility of a creature’s being, and limitedness in beauty from the limitation of that being by a particular nature. This correspondence implies that ugliness, which is not merely a deficiency in beauty but the contrary of beauty, is nothing but a privation in a thing’s being. Thomas confirms this suspicion when he says later in Chapter Four that “ugliness follows” on privations of either form or order since these pertain to beauty; consequently, if a body’s beauty were wholly removed from it, “not even the body itself could remain.” In claiming that ugliness is a mere privation of being and that every being has at least some beauty so long as it exists, this text gives still more evidence that beauty is coextensive with being, and therefore possibly identical with it.

Thomas all but proves the real identity of beauty and being when he discusses the second way that “beautiful” is attributed to God, i.e. by causality. He elucidates Dionysius’s statement that from God’s Beauty comes “the existence (esse) of all existing things” in the following way:

[F]or brightness (claritas) belongs to the understanding of beauty, as was said; however, every form, through which a thing has existence (esse), is a certain participation in the divine brightness (divinae claritatis); and this is what he adds, that single things are beautiful according to their own nature, i.e. according to their own form (secundum propriam formam); for which reason it is apparent that from the divine beauty the existence (esse) of all things is derived.

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176 Ibid., 4.5.345. Marietti 114. “. . . dicitur aliquid pulchrius per remotionem a defectu pulchritudinis. Est autem duplex defectus pulchritudinis in creaturis: unus, quod quaedam sunt quae habent pulchritudinem variabilem, sicut de rebus corruptibilitibus apparat. . . . Secundus autem defectus pulchritudinis est quod omnes creaturae habent aliquo modo particulatam pulchritudinem sicut et particulatam naturam.”

177 As we noted in our Introduction (p. 11-12), ugliness and evil are not simply a negation or absence of being, but rather a privation of being, i.e. the absence of being that is due to the substance in question and therefore ought to be there. Hence, the deficiencies of beauty that Thomas attributes to creatures in this text do not make them ugly, but rather simply mean that creatures do not possess beauty to the same unlimited degree as God.

178 Ibid., 4.21.554. Marietti 206-7. “Requiritur enim ad pulchritudinem et claritatem forma et commensuratio quae ad ordinem pertinet. Utrolibet autem privato, sequitur turpitudo. Nec tamen ita est malum in corpore quod omnino privetur forma et ordine, quia si totaliter tolleretur omnis forma et omnis ordo et per consequens totum id quod est in pulchritudine, nec ipsum corpus remanere posset et per consequens neque turpitudo corporis.”

179 Ibid., 4.5.349. Marietti 114. “Dicit ergo primo quod ex pulchro isto provenit esse omnibus existentibus: claritas enim est de consideratione pulchritudinis, ut dictum est; omnis autem forma, per quam res habet esse, est
For Thomas, the sign that the divine beauty causes the existence of everything is also the reason that each thing is beautiful according to its nature: everything shares in brightness, and therefore in beauty, through the very form by which it has existence (esse). Thomas expands this point in lesson six, where he says that, because every essence either is a form (i.e. a spirit) or has a form (i.e. a body), and because form is a “certain irradiation coming from the first brightness,” God’s Beauty causes “all the substantial essences of things.” These two texts thus indicate that all forms, substantial and accidental, are beautiful, from which it would follow that beauty is in all ten categories of being and is thus (4) coextensive with the transcendentals. Moreover, these passages also suggest, even if they do not prove, that beauty has the mark of (2) real identity with the transcendentals, as is also implied by texts outside the Dionysius commentary.

Having hinted throughout lesson five that beauty is really identical with being, Thomas removes all doubt of this fact with what he says at the end of the lesson about the beautiful and the good. According to Thomas, after proving that the divine beauty is the efficient, final, and exemplary cause of all things, Dionysius “infers a certain corollary from what has been said”:

[A]nd he says that, since in all ways the beautiful is the cause of all things, it is for this reason that the good and the beautiful are the same, because all things desire the beautiful and the good, as their cause in all ways; and because there is nothing that does not participate in the beautiful and the good, since each is beautiful and good according to its own form (secundum propriam formam) . . .

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180 Ibid., 4.6.360. Marietti 118. “Dicit ergo, quod ex pulchro causantur omnes essentiae substantiales entium. Omnis enim essentia vel est forma simplex vel habet complementum per formam; forma autem est quaedam irradiatio proveniens ex prima claritate; claritas autem est de ratione pulchritudinis, ut dictum est.”

181 For example, In Sent. III. 23.3.1.1 s.c. 2 strongly implies that beauty is identical with being when it says that “the form of a thing is its beauty.” While this statement is found in an objection sed contra, and thus may not express Thoma’s own opinion, it seems likely that it does since he does not write a reply to it, and so suggests that he agrees with it. Mandonnet 3.741. “Forma rei est decor ejus.” Meanwhile, that beauty is found in all ten categories is indicated by the fact that, as Kovach has shown, Thomas’s writings mention examples of beauty not only in the category of substance, but also in nearly all nine categories of accident. Kovach, “Transcendentality of Beauty,” 84.

182 In De divinis nominibus 4.5.355. Marietti 115. “Deinde, . . . infert quoddam corollarium ex dictis; et dicit quod, quia tot modis pulchrum est causa omnium, inde est quod bonum et pulchrum sunt idem, quia omnia
In this short paragraph, Thomas has explicitly affirmed that beauty and goodness are “the same,” i.e. identical in reality, and even given a reason for it: both goodness and beauty come to a thing through its form. That Thomas has thereby affirmed the convertibility of goodness and beauty is confirmed in lesson 22, where he says “the beautiful is convertible with the good, as was said above.” Finally, he asserts the coextension of these two as well when he says “there is nothing that does not participate in the beautiful and the good.” Now, unlike distinction in meaning, the marks of the transcendentals according to reality are transitive relations, so, if beauty is identical, convertible, and coextensive with one transcendental, it is so with them all. Hence, this passage proves that beauty has the marks of (2) identity, (3) convertibility, and (4) coextension with the transcendentals in reality since it makes clear that beauty has these relations with the good.

While Thomas has finished his commentary on this part of Dionysius’s text, he does not stop there, but adds a significant qualification to what he has said about goodness and beauty:

However, although the beautiful and the good are identical in subject, for both brightness (*claritas*) and harmony (*consonantia*) are contained within the meaning of the good, nevertheless they differ in meaning; for the beautiful adds to the good a relation to the power capable of knowing that it is of such a kind. Thomas has actually interrupted his commentary on the text of Dionysius in order to affirm that beauty, while identical with the good in subject, is distinct from it in meaning because it adds to the good a relation to the cognitive power. Hence, this text confirms what we learned from *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 ad 4: that beauty is conceptually distinct from goodness.

As Aertsen notes, it is also “striking” that in this text “Thomas formulates the identity of

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*desiderant pulchrum et bonum, sicut causam omnibus modis; et quia nihil est quod non participet pulchro et bono, cum unumquodque sit pulchrum et bonum secundum propriam formam . . .”*

Ibid., 4.22.590. Marietti 216. “. . . quia pulchrum convertitur cum bono, ut supra dictum est . . .”

*Quamvis autem pulchrum et bonum sint idem subiecto, quia tam claritas quam consonantia sub ratione boni continentur, tamen ratione differunt: nam pulchrum addit supra bonum, ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam illud esse huiusmodi.”*
and the difference between the beautiful and the good in terms he usually employs in connection with the transcendentals,” i.e. real identity but conceptual distinction. Multiple scholars have consequently read this text as proving that Thomas considered beauty to be a transcendental. For Aertsen, however, the “fundamental objection” to this interpretation is that “transcendentals express a general mode of being,” and “Thomas does not speak” here “of the relation between the beautiful and being, but of the relation between the beautiful and the good”; hence, beauty “seems to be a property of the good as good,” rather than of being as being. Aertsen finds this impression “strengthened by the fact that in the passage cited, ‘clarity’ and ‘consonance,’ which form the proper ratio of the beautiful, are said to be contained within the notion of the good.”

Since the theory that beauty is a property of the good rather than of being is not explicitly supported by the text, it can only be proven or disproven through systematic considerations, and will therefore be more fully discussed in our second chapter. Nevertheless, Aertsen is certainly correct that the last paragraph of In De divinis nominibus 4.5 does not prove that “Thomas in this commentary views the beautiful as a distinct transcendental,” since distinction in meaning from the good does not necessarily entail conceptual distinction from all of the transcendentals. Thus, the only marks that the text clearly attributes to beauty are the same ones indicated by the rest of the lesson, i.e. (2) identity, (3) convertibility, and (4) coextension in reality, which also belong to mere synonyms of transcendentals. Thomas has therefore neither affirmed nor denied

185 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 343.
186 For example, Kovach claims that “the relation Thomas asserts to stand between beauty and goodness” in this text is the “peremptory argument” for beauty being a transcendental. “Transcendentality of Beauty,” 85. Likewise, Luis Clavell states simply that “the beautiful, then, is presented as a transcendental” in this passage. Clavell, “La Belleza en el Commentario Tomista al De Divinis Nominibus,” Anuario Filosófico 17 (1984): 99.
187 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 344. Nor is Aertsen alone in this interpretation. Even Eco, an ardent supporter of beauty’s transcendentality, writes that the inclusion of clarity and consonance in the meaning of the good “seems rather to assimilate the beautiful into the good than to identify both of them with being.” Eco, The Aesthetics, 31.
188 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 344.
that beauty is a transcendental in this Dionysius commentary; however, the absence of an explicit declaration regarding beauty’s transcendental status in this work makes it doubtful that Thomas definitely held the view that beauty is a transcendental. After all, the lessons on beauty in the Dionysius commentary are Thomas’s most extended treatment of beauty, so, if he considered beauty a transcendental while writing them, it is strange that he did not say so.

3. *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1 and I-II, 27.1 ad 3

Not surprisingly, Thomas’s most informative passages on beauty are found in his greatest work, the *Summa Theologiae*, which he wrote from 1266 until he stopped writing altogether in 1273. Nevertheless, as Aertsen notes, “Thomas speaks only in passing of the beautiful” in this work since he “devotes no separate question to the beautiful” as he does for “the transcendentals good (I, 5-6), one (I, 11), and true (I, 16).” In fact, “there are just two texts in the *Summa* that are of importance for the transcendental status of the beautiful,” and both are found in discussions of the good; moreover, both are mere replies to objections based on statements of Dionysius.

The first text is in *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4, which asks “whether the good has the nature of a final cause.” The first objection argues that good has the nature of the formal cause rather than the final since, as Dionysius says, “the good is praised as beautiful,” and beauty “possesses the nature of the formal cause.” Thomas replies that the beautiful and the good “are indeed identical in reality, for they are founded on the same reality, namely the form,” which is why the good is praised as beautiful; however, “they differ in meaning (*ratione*).” The good “properly regards the appetite” because it is what all desire, and so, since “appetite is like a certain motion

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toward the thing,” the good has the nature of an end; however, beauty “regards the cognitive power” for “those things are called beautiful which please when seen.” 192 It is for this reason that “beauty consists in due proportion” since, like “every cognitive power,” sense “is a certain proportion (ratio). and consequently “delights in things duly proportioned as in things similar to itself.” 193 Thus, since knowledge “occurs through assimilation,” while” similitude relates to the form,” beauty “properly pertains to the nature (rationem) of a formal cause.” 194

The second text is *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3, which asks “whether the good is the only cause of love.” The third objection notes that, according to Dionysius, “not only the good, but also the beautiful is lovable to all.” 195 Once again, Thomas begins by observing that “the beautiful is identical with the good, differing in meaning only,” since “the good is that which all desire,” and so “it is of the nature of the good (de ratione boni) that in it the appetite is stilled: but it pertains to the nature of the beautiful (ad rationem pulchri) that in the sight or knowledge of it the appetite is stilled.” It is because beauty quiets the appetite in being known that “those senses chiefly look to the beautiful” which are “maximally knowing (maxime cognoscitivi),” i.e. hearing and sight “when serving reason,” since we speak of beautiful sights and sounds, but not of “beautiful tastes or odors.” Hence, “the beautiful adds to the good a certain relation to the

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194 *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1. Leonine 4.61. “Et quia cognitio fit per assimilationem, similitudo autem respicit formam, pulchrum proprie pertinet ad rationem causae formalis.”

195 Leonine 6.192. “Dionysius dicit . . . quod non solum bonum, sed etiam pulchrum est omnibus amabile.”
cognitive power” because the good “is said to be that which pleases the appetite absolutely,” while beauty “is said to be that the mere apprehension of which pleases.”

Both I, 5.4 ad 1 and I-II, 27.1 ad 3 confirm what the Dionysius commentary showed us, namely that for Thomas beauty is identical in reality with the transcendental good, and so with the other transcendentals. The former text even gives an explanation for this fact: the good and the beautiful are identical because they are “founded on the same reality,” the form. As with the last paragraph of In De divinis nominibus 4.5, however, the main purpose of both texts is to show that beauty and goodness “differ in meaning,” for which both give the same argument: whereas the good relates to the appetitive power, the beautiful relates to the cognitive power.

These texts have led to opposite conclusions on beauty’s transcendental status. Kovach holds that Thomas has “clearly expressed his belief in the transcendentality of beauty” in these passages by assigning beauty the marks of real identity and conceptual distinction; likewise, Eco sees these texts as “definitive” proof that beauty is a transcendental because in both of them “beauty is identified with being simply as being.” For Aertsen, however, no such “definitive” conclusion can be drawn since in these passages “the beautiful is not identified with being, but with the good.” In fact, “the formulations rather suggest that the beautiful is a specification of the good” since goodness is defined as “that which simply pleases” and beauty as “that the mere

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196 Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum est idem bono, sola ratione differens. Cum enim bonum sit quod omnia appetunt, de ratione boni est quod in eo quietetur appetitus: sed ad rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus. Unde et illi sensus praecipue respiciunt pulchrum, qui maxime cognoscitivi sunt, scilicet visus et auditus rationi deservientes: dicimus enim pulchra visibilia et pulchros sonos. In sensibilibus autem aliorum sensuum, non utimur nomine pulchritudinis, non enim dicimus pulchros sapore aut odore. Et sic patet quod pulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam: ita quod bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitu; pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.”

197 That the “good” discussed in these articles is transcendental goodness, not the quality of moral goodness, is clear from the fact that Summa Theologiae I, q. 5 concerns “the good in general,” and its first article shows that this good is identical in reality with being, while Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 27 is devoted to “the cause of love,” which is of course the good in general.


199 Eco, The Aesthetics, 36.
apprehension of which pleases.” which is why “Cajetan in his commentary on Summa theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 concludes that the beautiful is a quaedam boni species,” or “certain species of the good.” Hence, “in both texts the transcendental status of the beautiful remains unclear.”

Once again, we must agree with Aertsen since, like the last paragraph of In De divinis nominibus 4.5, these texts from the Summa Theologiae only affirm that beauty is transcendental, not that it is a transcendental. Both passages confirm that, as we learned in the commentary on Dionysius, beauty has the mark of (2) identity according to reality with the good and so with all the transcendentals; moreover, since the transcendentals’ (3) convertibility and (4) coextension necessarily follow from their identity, these two articles implicitly attribute these marks to beauty as well. On the other hand, these texts only conceptually distinguish beauty from the good, not from all the transcendentals, and, while each gives a definition of beauty, it is not apparent that these definitions express a unique general mode of being; hence, these passages do not clearly attribute to beauty either the defining feature of the transcendentals or their marks according to meaning, though systematic considerations could still prove beauty to have these characteristics. These texts therefore do not prove that Thomas considered beauty a transcendental since they only give beauty the marks that can be possessed by mere synonyms of the transcendentals.

**Conclusion**

Five questions have guided our inquiry, the first being what characteristics a term must have to be a transcendental. Our analysis determined that, for Thomas, the transcendentals are distinguished by seven marks, one of which is the essential function of the transcendentals, and the rest of which follow from this first one. The defining feature of the transcendentals is that

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200 Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 347. Cajetan’s commentary on Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 can be found below the article itself on Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum est quaedam boni species.”
they (1) express a general mode that follows on being, rather than a special nature that contracts it. Because they do not contract being, according to reality the transcendentals are (2) identical, from which it follows that they are (3) convertible and hence (4) coextensive. On the other hand, since they express modes that follow from the nature of being yet are not expressed by the word “being,” according to meaning they (5) distinguish themselves from “being” and each other with the conceptual additions they make to “being,” but also (6) arrange themselves in a strict order on the basis of how closely the modes they express follow on the nature of being—i.e. the order De veritate 1.1 presents of “being,” “thing,” “one,” “something,” “true,” and “good.” Finally, because the transcendentals add to being in a certain order, rather than simultaneously, each one (7) adds to and includes not just “being” but all the transcendentals preceding it in that order.

Our second question was whether a non-transcendental can have any of the marks of the transcendentals. De veritate 21.1 showed us that synonyms of the transcendentals would have all of the marks of the transcendentals according to reality—i.e. (2) identity, (3) convertibility, and (4) coextension with being—but would not (1) express general modes of being that “being” and the other transcendentals do not already express, and thus would lack the defining feature of the transcendentals; furthermore, such terms would lack the marks of the transcendentals according to meaning.201 Synonyms of the transcendentals would thus be non-transcendentals, but would nevertheless have all the marks of the transcendentals according to reality.

Third, we asked whether any of Thomas’s lists of the transcendentals were meant to be exhaustive. We found that Thomas often implies that he is deriving a complete list when he is only listing four of the six transcendentals, and the one text that does list all six, De veritate 1.1,

201 As we explained in our section on De veritate 21.1, a synonym for one of the transcendentals would share both the meaning and the position of the transcendental with which it was synonymous, and would not add to and include it in meaning; as a result, such a term would neither (5) be distinct in meaning from all of the other transcendentals, (6) have its own unique place in their order, or (7) add to and include every prior transcendental.
has no language that clearly establishes whether it is comprehensive. Hence, textual analysis alone cannot show whether Thomas intended any of the lists to be exhaustive, though systematic considerations in Chapter Two could still prove one of them to be complete.

Fourthly, we asked whether beauty’s absence from the lists of transcendentals could be harmonized with the theory that he considered beauty a transcendental. I conclude that such a reconciliation is difficult if not impossible since there is no evidence that Thomas either began to think of beauty as a transcendental after the Dionysius commentary, as Kovach argues, or that he was hesitant to change the list of transcendentals, as Eco claims. Not only does Thomas never express the view that beauty is a transcendental, whether in the Dionysius commentary or after it, but he gives beauty the same passing treatment after this work that he gave it before. Moreover, although Thomas did not always include “thing” and “something” in his lists of transcendentals, he did not pull back from declaring them transcendentals, even though no Scholastic had done so previously.\textsuperscript{202} Hence, that beauty is never even mentioned by Thomas as a transcendental, much less listed with the others, cannot be attributed to any qualms about innovation on Thomas’s part.

Finally, we asked what marks of the transcendentals Thomas attributes to beauty. Of the seven, the three that Thomas definitely ascribes to beauty, both in the Dionysius commentary and in the \textit{Summa Theologiae}, are (2) identity, (3) convertibility, and (4) coextension with being in reality. He also makes clear in three texts that “beautiful” is distinct in meaning from “good.” Nevertheless, as was noted, conceptual distinction from one transcendental does not guarantee conceptual distinction from them all, so it must be concluded that Thomas’s texts do not clearly

\textsuperscript{202} As we noted on p. 43, one could object that “thing” and “something” were easier for Thomas to add to the list of transcendentals because of their appearance in the thought of Avicenna, to whom he could therefore appeal as an authority. On the other hand, there was an authority to which Thomas could have appealed for adding beauty to the list, namely pseudo-Dionysius, whose opinion had far greater weight for medieval theologians than Avicenna’s.
attribute to beauty any of the marks of the transcendentals according to meaning: (5) distinction, (6) order, and (7) inclusion of prior terms in that order; moreover, they never attribute to beauty the defining feature of the transcendentals: (1) expressing a unique general mode of being.

What do these answers tell us about the status of beauty for Thomas? On the one hand, only three of the marks of the transcendentals definitely belong to beauty for Thomas (although systematic considerations might show that beauty possesses others), and these are the marks that mere synonyms of the transcendentals can have; thus, while Thomas certainly thinks that beauty is *transcendental*, he does not make it clear that beauty is *a transcendental*. Moreover, if he did consider beauty a transcendental, why did he never say so since he was obviously not reluctant to declare new transcendentals? On the other hand, Thomas never makes clear that any of his lists of the transcendentals are meant to be exhaustive, and thus never precludes the possibility of transcendentals after “good”; moreover, Thomas never explicitly denies any of the marks of the transcendentals to beauty. Hence, while Thomas gives no signs of thinking that beauty definitely is a transcendental, he also gives no indication of holding that beauty *is not* a transcendental.

For these reasons, I conclude that it cannot be determined from Thomas’s texts what he thought regarding the transcendental status of beauty, or even whether he had an opinion on this issue; in fact, it appears most likely that Thomas did not have a definite opinion, either because he never considered the question, or because he never made up his mind regarding it. Beauty, after all, was clearly not a pressing issue for him since he writes of it only in passing. Moreover, Thomas seems to have never determined to his satisfaction the exact nature of beauty, as can be seen in one of his last writings on beauty, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3. There Thomas says that beauty adds to the good “a certain (quendam) relation to the cognitive power”\(^{203}\) but says no

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\(^{203}\) Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam . . .” Emphasis
more about it, thus implying that he is unsure what that relation is; moreover, the word *quendam* does not appear in the earlier text that first mentions this relation,\(^\text{204}\) which suggests that Thomas has become more uncertain about beauty over time. Thus, it may be that Thomas never resolved the question of beauty’s transcendental status because he never solved the riddle of beauty itself.

Although it is unfortunate that Thomas never took a clear position on whether beauty is a transcendental, it also means that Thomists both can and should go beyond his text in answering this question, by drawing out from his statements on beauty what is implied by them. Hence, our next chapter will examine the attempts of Thomists to answer the systematic question of beauty’s transcendental status: whether beauty is a distinct transcendental in Thomas’s metaphysics.

\[^{204}\text{In De divinis nominibus 4.5.356. Marietti 115. “. . . pulchrum addit supra bonum, ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam illud esse huiusmodi.”}\]
Figure 1: The Traits of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defining Feature</th>
<th>Traits According to Reality</th>
<th>Traits According to Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Expressing Unique General Modes of Being That Follow on Every Being</td>
<td>2) Identity with Each Other</td>
<td>5) Distinction from Each Other</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Convertibility with Each Other</td>
<td>(is the opposite of)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>4) Coextension with Each Other</td>
<td>(is the opposite of)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a.k.a. Transcendental)</td>
<td>6) Order among Themselves</td>
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Figure 2: The Derivation of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Transcendentals</th>
<th>Other Primary Notions</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being (ens)</td>
<td>Non-Being (non ens)</td>
<td>Means “that which is.” Expresses the existence or actuality of a being. First conception of the mind because a thing is knowable insofar as it is actual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thing (res)</td>
<td>Division (divisio)</td>
<td>The negation of being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One (unum)</td>
<td>Multitude (multitudo)</td>
<td>Means “that which is determinate.” Expresses a being’s essence, or principle of relative non-being, which limits the being and makes it include negations of all other beings. Therefore presupposes non-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something (aliquid)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arises primarily between being and non-being, but also among beings on account of their including one another’s negations. Therefore presupposes “thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True (verum)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Means “that which is undivided in itself.” Presupposes “division” because it express the negation of division in a being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good (bonum)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Things that are divided from one another but are one in themselves. Therefore presupposes “one.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Means “that which is divided from others.” Presupposes “multitude” because it expresses being’s diversity, or division from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Means “that which is knowable.” Presupposes “something” because a being is knowable insofar as it is distinguished from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Means “that which is desirable.” Presupposes “true” because a being is only lovable insofar as it is knowable.</td>
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CHAPTER TWO
THE SYSTEMATIC QUESTION

Introduction

Whereas Thomas himself gives little attention to beauty and does not say whether it is a transcendental, contemporary Thomists have not only produced a wealth of literature on beauty, but have even devoted much of it to arguing over beauty’s status as a transcendental. According to Kovach, the debate began over a hundred and thirty years ago when Josef Jungmann declared beauty a transcendental in “the first elaborate neoscholastic aesthetics,” and thereby provoked an emphatic rejection of this view by several scholars.¹ Hence, as Eco observes, the debate’s first participants “tended to exclude” beauty from the order of transcendentals,² which was primarily due to their acceptance of Cajetan’s view that beauty is “a certain species of the good” (quaedam species boni).³ This premise led inevitably to the conclusion that beauty is not coextensive with goodness (and thus not with being either) since a species is always less extensive than its genus.

Over time, however, it became clear to Thomists that, for several reasons, the beautiful cannot be a mere species of the good.⁴ For one thing, as G. B. Phelan observes, Thomas “does not include beauty” when he presents a “three-fold classification of the good” into the species of the pleasant, the useful, and the good in itself or “good worthy of honor” (bonum honestum).⁵ It

² Eco, The Aesthetics, 22.
⁴ No scholar refutes Cajetan more thoroughly than Kovach does in his Die Ästhetik, 183-214. For a more concise presentation of the reasons that beauty is not a species of the good, see his “Transcendentality of Beauty,” 83-89.
is true that for Thomas spiritual or intelligible beauty is really identical with one of these species, i.e. the bonum honestum,⁶ but this species is the primary sense of the good⁷; moreover, it is the kind of goodness that is identical with esse since everything loves and desires its existence for its own sake,⁸ which is how the bonum honestum is loved.⁹ Therefore, Thomas’s identification of spiritual beauty with the bonum honestum does not make beauty a mere species of goodness, but rather simply confirms that intelligible beauty is identical, convertible, and coextensive in reality with the transcendental good—just as we have seen explicitly stated by Thomas.¹⁰

More than anything else, beauty’s identity in reality with goodness convinced a growing number of Thomists that it is likewise identical with being since to be really identical with one transcendental is to be really identical with them all. Nevertheless, these scholars supported this conclusion by proving that not only Cajetan’s appraisal of beauty as a species of goodness, but all of the anti-transcendentalists’ arguments against beauty’s convertibility with being were based on deficient understandings of beauty for Thomas, such as those we encountered in our Introduction.¹¹ Since it was assumed that only transcendentals could be convertible with being,
by the middle of the twentieth century beauty was accepted as a transcendental by the majority of Thomists, and seemed to be headed for universal acceptance as such.\textsuperscript{12} The momentum of the debate changed dramatically, however, after the publication of Aertsen’s authoritative study on the transcendentals for Thomas since the eighth chapter of this work presents arguments against beauty’s being a transcendental that are far superior to those of prior anti-transcendentalists.\textsuperscript{13} Unlike those earlier scholars, Aertsen does not base his denial of beauty’s transcendental status on the easily refuted claim that it is not convertible with being, but on the far more plausible contention that beauty is the mere combination of two transcendentals, and therefore does not express a distinct general mode of being. Moreover, Aertsen’s arguments against beauty’s being a transcendental are so strongly reasoned and articulated that few scholars have attempted to respond to them; instead, most of the scholars who write on the beautiful after Aertsen—and who are aware of his book—\textsuperscript{14}—have either accepted his reasoning,\textsuperscript{15} or simply

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\textsuperscript{12} Kovach, “Beauty as a Transcendental,” 186.

\textsuperscript{13} Aertsen has written four other pieces arguing that beauty is not a transcendental—two articles written before his book on the transcendentals in Aquinas (“Beauty in the Middle Ages: A Forgotten Transcendental?”, Medieval Philosophy and Theology 1 (1991): 68-97; “Die Frage nach der Transzendentalität der Schönheit im Mittelalter,” in Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi, ed. Burkhard Mojsisch and Olaf Pluta (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: B. R. Grüner, 1991), 1-22), one article written after it (“The Triad ‘True-Good-Beautiful,’” 415-35), and an excursus in his recently published opus magnum on the transcendentals in medieval thought (Transcendental Thought, 161-76). The two articles written prior to his book on Thomas and the transcendentals give earlier versions of the argument presented in its eighth chapter, and the article and excursus that come after it investigate beauty’s status not just in Aquinas but in medieval philosophy in general. Hence, we will only refer to them for salient points that Aertsen does not make in the eighth chapter of his book on Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentals, as this chapter is his most definitive treatment of beauty’s transcendental status in Thomas’s metaphysics.

\textsuperscript{14} There are a number of transcendentalists who do not try to refute Aertsen’s book because they are apparently unaware of it, as shown by the fact that they argue for or assume beauty’s transcendentality but do not consider his objections to this position. Battista Mondin, “La bellezza come trascendentale in Platone, Agostino e Tommaso,” Sapienza: Rivista di Filosofia e di Teologia 55 (2008): 385-397; Pascal Dasseleer, “Être et beauté selon saint Thomas d’Aquin. Pour une ontologie du beau,” in Actualité de la pensée médiévale (Paris: Editions Peeters, 1994) 268-286, and “Esthétique ‘thomiste’ ou esthétique ‘thomasiéenne’?” Revue philosophique de Louvain 97, no. 2 (May 1999): 323; Jaroszynski, Beauty and Being, part 3 passim.; Tomás Melendo Granados, Esbozo de una metafísica de la belleza (Pamplona : Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2000), 37.

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declined to comment on the question of whether beauty is a distinct transcendental.\textsuperscript{16}

Whether one agrees with Aertsen’s conclusion or not, it is indisputable that he has made the greatest contribution of any scholar to the debate over beauty’s transcendental status since he has manifested the only principle by which one can determine whether beauty is a transcendental in Thomas’s thought. That principle is the “guideline” he sets for his inquiry: “the question as to the transcendentality of the beautiful cannot be resolved until it has become clear what universal mode of being the beautiful expresses that is not yet expressed by the other transcendentals, and what its place is in the order of these properties.”\textsuperscript{17} In addition to being founded on Aertsen’s own unparalleled research on the transcendentals for Thomas, this guideline has been confirmed by our first chapter, which found that the transcendentals are distinguished from mere synonyms of the transcendentals by the former’s defining feature, (1) expressing a unique general mode of being, and also by their marks according to meaning: (5) distinction, (6) order, and (7) inclusion. Thus, in giving this guideline, Aertsen is the first adequately to define the conditions beauty must fulfill to be a transcendental, and so has raised the debate to a new level of rigor and clarity.

Consequently, in order to benefit from the unique precision of Aertsen’s analysis, our investigation of the systematic question of beauty’s transcendentality—i.e. whether beauty is a transcendental in Thomas’s thought—will be organized according to Aertsen’s treatment of the


\textsuperscript{17} Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 337; cf. Transcendental Thought, 176.
beautiful in his eighth chapter. There he comes to three conclusions: 1) that a “clarification” of beauty’s transcendental status “is not to be found in Thomas’s writings,”\(^{18}\) 2) that “the attempts of various scholars to find a distinct place for beauty as a transcendental must be regarded as having failed,”\(^{19}\) and 3) that in fact “the beautiful is not a distinct transcendental” in Thomas’s thought,\(^ {20}\) but is rather “the extension of the true to the good.”\(^ {21}\) Our first chapter has already confirmed Aertsen’s first conclusion, but only systematic considerations can confirm or refute the latter two. Hence, this chapter’s first part will examine the arguments for beauty’s being a transcendental that scholars have made both before and after Aertsen’s book, in order to see whether any succeed in fulfilling Aertsen’s guideline. Then, in the second part of the chapter, we will consider Aertsen’s arguments that beauty is not a transcendental in Thomas’s thought.

A. Transcendentalist Arguments for Beauty’s Being a Distinct Transcendental

The arguments presented in this section should be understood as different strategies for proving that beauty is a transcendental, rather than as distinct schools of thought on beauty, since transcendentalists have frequently appealed to more than one of them simultaneously. Moreover, since most of these arguments have been used since the beginning of the debate, we will not treat them in chronological order, but in the order of how close they come to proving that beauty is a transcendental, beginning with the least successful and proceeding to the most successful.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 351.  
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 353.  
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 354.  
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 359.
1. Beauty Is the Synthesis or Unity of Other Transcendentals

One of the most popular theories among transcendentalists is that beauty ends the list of transcendentals as their synthesis or union. While the first person to present a version of this theory was B. G. Paredes, its most famous formulation comes from Maritain, who states that “strictly speaking, Beauty is the radiance of all the transcendentals united”—a phrase that has been repeated, often verbatim, by numerous Thomists.

There are two problems with this proposal. First, De veritate 21.3 makes clear that each transcendental adds to and includes in its meaning the term preceding it in the order. Thus, as Aertsen observes, “transcendentals do not stand apart from each other, but are marked by a progressive explication of being,” in which “what is later includes conceptually what is earlier.” What follows from this “cumulative structure” is that “there is no reason (and no room) for a unique transcendental, the beautiful, that would synthesize the other transcendentals,” since, in fact, every transcendental is a synthetic transcendental, inasmuch as it conceptually contains the transcendentals coming before it. The other, more serious problem with this position is that each transcendental does not merely include the ones prior to it, but also adds its own unique meaning to that synthesis; hence, if beauty is defined merely as the synthesis of the other transcendentals, without a conceptual addition of its own, it cannot be a transcendental. Maritain’s theory thus not only fails to prove but even casts doubt on beauty’s being a distinct transcendental since it describes beauty as not adding anything new to being but only as blending its attributes together.

23 Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, 173, note 66.
25 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 351.
Winfried Czapiewski presents an interesting twist on the synthesis hypothesis when he argues that beauty is the union, not of all the transcendentals, but only of truth and goodness, and moreover does not end the list, but rather precedes these two transcendentals as their source; thus, as Aertsen notes, this theory is the “converse” of Maritain’s. According to Czapiewski, beauty is conceptually prior to truth and goodness because the root of their separate relations to intellect and will is beauty’s relation to both powers. This foundational relation, however, cannot be grasped directly since the finite spirit can only realize its conformity to being by means of the distinct powers of intellect and will, and thus beauty can only be apprehended through truth and goodness; therefore, despite being a transcendental, beauty cannot be included in the list of the transcendentals. Hence, Czapiewski’s “ingenious solution” tries to make beauty’s absence from the list of transcendentals into evidence that Thomas did consider it such a term.

Nevertheless, Czapiewski’s attempt to find a place for beauty as a transcendental for Thomas is even less successful than Maritain’s. According to Czapiewski, beauty includes truth and goodness because it is conceptually prior to them, yet, as Aertsen points out, in Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentals “the posterior includes the prior conceptually, and not the prior the posterior.” Hence, whereas Maritain fails to account for Thomas’s order of transcendentals, Czapiewski flatly contradicts it. Moreover, Czapiewski forgets that truth and goodness already have a foundational unity, namely being, which as the first transcendental is the conceptual root of all the others. Finally, as Aertsen notes, in De veritate 1.1 Thomas justifies being’s relations

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26 Ibid., 352.
27 Czapiewski, Das Schöne, 121-31.
28 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 352.
29 Ibid., 353.
to the intellect and will by citing Aristotle’s statement that the soul “is in some way all things.”

Hence, for Thomas the relations of intellect and will to true and good are not founded on a prior relation of the soul to beauty, but of the soul to being—i.e. every being is true and good because the soul’s ontological perfection allows it to be in accord with all beings through intellect and will. We therefore agree with Aertsen that “there is in [Thomas’s] doctrine no need whatsoever for a ‘hidden’ transcendental that would be the unitary center of the true and the good.”

2. Beauty Is Being as Related to a Third Power of the Soul

Once scholars recognize the need for beauty to make a unique conceptual addition to being, what they propose for this conceptual addition are always relations to the soul. After all, not only does Thomas’s definition of beauty show that it expresses a relation of being to the soul, but the only place where one can add to the order of transcendentals is among the terms said “in relation to another,” consequently, transcendentalists have looked for a way to distinguish beauty’s relation to the soul from those of truth and goodness.

The most obvious way to do so is to find another power to which beauty relates since both the true and the good are distinguished from each other through being related to distinct powers. Hence, some scholars suggest that what beauty relates to is a “third power,” which for most of these thinkers is sensibility, i.e. the human being’s sense powers taken as a group.

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30 Leonine 22/1.5:153-54. “Alio modo secundum convenientiam unius entis ad aliud, et hoc quidem non potest esse nisi accipiatur aliquid quod natum sit convenire cum omni ente; hoc autem est anima, quae « quodam modo est omnia », ut dicitur in III de anima . . .” Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 353.
31 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 353.
33 See Chapter One, pp. 41.
34 One exception is Battista Mondin, who writes that, even though he did not actually do so, what Thomas should have related beauty to is “sentiment,” which according to Mondin is the seat of the “admiration” provoked by
Gilson, for example, writes that “just as good is the perfection of the will, and just as the true is ‘the good of the intellect,’ so also . . . the beautiful is the good of sense knowledge for the sensibility of an intelligent being.”\textsuperscript{35} As this statement illustrates, scholars that define beauty in relation to the senses still hold that what delights in beauty are the powers unique to man, and so it is more precise to say that for them beauty relates \textit{through} the senses \textit{to} intellect and will.

The theory that beauty is a transcendental relating to man’s soul through his senses receives its most influential articulation from Hans Urs von Balthasar. For von Balthasar, beauty combines two elements: a sensible appearance, which he calls “Form” (\textit{Gestalt}) or “Figure” (\textit{Gebilde}), and “splendor,” or the shining of a higher reality through this sensible form; hence, in the experience of beauty, “we are confronted simultaneously with both the figure and that which shines forth from the figure, making it into a worthy, a love-worthy thing.”\textsuperscript{36} As the sensible manifestation of an intelligible reality,\textsuperscript{37} beauty for von Balthasar is the “self-showing” or “epiphany” of being, and so precedes both goodness (the “self-giving” of being) and truth (the “self-saying” of being) in the order of transcendentals since a being must first appear to man

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\textsuperscript{35} Etienne Gilson, \textit{The Arts of the Beautiful} (Washington, D.C.: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), 28. James Joyce, whose novel \textit{A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man} is famous for including discussions elaborating on Thomas’s aesthetic thought, writes in a notebook that, just as “truth is desired by the intellectual appetite which is appeased by the most satisfying relations of the intelligible,” so “beauty is desired by the aesthetic appetite which is appeased by the most satisfying relations of the sensible.” James Joyce, \textit{The Critical Writings of James Joyce}, ed. E. Mason and R. Ellman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 146f.


before it can be loved or known by him.\textsuperscript{38} Hence, for von Balthasar, beauty is not merely a relational transcendental but even the first and foundational one since “without beauty . . . the good also loses its attractiveness” and “the proofs of the truth have lost their cogency.”\textsuperscript{39}

As philosophically interesting as von Balthasar’s account is, it cannot be used to show that beauty is a transcendental in Thomas’s thought, for several reasons.\textsuperscript{40} The most important is simply that, if beauty essentially relates to the senses, it is not an attribute of every being since purely spiritual beings, i.e. angels, are entirely non-sensible, and so would only be beautiful metaphorically; indeed, as we saw in our Introduction, it is precisely on this basis that Seidl argues against beauty’s transcendentalit\textsuperscript{y}.\textsuperscript{41} Even if von Balthasar’s view could explain how non-sensible beings are beautiful,\textsuperscript{42} it still holds that a thing is beautiful not simply insofar as it exists, but insofar as its existence is manifested by its sensible appearance; thus, since the being of any creature far exceeds what we can perceive of that being through its sensible appearance,\textsuperscript{43} von Balthasar’s theory entails that beauty is not identical in reality with being, even in material things. Hence, by Thomas’s standards, von Balthasar and other scholars who relate beauty to the senses do not even have an account of how beauty is \textit{transcendental}, much less \textit{a transcendental}.

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\textsuperscript{39} von Balthasar, \textit{Seeing the Form}, 19.
\textsuperscript{40} For one thing, von Balthasar’s order of the relational transcendentals is the opposite of Thomas’s, since it places the good before the true. Schindler defends this reversal by saying that “this view avoids irrationalism—of which it might be suspected to the extent that it places the willing of the good before the knowledge of the object’s truth—because the good here is preceded by the \textit{beautiful}, which is an intellectual perception of form even if it is not yet a perception in the mode specifically of comprehended truth.” Schindler, “Beauty and the Analogy of Truth,” 312. Thomas, however, could not accept this explanation since for him truth is defined as the knowable, so any kind of knowledge—even if it falls short of full comprehension—is an engagement with truth. Thus, since Thomas holds that one cannot love something without knowing it at least vaguely, truth necessarily precedes goodness for him.
\textsuperscript{41} Seidl, “Sulla questione,” 259.
\textsuperscript{42} For instance, von Balthasar’s followers might say that spiritual beings are beautiful insofar as they are manifested to the human senses and intellect by material ones. Of course, that spirits are not intrinsically beautiful, since they do not relate to man’s senses in themselves, but only through something else.
\textsuperscript{43} As Thomas famously declares, “our knowledge is so weak that no philosopher has ever been able to investigate perfectly the nature of a single fly.” \textit{In Symbolum} prooemium. Marietti 194. “[C]ognitio nostra est adeo debilis quod nullus philosophus potuit unquam perfecte investigare naturam unius muscae . . .”
\end{flushright}
In any case, Thomas evidently does not share von Balthasar’s opinion that transcendental beauty essentially relates to the senses. As we pointed out in our Introduction, Thomas explicitly distinguishes sensible and intelligible beauty, and makes clear that it is only the latter that is identical in reality with being, and thus transcendental. Therefore, “being as related to man’s soul through his senses” cannot be the meaning of beauty for Thomas.

3. Beauty Is Being as Related to Both Intellect and Will

One of the more popular views of Thomists is that, while truth and goodness express separate relations to intellect and to will, beauty expresses a single relation to both powers—a promising theory since Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 makes clear that the experience of beauty involves both intellect and will: “it pertains to the nature of the beautiful that in the sight or knowledge of it the appetite is stilled.” This relation to both powers can also be interpreted as a relation to the spiritual soul underlying these powers since it is precisely from the fact that intellect and will “are rooted in the one soul” that Kovach, the primary promoter of this view, argues that “there is no reason why being could not be referred to these two faculties jointly, and not only separately.” Still, Kovach and his followers prefer to describe beauty as “the only relative transcendental of two termini (the intellect and the will),” rather than as expressing a relation whose single term is the soul, because they consider beauty’s “double-termed” nature

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44 See Introduction, pp. 8-10.
46 Leonine 6.192. “[A]d rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus.”
48 Ibid., 89.
to be its most distinguishing characteristic. Especially enthusiastic on this point is Schindler, who writes that “not only is the notion of a relation with two termini without precedence in the transcendentals, but it seems to be unique in the whole thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas.”

This conclusion is premature, however, since the absence of an example of a “double-termed” relation in Thomas’s texts might not mean that beauty’s relation to the soul is the only case of such a relation, but that such a relation does not exist in his metaphysics. In fact, strictly speaking, it is impossible for a relation to have two terms, in the sense of two formally distinct correlates, as Thomas makes clear when he says that “double” relates only to “half” and “equal” only to “equal, because “one is only related to one” and “to a determinate one.” Now, it does seem that for Thomas a being has a single relation to all beings that have the same corresponding relation, e.g. one relation of equality to everything that is equal to it; hence, being could have a single relation to some formality that is shared by both intellect and will, which Kovach would likely say is the soul in which both exist. Yet the spiritual soul is not such a formality since it is the material cause of these powers, in which they exist as accidents; nor could there be such a formality since it would have to be an accident inhering in each of them as its matter, and the

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51 In Metaphysic. IV, 15.717. Marietti 197. “[U]num non refertur nisi ad unum; et non ad quodcumque unum, sed ad unum determinatum. Sicut patet quod sint idem subiecto dimidium et aequale; non tamen ad aequale dicitur duplum, sed magis ad dimidium. Aequale vero dicitur ad aequale.”
52 Thomas’s explanation for how I can acquire a real relation to someone else because of a change not in me but in him—for example, through his growing and becoming equal to me in height—is that “from the fact that I have a certain quantity, it belongs to me to be equal with all those who have the same quantity,” so when he acquires this same quantity, “this common root of equality is determined to him.” These statements suggest that, if I am already equal to someone, I do not acquire a new relation of equality when someone else becomes equal to me, but rather my original relation of equality acquires a new term, and thus I have a single relation of equality to multiple beings. The advantage of this interpretation is that it avoids saying I have myriad relations of the same kind, which I am constantly gaining and losing due to changes in me and others. In Phys. V, 3. Leonine 2.237. “Unde dicendum est quod si aliquis per suam mutationem efficiatur mihi aequalis, me non mutato, ista aequalitas primo erat in me quodammodo, sicut in sua radice, ex qua habet esse reale: ex hoc enim quod habeo talem quantitatem, competit mihi quod sim aequalis omnibus illis, qui eandem quantitatem habent. Cum ergo aliquis de novo accipit illam quantitatem, ista communis radix aequalitatis determinatur ad istum: et ideo nihil adventit mihi de novo per hoc quod incipio esse alteri aequalis per eius mutationem.”
activities of intellect and will—knowing and loving—are too diverse for the same accident to exist in each. It is thus impossible for beauty to express a single relation to both of these powers.

One might try to avoid this problem by saying that what the beautiful adds is not a single relation to both powers, but rather the notion of “jointness” to the two relations already expressed by truth and goodness—i.e. the understanding of being as having relations to both powers at the same time, instead of consecutively.\textsuperscript{53} Aside from the fact that being never engages one power without engaging the other (since the intellect can only know if the will moves it to act, and the will can only desire what the intellect knows\textsuperscript{54}), the chief issue for this proposal is that there is already a transcendental that relates to both powers: the good. Thomas says in \textit{De veritate} 21.3 that “‘good’ presupposes ‘true’” because, while “true” perfects the soul “according the specific nature” alone, “good” perfects “not only according to the specific nature, but also according to the existence which it has in reality”\textsuperscript{55}; in other words, “good” perfects the soul both in the way that truth perfects and in a further way. Moreover, Thomas tells us that “knowledge is the cause of love,” and so precedes it, for the reason that the good “cannot be loved unless it is known.”\textsuperscript{56}

Since the good’s relation to will presupposes that it is related to intellect, it seems that it is goodness, not beauty, that has the place of “being as related to both powers” for Thomas.

The greatest difficulty for Kovach’s position is that it contradicts Thomas’s statements

\textsuperscript{53} Kovach seems to be thinking along these lines when he says that beauty relates “simultaneously to the intellect and to the will.” \textit{Philosophy of Beauty}, 242.
\textsuperscript{54} Cf. \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 82.4, where Thomas discusses how the intellect and the will act upon each other, but in different ways. Leonine 5.303. \[A\]liquid dicitur movere dupliciter. Uno modo, per modum finis; sicut dicitur quod finis movet efficientem. Et hoc modo intellectus movet voluntatem; quia bonum intellectum est obiectum voluntatis, et movet ipsam ut finis. Alio modo dicitur aliquid movere per modum agentis; sicut alterans movet alteratum, et impellens movet impulsum. Et hoc modo voluntas movet intellectum . . .”
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{De veritate}, 21.3. Leonine 22/3.598:48-51. “. . . verum sit perfectivum alciuis secundum rationem speciei, bonum autem non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habit in re . . .”
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 27.2. Leonine 6.193. “Sic igitur cognitio est causa amoris, ea ratione qua et bonum, quod non potest amari nisi cognitum.”
about beauty’s relation to the soul. Both *Summa Theologiae* I-II 27.1 ad 3 and *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5 n. 356 tell us that what distinguishes the beautiful from the good is not a relation to both powers, but a “relation to the cognitive power” which beauty “adds to the good.” The only way to interpret these two passages as saying that beauty adds a relation to both powers, as Kovach claims, is to ignore *De veritate* 21.3 and deny that “good” already includes the relation to the cognitive power added by truth—which is exactly what Kovach is forced to do. Hence, “being as related to both intellect and will” cannot be the place of the beautiful for Thomas.

While beauty thus cannot express a “joint” or “simultaneous” relation to both intellect and will, it does not seem to be impossible for beauty to express a relation to one power through the other since such a relation would not have two ultimate terms, but rather one proximate term and one ultimate term. Of course, some account would have to be given for why beauty is relating directly to one power and indirectly to the other, as well as how it can do so. The next and last transcendentalist theory that we will examine seems to be an attempt to do just that.

### 4. Beauty Is Being as Proportioned to the Intellect by Its Perfection

The last transcendentalist theory is that beauty expresses a conformity to the intellect greater than that of truth since it is one that a being has insofar as it is perfect. This theory only finds explicit articulation from Matteo Febrer, though, as we shall see, it is in a way held implicitly by many more. Febrer begins with the observation that, while the good only pleases when possessed, the beautiful does so simply when known, which indicates that beauty perfects

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the intellect rather than the will since “the appetite seeks possession of the thing and the intellect solely to know it.” Nevertheless, since beauty is identical in reality with goodness, it must also be founded on perfection, and therefore “beauty will be perfection related to the intellect.”

Beauty is thus distinct from goodness due to its relation to the intellect, and distinct from truth because truth is founded on a thing’s sheer existence, or being absolutely (ens simpliciter) but beauty is founded on a thing as perfected by further actualities, or being in a certain respect (ens secundum quid); as Febrer puts it, beauty has the objective aspect of goodness (perfection) and the subjective aspect of truth (relation to the intellect), which distinguishes it from them while explaining the common view that beauty is the combination of the true and the good. Febrer ends with various triplets of definitions of the relative transcendentals, of which the primary one is that, while truth is the adequation of a thing and the intellect and goodness the adequation of a thing and the will, beauty is the adequation of a perfect thing and the intellect.

The main advantage of this position is that it is founded on a widespread view among Thomists that the pleasure caused by beauty is a delight not in the object itself, but merely in the more intense act of knowing that the object arouses in the person; as Mark Jordan puts it, “the appetite brought to rest” by beauty “is cognitive and apprehensive . . . an appetite to know and to

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61 Ibid., 555.
62 Ibid., 560.
63 Ibid., 565.
64 Ibid., 566.
65 For instance, see: Maurer, About Beauty, 17: “The call of the beautiful is different. In this case, what delights us is not precisely the thing itself but the sight of the thing.” Phelan, The Concept of Beauty,” 167: “Things are beautiful because they bring delight to the mind upon which they impress their likeness, and, indeed, through the impression of that likeness. It is in the very apprehension by the mind of its likeness to the real that the tendency of the mind to know finds rest and complacent delight”; Vijgen, “A Note,” 80: “Beauty, like truth, is apprehended by the intellect and only perfects the intellect, but it also adds a relation to the operative faculty of will which apprehends the knowledge of the beautiful as a good and is delighted in this knowledge”; Thomas C. Donlan, “The Beauty of God,” The Thomist 10 (1947): 191: “Formally, the perception of beauty consists in an act of abstraction by which the intellect knows its proper object (i.e. the form or quiddity of material things) . . . This knowledge itself delights the will, and thus the esthetic response is completed.”
gaze upon what mind was made to know.” Moreover, most of these scholars seem to share Febrer’s position that beauty incites this pleasure because its perfection makes it especially proportioned to the intellect. In fact, this position enjoys support from both of the most famous twentieth-century Thomists: Gilson, who defines beauty as “the particular kind of good to be experienced by a knowing power” in the “act of knowing an object eminently fit to be known,” and Maritain, who writes that “beauty delights the intellect” because it “essentially means a certain excellence in the proportion of things to the intellect.” Thus, it seems that “being as proportioned to the intellect by its perfection” is actually the majority view among contemporary Thomists, even if it is held by them somewhat subconsciously.

This view also seems to enjoy greater support from Thomas’s texts than the other theories we have examined. First of all, it is the only view that tries to make sense of Thomas’s statement in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3 that what beauty adds to goodness is “a certain relation to the cognitive power,” since it says that beauty expresses a conformity to the intellect based on perfection and thus beyond that of truth. Moreover, this theory seems to explain Thomas’s statement in *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 ad 4 that “beauty does not have the meaning of desirability except insofar as it takes on the meaning of the good,” since it says that it is not the beautiful object itself that is pleasing and desirable to us, but rather the act of knowing it causes. Finally, as we hinted at the end of the last section, this theory provides an explanation for how beauty can in some sense relate to both powers, as Kovach holds, since it states that beauty causes pleasure in

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69 Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam . . .”
70 Mandonnet 1.725. “[P]ulchritudo non habet rationem appetibilis nisi inquantum induit rationem boni . . .”
the will by perfecting the intellect, and so relates to the will through the intellect.\footnote{Kovach himself seems to suggest this view when he says that the pleasure caused by beauty is “originally and substantially” an act of the intellect, but “formally and finally” an act of the will. Kovach, \textit{Die Ästhetik}, 249.} Maritain confirms this impression when he says that, because aesthetic pleasure is the delight of the will in the “metaphysical well-being” or “blossoming” of the intellect, which is what beauty properly causes, beauty relates “directly” to the intellect and “indirectly” to the will.\footnote{Maritain, \textit{Art and Scholasticism}, 167, note 57.}

Nevertheless, there are two fatal problems with this proposal. First, as we have seen, each transcendental presupposes and includes the additions of the ones before it. Therefore, if beauty comes after the good in this order—as this view claims it must because, like the good, it is based on perfection—then it must include the relation to the will added to being by the good, i.e. desirability. Yet according to this theory beauty’s meaning does not include the notion of desirability since beauty is only desired for the knowledge it causes. Hence, while claiming to place beauty after goodness, this view actually places beauty before goodness and thus closer to truth since like truth it does not have the notion of desirability except as perfecting the intellect. It is for this reason that several scholars who hold this theory conclude that beauty does not come after the good in the order of transcendentals, but rather falls between truth and goodness.\footnote{For example, A. D. Sertillanges argues that beauty goes beyond truth, and therefore comes after it in the order of transcendentals, because it does not merely cause knowledge, but also causes intellect to take “complacence” in this knowledge, on account of the greater “similitude” that a beautiful being has to the intellect. Nevertheless, beauty precedes goodness for Sertillanges because it perfects the soul “solely through an ideal communication,” i.e. solely by being known, whereas the good does so “through a communication of the positive riches of being, i.e. by being possessed. A. D. Sertillanges, \textit{S. Thomas D’Aquin} (Paris: F. Alcan, 1910), 30-31; See also: Andrés Bejas, \textit{Vom Seienden als solchen zum Sinn des Seins. Die Transzendentalienlehre bei Edith Stein und Thomas von Aquin} (Frankfurt a. M., 1994), 89-90; and Waddell, “Truth Beloved,” 304-317.}

In fact, this account does not only draw beauty closer to truth, but conceptually identifies them. Thomas states explicitly that a being is knowable insofar as it is actual,\footnote{\textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.2. Leonine 4.58 “. . . unumquodque cognoscibile est, inquantum est actu . . .”} and thus, while a being does acquire a greater conformity to the intellect through being perfected by further
actualities, this greater conformity is still its truth; hence, “being as proportioned to the intellect by its perfection” is not distinct in meaning from truth. If one tries to say that beauty is distinct from truth because it adds to truth the notion of pleasure in the act of knowing, one is refuted by Thomas’s statement that “from the very fact that truth is the end of contemplation, it has the notion of a desirable and lovable and delightful good.”

Knowledge in and of itself is delightful, so, if beauty pleases merely by causing knowledge, as this view claims, then it is identical in meaning with truth—and therefore not a distinct transcendental.

Thus, we have now refuted all of the attempts that have been made so far to prove that beauty is a distinct transcendental since, both before and after Aertsen’s book, transcendentalist theories regarding beauty’s place in the order of transcendentals are all just variations on the four theories that we have examined in this section. The inability of transcendentalists to come up with new theories after Aertsen’s book may well be one of the reasons why, as we mentioned at the start of this chapter, few scholars attempt to overturn Aertsen’s conclusion that beauty is not a distinct transcendental. Instead, Aertsen’s own theory as to beauty’s place in Thomas’s metaphysics—that beauty is the true taken as good—has found acceptance not only from those who share his view that beauty is not a transcendental, but also from some who either reject

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75 *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 180.1 ad 1. Leonine 10.424. “... ex hoc ipso quod veritas est finis contemplationis, habet rationem boni appetibilis et amabilis et delectantis.”

76 Juan Roig Gironella makes this very argument in an article from 1949. There Gironella, who defines beauty as “the true as delightful,” agrees with Sertillanges that beauty is “intermediary between” truth and goodness because it takes a single element from both while excluding their other elements; thus, beauty takes the note of “vision” from truth but not its aspect of “mere” vision (since beauty also delights), while beauty takes from the good the note of “delighting” but not “possession” (since beauty delights simply in being known, not in being possessed). Unlike Sertillanges, however, he denies that it is a “new” transcendental on the grounds that, just as “the good as delightful” is not distinct from goodness, but is simply the good “as modified by a reference to the feeling of appetite or of possession,” likewise beauty or “the true as delightful” is not distinct from truth, but is simply truth “as modified with a reference to the intellectual feeling of vision.” Thus, Gironella confirms our conclusion that defining beauty as “that which pleases by perfecting the intellect” does not make beauty a distinct transcendental, but rather reduces beauty to truth. “Esbozo para una metafisica de la belleza,” *Pensamiento* 5 (1949): 34, 35, and 50.

that conclusion\textsuperscript{78} or are unsure about it.\textsuperscript{79} In fact, Waddell, one of Aertsen’s toughest critics, has entirely embraced the latter’s theory that beauty is the extension of the true to the good, and even given additional argumentation for it, as will be seen below when we discuss Aertsen’s views.\textsuperscript{80}

Since transcendentalists writing after Aertsen’s book have therefore failed to come up with a unique general mode of being for beauty to express, they have likewise failed to meet his guideline for proving beauty’s transcendental status. Hence, the only way for them still to hold that beauty is a transcendental is by showing that, in fact, Aertsen’s guideline is invalid. It is this very conclusion that the last kind of argument made by transcendentalists is intended to prove.

5. Aertsen’s Guideline Is Based on a Deficient Account of Adding to Being

Not all of the transcendentalists who take issue with Aertsen’s guideline reject it entirely. Louis-Marie de Blignieres acknowledges that Aertsen “has well formulated the problems to solve,”\textsuperscript{81} but argues that beauty should not be excluded from the list of transcendentals simply because it does not have a clear place in their order since “thing” and “something,” which are both “uncontested transcendentals,” do not have a clear place in that order either.\textsuperscript{82} Although de Blignieres’ reasoning is valid, it is based on a premise that we have already rejected in Chapter One, where we showed that, in fact, “thing” and “something” do have clear places in the order of transcendentals, namely the ones that Thomas gives them in \textit{De veritate} 1.1.\textsuperscript{83} Hence, “thing” and “something” do not undermine Aertsen’s guideline, as de Blignieres thinks, but rather only

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} Schindler, “The Transcendentals,” 394 and 397.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Ramos, \textit{Dynamic Transcendentals}, 156, note 36.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Waddell, “Truth Beloved,” 304-11.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Louis-Marie de Blignieres, \textit{Le mystère de l’être: L’approche thomiste de Guérard des Lauriers}, preface by Serge-Thomas Bonino (Paris: J. Vrin, 2007), 123.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 131-35.
\item \textsuperscript{83} See Chapter One, pp. 55-65.
\end{itemize}
confirm that beauty cannot be declared one of the transcendentals unless it fits into their order.

The only other transcendentalists who argue against Aertsen’s guideline are Waddell and Schindler.84 In contrast to de Blignieres, these scholars do not merely criticize part of Aertsen’s guideline, but utterly repudiate it. Moreover, they do so not because they question the degree to which Aertsen’s guideline is based in Thomas’s doctrine of the transcendentals, as de Blignieres does, but rather because they question an essential part of the doctrine itself.

Near the start of his dissertation on the relational transcendentals, Waddell considers Aertsen’s guiding principle that “if the beautiful is really a transcendental, it must make explicit a general mode of being and add a value to being conceptually that cannot be reduced to another transcendental.”85 For Waddell, this is “an excessively restrictive definition of ‘transcendental,’” especially since “Aertsen himself writes: ‘Transcendentals are convertible with being and with one another,’” and, “according to this broader definition, even if beauty is glossed as a property of goodness or as convertible with the good, it can still be a transcendental.”86 Waddell’s study does not discuss any further the requirements that beauty must fulfill to be a transcendental, but these early statements show that, for Waddell, Aertsen’s guideline is not valid since a term’s convertibility with being is enough to make it a transcendental.

Since, as we saw in Chapter One, Aertsen’s guideline is simply based on Thomas’s own

84 Jesús Villagrasa does not so much argue against Aertsen’s guideline as attempt to sidestep it, by claiming that, while a “merely Aristotelian interpretation” of Thomas Aquinas does not allow the inclusion of beauty among the transcendentals, “this is not . . . the only possible interpretation of Aquinas”; hence, beauty can indeed be considered a transcendental for Thomas if his thought is not read as “pure Aristotelianism.” Jesús Villagrasa, “Il trascendentale pulchrum in Tommaso D’Aquino, secondo Hans Urs von Balthasar,” Alpha Omega 15 (2012), 107-143. Despite what Villagrasa thinks, however, the conditions that Aertsen gives for beauty being a transcendental are not based on a certain “interpretation” of Thomas’s thought, but on Thomas’s own statements; thus, unless beauty fulfills these conditions, it cannot be considered a transcendental in Thomas’s thought, no matter how that thought is interpreted.


statements about how transcendentals add to being, Waddell cannot reject the former without to some degree rejecting the latter. Hence, it is not surprising that Waddell does find fault with one of Aquinas’s views on how transcendentals add to being—namely, that for truth and goodness to be really identical but conceptually distinct from being, they must add to being a relation that is “merely conceptual,” which can only be a relation in which “that which is said to be referred does not depend on that to which it is referred, but vice versa.”87 As Waddell points out, this requirement seems to invalidate one of the senses in which things are true and good, i.e. in relation to the Divine Intellect and Will.88 After all, creatures receive their very existence from God according to the determination of His knowledge and love89; thus, when said of a being in reference to God, truth and goodness apparently add relations that are not merely conceptual but real, i.e. relations of dependence on God’s Intellect and Will. What is more, a being’s truth and goodness with respect to God are the primary senses in which it is true and good for Thomas since a being is essentially related to the Divine Intellect and Will on which it depends for its

87 De veritate 21.1. Leonine 22/3.593:153-66. “Id autem quod est rationis tantum non potest esse nisi duplex, scilicet negatio et aliqua relatio. . . . Illa autem relatio . . . inventur esse rationis tantum secundum quam dicitur referri id quod non dependet ad id ad quod referitur, sed e converso . . .”

88 Waddell does not speak of a creature’s goodness in relation to God as expressing a relation to His Will, but to His Goodness, in which it participates. Waddell does so on the basis of De veritate 21.4, where Thomas says that all beings are good by the first goodness as by an exemplary form. Waddell, “Truth Beloved,” 198-99. Yet Thomas says in his reply to the second objection that beings are not called good in relation to the Divine Goodness in the sense that “the very reference itself is the meaning of the denomination,” just as urine is called healthy only as indicating health in an animal and not in itself. Rather, creatures are said to be good in relation to God in the sense that “the reference is not the meaning of the denomination but its cause,” just as air is said to be bright “from the Sun”, not as meaning that air’s brightness is simply its relation to the Sun, but that it is caused by that relation. This reply makes clear that a being’s participation in God’s goodness is not the relation expressed by goodness, but is rather the relation that causes a creature’s goodness, just as it causes its being. Of course, goodness does express a relation to appetite, as Thomas says in 21.1, and hence also to God’s appetite, i.e. His Will. De veritate 21.4, ad 2. Leonine 22/3.602-3:225-42. “[Uno modo quando ipse respectus est ratio denominationis, et sic urina dicitur sana per respectum ad sanitatem animalis. . . . Alio modo . . . quando respectus non est ratio denominationis sed causa; sicut si aer dicatur lucens a sole, non quod ipsum referri aerem ad solem sit lucere aeris sed quia directa oppositio aeris ad solem est causa quod lucent; et hoc modo creatura dicitur bona per respectum ad Deum . . .]”

89 Summa Theologiae I, 19.4. Leonine 4.237. “Non igitur agit per necessitatem naturae; sed effectus determinati ab infinita ipsius perfectione procedunt, secundum determinationem voluntatis et intellectus ipsius.”
existence, but only accidentally related to the human intellect that it perfects.\textsuperscript{90} Hence, Aquinas’s requirement of adding non-real relations to being seems to undermine his entire account of the truth and goodness of being.\textsuperscript{91}

According to Waddell, one can save this account by interpreting Thomas’s “proposal of adding non-real relations to ‘being’” to mean simply “not adding anything real to ‘being.’”\textsuperscript{92} In other words, for Waddell a relational transcendent does not need to add a merely conceptual relation to being, but rather needs only to \textit{not add} a real relation to being. Thus, for Waddell truth and goodness are still transcendentals, despite expressing real relations to God, because a creature already includes within its being a relation of dependence on its Creator, i.e. “creation” taken in a passive sense\textsuperscript{93}; consequently, truth and goodness do not add anything real to being since the relations they express are already contained, “albeit implicitly and indeterminately,” in the term “being.”\textsuperscript{94} What follows is that, for beauty to be a transcendental, it does not need to add a unique relation to being that is merely conceptual, but simply has to \textit{not add} a real relation to being, which it can do even if what it expresses has already been added to being by truth and goodness. Thus, Waddell’s interpretation of how transcendentals add to being explains his view that beauty is a transcendental despite not adding anything unique to being in meaning.

That Waddell’s rejection of Aertsen’s guideline is based on his rejection (or, at least, reinterpretation) of how transcendentals add to being for Thomas is confirmed by the fact that Schindler argues against Aertsen’s guideline on the same basis. In his book chapter on the

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 16.1. Leonine 4.206. “Per se quidem habet ordinem ad intellectum a quo dependet secundum suum esse: per accidentem autem ad intellectum a quo cognoscibilis est.” \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 20.2. 4.254. “[A]mor noster . . . non est causa bonitatis ipsius. . . . Sed amor Dei est infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus.”

\textsuperscript{91} Waddell, “Truth Beloved,” 192-93.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 211.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{De Potentia} 3.3. Marietti 2.43. “. . . unde in ipsa creatione non importatur aliquis accessus ad esse, nec transmutatio a creante, sed solummodo inceptio essendi, et relatio ad creatorem a quo esse habet . . .”

\textsuperscript{94} Waddell, “Truth Beloved,” 211-12.
transcendentals, Schindler devotes an entire section to criticizing Aertsen’s solution (which Schindler admits Aertsen takes from Aquinas\textsuperscript{95}) to what he calls “the transcendental paradox,” namely the problem of how the transcendentals can add to being when there is nothing outside of being.\textsuperscript{96} According to Schindler, Aertsen’s (and Aquinas’s) response to this problem—i.e. transcendentals add something that is merely conceptual to being—makes them into “merely an unfolding of our thoughts about being,” rather than of being itself.\textsuperscript{97} Even worse in Schindler’s opinion is what this answer says about the relational transcendentals in particular—that they express relations between being and the soul that are real on the side of the soul but not vice versa—because “a relationship that is in a strict, metaphysical sense absolutely one-sided is no relationship at all,” and thus, since being is really related only to God’s Mind and not to ours, “the proposed solution makes being true ontologically only in relation to the divine intellect . . . and the human intellect true only in relation to itself.”\textsuperscript{98}

Consequently, Schindler gives the problem a different answer: the transcendentals can add to being something that is already included in the nature of being “because ‘being added to’ belongs to the very meaning of being,” insofar as each being is composed of two distinct principles, essence and existence.\textsuperscript{99} For Schindler, the relational transcendentals in particular manifest this difference at the heart of being because their essence is “reciprocal causality,” the “mutual engagement of irreducible principles”\textsuperscript{100} which in the case of transcendental relations are the soul and being. Nevertheless, according to Schindler this notion of reciprocal causality is

\textsuperscript{96} Schindler, “The Transcendentals,” 351-361.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 411.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 359. Emphasis Schindler’s.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 411.
only found to its fullest degree in beauty since, by relating to both intellect and will, beauty contains the motions of both truth and goodness—i.e. of being to the soul and of the soul to being—and therefore “beauty is reciprocal causality itself.”101 As a result, in Schindler’s view beauty is not just a transcendental but the most important of them since “beauty is in fact what ensures the transcendentality of the other transcendentals.”102

The alterations that Schindler makes to Thomas’s thought on the transcendentals are so far-reaching that the result is in fact an entirely different account of these terms; hence, assessing the merits of Schindler’s views on beauty and the transcendentals is outside the scope of this inquiry. What is significant for our purposes, however, is that, like Waddell, Schindler attempts to refute Aertsen’s guideline for determining the transcendental status of beauty by arguing for a revision of Thomas’s understanding of how transcendentals add to being.

These two scholars have thus adopted a strategy of saying that Aquinas’s doctrine of the transcendentals is not quite so consistent as it seems, and therefore can (and must) be emended; as Schindler puts it, his explanation of the addition to being, while not given by Aquinas himself, nonetheless “has a logic that imposes itself.”103 Waddell’s motivation for doing so seems to be a desire to have Thomas’s thought confirm his personal conviction that beauty is a transcendental, while Schindler apparently wishes to show that von Balthasar (the primary subject of Schindler’s study) has given an account of beauty and the transcendentals that is simply the completion of Thomas’s thought. If so, their tactic is self-defeating since revising Thomas’s doctrine in order to make beauty a transcendental only proves that it is not one in his metaphysics.

In any case, their objections to how transcendentals add to being for Thomas—and thus

101 Ibid., 405. Emphasis Schindler’s.
102 Ibid., 351.
to Aertsen’s guideline—are easily answered. In saying that a merely conceptual addition to being makes the transcendentals into properties of our mind and not being, Schindler forgets that, as Thomas notes, “the meaning which a word signifies is the intellect’s conception of the thing signified by the word.” Thus, the purely conceptual distinction among the transcendentals simply entails that, despite having various meanings, they signify the same reality, being, and thus unity, truth, and goodness are not just properties of being—they are being. What is more, precisely because these terms refer to the same reality with different meanings, each manifests a different aspect of that reality, and thus the order of transcendentals as a whole is a progressive revelation of the richness of what it means to be a being.

In the same way that the purely conceptual addition to being of the transcendentals in general does not destroy but ensures their identity with and manifestation of being, so the expression of purely conceptual relations to the soul by truth and goodness in particular does not lessen but increases the closeness of the soul’s relationship with being. The reason is that while a relation refers its subject to another substance, it only does so because that other substance possesses the relation corresponding to its own, as shown by Thomas’s statement that, while the same thing may be both half of something and equal to something else, it does not relate to its double as equal but as half. Hence, it is clear that a relation refers its subject directly to the corresponding relation, and to the substance bearing that relation only indirectly, i.e. through the mediation of the other relation; for example, a son is not related to his father simply as the man

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104 Summa Theologiae I, 13.4. Leonine 4.144. “Ratio enim quam significat nomen, est conceptio intellectus de re significata per nomen.”
105 Granados makes this point quite eloquently in Esbozo, 31-36.
106 In Metaphysic., IV, 15.717. Marietti 197. “Sicut patet quod sint idem subjicto dimidium et aequale; non tamen ad aequale dicitur duplum, sed magis ad dimidium.”
his father is in himself, but \textit{as his father}.\footnote{As Clifford Kossel puts it, “relation formally and immediately terminates in a correlative, not in the subject or foundation of the correlative,” though it remains the case that “it is . . . the subjects which are related by the relations.” Thus, for example, “the correlative and terminus of double is not 2 but half; 4 is related to 2 as double to half.” Clifford J. Kossel, “St. Thomas’s Theory of the Causes of Relation,” \textit{Modern Schoolman} 25 (1948): 161.} What follows is that, if the relations being had to the soul were in any way real, we would be directly related to them, and only indirectly to being as it is in itself; as a result, we would not be able to know and love simply being, but only “being as knowable” and “being as lovable,” i.e. truth and goodness, which would differ from being in reality owing to the real relations of knowability and lovability. Luckily, these relations are only conceptual, which not only allows us to relate more closely to being—since when we know the true and love the good, we are knowing and loving \textit{being}—but also makes being more closely related to us since it relates to us not through a relation inhering in it as an accident, but through itself. Thus, Schindler is simply wrong: that being is only conceptually related to us does not make our relationship with being “no relationship at all,”\footnote{Schindler, “The Transcendental,” 359.} but actually makes it more intense.\footnote{This point could also be made about God’s merely conceptual relation to creatures (for Thomas’s discussion of it, see \textit{De Potentia} 7.10 [Marietti 209-11]), which makes Him, not less related to us (as some argue), but rather related to us by His very Essence, \textit{so} that when we relate to Him as Creator, we are relating to Him as He is in Himself.} 

Waddell’s objection is more difficult since he raises a question that Thomas does not address: how can he reconcile the expression by truth and goodness of relations to the Divine Intellect and Will, which are relations of dependence and are therefore real, with his principle that transcendental must express merely conceptual relations? What is more, Waddell’s solution—saying that truth and goodness only have to “not add” anything to being—is inadequate,\footnote{Waddell does help show how the relations of truth and goodness to God accord with \textit{De veritate} 1.1’s principle that transcendental “express a mode of being itself that is not expressed by the name of ‘being,’” by noting that “these terms merely make explicit” relations that are “implicitly and indeterminately” contained in “being.” Nevertheless, Waddell does not attempt to show how these relations can be reconciled with \textit{De veritate} 21.1. “Truth Beloved,” 211-12.} since \textit{De veritate} 21.1 makes clear that terms which do not add to being according
to meaning are mere synonyms of being, rather than true transcendentals.

Of course, this apparent contradiction in Thomas’s thought disappears if the addition by truth and goodness of relations to God’s Intellect and Will is somehow still merely conceptual; that such is indeed the case can be shown from the following considerations. First, while God’s acts of understanding and willing are identical in reality with His Being, they are still distinct according to their conception by our intellect; hence, a creature’s relations to the Divine Intellect and Will are really identical with but conceptually distinct from its real relation of dependence on God for existence, since these relations’ terms have not a real but a conceptual distinction between them. Therefore, while the relations to God that “true” and “good” express are not merely conceptual, nevertheless they are added to “being” by “true” and “good” solely according to meaning since they refer a being to God in a different sense than does its relation of createdness (i.e. to God as knowing or as loving, rather than as creating), but do not really differ from that relation; thus, truth and goodness said in regard to God do not add to “being” its relation to God, which is a real part of every being, but the notion of that relation as referring to God’s Knowledge or Love, which is merely conceptual.

Secondly, what a being conforms to is not, strictly speaking, God’s Will or Intellect Themselves (which are His Essence, and thus infinitely exceed any creature), but is rather the

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112 *De Potentia* 7.6. Marietti 2.201. “Et sic omnes rationes sunt quidem in intellectu nostro sicut in subiecto: sed in Deo sunt ut in radice verificante has conceptiones. . . . Diversitatis ergo vel multiplicitatis nominum causa est ex parte intellectus nostri, qui non potest pertingere ad illam Dei essentiam videndam secundum quod est, sed videt eam per multas similitudines eius deficientes, in creaturis quasi in speculo resultantes.”
113 *De Potentia* 3.3. Marietti 2.43. “. . . unde in ipsa creatione non importatur aliquis accessus ad esse, nec transmutatio a creante, sed solummodo inceptio essendi, et relatio ad creatorem a quo esse habet.”
114 In this respect, “true” and “good,” when said of a being in relation to God, are like “thing,” which, as we saw in Chapter One, makes an absolute affirmation of being—it having an essence—which nevertheless adds to “being” merely according to meaning since the essence is implied but not expressed by “being.” See pp. 48-49.
115 Hence, Thomas makes clear in *Summa Theologiae* I, 20.3 that the goodness of creatures conforms to
idea that God has of the being, which is known by His Intellect but is made a cause by the choice of His Will.  Moreover, this idea is not something real in God—since He knows all beings through His own Essence—but is merely known by Him as a certain way that He can be imitated. Because an idea has not a real but an intentional existence, a being’s relation to it would likewise be merely conceptual since Thomas makes clear that a relation to something that does not exist in reality, such as our relation of temporal priority to people who have not been born yet, is itself not a real relation; thus, even though a creature’s truth is measured by its divine idea, and its goodness caused by God’s willing of that idea, these relations of dependence are still solely conceptual relationships. Consequently, truth and goodness in regard to God do indeed add to “being” something that “is nothing in reality”—namely the notion of a being’s real relation to God as referring to His Intellect or Will, and a merely conceptual relation to the idea that God has of the being—and so fulfill the requirements for merely conceptual addition that Thomas gives in De veritate 21.1.

God’s Love for them in the sense of the goods that He wills for them, not in the sense of the intensity of the act of will by which He wills these goods for them. For the latter possibility to be true, all creatures would have to have the same infinite degree of goodness since God’s Will is both one and infinite. Leonine 4.255. “[C]um amare sit velle bonum alicui, duplici ratione potest aliquid magis vel minus amari. Uno modo, ex parte ipsius actus voluntatis, qui est magis vel minus intensus. Et sic Deus non magis quaedam alii amat: quia omnia amat uno et simplici actu voluntatis, et semper eodem modo se habente. Alio modo, ex parte ipsius boni quod aliquis vult amato. Et sic dicimur aliquem magis alio amare, cui volumus maius bonum; quamvis non magis intensa voluntate. Et hoc modo necesse est dicere quod Deus quaedam alii magis amat. Cum enim amor Dei sit causa bonitatis rerum, ut dictum est, non esset aliquid alio melius, si Deus non vellet uni maius bonum quam alteri.”

116 Doolan, Aquinas on the Divine Ideas, 157-58. Doolan makes the helpful clarification that, while God has ideas of everything He knows, an idea only becomes an exemplar due to God’s choosing to create by it, since an exemplar is the extrinsic formal cause of a being in reality, and forms do not cause unless given an inclination to something outside them—in this case, by the Divine Will.


118 In Sent. I, 26.2.1. Mandonnet 1.630. “Et hoc contingit quatuor modis, scilicet quod sint relationes rationis, et non rei. . . . Tertio modo quando designatur relatio aliqua entis ad non ens, ut cum dicitur quod nos sumus priores illis qui futuri sunt: ista enim prioritas non est aliqua relatio secundum rem, sed solum secundum rationem: quia relatio realis exigit utrumque extremorum in actu.”
Schindler’s and Waddell’s objections to Thomas’s account of how transcendents add to being are therefore, in fact, spurious—thus confirming that, when faced with what appears to be a problem in the thought of a thinker as rigorously systematic as Aquinas, it is better to search for a solution implicit in his writings than to invent one, or to bring one in from the thought of a different philosopher. In vindicating Thomas’s account, this section of our study has likewise confirmed Aertsen’s guideline for determining whether beauty is a transcendental, which is founded on that account and which will therefore continue to guide our chapter.

Finally, this section has concluded our analysis of transcendentalist arguments by showing that the last of these, like all the others, fails to demonstrate that beauty is a distinct transcendental. So far, then, our second chapter has confirmed the second of Aertsen’s three conclusions in his eighth chapter: “the attempts of various scholars to find a distinct place for beauty as a transcendental must be regarded as having failed.”119 We can thus proceed to evaluate his arguments for Aertsen’s third and last conclusion: that “the beautiful is not a distinct transcendental” in Thomas’s thought,120 but “the extension of the true of the good.”121

B. Aertsen’s Arguments against Beauty’s Being a Distinct Transcendental

Like most scholars writing on beauty’s place in Thomas’s metaphysics, Aertsen does not separate his treatment of the systematic question regarding beauty’s transcendental status from his discussion of the historical question, as we have done. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to distinguish when he is arguing against beauty’s being a transcendental on textual grounds, i.e. on the basis of what Thomas says or does not say, and when he does so on systematic grounds, i.e.

119 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 353.
120 Ibid., 354.
121 Ibid., 359.
on the basis of what Thomas’s metaphysics implies. Hence, from his writings one can assemble five distinct arguments for why beauty cannot be a transcendental in Thomas’s thought. As we did with the transcendentalists, we will examine Aertsen’s arguments in what I judge to be the ascending order of their strength, from the least to the most compelling.

1. There Is No Third Power of the Soul to which Beauty Can Relate

The simplest argument made by Aertsen is that beauty cannot be one of the relational transcendentals (the only kind of transcendental that beauty could be, as we said above\(^{122}\)) because these terms relate to distinct faculties of the human soul and thus, since there are only two powers through which the soul relates to every being, i.e. intellect and will, there can only be two relational transcendentals, i.e. truth and goodness. Aertsen does not rely heavily on this argument since it does not even appear in his book on the transcendentals in Thomas, but is first made in his recently published work on the transcendentals in medieval thought as a whole. Nevertheless, he evidently considers it conclusive since he writes that “since there does not exist another human faculty that has a universal extension, there is no room for another distinct relational transcendental.”\(^ {123}\) Moreover, this argument is even approved by Waddell, who agrees that it shows beauty is not “a distinct property” of being\(^ {124}\) and only thinks that it fails to disprove that beauty is a transcendental because he rejects Aertsen’s guideline that beauty must express a unique general mode of being in order to be a transcendental\(^ {125}\)—a response that is not open to us since our first chapter’s analysis of Thomas’s texts has confirmed that guideline.

\(^{122}\) See p. 95 of this chapter and Chapter One, p. 41.
\(^{123}\) Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 176. This argument also appears in “The Triad ‘True-Good-Beautiful,’” 433.
\(^{124}\) Waddell, “Wisdom,” 539.
\(^{125}\) Waddell, “Truth Beloved,” 41.
This argument is not so conclusive, however, since in his derivations of the relational transcendentals Thomas does not say each must relate to its own unique power of the soul. In fact, he does not even say in *De veritate* 1.1 that relational transcendentals must relate to powers of the soul at all, but simply states that “there is in the soul, however, a cognitive power and an appetitive one,”\(^{126}\) which shows only that relational transcendentals can be related to powers of the soul, not that they must be. *De Potentia* 9.7 ad 6, meanwhile, does say that a relational transcendental can only express a relation to a thing “whose nature it is to be related universally to being,” and that ‘this is either the intellect . . . or the appetite,’\(^{127}\) but does not say there can only be one transcendental for each of these powers. Thus, neither text claims that there can only be as many relational transcendentals as there are powers in the soul.

Aertsen could respond by arguing in the opposite direction—that is, not that there must be as many relational transcendentals as there are powers of the soul, but that there must be as many powers of the soul as there are relational transcendentals. After all, for Thomas the soul’s powers are recognized and distinguished from each other by their objects; hence, in *De veritate* 22.10, he demonstrates that intellect and will are distinct powers of the soul on the grounds that they have distinct objects, the true and the good.\(^{128}\) Aertsen could therefore argue that, since a third relational transcendental would be distinct in meaning from the true and the good, it would necessarily follow from the existence of such a term that there is a third power of the soul that corresponds to it. Of course, there is no such third power for Thomas; thus, by the law of the

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\(^{126}\) *Leonine* 22/1.5:155-56. “. . . in anima autem est vis cognitiva et appetitiva . . .”

\(^{127}\) *Marietti* 2.243 “. . . relatio vel [corrig: ad] aliquid quod natum sit referri universaliter ad ens; et hoc est vel intellectus, ad quem importat relationem verum, aut appetitus, ad quem importat relationem bonum . . .”

\(^{128}\) *Leonine* 22/3.634-36. See, in particular, ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod distinctio potentiarum non ostenditur ex objectis secundum rem consideratis sed secundum rationem, quia ipsae rationes objectorum specificant ipsas operationes potentiarum. Et ideo ubi est diversa ratio objecti ibi invenimus diversam potentiam quamvis sit eadem res quae subest utrique rationi, sicut est de bono et vero.”
contrapositive, there cannot be a third relational transcendental, either.

As compelling as this argument appears, it tacitly assumes what it is trying to prove. In claiming that a third relational transcendental would be a third object of the soul’s operations and therefore require a third power corresponding to it, the argument takes for granted that relational transcendentals are necessarily distinct objects of the soul’s activity. Yet this is simply another way of saying that relational transcendentals must relate to unique powers of the soul since, by definition, an object relates to a single power as the cause of its operation. Thus, in assuming that relational transcendentals are always distinct objects of the soul, the argument begs the question since the matter being debated here is precisely whether or not there can be a relational transcendental that is not a distinct object of the soul’s powers. In any event, just as Thomas never says that relational transcendentals must relate to unique powers of the soul, so he never says that they are necessarily distinct objects of the soul’s activities.129

Moreover, this argument forgets the nature of the term whose transcendental status is at issue. While a distinct object of the soul’s operations is defined in relation to the single activity

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129 Thomas does come close to saying so in *De veritate* 22.10. There he states that “something . . . is said to be an object of the soul insofar as it has a certain relation (habituidinem) to the soul. Therefore, wherever we find diverse meanings of relationship (rationes habituidinis) to the soul, there we find a per se difference in object of the soul, showing a diverse genus of the powers of the soul.” Leonine 22/3.635-36: 81-86. “Dicitur autem aliquid esse objectum animae secundum quod habet aliquam habituidinem ad animam. Ubi ergo invenimus diversas rationes habituidinis ad animam, ibi invenimus per se differentiam objecti animae, demonstran tem diversum genus potentiarum animae.” This text strongly suggests that a relational transcendental is necessarily a distinct object of the soul, since it says that a difference in relation to the soul constitutes a difference in object; nevertheless, one cannot definitively conclude from it that relational transcendentals are always distinct objects of the soul for Thomas, for three reasons. First, in this passage Thomas is not discussing truth and goodness insofar as they are relational transcendentals, i.e. general modes of being in relation to another, but rather insofar as they are objects of the soul’s powers; thus, Thomas is not addressing the conditions for being a relational transcendental here. Second, in this text Thomas does not use the words for “relation” that he uses in *De veritate* 1.1 and 21.1, namely ordo and relatio, but rather habitudo, which can also mean “condition”; hence, it is possible that in *De veritate* 22.10 Thomas is saying that distinct objects of the soul are constituted, not simply by any distinct relation to the soul, but only by a certain kind of relation that he has designated here with the term habitudo. Finally, this passage is post-dated by *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3, which, as will be discussed later in the chapter (p. 131-32), implies that beauty expresses a distinct relation to the soul despite not being a distinct object of the soul’s powers.
that it causes—thus, truth is defined as what causes knowledge, and goodness as what causes love—beauty is defined for Thomas in relation to two distinct activities, as that which *pleases* when *seen*. Since beauty is therefore obviously not a distinct object of the soul’s operations for Thomas, it will not require a third power corresponding to it even if it does have a meaning that is distinct from both truth and goodness, and is therefore a relational transcendental. Hence, the absence of a third power of the soul in no way militates against beauty’s being a transcendental.

Of course, the question still remains of whether beauty can express a unique relation to the soul without being the object of a distinct power. As was observed in our section on the transcendentalists, it seems that beauty could only do so by relating directly to one power and ultimately to the other, or to the latter *through* the former\(^\text{130}\); however, no adequate account has been given yet of how beauty can do so. Nonetheless, it is significant that Thomas leaves open this possibility since it means that one cannot assume that there can only be as many relational transcendents as there are powers in the soul, and thus the fact that there are only two such powers does not of itself preclude the addition of a third relational transcendental.

\[\text{2. Goodness Ends the List of Transcendentalas as “The Ultimate”}\]

Another relatively unimportant argument for Aertsen, but which also seems to factor into his rejection of beauty as a transcendental, is his view that the meaning of the good implies and even necessitates that it ends the list of transcendentalas because that meaning includes the aspect of finality or being the “ultimate.” Aertsen only gives this opinion as a parting shot at the theory that beauty is a synthetic transcendental, saying that “there is no reason” for such a term because transcendentalas have both a “real unity” founded “in the first, ‘being,’” and “a conceptual order,

\(^{130}\) Chapter Two, pp. 101 and 103-4.
which is completed in the ultimate, the ‘good.”  

Aertsen’s basis for describing the good as the ultimate is a text that we have already examined, *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.1 ad 1. As we saw in the Introduction, Thomas argues in this text that, while the good is identical with being in reality, “something is not called ‘being absolutely (simpliciter)’ and ‘good absolutely’ in the same way”: the substantial existence that makes a thing a “being absolutely” only makes it “good in a certain respect, insofar as it has being,” whereas a thing’s “ultimate act” or perfection, i.e. the proper activity that brings all of the thing’s potencies into act, makes it to be a “being in a certain respect” but “good absolutely.” The reason that only perfect beings are “good absolutely” is that the meaning of the good consists in desirability, and thus in perfection since, as the body of the article states, “anything is desirable insofar as it is perfect, for all desire their perfection.” It is because a thing is good insofar as it is perfect that Thomas himself says the good has “the meaning of the ultimate.”

Aertsen’s second argument is thus based not on an unproven assumption, as was the first, but on an actual assertion of Thomas; like the first, however, it does not succeed in disproving the possibility of further transcendentals after the good. That the good has the notion of perfection and thus of the ultimate certainly explains why it comes at the end of the current list since none of the other terms have these aspects, and it might even be the basis for a strong

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133 *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.1 ad 1. Leonine 4.56. “... licet bonum et ens sint idem secundum rem, quia tamen differunt secundum rationem, non eodem modo dicitur aliquid *ens simpliciter, et bonum simpliciter*. ... Sic ergo secundum primum esse, quod est substantiale, dicitur aliquid ens simpliciter et bonum secundum quid, isted inquantum est ens: secundum vero ultimum actum, dicitur aliquid ens secundum quid, et bonum simpliciter.”
134 *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.1. Ibid. “Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit, quod aliquid sit appetibile. ... [U]numquodque est appetibile secundum quod est perfectum: nam omnia appetunt suam perfectionem.”
135 *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.1 ad 1. Ibid. “Sed bonum dicit rationem perfecti, quod est appetibile: et per consequens dicit rationem ultimi. Unde id quod est ultimo perfectum, dicitur bonum simpliciter.”
argument from fittingness for the good’s ending the list. Nevertheless, the good’s possessing these aspects is not incompatible with there being transcendentals after it, but simply means that, since every transcendental includes the one prior to it (what we have called their seventh mark, and which was demonstrated by *De veritate* 21.3), any transcendental that comes after the good must also have the aspects of the perfect and the ultimate. Yet beauty has both these aspects for Thomas since, as we saw in the Introduction, he explicitly states that perfection or integrity is one of the conditions for beauty, along with harmony and brightness; moreover, Thomas even says in a text from his *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus* that “in order for something to be absolutely good, it is required that it be entirely perfect, just as in order for a thing to be beautiful absolutely [*pulchrum simpliciter*] it is required that there be no deformity or ugliness in any part.” This text proves that the beautiful, like the good, is said “absolutely” of a thing not on account of its substantial existence, but solely on account of its ultimate actuality or perfection, and therefore also has the character of the ultimate. Thus, far from showing that the list of the transcendentals ends with goodness and so cannot include beauty, Aertsen’s second argument only proves that if there is a transcendental after the good, it will have precisely the attributes that Thomas affirms of beauty, which is a strong point in favor of beauty being a transcendental.

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136 An argument from fittingness is one that does not show its conclusion to be required by the nature of some reality, but rather to be in accord with it, i.e. to be appropriate or fitting. For example, Thomas himself argues in *Summa Theologiae* III, 1.1 that, while God did not have to become man, nevertheless it was fitting [*conveniens*] for Him to do so. Hence, in the case that we are discussing, one could argue that it is fitting for the good to end the list of transcendentals, because it has the aspect of the ultimate. Of course, this argument would not even show its conclusion to be fitting if there were a possible transcendental that had the aspect of the ultimate to an equal or greater degree than the good—something that might be true of beauty. We will return to this issue in Ch. 6.


139 *De virtutibus* 1.9 ad 16. Marietti 2.733. “Ad hoc autem quod alicuius sit bonum simpliciter, requiritur quod sit totaliter perfectum; sicut ad hoc quod alicuius sit pulchrum simpliciter requiritur quod in nulla parte sit aliqua deformitas vel turpitudo.” Emphasis mine.
Of course, the fact that beauty has the aspect of the ultimate for Thomas does not prove that it is a distinct transcendental. After all, beauty might have this aspect, not because it comes after the good in the list of transcendentals, but simply because beauty is inseparably linked to the good as one of its properties, and is thus included in its meaning. This is the very conclusion that Aertsen seeks to prove in his third argument against beauty’s being a transcendental.

3. Beauty Is an Attribute of Goodness, Not Being

Aertsen’s primary argument, with which he begins his case against beauty’s being a transcendental and which he repeatedly mentions throughout it, is that transcendentals add conceptually to being, but beauty adds conceptually to good, and is thus an attribute of the good, not of being. For evidence, Aertsen points to *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5 n. 356, where Thomas says that “the beautiful adds to the good” a relation to the cognitive power.140

Here Thomas does not speak, however, of the relation between the beautiful and being, but of the relation between the beautiful and the good. The beautiful is convertible with the good and adds something to the good. It even seems to be a property of the good as good.141

“Transcendentals,” Aertsen reminds us, “express a general mode of being, they add something to it conceptually.” Since “what the beautiful adds is an addition to the good,” not to being, it could at most be a transcendental attribute of the good, but not of being.142

Aertsen finds this conclusion supported by statements from Thomas suggesting that beauty is included in the ratio of the good. He notes that just before Thomas says that beauty adds to good conceptually in the text just quoted from the Dionysius commentary, “‘clarity’ and

140 *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5 n. 356. Marietti 115. “[N]am pulchrum addit supra bonum, ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam illud esse huiusmodi.”
141 Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 344.
142 Ibid.
‘consonance,’ which form the proper ratio of the beautiful, are said to be contained in the notion of the good.”

Aertsen also points to a text in the De veritate:

For from the very fact that something seeks the good, it seeks at the same time both the beautiful and peace: the beautiful indeed, insofar as it is proportioned (modificatum) and specified (specificatum) in itself, which is included in the ratio of the good . . .

Thomas states in the Summa Theologiae that the three essential features of the good are modus, species, and ordo, and the first two are mentioned here as belonging to beauty. Moreover, beauty’s essential features seem to correspond to these two, consonantia to modus (since both can mean proportion) and claritas to species, since Thomas says elsewhere that the “form” or species “pertains to brightness (claritatem).” Thus, according to Aertsen, “in this text Thomas connects beauty with the essential constitution of the goodness of things.” José Sanabria seconds Aertsen’s interpretation, saying that in these passages Thomas intends “to assimilate the beautiful to the good” and to make it “a mode of the good” relating to knowledge.

Aertsen’s conclusion that beauty is a general attribute of good, rather than of being, is held even more strongly by several scholars writing before and after him. About thirty years prior to Aertsen, Cajetan Chereso argues that Thomas does not mention beauty in De veritate 1.1 because there he is listing “the properties that follow upon being immediately,” and “beauty is a ‘mediate’ transcendental property which flows from being through the good.” This view finds

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143 Ibid.
147 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 356.
149 Cajetan Chereso, The Virtue of Honor and Beauty According to St. Thomas Aquinas: An Analysis of
support shortly before Aertsen from both Edualdo Forment, who says beauty is “a transcendental of another transcendental” or a “mediate transcendental” in a way “similar to aliquid,”\textsuperscript{150} and Mark Jordan, who writes that “beauty is transcendental because it is found wherever the good is found” and thus “we might even want to say that beauty is a transcendental of the good.”\textsuperscript{151} Writing after Aertsen is O’Reilly, who accepts his deduction and elaborates on it, saying that “the beautiful is not a transcendental per se, but achieves a transcendental status . . . only by way of the transcendentality of the good.” Hence, while “we might therefore accord a transcendental status to the beautiful in a derivative or secondary sense,” we “ought not to confuse this with the kind of transcendental status accorded to truth and to goodness” since transcendentals “make explicit a general mode of being consequent on every being,” but beauty only explicates “a general mode of being consequent on a general mode of being,” i.e. the good.\textsuperscript{152}

The number of scholars who hold with Aertsen that beauty is a general attribute of the good, rather than being, attests to its being a compelling theory. This appeal is due, on the one hand, to its being a marked improvement over Cajetan’s hypothesis that beauty is a species of the good since it acknowledges and explains beauty’s convertibility with the good, and, on the other, to its being supported by the close connection to the good that beauty clearly has for Thomas. In fact, Aertsen could have stated his case that beauty is included in the notion of the good even more strongly since there is a text in the Dionysius commentary where Thomas seems to identify \textit{species} (the second of the three essential features of goodness) not with a mere condition of

\textsuperscript{151} Jordan, “The Evidence of the Transcendentals,” 399.
\textsuperscript{152} O’Reilly, \textit{Aesthetic Perception}, 108. See also Saranyana, “La estética tomasiana,” 310, who suggests that beauty is not a full transcendental but rather a “dependent transcendental.”
beauty, i.e. claritas, as De veritate 22.1 ad 12 appears to do, but with beauty itself\textsuperscript{153}; moreover, this identification of beauty with the good’s second essential feature is strengthened by Thomas’s consistent interpretation of Hilary’s appropriation of species to the Son as “beauty,” in not only In Sent. I, 31.2.1, as we mentioned in Chapter One, but also in Summa Theologiae I, 39.8.\textsuperscript{154}

These texts thus seem to confirm Aertsen’s contention that beauty is included in the ratio of the good as one of its properties.

Nevertheless, there are problems for this theory. The first is that the scholars who accord beauty a quasi-transcendental status, i.e. as mediated through a true transcendental, have never been able to give another example of such a term. Forment is the only scholar who tries to do so, pointing to “something” as another “mediate” transcendental, but aliquid cannot be such a term since Thomas never calls it a quasi-transcendental, and our analysis in Chapter One demonstrates that Thomas’s metaphysics requires its presence in the list after “one” and before “true,” thus confirming its full status as a transcendental. Hence, as Christopher Sevier notes, “if beauty is such a tertiary or supernumerary transcendental, it seems to be the only one of its kind,”\textsuperscript{155} which makes it doubtful that this category of terms exists for Thomas. Furthermore, if beauty is truly included in the good’s ratio as one of its properties, one would expect him to say so in the texts where he seems to identify beauty with one of the good’s essential features, species; yet not only does Thomas not do so, but in one of these texts, as we saw in Chapter One, he even says that “beauty does not have the meaning of desirability except insofar as it takes on the meaning of the

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\textsuperscript{153} In De divinis nominibus 8.4.775. Marietti 292. “Est autem distributor bonorum; bonum autem, ut Augustinus dicit, consistit in modo et specie et ordine: . . . ut ergo significaret Deum esse totius boni distributorem, dicit quidem quantum ad modum: commensurationem; quantum ad speciem: pulchritudinem vel « formam » . . .”

\textsuperscript{154} Mandonnet 1.723. “. . . et species, id est pulchritudo quam dicit esse in imagine, id est in Filio . . .”

\textsuperscript{155} Sevier, Aquinas on Beauty, 144 note 163.
good."\textsuperscript{156} On the other hand, Thomas says that \textit{modus}, \textit{species}, and \textit{ordo} are called good “because by them something is formally good,”\textsuperscript{157} thus indicating that they have in themselves the meaning of desirability. Consequently, his denial that beauty has this aspect suggests that beauty is not, in fact, identical in meaning with one or more of the good’s constituents, and so is not conceptually included by the good but rather is merely identical in reality with it.

This suspicion is confirmed by the very texts that Aertsen cites to support his theory, which do not, in fact, show that beauty is subsumed under the meaning of good, but actually indicate otherwise. The grammatical structure of \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 4.5 n. 356, for instance, makes clear that Thomas’s intention is to distinguish the beautiful from the good:

However, \textit{although} the beautiful and the good are the same in subject, \textit{because} both brightness (\textit{claritas}) and consonance are contained within the meaning of the good, \textit{nevertheless} they differ in meaning . . . \textsuperscript{158} [Emphasis mine.]

The “because” (\textit{quia}) that introduces the clause “brightness and consonance are contained in the meaning of the good” indicates that this assertion is offered in support of the immediately prior statement that beauty and goodness are identical in subject. It is obviously not offered to support the claim that beauty itself is contained in the meaning of good for Thomas immediately denies that beauty is so contained by saying that “\textit{nevertheless}, [the beautiful and the good] differ in meaning” [emphasis mine]. Consequently, Thomas’s point here is not that beauty is subsumed conceptually by the good since if that were his point, he would have said \textit{beauty} is “contained in the meaning of the good”, rather than brightness and consonance. Instead, he seems to be saying

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{156} \textit{In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4. Mandonnet 1.725. “[P]ulchritudo non habet rationem appetibilis nisi inquantum induit rationem boni . . .”}
  \item \textsuperscript{157} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.5 ad 2. Leonine 4.63. “. . . modus, species et ordo eo modo dicuntur bona, sicut et entia: non quia ipsa sint quasi subsistentia, sed quia eis alia sunt et entia et bona. . . . Non enim sic dicuntur bona, quasi formaliter alii sunt bona; sed quia ipsa formaliter aliqua sunt bona . . .”
  \item \textsuperscript{158} Marietti 115. “Quamvis autem pulchrum et bonum sint idem subiecto, quia tam claritas quam consonantia sub ratione boni continentur, tamen ratione differunt . . .” Emphasis mine.
\end{itemize}
that the beautiful and the good have overlapping conditions—since both require that a thing have brightness and consonance—and therefore they are identical in subject. If he is saying that either of these is contained in the other, it would be goodness that is contained in beauty since beauty adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive power.

Likewise, in the other text that Aertsen cites, *De veritate* 22.1 ad 12, the statement which supposedly proves that beauty is contained in the meaning of the good is actually intended by Thomas only to explain why the beautiful and the good are really identical:

For from the very fact that something seeks the good, it seeks at the same time both the beautiful and peace: the beautiful indeed insofar as it is proportioned (*modificatum*) and specified (*specificatum*) in itself, which is included in the *ratio* of the good; but the good adds a relation of being perfective of another. Wherefore, whatever seeks the good by this very fact seeks the beautiful.\(^\text{159}\)

According to this text, the reason that “whatever seeks the good . . . seeks the beautiful” is that insofar as a being is good, it is also proportioned and specified in itself, and therefore beautiful. “But,” Thomas adds, “the good adds a relation of being perfective of another.” Just as he did in the Dionysius commentary, Thomas does not affirm the real identity of the good and the beautiful without immediately affirming their conceptual distinction.

Hence, both of these texts, as well as the texts where Thomas identifies beauty with *species*, ought to be interpreted as saying that goodness and beauty are identical in reality because they share certain conditions, *not* that beauty is included in the meaning of the good. The latter interpretation is refuted not only by the fact that the *ratio* of beauty contains an element not present in the *ratio* of the good (namely, a “relation to the cognitive power,” which

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\(^{159}\) Leonine 22/3.616:359-368. “Ex hoc enim ipso quod aliquid appetit bonum appetit simul et pulchrum et pacem: pulchrum quidem in quantum est in se ipso modificatum et specificatum, quod in ratione boni includitur, sed bonum addit ordinem perfectivi ad alia; unde quicumque appetit bonum appetit hoc ipso pulchrum.”
beauty must “add to the good”\textsuperscript{160}, but by the different ways in which the conditions shared by beauty and goodness relate to these two notions. Because the good consists in desirability and thus perfection, \textit{claritas} and \textit{consonantia} (which \textit{De veritate} 22.1 ad 12 identifies with \textit{species} and \textit{modus}) are included in the meaning of the good as parts of the perfection of a thing; as Thomas states in \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.5, “the meaning of goodness, insofar as it consists in perfection, consists also in mode, species, and order.”\textsuperscript{161} Beauty, on the other hand, includes brightness and proportion insofar as they ground its relation to the cognitive power—brightness does so in an obvious way since like beauty it has of itself a relation to vision,\textsuperscript{162} while Thomas actually proves that “beauty consists in due proportion” from the premises that beauty “looks to the cognitive power” and that “every cognitive power” is “a certain proportion.”\textsuperscript{163} Likewise, it is because the good relates to the appetite and so has the nature of a final cause, while the beautiful relates to the cognitive power and so has the nature of a formal cause,\textsuperscript{164} that \textit{species}, which signifies a thing’s form,\textsuperscript{165} is only part of the essence of the good\textsuperscript{166} but is identified with the essence of the beautiful.\textsuperscript{167} Hence, the fact that Thomas identifies two of beauty’s conditions with two of the good’s conditions, and beauty itself with one of them, does not “assimilate the

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 4.5.356. Marietti 115. “[P]ulchrum addit supra bonum, ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam illud esse huismodi.”
\item Leonine 4.63. “. . . ratio boni, secundum quod consistit in perfectione, consistit etiam in modo, specie et ordine.”
\item \textit{In Sent.} III. 14.1.2.3. Mandonnet 3.450. “. . . claritas vel limpiditas visionis contingit ex \textit{tribus}. . .” For beauty’s relation to the cognitive power, see \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.4 ad 1 in the next footnote.
\item Leonine 4.61. “Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam: pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent. Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit: . . . nam et sensus ratio quaedam est, et omnis virtus cognoscitiva.”
\item Ibid. “Nam bonum proprie respicit appetitum . . . [e]t ideo habet rationem finis. . . . Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam. . . . Et . . . pulchrum proprie pertinet ad rationem causae formalis.”
\item \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.5. Leonine 4.63. “Ipsa autem forma significatur per \textit{speciem}.”
\item As Thomas explains, a thing’s perfection and goodness require not only “that it have a form,” but also “those things that precede the form, and those things that follow from it.” Ibid. Ibid. “. . . ad hoc quod aliquid sit perfectum et bonum, nescsse est quod formam habeat, et ea quae praexiguntur ad eam, et ea quae consequuntur ad ipsam.”
\item See notes 42 and 43 above.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
beautiful into the good,” but rather simply confirms what *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1 has taught us: beauty and goodness are “identical in reality” but “differ in meaning” because they express the same reality as related to two different powers.\(^{169}\)

Though Aertsen’s claim that the beautiful is contained in the *ratio* of the good is ill-founded, he is plainly correct that beauty adds to goodness conceptually since Thomas says so in two different texts.\(^{170}\) What Aertsen seems to forget, however, is that *every* transcendental adds conceptually to the one preceding it in the order of transcendentals. *De veritate* 21.3 explicitly states that the good “is constituted in a certain way through an addition to” the true, and that likewise the true adds to the one.\(^{171}\) What is more, our analysis in Chapter One showed that “something” and “thing” not only can but must be inserted into this progressive order of conceptual addition. Therefore, if beauty is a “transcendental of the good” because it adds to the good, then “good” is a transcendental of “true,” “true” a transcendental of “something,” “something” a transcendental of “one,” “one” a transcendental of “thing,” and only “thing” is a transcendental attribute of being. Since all of these are nonetheless true transcendentals for Thomas, beauty cannot be disqualified from being a transcendental because it adds to goodness.

Hence, Aertsen’s primary argument against beauty’s being a transcendental has no merit—beauty is not a transcendental of the good, nor contained in its meaning. Moreover, beauty’s conceptual addition to goodness is not a point against its transcendental status but in favor of it, even more so than Aertsen’s second argument, which only implied that beauty added

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\(^{171}\) Leonine 22/3/598:40-59. “. . . et ita plura includit in se ratio boni quam ratio veri, et se habet quodam modo per additionem ad illam. Et . . . verum autem praesupponit unum . . .” Emphasis mine.
to and included the good in its meaning. After all, the good comes at the end of the list of transcendents as enumerated by Thomas, so any further transcendental would have to add conceptually to being by adding to good. Thus, beauty’s addition to goodness could be an addition to being, which would thus give beauty the first mark of the transcendents, as well as 5) distinction in meaning from the other transcendents, 6) a place in their order, and consequently 7) conceptual addition to the last transcendental in that order, i.e. goodness. It is not yet certain, however, that beauty’s addition to good is an addition to being; hence, it is no surprise that Aertsen’s fourth argument is directed against that very possibility.

4. Truth Already Adds to Being What Beauty Adds to Goodness

According to Aertsen, even if adding to good “implies an addition to being,” beauty still does not add to being because beauty adds to goodness what truth adds to being:

According to Thomas the beautiful adds “an ordering to the cognitive power,” but in his order of the transcendents, the good presupposes the true and the relation to the cognitive power is that which ‘the true’ adds to ‘being.’ One can therefore not interpret the addition of the beautiful to the good in such a way that this addition would be equivalent to an addition to being.172

For Aertsen, beauty’s addition to the good cannot be an addition to being since this addition has already been made to being by truth, and thus beauty cannot be a transcendental.

As logically valid as this argument is, it depends on a premise for which Aertsen gives no justification: that beauty’s relation to the cognitive power is the same as that of truth. What is more, in Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 Thomas does not say beauty adds to goodness the relation to the cognitive power, but that it adds “a certain relation” (quendam ordinem) to the

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172 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 344; cf. Transcendental Thought, 176.
cognitive power,\(^{173}\) which implies that this relation is merely one of several (i.e. at least two) relations to that power—an important detail that Aertsen misses because he only examines beauty’s relation to the soul while discussing the earlier text in *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5 n. 356, in which the word *quendam* does not appear. The phrase “certain relation” does not prove that there are multiple relations to the cognitive power since Thomas could simply be making the obvious point that the relation to the cognitive power is one of many different relations. Still, Thomas’s use of the modifier *quendam* raises the possibility that beauty’s relation to the cognitive power is not the same as truth’s relation to that power. Hence, one cannot conclude that beauty does not add to being simply from that fact that what it adds to good is a relation to the cognitive power; rather, one must determine what this relation is (and whether it is distinct from truth’s relation) in order to decide whether it is an addition to being. We therefore conclude that Aertsen’s fourth argument fails as well since beauty’s addition to goodness could be a relation to the cognitive power that is distinct from that of truth.

Moreover, there is a serious objection to Aertsen’s view that beauty’s relation is the same as truth’s—the very objection, in fact, that he makes against certain transcendentalists. In response to the view that beauty is a “synthetic” transcendental uniting the additions made by earlier terms on the list, Aertsen rightly observes that “transcendents do not stand apart from each other, but are marked by a progressive explication of being,” in which “what is later includes conceptually what is earlier.”\(^{174}\) Yet Aertsen himself claims that beauty adds to the good the same relation to the cognitive power that truth adds to being, thus flying in the face of *De veritate* 21.3, which makes clear that the good “presupposes the true” and so includes within


\(^{174}\) Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 351.
itself the relation added to being by truth. Hence, according to Aertsen, beauty adds to the good a relation already included in its meaning, which seems to contradict the principle that one cannot add to something what it already possesses.

This objection is not necessarily irrefutable. For instance, Aertsen might reply that the good’s meaning only implicitly contains the relation to the cognitive power since it is not part of the good’s definition but is presupposed by it, whereas beauty’s meaning contains it explicitly. In fact, this is precisely the response Aertsen seems to give in his fifth argument against beauty’s being a transcendental, which can thus be seen as his explanation for how beauty can conceptually distinguish itself from good without adding anything new to being.

5. Beauty Is “The Extension of the True to the Good”

Aertsen’s last argument for why beauty does not belong to the order of transcendentals is that he has found a place for it outside that order. He begins by observing that for Thomas “it is characteristic of the beautiful that its apprehension is taken as ‘appropriate’ (conveniens) and ‘good,’” as shown by such texts as *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2 ad 1,175 from which Aertsen deduces that “this knowledge of the beautiful must be a special type of knowledge” since ordinarily the mind only apprehends being “under the aspect of the true,” not of the good.176 He then points to *In Sent.* I, 15.4.1 ad 3, where Thomas discusses “two grades in knowledge”: whereas in the first grade the intellect merely seeks truth, in the second the mind “accepts the

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176 Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 357.
true as fitting and good,” and from this kind of knowledge “follows love and delight.” Aerts
distinction in knowledge appears again later in the same commentary, which tells us that the first
grade of knowledge concerns “truth simply,” while in the second “the true is extended into the
good and fitting.” Aertsen concludes that, “because Thomas describes the apprehension of the
beautiful in the same terms he applies to the second grade of knowledge,” i.e. as good and fitting,
“this extension of the true to the good must be the place of the beautiful.”

Of the places suggested for beauty outside the order of transcendentals, “the extension of
the true to the good” is certainly by far the most plausible since it best explains how beauty can
be transcendental without being a transcendental. As we saw in Chapter One, for Thomas terms
that are really identical, convertible, and coextensive with being, as beauty is, can only be either
transcendentals or synonyms of the transcendentals; moreover, because beauty “pleases when
seen,” and thus relates to the soul, the only transcendentals with which beauty could possibly be
synonymous are the ones that express relations to the soul, namely truth or goodness. Beauty
obviously cannot be a synonym of goodness since Thomas says they are distinct in meaning; nor
can it be a synonym of truth since beauty’s meaning includes features that truth’s does not, such
as perfection. There remains the possibility, however, that beauty is a synonym of both
together. In this case, the meaning of the word “beauty” would be “the combination of truth and
goodness,” and the statement “being is beautiful” would mean “being is both true and good.”

177 Mandonnet 1.351. “Videmus autem in cognitione duos gradus: primum, secundum quod cognitio
intellectiva tendit in unum [Aertsen suggests that “unum” should be corrected to read “verum,” on the basis of the
text in the next note]; secundum, prout verum accipit ut conveniens et bonum.” Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 358,
note 74.
178 In Sent. I, 27.2.1. Mandonnet 1.655. “Et quia potest esse duplex intuitus, vel veri simpliciter, vel ulterius
secundum quod verum extenditur in bonum et conveniens . . .”
179 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 358.
180 Summa Theologiae I, 16.4. Leonine 4.211. “Nam verum respicit ipsum esse simpliciter et immediate:
ratio autem boni consequitur esse, secundum quod est aliquo modo perfectum . . .” Summa Theologiae I, 39.8.
Leonine 4.409. “Nam ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem, integritas sive perfectio . . .”
Now, to define the beautiful as “the true accepted as good,” as Aertsen does, is equivalent to defining it as “the true that is also good,” or as “that which is both true and good.” Thus, Aertsen has found the one place beauty could possibly have outside the order of transcendentals: namely, as a synonym for the combination of truth and goodness.

Moreover, Aertsen’s theory finds plenty of support from Thomists writing both before and after him. The view that “beauty” is a mere synonym for “truth and goodness” was already espoused prior to Aertsen’s book by Breton, who writes that “the beautiful is therefore a mixture of the true and good,” as well as by Leo Elders, who states that “the beautiful is accordingly that property of being which arises from a combination of the true and the good,” which is “why it is not mentioned by Aquinas as a special transcendental.” Moreover, since the publication of Aertsen’s book, his theory that the beautiful is “the extension of the true to the good” has been recapitulated by O’Reilly, who calls beauty “a function of truth and goodness” or “a function of the delight of the will in the apprehension of truth,” as well as “the true perceived as good.”

Finally, as we noted earlier, even one of Aertsen’s harshest critics, namely Waddell, endorses and expounds on Aertsen’s theory by arguing that beauty is an extension of the true to the good just as the pleasure in knowing that it causes “consists in the extension of a cognitive act into an appetitive one.” Thus, the place that Aertsen has found for the beautiful in Thomas’s thought is evidently satisfying to a large and growing number of Thomists.

Nevertheless, Aertsen concludes too quickly that the true accepted as good “must be the place of the beautiful,” for two reasons. First, while Aertsen is probably right in holding that the

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181 Ibid., 359.
182 Breton, “L’idée de transcendental,” 56.
184 O’Reilly, Aesthetic Perception, 110.
apprehension of beauty is the same as the second grade of knowledge described in the *Sentences* commentary, this identity does not prove that beauty is nothing more than the extension of the true to the good. After all, if beauty is a transcendental, then, like the others, it must add to and include in its meaning the term immediately preceding it in their order, namely the good, from which it follows that one cannot apprehend a thing as beautiful without also apprehending it as good—i.e. without the true being accepted as good. Hence, the apprehension of beauty probably does involve the extension of the true to the good, but not necessarily because beauty simply is the extension of the true to the good; rather, it might be because beauty is a transcendental that comes after the true and the good, and thus conceptually presupposes both of them.

Secondly, whatever support Aertsen’s theory gets from the two texts in the *Sentences* commentary is cancelled out later in the very same work by a passage directly contradicting the thesis that beauty is the extension of the true to the good: namely, *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 ad 4:

*Beauty does not have* the meaning of desirability *except* insofar as it *takes on the meaning of the good; for in this way even the true is desirable:* but *according to its own meaning* it has brightness and those things that were said above . . .

Thomas says here that desirability does not belong to the meaning (*rationem*) of beauty. Yet if beauty were synonymous with “the true accepted as good,” desirability *would* be a part of the meaning of beauty since (as Thomas says in this very text) truth becomes desirable when it takes on the meaning of good. Hence, this text not only distinguishes beauty from the true and the good, as we noted in Chapter One, but also directly contradicts the view that beauty is “the true accepted as good” since it denies that desirability is part of the meaning of beauty.

Aertsen seems unaware of the threat that *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 ad 4 poses to his theory since

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he never addresses it; if so, it is surprising that he did not recognize the passage’s importance.

Aertsen’s main contention is that for Thomas “beauty” is a mere synonym for the combination of “truth” and “goodness” rather than a distinct transcendental, and this text is the only place in Thomas’s corpus that mentions all three terms at the same time; hence, that this passage presents beauty as distinct in meaning not only from truth and goodness, but even from the true accepted as good, is a devastating blow to Aertsen’s case. Moreover, since it post-dates both of the Sentences commentary texts on the extension of the true to the good, In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4 prevents Aertsen from reading either of these passages as showing that beauty is the extension of the true to the good since this interpretation would entail that Thomas changed his mind within the space of a single work. Consequently, this small but significant text not only contradicts Aertsen’s theory, but also eliminates much of the foundation for it in Thomas’s texts.

Thomas did write In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4 at the beginning of his career, so Aertsen could argue that, after contradicting the view that beauty is the true accepted as good in this early text, Thomas later embraced it; however, such a reversal of Thomas’s opinion does not appear in his later works. First, Summa Theologiae I, 5.4 ad 1 argues that beauty relates, not to the appetite, as it would if it were the true taken as good or desirable, but to the cognitive power; moreover, not only does Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 repeat this claim, but it does so in an article aiming to show that “the good is the only cause of love,” and so is implicitly arguing that beauty is not a cause of love. Consequently, both of the major texts on beauty in the Summa Theologiae indicate agreement with In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4 that desirability is not a part of beauty’s meaning,

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188 Leonine 6.192. “Cum enim bonum sit quod omnia appetunt, de ratione boni est quod in eo quietetur appetitus: sed ad rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus. . . . Et sic patet quod pulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam . . .”
and so is not the true taken as good. Finally, even *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2 ad 3, which Aertsen sees as evidence that beauty is the true taken as good, in fact suggests the opposite:

The object moving the appetite is an apprehended good. That which appears beautiful in the mere apprehension, however, is accepted as fitting and good.\(^{189}\) If the meaning of “beautiful” were “the true accepted as good,” it would be redundant to say that “that which appears beautiful . . . is accepted as fitting and good” since it would be equivalent to saying “that which appears to be the true accepted as good is accepted as fitting and good.” This text therefore does not support but rather undermines the view that beauty is the true accepted as good since it implies that “accepted as good” is not already included in beauty’s meaning.

Although Aertsen does not notice the apparent conflict between his theory and these passages, he is aware that Thomas’s writings do not clearly substantiate the claim that beauty is the true accepted as good; consequently, he seeks “support for this interpretation in the text *De pulchro et bono.*” As Aertsen notes, this manuscript “was long attributed to Thomas,” but “is in reality a *reportatio,*” or copy, that was “prepared by Thomas of the lectures of his teacher Albert the Great, given in Cologne between 1248 and 1252, on Dionysius’s exposition of the beautiful in *De divinis nominibus.*”\(^{190}\) Aertsen focuses his attention on “the first question,” in which “Albert reflects on the order of the names ‘Light,’ ‘Beauty,’ and ‘Love’ in chapter four of *De divinis nominibus,*” and argues that “this order must be understood according to the order of the processes in the mind.”\(^{191}\) In this text, Albert tells us that the mind’s “first procession” is “the apprehension of the true,” which then “bursts into flames” (*excandescit*) and “is accepted in the meaning of the good, and thus at last desire is moved toward it,” i.e. the apprehended being.

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\(^{189}\) *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2 ad 3. Leonine 10.147. “[O]biectum movens appetitum est bonum apprehensum. Quod autem in ipsa apprehensione appareat decorum, accipitur ut conveniens et bonum . . . .”

\(^{190}\) Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 358.

\(^{191}\) Ibid., 358-59.
Albert explains that “the motion of desire must be preceded by a two-fold apprehension,” the first being the apprehension by “the speculative intellect, which is of the true itself absolutely,” and the second being the apprehension of “the practical intellect,” which occurs “by the extension of the true into the meaning of the good.” Albert then correlates this three-step process of the mind to the order of topics in the fourth chapter, namely “Light,” “Beauty,” and “Love”:

Therefore to the apprehension of the true taken absolutely corresponds the procession of Light, but to the apprehension of the true insofar as it has the meaning of the good (veri secundum quod habet rationem boni) corresponds the procession of the Beautiful, and to the motion of desire corresponds the process of the Lovable; and so first Light had to be treated, secondly the Beautiful, thirdly the Lovable.192

Here we have an explicit statement by Albert that “the place of the beautiful is the true that has acquired the character of the good,” or the extension of the true to the good, from which Aertsen concludes that “in Albert’s treatise one finds systematically elaborated what we were able to discover in Thomas only through a reconstructive interpretation of scattered texts.”193

What Aertsen does not realize is that, far from supporting his case that beauty is the true taken as good for Thomas, this text actually destroys what is left of it. After all, if there is one thing that is proven by Thomas’s having written a reportatio of his teacher’s commentary on the Divine Names, it is that Thomas was familiar with the views Albert expressed in that work since Thomas literally copied them down word for word; thus, since one of the opinions that appear in

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192 Albertus Magnus, Super Dionysium De divinis nominibus, vol. 37/1 of Opera omnia (Münster im Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1972), 181. Cap. 4, n. 71. “[I]deo secundum ordinem processionis debet attendi ordo istorum de quibus hic agitur. Prima autem processio, quae est in mentem, est secundum apprehensionem veri. Deinde illud verum excandescit et accipitur in ratione boni, et sic demum movetur desiderium ad ipsum; oportet enim motum desiderii antecedere duplicem apprehensionem, unam quae est in intellectu speculativo, quae est ipsius veri absolute, et alteram, quae est in in intellect practico per exensionem de vero in rationem boni, et tunc primo erit motu desiderii ad bonum. . . . Apprehensioni igitur ipsius veri absolute respondet processio luminis, apprehensioni vero veri, secundum quod habet rationem boni, respondet processio pulchri, motui vero desiderii respondet processio diligibilis; et ideo primo de lumine, secundo de pulchro, tertio de diligibili erat determinandum.”

193 Aertsen, The Transcendentals, 359.
Albert’s commentary is that beauty is the true accepted as good, Thomas was undoubtedly aware of this view. Moreover, he knew of it from the very start of his career since, as has already been noted, Thomas wrote this reportatio during his period of study in Cologne under Albert from 1248 to 1252. Yet, in the immediately following period of Thomas’s career, i.e. his first years of teaching in Paris from 1252 to 1256, Thomas writes In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4, where he explicitly denies that beauty has the notion of goodness or desirability as part of its meaning, and even claims that it becomes desirable in the same way that truth does, i.e. by taking on the meaning of the good. In other words, Thomas writes a text completely contradicting the view that beauty is the true accepted as good only a few years after having heard that view expressed by his own teacher. Therefore, what the De pulchro actually proves is not that Thomas implicitly accepted Albert’s theory that the beautiful is the extension of the true to the good, but rather that Thomas consciously and deliberately rejected that theory in In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4.

As incredible as it may seem that Thomas would reject Albert’s views on beauty almost immediately after ceasing to be his student, Thomas’s reasons for doing so become clearer when one remembers the context of In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4. The objection to which it replies argues that “species or beauty” should be appropriated not to the Son, as Thomas holds, but to the Holy Spirit, on the grounds that according to Dionysius “the beautiful and the good follow on each other,” and “goodness is not appropriated to the Son, but to the Holy Spirit.”194 Hence, when Thomas begins his reply by saying that “beauty does not have the meaning of desirability,” it is for the purpose of explaining why beauty does not have a likeness to the Holy Spirit and thus should not be appropriated to Him. The clear implication is that, if beauty did have the notion of

desirability in its meaning—for instance, if its meaning were “the true accepted as good”—then beauty would be appropriated to the Spirit because He proceeds from the Father and the Son as their mutual Love, and thus anything that relates to love or desire is appropriated to Him. The reason that Thomas rejects Albert’s definition of beauty in this text must therefore be that he does not think it can explain why beauty is appropriated to the Son rather than the Spirit. If so, then, since he still appropriates “species or beauty” to the Son in *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8, it seems that even while writing the First Part of his *Summa Theologiae* (1265-68) Thomas still holds that beauty lacks the meaning of desirability, and so is not the true taken as good.

The strongest evidence, however, that Thomas rejects Albert’s theory of beauty not only at the start of his career but throughout it is that Thomas does not even mention this theory, much less discuss or endorse it, in any of the many texts that he wrote on beauty. This utter lack of references to Albert’s theory is most glaring in the texts that discuss the beautiful’s conceptual distinction from the good since, if Thomas had held while writing these passages that beauty’s meaning merely combines the meanings of truth and goodness, mentioning this view would have been an easy way for him to explain how beauty conceptually distinguishes itself from goodness.

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195 *In Sent.* I, 31.1.2. Mandonnet 1.721. “Potentia habet in ratione sua principium; et ideo appropriatur Patri, qui est principium non de principio; et sapientia, Filio, qui procedit ut verbum; et bonitas, Spiritui sancto, qui procedit ut amor, cujus objectum est bonus . . .”


197 Aertsen could reply that, by the time Thomas writes *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8, he has found a different explanation for why beauty is not appropriated to the Spirit; however, this hypothesis is impossible to verify, since in this text Thomas does not raise the objection that beauty, like goodness, should be appropriated to the Spirit. Moreover, it is doubtful that any other explanation would suffice, since Thomas still holds in this text that “goodness . . . has a likeness with the Spirit, Who is Love” because it is “the reason for and object of love,” so it would seem that anything having the aspect of goodness or desirability is necessarily appropriated to the Spirit; hence, if beauty is not appropriated to the Spirit, then it must not have the meaning of goodness or desirability. *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8. Leonine 4.409, “Bonitas autem, cum sit ratio et objectum amoris, habet similitudinem cum Spiritu divino, qui est Amor.” Finally, the explanation that Thomas gives in *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8 for why “species or beauty” is appropriated to the Son is almost identical to the one that he gives in *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 (see Chapter Five, pp. 270-72); hence, Thomas’s views on the appropriation of beauty to the Son seem not to have changed but only to have developed between the two works, which makes it very likely that at the end of his career Thomas still holds that beauty lacks the meaning of goodness or desirability.
There would have been no reason for Thomas to hold back from doing so since he would not have been boldly proclaiming a new definition of beauty but simply repeating what he had heard from his teacher Albert; moreover, even if Thomas had only thought that “the true taken as good” might be the definition of beauty, he would surely have at least mentioned this possibility. Thus, since Thomas was familiar with this opinion of Albert’s from the very start of his career, as the *De pulcro et bono* proves, there is only one possible explanation for why Thomas never mentions it: out of respect for his teacher, Thomas did not want to draw attention to the fact that he disagreed with Albert’s theory that beauty is the extension of the true to the good.

Thomas’s deferential strategy of simply not mentioning the views contained in Albert’s commentary on Dionysius rather than openly disputing them is most obvious in Thomas’s own commentary on the *Divine Names* since if there was ever a place to discuss Albert’s theory that beauty is the true taken as good it would be in commenting on the same chapter that prompted Albert to express this view. Like Albert, Thomas endeavors to account for the ordering of topics in Dionysius’s fourth chapter, which he does by showing how each topic is related to the primary subject of the chapter, the good. Hence, according to Thomas, Dionysius “also treats of evil” in this chapter because “it is opposed to the good”; likewise, “since an act is known by its object,” and “the good is the proper object of love,” so Dionysius “also treats of love” in this chapter on the good, along with “ecstasy, which is the effect of love,” and “zeal, which signifies a certain intensity of love.”

Finally, Thomas explains why beauty is included in this chapter:

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198 In *De divinis nominibus* 4.1. Marietti 87. “Ad sciendum vero continetiam huius 4 capituli, considerandum est quod opposita sunt eiusdem considerationis; malum autem opponitur bono, unde in cap. de bono determinat etiam de malo. Rursus, quia actus per obiectum cognoscitur, ad eandem considerationem reductur actus et obiectum; bonum autem est proprium obiectum amoris, unde in hoc cap. boni, agit etiam de amore et de extasi, quae est effectus amoris, ut patebit, et de zelo qui quamdam amoris intensionem signat.”
Again, since the good is that which all things desire, whatever possesses of itself the nature of the desirable is seen to pertain to the meaning of ‘good’; of this nature, however, are light and the beautiful, of which he also treats in this chapter. And the title of the chapter expresses this plan (intentionem), which is this: of the good, light, the beautiful, love, ecstasy and zeal.\footnote{Ibid. Ibid. “Item, cum bonum sit quod omnia appetunt, quaecumque de se important appetibilis rationem, ad rationem boni pertinere videntur; huiusmodi autem sunt lumen et pulchrum, de quibus etiam in hoc cap. agit. Et hanc intentionem capituli exprimit titulus qui talis est: de bono, lumine, pulchro, amore, extasi et zelo.”}

Thomas says nothing here about Albert’s impressive explanation for this order, in which Light, the Beautiful, and Love correspond to the apprehension of the true, the apprehension of the true as good, and the movement of desire, and thus have an arrangement necessitated by the order of processes in the mind itself. To add injury to insult, Thomas has even contradicted this account since, while Albert told us that “Light” corresponds to the true that has not acquired the meaning of goodness and desirability, Thomas tells us that Light, like the Beautiful, “possesses of itself the nature of the desirable.” Thus, like In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4, this text clearly displays Thomas’s quiet but firm rejection of Albert’s theory that beauty is the true accepted as good.

We can therefore safely conclude that, throughout his career, Thomas rejected the view that beauty is the true taken as good, for the following reasons. First of all, Thomas undoubtedly heard this theory proposed by his teacher Albert since he literally wrote it down in the reportatio or copy of Albert’s commentary on the De divinis nominibus that is known as the De pulchro et bono. Only a few years after hearing his teacher’s theory, however, Thomas directly contradicts it in In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4 since this passage says that beauty does not include goodness and desirability in its meaning, as would in fact be the case if beauty’s meaning were “the true taken as good.” Finally, despite its being his own teacher’s theory, Thomas never mentions the view that beauty is the true taken as good in any of his texts on beauty—not even in his discussions of the meaning of beauty or in his own commentary on pseudo-Dionysius. It is therefore apparent
that beauty is not the extension of the true to the good for Thomas, from which it follows that Aertsen’s fifth and last argument against beauty’s being a transcendental does not succeed.

Conclusion

Just as our first chapter confirmed Aertsen’s first conclusion regarding the beautiful—that Thomas does not take a clear position on whether beauty is a transcendental or not200—so our second chapter has corroborated his second conclusion that “the attempts of various scholars to find a distinct place for beauty as a transcendental must be regarded as having failed.”201 In fact, we have shown that this failure even extends to transcendentalists writing after Aertsen’s book. Moreover, we have refuted the arguments of contemporary transcendentalists that beauty does not have to express a unique general mode of being in order to be a transcendental, and so have confirmed Aertsen’s guideline for determining the transcendental status of beauty.

On the other hand, we have also found that the arguments offered by Aertsen to show that beauty is not a transcendental fail as well, and so his third conclusion, i.e. that beauty is the true accepted as good rather than a distinct transcendental,202 has not been confirmed by our analysis. In fact, we discovered that, far from indicating that Thomas implicitly accepted the theory of his teacher Albert that the beautiful is the true taken as good, Thomas’s writings actually prove that he quietly but consciously rejected that theory throughout his career. As a result, while our first chapter showed that we cannot know whether Thomas even had an opinion on the transcendental status of beauty, much less what that view was, our second chapter has revealed one opinion that we can be certain Thomas had regarding beauty: that it is not merely the true taken as good.

200 Aertsen, The Transcendental, 351.
201 Ibid., 353.
202 Ibid., 354-359.
Nonetheless, Thomas never gives a satisfying explanation for his career-long rejection of Albert’s theory that beauty is the true taken as good, but rather simply asserts in *In Sent. I*, 31.2.1 ad 4 that “beauty does not have the meaning of desirability” as part of its own meaning. This lack of an account may be due to the fact that, as we observed in the conclusion to Chapter One, Thomas seems to have never determined to his satisfaction the precise meaning of the beautiful, even at the end of his career.  

On what grounds, then, did Thomas hold that beauty is not the true taken as good? Thomas’s justification for this opinion might have been simply an intuition that the statement “something that is both true and good is also beautiful” is not redundant since redundancy (*nugatio*), or “useless repetition of the same,” occurs whenever two synonyms are predicated of each other, due to their having the same meaning; in fact, it is for this reason that Thomas often argues for the conceptual distinction of the transcendentals by noting that they are predicated of each other without redundancy, and thus cannot be synonyms. Thus, while we cannot know for certain, it seems likely that what led Thomas to reject Albert’s theory of beauty was an instinct or hunch that “beautiful” cannot be a mere synonym for “both true and good” or “the true taken as good” because it is not redundant to say that something is beautiful as well as true and good—an intuition to which transcendentalists have sometimes also appealed.

Whatever the reasons for Thomas’s repudiation of Albert’s theory, what follows from it is that beauty is not a synonym for the combination of truth and goodness, which was the only

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203 See Chapter One, pp. 85-86.
205 See *De Potentia* 7.6 s.c. 1 [Marietti 2.201] and *Summa Theologiae* I, 13.4 s.c [Leonine 4.144].
206 For example, see *De veritate* 1.1. s.c. 1. Leonine 22/1.4:61-63. “[S]i ergo verum esset idem quod ens, esset nugatio dum dicitur ens verum, quod falsum est; ergo non sunt idem.”
207 Clarke, for example, argues that “we all somehow intuitively recognize, it seems to me, that beauty is a unique and special dimension of our experience, irreducible to anything else we experience, and so it is appropriate for it to have its own unique rooting in being itself.” Clarke, “The Transcendental Properties of Being,” 301.
alternative to its being a transcendental. After all, as was said above, terms that are identical, convertible, and coextensive in reality with being, as beauty is, can only be transcendentals or synonyms of transcendentals; moreover, the only transcendentals with which beauty could be synonymous are truth and goodness since only these terms express relations of being to the soul. Since beauty is obviously not a synonym for either the true or the good by themselves, it follows that, if “beautiful” is not a synonym for “both true and good,” or “the true taken as good,” then it cannot be a synonym for any of the transcendentals, whether alone or in combination. Hence, Thomas’s rejection of the theory that beauty is the true accepted as good has eliminated the only place that beauty can have in Thomas’s metaphysics outside the order of transcendentals.

It thus appears at this point that beauty must be a distinct transcendental in Thomas’s thought, as can be shown by means of the same argument Thomas uses to prove that the good is a transcendental in De veritate 21.1. There Thomas notes that since the good does not contract being, it “either adds nothing to being,” and is thus “a synonym of being,” or it “adds something that is merely conceptual,” and is thus a transcendental; yet “good” cannot be a mere synonym of “being” since “being is not called good redundantly,” so the good must add something merely conceptual to being, and is therefore a transcendental.\footnote{Leonine 22/3.593:129-152. “Secundo autem modo inveniuntur aliqua addere super ens quia ens contrahitur per decem genera, quorum unumquodque addit . . . determinatum modum essendi. . . . Sic autem bonum non addit alicquid super ens, cum bonum dividatur aequaliter in decem genera ut ens. . . . Et ideo oportet quod vel nihil addat super ens vel addat alicquid quod sit in ratione tantum. . . . Cum autem ens sit id quod primo cadit in conceptione intellectus, ut Avicenna dicit, oportet quod omne aliud nomen vel sit synonymum enti, quod de bono dici non potest cum non nugatorie dicatur ens bonum, vel addat alicquid ad minus secundum rationem: et sic oportet quod bonum ex quo non contrahit ens addat alicquid super ens quod sit rationis tantum.”} Likewise, since beauty also does not contract being, and, like truth and goodness, it expresses a relation of being to the soul, beauty either expresses a unique general mode of being, and is thus a transcendental, or the mode that it expresses is not unique because it is a mere synonym for the true, the good, or their combination;
yet the beautiful cannot be the latter since, for Thomas, it is not redundant to say that “whatever is both true and good is also beautiful.” It follows that beauty must express a distinct general mode of being, and is therefore a transcendental in Thomas’s metaphysics.

Nevertheless, this conclusion is only tentative since we still have not fully disproven the possibility that beauty is a mere synonym for truth and goodness in Thomas’s thought. After all, while Thomas apparently rejected this view, it still might follow from his metaphysics as a whole that beauty is simply the true taken as good since, in the words of Gracia, philosophers “are not always aware of the implications of what they hold”209; hence, the only way to prove that beauty is not a mere synonym for truth and goodness in Thomas’s thought is to determine the meaning of beauty for him, and to show that it expresses a unique general mode of being, just as Aertsen’s guideline requires. We have already seen that Thomas himself never succeeds in pinning down the precise meaning of the beautiful since even in his most mature work he is only able to define it in terms of its proper effect, i.e. pleasing merely when seen, and to say that it thus expresses a “certain relation” to the cognitive power. That Thomas’s modern followers have likewise failed to establish beauty’s meaning in his thought is evident from the great variety of conflicting definitions they have given of beauty, as we have seen in this chapter. Hence, we conclude that the systematic question of beauty’s transcendental status has still not received an answer, and will remain unanswered so long as the meaning of beauty for Thomas remains unknown.

There is therefore still a great amount of confusion in Thomist aesthetics since it is in the dark not only about whether beauty is a transcendental, but even about what beauty’s meaning is for Thomas, and it cannot solve the former question without solving the latter. Hope remains, however, since, just as Aertsen gave us the guideline for determining beauty’s transcendental

status, so he has revealed the principle that will lead us to beauty’s meaning. By noting that Thomas’s definition of beauty only tells us the proper effect of beauty, rather than its essence, Aertsen has unintentionally shown us the best way, and indeed the only way, to arrive at the meaning of beauty in Thomas’s thought: by determining the precise nature of its proper effect, i.e. the pleasure that it gives when seen, and then by reasoning back to the cause of that effect.

It might seem incredible that no scholar has attempted this method before, given how obvious it is once stated. A thorough survey of the secondary literature, however, reveals that Thomists writing on beauty usually do not devote any time to examining the nature of aesthetic pleasure for Thomas; what is more serious, scholars who do raise the question do not deduce their answers to it from Thomas’s texts, but from their own reflections on aesthetic experience, thus taking for granted that Thomas is in agreement with them. Hence, far from the bleak picture that we sketched at the start of the preceding paragraph, we have great reason to think that we can determine the meaning of beauty for Thomas since the only reason it is unknown is that apparently no one has bothered to ask why, according to Thomas, beauty pleases when seen.

Our course for the remainder of this dissertation has thus become clear. First, we must establish the nature of aesthetic perception or vision for Thomas in Chapter Three since it is the specific difference by which Thomas defines the delight of beauty—“for those things are called beautiful which please when they are seen.” Once we have identified which instances of knowing are aesthetic experiences for Thomas, our fourth chapter will examine what Thomas says about the pleasures resulting from such experiences, in order to determine which of these is the proper effect of beauty. With the nature of aesthetic pleasure established, Chapter Five will

investigate how this pleasure is caused by the objective conditions for beauty that are listed by Thomas, in order to discover what the essence or meaning of beauty is for him. We will finally use this knowledge to determine whether beauty expresses a unique general mode of being that fits into the order of the transcendentals, and consequently fulfills Aertsen’s guideline for being a distinct transcendental. With our path set clearly before us, we can now begin its first step: investigating the nature of aesthetic perception for Thomas.
CHAPTER THREE
THE VISION OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Introduction

Thomists have unanimously maintained that what truly “sees” beauty as beautiful is the intellect; in other words, while the perception of beauty by human beings certainly begins in the senses, it is ultimately an act of reason. There is good reason for this consensus since Thomas’s writings make clear that the two kinds of beauty, both sensible (or bodily) and intelligible (or spiritual), are only recognized by the intellect. That the senses cannot know intelligible beauty is obvious since Thomas declares it to be identical in reality with the good and so with being,¹ and only the intellect can know being qua being, which is its proper object.² As for sensible beauty, while it does consist in the due proportion of a thing’s visible or audible qualities, it is still not perceivable by the sight and hearing alone since, as Thomas tells us more than once, sensible beauty is not simply any harmony in a thing’s appearance, but one “conforming to the nature”³ of the thing; thus, since only the intellect “penetrates even to the essence of a thing,” while “the senses stop at the outward accidents of a thing,”⁴ it follows that only the intellect can recognize the presence of sensible beauty. Thomas confirms this conclusion when he says that among the animals “man alone takes pleasure in the beauty of sensible objects for its own sake,”⁵ thus

¹ Summa Theologiae I, 5.4 ad 1. Leonine 4.61. “[P]ulchrum et bonum in subiecto quidem sunt idem . . .”
² Summa Theologiae I, 5.2. Leonine 4.58. “Unde ens est proprium objectum intellectus . . .”
indicating that other animals lack the cognitive power that knows beauty, which can only be the intellect. Finally, there is one text where Thomas explicitly states that “the beautiful and the ugly” belong to those things “that are known by the intellect.” Thus, the universal agreement among Thomists that the human experience of beauty is essentially an act of the intellect, though necessarily involving the senses, is simply a consequence of and a testament to the clarity of this doctrine’s presence in the writings of Thomas himself.

What is not evident in Thomas’s writings is his opinion regarding the nature of this knowledge that the intellect has of beauty since he never explains or even discusses it anywhere in his work. He does make clear that he thinks of it as a visio or seeing when he tells us that “those things are called beautiful which please when they are seen,” but it is not immediately apparent that this description indicates a specific kind of knowledge. After all, as was noted in the Introduction, Thomas is obviously not defining beauty in relation to the bodily sense of sight since then not only spiritual realities (which are known only by the intellect) but even sounds (which are known only by the hearing) would not be beautiful, as Thomas explicitly declares them to be. Moreover, Thomas tells us later in the *Summa Theologiae* that, while the word “seeing” is primarily applied to the activity of bodily sight, it can, “on account of the dignity and certitude of this sense,” be used to describe “all the knowledge of the other senses,” as when “we say ‘see how it tastes, or how it smells, or how hot it is,’” and even the knowledge of the intellect, as Christ did when He said “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.”

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6 *In Metaphysic.* XI, 6.7. Marietti 530. “Et sicut hoc manifestum est in cognitione sensus, similiter dicendum est in bono et malo, in pulchro et turpi, et huiusmodi omnibus quae per intellectum cognoscuntur.”

7 *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1. Leonine 4.61. “[P]ulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent.”

8 *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5.339. Marietti 113. “[A]lia enim est pulchritudo spiritus et alia corporis . . .”


9 *Summa Theologiae* I, 67.1. Leonine 5.163. “Sicut patet in nomine visionis, quod primo impositum est ad significandum actum sensus visus; sed propter dignitatem et certitudinem huius sensus, extensum est hoc nomen, secundum usum loquentium, ad omnem cognitionem aliorum sensuum (dicimus enim, *Vide quomodo sapit*, vel
That Thomas’s description of the knowledge of beauty is using the word “seeing” in its extended sense of referring to the activity of any cognitive power, rather than that of the particular power of bodily vision, is confirmed by his statement in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3 that “it pertains to the nature of the beautiful that in the *sight or knowledge* of it the appetite is stilled.”

Thomas’s use of the word “seeing” in describing aesthetic knowledge is thus clearly analogical, which might lead one to conclude that it tells us nothing about the kind of knowledge involved in the experience of beauty, or even that Thomas’s point is precisely that aesthetic perception is not a *kind* of knowledge at all, but simply any knowledge whatsoever. This interpretation, of course, does not explain Thomas’s consistent use of the term “seeing” rather than simply “knowledge.”

Moreover, Thomas shows in several texts that the word “seeing” has certain implications for him. In the text we saw from the *Prima Pars*, Thomas says that “seeing” is said of the other senses and of the intellect “on account of the dignity and certitude of this sense,” thus suggesting that a kind of knowledge is appropriately called “seeing” insofar as it has dignity and certitude. Thomas shows what he means by the “dignity” of a mode of knowledge when he says that the sense of sight is “the most spiritual, and more perfect than all the senses, and more universal” because it undergoes only a spiritual change, not a natural or material one, in its organ; hence, for Thomas knowledge has “dignity” to the degree that it is immaterial, the reason for which will become clearer when we discuss the nature of knowledge for Thomas. The *expositio* of *In Sent. III*, 24.1.3.3 explains the greater “certitude” of sight when it says that, while both seeing and

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*quomodo redolet, vel quomodo est calidum*; et uterius etiam ad cognitionem intellectus, secundum illud Matth. V: *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.*

10 Leonine 6.192. “[A]d rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus.”

11 *Summa Theologiae* I, 78.3. Leonine 5.254. “Visus autem, quia est absque immutatione naturali et organi et obiecti, est maxime spiritualis, et perfectior inter omnes sensus, et communior.” The material or physical changes that modern biology has shown to occur in the eye while it is seeing do not undermine but only confirm Thomas’s point since these changes were unknown (and even unknowable) to the biologists of Thomas’s day precisely because they are so much smaller and finer than the physical changes occurring in the other sense organs.
hearing are only said of the intellect “according to likeness,” they are said of it in different ways since “vision of the intellect is properly had of those things whose forms offer themselves to it, while hearing is had of what it does not see.”¹² This statement shows that for Thomas what “seeing” most implies is immediate knowledge in which a thing “offers” or presents itself to the knower, and so is known with greater certainty than if it were known on the basis of something more directly known, as when one knows a state of affairs from hearing someone talk about it.

Another distinctive feature of the act of bodily seeing for Thomas is an observation that he gets from Aristotle, namely that seeing is “complete” in every moment of its existence, and is therefore not a “generation,” i.e. a process or change, which is only complete after a length of time.¹³ Thus, for Thomas (and for most people), “seeing” implies a kind of knowing that is not “discursive,” i.e. a “running” (discursus) from one object of knowledge to the next, as when one is led from the knowledge of a proof’s premises to the knowledge of its conclusion.¹⁴ As a result, “seeing” can only be used to describe knowledge that is motionless and still, such as the act of contemplation, which Thomas describes as “a simple vision of the truth.”¹⁵

A final implication of the word “seeing” is brought out by Thomas’s use of the phrase “knowledge of vision” to describe God’s knowledge of things that have existed, exist now, or will exist, and the phrase “knowledge of simple understanding” to describe God’s knowledge of

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¹² Mandonnet 3.777. “[U]trumque dicitur in intellectu per similitudinem; unde proprie de illis rebus intellectus visio habetur quorum formae se ei offerunt, sed auditus de illis quae non videt.”

¹³ In Ethic. X, 5. Leonine 47/2.565. “[O]peratio sensus visus quae dicitur visio est perfecta secundum quodcumque tempus; non enim indiget aliquo posterius adveniente quod perficiat eius speciem et hoc ideo quia visio completur in primo instanti temporis; si autem requireretur tempus ad eius complementum, non quodcumque tempus ad hoc sufficeret, sed oporteret esse tempus determinatum, sicut accidit in ceteris quae fiunt in tempore, quorum generatio certam temporis mensuram requirit . . .”


things that never have existed and never will. Thomas justifies his use of these terms in *Summa Theologiae* I, 14.9 by noting that “those things that are seen around us have distinct existence outside the seer,”\(^\text{16}\) which shows that for him “seeing” implies immediate knowledge of an object external to the knower. This object must therefore be an individual since, while a being might share a common nature with other beings, e.g. horseness, this common nature only exists in reality as individuated by the singulars having that nature, and so is only universal, i.e. a unity related to many, insofar as it exists in the mind apprehending it.\(^\text{17}\) Moreover, for Thomas both sensible and intelligible beauty are necessarily individual—the former must be because it is the accident of a particular material being, while the latter must be because of its identity with being, which is inherently individual.\(^\text{18}\) The object of aesthetic *visio* is therefore always an individual.\(^\text{19}\)

Thus, Thomas’s description of aesthetic perception as a *visio* implies that it is knowledge (1) of an individual being really distinct from the knower (2) as directly present to the knower, in a (3) highly immaterial and (4) changeless way. Thomas confirms these characteristics when he

\(^{16}\) Leonine 4.182. “Quaedam enim, licet non sint nunc in actu, tamen vel fuerunt vel erunt: et omnia ista dicitur Deus scire scientia visionis. . . . Quaedam vero sunt, quae sunt in potentia Dei vel creaturae, quae tamen nec sunt nec erunt neque fuerunt. Et respectu horum non dicitur habere scientiam visionis, sed simplicis intelligentiae. Quod ideo dicitur, quia ea quae videntur apud nos, habent esse distinctum extra videntem.”

\(^{17}\) *De ente et essentia* 3. Leonine 43.374-75:82-107. “Similiter etiam non potest dici quod ratio generis vel speciei accidat naturae humanae secundum esse quod habet in individuis, quia non inuenitur in individuis natura humana secundum unitatem ut sit unum quid omnibus conveniens, quod ratio universalis exigit. Relinquitur ergo quod ratio speciei accidat nature humane secundum illud esse quod habet in intellectu. . . . [H]ec natura intellecta habeat rationem universalis secundum quod comparatur ad res extra animam, quia est una similitudo omnium . . .”

\(^{18}\) *De 108 articulis* 108. Leonine 42.294:1185-87. “[U]numquodque enim secundum quod habet esse, habet unitatem et individuationem.” For other texts where Thomas indicates that being is inherently individual, see *De anima* 1 ad 2 and *De spiritualibus creaturis* 9 ad 3 [Leonine 24/1.10:350-59 and 24/2.96:353-64]. As Aertsen points out, “it seems natural to connect unity with individuality,” and these texts “confirm this correlation,” so it appears that individuality is “a transcendental predicate” falling under unity. *The Transcendentals*, 236.

\(^{19}\) If one objects that universals can be beautiful, such as the beauty of “humanity itself,” I think Thomas would reply that it is beautiful in the same way that it exists: as a being of reason that nevertheless has a certain foundation in reality, namely the common nature shared in by singulars. *In Sent.* I, 19.5.1 corpus. Mandonnet 1.486. “Quaedam autem sunt quae habent fundamentum in re extra animam, sed complementum rationis eorum quantum ad id quod est formale, est per operationem animae, ut patet in universali. Humanitas enim est aliquid in re, non tamen ibi habet rationem universalis, cum non sit extra animam aliqua humanitas multis communis; sed secundum quod accipitur in intellectu, adjungitur ei per operationem intellectus intentio, secundum quam dicitur species . . .”
writes that beauty is chiefly regarded by sight and hearing, whose objects are more physically removed from the knower than those of smell, taste, and touch, but are still known directly, (almost) instantaneously, and with the greatest degree of immateriality among the senses.\footnote{Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “Unde et illi sensus praecipue respiciunt pulchrum, qui maxime cognoscitivit sunt, scilicet visus et auditus rationi deservientes . . .”}

To these characteristics implied by the word “seeing,” one can add two features that are demonstrable from the proper effect of beauty’s visio, i.e. the pleasure it causes. Thomas shares Aristotle’s view that “pleasure perfects operation as beauty perfects youth,”\footnote{Summa Theologiae I, 78.3 [Leonine 5.253-54].} i.e. not as a cause of the activity’s perfection but as a necessary effect; hence, for Thomas pleasure results from a perfect activity. This perfection further requires that the activity be “a connatural operation not impeded,”\footnote{Summa Theologiae I-II, 32.1 s.c. Leonine 6.223. “Sed contra est quod philosophus dicit, VII et X Ethic., quod delectatio est operatio connaturalis non impedita.”} i.e. an activity that is proportioned to the agent’s capacity since an activity that is difficult for an agent will not be performed well by him and will therefore not be pleasant, but rather “painful and irksome.”\footnote{Ibid., ad 3. Ibid. “[O]peraciones sunt delectabiles, inquantum sunt proportionatae et connaturales operanti. Cum autem virtus humana sit finita, secundum aliquam mensuram operatio est sibi proportionata. Unde si excedat illam mensuram, iam non erit sibi proportionata, nec delectabilis, sed magis laboriosa et attedians.”}

When we add these two features that aesthetic knowledge has insofar as it is delightful to those it has insofar as it is a “seeing,” as well as the primary feature that we discussed at the start of this chapter—that aesthetic knowledge is ultimately the activity
of the intellect—we are left with the following description of aesthetic visio for Thomas: an act of knowing that is (1) primarily performed by the intellect, in which (2) an individual being that is really distinct from the knower (3) is made directly present to the knower, in a way that is at once (4) highly immaterial, (5) changeless, (6) perfect, and (7) free of effort or impediment.

These characteristics of aesthetic perception for Thomas have led certain Thomists, such as Maritain, Thomas Gilby, and Charles Hart, to conclude that the vision of beauty is a special kind of knowing that differs greatly from how human beings normally know reality, and is thus utterly unique to the experience of beauty—namely, an intellectual but non-conceptual intuition of an individual being. They usually reason to this view in the following way: only the intellect can recognize beings as beautiful; yet, according to Thomas, the intellect in its ordinary mode of operation does not know concrete individuals directly, as is required for aesthetic visio, but only through the mediation of the concepts it has of the universals shared in by the individuals; hence, these Thomists conclude that visio is a special kind of knowing that transcends the normal limitations of the human intellect, though they disagree on how it does so.

The fact that some Thomists think that beauty is known in a manner unique to it has great significance for our inquiry since a relation to a special kind of knowledge might qualify as an addition to being that is distinct from the relation to the cognitive power added by truth, in which case beauty is a distinct transcendental. What is more, one hypothesis as to the nature of this supposedly unique knowledge of the beautiful is that it is an instance of connatural knowledge, i.e. knowledge by means of an inclination or affective response. If this theory is correct, then beauty’s relation to this knowledge could be the “certain relation (quendam ordinem)” that Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 tells us “beauty adds to the good,”26 since if the knowledge of

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26 Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam . . .”
being *as beautiful* depends on our having already responded to being *as good*, i.e. by desiring it, then beauty clearly presupposes and includes goodness in meaning.

Before we begin our inquiry into the nature of *visio*, however, it is important to note that Thomas’s writings give no indication that beauty is known in a way that departs from the human intellect’s usual way of knowing reality. If anything, Thomas implies that the knowledge of beauty is simply the normal activity of our cognitive powers, but exercised to a high degree of perfection—an impression given especially by his occasional quoting of Aristotle’s statement that “the most perfect activity of the sense of sight is of sight that is well-disposed toward the most beautiful of the objects falling within its power of seeing.”

Hence, one cannot conclude that the knowledge of beauty is distinct from ordinary human cognition for Thomas until one has examined his account of the latter in order to see whether any part of it can fulfill the conditions for aesthetic *visio*. We must therefore begin with Thomas’s general theory of knowledge.

A. Thomas’s Theory of Knowledge

The example of numerous scholars shows that one is apt to misunderstand Thomas’s account of how human beings know the world if one does not understand what knowledge is for Thomas. Hence, before we examine his description of the process by which human beings come to know reality, we must first discuss the nature of knowledge for Thomas.

1. The Nature of Knowing for Thomas

As multiple studies have noted, Thomas holds an identity theory of cognition, in which

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the knower is the known in the act of knowing. In fact, this identity is the ultimate ground for the positive relational transcedentals in Thomas’s thought. It is precisely because all things are knowable either by sense or by intellect, and because “sense in act, and knowledge or intellect in act, are also the things actually known or sensed,” that Thomas concludes with Aristotle that the soul is “in a certain way,” i.e. potentially, “all things”—which as we saw is what allows every being to have relations of conformity to the soul.

This identity of knower and known is not just any identity, however, but an utterly unique one, which Thomas explains in his commentary on Aristotle’s On the Soul 2.12. There Aristotle famously writes that sensation is the receiving of forms “without the matter,” which has been sometimes understood to mean that in seeing red the eye becomes red but without any red matter being transferred from the red thing to the eye. If that were the case, then, as Thomas notes, “it would seem not to be unique to the sense that it receives form without matter” since anything that is changed receives the form of what changes it but not its matter; for example, air that is heated by a fire does not receive bits of the fire itself, or even the selfsame heat existing in the fire, but rather its own accident of heat like the one in the fire. What then can Aristotle mean?

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29 In De anima III, 7. Leonine 45/1.235:28-36. “[N]am sensus in actu et scientia uel intellectus in actu sunt scibilia et sensibilia etiam in actu, set potencia anime sensitiua et id quod scire potest, id est potencia intellectiva, non est ipsum sensibile uel scibile, sed est in potencia ad ipsa, sensitiuum quidem ad sensibile, quod autem scire potest ad scibile. Relinquitur igitur quod anima quodammodo sit omnia.”


32 In De anima II, 24. Leonine 45/1.168-69:13-26. “[H]oc oportet accipere universaliter et communiter omni sensui inesse quod sensus est susceptivus specierum sine materia, sicut cera recipit signum anuli sine ferro et auro. Sed uidetur hoc esse commune omni patienti: omne enim paciens recipit aliqub ab agente secundum quod est agens; agens autem agit per suam formam et non per suam materiam; omne igitur paciens recipit formam sine
According to Thomas, “while it is the case for every patient that it receives a form from an agent,” there are different ways to receive the form, which “sometimes has the same mode of existence in the patient as in the agent,” as when air, after being heated by the fire, becomes hot in the same way as the fire—i.e. having a higher temperature, being able to melt things, etc. In this case, “the form is not received without the matter” since, even though “numerically one and the same matter that was in the agent does not come to be in the patient,” the latter “becomes, in a way, the same” as the agent, “insofar as it acquires a material disposition to the form like that which was in the agent”—that is, it becomes what the agent already is in the same way (though not always to the same degree) as the agent.\(^{33}\) “Sometimes, however, the patient receives the form in a mode of existence other than is in the agent,” in which case “the form is received in the patient ‘without matter’” because the recipient is “assimilated to the agent according to form and not according to matter.” It is in this way “that a sense receives form without matter” since, when seeing, the eye does not receive the color of the thing as \textit{being} that color—i.e. the eye does not literally become red when looking at a red thing—but only as \textit{seeing} that color. Hence, the sensible form has a different kind of existence in the sense than in the object since “in the latter it has a physical existence but in the sense it has an intentional or spiritual existence.”\(^{34}\) This

\[^{33}\textit{In De anima} \text{II, 24. Leonine 45/1.169:27-45. “Dicendum est igitur quod, licet hoc sit commune omni pacienti quod recipiat formam ab agente, differencia tamen est in modo recipiendi. Nam forma que in paciente recipitur ab agente, quandoque quidem habet eundem modum essendi in paciente quem habet in agente ( . . . [U]nde si eodem modo disponatur paciens sicut agens, eodem modo recipitur forma in paciente sicut erat in agente), et tunc non recipitur forma sine materia, quia, licet illa et eadem materia numero que est agentis non fiat patientis, fit tamen quodam modo eadem in quantum similem dispositionem materialem ad formam acquirit ei que erat in agente; et hoc modo aer patitur ab igne, et quicquid patitur passione naturali.”}\]

\[^{34}\textit{In De anima} \text{II, 24. Leonine 45/1.169:45-56. “Quandoque uero forma recipitur in paciente secundum alium modum essendi quam sit in agente, quia dispositio materialis pacientis ad recipiendum non est similis dispositioni materiali que erat in agente, et ideo forma recipitur in paciente sine materia in quantum paciones assimilatur agentis secundum formam et non secundum materiam; et per hunc modum sensus recipit formam sine materia, quia alterius modi esse habet forma in sensu et in re sensibili: nam in re sensibili habet esse naturale, in sensu autem habet esse intentionale siue spirituale . . .”}\]
immaterial possession of forms is even more perfectly immaterial in intellectual knowledge since
“in the intellect things exist both without matter, and without individuating material conditions,
and also apart from any bodily organ.”

It is very easy to misunderstand the kind of explanation that Aquinas is giving of
knowledge in this text. For example, at the end of her chapter on “the mechanisms of cognition”
in her book on Aquinas, Eleonore Stump wonders “why the form of the thing cognized received
in the cognizer with spiritual reception should produce cognition,” and concludes “I do not think
Aquinas’s account has any good answer to this question.” As shown by her word “produces,”
Stump understands “receiving forms immaterially” as the agent explanation of knowledge for
Thomas, i.e. as giving its efficient cause. If Thomas were indeed giving this kind of explanation,
then Stump would be right not to be satisfied since it would not only be unclear why receiving
forms immaterially causes knowledge, but even what it means to receive forms this way. After
all, if the form of the thing known does not exist in the knower as either its substance or one of
its accidents, as Thomas makes clear elsewhere, how can this form cause knowledge in the
mind? Is this form just “floating” near the knower in some kind of “ghostly” way? Interpreting
“the immaterial reception of forms” as an efficient cause of knowledge for Thomas thus leaves
one thinking that his explanation of knowledge is neither convincing nor intelligible. In fact,
however, “having forms immaterially” is not the agent explanation of knowledge for Thomas,
but its formal explanation or definition, as Thomas makes clear when he says in his commentary

35 In De anima II, 5. Leonine 45/1.88:73-76. “[I]n intellectu enim res habent esse et sine materia et sine
condicionibus materie indiuiduantibus et etiam absque organo corporali . . .”


37 De veritate 8.11 ad 4. “It is not necessary that the form which is the principle of the being of the thing is
the principle of knowing the thing according to its essence, but only according to its likeness. For the form by which
a stone exists is not in the soul, but its likeness is.” Leonine 22/2.257:272-77. “[N]on oportet formam quae est
principium essendi rem, esse principium cognoscendi rem secundum essentiam suam, sed solum secundum suam
similitudinem: forma enim qua lapis est, non est in anima, sed similitudo eius.”
on the Liber de Causis that “having something in oneself formally and not materially” is that “in which the meaning of knowledge consists.”

38 Hence, receiving forms immaterially does not cause knowledge for Thomas—it is knowledge for him.

Some might see this clarification as only proving that Thomas’s account merely assumes the immateriality of knowing. What it actually shows, however, is that the immateriality by which Thomas defines knowledge is something that he considers to be (and which in fact is) evident in the very experience of knowing, as confirmed by the beginning of his discussion of whether God has knowledge in Summa Theologiae I, 14.1:

Knowing beings are distinguished from non-knowing beings in that non-knowing beings have only their own form; but a knowing being is naturally adapted to have also the form of another thing . . .

39 Here Aquinas does not merely say that cognitive beings can have “another form” (alteram formam), but rather that they can have “the form of another thing” (formam rei alterius), as John of St. Thomas notes in his Cursus Theologicus. The former description can apply to non-knowing beings but not the latter for the reason that, as John Peifer observes, although “non-cognitive beings . . . are constantly receiving additional accidental forms,” nevertheless “they always receive these accessory forms as their own, not as the forms of other beings.”

40 To use the example already given, air heated by a fire does not receive the fire’s hotness but its own hotness since the heat existing in the air is an accident inhering in and therefore belonging to the air, not the fire. One who sees red, on the other hand, has indeed received redness, but as existing in and thus belonging to something else since he experiences it as being “out there” in

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38 In De Causis 18. Saffrey 101. “[H]abere aliquid in se formaliter et non materialiter, in quo consistit ratio cognitionis, est nobilissimus modus habendi vel continendi aliquid . . .”

39 Leonine 4.166. “[C]ognoscentia a non cognoscentibus in hoc distinguuntur, quia non cognoscentia nihil habent nisi formam suam tantum; sed cognoscentem naturam est habere formam etiam rei alterius . . .”

40 John of St. Thomas, Cursus Theologicus (Paris: Vivès, 1883), 420. Disp. 16, art. 1, n. 3-4.

some surface; likewise, one who imagines red imagines it as being in something in front of him rather than in himself, and one who understands redness understands it as being in all red things, not in his mind. Now, in all of these cases, what the knower has received is a certain kind of being, i.e. a form, but he receives it as existing in another being as its matter, and thus not in his own being as its matter; in other words, he receives the form immaterially.\(^{42}\) Hence, when Thomas defines knowing as the immaterial possession of a thing, he is simply expressing in more ontological terms the phenomenological definition that he gives in *Summa Theologiae* I, 14.1: knowing is having the form of another being, or, as John of St. Thomas paraphrases it, to know is “to receive that which belongs to another as belonging to that other.”\(^{43}\)

Although “having forms immaterially” is a definition of knowledge for Thomas and not an agent explanation as Stump takes it to be, it is an understandable mistake since there is such an explanation in Thomas’s theory of knowledge. Thomas makes clear in several places, and especially *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 84, that knowing requires an augmentation in the being of the knower—except in the case of God, due to the fact that His Essence is already “inclusive of all things, just as effects pre-exist virtually in their cause.”\(^{44}\) The most obvious reason that knowing

\(^{42}\) One might object that there is a case of knowing in which one knows something that does belong to oneself and therefore is present materially in oneself: self-knowledge. Though subtle, this problem is merely apparent since when one learns something about oneself—e.g. that one has an innate aptitude for a sport, after playing it for the first time—what before existed only materially or naturally in oneself, i.e. as part of one’s being, now also exists immaterially or intentionally in oneself, i.e. as part of one’s consciousness. It is for this reason that we call self-knowledge “reflexive” since it requires “turning back upon” ourselves so that what is present in us can also become present to us. Hence, self-knowledge only confirms that knowledge is possessing something as belonging to another or immaterially since in self-knowledge one possesses oneself as if other than oneself, i.e. in the same way that one possesses things having a separate existence outside of oneself.

\(^{43}\) John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus* (Turin: Marietti, 1820), 104. Part IV, Question 4, Article 1. “Cognoscientia autem in hoc elegantur super non cognoscentia, quia id, quod est alterius ut alterius, seu prout manet distinctum in altero, possunt in se recipere . . .”

\(^{44}\) *Summa Theologiae* I, 84.2. Leonine 5.316. “Ex his ergo patet quod, si aliquis intellectus est qui per essentiam suam cognoscit omnia, oportet quod essentia eius habeat in se immaterialiter omnia; sicut antiqui posuerunt essentiam animae actu componi ex principiis omnium materialium, ut cognosceret omnia. Hoc autem est proprium Dei, ut sua essentia sit immaterialiter comprehensiva omnium, prout effectus virtute praeexistent in causa. Solus igitur Deus per essentiam suam omnia intelligit; non autem anima humana, neque etiam Angelus.”
requires a change in a created knower’s being, and consequently an efficient cause, is that “man sometimes is only a potential knower, both as to sense and as to intellect,” and so it must be the case that “he is reduced from such potentiality to act by the action of sensible objects on his senses” in order to actually sense and “by instruction or discovery” in order for him to actually understand. A subtler reason why non-divine knowers must receive being beyond their own substance in order to know is that “every operation is specified by the form which is its principle, just as heating is specified by heat,” and so, for a knower to actually know, its cognitive power must have an additional form determining it to know this thing rather than that.

It is from these premises that Thomas concludes to the existence of a unique kind of form, called the species, that is the “formal principle” of knowledge, and which both actualizes the knower’s capacity to know and determines it to know a particular thing. To perform the first of these tasks, the species must exist in the cognitive power as its form, but to perform the second it must also somehow be the very form of the thing known, since knowledge is an action of which the thing known is the object, and a thing acts in virtue of its form. As Thomas explains in *Summa Theologiae* I, 85.2, just as “an act tending to an external thing” is always

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45 *Summa Theologiae* I, 84.3. Leonine 5.318. “Videmus autem quod homo est quandoque cognoscens in potentia tan tum, tam secundum sensum quam secundum intellectum. Et de tali potenti a in actum reductur, ut sentiat quidem, per actiones sensibilium in sensum; ut intelligat autem, per disciplinam aut inventionem.”

46 *Summa Theologiae* I, 14.5 ad 3. Leonine 4.173. “[I]psum intelligere non specificatur per id quod in alio intelligitur, sed per principale intellectum, in quo alia intelliguntur. Intantum enim ipsum intelligere specificatur per objectum suum, inquantum forma intelligibilis est principium intellectualis operationis: nam omnis operatio specificatur per formam quae est principium operationis, sicut calefactio per calorem. Unde per illam formam intelligibilem specificatur intellectualis operatio, quae facit intellectum in actu . . .”

47 I will be consistently be using the term species in reference solely to what has sometimes been called the “impressed species” in order to distinguish it from the “expressed” species or concept for the reason that Thomas himself usually refers to the former as the species, and to the latter as the verbum or word.


caused by a form that “is the likeness (similitudo) of the object of the action”—e.g. a stove heats a pot in virtue of its own heat, which is a “likeness” of the heat that it causes in the pot since both are instances of heat—so “an action remaining in the agent,” such as knowing, “proceeds” from a form that “is the likeness (similitudo) of the object” of the immanent action. Hence, what causes knowledge is “an assimilation of the knower and the known,” and since “similarity between two things is based on agreement in form,” the principle of knowing—the species—must “in some sense” be the form of the thing known.

Now, the species cannot simply be the same kind of form as the form of the known thing—e.g. the species of redness is not just another instance of redness. If it were, then, since the species is one of the knower’s accidents, the knower would receive the form of the thing known materially rather than immaterially, and so would not be knowing. Hence, Thomas says that the species agrees with the form of the thing known not “according to natural existence” but rather “according to representation” since it does not make the knower to have the same being as the thing known, but only makes that being intentionally present to the knower—e.g. a red

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50 Leonine 5.334. “Cum enim sit duplex actio, sicut dicitur IX Metaphys., una quae manet in agente, ut videre et intelligere, altera quae transit in rem exteriorem, ut calefacere et secare; utraque fit secundum aliquam formam. Et sicut forma secundum quam provenit actio tendens in rem exteriorem, est similitudo obiecti actionis, ut calor calefacientis est similitudo calefacti; similiter forma secundum quam provenit actio manens in agente, est similitudo obiecti. Unde similitudo rei visibilis est secundum quam visus videt; et similitudo rei intellectae, quae est species intelligibilis, est forma secundum quam intellectus intelligit.”

51 De veritate 8.8. Leonine 22/2.246:102-5. “[O]mnis cognitio est per assimilationem; similitudo autem inter aliquam rei existens esse accidentale habet: ratione cuius scientia nostra inter accidentia computatur.”

52 Quodliber VIII, 2.2. Leonine 25/1.59:105-9. “[U]nde species intelligibilis est similitudo ipsius essencie rei et est quodam modo ipsa quidditas et natura rei secundum esse intelligibile, non secundum esse naturale . . .”

53 Contra Gentiles 1, 46. Marietti 2.59. “Species intelligibilis in intellectu praeter essentiam eis existens esse accidentale habet: ratione cuius scientia nostra inter accidentia computatur.”

54 De veritate 8.1. Leonine 22/2.217-18:166-72. “[I]n omni enim cognitione quae est per similitudinem modus cognitionis est secundum convenientiam similitudinis ad id cuius est similitudo; et dico convenientiam secundum repraesentationem, sicut species in anima convenit cum re quae est extra animam, non secundum esse naturale.” Cf. De veritate 2.3 ad 9 and 2.13 ad 1 [Leonine 22/1.53:430-448 and 22/1.89:195-99].
object’s redness makes it be red, but the species of redness in the eye only makes it see red. 55

What emerges from this reasoning is that the species has a unique “two-fold character” that has been aptly noted to be “similar to the esse in and esse ad of relations” 56: in addition to the relation every form has to “that which is formed” by it, which in this case is the knower, the species has a relation that “is not common to all forms,” namely to a known object “outside” the knower, on the basis of which it is called a “likeness” (similitudo) instead of just a form. 57 In other words, just as a relation is in a subject as its accident but toward another thing according to its essence as a relation, 58 so a species is in the knower as its form but also of the known object because the species is essentially a likeness or representation of the form of the thing known. It is precisely due to this two-fold character that the species can perform its two-fold task of both actualizing and determining the act of knowledge: “according to the existence which it has in the knower,” the species “makes the knower actually know,” while “according to the relation that it has to the thing of which it is a likeness (similitudo),” it “determines the act of knowing to some definite knowable object.” 59 It is thus clear why Thomas uses the word species as his technical term for this principle of knowing since among its meanings are both “form” and “look, glance,

55 As Thomas says in In De anima II, 24.553 (cited above in note 34 on p. 159), the form of the thing known has two different modes of existence in the knower and the thing known: it has “physical existence” (esse naturale) in the thing known, but has a merely “intentional or spiritual existence” (esse intentionale et spirituale) in the knower.

56 Peifer, The Concept, 83.

57 De veritate 3.3. Leonine 22/1.108:148-53. “Invenimus autem in quibusdam formis duplicem respectum, unum ad id quod secundum eas formatur, sicut scientia respicit scientem, alium ad id quod est extra, sicut scientia respicit scibile; hic tamen respectus non est omni formae communis sicut primus; hoc igitur nomen forma importat solum primum respectum. . . . Sed similitudo et ratio respectum etiam secundum habent . . .”

58 De Potentia 7.9 ad 7. Marietti 2.208. “[I]psa relatio quae nihil est aliiu quam ordo unius creaturae ad aliciam, alicui habet in quantum est accidens et alicui in quantum est relatio vel ordo. In quantum enim accidens est, habet quod sit in subjeceto, non autem in quantum est relatio vel ordo; sed solum quod ad alicui sit quasi in alicui transiens, et quodammodo rei relatae assistens.”

gaze”⁶⁰, consequently, this term aptly expresses the double nature of the species as not only the form activating the “eye” of the knower but also in a certain sense the form of the thing known, i.e. as a “likeness” of that form existing in the mind of the knower.

Thomas’s description of the species as a similitude or representation has led some scholars to conclude that he is not, as is usually thought, a “direct realist,” i.e. one who holds that we know things in reality directly, but rather a “representationalist,” i.e. one who thinks we only know mental representations of reality directly and the things themselves by means of them⁶¹—despite Thomas’s insistence that what we primarily know are things in reality, and the species is only “that in virtue of which” we know, not “that which” we know.⁶² Others, while recognizing Thomas’s commitment to direct realism, express concern about his appeal to likenesses in his theory of knowing; for example, Robert Sokolowski writes that “Aquinas is saying all the right things” when “he insists that we directly know the thing and not its likenesses in us,” but “the constant use of the term similitudes . . . does seem to ‘substantialize’” these mental beings, to the degree that “Descartes and Locke seem just around the corner.”⁶³ While Thomas’s terminology can indeed be confusing if one is not already familiar with how he uses it, it does not seem fair to describe his language as obscuring the fact that we know things rather than their likenesses since the entire reason that he says we have only a “likeness” of the thing known within our minds is

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⁶² Summa Theologiae I, 85.2. Leonine 5.334. “Et ideo dicendum est quod species intelligibilis se habet ad intellectum ut quo intelligit intellectus. . . . Sed id quod intelligitur primo, est res cuius species intelligibilis est similitudo.” Cf. Contra Gentiles II, 75 [Marietti 2.218-19] and De anima 2 ad 5 [Leonine 24/1.19-20:361-92]. Thomas does speak of the species as an object of knowing in earlier texts such as In Sent. I, 35.1.2; however, as Lawrence Dewan has shown, these texts can be attributed to a temporary “confusion” of the concept and the intelligible species at the start of Thomas’s career, after which he “sharply distinguishes” between them. “St. Thomas and Pre-Conceptual Intellection,” Maritain Studies 11 (1995): 222 and passim.

⁶³ Phenomenology of the Human Person (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 297-98.
precisely to emphasize that the actual thing known is something that exists outside our minds.⁶⁴

Ultimately, what leads authors to conclude Thomas is a representationalist is a mistake that is the opposite of the one made by Stump: whereas she takes what is actually the knowing itself for Thomas (the immaterial reception of the known thing’s form) to be the efficient cause of the knowing for him, they are taking what is actually the cause of the knowing for Thomas (the physical reception of the known thing’s species) to be the knowing itself for him. As we saw, Thomas thinks that, in order for a knower to actually know a thing, i.e. receive the known thing’s form immaterially, it must be assimilated to the known by the known thing’s form, but by definition this assimilation cannot be due to that form actually existing in the knower since then he would receive its form materially rather than immaterially; consequently, Thomas must either conclude that knowing is impossible, or else posit a unique kind of form existing in the knower that, while differing in existence from the form of the thing known, nonetheless “stands for” or “represents” it, and can thus actualize the knower on the known thing’s behalf. Hence, Thomas’s doctrine that we know things in virtue of species that are likenesses of the known things’ forms is for him the only possible explanation for the fact that the things themselves are immediately present to us, and therefore does not undermine his direct realism, but rather sustains it.

Nonetheless, if one says, as Panaccio does, that a philosopher’s theory of knowledge is “representationalist” so long as it “attributes a crucial and indispensable role to some sort of mental representation,”⁶⁵ then Thomas’s theory is indeed representationalist, but not in the modern sense that is opposed to direct realism. In that kind of representationalism, which one

⁶⁴ In De veritate 2.3 ad 1, for example, Thomas says that it is not the knowng thing itself but rather its likeness that is the perfection of the intellect since, while the likeness is an accident of the knower’s mind, “that thing which is known . . . is outside the one understanding.” Leonine 22/1.51:262-68. “[I]ntellectum non est perfectio intelligentis secundum illam rem quae cognoscitur, res enim illa est extra intelligentem, sed secundum rei similitudinem qua cognoscitur quia perfectio est in perfecto, lapis autem non est in anima, sed similitudo lapidis.” Emphasis mine.

might call “epistemological representationalism,” the mental being represents or “makes present”
the thing in reality because, in being known itself, it also makes the thing in reality known. By
contrast, in Thomas’s theory the *species* makes the thing in reality known, not in *being known by*
the knower—since the *species* is only known when the intellect reflects on its own activity—
but by *being in* the knower, and thereby actualizing and determining the knower. One could
therefore call Thomas’s theory “ontological representationalism” since the representations it
posits are modifications of the knower’s being, rather than objects of his knowledge.

Our discussion of the nature of knowledge for Thomas has thus yielded an important
principle within his theory that we must keep in mind as we begin to examine his account of the
process of knowing: in general, and with a single exception that is clearly indicated by Thomas
as such, the various mental forms making up Thomas’s account of the process of cognition are
not *that which* the mind knows, but rather *that in virtue of which* the mind knows some object in
reality. In other words, what the mind receives immaterially (the form of some thing in reality) is
not what it receives physically (the thing’s *species*), or again, what is *present to* the mind (the
form of some thing in reality) is not what is *present in* the mind (the thing’s *species*).

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66 *Summa Theologiae* I, 85.2. Leonine 5.334. “Sed quia intellectus supra seipsum reflectitetur, secundum
eandem reflexionem intelligit et suum intelligere, et speciem qua intelligit.”

67 Likewise, one could call Thomas an “epistemological realist” or “presentationalist” since for him things
in reality are not known because a likeness of them is known, but are rather directly present to the knower.

68 This distinction also helps to explain why Thomas can define knowledge as “the immaterial possession
of forms” when he holds that the external medium of sensation receives the sense quality “spiritually” or
“intentionally” instead of “naturally,” but nevertheless does not know the sense quality. For Thomas, the medium
communicates sensible qualities to the sense organ, not by literally taking on the sensible quality (e.g. the air
through which we see a red object does not itself become red), but by receiving an intention or *species* of the
redness, which then causes the *species* in the sense organ that actualizes the sense power to know. Despite the fact
that an intention of the sense quality exists in both the medium and the organ, only the one in the organ causes
knowledge because there is no sense power in the medium for the *species* to actualize, as Thomas says in *In De
anima* II, 24.563. Leonine 45/1.171:190-95. “[A]er autem non sic patitur ut sensiat, quia non habet potenciam
sensituam, set sic patitur ut sit sensibilis, in quantum scilicet est medium in sensu.” The medium thus receives a
form immaterially in the sense that a *species* representing the sensible form (rather than the form itself) comes to
exist in it, but *not* in the sense that it possesses this sensible form as belonging to another being since the medium
does not come to perceive the sensible form actually existing in the sense object, as the sense organ does. Hence,
be seen, this principle has important implications for the nature of aesthetic visio.

2. The Process of Human Knowing for Thomas

Thomas certainly holds the Scholastic axiom that “nothing is in the intellect that is not first in the senses,” but for him this principle does not mean that the intellect can only know as much as or less of reality than do the senses. Rather, as Thomas explains in De veritate 2.3 ad 19, the reason that “whatever is in our intellect must have been previously in the senses” is that “a thing is led by gradual steps from its material conditions to the immateriality of the intellect, namely through the mediating immateriality of the sense”⁶⁹; in other words, material creatures cannot directly affect the human intellect due to its utter immateriality, and so can only cause knowledge in it by first affecting the senses, which are partly material and partly immaterial.

Now, for Thomas, knowledge is perfect to the degree that it is immaterial,⁷⁰ which follows from his position that knowledge is the immaterial possession of reality. Consequently, while each step in the process of human knowing depends on the preceding ones for its contact with reality, it nevertheless produces a knowledge that not only extends to more things but also penetrates those things more deeply than that which comes earlier.

This progression of human knowing from greater immediacy to greater depth and breadth

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⁶⁹ De veritate 2.3 ad 19. Leonine 22/1.55:531-35. “[G]radatim enim res a sua materialitate ad immaterialitatem intellectus deductur, scilicet mediante immaterialitate sensus; et ideo oportet ut quod est in intellectu nostro prius in sensu fuerit . . .” As Therese Cory observes, this is the only text where Thomas explains the “exact nature of this dependency” of the intellect on the senses. Therese Scarpelli Cory, “Thomas Aquinas and the Problem of Human Self-Knowledge” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2009), 3, note 2.

⁷⁰ Summa Theologiae I, 14.1. Leonine 4.166. “Patet igitur quod immaterialitas aliauisi rei est ratio quod sit cognoscitiva; et secundum modum immaterialitatis est modus cognitionis. Unde in II de Anima dicitur quod plantae non cognoscunt, propter suam materialitatem. Sensus autem cognoscitivus est, quia receptivus est specierum sine materia: et intellectus adhuc magis cognoscitivus, quia magis separat us est a materia et immixtus, ut dicitur in III de Anima. Unde, cum Deus sit in summo immaterialitatis . . . sequitur quod ipse sit in summo cognitionis.”
is apparent even in the kind of knowing that we share with animals, i.e. sense awareness, which makes up a large portion of human knowing. The process begins with the external senses, which are not only directly affected by their objects, but even distinguished according to how material or immaterial this “immutation” or change by the sense object is; yet, because each sense “only knows the form of the sensible by which it is immuted,” it can only distinguish things falling under its proper object (e.g. sight can only distinguish colors, and hearing can only distinguish sounds). Thus, since “what discerns between two things must know both,” our ability to judge the objects of two different senses (e.g. when we judge whether what we hear is the same thing as what we see) must be due to a single power called the “common sense” that receives “all apprehensions of the senses,” and which as a result is also the power by which a person “sees that he sees.” While the common sense thus ensures the unity of our consciousness of things present, an animal’s ability to apprehend a thing when absent, without which it would not seek what it currently lacks for its survival, depends on its having the ability to “retain and preserve” the sensible forms it receives. This activity must be attributed to a power other than the common sense, namely the “imagination,” since “the sensitive power is the act of a bodily organ” and “to receive and retain are, in bodily things, reduced to diverse principles”—for example, “moist things are apt to receive, but retain with difficulty, while it is the reverse with dry things.”

71 Summa Theologiae I, 78.4 ad 2. Leonine 5.256. “[S]ensus proprius iudicat de sensibili proprio, discernendo ipsum ab alius quae cadunt sub eodem sensu, sicut discernendo album a nigro vel a viridi. Sed discernere album a dulci non potest neque visus neque gustus: quia oportet quod qui inter aliquia discernit, utrumque cognoscat. Unde oportet ad sensum communem pertinere discretionis iudicium, ad quem referantur, sicut ad communem terminum, omnes apprehensiones sensuum; a quo etiam percipientur intentiones sensuum, sicut cum aliquid videt se videre. Hoc enim non potest fieri per sensum proprium, qui non cognoscit nisi formam sensibilis a quo immutatur . . .” As Michael Stock notes, the common sense is what gives man “his first awareness of his own sensitive activity, uniting and binding the various activities of the senses by consciousness in the one sentient subject.” Michael Stock, “Sense Consciousness According to St. Thomas,” The Thomist 21 (1958): 419.

72 Summa Theologiae I, 78.4. Leonine 5.255-56. “[A]d vitam animalis perfecti requiritur quod non solum apprehendat rem apud praesentiam sensibilis, sed etiam apud eius absentiam. Aliquum, cum animalis motus et actio sequantur apprehensionem, non moveretur animal ad inquirendum aliquid absens . . . . Oportet ergo quod animal per animam sensitivam non solum recipiat species sensibilium, cum praesentialiter immutatur ab eis; sed etiam eas

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The reception and retention of sensible forms, however, does not suffice for an animal’s survival since it “needs to seek or avoid certain things” not just as pleasant or painful to the senses but as harmful or useful to the whole animal, such as when “the sheep runs away when it sees a wolf, not on account of its color or shape, but as a natural enemy.” Animals therefore need a “distinct power,” called the “estimative,” by which they “perceive intentions such that the exterior sense does not perceive,” such as the individual substances underlying sensible forms and their harmfulness or utility to the animal. Furthermore, animals need a power that retains these “intentions that are not received through the senses,” which is shown to be the memory not only from the fact that animals can remember things as harmful or beneficial, but also because memory’s essential object, the past, is clearly an intention not perceived by the external senses, which only know the present. Thus, even before human knowing rises above what it shares with animals, one finds among the internal senses a cognitive power, namely the estimative, that perceives things that are unknown to lower powers (i.e. the external senses), but whose objects are still “made present” to it by these lower powers.

At this point in their accounts of human knowing, many scholars jump directly from the imagination to the intellect. They do so because the former, by retaining and rearranging sense

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retineat et conservet. Recipere autem et retinere reducuntur in corporalibus ad diversa principia: nam humida bene recipiunt, et male retinent; e contrario autem est de siccis. Unde, cum potentia sensitiva sit actus organi corporalis, oportet esse aliam potentiam quae recipiat species sensibilium, et quae conservet. . . . Ad harum autem formarum retentionem aut conservationem ordinatur phantasia, sive imaginatio, quae idem sunt: est enim phantasia sive imaginatio quasi thesaurus quidam formarum per sensum acceptarum.”

73 Ibid. “Sed necessarium est animali ut quaerat aliqua vel fugiat, non solum quia sunt convenientia vel non convenientia ad sentiendum, sed etiam propter aliquas alias commoditates et utilitates, sive nocentia: sicut ovis videns lupum venientem fugit, non propter indecentiam coloris vel figure, sed quasi inimicum naturae; et similibus avis colligit palem, non quia delectet sensum, sed quia est utilis ad nidificandum. Necessarium est ergo animali quod percipiat huismodi intentiones, quas non percipit sensus exterior. . . . Ad apprehendendum autem intentiones quae per sensum non accipiuntur, ordinatur vis aestimativa.”

74 Ibid. Leonine 5.256. “Ad conservandum autem eas, vis memorativa. . . . Cuius signum est, quod principium memorandi fit in animalibus ex aliqua huismodi intentione, puta quod est nocivum vel conveniens. Et ipsa ratio praeteriti, quam attendit memoria, inter huismodi intentiones computatur.”

75 Ibid., ad 4. Leonine 5.256. “[L]icet intellectus operatio oriatur a sensu, tamen in re apprehensa per sensum intellectus multa cognoscit quae sensus percipere non potest. Et similibus aestimativa, licet inferiori modo.”
forms, produces the “phantasm”\textsuperscript{76}—i.e. the form in virtue of which a person “phantasizes” or imagines a thing\textsuperscript{77}—which the intellect needs for its activity since, if we could not make things present to our minds by imagining them, then our intellects would only be able to consider them when present to the external senses, and would thus be severely limited in what it could know.\textsuperscript{78}

While the imagination is undoubtedly necessary for intellectual knowledge, to make it the sole contributor to that activity ignores Thomas’s statements in the \textit{Contra Gentiles} that the phantasm is “disposed” for the intellect’s acting upon it by the “cogitative power,”\textsuperscript{79} which is what Thomas calls the estimative power as existing in human beings because it forms intentions by means of a “certain comparison” (\textit{quandam collationem}).\textsuperscript{80} What has been left out by scholars is thus an indispensable part not only of Thomas’s theory of knowledge but also of his philosophy of human nature since Thomas’s attributing the summit of animal consciousness to human beings (though in a “more perfect” way, as will be seen) shows how committed he is to saying that

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  \item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., corpus. Ibid. “Avicenna vero ponit quintam potentiam, medium inter aestimativam et imaginativam, quae componit et dividit formas imaginatas; ut patet cum ex forma imaginata auri et forma imaginata montis componimus unam formam montis aurei, quem nunquam vidimus. Sed ista operatio non apparet in aliis animalibus ab homine, in quo ad hoc sufficit virtus imaginativa.”
  \item \textsuperscript{77} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 84.7 ad 2. Leonine 5.325. “[E]tiam ipsum phantasma est similitudo rei particularis: unde non indiget imaginatio aliqua alia similitudine particularis . . .” Although Thomas’s language sometimes implies that the phantasm is the imagined object itself, Thomas says in \textit{In De sensu} 1 that the imaginative and estimative powers “are not distinguished from sense from the point of view of the thing known, since they are of present things, or of things as if present”; furthermore, in \textit{In De anima} III, 4 Thomas describes the act of imagining as forming something “as if appearing before our eyes.” These texts make clear that the object of imagination is the same as the object of the external senses, i.e. a sensible thing existing outside our soul rather than a sense form existing within it, and thus confirms that, like the external sense forms from which it is composed, the phantasm is solely that by which the knower imagines, not that which he imagines. \textit{In De sensu} 1. Leonine 45/2.7:186-90. “Non facit autem de aliis mentionem, scilicet de imaginacione et estimatione, quia hec non distinguuntur a sensu ex parte rei cognitae (sunt enim presentia vel quasi presentium). . . .” \textit{In De anima} III, 4. Leonine 45/1.191:252-55. “. . . passio fantasia est in nobis cum volumus, quia in potestate nostra est formare aliquod quasi apparens ante oculos nostros . . .”
  \item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{In De anima} II, 13. Leonine 45/1.236:79-84. “Et propter hoc sine sensu non potest aliquid homo addiscere quasi de nouo acquirere scientiam neque intelligere quasi uten scientia habita, set op ortet, cum aliquis speculatur in actu, quod simul formet sibi aliquod phantasma . . .”
  \item \textsuperscript{79} \textit{Contra Gentiles} II, 76. Marietti 2.223. “Potest autem dici quod intellectus agens semper agit quantum in se est, sed non semper phantasmatas fiunt intelligibilia actu, sed solum quando sunt ad hoc disposita. Disponuntur autem ad hoc per actum cogitativa virtutis, cuius usus est in nostras potestate.” Cf. \textit{Contra Gentiles} II, 73 [Marietti 2.210].
  \item \textsuperscript{80} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 78.4. Leonine 5.256. “Et ideo quae in aliis animalibus dicitur aestimativa naturalis, in homine dicitur cogitativa, quae per collationem quandam huiusmodi intentiones advenit”
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human beings truly are rational animals, instead of spirits making use of bodies.

Although Thomas says that man’s cogitative perceives individual intentions in a higher way than an animal’s estimative does—the latter “only by some natural instinct,” the former “by a certain comparison (collationem) as well”81—he makes clear that this difference is mainly due to the cogitative’s “proximity” to the intellect, which “overflows” into it as well as the memory, and so man’s cogitative and reminiscent powers are “the same” as the estimative and memory, yet “more perfect than in other animals.”82 One can thus distinguish what the cogitative can do with and without the intellect’s help. By itself, the cogitative, like the estimative, perceives and recognizes individuals, but only as the objects of possible actions or passions.83 This kind of knowing is what enables human beings to react “without thinking,” i.e. without the command of the intellect, as when they are gripped by an emotion that they know is irrational,84 or when they perform actions too quickly and instinctively for them to be guided by fully formed concepts or

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81 Ibid. “Sed quantum ad intentiones praedictas, differentia est: nam alia animalia perciipient huiusmodi intentiones solum naturali quodam instinctu, homo autem etiam per quandam collationem.”
82 Summa Theologiae I, 78.4 ad 5. Leonine 5.257. “Ad quintum dicendum quod illum eminentiam habet cogitativa et memorativa in homine, non per id quod est proprium sensitivae partis; sed per aliquam affinitatem et propinquitatem ad rationem universalem, secundum quandam refluientiam. Et ideo non sunt aliae vires, sed eaedem, perfectiores quam sint in alis animalibus.” For Thomas, reminiscence is the uniquely human activity of “syllogistically searching the memory of the past.” Summa Theologiae I, 78.4. Leonine 5.256. “Ex parte autem memorativae, non solum habet memoriam, sicut cetera animalia, in subita recordatione praeteritorum; sed etiam reminiscientiam, quasi syllogistice inquirendo praeteritorum memoriam, secundum individuales intentiones.”
83 In De anima II, 13.396-98. Leonine 45/1.122:211-222. “[E]stimatiu autem non apprehendit aliquod individuum secundum quod est sub natura communi, set solum secundum quod est terminus aut principium alicuius actionis uel passionis, sicut quis cognoscit hunc agnum non in quantum est hic agnus, set in quantum est ab ea lactabilis, et hanc herbam in quantum est eius cibus . . .” A good example of this kind of knowledge in human beings would be our ability to recognize, from far away, a friend by his gait, or a car by its shape.
84 Thomas says in Summa Theologiae I, 81.3 [Leonine 5.290] that the sensuality is immediately moved by the estimative or the cogitative, which explains why it is aroused “as soon as something is declared delightful to it by reason or sense” (emphasis mine), and can therefore contradict the judgment of reason, as Thomas says in In Ethic. VII, 6. Leonine 47/2.405:47-50. “[S]ed concupiscientia statim quod denuntiatur sibi delectabile per rationem vel per sensum, movet ad fruendum illud delectabile abside aliquo syllogismo rationis.” Mark J. Barker gives a great example of such irrational passion, namely a person feeling fear at the sight of a snake that they know to be non-venomous, and argues that such cases can only be explained by the influence of the cogitative power since “an emotional response that runs counter to a cool intellectual evaluation is a clear indicator that the mind is apprehending an action-oriented intention as well as an abstract concept.” Mark J. Barker, “Aquinas on Internal Sensory Intentions: Nature and Classification,” International Philosophical Quarterly 52 (June 2012): 208.
judgments. As an instrument of the intellect, the cogitative sense is the power through which one gains “experience” (experimentum), the kind of knowledge that is “the next thing above memory” because it “comes from the comparison (ex collatione) of many singulars received from memory,” which is “proper to man” but is shared in by animals only “to a slight degree.”

Like true intellectual knowledge, experience grasps “one notion (acceptio) of something taken from many,” but this common feature known by experience is not a universal since it is known only as being true of many, not necessarily all; consequently, “experience is concerned only with singulars.” As Thomas explains, to know that a medicine “helped Socrates and Plato and many other individuals when suffering some infirmity . . . pertains to experience,” but to know that it “helps all” with the disease “now pertains to art.”

The reason that experience cannot know something universally, as intellectual knowledge does, is that the former only grasps that something is the case, while the latter also grasps why. Nevertheless, precisely

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85 Thomas tells us that experience makes a person able to act “easily and correctly.” In Metaphysic. I, 1.17. Marietti 9. “. . . quo experimento potens est ad facile et recte operandum.” The ultimate example of such action would be in a professional sport, where the need for precision and speed is at its extreme, but more commonly experienced examples would be driving a car or riding a bike, which most people can do “without thinking.”


because experience knows singulars rather than universals, in practical matters it is superior to intellectual knowledge devoid of experience, and is thus vitally important for prudence.\footnote{In Metaphysic. I, 1.20, Marietti 9. “Nam experti magis proficiunt in operando illis qui habent rationem universalem artis sine experimento.” Summa Theologiae II-II, 49.1. Leonine 8.367. “[P]rudentia est circa contingentia operabilia, sicut dictum est. In his autem non potest homo dirigi per ea quae sunt simpliciter et ex necessitate vera, sed ex his quae ut in pluribus accidunt: oportet enim principia conclusionibus esse proportionata, et ex talibus talia concludere. . . . Quid autem in pluribus sit verum oportet per experimentum considerare . . . .”}

Furthermore, experience is also necessary for the increase of intellectual knowledge through speculation, as Thomas explicitly affirms in at least one text.\footnote{In Post. An. I, 30.4-5, Leonine 1*/2.109:40-. “Set impossibile est uniuersalia speculari absque inductione. Et hoc quidem in rebus sensibilibus est magis manifestum, quia in eis per experientiam, quam habemus circa singularia sensibilia accipimus universalem noticiam, sicut manifestatur in principio Methaphysicue . . . .” Barker, “Experience and Experimentation,” 69, note 78. The reference to the beginning of Aristotle’s Metaphysics is significant since it indicates how closely Thomas is following Aristotle on the subject of experience.} The reason seems to be that, while the intellect may grasp certain universals after only encountering them in one or a few individuals, there will be many others that it does not perceive so immediately; consequently, the universals that are more difficult to recognize must first be grasped in experience as mere commonalities, which, if they are reflected upon deeply enough, can then reveal themselves to the intellect as true universals. Thomas confirms that many universals are first encountered through experience when he says that “just as one experience comes from many memories of a thing, so does one universal judgment about all similar things come from the apprehension of many experiences.” The cogitative therefore “disposes” the phantasm for causing intellectual knowledge by adding a common notion to it, which the intellect can then grasp as a universal.

This ability of the cogitative power to make universals “show up” in one’s sense experience (though not yet\footnote{In Metaphysic. I, 1.18, Marietti 9. “Nam sicut ex multis memoris fit una experimentalis scientia, ita ex multis experimentis apprehensio fit universalis acceptio de omnibus similibus.”} as universal) is clearly also for Thomas a necessary condition for the intellect’s recognizing in some individual a universal that it has already learned since he goes so far as to say that it is the cogitative power that “apprehends the individual thing as existing in a common
nature,” but only because “it is united to the intellect in one and the same subject.”94 The activity of the cogitative is thus indispensable not only for the augmentation of intellectual knowledge, but also for its application to particular cases, as Thomas confirms in several texts.95

Nevertheless, not even the activity of the cogitative power can render the phantasm able to cause intellectual knowledge on its own. The reason is that, because the intellect knows a nature as universal, i.e. as true of all things sharing in the nature, the intellect must know this nature in virtue of a *species* that is a universal likeness of the nature, i.e. a likeness of everything that has this specific nature96; yet, since the phantasm is a form by which we imagine a particular material thing, it is only a likeness of the nature as existing in a determinate and singular way,97 so it could never cause a likeness of the nature taken universally. Besides, the phantasm of itself cannot cause any likeness whatsoever in the intellect since the latter must be entirely immaterial in order for it to know universally, but the phantasm is a form existing in a material sense organ, and “nothing corporeal can make an impression on an incorporeal thing.”98 Consequently, for Thomas the individuals made present by the phantasms are only “potentially intelligible” since they can be known by the intellect but cannot by themselves bring about this knowledge in the

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95 For example, *De veritate* 10.5. Leonine 22/2.309:90-97. “[U]niversalem enim sententiam quam mens habet de operabilibus non est possibile applicari ad particularem actum nisi per aliquam potentiam medium apprehendentem singulare, ut sic fiat quidam syllogismus cuius maior sit universalis quae est sententia mentis, minor autem singularis quae est apprehensio particularis rationis . . .” See also *In Ethic.* VI, 9 [Leonine 47/2.367:178-86], and *De anima* III, 10 [Leonine 45/1.223:221-49].

96 *Summa Theologiae* I, 14.12. Leonine 4.185. “Species autem intelligibilis intellectus nostri est similitudo rei quantum ad naturam speciei, quae est participabilia a particularibus infinitis: unde intellectus noster per speciem intelligibilem hominis, cognoscit quodammodo homines infinitos. Sed tamen non inquantum distinguuntur ab invicem, sed secundum quod communicant in natura speciei; propter hoc quod species intelligibilis intellectus nostri non est similitudo hominum quantum ad principia individualia, sed solum quantum ad principia speciei.”

97 *Summa Theologiae* I, 84.7 ad 2. Leonine 5.325. “Ad secundum dicendum quod etiam ipsum phantasma est similitudo rei particularis . . .”

intellect,\(^{99}\) which thus requires some higher explanation.

For Thomas, that explanation is the existence in the human intellect of not only a passive power, called the “possible intellect” since it is by nature only in potency to knowing reality,\(^{100}\) but also an active power, called the “agent intellect” because it makes the phantasms actually intelligible, i.e. capable of actualizing the possible intellect to know the things they make present. Thomas usually describes this process as the agent intellect’s “abstracting” the universal \textit{species} from the individuating conditions it has in the phantasm so that it can then inform the possible intellect,\(^{101}\) which might give the impression that the immaterial \textit{species} actually exists in the phantasm and only needs to be “unwrapped” by the agent intellect in order to communicate itself to the possible intellect; yet, Thomas explicitly denies that the universal species exists anywhere but in the possible intellect.\(^{102}\) Moreover, Thomas also calls the agent intellect a light that makes things intelligible in a way similar to (though not necessarily the same as) the way that physical light makes things visible.\(^{103}\) Consequently, it seems that the best way to understand abstraction for Thomas is that, just as physical light is determined by the color that reflects it to produce a \textit{species} of that color (rather than of some other color) in the eye, so the light of the agent intellect

\(99\) \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 79.3. Leonine 5.264. “[F]ormae autem in materia existentes non sunt intelligibiles actu: sequebatur quod naturae seu formae rerum sensibilium, quas intelligimus, non essent intelligibiles actu. Nihil autem reductur de potentia in actum, nisi per aliquod ens actu: sicut sensus fit in actu per sensibile in actu.”

\(100\) \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 79.2. Leonine 5.259. “Intellectus autem humanus, qui est infimus in ordine intellectuum, et maxime remotus a perfectione divini intellectus, est in potentia respectu intelligibilium . . .”


\(102\) \textit{De veritate} 10.6 ad 7. Leonine 22/2.314:289-92. “[E]t sic formae intelligibiles in actu non sunt per se existentes neque in phantasia neque in intellectu agente, sed solum in intellectu possibili.”

\(103\) \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 79.3 ad 2. Leonine 5.264. “Quidam enim dicunt quod lumen requiritur ad visum, ut faciat colores actu visibles. Et secundum hoc, similiter requiritur, et propter idem, intellectus agens ad intelligendum, propter quod lumen ad videndum. Secundum alios vero, lumen requiritur ad videndum, non propter colores, ut fiat actu visibles; sed ut medium fiat actum lucidum, ut Commentator dicit in II de anima. Et secundum hoc, similitudo qua Aristoteles assimilat intellectum agentem lumini, attenditur quantum ad hoc, quod sicut hoc est necessarium ad videndum, ita illud ad intelligendum; sed non propter idem.” It is important to note that Thomas is commenting here on Aristotle’s notoriously difficult text on abstraction, \textit{On the Soul} 3.5.
is determined by the phantasm on which it shines to cause a species of the nature presented by the phantasm (rather than of some other nature) in the possible intellect. This species will therefore be a likeness of the nature taken universally, i.e. as abstracted from the individuating conditions that it has in the known being, because those conditions are represented in the soul by a partly material likeness—the phantasm, which exists in a bodily organ, the brain—and thus these conditions cannot be communicated to the entirely immaterial possible intellect.

Like all the cognitive forms we have examined so far, the intelligible species is not that which the intellect knows, but rather that in virtue of which the human intellect is able to “perceive the universal nature existing in the individual” made present by the senses, which the intellect can only do by turning to the phantasm. Nonetheless, repeated consideration of the universal in imagined or sensed individuals gradually empowers the intellect to express that universal in an “inner word” or concept, a mental form that is itself an object of knowledge,
though in being known it naturally gives knowledge of the universal it expresses, for which reason Thomas says it is that *in which* the intellect knows the universal. Not only are concepts what is expressed by spoken words, but they are also what the intellect combines and divides in order to make judgments about the things it knows, which Thomas says repeatedly is the operation in which the mind properly attains truth or error; moreover, those judgments lead to further judgments through the activity of reasoning. Concepts thus play a crucial role in both the completion and the manifestation of human knowledge.

A problem arises, however: if what the intellect knows are universals, how then can it make judgments about particulars, such as “Socrates is a man”? An objection in the *Summa Theologiae* raises this very problem as evidence that the intellect actually does know singulars directly. Thomas replies that “indirectly, and as it were by a kind of reflection, [the intellect] can know the singular, because, as was said above, even after it has abstracted the intelligible

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the result of reflection and reasoning. Marietti, 8. “*[Q]uia verbum nostrum prius est formabile, quam formatum: nam cum volo concipere rationem lapidis, oportet quod ad ipsum ratiocinando perveniam; et sic est in omnibus alis, quae a nobis intelliguntur, nisi forte in primis principiis, quae cum sint simpliciter nota, absque discursu rationis statim sciantur. Quamduo ergo sic ratiocinando, intellectus iactatur hac et illac, nec dum formatio perfecta est, nisi quando ipsam rationem rei perfecte conceperit: et tunc primo habet rationem rei perfectae, et tunc primo habet rationem verbi. Et inde est quod in anima nostra est cogitatio, per quam significatur ipse discursus inquisitionis, et verbum, quod est iam formatum secundum perfectam contemplationem veritatis.*”


110 In Ioannem 1.1.25. Marietti 8. “Istud ergo sic expressum, scilicet formatum in anima, dicitur verbum interius; et ideo comparatur ad intellectum, non sicut quo intellectus intelligent, sed sicut in quo intelligit . . .”

111 *Summa Theologiae* I, 34.1. Leonine 4.365. “Vox autem quae non est significativa, verbum dici non potest. Ex hoc ergo dicitur verbum vox exterior, quia significat interiorem mentis conceptum.”

112 *Summa Theologiae* I, 85.2 ad 3. Leonine 5.334-35. “Nam primo quidem consideratur passio intellectus possibilis secundum quod informatur specie intelligibili. Qua quidem formatus, format secundo vel definitionem vel divisionem vel compositionem, quae per vocem significatur. Unde ratio quam significat nomen, est definitio; et enuntiatio significat compositionem et divisionem intellectus. Non ergo voces significant ipsas species intelligibiles; sed ea quae intellectus sibi format ad iudicandum de rebus exterioribus.”

113 *Summa Theologiae* I, 16.2. Leonine 4.208. “Et ideo, proprie loquendo, veritas est in intellectu componente et dividente . . .” Cf. *De veritate* 1.3 [Leonine 22/1.10-11]; *In Sent.* 19.5.1 ad 7 [Mandonnet 1.489.].

114 *Summa Theologiae* I, 85.5. Leonine 5.341. “Et secundum hoc, necesse habet unum apprehensum alii componere vel dividere; et ex una compositione vel divisione ad aliam procedere, quod est ratiocinari.”

species, the intellect cannot actually understand in virtue of these without turning itself to the phantasms, in which it understands the species”; thus, the intellect “understands the universal itself directly in virtue of the intelligible species,” and “indirectly the singulars” represented by the phantasms. In other words, the intellect cannot consider its proper object, the universal, without also knowing the individual in which it sees the universal. For Thomas, apparently, knowledge of the universal and of the singular go together since they are both had through the intellect’s turning to look at the phantasm, which means that this activity is in fact the natural orientation of the human intellect. Hence, when Thomas calls the intellect’s consideration of the universal in the singular a “reflection” or “turn,” he seems to mean only that the intellect’s application of its knowledge to sense experience goes in the opposite direction of the process by which that knowledge is acquired: whereas the acquisition of knowledge is a movement from reality to the soul, in which reality affects the senses and through them causes knowledge in the intellect, applying knowledge is a movement from the soul to reality, in which the intellect uses the species it has gained to behold the natures of the singulars made present by the senses.

We can thus end our account of human knowing for Thomas with its return to the sensible singulars from which it arose. While we have had to pass over many details, some of

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116 *Summa Theologiae* I, 86.1. Ibid. “Indirecte autem, et quasi per quandam reflexionem, potest cognoscere singulare: quia, sicut supra dictum est, etiam postquam species intelligibiles abstraxit, non potest secundum eas actu intelligere nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata, in quibus species intelligibiles intelligit, ut dicitur in III de anima. Sic igitur ipsum universale per speciem intelligibilem directe intelligit; indirecte autem singularia, quorum sunt phantasmata. Et hoc modo format hanc propositionem, *Socrates est homo*. Unde patet solutio ad primum.”

117 See Therese Scarpelli Cory, “What Is an Intellectual Turn? The *Liber de Causis*, Avicenna, and Aquinas’s Turn to the Phantasms,” *Tópicos, Revista de Filosofía* 45 (2013): 129-62. Bernard Lonergan draws the same conclusion from *De veritate* 10.2 ad 7, which says that intellect must turn toward the phantasm in order to know, just as sight must turn toward the colored object in order to see because “no power can know something without turning to its object,” thus showing that the intellect is ordered by nature to knowing things by means of phantasms. Leonine 22/2.302:216-26. “[N]ulla potestia potest aliquod cognoscere nisi convertendo se ad objectum suum, sicut visus nihil cognoscit nisi convertendo <se> ad colorem; unde cum phantasma hoc modo se habeat ad intellectum possibilem sicut sensibilia ad sensum . . . quantuncumque aliquam speciem intelligibilem apud se intellectus habeat, nunquam tamen actu aliquid considerat secundum illam speciem nisi convertendo se ad phantasma.” Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. David Burrell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 161.
which we will have to discuss later in the chapter, we have outlined his theory of knowledge sufficiently to begin considering certain parts of it as candidates for aesthetic visio.

B. Candidates for Aesthetic Visio

Two of the suggestions that Thomists have made for aesthetic visio are obviously problematic. One of the first theories on the nature of aesthetic visio, advanced when interest in Thomas’s aesthetics was just starting to grow, claims that visio is the intellect’s abstraction of a sensed thing’s form, on the grounds that the intellect is the proper percipient of beauty, and abstraction is the point at which it first becomes involved.\(^{118}\) If what these scholars are referring to is the intellect’s abstraction of its species from the phantasm, then abstraction cannot be aesthetic visio because it is not an act of knowing at all but rather the unconscious prerequisite for intellectual knowing.\(^{119}\) On the other hand, the conscious act of abstraction—the intellect’s understanding one aspect of a thing apart from its other aspects, such as considering a thing’s quiddity apart from its accidental features\(^{120}\)—cannot be aesthetic visio either since one of the

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\(^{119}\) To my knowledge, Thomas never says that the intellect is unconscious of the agent intellect’s abstraction of its species, but there are at least four reasons indicating that it must be. First, the intellect is not conscious of anything without an intelligible species, which the agent intellect’s abstraction precedes as its cause. Second, Thomas holds that the principles of our intellectual acts (two of which are the species and the agent intellect) are known only by reflecting on the acts themselves, which are in turn known only after their objects (see Summa Theologiae I, 87.1-3, Leonine 5.355-61). Third, Thomas says that the intellect only knows its species by reflecting on its act of knowing (Summa Theologiae I, 85.2, Leonine 5.334: “Sed quia intellectus supra seipsum reflectitur, secundum eandem reflexionem intelligit et suum intelligere, et speciem qua intelligit”), so since acts are known after their objects, and the species is the object of the agent intellect’s activity, it follows that this abstraction is likewise known only by reflection. Finally, Thomas devotes many articles to proving not only that species are obtained through abstraction by the agent intellect (Summa Theologiae I, 84.3-6, Leonine 5.317-24), but even that the species exist (Summa Theologiae I, 84.2, Leonine 5.315-16) and that the agent intellect exists (Summa Theologiae I, 79.3-5, Leonine 5.264-69), which would be pointless if he thought we were directly conscious of the agent intellect’s activity.

\(^{120}\) In De Trinitate 5.3. Leonine 50.148:163-71. “In operatione erno qua intelligit quid est unumquodque, distinguuit unum ab alio dum intelligit, quid est hoc, nihil intelligendo de alio, neque quod sit cum eo, neque quod sit ab eo separatum. . . . Hec autem distinctio recte dicitur abstractio, set tunc tantum quando ea quorum unum sine altero intelligitur sunt simul secundum rem . . . ."
marks of the latter is that it is knowledge of a concrete individual, but abstraction precisely consists in ignoring most of the features of an individual in order to focus on one of them.

A more common tendency among Thomists is to identify aesthetic knowledge with the intellect’s act of judgment.\textsuperscript{121} They do so on the basis that, since beauty is identical with being, and so, like being, consists primarily in existence rather than essence,\textsuperscript{122} the act of knowing by which the intellect grasps a thing’s beauty must the same as that by which it grasps its existence. Consequently, since Thomas holds that the intellect only attains a thing’s existence in its second operation, i.e. the judgment,\textsuperscript{123} aesthetic knowledge must consist in the act of judging.

While these arguments certainly show that aesthetic knowledge involves or presupposes a judgment, it is equally clear that aesthetic \textit{visio} cannot actually \textit{be} a judgment, but is rather an instance of the first operation of the intellect, i.e. an apprehension.\textsuperscript{124} This conclusion is evident not only because Thomas himself calls the knowledge of beauty an \textit{apprehensio} in one of his principal texts on beauty,\textsuperscript{125} but also because a judgment is a kind of change, taken broadly, since it consists in a “combining” (\textit{compositio}) or “dividing” (\textit{divisio}) by the intellect of the notions it has grasped from things\textsuperscript{126}, a “seeing,” however, as we saw at the start of this chapter, is not a


\textsuperscript{122} \textit{In Sent.} I, 19.5.1 corpus. Mandonnet 1.486. “Cum autem in re sit quidditas ejus et suum esse, veritas fundatur in esse rei magis quam in quidditate, sicut et nomen entis ab esse imponitur . . .”

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{In Sent.} I, 19.5.1 ad 7. Mandonnet 1.489. “[S]it duplex operatio intellectus . . . prima operatio respicit quidditatem rei; secunda respicit esse ipsius. Et quia ratio veritatis fundatur in esse, et non in quidditate, ut dictum est, ideo veritas et falsitas proprie inventur in secunda operatione . . .” Cf. \textit{In De Trinitate} 5.3 [Leonine 50.144-51].

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 85.5. Leonine 5.341. “Et similiter intellectus humanus non statim in prima apprehensione capiit perfectam rei cognitionem; sed primo apprehendit aliquid de ipsa . . . Et secundum hoc, necesse habet unum apprehensionem aliis componere vel dividere; et ex una compositione vel divisione ad aliam procedere, quod est ratiocinari.” Thomas also describes the first act of the intellect as an apprehension in the following texts from the \textit{Summa Theologiae}: I, 14.14, 16.2, and 58.4 [Leonine 4.194, 4.208, and 5.85].

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.”

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 16.2. Leonine 4.208. “[S]ed quando [intellectus] iudicat rem ita se habere sicut est
change even in the broad sense for Thomas,\textsuperscript{127} nor is the intellect’s apprehension, which is why it is the only kind of knowledge had by God, in Whom there is no change.\textsuperscript{128} Finally, Thomas says in the \textit{Summa Theologiae} that the word \textit{visio} “is transferred to all the other senses, and even to all inner apprehensions (\textit{apprehensiones}),”\textsuperscript{129} thus confirming that only an \textit{apprehensio} can be called a \textit{visio}; hence, aesthetic \textit{visio} must likewise be an \textit{apprehensio}. Eco is thus absolutely right when he says that “the aesthetic \textit{visio} is not the same thing as the \textit{compositio}” or judgment, but is rather an apprehension that follows and depends on the judgment\textsuperscript{130}—a dependency the nature of which we will explore more fully in this chapter’s conclusion.

If \textit{visio} is not a judgment, and if, as we saw at the start of the chapter, one of the marks of \textit{visio} is that it is ultimately an activity of the intellect, one might think that Thomists as a group would have quickly identified aesthetic \textit{visio} with the only other knowledge of the singular that Thomas attributes to the intellect: namely, the knowledge based on the return to the phantasm. In fact, however, Thomists have largely ignored the \textit{conversio} as a candidate for \textit{visio}, probably because most of them hold that the latter does not involve concepts but the former does. Hence, before we can conclude to the identity of \textit{visio} with the \textit{conversio}, we must examine the arguments Thomists have made for identifying \textit{visio} with one of the two following “non-conceptual” modes of knowledge: a pre-abstractive intellectual intuition by means of the senses,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{127} See p. 153 above.
\item \textsuperscript{128} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 14.14. Leonine 4.194. “[N]ecesse est quod Deus sciat omnia enuntiabilia quae formari possunt. Sed, sicut scit materialia immaterialiter, et composita simpliciter, ita scit enuntiabilia non per modum enuntiabilium, quasi scilicet in intellectu eius sit compositio vel divisio enuntiabilium; sed unumquodque cognoscit per simplicem intelligentiam, intelligendo essentiam uniuscuiusque.” Thomas also affirms that angels know solely by apprehending and never by judging in \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 58.4 [Leonine 5.85].
\item \textsuperscript{129} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 77.5 ad 3. Leonine 7.67. “[S]ensus visus est excellentior inter omnes sensus. . . . Et ideo nomen eius transfertur ad omnes alios sensus, et etiam ad omnes interiores apprehensiones . . .”
\item \textsuperscript{130} Eco, \textit{The Aesthetics}, 199.
\end{enumerate}
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and a connatural or affective knowledge by means of an inclination.

1. Pre-abstractive Sense-Intellectual Intuition

As do many of the most popular Thomist positions on aesthetic issues, the view that the knowledge of beauty is a special kind of pre-abstractive and pre-conceptual intuition has its origin in Maritain’s writings. In *Art and Scholasticism*, Maritain states that “the beautiful that we have called connatural to man,” i.e. sensible beauty, “is seized in the sensible and through the sensible,” and thus by means of an “intuition” that “stands at the opposite extreme from the abstraction of scientific truth.” In this kind of knowledge, the intellect “rejoices without work and without discourse” in the intuition of beauty because it has been “diverted from all effort of abstraction” and so is “dispensed from its usual labor”—namely, “it does not have to disengage an intelligible from the matter in which it is buried,” but, “like a stag at the gushing spring, intelligence has nothing to do but drink . . . the clarity of being.”

The reason for this reprieve from the intellect’s ordinary toil is that “the splendor or radiance of the form glittering in the beautiful object is not presented to the mind by a concept or idea, but rather by the sensible object intuitively grasped.” In other words, the means by which the intellect grasps sensible beauty is not an intelligible species but “the sensible intuition itself,” so that it is not really intellect alone that perceives beauty, but “intellect and sense as forming but one, or, if one may so speak, intelligentiated sense.” Because the perception of beauty is a fusion of sense and intellect so complete that it may equally be described as “the

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132 Ibid., 25. Emphasis Maritain’s.
133 Ibid., 26.
134 Ibid., 163, note 56. Emphasis Maritain’s.
135 Ibid., 164, note 56. Emphasis Maritain’s.
sense as imbued with intelligence, or intellection as engaged in sense perception,” its result is not “an intellectual knowledge expressible in a concept,” but solely “the joy of the beautiful.” As a result, according to Maritain “the perception of the beautiful . . . is not so much a kind of knowledge as a kind of delight” since it grasps a being not sub ratione veri (i.e. as true or knowable) “but rather sub ratione delectabilis” (i.e. as delightful).

Like his definition of beauty itself as “the radiance of the transcendentals united,” Maritain’s views regarding aesthetic knowledge have found support from many Thomists; however, it has also encountered some serious criticism from a few scholars, especially Eco, who writes that “the kind of intuition that is discussed by Maritain . . . is a modern concept which is alien to the Thomist system.” After briefly sketching Thomas’s account of human knowing, Eco notes that “Aquinas has defined, secured, and ordered the stages of the process of cognition with such minute precision that it is impossible to disrupt their order to introduce a new element,” especially not an intuition occurring “somewhere in between sensible perception and intellectual abstraction” since “it is just here that Aquinas has established the various affiliations and connections with greatest clarity, in many of his works, and quite explicitly.” Hence, Eco concludes, “it is simply not possible to find a place for an intellectual intuition of particulars” in Thomas’s account of knowing, and “still less” for one that “grasps the intelligible.

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136 Maritain, Creative Intuition, 164.
137 Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, 164, note 56.
138 Ibid., 26.
in the sensible without the activity of abstraction.”

Having ourselves examined Thomas’s theory of knowledge, we can only agree with Eco’s assessment since we found that it is a first principle of Thomas’s account that knowing cannot occur without the assimilation of the knower to the known by means of an intentional *species*; hence, the intellect only becomes capable of knowing after acquiring its own *species* by abstracting it from the phantasm, from which it follows that there cannot be any act of knowing by the intellect prior to that abstraction. In fact, we can go further than Eco, and say that a pre-abstractive intellectual intuition is not only impossible in Thomas’s theory but unnecessary since we saw that the intelligible *species* is primarily a capacity “to perceive the universal nature existing in the individual.” Thus, the abstraction of this *species* from the phantasm does not prevent the intellect from grasping a thing’s nature “*in the sensible and through the sensible,*” but actually enables such an apprehension to take place in the intellect’s return to the phantasm.

This conclusion finds confirmation in the fact that Maritain apparently has a deficient understanding of the intelligible *species* as “a mere way to the concept,” i.e. a capacity only to express the universal and not to perceive it in individuals, which seems to be the main reason that he thought it necessary to insert a pre-abstractive intuition into Thomas’s account of knowledge. Another reason, of course, is his view that the abstraction of the *species* from the phantasm is “laborious” and consequently incompatible with the delightful ease of aesthetic *visio*. This error seems to arise from conflating the intellect’s unconscious, automatic, and therefore

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142 Duffy makes this point as well. “A Philosophy of Poetry,” 63-68.
145 Maritain, *Creative Intuition*, 112.
146 See p. 181, note 119 above.
effortless abstraction of the *species* from the phantasm with the conscious and deliberate activity of abstracting the universal from the particular—i.e. gradually distinguishing what is essential to a nature from what is accidental, which is an activity of reasoning and consequently *does* involve effort for Thomas.\(^{148}\) Since the former abstraction is therefore obviously compatible with aesthetic *visio*, there is no reason to posit a pre-abstractive intellectual intuition for Thomas.\(^{149}\)

2. Connatural Knowledge

The other kind of “non-conceptual” knowledge that is sometimes identified with *visio* by Thomists is what Thomas calls connatural knowledge, or knowledge by inclination. One of the two main texts where Thomas discusses this kind of knowledge\(^{150}\) is a reply to an objection at

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\(^{147}\) Thomas makes clear that the agent intellect’s abstraction is automatic when he says in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 17.6 that our initial apprehension of truth is “not in our power,” and therefore cannot be commanded, because it occurs “in virtue of some light, either natural or supernatural.” Leonine 6.122. “Primo quidem, ut veritatem circa aliquid apprehendat. Et hoc non est in potestate nostra: hoc enim contingit per virtutem alicuius luminis, vel naturalis vel supernaturalis.” I am grateful to Therese Cory for pointing out this text.

\(^{148}\) See p. 181-82 above.

\(^{149}\) Maritain’s view that aesthetic perception is an intellectual intuition might be connected to his positing of another intellectual intuition in human knowing, namely the intuition of being, which according to Maritain is the way that we discover the subject of metaphysics, or being insofar as it is being, as well as the common sense notion of being that most people have. For Maritain’s main articulation and defense of this view, see his *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantiere and Gerald B. Phelan (New York, N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1948), 19-46. Although Maritain never identifies aesthetic perception either with the metaphysician’s intuition of being as being or with the intuition of the common sense notion of being, it seems that each of them could be connected for Maritain to the perception of intelligible beauty, which of course is identical with being; however, making this connection is complicated by the fact that Maritain’s views on the intuitions of being change significantly in his final treatment of the subject in “Reflections on Wounded Nature,” in *Untrammeled Approaches*, The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain 20 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 207–242. In any case, as Wippel has shown, there is no such intuitions of being in the thought of Thomas, for whom the common sense or primitive notion of being is gained through making judgments of existence, and the subject of metaphysics (or being insofar as it is being) is discovered through separatio, i.e. the judgment that being need not be material. See John F. Wippel, “Maritain and Aquinas on Our Discovery of Being,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 3 (2014): 415-443. Ultimately, in Thomas’s view a direct intellectual intuition of being is impossible for human beings in this life for the simple reason that our intellects know reality indirectly through the senses and, as Gilson observes, there is no sensible image of being insofar as it is being since this is a purely intelligible notion. Etienne Gilson, “Propos sur l’étre et sa notion,” in *San Tommaso e il pensiero moderno*, ed. Antonio Piolanti (Citta Nuova: Pontificia Accademia Romana de S. Tommaso d’Aquino, 1974), 11-12. Hence, the perception of the beauty that is identical with being cannot be identified with any direct intellectual intuition of being, but rather with the intellect’s apprehension of being through the internal and external senses.

\(^{149}\) The other is *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 45.2 [Leonine 8.340-41], which is also where he speaks of
the start of the *Summa Theologiae*, where he endeavors to distinguish the wisdom that is gained in Sacred Doctrine, i.e. theology, from the wisdom that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. He does so by noting that, “since judgment appertains to wisdom,” there are consequently two kinds of wisdom corresponding to “the twofold manner of judging”:

For it happens that someone judges, in one way by means of inclination, just as he who has the habit of a virtue judges rightly of those things that must be done in accord with that virtue, insofar as he is inclined to them, for which reason . . . the virtuous man is the measure and rule of human acts. In another way, by means of knowledge, just as a man instructed in moral science is able to judge regarding acts of virtue, even if he should not have the virtue.

According to Thomas, the second manner of judging belongs to the kind of wisdom “acquired through study” of theology, whereas “the first manner of judging divine things belongs to that wisdom which is set down as a gift of the Holy Ghost,” and is thus the wisdom to which Paul refers when he says that “the spiritual man judges all things”; moreover, it is also the wisdom that Dionysius attributes to Hierotheus, who is said to have been “taught not only by learning, but by experiencing (*patiens*) divine things.” 151 This wisdom that is a gift of the Holy Spirit is evidently not the only instance of connatural knowledge, however, since the reference to the virtuous man in this passage indicates that prudence, the intellectual virtue by which the virtuous man judges what he should do, is also a case of judging by means of inclination—an implication supported by Thomas’s view (which he inherits from Aristotle) that one cannot have prudence

judgments by inclination as being based on “connaturality” (*connaturalitatem*). We will not be discussing this passage in depth because the explanation that it gives does not differ—at least not in any way that is significant for our purposes—from the one given by the text that we are about to examine from the *Prima Pars*.

151 *Summa Theologiae* I, 1.6 ad 3. Leonine 4.18. “Ad tertium dicendum quod, cum iudicium ad sapientem pertineat, secundum duplicum modum iudicandi, dupliciter sapientia accipitur. Contingit enim aliquem iudicare, uno modo per modum inclinationis: sicut qui habet habitum virtutis, recte iudicat de his quae sunt secundum virtutem agenda, inquantum ad illa inclinatur: unde et in X *Ethic*. dicitur quod virtuosus est mensura et regula actuum humanorum. Alio modo, per modum cognitionis: sicut aliquis instruxit in scientia morali, posset iudicare de actibus virtutis, etiam si virtutem non haberet. Primus igitur modus iudicandi de rebus divinis, pertinet ad sapientiam quae ponitur donum Spiritus Sancti, secundum illud I Cor. II: *spiritualis homo iudicat omnia*, etc.: et Dionysius dicit. Il cap. de Divinis Nominibus: Hierotheus doctus est non solum discens, sed et patiens divina. Secundus autem modus iudicandi pertinet ad hanc doctrinam, secundum quod per studium habetur . . . .”

This growth in awareness of connatural knowledge has led multiple Thomists to theorize that it plays a special role in our interactions with beauty. Maritain, for instance, argues that fine artworks proceed from a kind of connatural knowledge called “poetic intuition,” which “tends to beauty as to its natural correlative” because it is “the free creativity of the intellect” and therefore “cannot help” being drawn to what pleases the intellect\footnote{Maritain, \textit{Creative Intuition}, 170-71. While Maritain’s poetics cannot be discussed here, it should be noted that it is at least questionable whether the philosophy of art expounded by Maritain in \textit{Art and Scholasticism} and especially in \textit{Creative Intuition} corresponds to Thomas’s own thought on the matter. For a strong articulation of the view that Thomas’s poetics differs significantly from that of Maritain, see Thomas Dominic Rover, \textit{The Poetics of Maritain: A Thomistic Critique} (Washington, D.C.: Thomist Press, 1965), passim. For a defense of Maritain’s aesthetics as a genuine development of Thomas’s thought, see Trapani, \textit{Poetry, Beauty, and Contemplation}, passim., as well as Francis Kovach, “Is Maritain’s Philosophy of Beauty Truly Thomistic?”, in his \textit{Scholastic Challenges to Some Medieval and Modern Ideas} (Stillwater, OK: Western Publications, 1987), 297-330.}; furthermore, although Maritain only relates connatural knowledge to the beauty produced by man, he also says that there is a “distant analogy” between it and the pre-abstractive intuition by which man experiences all beauty since both are non-conceptual.\footnote{Maritain, \textit{Art and Scholasticism}, 165. Maurer expresses this view more clearly in \textit{About Beauty}, 38.} More recently, O’Reilly has argued that connatural knowledge not only “operates at the heart of artistic creativity,” as Maritain claims, but “applies equally in our
perception and experience of beauty” because “we are all conditioned with respect to how and even what we perceive as being beautiful” by our affective constitutions.\textsuperscript{156}

Finally, there is one scholar, namely Thomas Gilby, who goes so far as to argue that aesthetic perception itself \textit{is} an instance of connatural knowledge, a view seconded by Charles Hart.\textsuperscript{157} Gilby and Hart reach this conclusion on the basis that, as Hart puts it, the intellect’s “ordinary knowledge” is “general, abstract, conceptual, unsatisfactory, and deliberate,” and therefore the opposite of aesthetic experience, “which is intensely individual or unique, concrete, real, complete (that is, for its own sake), and inspiring”\textsuperscript{158}; yet, according to Gilby, such an intimate knowledge is made possible by the influence of the will, which tends to things in their natural existence, rather than simply their spiritual existence in the mind as the intellect does.\textsuperscript{159}

In explaining how the will achieves this greater attainment of the individual, Gilby and Hart refer to an oft-quoted passage from John of St. Thomas on connatural knowledge, where he says that, due to the will’s applying and uniting itself to an object and cleaving to it with enjoyment, “affection passes into the condition of the object”; as a result, the intellect is likewise “brought into” the object, “as experienced and brought closer to itself.”\textsuperscript{160} Hence, according to Gilby, the experience of beauty is possible because “love becomes . . . a medium of knowledge,” and so

\textsuperscript{156} O’Reilly, \textit{Aesthetic Perception}, 77.

\textsuperscript{157} Trapani likewise argues that aesthetic perception is an instance of connatural knowledge, which he calls “Poetic Contemplation”; however, he does so within the context of Maritain’s aesthetics, and thus does not address whether it holds true within Thomas’s thought. \textit{Poetry, Beauty, and Contemplation}, 120-67.


\textsuperscript{159} Gilby, \textit{Poetic Experience}, 34.

“adds a precious seeing to the eye” not normally possessed,161 which is thus “post-rational.”162 Likewise, Hart describes aesthetic visio as, “a non-conceptual connatural knowledge by which we can see the unique beauty of each being.”163

Nonetheless, it is clear that for Thomas aesthetic visio is not a kind of connatural knowledge for the simple reason that, as we saw, he considers visio to be an apprehension, but connatural knowledge is a kind of judgment for him. As O’Reilly observes, “that Aquinas means a kind of judgment when he speaks of knowledge through connaturality ... is evident from the fact that this is the term which occurs in almost all the relevant texts,”164 including the text from the Summa Theologiae that we examined above, in which Thomas refers to connatural knowledge as “the first manner of judging.” This conclusion finds additional confirmation in the fact that precisely what distinguishes the gifts of understanding and wisdom for Thomas—the latter being the connatural knowledge discussed in our text from the Summa Theologiae—is that, while the former regards “perception” or “apprehension,” i.e. the first act of the intellect, the latter regards judgment, or the second act of the intellect.165 Moreover, that understanding is not a kind of connatural knowledge is evident from Thomas’s statements that the gift of wisdom follows on charity as its effect because the connaturality by which wisdom judges is “the result of charity, which unites us to God,” but the gift of understanding precedes charity as its cause since “the will cannot be rightly directed to good, unless there be already some knowledge of the

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162 Gilby, Poetic Experience, 105.
163 Hart, Thomistic Metaphysics, 390.
164 O’Reilly, Aesthetic Perception, 62.
true,” which is provided by the gift of understanding. \(166\) Since judgment is therefore “opposed to perceptio or apprehensio” for Thomas, we agree with O’Reilly that “judgment per modum inclinationis does not constitute a privileged mode of apprehending the object,” \(167\) as Gilby and Hart think, and so cannot be identical with the apprehension that is aesthetic visio.

Gilby and Hart might reply that, while the judgment per modum inclinationis is not an apprehension, it is nevertheless based on one, namely the deeper grasp of a thing that is given by connaturality with it, which could be why Thomas occasionally describes connatural knowledge as “experiential knowledge.” \(168\) If such were the case, judgments per modum inclinationis would not differ from those made per modum cognitionis since what distinguishes the latter is that they are based on a “perfect” intellectual grasp of the object, rather than an inclination toward it. \(169\) Moreover, the description of connatural knowledge as “experiential” simply refers to the fact that this kind of judgment is grounded in our awareness, not of the object, but of our own affective reactions to it, which, like everything that is “in the soul by essential presence,” is known “by experiential knowledge,” \(170\) i.e. by actually “experiencing” these emotions in the sense of feeling or undergoing them. Of course, to experience an affection for something is also to experience

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\(166\) Summa Theologiae II-II, 8.4. Leonine 8.69. “[I]n omnibus habentibus gratiam necesse est esse rectitudinem voluntatis: quia per gratiam praeparatur voluntas hominis ad bonum, ut Augustinus dicit. Voluntas autem non potest recte ordinari in bonum nisi praexistenti aliqua cognitione veritatis: quia objectum voluntatis est bonum intellectum. . . . Sicut autem per donum caritatis Spiritus Sanctus ordinat voluntatem hominis ut directe moveatur in bonum quoddam supernaturale, ita etiam per donum intellectus illustrat mentem hominis ut cognoscat veritatem quandam supernaturalem, in quam oportet tendere voluntatem rectam. Et ideo, sicut donum caritatis est in omnibus habentibus gratiam gratum faciement, ita etiam donum intellectus.”

\(167\) O’Reilly, Aesthetic Perception, 63.


\(169\) Summa Theologiae II-II, 45.2. Leonine 8.341. “Rectitudo autem judicii potest contingere dupliciter: uno modo, secundum perfectum usum rationis. . . . Sicut de his quae ad castitatem pertinent per rationis inquisitionem recte indicat ille qui didicit scientiam moralem. . . . Sic igitur circa res divinas ex rationis inquisitione rectum iudicium habere pertinent ad sapientiam quae est virtus intellectualis . . . ”

\(170\) Summa Theologiae I-II, 112.5 ad 1. Leonine 7.327. “[I]lla quae sunt per essentiam sui in anima, cognoscentur experimentali cognitione, inquantum homo experitur per actus principia intrinseca: sicut voluntatem percipimus volendo, et vitam in operibus vitae.”
the object itself *as loveable*, which is why “experiential” knowledge of God is that by which man “experiences in himself the taste of God’s sweetness, and complacency in God’s will,” i.e. he feels the conformity of God to his affections. 171 Hence, in the text cited by Gilby and Hart, John of St. Thomas says “the intellect is brought into the object” by the will’s affection because “by this affective experience the object is rendered more conformed, and proportioned, and united to the person, and more agreeable to him” 172; in other words, love for the object causes, not a greater apprehension of its goodness, but rather a more powerful feeling of the “pull” that it exerts on oneself. O’Reilly thus aptly defines connatural knowledge when, in a paraphrase of Rafael-Tomás Caldera’s formula, he calls it “an intuitive judgment of the value of an object, posited by means of the affective reaction of the subject in relation to it.” 173

If connatural knowledge is not a “seeing” but rather a “judging by means of a feeling,” then, while aesthetic perception cannot be an instance of connatural knowledge, aesthetic judgment—namely, the judgment that the perceived object is beautiful—very well might be for Thomas since the basis for this judgment seems to be at least partially and even primarily the joy caused by the beautiful object. This impression is confirmed by Thomas’s statement that “carnal men love the carnally beautiful” and “spiritual men love the spiritually beautiful” 174 since the disagreement described here is entirely attributed to a difference in character, which indicates that each kind of man is judging each kind of beauty by means of his affective response to it; moreover, the reference to “spiritual men” echoes Paul’s statement that “the spiritual man judges

171 *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 97.2 ad 2 [Leonine 9.338], cited in note 168 above.
172 See p. 190, note 160 above.
all things,” which Thomas quotes as an example of connatural knowledge. Even Thomas’s definition of beauty in *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1—“those things are called beautiful that please when seen”—implies that aesthetic judgment is made by connaturality since it seems to say that we judge and consequently call things beautiful because they please us when seen. If so, we can only explain the role played by connatural knowledge in aesthetic experience after we have examined the nature of aesthetic pleasure since aesthetic judgment will be the effect of this pleasure. Nonetheless, we can certainly conclude at this point that the knowledge causing aesthetic pleasure—namely, aesthetic *visio*—is not a kind of connatural knowledge since the latter is a judgment by means of an inclination, while *visio* is an apprehension.

3. The Return to the Phantasm

Having eliminated all other candidates for aesthetic *visio*, we are left once again with the one suggested by our review of Thomas’s theory of knowledge: namely, the return to the phantasm. Nevertheless, we still have to show that this kind of knowing possesses all of the characteristics needed to be aesthetic *visio* since the only reason Thomists turned to other theories was their opinion that the *conversio* could not fulfill these requirements.

It is not difficult to prove that the *conversio* has most of these features, especially the first one since what is turning to the senses is the intellect, and so this turn is obviously (1) primarily an activity of the intellect, from which it follows that the *conversio* is also (4) highly immaterial since the intellect is a purely spiritual power. It is also clear that, unlike most of the candidates for aesthetic *visio* that we have examined, the knowledge that is given in the *conversio* is an apprehension since Thomas describes it as the intellect turning to the phantasm “in order that it

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175 *Summa Theologiae* I, 1.6 ad 3, cited above in note 151 on p. 188.
176 *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1. Leonine 4.61. “[P]ulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent.”
may perceive (*speculetur*) the universal nature existing in the individual,”¹⁷⁷ and Thomas calls
the intellect’s apprehension a “perception”¹⁷⁸; thus, the return to the phantasm not only matches
with Thomas’s description of *visio* as an *apprehensio*,¹⁷⁹ but also fulfills the requirement of
being (5) changeless since, as we saw, an apprehension is not a change or the result of one.¹⁸⁰
Lastly, while this apprehension can be imperfect and difficult—e.g. when someone “is hindered
even from actually understanding things of which he previously acquired knowledge,” due to
“the act of the imagination being hindered by a lesion of the bodily organ”¹⁸¹—it will in fact be
(6) perfect and (7) free of effort if the knower is in a good condition, as is true for all knowing.

Hence, the only characteristics of aesthetic *visio* that might seem not to belong to the
return to the phantasm are that it is knowledge (2) of an individual being that is really distinct
from the knower, but also (3) directly present to the knower. After all, Thomas tells us that the
intellect only “indirectly” knows the singular really existing outside the mind, and that the only
thing it “directly” knows is the universal, which only exists in the mind.¹⁸² Nevertheless, a little
consideration shows that the *conversio* possess these last two features of *visio* as well.

That what the intellect knows in the *conversio* is something existing outside the soul,
rather than its own ideas, is evident from Thomas’s description of this activity as a turning “to

¹⁷⁷ *Summa Theologiae* I, 84.7. Leonine 5.325. “Et ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat
suum objectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari
existentem.” To the contrary, Klubertanz argues in his exhaustively researched article on the intellect’s knowledge
of the singular that the *conversio* is a judgment; nevertheless, this conclusion overlooks the fact that in *Summa
Theologiae* I, 86.1 [Leonine 5.347] Thomas presents the *conversio* not as being the particular judgment itself but
rather as being what such a judgment presupposes: namely, an apprehension of the singular that is the subject of the
judgment, which for Thomas is had in the *conversio* (see p. 179-80 of this chapter). Since the *conversio* is thus the
grounds for a judgment, it cannot be the judgment itself. Klubertanz, “St. Thomas,” 286.

¹⁷⁸ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 45.2 ad 3. Leonine 8.341. “[I]ntellectus habet duos actus: scilicet percipere, et
iudicare.”

¹⁷⁹ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio
placet.”

¹⁸⁰ See p. 182-83 above.

¹⁸¹ *Summa Theologiae* I, 84.7. Leonine 5.325. “Videmus enim quod, impedito actu virtutis imaginativae per
laesionem organi . . . impeditur homo ab intelligendo in actu etiam ea quorum scientiam praeccepit.”

perceive the universal nature *existing in the singular* made present by the phantasm. It is likewise evident that this knowledge is not just of the nature, but also of the individual *in which* the intellect sees this nature. After all, while Thomas sometimes compares the intellect’s seeing the universal in an individual to the eye’s seeing a color in a colored object, the universal does not exist in the singular as a color does in its surface or as any accident does in its subject since one of the reasons that we need an agent intellect to illuminate the phantasm is precisely that the universal does not exist there in this way. Rather, the universal nature exists in the individual as *particularized*, i.e. as an instance of the common nature. Hence, to know the universal *in* the singular is simultaneously to know the singular *as* an instance of the universal—e.g. as “this human being,” “this animal,” or even just “this being”—and therefore the conversio gives true knowledge of the singular. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that, for Thomas, it is the conversio that enables the intellect to know both the singular and the universal at the same time, and consequently to form a judgment in which the mind predicates the latter of the former.

While this intellectual knowledge of the singular in the return to the phantasm might seem to contradict the numerous statements by Thomas that “we know singulars with the senses and universals with the intellect,” there are many other passages where Thomas “formally and explicitly says that we can and do intellectually know singular material things.” Hence, when Thomas denies that the human intellect can know singulars, he is clearly using “know” in an especially strict sense, one that can be better understood by considering the kind of created

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183 *Summa Theologiae* I, 84,7, cited above in note 107 on p. 178.
184 *De Potentia* 3.9 ad 22. Marietti 2.68. “[I]ntellectus in corpore existens non indiget aliquo corporali ad intelligendum, quod simul cum intellectu sit principium intellectualis operationis, sicut accidit in visu: nam principium visionis non est visus tantum, sed oculus constans ex visu et pupilla. Indigit autem corpore tamquam obiecto, sicut visus indiget pariete in quo est color: nam phantasmata comparantur ad intellectum ut colores ad visum, sicut dicitur in III de Anima.” Cf. *De veritate* 10.2 ad 7, cited above in note 117 on p. 180.
185 See p. 176 above.
186 See p. 179-80 above.
intellect that can know singulars for Thomas: that of the angel.

For Thomas, an angel knows material singulars despite lacking senses because it receives the intelligible species in virtue of which it knows, not by abstracting them from phantasms, but directly from God. As a result, these species have not been stripped of individuating conditions as have ours, and are therefore sufficient likenesses of the things they represent “not only as to their universal natures, but also as to their singularity.” What follows is that an angel, simply by considering a certain universal—and the higher the angel, the more general this universal can be—can intellectually perceive all the individuals sharing in that universal, as well as all of their accidents. An angelic intellect therefore clearly “knows” or immaterially possesses individuals in a way that the human intellect does not since it can “see” individuals just by thinking them whenever it wants, while the human intellect cannot consider singulars—or universals for that matter—without a phantasm given by the senses.

Hence, when Thomas says the human intellect cannot know singulars, he is not saying that it cannot perceive a singular made present to it by the senses or imagination, but only that it cannot perceive an individual without that individual being sensed or imagined—a denial that should not be troubling to anyone. We can therefore distinguish the ways in which the human intellect does and does not know individuals as follows: while it cannot cognize them, i.e. make them cognitively present through its own activity, as it does with universals, it can still recognize

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188 Summa Theologiae I, 57.2. Leonine 5.71. “[I]ta angeli per species a Deo inditas, res cognoscunt non solum quantum ad naturam universalem, sed etiam secundum earum singularitatem . . .” For a thorough treatment of Thomas’s thought on the natural knowledge of the angels, see James Collins, “The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1947), chs. 4 and 5. For a more recent treatment of this topic, see Harm Goris, “Angelic Knowledge in Aquinas and Bonaventure,” in A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy, ed. Tobias Hoffman (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 149-85.

189 Summa Theologiae I, 55.3. Leonine 5.59. “Sic igitur quanto angelus fuerit superior, tanto per pauciores species universitatem intelligibilium apprehendere poterit. Et ideo oportet quod eius formae sint universaliores . . .”

190 De veritate 8.11 ad 9. Leonine 22/2.257:300-306. “[I]ntellectus angeli per speciem quam apud se habet cognoscit singularum non solum in sua substantia sed etiam secundum omnia accidentia eius . . .”
individuals as instances of a universal when they are made cognitively present or cognized by the senses. This distinction corresponds to the one Thomas himself makes when he says that our intellect knows the universal “directly” and the individual only “indirectly.”

It therefore might appear that the only feature of aesthetic *visio* lacked by the *conversio* is that it is knowledge of the singular as directly or immediately present since the intellect does indeed know the singular in the *conversio*, but only “indirectly”; however, if one remembers the principle that we discussed at the start of this chapter—namely, that for Thomas all mental forms except the concept are not that which the mind knows, but that by which it knows—then it becomes obvious that the *conversio* fulfills this requirement as well. Like every other cognitive *species* for Thomas, the phantasm that mediates the intellect’s knowledge of the singular does not do so by being itself known, but rather by making a material thing sensibly or imaginatively present to the intellect. It is for this reason that Thomas does not say that the intellect knows things *in the phantasm*, but rather that “*in the thing apprehended through the senses*, the intellect knows many things which the senses cannot perceive.”

Hence, while the knowledge of the singular that the intellect has in the *conversio* is indirect in the sense that it is mediated by prior acts of knowing, it is direct insofar as it is not mediated by any objects of knowledge other than the singular. It is only in this latter sense that knowledge needs to be direct for it to qualify as *visio*, as Thomas makes clear when he says that “vision of the intellect is properly had of those things *whose forms offer themselves to it*,” i.e. which are not known as a result of something else being known. In other words, the directness of “seeing” only requires that the object of knowledge be immediate, so an act of knowing is

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191 *Summa Theologiae* I, 78.4, ad 4. Leonine 5.256-57. “[I]n re apprehensa per sensum intellectus multa cognoscit quae sensus percipere non potest. Et similiter aestimativa, licet inferiori modo.”

192 *In Sent. III*, 24.1.3.3 expositio. Mandonnet 3.777. “[U]nde proprie de illis rebus intellectus visio habetur quarum formae se ei offerunt, sed auditus de illis quae non videt.”
direct even if it is necessarily mediated by other acts of knowing; otherwise, one would have to conclude that a sheep does not truly see a wolf since it knows the wolf as wolf by its estimative power, which, as we have noted, depends on the external senses just as much as the intellect does.\footnote{193} Since no objects of knowledge come between the individual and the intellect in the conversio—not even the universal, which is seen in and with the singular—the apprehension given in this return is indeed a knowledge of the singular as directly present, and therefore fulfills the last requirement for aesthetic visio.

We can thus safely conclude that the human aesthetic visio for Thomas is identical with the apprehension of individuals that our intellect has in its return to the phantasm since it is the only kind of knowledge discussed by Thomas that has all the distinguishing features of visio that we identified at the start of this chapter. It is strange that so few Thomists have reasoned to this identity since they recognize that the knowledge of beauty is an intellectual apprehension of an individual, and Thomas makes clear in several texts that this knowledge is only had through the conversio. Ultimately, as John Duffy points out, it seems that what has led neo-Thomists to identify visio with kinds of knowledge other than the conversio is “a certain disparagement of the ordinary limitations of our human intellect, or an impatience with its inability to see things except by a process,” which in turn stems from a misperception of this process as “laborious and ineffective”\footnote{194} because it only yields “abstract” knowledge. Yet, as we have seen, our intellect’s abstraction of its species from the senses does not prevent it from knowing individuals but in fact enables it do so through the senses. Hence, as Duffy observes, human intellectual knowledge for Thomas “is best described by the term ‘abstractive,’ rather than ‘abstract.’”\footnote{195} There is thus no

\footnote{193} See note 191 above of this chapter.\footnote{194} Duffy, “A Philosophy of Poetry,” 62.\footnote{195} Ibid., 20.
reason not to identify aesthetic *visio* with the intellect’s “ordinary knowledge” of individuals in
the *conversio* since this knowledge is actually quite rich and intimate.

Having finally located aesthetic *visio* within Thomas’s theory of knowledge, we can now close this chapter by describing the nature of this *visio* and how it occurs, as well as what these findings tell us about beauty’s meaning and transcendental status.

**Conclusion**

At the start of this chapter, we listed seven marks of aesthetic *visio* implied by Thomas’s statements on seeing in general and the seeing of beauty in particular. After reviewing Thomas’s theory of knowledge, we found that only the intellect’s *apprehension* of an individual being, rather than a judgment about it or an inclination toward it, can fulfill all these conditions, and that the human intellect only enjoys such an apprehension during its return to the phantasm, by which alone singulars are made present to it. Now, Thomas consistently holds throughout his career that the greatest and truest beauties are entirely insensible,¹⁹⁶ and that purely spiritual beings also and especially experience the beauty of the world,¹⁹⁷ so depending on the senses cannot be essential to aesthetic *visio*, but is only an accident of its occurrence in the human being, the lowest of intellectual substances.¹⁹⁸ Hence, a true definition of aesthetic *visio* for Thomas, one applying to both human and super-human knowers, can only be the following: an

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¹⁹⁶ This attitude is implicit throughout Thomas’s writings, and not merely those that are devoted to beauty; however, he explicitly affirms it in the following texts: *In Sent.* I, 3.1 prooemium. Mandonnet 1.89. “Sed invenimus corpora esse speciosa sensibili specie, spiritus autem speciosiores specie intelligibili.” *In Sent.* II, 9.1.5 s.c. 2. Mandonnet 2.242. “[I]n angelis est summa pulchritudo post Deum.” *In Symbolum* 1. Marietti 2.196. “Unde corpora caelestia pulchriora et nobiliora sunt quam corpora inferiora, et invisibilia visibilibus.”

¹⁹⁷ Thomas writes in *Summa Theologiae* I, 108.5 ad 5 that the Cherubim “contemplate in God Himself the beauty of the order of things derived from God.” Leonine 5.500. “. . . in ipso Deo contemplatur pulchritudinem ordinis rerum a Deo derivatam . . .” Likewise, he says that God loves the “spiritual beauty” of the soul. *In Symbolum* 4. Marietti 2.202. “Nam sicut carnalis diligat carnalem pulchritudinem, ita Deus spiritualem quae est pulchritudo animae.”

¹⁹⁸ See p. 177, note 100 above.
intellectual apprehension of an individual being as directly present, in a way that is highly immaterial, changeless, perfect, and free of effort or impediment.

As this definition makes clear, aesthetic *visio* is nothing other than intellectual knowing at its peak, i.e. the act of understanding or intellectually apprehending something, which Thomas calls *intellactus*\(^{199}\) as well as contemplation.\(^{200}\) Such knowing is the goal of all human knowing\(^{201}\) and the *only* kind of knowing for the angels and God\(^{202}\); hence, *visio* will be instanced in as many ways as there are degrees of intellectual knowing. The essence of aesthetic *visio* for Thomas is found in God (or rather *is* God since His Being and Knowledge are identical\(^ {203}\)) because He alone enjoys a perfect vision not only of the Essence of Beauty (namely, Himself), but also of all created beauties as directly present, even those no longer or not yet existing, in His “knowledge of vision.”\(^ {204}\) This infinitely perfect seeing, through proper to the

\(^{199}\) That *visio* is an act of *intellactus* is even indicated by Thomas’s etymological derivation of the latter: “someone is said to understand (intelligere) from the fact that in some fashion he reads (legit) the truth within (intus) the very essence of the thing.” *De veritate* 15.1. Leonine 22/2.479:284-87. “Intellectus enim simplicem et absolutam cognitionem designare videtur; ex hoc enim aliquid intelligere dicitur quod intus in ipsa rei essentia veritatem quodam modo legit.” Since *visio* is identical with the apprehension given by the *conversio*, in which the intellect “turns to perceive the universal nature existing in the singular,” it can just as fittingly be described as a “reading” of the truth within a thing, and is thus a case of *intellactus*. Hence, Pope St. Gregory the Great was not just speaking metaphorically when he said that experiencing the beauty of sacred art is a kind of “reading” in his Letter to Serenus: “The picture is exhibited in church, so that those who cannot read may, by looking at the walls, at least read there what they are unable to read in books.” Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *Medieval Aesthetics*, vol. 2 of *History of Aesthetics*, ed. C. Barrett (The Hague: Mouton,1970), 104.

\(^{200}\) *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 180.3. Leonine 10.426. “Haec est autem differentia inter hominem et angelum, ut patet per Dionysium, VII cap. de Div. Nom., quod angelus simplici apprehensione veritatem intuetur, homo autem quodam processu ex multis pertingit ad intuitum simplicis veritatis. Sic igitur vita contemplativa unum quidem actum habet in quo finaliter perficitur, scilicet contemplationem veritatis, a quo habet unitatem: habet autem multos actus quibus pervenit ad hunc actum finalem. Quorum quidam pertinent ad acceptionem principiorum, ex quibus procedit ad contemplationem veritatis; alii autem pertinent ad deductionem principiorum in veritatem, cuius cognitio inquiritur; ultimus autem completivus actus est ipsa contemplatio veritatis.”

\(^{201}\) See previous note.

\(^{202}\) See p. 183, note 128 above.

\(^{203}\) *Summa Theologiae* I, 14.4. Leonine 4.171. “[I]ntelligere Dei est eius substantia.” For a discussion of how this identity between being and knowledge is unique to God, see Goris, “Angelic Knowledge,” 150-54.

\(^ {204}\) *Summa Theologiae* I, 14.9, cited above in note 16 on p. 154. It seems to me that God’s knowledge of understanding, i.e. His knowledge of things that never have existed and never will, is not an aesthetic *visio*, or perception of beauty, to the same degree as His knowledge of vision. For Thomas, a thing is beautiful insofar as it has existence (*esse*), and the merely possible creatures that God knows with His knowledge of understanding only have existence in God’s Mind as beings of reason, not in reality. Consequently, God’s knowledge of these pure
Divine Intellect alone, is nevertheless shared in by the divinized intellects of the blessed, whom
the light of glory enables to see God and creatures by means of His Essence, in the same way but
by no means to the same degree as God Himself. A far less perfect participation in the divine
aesthetic visio, but supreme in the order of nature unassisted by grace, is the natural knowledge
of the angels, who in virtue of their divinely-infused universal species can see all individuals of a
certain nature now existing, but not those in the past or the future, and can only see God as
reflected in their very being, not as He is in Himself; moreover, the angels can only know by
means of one universal species at a time, and thus do not see everything that they can naturally
know all at once, as they do by their beatific knowledge. The human soul after death enjoys
a still fainter mode of this visio in virtue of infused universal species.

Finally, the weakest form of aesthetic visio belongs to the human intellect in the present
life, whose apprehension of individuals is restricted to sensible things because it occurs in virtue
of intelligible species that have been abstracted from sense experience, and so depends on these
individuals being made present to the intellect by the exterior and interior senses in its return to
the phantasm. Because it is not purely intellectual, the human aesthetic visio is not a simple

possibilities will not be as delightful to Him as His vision of the creatures on whom He has bestowed the beauty of actual existence.

205 Summa Theologiae I, 12, articles 5, 7, 8, and 10 [Leonine 4.123, 127-28, 128-29, 133].
206 Summa Theologiae I, 57.3 ad 3. Leonine 5.75. “[E]a quae praesentia sunt, habent naturam per quam assimilantur speciebus quae sunt in mente angeli: et sic per eas cognosci possunt. Sed quae futura sunt, nondum habent naturam per quam illis assimilentur: unde per eas cognosci non possunt.” Goris, “Angelic Knowledge,” 175-76 and 178-82
208 Summa Theologiae I, 58.2. Leonine 5.81. “Ea vero cognitione qua cognoscunt res per species innatas, omnia illa simul possunt intelligere, quae una specie cognoscuntur; non autem illa quae diversis.”
activity, as are the visions occurring in virtue of God’s Essence or of infused universal *species*, but a composite one. Nevertheless, the human aesthetic *visio* is still a single activity since the sense and intellectual acts that compose it are unified not only by their subject, i.e. the single human knower, but also by an order of knowing in which each level is the material and instrumental cause for the one following it, and whose formal and primary cause is the act of the intellect; in other words, the activities of the lower cognitive powers lay the foundation for and thus make possible the activities of the higher cognitive powers and ultimately of the intellect, which in turn makes use of all the lower powers’ activities as instruments. Consequently, as Therese Cory observes, *visio* that the human intellect enjoys in its turn to the phantasm is “a unified experience of the world in which sense and intellect cooperate, in consonance with the hylomorphic soul-body unity that is the human individual.”

To fully appreciate the composite character of the human aesthetic *visio*, we must review the intricate but rapid process that gives rise to it, which is nothing other than the normal process of knowing that we already examined in Thomas’s thought. The beautiful object first becomes present through the external senses of sight and hearing, whose activities are unified by the common sense into a single experience of the object’s proper and common sensible qualities—

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211 *De veritate* 2.6 ad 3. Leonine 22/1.66-67:131-33. “[N]on enim proprie loquendo sensus aut intellectus cognoscunt sed homo per utrumque, ut patet in I De anima.”

212 *Summa Theologiae* I, 89.5. Leonine 5.380. “Actus autem intellectus ex quibus in praesenti vita scientia acquiritur, sunt per conversionem intellectus ad phantasmata, quae sunt in praedictis viribus sensitivis. Unde per tales actus et ipsi intellectui possibili acquiritur facultas quaedam ad considerandum per species susceptas; et in praedictis inferioribus viribus acquiritur quaedam habilitas ut facilius per conversionem ad ipsas intellectus possit intelligibilia speculari. Sed sicut actus intellectus principaliter quidem et formaliter est in ipso intellectu, materialiter autem et dispositive in inferioribus viribus, idem etiam dicendum est de habitu.”


214 As was mentioned in Chapter One (p. 80), Thomas indicates that aesthetic experience is restricted to the senses of sight and hearing in *Summa Theologiae* I-II. 27.1 ad 3 [Leonine 6.192]. The nature of and explanation for this restriction will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.
i.e. its colors and sounds, shape and dimensions. Since the beautiful object itself is neither a proper nor a common sensible, it is only sensible incidentally, and so is not explicitly grasped with either the external senses or the common sense; thus, *visio* only becomes an experience of the beautiful object as such when the cogitative power grasps the individual with these various sensible qualities *as this individual*. Nevertheless, it is by means of the common sense that we are aware that we are sensing, and consequently that the individual before us actually exists; moreover, we obviously could not have this awareness unless the object was actually being made present to us by the external senses. Hence, both the external senses and the common sense are evidently crucial for enjoying beauty as actually present rather than as merely imagined.

While the receptive sense powers are thus sufficient to make the beautiful being present, seeing it *as beautiful* requires an evaluation of the object as an instance of its kind. The human aesthetic *visio* is therefore greatly assisted by the retentive sense powers, i.e. the imagination and memory, which bring forward previously sensed singulars of the same nature to which the object can be compared. Nevertheless, the internal sense power that plays the most important role in assessing the beauty of an object is the cogitative power since the kind of knowledge that it has as an instrument of the intellect—namely, experience (*experimentum*)—enables it to grasp the nature of the beautiful object, though only as a commonality rather than a true universal, and thus helps the intellect to grasp this nature *as a universal*. What is more, the intellect cannot apply its

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215 The common sensible qualities are those that can be perceived by multiple senses or even all of them, such as number or shape. See *In De anima* II, 25 [Leonine 45/1.177-81] for Thomas’s treatment of them.

216 As Thomas explains in *In De anima* II, 13 [Leonine 45/1.118-22], something is only sensible incidentally or *per accidens* if it happens to be united in reality to something that is in its perceptible by one of the external senses. For instance, a sugar cube is only visible *per accidens* but its white color is visible *per se*.

217 See *In De anima* II, 13 [Leonine 45/1.121-22:191-222]. See also Alfred Leo White, Jr., “The Experience of Individual Objects in Aquinas” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2000), 192-98.

knowledge of a universal—that is, perceive the common nature in some particular—without the experience of that common nature provided by the cogitative power.

Finally, even in those cases where experience does not help the intellect grasp a true universal, it can still enable a person to make a more or a less trustworthy appraisal of a thing’s beauty since experience enables one to compare the present individual with the rest of its kind. Of course, a judgment based on experience will be less able to explain itself than one based on properly intellectual knowledge since experience enables a man to know that something is the case, but not to know why as the man of science or art does. In fact, it is obvious that the vast majority of aesthetic judgments, even true ones, are based primarily on experience since it is rare that a person can give an account of why something they consider beautiful is actually so, as would be possible if their judgment was based on knowledge strictly speaking. Human beings thus rely heavily on their cogitative power for the many decisions they must make every day about what is and is not beautiful, and consequently what is and is not worthy of admiration.

Despite this dependence of visio on the cogitative power, which a growing number of scholars has rightly pointed out, we must emphasize that the activity of the cogitative is still only a material and instrumental cause of aesthetic visio, which is essentially an activity of the intellect. Specifically, it is the apprehension performed by the intellect in its conversio or return

\[\text{219} \text{ Indeed, knowledge in the strict sense regarding most cases of beauty may well be impossible for man in this life.}\]
\[\text{220} \text{ Hence, the airbrushed and hyper-sexualized images of today’s popular culture are so damaging to the minds and souls of men and women because these illusions deform the cogitative power with a false “experience” of how the human person is supposed to look, to act, and to be treated by members of the opposite sex.}\]
\[\text{221} \text{ Waddell, “Truth Beloved,” 47; Dasseleer, “Esthétique ‘thomiste’,” 333; Granados, Esbozo, 49 and 53; Lobato, Ser y Belleza, 69; Andrey Ivanov, “Prazer e apreensão na caracterização do belo segundo Tomás de Aquino,” Scintilla: Revista de filosofia e mística medieval 5 (2008): 76. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these and other scholars who write on the cogitative power in Thomas’s thought might be exaggerating its importance when they imply that it is a necessary step in Thomas’s account of abstraction. After all, as we mentioned above on p. 175, it seems that the intellect can abstract certain universals from the phantasm without the help of the cogitative power, which might be why Thomas does not usually mention it in his descriptions of abstraction.}\]
to the phantasm, in which the intellect considers the beautiful object as an instance of its nature, in virtue of an intelligible *species* that it already possessed or has just abstracted. After all, as was noted in this chapter’s introduction, for Thomas both intelligible and sensible beauty are founded on a thing’s nature, so perceiving a thing as beautiful requires seeing it, not just as an individual having traits in common with other individuals, as the cogitative knows it, but as a being with an essence, which only the intellect can do.

While aesthetic *visio* thus begins with the intellect’s *conversio* to the phantasm, this *visio* is not fully pleasing and so not truly aesthetic until after the intellect has made a judgment about the beauty it is perceiving in the object, as multiple scholars have pointed out. The reason is that beauty only delights insofar as it is apprehended, and, unlike the divine and angelic intellects, the human intellect does not apprehend a thing’s being (and therefore its beauty) all at once, but must first grasp the thing’s various aspects, i.e. its quiddity, properties, and accidents, by different acts of knowing. As a result, not only will the beauty of the whole being elude the human intellect so long as it is occupied with the being’s parts, but *visio* itself will be fragmented and discursive, roving from one facet of the thing to the next, and so will neither be changeless, perfect, nor free of effort and impediment, as aesthetic *visio* must be.

Both of these problems are solved by the judgment, in which the intellect attains the existence of the beautiful object by affirming of it the perfections that have been perceived in

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^222 See p. 150 above.
^224 *Summa Theologiae* I, 85.5. Leonine 5.341. “Cum enim intellectus humanus exeat de potentia in actum, similitudinem quandam habet cum rebus generabilibus, quae non statim perfectionem suam habent, sed eam successive acquirunt. Et similiter intellectus humanus non statim in prima apprehensione capit perfectam rei cognitionem; sed primo apprehendit aliquid de ipsa, puta quidditatem ipsius rei, quae est primum et proprium obiectum intellectus; et deinde intelligit proprietates et accidentia et habitudines circumstantes rei essentiam.”
it, and by which it is consequently able “to reduce to one” the things that it has understood “separately.” What follows is aesthetic *visio* as such, in which subject and accident, whole and part, and even the individual being and its nature are grasped in a unity that is seen to be fitting and perfect, and is consequently pleasing; as Eco aptly expresses it, aesthetic *visio* “is not the same thing as the *compositio*” or “combining operation” that “is a part of judgment,” but “is, rather, an ‘apprehension’ of the structural harmony that *compositio* has brought to light.”

Having been preceded by a judgment, aesthetic *visio* may in turn spontaneously give rise to a judgment (even a spoken one) that the thing seen and delighted in is beautiful, i.e. what is known as aesthetic judgment, and whose nature we will discuss more in the next chapter. Still, it is not the case, as certain scholars argue, that aesthetic experience is complete only after such a judgment since for Thomas beauty is defined not by a judgment one makes about it but by the delight one takes in it, which delight is therefore what truly completes aesthetic experience.

This account, in which aesthetic perception comes only after many steps and finally a judgment, may seem to contradict the spontaneous pleasure that we experience in seeing beauty. As Duffy observes, however, “a little thought convinces anyone that he is continually judging, with amazing instantaneousness,” so the complexity of the human aesthetic *visio* does not mean that it is arduous. Moreover, if *visio* follows a judgment because the judgment perfects our apprehension of the thing’s beauty, it follows that further judgments resulting from further

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226 *In Sent.* I, 19.5.1 ad 7, cited above in note 123 on p. 182.
230 As Francis Donnelly has observed, “a judgment, ‘This is beautiful,’” may precede, accompany or follow the intellect’s perception of beauty, “but explicit assertion of such a judgment does not seem any more necessary than a judgment, ‘This is true,’ should be explicitly formulated for every proposition of logical truth,” Francis P. Donnelly, “Where and Why of Beauty’s Pleasure,” *Thought* 5 (1930): 261-71.
reasoning about the thing yield further increases in the perfection and the pleasure of *visio*.

Hence, aesthetic experience does not consist solely in moments of rest in a *visio* or *intellectus*, but also includes periods of effort to attain new insight into the object by means of reasoning or *ratio*. What is more, since *ratio* “is related to *intellectus* as its origin and term,”232 each *visio* is not only the conclusion and reward of one line of reasoning, but also the platform and incitement for another, in a process of ever-deepening acquaintance with the object that will likewise cause ever-increasing pleasure, at least until the knower becomes too tired to continue this activity at its highest pitch.233 We must therefore agree with Eco that, notwithstanding the popular view among contemporary Thomists that aesthetic experience is “effortless,” for Thomas aesthetic delight “signifies, not an absence, but a cessation, of effort,” and is thus “a sense of joy and triumph, of pleasure in a form which has been discerned, admired, and loved.”234

We must therefore likewise reject, or at least qualify, the other popular neo-Thomist view that aesthetic knowledge is “non-conceptual.” If this statement only means that the knowledge of beauty is not mediated by the more direct knowledge of a concept, then it is correct but also misleading since if one confuses the concept with the intelligible *species* (as many do), one might conclude that the “non-conceptual” character of *visio* means that it does not even occur in virtue of an intelligible *species*—a view that we have seen is indeed held by Maritain and his followers, despite its patent contradiction of Thomas’s thought. If, however, calling aesthetic experience “non-conceptual” means that concepts are not at all involved in it, then this statement is entirely false since we have just seen that reasoning and judgments, which are made up of

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232 *De veritate* 15.1. Leonine 22/2.479:297-301. “[I]ta etiam et ratio quae comparatur ad intellectum ut motus ad quietem . . . Comparatur [ratio] ad intellectum ut ad principium et ut ad terminum . . .”

233 O’Reilly has a good description of the reasoning that takes place during aesthetic experience in *Aesthetic Perception*, 41-42, 46.

concepts, both nourish and are nourished by the apprehension of a beautiful object, and thus are inseparable from the experience of beauty. Hence, it seems best to drop the description of aesthetic knowledge for Thomas as “non-conceptual” or as an “intuition” since it is better suited to the subjectivist aesthetics from which it takes its origin, namely that of Kant, for whom beauty is a mere phenomenon rather than something real, and so is not experienced by knowing things in themselves (which for him is impossible anyway). For Thomas, however, beauty is not only real but the whole of reality since it is identical with being; thus, it only makes sense that for Thomas our knowledge of beauty is really just knowledge plain and simple, and so involves concepts, judgments, and reasoning. After all, it simply follows from his aesthetic objectivism that for Thomas the experience of beauty pleases us not because we are seeing reality differently during that experience, but because what we are seeing is especially perfect.

Our conclusion that aesthetic knowledge is simply the apex of “ordinary” knowledge is not surprising since, as was mentioned at the start of this chapter, Thomas never implies anything otherwise; nevertheless, this conclusion is still significant for our main inquiry because it seems to cast doubt on beauty’s being a distinct transcendental. After all, if the “certain relation” to the cognitive power that beauty adds to goodness is not a relation to a special kind of knowledge, then it is hard to conceive what it could be. Hence, at this point it seems more likely that, as Aertsen claims, the relation that beauty adds to goodness is identical with that which truth adds to being, in which case beauty is not a distinct transcendental. Nevertheless, the proper effect of beauty is not to be seen but to please when seen, so there might yet be a unique relation to the

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235 See Summa Theologiae I, 85.2 ad 3 and 85.5, cited above on p. 179, in notes 112 and 114 respectively. It should be noted that, in these and other texts, Thomas refers to judgment and reasoning as “conceptions,” not “concepts.”

cognitive power that our next chapter’s investigation of aesthetic pleasure could reveal.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE DELIGHT OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Introduction

The last chapter showed that, because only the intellect can recognize beings as beautiful, while only the outer and inner senses can make them present to man’s intellect, the human vision of beauty involves every level of our cognitive powers. This perception will likewise involve at least as many levels of pleasure as it does levels of knowledge since pleasure follows on perfect activity, and aesthetic *visio* is such an activity. Yet not every one of these pleasures, or even their sum, will necessarily be the delight proper to beauty since one of them might be essentially caused by beauty and the others only accidentally. One thus cannot simply identify aesthetic pleasure with any or all of the delights arising from aesthetic *visio*, but must rather examine each one to see whether it has the characteristics needed for it to be the proper effect of beauty.

A. Candidates for Aesthetic Pleasure

Before considering the various pleasures that Thomas distinguishes in the experience of beauty, it is important to note that there is one kind of pleasure that he entirely excludes from that experience: namely, pleasure in the anticipation of physical goods such as food and sex. For some philosophers such pleasure is not only part of aesthetic experience but even essential to it. Thomas Hobbes, for example, predictably defines beauty as that “which by some apparent signes promiseth Good,” where “Good” ultimately means what is agreeable to a bodily appetite since for him “pleasures of the mind” are ones that merely “arise from the Expectation” of “pleasures

Thomas, however, rejects this view in \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 91.3 ad 3:

[S]enses are given to man, not only for the sake of procuring the necessities of life, as with other animals, but also for the sake of knowing. Hence, while the rest of the animals do not delight in sensible objects except in relation to food and sex, \textit{man alone delights in the very beauty of sensible objects for its own sake}.\footnote{Leonine 5.394. “[S]ensus sunt dati homini non solum ad vitae necessaria procuranda, sicut aliis animalibus; sed etiam ad cognoscendum. Unde, cum cetera animalia non delectentur in sensibilibus nisi per ordinem ad cibos et venerea, solus homo delectatur in ipsa pulchritudine sensibilium secundum seipsam.”} Here Thomas explicitly distinguishes delighting in sensible beauty “for its own sake” (\textit{secundum seipsam}) from delighting in it “as ordered to food and sex,” i.e. as promising future bodily goods. An example of the latter pleasure, as he says in a parallel passage, is when “the lion delights in seeing a stag or hearing its voice for the sake of food.”\footnote{\textit{Summa Theologiae} II-II, 141.4 ad 3. Leonine 10.126. “[L]eo delectatur videns cervum vel audiens vocem eius, propter cibum.” Cf. \textit{In Ethic.} III, 19 [Leonine 47/1.182:187-214]. Thomas takes this example, as well as the view that animals do not delight in sensing as man does, from Aristotle’s \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} III.10, 1118a18-24. Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, trans. J.A. Smith, in Vol. 2 of \textit{The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation}, edited by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1765.} Hence, pleasure in the anticipation of bodily goods is not even accidentally involved in aesthetic experience for Thomas.

In fact, this text helps us to demonstrate that \textit{any} pleasure in the anticipation of future goods, even spiritual ones, is excluded from aesthetic experience for Thomas since he tells us that the reason “man alone” delights in beauty for its own sake is that he uses his senses not just for survival “but also for the sake of knowing.” This statement indicates that the pleasure caused
by beauty arises *solely* from the knowledge of it, which is confirmed by his definition of beauty as “that the *mere* (*ipsa*) apprehension of which pleases.” Yet pleasure in the anticipation of future possession, i.e. the pleasure caused by hope, results not only from knowledge, but also from “the faculty or power of attaining the good that delights,” which power of attainment need not be real but must be “at least supposed.” Hence, the moment one begins to delight in the expectation of possessing a beautiful thing in the future, one has ceased to experience it as *beautiful* since one is no longer delighting merely in knowing it.

While excluding the pleasure caused by hope from the experience of beauty may seem arbitrary, it in fact follows from the nature of beauty for Thomas. After all, as Thomas notes, both goodness and beauty please, so the only distinction between the two is that the good

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5 *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “[I]ta quod bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitu; pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.” It might be objected that, since *ipsa* can also be translated as “itself” or “very” rather than “mere,” Thomas is not necessarily saying here that aesthetic pleasure is caused *solely* by the knowledge of beauty. As we will discuss in more depth on p. 233, however, Thomas holds that, since a person cannot take delight in something of which he is unaware, one of the three causes of every pleasure is the knowledge of the pleasing object. Consequently, if Thomas only meant here that aesthetic pleasure is caused at least *partially* by the apprehension of it, then the delight caused by beauty would not differ at all from the delight caused by the good, which is also partially caused by a knowledge of the good object. In that case, beauty would not differ in meaning from the good, as Thomas states in this passage. Hence, the only interpretation of this text that makes sense is the following: what distinguishes the beautiful from the good is that, whereas the delight brought about by goodness is caused at least partially by the knowledge of it, the delight brought about by beauty is always caused *solely* by the knowledge of it. It is for these reasons that I consider “mere” the best translation of *ipsa*.

6 After all, the object of hope is defined as a future good that is difficult but not impossible to attain, as Thomas explains in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 40.1. Leonine 6.265. “Circa obiectum autem spei, quatuor conditiones attenduntur. Primo quidem, quod sit bonum. . . . Secundo, ut sit futurum. . . . Tertio, requiritur quod sit aliquid arduum cum difficultate adipiscibile. . . . Quarto, quod illud arduum sit possibile adipisci . . .”

7 *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 32.3, corpus. Leonine 6.226. “[D]electatio spei, in qua non solum est delectabilis coniunctio secundum apprehensionem, sed etiam secundum facultatem vel potestatem adipiscendi bonum quod delectat . . .” Ibid., ad 1. Ibid. “[S]pes et memoria sunt quidem eorum quae sunt simpliciter absentia, quae tamen secundum quid sunt praesentia, scilicet vel secundum apprehensionem solam; vel secundum apprehensionem et facultatem, ad minus aestimatam.”

8 This conclusion might appear to contradict *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2 ad 1, which says that spiritual beauty is necessarily taken as good in itself and thus always causes a desire to possess it. Leonine 10.147. “Quod autem in ipsa apprehensione appetitum decorum, accipitur ut conveniens et bonum. . . . Unde et ipsum honestum, secundum quod habet spiritualem decorem, appetibile redditur.” Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.2 [Leonine 6.193], which says that the contemplation of spiritual beauty is the beginning of spiritual love. “Et similiter contemplatio spiritualis pulchritudinis vel bonitatis, est principium amoris spiritualis.” The contradiction is only apparent, however, since the fact that beauty causes desire for itself does not necessarily mean that the reason for its delight is the anticipation of possessing it; moreover, as we will see (p. 267, note 187 below), there is a good reason that, although beauty is defined as *satisfying* when seen, it usually arouses a desire for further possession of it.
“pleases the appetite absolutely,” i.e. under any circumstances, whereas the beautiful pleases solely in being apprehended.⁹ Hence, if the pleasure of hope were part of aesthetic experience, so that beauty delighted not just in being known but also in being hoped for, experiencing a being as beautiful would no longer differ from experiencing it as good, and thus beauty would not differ in meaning from goodness, as Thomas says it does.¹⁰

We can thus exclude from the experience of beauty for Thomas all pleasures caused by something in addition to the knowing activity since to delight in beauty not merely as an object of knowledge but also for some other reason (e.g. as part of one’s property, as a means to some other good, etc.) is not to experience it as beautiful. Hence, the only pleasures that can be part of aesthetic experience, and are therefore candidates for the essential pleasure of beauty, are those arising solely from the activity of knowing itself. Since there are two levels of human knowing, the pleasures involved in aesthetic experience come in two basic types: pleasure caused by the activity of the senses, and pleasure caused by the activity of the intellect.

1. Pleasures of Sense

Thomas sometimes implies that the sense powers themselves experience delight in knowing beauty, as when he says that “the sight delights in beautiful colors.”¹¹ Indeed, even in one of his primary texts on beauty, Summa Theologiae I, 5.4 ad 1, Thomas tells us that “beauty consists in due proportion” for the reason that “sense delights in things duly proportioned as in things similar to itself.”¹² That Thomas is speaking loosely in these passages, however, is evident

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⁹ See Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 [Leonine 6.192], cited in note 5 of this chapter.
¹⁰ Ibid. “[P]ulchrum est idem bono, sola ratione differens.”
¹² Leonine 4.61. “ . . . quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite proportionatis, sicut in sibi similibus . . .”
from *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 11.1, where, in the course of proving that “enjoyment is the act of the appetitive power,” Thomas actually considers the objection that “sensible pleasure pertains to the sense, which delights in its object, and for the same reason intellectual delight pertains to the intellect”; therefore, since “enjoyment implies a certain delight,” the objection concludes that “enjoyment pertains to the apprehensive power, and not to the appetitive.” Thomas replies that “in delight there are two things, namely the perception of agreeableness, which pertains to the apprehensive power, and complacency in that which is presented as agreeable,” which “pertains to the appetitive power”; consequently, it is in the appetite that “the nature (ratio) of delight is completed.” This text shows that the power by which a man properly experiences delight is always an appetite, even when the cause of the delight is the perfection of the cognitive power. It follows that every pleasure in aesthetic experience has as its immediate subject one of the two appetitive powers in the human soul: pleasures following on the apprehension of the senses will be the acts of the sense appetite, while pleasures following on the apprehension of the intellect will be the acts of the intellectual appetite, i.e. the will.

Hence, the power by which man experiences pleasure on the level of the senses in seeing

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16 *Summa Theologiae* I, 80.2. Leonic 5.284. “[N]ecessa est dicere appetitum intellectivum esse aliam potentiam a sensitivo. Potentia enim appetitiva est potentia passiva, quae nata est moveri ab apprehenso: unde appetibile apprehensum est movens non motum, appetitus autem movens motum, ut dicitur in III de Anima, et XII Metaphys. Passiva autem et mobilia distinguuntur secundum distinctionem activorum et motivorum: quia oportet motivum esse proportionatum mobili, et activum passivo; et ipsa potentia passiva propria rationem habet ex ordine ad suum activum. Quia igitur est alterius generis apprehensum per intellectum et apprehensum per sensum, consequens est quod appetitus intellectivus sit alia potentia a sensitivo.” Cajetan Chereso comes to the same conclusion as we have in *Honor and Beauty*, 6, as does Maritain in *Art and Scholasticism*, 167-8, note 57.
beauty can only be the sense appetite or sensuality, which is “nothing but the appetitive power of the sensitive part of the soul,” and whose proper object is therefore “a thing which is good or agreeable for the one sensing,” i.e. something conducive to the health of our sensitive or animal nature, which “happens in two ways.” First, sensuality desires that which is “agreeable to the very existence of the one sensing, such as food and drink, and other things of this kind”; as we saw, delight in anticipating these physical goods is entirely excluded from aesthetic experience for Thomas, so it is not for the sake of these goods that sensuality delights in beauty. Secondly, however, sensuality seeks that which is “agreeable to the sense for sensing, just as a beautiful color is agreeable for sight to see and a modulated sound agreeable for hearing to hear, and likewise of the others.” Thomas here confirms that our sensuality can delight in beauty, insofar as a beautiful object conduces to the health of the sense powers and thus of the human being.

Why, however, are certain objects more agreeable to the senses than others? The reason, as Thomas says in his In De anima, is that every sense power is “a certain proportion,” as shown by the facts that “proportion is destroyed by excess” and each sense is harmed by “an excessive sense-object”: hearing by “excessively high- or low-pitched” sounds, taste by “an excessively flavored thing” (i.e. too sweet or sour), sight by what is “very bright or dark,” and smell by a “strong odor.” One would thus expect the most pleasant sense objects to be a “proportionate mixture” of “pure sensible qualities,” just as “in flavors, when something is either sour, or sweet, or salty according to a due proportion”—which is precisely what we experience:

And always, what is mixed is more delightful than what is simple, just as harmony [is more delightful] than only a high voice, or only a low voice. And in

17 De veritate 25.1. Leonine 22/3.728-730:111-13, 208-16. “[S]ensualitas nihil aliud esse videtur quam vis appetitiva sensitivae partis. . . . Sic ergo sensualitatis proprium objectum est res bona vel conveniens sentienti; quod quidem contingit dupliciter: uno modo quia est conveniens ad ipsum esse sentientes, ut cibus et potus et alia huiusmodi; alio modo quia est conveniens sensui ad sentiendum, sicut color pulcher est conveniens visui ad videndum et sonus moderatus auditui ad audiendum, et sic de aliis.”
touch, what is composed of the hot and the cold. For the sense delights in things proportioned as in things similar to it, for the reason that sense is a certain proportion.  

As we have already seen, it is for this very reason—namely, that the sense is “a proportion, as is every cognitive power,” and therefore “delights in things duly proportioned as in things similar to itself”—that Thomas concludes in *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1 that “beauty consists in due proportion.” It thus appears that Thomas considers some degree of pleasantness to the senses (or at least lack of painfulness) to be necessary for sensible beauty, which accords with common sense since a thing cannot be experienced as beautiful, i.e. as pleasing when seen, if it pains the very cognitive powers by which we know it. For Thomas, then, sense pleasure not only has a role in human aesthetic experience, but an important one.

Nonetheless, it is clear that sense pleasure cannot be beauty’s proper delight for Thomas, not only from the fact that he thinks there are entirely non-sensible beauties (such as the soul and the angels), but even from his views on the experience of sensible beauty. As we saw, Thomas explicitly denies that animals other than man can delight in beauty for its own sake. Yet he also makes clear in *Summa I*, 78.4 that animals can experience pleasure in the agreeable stimulation of their senses: “it is necessary for the animal that it seek or flee certain things, not only because they are agreeable or not agreeable for sensing, but also for the sake of certain other advantages and utilities, or harms, just as the sheep flees when it sees the wolf approaching, not because of

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18 *In De anima* III, 2. Leonine 45/1.181:226-44. “Et quia quelibet proportio corruptitur per superhabundanciam, idcirco excellens sensibiles corruptit sensum, sicut quod est excellenter graue et acutum corruptit audium, et excellens saporesum corruptit gustum, et fortiter fulgidum uel obscurum corruptit uisum, et fortis odor corruptit odoratam, quasi sensus sit quedam proportio. Set si pura sensibilia deducuntur ad proportionatam mitionem, efficuntur delectabilia, sicut in saporibus quando aliquid secundum debitam proportionem est acutum aut dulce aut salsum; tunc enim sunt [omnino] delectabilia. Et omnino quod est mixtum est magis delectabile quam quod est simplex, sicut symphonia quam uox acuta uantum uel grauis tantum, et in tactu quod est compositum ex calefactibili et frigidabili; sensus enim in proportionatis delectatur, sicuti in sibi similibus, eo quod sensus est proportio quedam; set excellenta corruptu sunt sensum uel saltum contristant ipsum.”

19 Leonine 4.61. “Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit: quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite proportionatis, sicut in sibi similibus; nam et sensus ratio quedam est, et omnis virtus cognoscitiva.”
unbecomingness in color or shape, but as harmful to nature.”20 That for Thomas animals can take delight in things proportioned to their senses naturally results from his view that, like human beings, sub-rational animals have a sense appetite or sensuality, which delights not only in that which is “agreeable to the very existence of the one sensing,” but also in “that which is agreeable to the sense for sensing,” such as “a beautiful color” or “a modulated sound.”21 What follows is that for Thomas aesthetic pleasure is not the same as sense pleasure in the agreeable stimulation of the senses since animals are capable of the latter but not of the former.

Furthermore, if these two pleasures were identical for Thomas, then he would have no explanation for why man, unlike the other animals, takes so much delight in beauty. As Thomas says when he ranks the senses according to how much pleasure they cause, it is touch that gives the greatest sensual delight, or pleasure “by reason of usefulness,”22 because “the usefulness of sensible things depends on their relation to the preservation” of the animal; consequently, since touch has awareness of things that constitute the very life of the animal, i.e. “of hot and cold and the like,” its delights are “greater, as if nearer to the end.” Thus, for example, a warm fire during winter and a cool breeze during summer give far more intense delight to the sense appetite than seeing a bright color or hearing a sweet sound. Moreover, Thomas says that it is because touch gives the greatest sensual pleasure that the animals other than man do not delight in objects of the higher senses “except in relation to the objects of touch”; apparently, according to Thomas,

20 Leonine 5.256. “[N]ecessarium est animali ut quaerat aliqua vel fugiat, non solum quia sunt convenientia vel non convenientia ad sentiendum, sed etiam propter aliquas alias commoditates et utilitates, sive nocentia: sicut ovis videns lupum venientem fugit, non propter indecentiam coloris vel figurae, sed quasi inimicum naturae; et similiter avis colligit paleam, non quia delectet sensum, sed quia est utilis ad nidificandum.”
21 See De veritate 25.1, cited in note 17 on p. 216.
22 Summa Theologiae I-II, 31.6. Leonine 6.220. “Si autem loquamur de delectatione sensus quae est ratione utilitatis, sic maxima delectatio est secundum tactum.” It is evident that the delight “by reason of usefulness” discussed here is the same as the pleasure experienced by the sense appetite or sensuality since we saw in De veritate 25.1 (cited above in note 17 on p. 216) that what sensuality desires is “a thing which is good or agreeable for the one sensing,” i.e. a thing that is useful to the animal, either for the health of the animal as a whole or for the health of its senses.
the reason that “dogs do not delight in the smell of hares, but in eating them, nor the lion in the
voice of the ox, but in devouring it,” is that the sense pleasure given by smelling hares or hearing
oxen bellow is paltry in comparison to the sense pleasure given by eating them. 23 Now, Thomas
holds that beauty “chiefly” (praecipue) relates to the senses of sight and hearing, 24 so for him the
experience of sensible beauty must afford much less sense pleasure than experiences relating to
the lower senses, such as a delicious meal or a warm bath. Therefore, if aesthetic pleasure were
the same as sense pleasure, then, like the other animals, man would derive little pleasure from
the experience of beautiful objects, and consequently would only delight in seeing or hearing
them insofar as they promised future physical pleasures—which Thomas explicitly denies when
he says that “man alone delights in the very beauty of sensible objects for its own sake.” 25

If aesthetic pleasure is not the same as sense pleasure, then, by process of elimination, it
must be an instance of the only other kind of pleasure that is caused by the senses for Thomas,
i.e. pleasure “on account of knowing” 26; moreover, placing aesthetic pleasure in this category of
delight resolves several of the problems we have encountered in this section. For one thing, it
would explain why only human beings can delight in sensible beauty since, as Thomas notes,
taking pleasure in sensation “on account of knowing” is unique to man because “it is proper to
man to apprehend knowledge itself as something good.” 27 What is more, Thomas tells us that

23 Ibid. Ibid. “‘Utilitas enim sensibilium attenditur secundum ordinem ad conservationem naturae animalis.
   Ad hanc autem utilitatem propinquius se habent sensibilia tactus: est enim tactus cognoscitivus eorum ex quibus
   consistit animal, scilicet calidi et frigidii, et huimodii. Unde secundum hoc, delectiones quae sunt secundum
   tactum, sunt maiores, quasi fini propinquiore. Et propter hoc etiam, alia animalia, quae non habent delectionationem
   secundum sensum nisi ratione utilitatis, non delectantur secundum alios sensus, nisi in ordine ad sensibilia tactus: neque
   enim odoribus leporum canes gaudent, sed cibatione; neque leo voce bovis, sed comestione . . .’”
   maxime cognoscenti sunt, scilicet visus et auditus ratione deservientes: dicimus enim pulchra visibilia et pulchros
   sonos.”
25 Summa Theologiae I, 91.3 ad 3, cited above on p. 212.
26 Summa Theologiae I-II, 31.6. Leonine 6.220. “[S]icut iam dictum est, unumquodque, inquantum amatur,
efficitat delectabile. Sensus autem . . . propter duo diliguntur: scilicet propter cognitionem, et propter utilitatem . . .”
27 Ibid. Ibid. “Sed quia apprehendere ipsam cognitionem tanquam bonum quoddam, proprium est hominis;
pleasure “on account of knowing” is found more in sight than in any other sense, and that, as a result, while touch gives more pleasure than sight does insofar as the latter “remains within the limits of sense pleasure,” sight gives the greatest pleasure among the senses “inasmuch as sight serves the intellect” since “pleasures of intellect are greater than those of sense.” Hence, if aesthetic pleasure is an instance of pleasure “on account of knowing,” then it is understandable that man takes so much delight in the experience of beauty since this kind of pleasure is found most in the higher senses (i.e. sight and hearing, to which beauty relates), and is the greatest delight that the senses can give. Most of all, identifying aesthetic pleasure as a case of pleasure “on account of knowing” would accord with the fact that for Thomas sensible beauty is defined as a disposition of the sensible qualities of a thing that “conforms (convenit) to the nature of the thing”—a statement showing that the primary reason for man’s delight in a being’s sensible beauty is not its conformity to his senses, but rather its intrinsic “fittingness” (convenientia), or conformity to nature, which only the intellect is capable of recognizing. Thomas confirms this impression when he tells us that “those senses chiefly look to the beautiful that are maximally knowing, namely sight and hearing when ministering to reason,” which shows that that sensible beauty does not primarily delight the senses, but rather the intellect through the senses.

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28 Ibid. Leonine 6.220-21. “Siigitur loquamur de delectatione sensus quae est ratione cognitionis, manifestum est quod secundum visum est maior delectatio quam secundum aliquem alium sensum. . . . Cum igitur delectatio tactus sit maxima ratione utilitatis, delectatio autem visus ratione cognitionis; si quis utramque comparare velit, inveniet simpliciter delectionem tactus esse maiorem delectatione visus, secundum quod sistit infra limites sensibilis delectionis. Quia manifestum est quod id quod est naturale in unoquoque, est potentissimum. Huissiodi autem delectiones tactus sunt ad quas ordinatur concupiscentiae naturales, sicut cibi, et venerea, et huiusmodi. Sed si consideremus delectiones visus, secundum quod visus deservit intellectui; sic delectiones visus erunt potiores, ea ratione qua et intelligibiles delectiones sunt potiores sensibilibus.”

29 Summa Theologiae I-II, 49.2 ad 1. Leonine 6.311. “Unde et ipsae figurae et passibiles qualitates, secundum quod considerantur ut convenientes vel non convenientes naturae rei, pertinent ad habitus vel dispositiones: nam figura, prout convenit naturae rei, et color, pertinent ad pulchritudinem . . .”

30 As others have pointed out, one proof that conformity to nature is more important than conformity to the senses in the experience of beauty is that, even though one’s favorite color is often much brighter when artificially produced (e.g. blue paint), one delights more in seeing it where it normally occurs in nature (e.g. a blue sky).

If aesthetic pleasure is thus a pleasure “on account of knowing,” then it will be found not only in sensation but also and primarily in intellection; moreover, even when one experiences this pleasure in the act of sensation, the actual subject of this pleasure is not the sensitive part of the soul but rather the intellective, which is why only sensitive beings with intellects (i.e. human beings) can experience it. Hence, properly speaking, pleasure “on account of knowing” is not a sense pleasure but an intellectual or spiritual pleasure, and so cannot be fully understood until we have examined the delights arising from the activity of the intellect in aesthetic experience.

2. Pleasures of Intellect

Since pleasure “on account of knowing” is not only unique to man but also greatest in the higher senses, as Thomas also says of aesthetic pleasure, one might conclude that the two are simply identical. Such a conclusion would be premature for, as we will see shortly, there are actually two different kinds of pleasure “on account of knowing”; thus, while there is no question at this point that aesthetic pleasure falls within the genus of pleasure in knowledge, it might not be coterminous with it. We will begin by considering the kind of pleasure in knowing to which Thomas devotes the most attention: pleasure in the very act of knowing.

i. Pleasure in the Act of Knowing

As ought to be expected, one finds Thomas’s primary discussion of the pleasures “on account of knowing” in his treatment of the contemplative life: *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 180. The seventh article asks whether there is any delight in this life, to which Thomas replies that “any particular act of contemplation can give pleasure in two ways.” First, contemplation can delight “by reason of the operation itself” because of man’s nature as a knower:
Delightful to each one is the operation suitable to him according to his own nature or habit. Contemplation of the truth, however, befits a man according to his nature, insofar as he is a rational animal. From which it results that all men by nature desire to know, and consequently they delight in the knowledge of truth. And still more delightful does this become to one who has the habit of wisdom and knowledge, from which it happens that someone contemplates without difficulty.32

While Thomas is here speaking of this delight specifically as caused by intellectual activity, he makes clear that it also arises from sense knowledge earlier in the quaeestio, where he says that “the appetitive power moves one to observe something either sensibly or intelligibly . . . sometimes . . . for love of the very knowledge that one acquires by observation.”33

This delight in the very act of knowing has been identified as the essence of aesthetic pleasure by the vast majority of Thomists, as we mentioned in Chapter Two. One of the first to express this opinion was Leonard Callahan, who writes that aesthetic pleasure is the fulfillment of the mind’s “innate and unquenchable desire of knowledge,” a “tendency” that “is naturally directed with greater force” towards those beings “in which the object of the intellect,” i.e. the form or quiddity, “stands out in greatest prominence”; as a result, this desire especially delights in “works of beauty” since “their form . . . shines forth with a peculiar brilliancy.”34 Callahan’s view is seconded not only by Gilson, who says that the cause of aesthetic pleasure is “not so much the thing itself as the good of apprehending it,”35 but also by Maritain, who writes that


33 Summa Theologiae II-II, 180.1. Leonine 10.424. “Moveret autem vis appetitiva ad aliquid inspicendum, vel sensibiliter vel intelligibiliter . . . quandoque . . . propter amorem ipsius cognitionis quam quis ex inspectione consequitur.” For a parallel passage, see In Sent. IV, 49.3.3.2 [Mandonnet 4.1219].


“beauty makes us delighted in the very act of knowing.”  

More recently, Armand Maurer has said that “the call of the beautiful is different” from that of the good since in the experience of beauty “what delights us is not precisely the thing itself but the sight of the thing,” likewise, Jordan writes that “the appetite brought to rest” by beauty “is cognitive,” i.e. “an appetite to know and to gaze upon what mind was made to know.” In fact, this view seems to find support from just about every Thomist writing on aesthetic pleasure over the last two hundred years.

While most of the Thomists holding this position do not argue for it, it is not difficult to see the reasoning that is implicit in the quotations above: if a thing cannot please without being possessed (as Thomas makes clear), and if beauty pleases merely when seen and so without being possessed, then the reason for aesthetic delight must not be the beautiful being itself, but rather the act of knowing it causes. In other words, beauty is able to please “disinterestedly,” or without being possessed, because what it satisfies is a desire for the perfection, not of the object

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36 Maritain, <i>Creative Intuition</i>, 161.
37 Maurer, <i>About Beauty</i>, 17-18.
40 See p. 233 below.
41 E.g., Maurer, <i>About Beauty</i>, 18: “The beautiful attracts us to look at it, but not to possess it, except in order that we might look at it more often and more attentively. In contrast to the desire of the good, the experience of the beautiful is disinterested”; Chapman, “Perennial Theme,” 344: “The good placates the appetite, stirred by it as a final cause, when it is partaken of through direct acquisition and possession. The beautiful, operating as a formal cause, placates by being seen, apprehended, cognized, or contemplated”; Kunkel, “Beauty,” 270: “The good placates the appetite, satisfies the subject, only by being acquired or possessed. The beautiful placates and satisfies simply by being seen, apprehended, or contemplated.” Others who hold this view include: Duffy, “A Philosophy of Poetry,”
itself, but of the act of knowing it causes—though the latter perfection is necessary to cause the
former since, according to these Thomists, it is precisely because of the brilliance of its form or
nature that the beautiful object is fully proportioned to the intellect.42

These scholars interpret Thomas as affirming their position when he says in Summa
Theologiae I, 5.4 ad 1 that “beauty consists in due proportion” because “even sense is a certain
proportion, as is every cognitive power”—a statement that they read as meaning that beauty
pleases the soul because, like the sense, the intellect “delights in things duly proportioned as in
things similar to itself.”43 While this interpretation is certainly a plausible one at first glance, it
does not impose itself on the reader since the text only mentions the delight that beauty causes in
the sensitive part of the soul, not the intellective, and thus does not specify the nature of the latter
pleasure. Rather, all that the text establishes is that, in order to cause this pleasure, beauty must
have a due proportion 1) to the cognitive powers by which it is known, and therefore 2) in itself,
without saying why the pleasure requires this proportion—a question we will try to answer when
we examine proportion and the rest of beauty’s objective conditions in Chapter Five. Moreover,
however initially probable it might seem that this text is arguing that aesthetic pleasure is delight
in the very act of knowing, it starts to seem less and less so when one considers the problems and

51; Mercier, “General Metaphysics,” 565; Fiorentino, “Il ‘pulchrum,’” 411; McCall, “Metaphysical Analysis,” 142;
Mondin, “La belleza,” 394-95; Donlan, “The Beauty of God,” 201; Chereso, Honor and Beauty, 27-28; Gironella,
42 This view even leads Donnelly to argue, contra Maritain, that an angel could delight in beauty if it
possessed an intellect but not a will. Donnelly is in fact wrong and Maritain right since, as we have shown above on
pp. 214-15, delight is always an act of sensitive or intellectual appetite; nevertheless, it is interesting that both
scholars are taking the same point for granted: beauty delights because it is proportioned to and perfective of the
43 Leonine 4.61. “Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit: quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite
proportionatis, sicut in sibi similibus; nam et sensus ratio quaedam est, et omnis virtus cognoscitiva.” For example,
Duffy writes the following regarding this text: “There is no doubt whatever that here, among other things, St.
Thomas sets the experience of the beautiful apart from the experience of the final good, for the latter directly relates
to appetite and draws the appetite to itself, while the beautiful thing, precisely as beautiful, is directly related to
some knowing faculty, and relates to appetite only indirectly.” Duffy, “A Philosophy of Poetry,” 40.
even contradictions that arise in Thomas’s thought on beauty if one attributes this view to him.

While there are several such problems, which we will discuss later in the chapter, by far the greatest difficulty for this view of aesthetic pleasure is explaining the existence of ugliness. Thomas explicitly states in several texts that beauty and ugliness are contraries, which follows necessarily from the fact that for him ugliness is simply the privation of beauty. Hence, if the proper effect of beauty is to please when seen, the proper effect of its contrary, ugliness, must be to pain when seen since, as Thomas writes in the *Summa Theologiae*, “if there is delight from the presence of something, there is sorrow from the absence of the same thing,” and “in one contrary is included the privation of the other.” That pain in being known is, in fact, the proper effect of ugliness for Thomas finds confirmation from the multiple passages where he describes ugliness as causing sorrow and hatred upon being known. What follows is that, if the pleasure of beauty is caused by an act of knowing that especially perfects the intellect, then conversely the pain of ugliness must be caused by an act of knowing that harms the intellect. Yet knowing cannot pain the intellect for Thomas since, as a purely spiritual power, the intellect “does not have a bodily organ” that can be harmed by what it knows, as is true of the senses; thus, “contemplation, in
itself, is never evil” since it is “nothing other than the consideration of truth, which is the good of the intellect.”\textsuperscript{50} Hence, if the pleasure of beauty is delight in the act of knowing and therefore the pain of ugliness is sorrow in the act of knowing, then, while it is easy to see how a thing could \textit{fail to arouse} aesthetic pleasure, namely by causing an act of knowing that is not perfect enough, a being that in fact causes aesthetic \textit{displeasure}, i.e. an ugly being, should be impossible.

There are not many responses to this objection by contemporary Thomists, and the few that are made are unsatisfying. Maritain apparently holds that ugliness does not pain the intellect but rather only the senses since he says that, “because a pure spirit sees everything in a merely intellectual, not sensitive manner,” it follows that “this category of the Ugly has no sense for a pure spirit.”\textsuperscript{51} This explanation of aesthetic pain, which is seconded by Maurer,\textsuperscript{52} is certainly consistent with the position that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the very act of knowing since we have just seen that only the senses can be pained by knowing. Nevertheless, sense pain cannot be ugliness’s proper effect since it cannot be caused by spiritual ugliness—for example, the ugliness of sin\textsuperscript{53}—and so does not always accompany ugliness. Moreover, it is clear that for Thomas hatred and pain are the proper effect of ugliness not only in human beings but also in pure spirits since he describes God Himself as hating the ugliness of sin.\textsuperscript{54}

It is true that, strictly speaking, God and the blessed angels are not pained by ugliness for

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 35.5 ad 3. Leonine 6.244. “...contemplatio, secundum se, nunquam habet rationem mali, cum contemplatio nihil alii sit quam consideratio veri, quod est bonus intellectus...”

\textsuperscript{51} Maritain, \textit{Creative Intuition}, 164.

\textsuperscript{52} Maurer, \textit{About Beauty}, 32.

\textsuperscript{53} In \textit{Symbolum} 4. Marietti 2.202. “[H]omo enim cum peccat, deturpat animam suam: quia sicut virtus animae est pulchritudo eius, ita peccatum est macula eius.” Cf. \textit{In Sent.} IV, 16.2.1.2 ad 3, 16.2.2.1 ad 1, and 18.1.2.1 [Mandonnet 4.785, 4.789, and 4.936-37].

\textsuperscript{54} In \textit{Symbolum} 4. Marietti 2.202-3. “[S]icut carnalis diligit carnalem pulchritudinem, ita Deus spiritualem quae est pulchritudo animae. Quando ergo anima per peccatum inquinatur, Deus offendidur, et odio habet peccatorem.” See also the texts on the ugliness of sin mentioned in the previous note.
Thomas since, as perfectly happy, they do not experience pain of any kind\textsuperscript{55}; moreover, Thomas explicitly denies that angels grieve over the sins and punishments of the human beings that they guard,\textsuperscript{56} which are ugly\textsuperscript{57}—but the reason for this lack of pain at ugliness is not that angels do not find ugliness hateful in itself. Rather, it is because one is only pained by things “that oppose the will,” and “simply speaking, nothing occurs in the world against the will of the blessed” since “nothing happens in the world save what is effected or permitted by Divine justice,” to which the will of the blessed angels “cleaves entirely.” In other words, since ugliness cannot exist without God’s allowing it to exist, the angels are not pained by ugliness because they accept it as being permitted by God’s Will, with which their own wills are in perfect harmony. Hence, the fact that ugliness actually delights the blessed angels insofar as it is part of “the fulfillment of the ordering of Divine justice” only confirms that “universally and absolutely speaking” ugliness is contrary to the will of the angels,\textsuperscript{58} and so has hatred and pain in the will as its proper effect.

Ultimately, Gary Greif is the only scholar to give a plausible explanation for how the existence of spiritual ugliness, and its causing of spiritual pain, can be reconciled with the view

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 113.7, s.c. Leonine 5.531. “Sed contra, ubi est tristitia et dolor, non est perfecta felicitas. . . . Sed angeli sunt perfecte beati. Ergo de nullo dolent.” Thomas apparently grants this \textit{sed contra} in the body of the article since he accepts its conclusion and does not disagree with its reasoning.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 113.7. Ibid. “[A]ngeli non dolent neque de peccatis, neque de poenis hominum. Tristitia enim et dolor, secundum Augustinum, non est nisi de his quae contrariantur voluntati. Nihil autem accidit in mundo quod sit contrarium voluntati angelorum et aliorum beatorum: quia voluntas eorum totaliter inhaeret ordini divinae iustitiae; nihil autem fit in mundo, nisi quod per divinam iustitiam fit aut permittitur. Et ideo, simpliciter loquendo, nihil fit in mundo contra voluntatem beatorum.”

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{In Sent.} III, 26.1.3. Mandonnet 3.823. “Primo modo accidit sibi turpitudo; et hoc vel in se, et sic est \textit{verecundia} quae est de turpi actu; vel in opinione, et sic est \textit{erubescentia}, quae est « timor de convicio », ut dicit Damascenus; vel \textit{verecundia} de turpitudine culpae, \textit{erubescentia} de turpitudine poenae.”

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 113.7. Leonine 5.531. “Sic igitur angeli peccata et poenas hominum, universaliter et absolute loquendo, non volunt: volunt tamen quod circa hoc ordo divinae iustitiae servetur, secundum quem quidam poenis subduntur, et peccare permittuntur.” See also \textit{In Sent.} IV, 50.2.4.3, which says that the blessed delight in the punishments of Hell, not because the blessed find the misery of the damned to be delightful in itself (which would be malicious), but rather solely insofar as the blessed can contemplate within these punishments “the order of divine justice, and their own liberation.” Parma 7/2.1258. “[A]liquid potest esse materia gaudii dupliciter. Uno modo per se, scilicet quando de aliquo gaudetur inquantum hujusmodi; et sic sancti non laetabuntur de poenis impiorum. Alio modo per accidens, idest ratione aliquibus adjuncti; et hoc modo sancti de poenis impiorum gaudebunt considerando in eis ordinem divinae iustitiae, et suam liberationem, de qua gaudebunt; et sic divina justitia et sua liberatio erunt per se causa gaudii honorum, sed poenae damnatorum per accidens.”
that aesthetic pleasure is pleasure in the act of knowing. Unlike most scholars sharing his view, Greif is aware of the problem: “as an object is beautiful because of the perfection it has as able to cause perfection in the intellect, so must a being be ugly because of a lack of perfection and its consequent inability to perfect the intellect”; yet if “whatever the intellect knows has existence and thus perfects the intellect in some way,” then “how can the ugly object be a possessed lack of perfection for the intellect?” Greif’s response is that, while the intellect “per se possesses a good whenever it knows anything,” it “per accidens lacks a perfection for itself” when it knows an ugly being since the being “is not perfecting the intellect to the extent that it could and should be perfecting it.” As a result, “when such an obviously imperfect object of knowledge is present to the intellect, the will is disturbed at this lack of perfection and experiences pain” because of its instinctive desire for the full perfection of the soul’s powers. To support his conclusion, Greif cites a text where Thomas says that, while “contemplation, in itself, is never evil,” it can still “be evil only accidentally, insofar as the contemplation of a viler thing hinders the contemplation of something nobler.” Hence, it seems that ugliness can cause pain in the very act of knowing it, insofar as that act of knowing prevents the more delightful act of knowing caused by beauty.

Nevertheless, this pain proposed by Greif cannot be the proper pain of ugliness, for two reasons. First, beauty and ugliness are contraries, and, as Thomas observes, “sorrow is of itself contrary to pleasure in a contrary object,” which is why “the sorrow that is caused by cold is contrary to the pleasure that is caused by heat”; consequently, the pain of ugliness must be the corresponding contrary of the pleasure caused by beauty, as Thomas confirms when he says that

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60 Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.5 ad 3. Leonine 6.244. “. . . contemplatio, secundum se, nunquam habet rationem mali . . . sed per accidens tantum, inquantum scilicet contemplatio vilioris impedit contemplationem melioris . . .”
61 Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.5. Leonine 6.244. “Cuius ratio est, quia tristitia per se contrariatur delectationi quae est de contrario objecto: sicut delectationi quae est de calore, contrariatur tristitia quae est de frigore.”
“no one is moved by a hatred or fear of the ugly except him to whom a willing of the beautiful and of the good already in some way belongs.” Yet Thomas devotes an entire article of the Summa Theologiae to showing that “to the delight which is in the contemplation itself no pain is contrary, nor is any pain joined to it except per accidens,” for the very reasons we have already discussed: as a purely spiritual power, the intellect can only be perfected and never harmed by what it knows, so there is no such thing as an act of knowing that is in itself harmful or painful for the intellect. Hence, the only pains that one can encounter in contemplation are either due to harm or weariness in the sense organs, which is clearly “accidental” to the intellectual knowing itself, or resulting from “a hindrance to contemplation,” i.e. when something prevents one from contemplating as much or as well as one would like, which “is not contrary to the pleasure of contemplation, but rather is in affinity and in harmony with it.” The pain Greif proposes would evidently be of the latter kind since the reason for this pain is that “the contemplation of a viler thing hinders the contemplation of something nobler.” Thus, if ugliness caused this sorrow, and beauty caused pleasure in the very act of knowing, then the delight of beauty and the pain of ugliness would not be contraries, as they clearly are for Thomas.

Secondly and more seriously, for Thomas ugliness cannot produce the kind of pain that Greif suggests because it does not cause imperfection in knowing, as Thomas makes clear in an article from the Sentences commentary on whether those in heaven see the punishment of those in hell. Here Thomas actually considers the objection that “the perfection of vision depends on

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62 In Sent. IV, 19.2.1 ad 5. Mandonnet 4.988. “... nullus movetur ex odio vel timore turpis, nisi ille cui jam inest aliqua voluntas pulchri et boni.”
63 Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.5. Leonine 6.244. “[I]deo indirecte admiscetur aliqua affection vel dolor contemplationi. Sed neutro modo tristitia contemplationi per accidens adiuncta, contrariatur delectationi eius. Nam tristitia quae est de impedimento contemplationis, non contrariatur delectationi contemplationis, sed magis habet affinitatem et convenientiam cum ipsa, ut ex supradictis patet. Tristitia vero vel affection quae est de lassitudine corporali, non ad idem genus refertur: unde est penitus disparata. Et sic manifestum est quod delectationi quae est de ipsa contemplatione, nulla tristitia contrariatur...” Cf. In Sent. IV, 49.3.3.2 [Mandonnet 4.1219].
64 Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.5 ad 3, cited above in note 60 on p. 228.
the perfection of the visible,” an assertion supported by Aristotle’s maxim that the act of sensing is “most perfect” when a sense in its best condition sees “the most beautiful objects falling under that sense.” From this principle, the objection infers that “conversely ugliness in what is seen results in imperfection of seeing”; thus, since “no imperfection will be in the blessed,” they must not see the miseries of the damned, “in which there is the highest ugliness.”

Thomas replies:

[A]lthough the beauty of what is seen makes for the perfection of seeing, nevertheless there can be ugliness in what is seen without imperfection in seeing: for the species of things in the soul, by which contraries are known, are not contrary; wherefore also God, who has the most perfect knowledge, sees all things, beautiful and ugly.

What Thomas seems to be saying here is that, although knowing the most beautiful things it can know is the perfection of a cognitive power, its attainment of that goal is not thwarted by seeing ugliness since contraries are not contraries insofar as they exist in the soul, i.e. in virtue of their species. In fact, Thomas seems to think that knowing ugliness would actually help one to know beauty since, as he says in the Summa Theologiae, “the meanings of contraries are not contraries insofar as they are apprehended, but one contrary is the principle for knowing another.”

This impression is confirmed by the body of the article, which begins by observing that “from the blessed nothing must be taken away which pertains to the perfection of blessedness:

Everything, however, is more known due to the activity of its contrary, since contraries placed next to each other shine more clearly (magis elucescunt); and therefore, in order that the blessedness of the saints may delight them more, and that they may give more abundant thanks for it, it is granted to them that they may

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65 In Sent. IV, 50.2.4.1 arg. 2. Parma 7/2.1257. “[P]erfectio visionis dependet a perfectione visibilis; unde Philosophus dicit in 10 Ethic.or., quod perfectissima sensus operatio est sensus optime dispositi ad pulcherrimum sub sensu jacentium. Ergo et contrario turpitudo visibilis redundat in imperfectionem visionis. Sed nulla imperfectio erit in beatis. Ergo non videbunt miserias damnatorum, in quibus est summa turpitudo.”

66 In Sent. IV, 50.2.4.1 ad 2. Parma 7/2.1258. “[Q]uamvis pulchritudo visibilis ad perfectionem faciat visionis, visibilis tamen turpitudo sine visionis imperfectione esse potest: species enim rerum in anima, per quas contraria cognoscuntur, non sunt contrariae; unde etiam Deus, qui perfectissimam cognitionem habet, omnia, pulchra et turpia, videt.”

67 Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.5. Leonine 6.244. “[C]ontrariorum enim rationes, secundum quod sunt apprehensae, non sunt contrariae, sed unum contrarium est ratio cognoscendi aliud.”
perfectly see the punishment of the wicked.\textsuperscript{68}

For Thomas, the full perfection of the knowledge enjoyed by the saints does not preclude but in fact \textit{requires} beholding the “highest ugliness” in the misery of the damned.

Hence, far from necessarily being a hindrance to more perfect acts of knowing, the knowledge of ugliness is actually compatible with and even necessary for a fully perfect act of knowing. What follows is that for Thomas not only could knowing ugliness \textit{fail to cause} the pain that Greif claims is essential to it, but it could actually \textit{help to cause} the pleasure that Greif thinks is essential to beauty, i.e. pleasure in a perfect act of knowing. In other words, Greif’s position entails that ugliness \textit{qua} ugliness could cause aesthetic pleasure rather than pain, which contradicts Thomas’s statements that beauty and ugliness have contrary effects. Hence, Greif’s attempt to explain ugliness does not succeed within Thomas’s thought.

We therefore conclude that pleasure in the act of knowing cannot be aesthetic pleasure for Thomas since not only does the former pleasure have no contrary, as does the latter, but it can even arise from a knowledge of ugliness, which obviously cannot cause the pleasure proper to beauty since ugliness and beauty are contraries. That the intellect can take pleasure in knowing ugliness should not be surprising since, as Thomas notes in the \textit{Contra Gentiles}, if “truth is the good of the intellect,” and “it is true not only that good is good, but that evil is evil,” then “the good of the intellect consists also in the knowledge of evil”\textsuperscript{69}; it follows, then, that the good of the intellect consists also in knowing ugliness since ugliness and evil are identical in reality, just as beauty and goodness are. Still, it does seem probable that a beautiful being would cause more

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{In Sent. IV,} 50.2.4.1. Parma 7/2.1258. “[A] beatis nihil subtrahi debet quod ad perfectionem beatitudinis eorum pertineat. Unumquodque autem ex operatione contrarii magis cognoscitur; quia contraria juxta se posita magis elucescunt; et ideo, ut beatis sanctorum eis magis complaceat, et de ea uberiores gratias Deo agant, dantur eis ut poenam impiorum perfecte intueantur.”

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Contra Gentiles I,} 71. Marietti 2.83. “Verum est bonum intellectus: . . . Verum autem non solum est bonum esse bonum, sed etiam malum esse malum. . . . Bonum igitur intellectus etiam in cognitione mali consistit.”
\end{footnotesize}
pleasure in the very act of knowing than an ugly being because “a thing is knowable insofar as it
is in act,”⁷⁰ and ugliness is a mere privation. A being will thus cause a greater act of knowing if
it is beautiful than if it is ugly since there will be more in it to know. Hence, while pleasure in
the act of knowing is not the proper effect of beauty, it certainly always accompanies the
experience of beauty, and seems to arise more from it than from other instances of knowing.

It might seem that, in concluding that the delight proper to beauty is actually not pleasure
in the very act of knowing, we have taken away the one place that aesthetic pleasure could have
in Thomas’s thought. After all, we are not only going against the consensus of most Thomists,
but even apparently contradicting one of Thomas’s definitions of beauty—namely, as “that the
mere apprehension of which pleases”⁷¹—which shows that the cause of beauty’s delight is the
very act of knowing. Nevertheless, while the act of knowing is indeed the cause of aesthetic
pleasure, this fact does not mean that contemplation is necessarily the “object of” (or reason for)
this pleasure, as is the case “when one delights in the very fact that one is contemplating.”⁷² As
Thomas himself points out, there is a delight of which “contemplation is the cause but not the
object”: delight that is “not in the contemplation itself, but in the thing contemplated.”⁷³

ii. Pleasure in the Thing Known

Right after discussing pleasure in the act of contemplating itself, Summa Theologiae II-II,
180.7 describes the second kind of delight that can arise from contemplation:

In another way contemplation is rendered delightful on the part of its object,

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⁷⁰ Summa Theologiae I, 5.2. Leonine 4.58. “. . . unumquodque cognoscibile est, inquantum est actu . . .”
⁷¹ Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio
placet.”
⁷² Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.5. Leonine 6.244. “Alio modo potest dici delectatio contemplationis, quia
contemplatio est eius obiectum et causa: puta cum aliquis delectatur de hoc ipso quod contemplatur.”
⁷³ Ibid. Ibid. “Uno modo, ita quod contemplatio sit delectationis causa, et non obiectum. Et tunc delectatio
non est de ipsa contemplatione, sed de re contemplata.”
insofar namely as someone contemplates a loved thing; just as also happens in bodily vision, which is rendered delightful, not only from the fact that the very seeing is delightful, but also from the fact that one sees a loved person. Since, therefore, the contemplative life consists chiefly in the contemplation of God, to which charity moves one, as was said, hence it is that in the contemplative life there is delight not only by reason of the contemplation itself, but also by reason of the Divine love itself.\(^74\)

This text is very clear on the nature of the pleasure it describes since it repeatedly affirms that the reason for this delight is the very being that one knows with the senses and/or the intellect (which, in the examples given by the text, is a human being or God), and that the being causes this delight because it is loved by the knower. At the same time, however, it raises a serious difficulty since it appears to contradict what Thomas says elsewhere about the conditions for pleasure. Thomas makes clear in multiple texts that pleasure in an object requires not only love for the thing\(^75\) and consequently knowledge of it, since love presupposes knowledge,\(^76\) but also an “attainment of” or union with the object “by means of some activity,” as well as an awareness of this possession.\(^77\) Thus, for example, to delight us food must not only be seen and hungered for, but also chewed and swallowed, which we are aware of through the sense of touch.\(^78\) Yet, by definition, the second kind of delight discussed in \textit{Summa Theologiae} II-II, 180.7 arises solely

\(^{74}\) Leonine 10.432-33. “Alio modo contemplatio redditur delectabilis ex parte obiecti, inquantum scilicet aliquis rem amatam contemplatur: sicut etiam accidit in visione corporali quod delectabilis redditur non solum ex eo quod ipsum videre est delectabile, sed ex eo etiam quod videt quis personam amatam. Quia ergo vita contemplativa praecipue consistit in contemplatione Dei, ad quam movet caritas, ut dictum est; inde est quod in vita contemplativa non solum est delectatio ratione ipsius contemplationis, sed ratione ipsius divini amoris.”

\(^{75}\) Summa Theologiae I-II, 25.2. Leonine 6.184-85. “Manifestum est autem quod omne quod tendit ad finem aliquem, primo quidem habet aptitudinem seu proportionem ad finem, nihil enim tendit in finem non proportionatum; secundo, movetur ad finem; tertio, quiescit in fine post eius consecutionem. Ipsa autem aptitudo sive proportio appetitus ad bonum est amor, qui nihil aliud est quam complacentia boni; motus autem ad bonum est desiderium vel concupiscencia; quies autem in bono est gaudium vel delectatio. Et ideo secundum hunc ordinem, amor praecedit desiderium, et desiderium praecedit delectationem.”

\(^{76}\) Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.2. Leonine 6.193. “Bonum autem non est obiectum appetitus, nisi prout est apprehensum. Et ideo amor requirit aliquam apprehensionem boni quod amatur.”


\(^{78}\) Summa Theologiae II-II, 141.5. Leonine 10.129. “Et ideo principaliter temperantia est circa delectationem tactus, quae per se consequitur ipsum usum rerum necessariorum, quarum omnis usus est in tangendo.”
from the contemplation of a loved object, and therefore does not seem to require that the object be attained, but only that it be both known and loved.

In fact, pleasure in the object contemplated does not violate Thomas’s teaching on pleasure, as shown by a text in his *Sentences* commentary where he discusses the “three gifts of the soul,” i.e. the three things making up our ultimate happiness, which according to Thomas is the vision of God by those in heaven. As in *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 180.7, Thomas observes that “any vision is delightful in two ways,” either “on the part of the object, insofar as what is seen is delightful,” or “on the part of the vision, insofar as seeing is itself delightful.” He then argues that the vision of God must be delightful in both of these ways since happiness consists in “perfect activity,” and an activity’s delight is “its perfection.” Pleasure in the act of seeing itself requires only that the vision is “made connatural to the knower through some habit,” and thus the first gift of the soul is “vision” (*visio*), but “on the part of the thing seen two things are required”: first that it has a certain “agreeableness” to the affection, which gift of the soul is called either “delight” (*dilectio*) or “enjoyment” (*fruitio*).79 Secondly,

on the part of the thing seen “conjoining” is also required; and thus comprehension is set down by some [as a gift of the soul], which is nothing other than to have God as present, and to possess Him within oneself . . . 80

This text makes clear that to be fully delightful the vision of God must entail not only ease of

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79 *In Sent.* IV, 49.4.5.1. Parma 7/2.1231. “Visio autem aliqua est delectabilis dupliciter: uno modo ex parte objecti, inquantum id quod videtur, est delectable; alio modo ex parte visionis, inquantum ipsum videre delectabile est, sicut delectamur in cognoscendo mala, quamvis mala nos non delectent: et quia operatio illa in qua ultima beatitudo consistit, debet esse perfectissima, ideo requiritur quod visio illa sit utroque modo delectabilis. Ad hoc autem quod ipsa visio sit delectabilis ex parte visionis, requiritur quod sit facta connaturalis videnti per habitum aliquem. Sed ad hoc quod sit delectabilis ex parte visionis, duo requiruntur: scilicet quod ipsum visibile sit conveniens, et quod sit conjunctum. Sic ergo ad delectabilitatem visionis ex parte sui requiritur habitus qui visionem eliciat; et sic est una dos, quod dicitur ab omnibus visio. Sed ex parte visibilis requiritur duo: scilicet convenientia quae est per affectum; et quantum ad hoc ponitur dos a quibusdam dilectio, et a quibusdam fruitio, secundum quod fruitio ad affectum pertinent . . .”

80 *In Sent.* 49.4.5.1. Parma 7/2.1231. “Requiritur etiam ex parte visibilis, conjunctio; et sic ponitur a quibusdam comprehensio, quae nihil est aliud quam in praesentia Deum habere, et in seipso tenere . . .”
seeing (visio) and conformity to the affection (dilectio), but a third gift of the soul, called comprehension (comprehensio) by some, which is the possession of what is seen and loved; hence, delight in the object of vision or contemplation is no exception to Thomas’s principle that pleasure in a thing requires union with it as well as knowledge of it and love for it.

If so, then an object that pleases solely by being contemplated must be possessed through the very act of knowing it since there is no other activity through which it could be attained—a conclusion that several texts in the *Summa Theologiae* confirm. In an article on why man’s final happiness requires that his vision of God include comprehensio of Him, Thomas tells us that in this context the term “comprehension” means “nothing other than holding something already presently possessed, just as someone pursuing another is said to comprehend him”—though in English we would say “apprehend”—“when he holds him.” Moreover, this comprehension or holding of God “is not some activity in addition to vision,” but “a certain relation (quaedam habitudo) to the end already possessed” through seeing, so that it is not merely “the thing seen insofar as it is present,” but “even the seeing itself,” that is “an object of comprehension.”

The Vision of God is not the only act of knowing that gives possession of its object (though it does so to an unparalleled degree), as Thomas makes clear in an article arguing that the proper and primary cause of every pleasure is a certain activity. There Thomas considers the

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81 “Comprehension” here does not have its proper meaning, which is to understand a thing as completely as it may be understood because for Thomas, while creatures do know the essence of God in the Beatific Vision, only God has comprehensive knowledge of Himself since it requires an infinite cognitive power to exhaust an infinitely knowable being. See *Summa Theologiae* I, 12.7 [Leonine 4.127-28], which will be discussed more in Chapter Five.
83 *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 4.3 ad 3. Leonine 6.40. “[C]omprehensio non est aliqua operatio praeter visionem: sed est quaedam habitudo ad finem iam habitum. Unde etiam ipsa visio, vel res visa secundum quod præsentialiter adest, est objectum comprehensionis.”
84 See pp. 264-67 below.
objection that, since knowledge is the cause of pleasure and since “the objects of activities are knowable before the activities themselves,” the objects can please before the activities can, in which case “activity is not the proper cause of pleasure.” Thomas gives the following reply:

The very objects of operations are not delightful, except insofar as they are united to us; either through knowledge alone, as when we take pleasure in thinking about or looking at certain things (consideratione vel inspectione aliquorum); or through some other way along with the knowledge; as when a man takes pleasure in the fact that he knows that he has something good, namely riches or honor or something of this kind. . . . To have things of this kind, however, is nothing other than to use them or to be able to use them. And this is through some activity.

As this text shows, most pleasures are the effect of being united to a thing “through some other way” in addition to knowledge; for example, our delight in food results not just from knowing it, but from knowing that we are consuming it because we can feel it being chewed and swallowed. Hence, what makes the delight in an object of contemplation unique is not that it arises without possession of the object but that it results from being united to the thing “through knowledge alone,” as happens whenever “we delight in thinking about or looking at certain things.” This discovery should not surprise us since we saw in Chapter Three that for Thomas knowing is defined as a kind of possession, i.e. possessing something immaterial.

Now that it has been shown to arise solely from the possession through knowledge of a loved being, pleasure in the object of contemplation appears to be beauty’s proper delight, not


86 Summa Theologiae I-II, 32.1 ad 1. Leonine 6.223. “[I]psa obiecta operationum non sunt delectabilia, nisi inquantum coniunguntur nobis: vel per cognitionem solam, sicut cum delectamus in consideratione vel inspectione aliquorum; vel quocumque allo modo simul cum cognitione, sicut cum aliquis delectatur in hoc quod cognoscit se habere quocumque bonum, puta divitias vel honorem vel aliquid huiusmodi. . . . Habere autem huiusmodi nihil est aliud quam uti eis, vel posse uti. Et hoc est per aliquam operationem.”

87 In De Causis 18. Saffrey 101. “[H]abere aliquid in se formaliter et non materialiter, in quo consistit ratio cognitionis, est nobilissimus modus habendi vel continendi aliquid.” That knowledge is a certain kind of possession is reflected in our ordinary discourse when we describe knowing something as “grasping” it, as “getting” it, or as “beholding” it, the last of which is obviously derived from “holding.”
only because it is the one candidate for aesthetic pleasure remaining, but also because it seems to most accord with Thomas’s definitions of beauty. When Thomas writes in *Summa* I-II, 27.1 ad. 3 that “the beautiful is said to be *that of which* the mere apprehension pleases,” he suggests that the reason for the delight caused by the apprehension is the perfection of its *object*, rather than of the *act* itself. Thomas gives this impression even more in *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1 when he says that “*those things* are called beautiful *that please when seen*” since in this sentence the subject of the verb “please” is “those things” that are seen, not the act of seeing them.

What these texts merely imply Thomas makes explicit in *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 180.1, the first article in his *quastio* on the contemplative life, which asks whether this life pertains at all to the affections, or only to the intellect. Thomas responds that while the contemplative life essentially consists in an act of the intellect, what moves the intellect to its activity is the will, and the will moves one to know things “either sensibly or intelligibly” sometimes “for love of the thing seen” and sometimes “for love of the very knowledge that one acquires from seeing.”

These two kinds of love are clearly the root causes presupposed by the two kinds of delight in contemplation since, as Thomas says at the end of the article, “everyone delights when he obtains what he loves.” Just before saying so, however, Thomas writes:

> And on account of this Gregory holds that the contemplative life consists in the “love of God,” namely inasmuch as *from the love of God one burns to gaze upon His Beauty.*

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88 Leonine 6.192. “... pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.”
89 Leonine 4.61. “... pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent.”
90 *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 180.1. Leonine 10.424. “Et ideo vita contemplativa, quantum ad ipsam essentiam actionis, pertinet ad intellectum: quantum autem ad id quod movet ad exercendum tam operationem, pertinet ad voluntatem, quae movet omnes alias potentias, et etiam intellectum, ad suum actum. ... Movet autem vis appetitiva ad aliquid inspiciendum, vel sensibiliter vel intelligibiliter, quandoque quidem propter amorem rei visae ... quandoque autem propter amorem ipsius cognitionis quam quis ex inspectione consequitur.”
91 Ibid. Ibid. “Et quia unusquisque delectatur cum adeptus fuerit id quod amat, ideo vita contemplativa terminatur ad delectationem, quae est in affectu, ex qua etiam amor intenditur.”
In saying that loving God causes an intense desire to behold His Beauty, Thomas has identified the love of beauty with love for the object contemplated rather than for the act of contemplation itself since desire for a thing is caused by love for it; consequently, he has also attributed to beauty the pleasure corresponding to this love. This text therefore unambiguously affirms that the proper effect of beauty, or aesthetic pleasure, is delight in the object of contemplation.

B. Confirmations That Aesthetic Pleasure Is Delight in the Object Known

It already seems certain at this point that aesthetic pleasure for Thomas is delight in the thing contemplated since we have not only eliminated all the other candidates, but even found a text confirming our theory. Still, some might find this conclusion tenuous, either because they are not entirely convinced by our arguments against the other kinds of delight, or because they do not think that our texts from Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 180 sufficiently establish beauty’s connection to this kind of pleasure. In order to remove all doubt, we will now show that the consistency of Thomas’s thought on beauty depends on holding that aesthetic pleasure is a delight in the thing contemplated since attributing this view to him easily resolves certain aporiae in Thomas’s positions on several issues connected with the experience of beauty.

1. The Pain of Ugliness

The first problem that our theory resolves is the one that was most difficult for its main

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94 Fearon, for example, claims that what Summa Theologiae II-II, 180.7 presents is “not a distinction between two totally different kinds of delight,” but rather the essential reason for delight in knowing and an accidental one. He proceeds to reduce the second kind of delight in contemplation to the first by saying that we delight more in seeing a loved object because love “stimulates the mind to an ever fuller knowledge of the beloved,” and thus causes a greater delight in the act of knowing itself. It seems to me that Fearon is ignoring the plain meaning of the text because, like most Thomists, he is already committed to the view that beauty causes delight in the act of knowing itself, and consequently reads this view into Thomas. Fearon, “The Lure of Beauty,” 174-75.
competitor. As we saw, the theory that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the act of contemplation cannot explain how ugliness can displease merely by being seen since pain in seeing ugliness is the contrary of delight in seeing beauty, but delight in the act of seeing does not have a contrary pain. On the other hand, as Thomas himself notes, “nothing prevents some sorrow from being contrary to the pleasure of contemplation” in the sense of pleasure in the object of knowledge since sometimes “it happens . . . that something harmful and sorrowful is contemplated” rather than “something suitable and delightful.”

Now, Thomas tells us that “just as two things are requisite for pleasure,” i.e. “a conjoining with the good and the perception of this conjoining,” so “two things are required for pain: namely, a conjoining with some evil . . . and the perception of this conjoining.” Hence, for our theory it is simple to explain the pain caused by ugliness: just as beauty pleases when seen because it is lovable in itself and is united to the knower through the very act of contemplating it, so ugliness pains when seen because it is hateful in itself and is united to the knower through the very act of contemplating it.

This impression is confirmed by Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.7, which discusses whether external or bodily pain is greater than internal or spiritual pain. The second objection argues that, since “outward pain arises from the real conjoining of some contrary,” whereas “inward sorrow arises from the apprehended likeness of a contrary,” it follows that exterior pain is greater than interior for “the reality moves more than its likeness does.” As should be obvious from our prior discussion of the nature of knowing for Thomas, this objection confuses that which we

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95 Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.5. Leonine 6.244. “Contingit autem contemplari aliquid nocivum et contristans, sicut et aliquid conveniens et delectans. Unde si sic delectatio contemplationis accipiatur, nihil prohibet delectationi contemplationis esse tristitiam contrariam.”

96 Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.1. Leonine 6.240. “[S]icut ad delectationem duo requiruntur, scilicet coniunctio boni, et perceptio huiusmodi coniunctionis; ita etiam ad dolorem duo requiruntur: scilicet coniunctio alciuus mali (quod ea ratione est malum, quia privat aliquod bonum); et perceptio huiusmodi coniunctionis.”

know (in this case, an evil existing outside the mind) with that by which we know (the likeness or species of that evil in the mind). It is precisely this point that Thomas makes in his reply:

Inward pain does not proceed from the apprehended likeness of a thing, as from a cause, for man is not inwardly pained by the apprehended likeness itself, but by the thing which the likeness represents. Which thing indeed is all the more perfectly apprehended by means of its likeness, as this likeness is more immaterial and abstract.98

This text makes clear that, when someone is pained by the mere apprehension of some evil,99 the cause of the pain is not the person’s species of the evil, but the evil itself, which therefore must be conjoined to the soul through the very act of knowing it since only a conjoined evil pains. Thus, since ugliness causes pain merely through being known, and since the reason for that pain must be the object known rather than the act of knowing it, it follows that the vision of ugliness pains because it conjoins one to the ugliness, which is evil and hateful in itself.

2. Non-aesthetic Pleasure in Knowing

Another problem for the position that aesthetic pleasure is delight in contemplation itself is that it cannot explain non-aesthetic pleasure in knowing—i.e. delight that is caused solely by the act of knowing, but whose object is not the beauty of what is known—since for this view any delight taken in the act of contemplation itself will be an instance of aesthetic pleasure. Unlike the dilemma of ugliness, this problem has concerned many Thomists for the reason that it has obvious implications regarding beauty’s transcendental status. After all, if the pleasure of beauty is not distinct from the delight that ordinarily attends knowing, namely that of truth, then truth

98 Ibid., 247. “[T]ristitia interior non procedit ex similitudine rei apprehensa, sicut ex causa: non enim homo tristatur interius de ipsa similitudine apprehensa, sed de re cuius est similitudo. Quae quidem res tanto perfectius apprehenditur per aliquam similitudinem, quanto similitudo est magis immaterialis et abstracta.”

99 The objection is discussing a case where the object of pain is only conjoined to the soul through knowledge, but, as Thomas notes in the body of the article, a cause of exterior pain can also be simultaneously a cause of interior pain, in which case the latter is arising from a real conjoining. Summa Theologiae I-II, 35.7 [Leonine 6.246-47].
and beauty are not distinct, and beauty is not a transcendental.

There have consequently been many attempts to show that beauty can be distinct from truth even if aesthetic pleasure is delight in the act of knowing. Some have argued that, while truth only pleases the cognitive power, beauty pleases both the cognitive and appetitive powers by causing an act of knowing so perfect that it causes delight in the will; however, this is a distinction without a difference since, as we saw, for Thomas pleasure is always the act of the appetitive power, so the delight of truth must likewise be the pleasure of the will in the perfection of the intellect. It is thus not surprising that many scholars hold that beauty’s pleasure is simply a higher grade of truth’s delight, caused by knowing an object that is especially proportioned to the intellect by its perfection, or that has been loved in its individuality.

Finally, Gilson gives what is perhaps the most plausible account of how beauty can cause delight in the act of knowing itself but still be distinct from truth: beauty delights because of its agreeableness to our cognitive powers, while truth delights with “the effort” that is required for grasping it in “the experience of learning,” from which it follows that one can enjoy the former pleasure multiple times but not the latter since “the intellectual pleasures of discovery cannot be repeated.” Gilson has certainly succeeded in finding a way to distinguish beauty from truth since the latter pleases with the effort of knowing it while the former pleases with the lack of such effort. Nevertheless, this distinction is not valid for Thomas, who holds that truth delights not only “in the investigation” of it, but also “in the contemplation of truth already discovered and known.” In fact, for Thomas “greater pleasure is found in the consideration of truth already

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known than in its investigation” for the reason that the contemplation of truth “is the terminus and end of investigation” and is therefore a “more perfect” activity.¹⁰⁴ Thus, Gilson’s attempt to explain how there can be non-aesthetic pleasure in knowing when aesthetic pleasure simply is pleasure in knowing does not work within the framework of Thomas’s philosophy.

By contrast, for our theory of aesthetic pleasure the task is much simpler. As Thomas says, “a certain contemplation can be delightful in two ways,” either “by reason of the activity itself” or “on the part of its object, namely insofar as one contemplates a loved thing.”¹⁰⁵ Hence, if beauty causes the latter kind of pleasure, then pleasure in knowing will be non-aesthetic if the reason for the pleasure is not the object known, but the act of knowing—e.g. understanding the causes of a certain physical or spiritual ugliness, or regaining one’s sense of sight in the middle of a garbage dump.¹⁰⁶ Our theory’s distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic pleasures of knowing is thus far clearer and more convincing than the ones proposed by others since it is none other than the marvelously simple distinction of pleasures in knowing made by Thomas himself. Moreover, in our theory this distinction would also be the distinction between the pleasures of beauty and truth since a being’s truth is what causes knowledge¹⁰⁷ and thereby causes delight in

¹⁰⁴ *In Ethic.* X, 11. Leonine 45/1.584:134-40. “Speculatio veritatis est duplex: una quidem quae consistit in inquisitione veritatis; alia vero quae consistit in contemplatione veritatis iam inventae et cognitae, et hoc perfectius est, cum sit terminus et finis inquisitionis; unde et maior est delectatio in consideratione veritatis iam cognitae quam in inquisitione eius.”


¹⁰⁶ One might object that we often admire an artwork as beautiful in spite of its depicting ugliness, which is thus an instance of aesthetic pleasure whose cause cannot be the goodness of the object known. As Thomas himself explains, however, this case is no exception to the rule since what delights one is not the very ugliness portrayed, but rather the *accuracy of its portrayal* by the artist, or, as Thomas implies, the artwork’s “proportion” to what it represents, which is one of the conditions of beauty. It is for this reason, he says, that “a certain image is said to be beautiful, if it perfectly represents a thing, even an ugly one.” *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8. Leonine 4.409. “[A]liqua imago dicitur esse pulchra, si perfecte repraesentat rem, quamvis turpem.”

¹⁰⁷ *De veritate* 1.1. Leonine 22/1.6:170-76. “Hoc est ergo quod addit verum super ens, scilicet conformitatem sive aequationem rei et intellectus, ad quam conformitatem, ut dictum est, sequitur cognitio rei: sic
the act of knowing itself, while a being’s beauty causes delight in the object known. Hence, our
theory confirms and explains the commonly held opinion that the pleasures of truth and beauty
are distinct—a conclusion that is highly significant for our inquiry since it confirms that beauty
is indeed distinct in meaning from truth and therefore might be a distinct transcendental.

3. Connatural Knowledge and Aesthetic Judgment

As we noted in Chapter Three, Thomas makes clear that aesthetic experience involves
connatural knowledge when he says that “carnal men love the carnally beautiful” while “spiritual
men love the spiritually beautiful,”\(^\text{108}\) which shows that a person’s aesthetic judgment depends to
a large degree on the desires and aversions that result from his character. To explain how one’s
moral disposition can affect one’s aesthetic judgment is difficult if not impossible for the theory
that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the very act of knowing since Thomas holds that “all men by
nature desire to know” and consequently “delight in the knowledge of truth”; hence, pleasure in
the act of knowing does not require moral virtue for Thomas, but rather “a habit of wisdom and
knowledge” that allows one to contemplate “without difficulty.”\(^\text{109}\) Delight in the thing known,
however, obviously presupposes a love for what is known since “no one delights except in that
which is loved in some way.”\(^\text{110}\) Moreover, we concluded in Chapter Three that the grounds for
a judgment by inclination is an experience of the conformity that an object has to one’s appetite,
and pleasure seems to be the most intense example of such experience since Thomas writes that

\(^{108}\) In \textit{Psalmos} 25.5. Parma 14.235. “[C]arnaes amant pulchrum carnale, spirituales amant pulchrum
spirituale . . .”


\(^{110}\) \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 27.4 ad 1. Leonine 6.196. “[N]ullus enim delectatur nisi in re aliquo modo
amata.”
pleasure is “nothing other than a resting of the appetite in the good.””

Hence, our theory can provide the following explanation for why, all other things being equal, a morally virtuous man will be better at recognizing and appreciating spiritual beauty than a non-virtuous man. Because of the connaturality existing between such beauty and his own character, the virtuous man will experience an immense and immediate delight in seeing it, while the non-virtuous man, even if he does apprehend such beauty, might fail to delight in it or even be pained by it, depending on how much this beauty conflicts with his appetites. Moreover, while the virtuous man’s spontaneous delight in spiritual beauty will make him more attentive to it, and thus perfect his apprehension of it, the pain that this beauty causes the non-virtuous man will make it difficult for him to fully see it or even to see it at all since intellectual apprehensions are impeded by appetites that are opposed to them. Consequently, whereas the virtuous man’s greater vision of and delight in spiritual beauty allows him to swiftly and surely judge that it is beautiful, the non-virtuous man’s pained and obscured vision of such beauty may lead him to be uncertain about its beauty, or even to judge that it is not beautiful. Explaining Thomas’s view

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112 It does seem that, in this life, no human beings are completely incapable of delighting in spiritual beauty for Thomas since they have certain “seeds” of virtue in their reason giving them a small degree of connaturality to such beauty. Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.3 ad 4. Leonine 6.194. “[L]icet non omnes homines habeant huissmodi virtutes secundum habitum completum, habent tamen eas secundum quaedam seminalia rationis, secundum quae, qui non habet virtutem, diligit virtuosum, tanquam suae naturali rationi conformem.”

113 For example, an unchaste man might recognize the beauty of a chaste woman and even delight in it, but this recognition will also cause him pain by making him aware of how ugly his own life is by comparison; on the other hand, the beauty of a woman’s chastity will cause nothing but joy and admiration in a man who is chaste himself.

114 Summa Theologiae I-II, 4.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.37. “[D]electatio concomitans operationem intellectus, non impedit ipsam, sed magis eam confortat . . .: ea enim quae defectabilir facimus, attentius et perseverantius operamus. Delectatio autem extranea impedit operationem: quandoque quidem ex intentionis distractione; quia, sicut dictum est, ad ea in quibus defectamur, magis intenti sumus; et dum uni vehementer intendimus, nescesse est quod ab alio intentio retrahatur. Quandoque autem etiam ex contrarietate: sicut delectatio sensus contraria rationi, impedit aestimationem prudentiae magis quam aestimationem speculativi intellectus.”

115 Thus, to continue with our example from note 113 above, the shame and sorrow experienced by the unchaste man in seeing the contrast between a chaste woman’s beauty and his own ugliness might lead him to angrily reject that beauty as false, and to prefer thinking of the woman as having the spiritual ugliness of
that aesthetic judgments involve connatural knowledge is therefore quite easy for our theory of aesthetic pleasure, which indicates that it is Thomas’s theory as well.

4. The Exclusion of the Lower Senses from Aesthetic Experience

The last and most interesting problem that our theory resolves is one that has puzzled scholars of Thomas ever since they began investigating his thought on beauty: why does he exclude the three lower senses from aesthetic experience in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3? Certain scholars deny that he does so, on the grounds that he says beauty “chiefly” (*praecipue*) regards sight and hearing\(^\text{116}\) and must therefore hold that smell, taste, and touch are merely less involved, not uninvolved, in the experience of beauty\(^\text{117}\); however, this view cannot explain why, as Thomas notes, “we speak of beautiful sights and beautiful sounds,” but in describing objects of the other senses, “we do not use the word ‘beauty, for we do not speak of beautiful tastes or smells.”\(^\text{118}\) After all, the objects of the lower senses must in fact be beautiful to some degree for Thomas since he holds that everything is beautiful insofar as it exists, and that sensible qualities exist in reality as the accidents of certain substances\(^\text{119}\); hence, for Thomas the reason that we do not call the lower sense objects beautiful must be that, while they are in fact beautiful, we cannot *experience* them as such. Moreover, the impediment to our experiencing them as beautiful must be some feature of the external senses that directly know them since if it were a characteristic of prudishness.

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\(^{118}\) *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3. “[D]icimus enim pulchra visibilia et pulchros sonos. In sensibilibus autem aliorum sensuum, non utimur nomine pulchritudinis: non enim dicimus pulchros sapores aut odores.”

\(^{119}\) Thomas explicitly affirms that sense qualities are real accidents of material things in many places, but especially in *In Metaphysic*. IV, 14.706-707 [Marietti 194] and *Summa Theologiae* I, 85.2 [Leonine 5.334].
the other powers through which we know them—i.e. the internal senses and the intellect—then we would not be able to experience anything as beautiful because all our knowing involves these other powers. Consequently, the only explanation that Thomas can give for why touches, tastes, and smells are not called beautiful is that, for some reason, one cannot experience something as beautiful when knowing it with the lower senses. Thus, when Thomas says that beauty “chiefly” relates to sight and hearing, he means that the knowledge of the other senses cannot be a part of aesthetic *visio* itself, and must therefore have an extrinsic and accidental role in aesthetic experience—the nature of which we shall discuss further on.

As is consistent with their position on aesthetic pleasure, the majority of Thomists have argued that the lower senses are excluded from aesthetic experience because they cannot cause the kind of pleasure whose sole reason is the act of knowing itself, an inability that these scholars attribute to the fact that these senses are not “capable of disinterested knowledge.”¹²⁰ The best explanation of this view is provided by Joseph Gredt. According to Gredt, while sight and hearing are unaware of how their objects physically affect them—since we do not see light or hear vibrations in the air or water, but rather the colors and sounds communicated by them—smell, taste, and especially touch are aware of how they are physically affected, and thus sense them “under a certain subjective aspect.” Consequently, one can delight in objects of the higher senses as beautiful, i.e. as “purely objectively” agreeable to the sense, but in the objects of the lower senses only as voluptuous, i.e. “as affecting the sensing subject.”¹²¹

While Gredt seems to be right that the knowledge of the lower senses includes awareness

of how their objects affect them,\textsuperscript{122} he is wrong in concluding that smells, tastes, and touches are therefore incapable of causing pleasure solely in the act of knowing. As Thomas often reminds us, taking pleasure in a thing presupposes having love and desire for it,\textsuperscript{123} so a lower sense’s awareness of how it is physically affected by its object will only cause delight that is not in the very act of knowing if the person sensing desires the object for some reason other than the act of knowing it causes. Consequently, an object of the lower senses can cause pleasure that is solely in the act of knowing so long as the one sensing does not desire the object for any reason other than as an object of knowledge; for example, a chef who tastes the food that he has prepared can take pleasure solely in discerning the meal’s quality if he has already eaten his own dinner and is therefore not hungry. Hence, if beauty is defined as what causes delight solely in the very act of knowing, there is no reason why the objects of the lower senses cannot be beautiful.

In fact, the theory that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the very act of knowing not only cannot explain the exclusion of the lower senses from aesthetic experience, but even entails that touch, the lowest of the senses, is one of the primary senses in that experience. This implication was only brought to light in a relatively recent article by Donald McQueen, who points out an “apparent inconsistency” in Thomas’s “cognitive ranking” of the senses. McQueen notes that Thomas ranks sight and hearing above the others not only according to their nature as senses in \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 78.3, but also with respect to beauty in \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 27.1 ad 3; however, at the start of his \textit{Metaphysics} commentary, Thomas “tells a different story”\textsuperscript{124}:

\[W\]e seem to know sensible bodies chiefly (\textit{praecipue}) by means of sight and

\textsuperscript{122} Touching and tasting something obviously involve awareness of the object’s contact with the one sensing, while smelling seems to necessarily entail a consciousness of having inhaled something given off by the object.

\textsuperscript{123} See \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 25.2 cited above in note 75 on p. 233.

touch, and still more by means of sight. The reason for which can be drawn from this: that the other three senses know those things which in a way flow out from a sensible body, and do not remain in it: just as sound is from a sensible body, as flowing from it and not remaining in it: and likewise the evaporation of fumes with which and by which odor is diffused. Sight and touch however perceive those accidents which remain in the things themselves, such as color and heat and cold. And it is for this reason that shape and size and things of this kind, by which the very sensible thing is disposed, are more perceived by sight and touch, than by the other senses.  

According to this text, sight and touch are the senses by which we “chiefly” (praecipue) know reality because their proper objects are accidents remaining in bodily things, which makes these two senses the best at communicating the common sensibles, i.e. “quantity and the accidents that follow on it.” Thus, Thomas is saying here that touch is second only to sight in the knowledge it gives, a claim that is not to be found in the passage on which Thomas is commenting, and so is entirely his own view. It follows that, if beauty causes delight in the very act of knowing, then it is by sight and touch, rather than by sight and hearing, that we “chiefly” experience beauty—a conclusion that is, as McQueen observes, “incompatible” with Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3, where touch is so far from relating to beauty that Thomas does not even think that he needs to mention that we do not speak of beautiful touches.  

Unable to find “a satisfactory explanation of this apparent inconsistency,” McQueen chooses to “skirt around it and focus” on the claim regarding “the superior status of sight and

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125 In Metaphysic. I. 1.8. Marietti 7. “[S]ensibilia corpora praecipue per visum et tactum cognoscere videmur, et adhuc magis per visum. Cuius ratio ex hoc sumi potest: quod alii tres sensus sunt cognoscitivae eorum quae a corpore sensibili quodammodo effluunt, et non in ipso consistunt: sicut sonus est a corpore sensibili, ut ab eo fluens et non in eo manens: et similiter fumalis evaporatio cum qua et ex qua odor diffunditur. Visus autem et tactus percipiant illa accidentia quae rebus ipsis immanent, sicut color et calidum et frigidum. Unde judicium tactus et visus extenditur ad res ipsas, judicium autem auditus et odoratus ad ea quae a rebus ipsis procedunt, non ad res ipsas. Et inde est quod figura et magnitudo et huismodo, quibus ipsa res sensibilis disponitur, magis percipitur visu et tactu, quam alius sensibus. Et adhuc amplius magis visu quam tactu, tum propter hoc quod visus habet maiorer efficaciam ad cognoscentium, ut dictum est, tum propter hoc, quod quantitas et ea quae ad ipsam sequuntur, quae videntur esse sensibilia communia, proximius se habent ad obiectum visus quam ad obiectum tactus. Quod ex hoc patet, quod obiectum visus omne corpus habens aliquam quantitatem aliquo modo consequitur, non autem obiectum tactus.”

126 McQueen, “Aquinas on the Aesthetic Relevance,” 350.

127 Ibid.
hearing,” which he proceeds to reject for other reasons. In an article replying to McQueen, Neil Campbell succeeds in solving the “apparent inconsistency”; however, because he also assumes that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the act of knowing itself for Thomas, Campbell runs into a different problem, and so ends up agreeing with McQueen that Thomas’s exclusion of the lower senses from aesthetic experience “is extremely problematic.”

Campbell notes that “there is no inconsistency here because the senses are in fact ranked according to different criteria in the mentioned works”: In Metaphysic. I, 1 ranks the senses by “the sheer quantity of the information” that they convey, while Summa Theologiae I, 78.3 ranks them according to “the proportion of spiritual to natural immutation” or change in the act of sensation. The distinction between natural and spiritual change in the latter text is the same as the one that we discussed in Chapter Three between receiving a form materially (i.e. natural change) and receiving it immaterially (i.e. spiritual change). All the senses undergo the latter change since sensation is such a change, but not necessarily the former; moreover, those senses where it does occur experience it to varying degrees:

But in some senses only a spiritual change is found, as in sight. In some, however, there is with the spiritual change also a natural change; either on the part of the object only, or also on the part of the organ. On the part of the object, however, a natural change is found, according to place in fact, in sound which is the object of hearing, for sound is caused by the percussion and disturbance of the air. According to alteration however, in odor which is the object of smell, for a body

128 McQueen, “Aquinas on the Aesthetic Relevance,” 350-55.
131 Ibid., 171.
132 See Chapter Three, pp. 158-60.
133 As we observed in Chapter Three, p. 168, note 68, sensation is not the only case of spiritual change for Thomas since he holds that the medium does not communicate a sense quality to the sense organ by receiving the sense quality physically (e.g. the air or water through which we see red does not itself become red) but rather immaterially, i.e. by receiving a species or intention of that redness, which causes the species of the sense quality in the sense organ that determines it to know the sense object. For our discussion of how he can still define knowledge as the immaterial possession of reality, see the mentioned footnote.
must in some way be affected by heat, in order that it exhale an odor. On the part of an organ, however, there is a natural change in touch and taste, for both the hand touching something becomes hot, and the tongue is moistened by the moistness of the flavor. The organ of smell or of hearing, on the other hand, is changed by no natural change in perceiving, except accidentally.\textsuperscript{134}

Once he has established the respective degree of immateriality for each sense, Thomas proceeds to rank the senses from the most immaterial to the least: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.\textsuperscript{135}

Since this order “coincides” with how the senses are ranked “in terms of their aesthetic relevance,” Campbell concludes that Thomas restricts aesthetic experience to sight and hearing because these senses have “less matter involved in the actual process of sensation itself,” and so “convey the form of the thing in a purer manner.”\textsuperscript{136} In other words, what determines whether a sense is part of aesthetic experience is not how much it knows but how well it knows, which in turn depends on its degree of immateriality since, as Thomas even says in \textit{In Metaphysic. I, 1}, “the more immaterial any cognitive power is, the more perfect it is in knowing.”\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 78.3. Leonine 5.254. “Sed in quibusdam sensibus invenitur immutatio spiritualis tantum, sicut in \textit{visu}. In quibusdam autem, cum immutacione spirituali, etiam naturali; vel ex parte objecti tantum, vel etiam ex parte organi. Ex parte autem objecti, invenitur transmutatio naturalis, secundum locum quidem, in sono, qui est objectum \textit{auditus}; nam sonus ex percussione causatur et aeris commotione. Secundum alterationem vero, in odore, qui est objectum \textit{olfactus}; oportet enim per calidum alterari aliquo modo corpus, ad hoc quod spiret odorum. Ex parte autem organi, est immutatio naturalis in \textit{tactu} et \textit{gustu}; nam et manus tangens calida calefit, et lingua humectatur per humiditatem saporum. Organum vero olfactus aut auditus nulla naturali immutacione immutatur in sentiendo, nisi per accidens.” Although Thomas is wrong about the lack of physical change in the organs of sight, hearing, and smell, he is still right about the greater immateriality of these senses since, while it is true that very fine electromagnetic, mechanical, and chemical changes occur in the eye, ear, and nose when sensing, the forms they receive materially are not the forms that they receive immaterially, as is the case with the other two senses: the eye does not become colored, the ear does not become sounding, and the nose does not become smelly, but the tongue does become flavored to a degree (hence the phrase “that left me with a bad taste in my mouth”), and the skin does take on the contours and temperature of what the touch is sensing.


\textsuperscript{137} \textit{In Metaphysic. I, 1.6}. Marietti 6. “Quanto enim aliqua vis cognoscitiva est immaterialior, tanto est
Campbell has certainly determined part of the reason that Thomas restricts aesthetic experience to the two higher senses. Not only is greater immateriality precisely what makes a sense “higher” for Thomas, but, as we discussed in Chapter Three, Thomas’s description of the knowledge of beauty as a *visio* or seeing implies that it is “highly immaterial.” Hence, there is no question at this point that the greater materiality of the lower senses has something to do with their exclusion from aesthetic experience for Thomas.

Nevertheless, Campbell’s account is still incomplete since, as he points out himself, “the proportion of natural to spiritual immutation which determines the relative ranking of each sense is a function varying only by degrees,” and so cannot explain “the separation” of the five senses into aesthetic and non-aesthetic. This distinction therefore cannot avoid appearing “arbitrary” to Campbell, and “especially” because it splits hearing and smell, which “are grouped together by Aquinas with respect to the type and degree of natural immutation involved in each”: i.e. natural change in the medium but not in the organ; consequently, “it seems arbitrary to treat one but not the other as aesthetically relevant.” According to Campbell, in order for Thomas to eliminate this inconsistency in his thought on beauty, he “must either include the sense of smell in his list of aesthetically relevant senses, in which case he would have to speak of beautiful smells, or he could exclude the sense of hearing from his list and claim that the sense of sight is the only one that reveals beauty.” The first option is “tenuous” because “touch and taste also differ only in degree (of natural immutation) from hearing and smell and so it is likewise arbitrary to exclude them”; the second, meanwhile, “is very counterintuitive” since it entails the denial of beautiful sounds. Therefore, Campbell concludes, “Aquinas’s claim that sight and hearing are the only perfectior in cognoscendo.”

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138 See Chapter Three, p. 152.
aesthetically relevant senses is an extremely unstable and contentious one.”

It seems unlikely that Thomas’s exclusion of the lower senses from aesthetic experience is as “contentious” a view as Campbell claims since it is a position that he shares with a number of other thinkers going back to the dawn of philosophy. Moreover, Thomas’s main reason for holding this position is precisely that the vast majority of people do not describe smells, tastes, or touches as “beautiful”—a fact that was also observed by Plato and is still true today. Finally, this opinion also has a solid philosophical explanation that shows itself the moment one recognizes that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the object known.

As we saw, pleasure in the object of contemplation requires not only knowledge of and love for something but also possession of it. Thus, if beauty causes this kind of pleasure, it must be possessed through no other means than the knowledge of it since the only distinction between the meanings of beauty and goodness for Thomas is that, while the good is “that which pleases the appetite absolutely,” i.e. when possessed through any means, the beautiful is “that the mere apprehension of which pleases,” i.e. when possessed solely through knowledge. We in fact possess a thing through knowledge alone, and so can experience it as beautiful, when we see or hear it since in perceiving it with these senses our knowledge is caused not by direct physical contact with the thing itself or with little parts of the thing that have been given off by it. Rather, our knowledge is caused by a spiritual/material change, i.e. the intentional communication of

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140 Ibid., 175.
143 *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “[B]onum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitui; pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.”
color and sound through electromagnetic and longitudinal mechanical waves, which the object has effected in the medium separating it from one’s eye or ear (namely, air or water).

In contrast, when one knows a thing with the lower senses, one is united to it not just by the act of knowing it but also by some form of physical contact, either with the thing itself (in the cases of touch and taste), or else with tiny parts of it that have been dispersed in the air through evaporation (in the case of smelling). Consequently, while something that is known by means of the lower senses can certainly delight for its own sake just as beauty does, nevertheless the cause of this delight will necessarily be a union that is not only spiritual but also physical, and therefore not an instance of aesthetic experience. For example, feeling the embraces of our close friends and family members with the sense of touch is obviously something delightful in itself, but this joy is caused by being united to them not only through knowing them but also through hugging them; thus, in these cases we are not delighting in being united to our loved ones solely through knowledge, and therefore are not experiencing them as beautiful. Hence, our theory of aesthetic pleasure has a simple explanation for the exclusion of the lower senses from the experience of beauty: because these senses cannot know without also being in some kind of physical contact with their objects, anything known by means of them cannot delight by being possessed solely through knowledge, and thus cannot be experienced as beautiful.\[145\]

\[144\] I am not attributing this view to Thomas since, as we have seen, he holds that colors are communicated by a purely spiritual change in the medium; rather, I am expressing my view of how Thomas’s theory of seeing should be updated in light of modern science, for two reasons: 1) in order to show that the conclusion I am coming to here does not depend on Thomas’s disproven theory of light, and 2) because it is the harder case. After all, if sight involves no physical possession of its object even if it is caused by a physical change in the medium, then, a fortiori, there will certainly be no such possession if it is caused by a purely spiritual change. Hence, if I can prove my point for a modern Thomistic theory of sight, I have done so for Thomas as well.

\[145\] Kovach makes the same point in “The Role of the Senses in Aesthetic Experience,” Scholastic Challenges to Some Mediaeval and Modern Ideas (Stillwater, OK: Western Publications, 1987), 289-90: “From all this it follows that aesthetic delight stems solely from mental possession and, since delights flowing from touch, taste, and smell are caused by some sort of physical possession, only those senses are aesthetic per se . . . the use of which does not consist in physical contact or union, namely, the eye and the ear.” Kovach arrives at this conclusion by means of a demonstration quia, based on the observation that we often cannot and usually do not possess
In addition to its simplicity, this account also has the advantage of giving the best and clearest explanation of Thomas’s statement that “those senses chiefly look to the beautiful that are maximally knowing.”\(^{146}\) As we saw, scholars take various positions on what the expression “maximally knowing” means for Thomas, namely that a cognitive power has the most objective knowledge,\(^{147}\) or the greatest quantity of knowledge,\(^{148}\) or knowledge that is the least obscured by a physical change in the process of sensation.\(^{149}\) What has not occurred to these scholars is that the easiest way to determine what Thomas means by “maximally knowing” is to look at what he means by “knowing” itself, which, as we learned in Chapter Three, Thomas defines as “having something in oneself formally and not materially,”\(^ {150}\) i.e. to possess the form of a thing immaterially. It follows from this definition that, when Thomas restricts aesthetic experience to the senses of sight and hearing on the grounds that they are “maximally knowing,” he means that it is because they are the only two senses that possess their objects in the most immaterial way possible for a sense power, i.e. without materially possessing them \textit{at all}—an explanation that makes perfect sense if experiencing a thing as beautiful means delighting in the possession of it \textit{solely} through knowledge, as our theory of aesthetic pleasure maintains.

A final advantage of our account is that it does not depend on asserting that the three lower senses are incapable of causing a “disinterested” delight, namely a pleasure that is taken in aesthetic objects any way other than by knowledge; however, because he does not recognize that beauty’s proper effect is pleasure in the object contemplated, he is unable to give a \textit{propter quid} explanation. We, on the other hand, can offer such a proof, with the following steps: 1) beauty is that which pleases through the mere apprehension of it, i.e. by being possessed solely through knowledge; 2) objects that are known by means of smell, taste, or touch are always in some kind of physical contact with the knower, and thus \textit{cannot} be possessed through the mere apprehension of them; therefore, 3) objects that are known by means of the three lower senses cannot be experienced as beautiful.

\(^{146}\) \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “Unde et illi sensus praecipue respiciunt pulchrum, qui maxime cognoscitivi sunt, scilicet visus et auditus rationi deservientes . . .”

\(^{147}\) See pp. 246-47.

\(^{148}\) McQueen, “Aquinas on the Aesthetic Relevance,” 349-55.


\(^{150}\) \textit{In De Causis} 18, cited in note 87 on p. 236.
the object of knowledge for its own sake rather than as gratifying some physical appetite. The claim that objects of the lower senses cannot please disinterestedly has been used to justify the exclusion of these senses from aesthetic experience not only by Thomists, as we saw,\textsuperscript{151} but also by other philosophers such as Hegel.\textsuperscript{152} It is a dubious premise at best since, as we have already seen, it is easy to come up with cases where an object of the lower senses certainly seems to be pleasing solely for its own sake: a chef who is not hungry tasting the perfectly flavored meal that he has prepared for someone else; two friends embracing after a long absence from each other; wine connoisseurs sampling especially fine vintages at a tasting; a perfumer admiring a new scent that he has created; and so on. Furthermore, Thomas himself seems to reject the idea that objects of the lower senses cannot please disinterestedly when he states in several passages that human beings, unlike other animals, can delight in the objects not only of sight and hearing but of all the senses “for themselves” (*secundum se*).\textsuperscript{153} These are difficult objections for Thomists who wish to base the exclusion of the lower senses from aesthetic experience on a supposed incapacity to cause disinterested pleasure. On the other hand, these facts pose no threat to our account, in which objects of the lower senses cannot be experienced as beautiful, not because they cannot please disinterestedly, but simply because they cannot be possessed solely through knowledge. Our theory of aesthetic pleasure can therefore explain why the three lower senses are excluded from aesthetic experience without denying that their objects can please for their own sake, as

\textsuperscript{151} See pp. 246-47 above.

\textsuperscript{152} For instance, see the texts by Hegel and Scruton cited in note 141 on p. 252.

\textsuperscript{153} See *In Ethic.* III, 19, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 35.2 ad 3, and *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 141.4 ad 3 [Leonine 47/1.182:205-14, 6.241, and 10.126]. It is possible to interpret the passages from the *Summa Theologiae* as saying that every sense except touch can cause disinterested delight; however, in the Ethics commentary text Thomas indicates that one can also take delight in touch for its own sake, and seems to give pleasures in exercise as an example of such delight. Another good example of such delight is described by J. R. R. Tolkien: “As Frodo prepared to follow him, he laid his hand upon the tree beside the ladder: never before had he been so suddenly and so keenly aware of the feel and texture of a tree’s skin and of the life within it. He felt a delight in wood and the touch of it, neither as forester nor as carpenter; it was the delight of the living tree itself.” J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring,* vol. 1 of *The Lord of the Rings,* 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 366.
seems to be indicated by common experience.

The one major objection to our account is that, while the explanation it gives for smell’s exclusion from aesthetic experience is certainly supported by what modern science has revealed about this sense, it is not supported by the views that Thomas himself holds on smell, and thus cannot be his explanation for why smells are not experienced as beautiful. As is well known, Thomas holds that “when the odor of a cadaver is sensed by vultures from as far as fifty [Roman] miles or more, it would be impossible that some bodily evaporation be utterly diffused through such a space” because “a sense object affects its medium in all directions according to the same distance, unless impeded,” and “there would not be enough to occupy such a space, even if the whole corpse were to evaporate.” On this foundation of excellent observation but faulty reasoning, Thomas concludes that the vapor “does not reach all the way to the point where the odor is perceived,” and that beyond this point the odorous thing “changes the medium

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154 As Kovach observes, another possible objection is that “if only mental possession could cause aesthetic delight, touch could never lead to aesthetic experience, even in the blind; and this is obviously not true” since, for example, the blind can admire the beauty of a statue by touching it. For Kovach, the “proper answer” to this objection is that when the blind man touches a statue, “that touch is merely a means whereby the per se visible shape becomes visible in his imagination.” Kovach, “Role of the Senses,” 290-92. Unfortunately, this explanation does not succeed for a person blind from birth who delights in feeling a statue; moreover, even if this person is not blind from birth, he is still delighting in an object that is not possessed solely by knowledge. It therefore seems better to say that, while a blind person can take disinterested delight in knowing a statue’s beauty through touch, he is not experiencing the statue as beautiful because he is not delighting in possessing it solely through knowledge; rather, he is experiencing it as good since the good delights “absolutely” or through any means of possession, material or immateral. Hence, as we have argued in the preceding paragraph, the fact that the lower senses cannot be a part of aesthetic experience does not mean that one cannot delight in something that is known by these senses for its own sake or disinterestedly.

155 In De anima II, 20. Leonine 45/1.152:64-74. “Cum enim odor cadaueris usque ad quinquaginta miliaria amplius a vulturibus sensiatur, impossibile est quod aliqua corporalis evaporatio cadaueris usque ad tantum sprium diffundatur, presertim cum sensibile inmedium undique secundum eandem distanciam nisi impediat; non autem sufficeret ad occupandum tantum spium, etiam si totum cadauer resolueretur in fumalem evaporationem, cum sit certus terminus rarefactionis ad quem corpus naturale pervenire potest . . .”

156 As Miles Burnyeat observes, Thomas is assuming that “the vapour would have to stretch continuously all the way from corpse to vulture, so that the corpse could be scented at any point along the path of diffusion,” and thus “does not consider the possibility of an isolated cloud of vapour, like a puff of spray from a scent-bottle, drifting on its own from one place to another.” M. F. Burnyeat, “Aquinus on ‘spiritual change’ in perception,” Ancient and medieval theories of intentionality, ed. Dominik Perler (Boston: Brill, 2001), 138.
spiritually,” i.e. purely with a spiritual change.\textsuperscript{157} In other words, while the \textit{emission} of a thing’s scent requires that part of the thing is evaporated, the scent’s \textit{communication} does not depend on that vapor reaching the organ of smell, and so for Thomas it is possible to smell a thing without physically possessing part of it. Since Thomas also says that, unlike other animals, man delights in certain smells “for themselves” (\textit{secundum seipsos}) rather than “for the sake of food”\textsuperscript{158}—a claim paralleling his statement that “man alone takes pleasure in the beauty of sensible objects for its own sake”\textsuperscript{159}—it seems that for Thomas objects of smell \textit{can} delight by being possessed merely through knowledge, and so can be experienced as beautiful, in which case he has no grounds for excluding the sense of smell from aesthetic experience.

Surprisingly, this objection is refuted by the very delight to which it appeals since in Thomas’s opinion the pleasure that man takes in smells not only differs in kind from aesthetic delight, but also shows that for Thomas, at least in \textit{human beings}, smelling always entails the physical possession of the smelt object. According to Thomas, most animals delight in smells associated with flavors (e.g. the scent of a steak) because they arouse delight in the anticipation of eating, but those odors that are delightful “in themselves” (e.g. the smell of flowers) are only pleasing to man for the reason that they help “to counter the excessive coolness of the brain,” a condition unique to human beings because of the larger size of their brains in proportion to the rest of their bodies.\textsuperscript{160} Hence, what makes a smell “delightful in itself” is not that it is lovable for

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\item \textsuperscript{157} \textit{In De anima} II, 20. Leonine 45/1.152:77-81. “Et ideo dicendum est, quod ab odorabili resolui quidem potest fumalis evaporatio, quae tamen non pertingit usque ad terminum unde odor percipitur, set inmutatur medium spiritualiter ultra quam predicta evaporatio pertingere possit.”
\item \textsuperscript{158} \textit{In De caelo} II, 14.426. Leonine 3.176. “[H]omo delectatur secundum olfactum in odoribus rosarum et liliorum, non autem alia animalia; quia huismodi odores sunt convenientes hominibus secundum seipsos, alis autem animalibus non conveniant odores, nec delectant ea, nisi causa alimenti, sicut nec colores.” Duffy cites this text as proof that smells can be experienced as beautiful for Thomas in “A Philosophy of Poetry,” 62.
\item \textsuperscript{159} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 91.3 ad 3, cited above on p. 212.
\item \textsuperscript{160} \textit{In De sensu} 12. Leonine 45/2.68-69:29-30, 63-66, 122-135. “[I]nter odorabilia aliquid est \textit{ordinatum} secundum saporis species. . . . [Q]uidam odores \textit{sunt detectabiles secundum se ipsos}, id est non per comparationem
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itself (like beauty) but that it is “always useful for health of its own nature”\textsuperscript{161} which means that this kind of smell pleases our appetite for bodily goods, or sensuality, rather than our will. Now, the brain cannot be heated by the intentional or spiritual changes that odors cause in the air and the nose since “intentions do not cause natural changes,”\textsuperscript{162} but it could be caused by the fumes given off by the odorous object since these had to be heated in order to be evaporated in the first place. Thomas confirms this interpretation when he says that “odor has power to heat due to the heat of the fire by which it is caused and released,”\textsuperscript{163} and that, conversely, odors are harmful due to the coolness or noxiousness of their vapors.\textsuperscript{164} Thus, Thomas’s explanation for our delight in smells indicates that he does not think human beings are able to smell something without also inhaling its vapor, which should not surprise us; after all, Thomas only attributes this ability to vultures, the animals with by far the best sense of smell, while human beings, as Thomas says in several places, have by far the worst sense of smell.\textsuperscript{165}

Hence, it turns out that our explanation for why smells cannot be experienced as beautiful does work in Thomas’s understanding. The only animals that he thinks can smell a thing without physically possessing it (i.e. vultures) are not capable of recognizing and delighting in beauty, while the only animals capable of delighting in beauty (i.e. human beings) cannot smell a thing.

\textsuperscript{161} In De sensu 12. Leonine 45/2.70:153-55. “[S]et illa species odoris que est secundum se delectabilis semper est utiles ad sanatatem ex sui natura . . .” Emphasis mine.
\textsuperscript{162} Summa Theologiae I, 67.3. Leonine 5.165. “Intentiones autem non causant transmutationes naturales.”
\textsuperscript{163} In De sensu 12. Leonine 45/2.70:181-83. “[O]dor enim habet uirtutem calefaciendi propter calidum ignem a quo causatur et resoluitur.”
\textsuperscript{164} See note 160 above in this chapter, and In De sensu 13 [Leonine 45/2.73:90-123].
\textsuperscript{165} E.g. Summa Theologiae I, 91.3 ad 1. Leonine 5.393. “[H]omo, inter omnia animalia, habet pessimum olfactum.”
without physically possessing it. As a result, for Thomas smells cannot give delight in being possessed solely through knowledge, and thus cannot be experienced as beautiful.

At any rate, it is clear that Thomas does not consider the delight we take in smells “for their own sake” to be an instance of aesthetic pleasure, but rather thinks of it as a kind of sensual pleasure that relates to breathing as pleasures of taste relate to eating. According to Thomas, just as delightful tastes not only “contribute to the delight of the food” but are also important “signs of its suitability for nourishment,”166 likewise those odors that are delightful in themselves make breathing better for health as well as more pleasant167 since they indicate the presence of vapors that cause health in the brain and are consequently good to inhale.168 In other words, delight in smelling seems to be the secondary pleasure of breathing for Thomas just as delight in tasting is the secondary pleasure of eating for him,169 which Thomas confirms when he says that “as flavor is ordered to nutrition, so odor is ordered to health.”170 It turns out that Thomas was righter than

166 Summa Theologiae II-II, 141.5 ad 2. Leonine 10.129. “Sed ad gustum pertinet discretio saporum, qui conferunt ad delectationem alimenti, inquantum sunt signa convenientis nutrimenti.”
167 In De sensu 13. Leonine 45/2.75:231-34. “Vnde manifestum est quod odor non nutrit (confortat autem propter inmutationem que est a calido humido et sicco, et propter delectationem . . . ).”
168 In De sensu 12. Leonine 45/2.70:177-81. “[O]dores ascendent ad cerebrum, quia calor igneus, qui resoluit odores dat eis quamdam levitatem ut superiora petant, et ex hoc sequitur quedam sanitas circa cerebrum . . . .”
169 In Summa Theologiae II-II, 141.5. Thomas makes clear that, because the essential “use” of food is to chew and swallow it so that it can nourish us, the primary pleasure of eating is “the delight of touch,” i.e. that of feeling the food in our mouth, throat, and stomach, while the secondary pleasure is that of “a delightful flavor in food” because it “makes the use more delightful.” Since inhaling air into our lungs is the essential “use” that we make of air, the primary pleasure of breathing must also be a pleasure of touch, namely that of feeling the air filling our lungs, while the secondary pleasure would be that which is caused by smells that are delightful in themselves since these “make the use” or breathing of air “more delightful.” Thomas seems to be confirming this interpretation when he says that “nature uses breathing for two things: . . . principally as an aid to the chest” and “secondarily for perceiving odor.” Summa Theologiae II-II, 141.5. Leonine 10.128-29. “Principaliter quidem ipse usus rei necessariae: puta vel feminae, quae est necessaria ad conservationem speciei; vel cibi vel potus, quae sunt necessaria ad conservationem individui. Et ipse usus horum necessitariorum habet quandam essentiam delectationem adiunctam. Secundario autem consideratur circa utrumque usum aliquid quod facit ad hoc quod usus sit magis delectabilis: sicut pulchritudo et ornatus feminae, et sapor delectabilis in cibo, et etiam odor.” In De sensu 12. Leonine 45/2.70:183-87. “Vnde natura utitur respiratione ad duo: ut operose quidem, id est principaliter, ad adiutorium toracis, id est pectoris, id est ad refrigerium caloris cordis; ut adventicie autem, id est secundario, ad perciendi odorem . . . .”
170 In De sensu 13. Leonine 45/2.75:242-43. “[S]icut sapor ordinatur ad nutritionem, ita odor ad sanitatem.”
he knew since, as we know today, the things whose scents naturally delight us for their own sake, i.e. flowers, trees, and other plants, not only make the air healthier for us to breathe but actually keep it from suffocating us to death, which they accomplish by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and replacing it with oxygen. Thus, while modern science has refuted Thomas’s biological theory that intrinsically delightful odors are healthy for us because their vapors heat the brain, it has only confirmed his philosophical insight that our sensuality is programmed to delight in these smells because they indicate the presence of air that is good for our health.\footnote{171}

Although our theory has thus helped to confirm and explain Thomas’s exclusion of the lower senses from the experience of beauty, we would emphasize that these senses can still support that experience from the outside, as it were, by revealing certain aspects of the thing’s excellence that the intellect cannot know by means of the higher senses. Thus, our delight in a beautiful rose is “enhanced by” awareness of “its fragrance and delicate texture,” not because we can experience beauty through taste and smell, as Callahan thinks,\footnote{172} but because our delight in seeing the flower is increased when we know that it has certain non-visible qualities that are also required for the full perfection of its nature. Of course, as long as we are touching or smelling a beautiful thing, we are no longer possessing and enjoying it merely through knowing it, and thus no longer properly experiencing it \textit{as beautiful}, but rather simply \textit{as good} or \textit{as delightful}. It is for this reason that, when we do touch a flower or a work of fine art, we usually do so only for a moment, in order to add to our knowledge of its flawlessness by feeling it with our hands, after which we step back to resume admiring it from a distance.\footnote{173} Hence, as we said above, when

\footnote{171}{Once again, Tolkien gives a helpful example: the words of Treebeard, which nicely illustrate the close connection between the pleasure of smelling and breathing: “And the smell of the air! I used to spend a week just breathing.” \textit{The Two Towers}, vol. 2 of \textit{The Lord of the Rings}, 2nd ed. (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 72.}
\footnote{172}{Callahan, \textit{A Theory of Esthetic}, 38.}
\footnote{173}{As Kovach observes, “the artworks which can be touched (paintings, statues, buildings, etc.) are in most}
Thomas says that beauty “chiefly” regards the higher senses, he does not mean simply that we experience beauty to a lesser degree through the lower senses, but rather that, though the lower senses can give extrinsic assistance to aesthetic visio, they cannot be part of visio itself.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we found that for Thomas there are in fact three kinds of pleasure that are caused by aesthetic experience: (1) the delight of the sensual appetite in the agreeable stimulation of the senses, (2) the delight of the will in the knowledge of the senses and of the intellect, and (3) the delight of the will in the object that is possessed through the act of knowing. While the first frequently accompanies aesthetic experience and the second always does, we found that for Thomas it is only the third that is aesthetic pleasure strictly speaking, i.e. beauty’s proper effect, since it is the only delight that is caused by beauty and only by beauty, and whose contrary pain is caused by ugliness and only by ugliness. Moreover, we found that identifying this pleasure as beauty’s proper effect immediately resolves a number of “problems” in Thomas’s thought on beauty, and is therefore indispensable for properly understanding that thought.

Despite the certainty that for Thomas beauty causes delight in the object known, I have found only one Thomist who shares this understanding of aesthetic pleasure: Tomás Melendo.
Granados, who in his *Esbozo de una metafísica de la belleza* writes the following:

Ordinarily goodness and beauty are contrasted with regard to the different ways in which these realities bring about the pleasure that they achieve: the good . . . through a possession that calms the desire . . . ; the beautiful, however, through a simply cognitive acquisition, without need for possession. I now intend to affirm, even though only in appearance, the contrary: that goodness and beauty, without a doubt, are distinguished from each other . . . but, note well, beauty does not exceed the “simply” good because it excludes possession, but only by appealing to the most sublime mode of possession that can be given: to knowledge—the immaterial possession of being . . . 175

Granados does not try to demonstrate that Thomas himself holds this view of aesthetic delight, presumably because he is not familiar with the passages presented in this chapter. Nevertheless, in the above paragraph Granados has eloquently described the substantial difference between Thomas’s explanation for why beauty pleases merely when known and the one that that has been given by nearly every Thomist over the last two centuries: whereas contemporary Thomists hold that a beautiful object arouses and satisfies a desire *merely for the act of knowing it* and therefore pleases *without being possessed*, Thomas holds that the beautiful object arouses and satisfies a desire *for itself*, which it does *by being possessed solely through knowledge*.

Since, as we have seen, the latter view is an absolutely essential part of Thomas’s thought on beauty, it seems that the nearly unanimous failure of Thomists to recognize the true nature of aesthetic pleasure for Thomas—the sole exception being Granados—only makes sense in light of the enormous influence that is exerted by Kant on the field of aesthetics. Kant famously states in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that aesthetic pleasure is “disinterested,” by which he does not mean that beauty delights us for its own sake by being united to the soul through the very act

175 “De ordinario se contraponen bondad y belleza, en atención al diverso modo en que estas realidades producen placer . . . : lo bueno . . . a través de una posesión que colma el deseo . . . ; lo bello, sin embargo, por la simple captación cognoscitiva, sin necesidad de posesión. Ahora pretendo afirmar, aun cuando sólo en apariencia, lo contrario: que el bien y la belleza, sin duda, se distinguen entre sí . . . pero, nótese bien, la belleza no excede a la « simple » bondad porque excluya la posesión, sino justo por apelar al modo de poseer más sublime que puede darse: al conocimiento—posesión inmaterial de ser . . .” Granados, *Esbozo*, 48.
of knowing it. Such delight is impossible for Kant, who thinks that our knowledge separates us from reality rather than uniting us with it as Thomas holds. Instead, aesthetic pleasure is literally “disinterested” for Kant in the sense that it does not spring from any “interest in” or desire for the beautiful thing itself, but from the “harmony” or “free play” that beauty causes in the cognitive powers.\(^{176}\) That the majority of Thomists wrongly attributed a version of this view to Thomas is thus probably the result of their having accepted it uncritically from modern aesthetics.\(^{177}\)

In addition to being significant in itself, demonstrating that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the object contemplated is also very significant for our main inquiry since it disproves one of the most popular Thomist theories regarding the meaning of beauty: namely, that beauty is “being as proportioned to the intellect by its perfection.” According to this view, beauty pleases merely when seen because its greater conformity to the intellect brings about an especially perfect and thus delightful act of knowing; hence, as we noted in Chapter Two, this theory assumes that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the act of knowing itself. Since we have now disproven this view of aesthetic pleasure, we have likewise disproven this theory regarding beauty’s meaning.

Aertsen’s theory that beauty is the true taken as good, however, has not been disproven

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\(^{176}\) Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 91: “Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. One must not be in the least biased in favor of the existence of the thing, but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste.” Ibid., 167-68: “[T]he judgment of taste must rest . . . on a feeling that allows the object to be judged in accordance with the purposiveness of the representation . . . for the promotion of the faculty of cognition in its free play; and taste . . . contains a principle of subsumption . . . of the faculty of intuitions or presentations (i.e. of the imagination) under the faculty of concepts (i.e. the understanding), insofar as the former in its freedom is in harmony with the latter in its lawfulness.” Emphasis in original.

\(^{177}\) This attitude is especially evident in Kovach, who devotes two whole articles to showing that the modern notion of aesthetic disinterestedness is also part of Thomas’s thought in particular and of pre-modern thought in general, and consequently concludes at the end of his article on Thomas that “the principal difference between modern and pre-modern aesthetics should be sought in something other than the idea of aesthetic disinterestedness”: “Aesthetic Disinterestedness in Thomas Aquinas” and “Aesthetic Disinterestedness in Pre-Modern Thought,” *Scholastic Challenges to Some Mediaeval and Modern Ideas*, ed. Francis J. Kovach (Stillwater, OK: Western Publications, 1987), 253-58 and 259-270. Kovach is right in a sense since I would argue that modern and pre-modern thinkers do not disagree on whether aesthetic pleasure is disinterested, but rather on how and why it is disinterested: does the mere apprehension of beauty please because it is loved for itself and united to the soul by the very act of knowing, or rather because it stimulates the cognitive powers in an agreeable way?
yet since it is not necessarily incompatible with our conclusion that aesthetic pleasure is delight in the object known. While Thomas does tell us that this pleasure requires not only knowledge of and love for some object, but also comprehensio or possession of it, he makes clear that it is precisely through the act of knowing that the being is possessed by the soul. Hence, it still seems that, for a being to please merely when seen and thus be beautiful, all that is needed is that it be knowable and lovable, or true and good, in which case beauty is reduced to truth and goodness.

This impression is strengthened by Thomas’s position on man’s ultimate beatitude. As is well known, Thomas maintains that “the essence of happiness consists in an act of the intellect,” rather than an act of the will, because “happiness is the attainment of the last end,” i.e. God, and we attain or possess God not through an act of the will—since then we would be united to Him the moment we desired Him—but rather through His “being made present to us by an act of the intellect.”

This view seems to eliminate the distinction between knowledge and possession, and consequently the distinction between beauty and the true taken as good; after all, if Thomas holds that an act of intellectual vision is what perfectly unites us to God, then it seems that for him knowledge simply is the greatest kind of possession. That Thomas indeed holds this view of knowledge is argued by none other than Josef Pieper, who notes in his classic work Happiness and Contemplation that Thomas “more than once” states that knowing is “the highest mode of

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178 Summa Theologiae I-II, 3.4. Leonine 6.29. “Manifestum est enim ex praemissis quod beatitudo est consecutio finis ultimi. Consecutio autem finis non consistit in ipso actu voluntatis. Voluntas enim fertur in finem et absentem, cum ipsum desiderat; et praeuentem, cum in ipso requiescens delectatur. . . . Oportet igitur aliquid aliud esse quam actum voluntatis, per quod fit ipse finis praesens volenti. Et hoc manifeste apparat circa fines sensibiles. Si enim consequi pecuniam esset per actu voluntatis, statim a principio consequence esset pecuniam, quando vult eam habere. Sed a principio quidem est absens ei; consequitur autem ipsum per hoc quod manu ipsum apprehendit, vel aliquo huiusmodi; et tunc iam delectatur in pecunia habita. Sic igitur et circa intelligibilem finem contingit. Nam a principio volumus consequi finem intelligibilem; consequimur autem ipsum per hoc quod fit praesens nobis per actu intellectus; et tunc voluntas delectata conquiescit in fine iam adepto. Sic igitur essentia beatitudinis in actu intellectus consistit: sed ad voluntatem pertinet delectatio beatitudinem consequens . . .”
having,“"179 and contends that Thomas repeatedly makes this claim “not because that mode of having is the ‘most spiritual,’” but rather because “there is no form of having in which the object is more intensely grasped,” and thus “no other form so thoroughgoing.”180

In fact, however, the eminent Thomist is mistaken on this point: in itself, knowledge is actually the weakest kind of possession for Thomas, not the strongest. The reason is that, as we saw in Chapter Three, for Thomas knowledge is possessing a form immaterially, or as belonging to another, and thus depends on an immaterial assimilation of the knower to the known. In this unique mode of assimilation, the knower is united to the known, not through the known thing’s form existing physically or materially in the knower, but in virtue of a “likeness” of that form existing in the knower, namely the species, which enables the form to be intentionally present in the knower.181 Hence, as Thomas notes in an article from the *Summa Theologiae*, the knower and the known are only united “insofar . . . as the thing known is in the knower according to its likeness,” which is therefore weaker than the union “according to reality” that occurs when “one is really conjoined to another, either actually or potentially.” It is because “conjoining according to reality is greater than conjoining according to likeness, which is the conjoining of knowledge,” and because “the actual conjoining of a thing is greater than the potential conjoining,” that for Thomas “the greatest pleasure is that which arises from sensation” since this delight “requires the presence of the sensible thing”—in other words, the actual conjoining according to reality of the sensible thing and the one sensing. “The second place,” meanwhile, “belongs to the pleasure of hope,” in which “there is not only delightful conjoining according to apprehension, but also

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179 *In De Causis* 18, cited in note 87 on p. 236; *In Sent.* IV, 49.3.5.1 ad 2 [Parma 7/2.1224].
180 Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, trans. Richard and Clara Winson (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998), 65. Granados seems to share this opinion since he says that knowledge “renders superfluous the inferior modes of possession.” *Esbozo*, 49: “. . . conocimiento—posesión inmateral de ser—, que, en verdad, y por su misma eminencia, torna superfluos los modos inferiores de posesión.”
181 See *Summa I*, 85.2 [Leonine 5.333-335] and especially *In De anima* II, 24 [Leonine 45/1.169:45-56].
according to the faculty or power of obtaining the good that delights. “Finally, “the delight of memory holds the third place,” precisely because it “has only the conjoining of apprehension.”\textsuperscript{182}

What is even more astonishing, given Thomas’s position that man attains happiness in an act of the intellect rather than an act of the will, is that for him the union caused by knowledge is not only weaker than both kinds of real union, but is even weaker than the union caused by love! This “union according to affection” is obviously not as strong as actual union in reality since the latter is that “which the lover seeks with the object of his love” and is therefore the fulfillment and goal of the union of love\textsuperscript{183}; however, the union of love is also weaker than potential union in reality since the reason that the pleasure caused by hope is greater than that caused by love is precisely that the former “implies” what the latter does not, namely “some certainty of the real presence of the pleasing good,”\textsuperscript{184} or potential real union. Nevertheless, the union of love “is likened to substantial union, inasmuch as the lover stands to what he loves” either “as to himself” or “as to something belonging to himself.”\textsuperscript{185} Therefore, since knowledge causes a union solely

\textsuperscript{182} Summa Theologiae I-II, 32.3. Leonine 6.226. “[D]electatio causatur ex praesentia boni convenientis, secundum quod sentitur, vel qualitercumque percipitur. Est autem aliquid praeens nobis dupliciter: uno modo, secundum cognitionem, prout scilicet cognition est in cognoscente secundum suam similitudinem; alio modo, secundum rem, prout scilicet unum alteri realiter coniungitur, vel actu vel potentia, secundum qucumque conjunctionis modum. Et quia maior est coniunctio secundum rem quam secundum similitudinem, quae est coniunctio cognitionis; itemque maior est coniunctio rei in actu quam in potentia; ideo maxima est delectatio quae fit per sensum, qui requirit praesentiam rei sensibilis. Secundum autem gradum tenet delectatio spei, in qua non solum est delectabilis coniunctio secundum apprehensionem, sed etiam secundum facultatem vel potestatem adhibiscendi bonum quod delectat. Tertium autem gradum tenet delectatio memoriae, quae habet solam conjunctionem apprehensionis.”


\textsuperscript{184} Summa Theologiae I-II, 32.3 ad 3. Leonine 6.226. “[S]pes, inquantum importat quandam certitudinem reals praeentiae boni delectantis, quam non importat nec amor . . . , magis ponitur causa delectionation quam illa.”

\textsuperscript{185} Summa Theologiae I-II, 28.1 ad 2. Leonine 6.197. “Quaedam vero unio est essentialiter ipse amor. Et haec est unio secundum coaptationem affectus. Quae quidem assimilatur unioni substantiali, inquantum amans se habet ad amatum, in amore quidem amiciciae, ut ad seipsum; in amore autem concupiscientiae, ut ad aliquid sui. Quaedam vero unio est effectus amoris. Et haec est unio realis, quam amans quaerit de re amata.”
“according to likeness,” Thomas concludes that “love is more unitive than knowledge.”

Since knowledge apparently gives the least amount of union with a thing for Thomas, it should be no surprise that he considers possession and knowledge to be not only distinct, but even separable to some degree. In the Summa Theologiae, Thomas supports his contention that *comprehensio* is a distinct gift of the soul from *visio* by noting that “even among ourselves not everything seen is held or possessed, for sometimes distant things are seen, or things that are not in our power of attainment”; in other words, one can know a thing without possessing it to the degree that the knowledge does not entail a real union, either actual or potential, with the object. Moreover, Thomas makes clear in at least a couple of places that the mere vision of God gives perfect possession or *comprehensio* of Him only because of certain characteristics that are utterly exclusive to that vision, which we will discuss in the next chapter. Hence, Thomas’s view that we possess our ultimate happiness through an act of the intellect does not prove that knowledge and possession are the same thing, but rather only shows the degree to which Thomas thinks that the Vision of God transcends the limitations that apply to all creaturely knowing.

If knowing and possessing are thus distinct, then a relation to possession is likewise distinct from a relation to knowledge, and would distinguish beauty from the true taken as good

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187 This fact resolves the problem we discussed earlier in note 8 on p. 213. There we noted that, in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 272 and II-II, 145.2 ad 1 [Leonine 6.193 and 10.147], Thomas indicates that beauty causes desire for itself, even though he defines beauty as causing *pleasure* when seen, which is the opposite of desire. Yet if the cause of beauty’s delight is the possession of a loved being through knowledge, which is in fact the weakest kind of union, then it should be no surprise that the sight of beauty arouses desire since the possession it gives will not always satisfy one’s love for the object. Hence, the fact that beauty can cause desire for itself does not overturn its definition as that which *pleases* when seen since, as Thomas notes, “that which is possessed imperfectly, is in a certain respect possessed, and in a certain respect not possessed,” and therefore “both desire and delight can be caused by it at the same time.” *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 33.2 ad 2. Leonine 6.232. “[I]d quod imperfecte habetur, secundum quid habetur, et secundum quid non habetur. Et ideo simul de eo potest esse et desiderium et delectatio.”

188 *Summa Theologiae* I, 12.7 ad 1. Leonine 4.127. “[H]oc modo *comprehensio* est una de tribus dotibus animae, quae respondet spei; sicut visio fidei, et fruitio caritati. Non enim, apud nos, omne quod videtur, iam tenetur vel habetur: quia videntur interdum distantia, vel quae non sunt in potestate nostra.”
if it were what beauty conceptually adds to being. Indeed, a relation to “possession through the mere apprehension” seems to be the best candidate we have seen so far for the “certain relation to the cognitive power” that Thomas tells us beauty adds to goodness since, as this chapter has shown, the pleasure by which Thomas defines the beautiful essentially depends on possession or *comprehensio* of the object known. This dependence, however, is not enough by itself to show that beauty expresses a relation to *comprehensio* because the pleasure that is given by beauty also depends on knowledge and love, the relations to which are expressed not by beauty but by truth and goodness; thus, we can only conclude that beauty is essentially related to *comprehensio* if it can be shown that the latter is the proper effect of the former, just as knowledge is the proper effect of truth and love is the proper effect of goodness. Therefore, in our next chapter, we will examine the three objective conditions for beauty according to Thomas in order to see whether they are the causes of *comprehensio* and, if they are, how they do so.

Now, a thing’s proper effect is not merely caused by the thing, but is caused by that thing alone, so we can only conclude that “possession through the mere apprehension” is the proper effect of beauty if it can be shown that beauty causes possession through the mere apprehension, and nothing else does. Hence, in addition to determining whether beauty causes possession through the mere apprehension, our next chapter will also investigate whether the extension of the true to the good is capable of causing this effect since it remains the only possible place for beauty outside the order of transcendentials. Once we have done so, we will finally be able to ascertain whether beauty is a distinct transcendental in Thomas’s thought since, if beauty causes possession through the mere apprehension of it, but the true taken as good does not, then beauty

190 *De veritate* 1.1. Leonine 22/1.6:175-76. “. . . cognitio est quidam veritatis effectus.”
is a distinct transcendental that expresses a unique relation of being to possession through vision.

On the other hand, if both or neither cause possession through vision, then beauty is identical in meaning with the true accepted as good, rather than a distinct transcendental.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS FOR BEAUTY

Introduction

The three conditions for beauty that are mentioned by Thomas—integrity or perfection, harmony or due proportion, and brightness—only appear together in two passages, both of which discuss St. Hilary’s Trinitarian appropriations: “eternity” to the Father, “species” to the Son, and “use” to the Holy Spirit. The first of these texts, which we briefly discussed in Chapter One,¹ is In Sent. I, 31.2.1, where Thomas interprets species as “beauty”, and then argues that it should be appropriated to the Son on the grounds that beauty’s three requirements have a special likeness to Him. Thomas begins by laying out these three factors, along with his sources for them:

For the meaning of beauty, however, two things come together, according to Dionysius, namely harmony (consonantia) and brightness (claritas). For he says that God is the cause of all beauty insofar as He is the cause of harmony and brightness, just as we call human beings beautiful who have proportioned members and a shining color. To these two the Philosopher adds a third when he says that there is no beauty except in a large (magno) body; hence, small human beings can be called proportioned and well-formed, but not beautiful.²

Having briefly explicated beauty’s three conditions in this way, Thomas then claims that “according to these three, beauty agrees with what is proper to the Son”:

[F]or insofar as the Son is the perfect image of the Father, thus there is perfect harmony; for He is equal and similar without inequality or dissimilarity. . . . Insofar as He is the true Son indeed, He has the perfect nature of the Father: and so He also possesses magnitude (magnitudinem) which consists in the perfection of the divine nature. . . . But insofar as He is the perfect Word of the Father, He

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¹ Chapter One, p. 69.
² Mandonet 1.724. “Ad rationem autem pulchritudinis duo concurrunt, secundum Dionysium, IV cap. De Divinis nominibus, ubi supra, scilicet consonantia et claritas. Dicit enim, quod Deus est causa omnis pulchritudinis, inquantum est causa consonantiae et claritatis, sicut dicimus homines pulchros qui habent membra proportionata et splendentem colorem. His duobus addit tertium Philosophus, IV Ethic., c. VI, ubi dicit, quod pulchritudo non est nisi in magno corpore; unde parvi homines possunt dici commensurati et formosi, sed non pulchri.”
has the brightness which shines over all and in which all things shimmer.  

Thomas concludes his treatment of beauty’s appropriation to the Son by briefly describing an alternative account that Augustine gives of it, based solely on “the nature of harmony.”  

In the second passage, *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8, Thomas once again identifies *species* with beauty and argues from the latter’s requirements that it “has a likeness to the properties of the Son,” but his description of beauty’s conditions is slightly different in this text:  

For three things are required for beauty. The first indeed is integrity or perfection, since those things that are diminished are by this very fact ugly. Also due proportion or harmony. And again brightness, for which reason those things that have a shining color are said to be beautiful.  

Some scholars have interpreted this text as replacing “magnitude” with “integrity or perfection,” but the latter seems to be simply a more precise description of the same condition as the former since both are attributed to the Son on account of His “having within Himself truly and perfectly the nature of the Father.” This impression is confirmed by Thomas’s statement that magnitude, when attributed to spiritual things, means perfection since we usually call something great when it is as complete or perfect in its being as possible; for example, we call a heat “great” when it is extremely hot. Apart from this small change in language, Thomas’s account here is largely the

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3 Ibid. “Et secundum haec tria, pulchritudo convenit cum propriis filii: inquantum enim Filius est imago perfecta patris, sic est ibi consonantia perfecta; est enim aequalis et similis sine inaequalitate et dissimilitudine . . . Inquantum vero est Filius verus, habet perfectam naturam Patris: et ita etiam habet magnitudinem quae consistit in perfectione divinae naturae . . . . Sed inquantum est verbum perfectum Patris, habet claritatem quae irradiat super omnia et in quo omnia resplendent.”  
4 Ibid. “Potest etiam totum accipi ex verbis Augustini secundum rationem consonantiae . . .”  
6 Aertsen, for example, writes that “in Summa theologiae I, 39.8 the third characteristic has disappeared and has been replaced by ‘perfection.’” *The Transcendentals*, 339.  
7 Summa Theologiae I, 42.1 ad 1. Leonine 4.435-36. “Sed alia est quantitas virtus, quae attenditur secundum perfectionem alciuiss naturae vel formae: quae quidem quantitas designatur secundum quod dictur aliquid magis vel minus calidum, inquantum est perfectius vel minus perfectum in caliditate. Huissmodi autem quantitas virtualis attenditur primo quidem in radice, idest in ipsa perfectione formae vel naturae: et sic dicitur
same, though more developed: “due proportion or harmony” befits the Son “insofar as He is the expressed image of the Father” since “any image is said to be beautiful if it perfectly represents a thing, however ugly,” and “brightness” agrees with the Son “insofar as He is the Word, which is in fact a light, and the splendor of the intellect.”

These two texts have inspired a great deal of speculation among Thomists for the simple reason that, as Aertsen observes, Thomas “is satisfied just to enumerate the conditions of beauty” in these and other passages, and thus “does not indicate their mutual relationship in such a way as to clarify the *a posteriori* definition of the beautiful.” The result has been a great variety of Thomistic theories as to the relationship between beauty’s conditions. Perhaps the most famous hypothesis is the one contained in James Joyce’s novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, whose protagonist Stephen Dedalus argues that the three conditions correspond to three stages of aesthetic apprehension. While Joyce’s theory contains some insight into the three conditions taken individually, his account of their order has no basis in Thomas, who does not even mention stages of aesthetic experience, much less correlate them to beauty’s conditions.

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8 *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8. Leonine 4.409. “Quantum igitur ad primum, similitudinem habet cum proprio Filii, inquantum est Filius habens in se vere et perfecte naturam patris. . . . Quantum vero ad secundum, convenit cum proprio Filii, inquantum est imago expressa Patris. Unde videmus quod aliqua imago dicitur esse pulchra, si perfecte repraesentat rem, quamvis turpem. . . . Quantum vero ad tertium, convenit cum proprio Filii, inquantum est Verbum, quod quidem *lux* est, *et splendor intellectus.*”


10 According to Dedalus, “the first stage of apprehension,” which “is a bounding line drawn about the object to be apprehended” that allows one to “see it as one whole,” corresponds to integrity or wholeness. Harmony corresponds to the next stage, in which “you apprehend [the object] as complex, multiple, divisible, separable, made up of its parts, the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious.” Finally, in the last stage of aesthetic apprehension, “you see that [the object] is that thing which it is and no other thing,” which corresponds to brightness or radiance because in this moment the “*quidditas*, the *whatness* of the thing,” becomes fully manifest. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. John Paul Riquelme (New York: Norton, 2007), 186-188, lines 1342-1405.

11 As Eco notes, the most problematic part of Joyce’s theory is his account of integrity as the mental separation of the object from its surroundings since “it is clear that to understand Aquinas’s term in this fashion is to strip it of its original ontological character”; indeed, “when the three criteria” in general, and “especially the first two,” are “taken in an epistemological sense, their importance dwindles.” Nevertheless, Eco does find Joyce’s interpretation of *claritas* as the manifestation of *quidditas* to be “a more felicitous account of clarity” than those held
A more common trend among Thomists has been to link beauty’s three conditions with earlier transcendentals, probably because such an account harmonizes with Maritain’s influential view that beauty is “the radiance of all the transcendentals united.” The most impressive effort in this direction is made by G. B. Phelan, who, in a diagram that we have reproduced below, correlates the triad not only with the transcendentals “being-true-good,” but also with the two versions of Thomas’s definition of beauty, “those things that please when they are seen” (qua vis a placet) and “that of which the apprehension pleases” (id cuius apprehensio [sic] placet):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Quae} &= (id 	ext{ cuius}) = \text{Integritas sive perfectio} = \text{Ens} \\
\text{Visa} &= (apprehensio) = \text{Claritas} = \text{Verum} \\
\text{Placent} &= (placet) = \text{Proportio sive consonantia} = \text{Bonum}
\end{align*}
\]


12 Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, 173, note 66. See also my second chapter, pp. 93-95.
13 Phelan leaves out the word “mere” (ipsa), which, as should be clear from the last chapter, is not a trivial omission since, by means of this one word, Thomas tells us that aesthetic pleasure is caused solely by the apprehension of the beautiful being, from which it follows that beauty must be possessed solely through that apprehension. Recognizing the significance of the word ipsa is thus essential to discovering the true nature of aesthetic pleasure for Thomas.
15 Ibid., 177-78: “St. Thomas expressly states that the first and primary meaning of perfectio is actual existence, and that to be perfect means, first and foremost, to be . . . . Harmony and proportion are patently connected with the attainment of an end and thus belong to the realm of the good. . . . Finally, claritas is in the realm of intelligibility and truth; it expresses most aptly the power of reality to reveal itself to the mind.” See also Cooper, “Does St. Thomas Aquinas Consider ‘Beautiful’ to be a Transcendental?”, 42, and Donlan, “The Beauty of God,” 212.
16 Hart, Thomistic Metaphysics, 392-93: “Integrity also refers to wholeness as indicative of the perfection of beauty. It is implied in proportion or harmony but particularly emphasizes the element of transcendental unity. . . . Thus do the objective requirements give representation to the transcendentals of the one, true, and good, which are united in beauty as their integrated splendor.” Jordan argues for this same view in “The Grammar of Esse,” 19-21, but then rejects it in “The Evidence,” 394. Cf. Hope, “The Esthetic Theory of James Joyce,” 107.
harmony to unity and integrity to goodness.\textsuperscript{17} That contradictory but equally plausible triads of transcendentals can be related to the three conditions indicates not only that these schemas lack textual support, but also that they cannot explain either the number or the order of beauty’s conditions, and are therefore extraneous to Thomas’s doctrine on beauty.

The most popular explanation for how beauty’s three conditions relate to each other is that each is a requirement for beauty’s proportion to the intellect. This is not surprising since, as we saw in Chapters Two and Four, the majority of Thomists hold that beauty pleases because its conformity to the intellect causes an especially perfect and delightful act of knowing. Hence, Maritain, who is the strongest advocate for that theory of aesthetic pleasure, also argues the most eloquently for how it can be used to explain the number and order of beauty’s conditions:

If beauty delights the intellect, it is because it is essentially a certain excellence or perfection in the proportion of things to the intellect. Hence the three conditions Saint Thomas assigned to beauty: \textit{integrity}, because the intellect is pleased in fullness of being; \textit{proportion}, because the intellect is pleased in order and unity; finally, and above all, \textit{radiance} or \textit{clarity}, because the intellect is pleased in light and intelligibility.

Here Maritain uses his theory that beauty causes pleasure in the very act of knowing not only to explain why each of these three traits is a condition for beauty, but even to account for why one of them, namely clarity, is “the essential characteristic of beauty.”\textsuperscript{18} The explanation for both is the same: the pleasure caused by beauty is pleasure in the very act of knowing, and thus clarity, which most relates to the cognitive power, is the essence of beauty. Maritain’s schema is drawn out even more fully by others,\textsuperscript{19} and especially by Cajetan Chereso, who argues convincingly

\textsuperscript{17} Hunter, “Analogy and Beauty,” 123-24: “Integrity or perfection then relate to ‘good,’ since the good is desirable in so far as it is perfect. . . . Next, harmony refers to ‘one,’ since none of the things which we experience are \textit{one} absolutely, but due to a concordance among parts. . . . Finally, \textit{claritas}, as in Phelan’s account, refers to truth.” For Hunter, “the lack of an explicit mention of ‘one’ in Phelan’s account seems to me a deficiency.” See also Gironella, “Metafisica,” 40 and Jordan Aumann, “Beauty and the Esthetics Response,” \textit{Angelicum} 54 (1977): 501.


\textsuperscript{19} McCall, “Metaphysical Analysis,” 140-41; Gredt, \textit{Metaphysica}, 29-30; Mercier, \textit{A Manual}, 567; de
that integrity is the prerequisite for proportion, which is in turn the prerequisite for clarity\textsuperscript{20}—thus giving a complete explanation of both the number and the order of beauty’s conditions, as necessitated by its ability to cause delight in the very act of knowing. The only problem with this impressive schema, of course, is that it is founded on a theory of aesthetic pleasure that we have already rejected within the framework of Thomas’s thought.

What this great variety of hypotheses shows is that it is very easy to begin with a theory of how beauty’s conditions relate to each other and then use Thomas’s writings to support that theory, instead of looking for the order indicated by the texts themselves. This is a trap that we especially want to avoid since, while it is clear at this point that beauty’s pleasure depends on \textit{comprehensio}, it is not yet clear that beauty actually causes \textit{comprehensio}. Hence, although we have an obvious advantage over these earlier scholars in that we have discovered the true nature of beauty’s proper effect, i.e. the pleasure it causes when seen, we are not going to proceed by starting with that effect and then seeing how beauty’s conditions would have to be arranged in order to explain it. Instead, we will begin by examining in the first section of this chapter what Thomas’s writings reveal about the nature of these conditions and their relation to each other. Then, in this chapter’s second part, we will see whether the order that we have discovered in the first section is capable of causing \textit{comprehensio}. Finally, if it turns out that beauty does cause \textit{comprehensio}, we will determine in the third part whether the extension of the true to the good is capable of doing so as well, and thus whether or not beauty is a distinct transcendental.

A. The Three Conditions for Beauty

The goal of this section is to figure out the relationship of beauty’s conditions to each

\textsuperscript{20}Chereso, \textit{Honor and Beauty}, 24-25.
other and to beauty itself; however, we cannot reliably do so until we have determined what each is in itself since a relation is always grounded in something absolute. Hence, we will examine the conditions separately from each other in the first half of this section, and delay searching for evidence of an order between them until the section’s second half.

1. Beauty’s Conditions in Themselves

Thomas makes clear in several passages that, just as there are two kinds of beauty, i.e. bodily (or sensible) and spiritual (or intelligible) beauty, so there are likewise a sensible version and an intelligible version of each condition for beauty. For example, Thomas writes in *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2 that both kinds of beauty consist in brightness and due proportion, but for bodily beauty fulfilling these requirements means “that a man has bodily members that are well-proportioned, with a certain brightness of a due color,” whereas in spiritual beauty brightness and due proportion mean “that a man’s conduct, or his action, is well proportioned according to the spiritual brightness of reason.”

Since, as we noted in our Introduction, sensible beauty belongs to the genus of quality and thus only intelligible beauty is convertible with being, in discussing each condition for beauty, we must carefully distinguish between its sensible and its intelligible version for only the latter is a foundation for beauty in the ontological or transcendental sense. Moreover, since there are two senses to which beauty relates according to Thomas, i.e. sight and hearing, there are thus two kinds of sensible beauty, namely visual and auditory. Consequently, we must also try to establish both the visual and the auditory versions of these three conditions.

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21 Leonine 10.147. “[A]d rationem pulchri, sive decori, concurrit et claritas et debita proportio. . . . Unde pulchritudo corporis in hoc consistit quod homo habeat membra corporis bene proportionata, cum quadam debiti coloris claritate. Et similiter pulchritudo spiritualis in hoc consistit quod conversatio hominis, sive actio eius, sit bene proportionata secundum spiritualem rationis claritatem.”
i. Integrity or Perfection (*Integritas vel Perfectio*)

It is already clear that the sensible analog of “integrity or perfection” is “magnitude” since, as we saw above, for Thomas “magnitude” *means* “perfection” when the former is said of spiritual beings; furthermore, Thomas attributes “integrity or perfection” to the Son in *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8 for the same reason that he attributes “magnitude” to Him in *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1: the Son’s perfect possession of the same Divine Nature as the Father. If perfection can thus be thought of as an ontological or intelligible magnitude, then magnitude can conversely be thought of as a bodily or sensible perfection. Now, while “magnitude” in its original meaning refers to a visible quality, i.e. largeness of size, it can also be attributed to sounds as meaning “loudness” since a sound is “great” if it has a loud volume. Thus, the analog of integrity or perfection in visual beauty will be greatness of size, and in auditory beauty it will be greatness of volume.

As we have seen, Thomas makes clear that magnitude is a requirement for bodily or sensible beauty in *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1, where he agrees with Aristotle that beauty requires a large body, and that small human beings can therefore be called well-formed or proportioned, but not beautiful. Furthermore, this quote also appears in his *Tabula Ethicorum,* an “index of the

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22 See p. 271 above.
23 See, for example, *In De caelo II,* 14 [Leonine 3.173-77], which refers to loud sounds as being “great” (magnos).
24 *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1. Mandonnet 1.724. “His duobus addit tertium philosophus ubi dicit, quod pulchritudo non est nisi in magno corpore; unde parvi homines possunt dici commensurati et formosi, sed non pulchri.” This text should not be interpreted to mean that Thomas thinks people of short stature cannot be beautiful at all. Thomas makes clear that people of all shapes and sizes can be beautiful in *In Psalms* 44.2, where he says that, since beauty consists in proportion, and since the proportion required for beauty will vary from individual to individual, “there is a certain beauty of one [person]” and “another [beauty] of another.” In other words, a person attains physical beauty not by having some set of ideal proportions, but by having the proportions best suited to him as an individual, in which case people of short stature can certainly be physically beautiful so long as they possess the proportions that are healthy and appropriate for them. Hence, when Thomas says that small human beings cannot be called physically beautiful even if they are well-proportioned, he most likely means that they cannot be called physically beautiful *to the same degree* as people who are equally proportioned but have a more impressive stature. *In Psalms* 44.2. Parma 14.320. “Dicendum, quod pulchritudo, sanitas, et hujusmodi, dicuntur quodammodo per respectum ad aliquid: quia aliquia contemperatio humorum facit sanitatem in pueru, quae non facit in sene: aliqua est enim sanitas leoni, quae est mors homini. Unde sanitas est proportio humorum in comparatione ad talem naturam. Et similiter
principal themes (*index rerum notabilium*) of the *Nicomachean Ethics*” that Thomas wrote around 1270,\(^{26}\) which implies that he still agreed with this statement at the end of his life. Thus, while magnitude does not appear in most of Thomas’s texts on beauty, he never abandoned his view that it is a requirement for sensible beauty, but rather simply takes it for granted.

It might be objected that, since *In Sent. I, 31.2.1* supports the statement “beauty cannot exist except in a large body” with the claim that small human beings cannot be called beautiful,\(^{27}\) magnitude is only a requirement for sensible beauty in human beings. Yet in this text Thomas also uses the human being as an example for brightness and harmony,\(^{28}\) which he undoubtedly thinks are conditions for sensible beauty in other things. Furthermore, that Thomas considers magnitude to be a requirement for all sensible beauty is confirmed by what he says regarding the beauty of the celestial bodies, which he tells us is greater than the beauty of terrestrial bodies.\(^{29}\)

In one place, Thomas states that the beauty of the celestial bodies consists in their “brightness, shape, and quantity,” and thus implies that the enormity of the size and number of the stars is part of the reason why their beauty is unparalleled in physical creation\(^ {30}\); likewise, Thomas says elsewhere that celestial bodies “serve man insofar as by their beauty and magnitude (*ex eorum specie et magnitudine*) they show forth the excellence of their creator,” and consequently inspire in man “reverence for God.”\(^ {31}\) Thomas therefore seems to hold that, if two objects are equally

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\(^{25}\) *Tabula Ethicorum* P. Leonine 48B.133:10-12. “PARVI. Quod parui sunt formosi et non pulcri.”

\(^{26}\) Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 229.

\(^{27}\) See p. 277, note 24 above.

\(^{28}\) See note 2 on p. 270 above.

\(^{29}\) *In Symbolum I.* Marietti 2.196. “Unde corpora caelestia pulchriora et nobiliora sunt quam corpora inferiorea . . .”


beautiful in other respects, the large object will possess more sensible beauty than the smaller one simply because its very largeness is something to wonder at and admire.

Nevertheless, it is certainly not the case that an increase in size is always an increase in beauty for Thomas since then the most beautiful human beings would be the morbidly obese; hence, the magnitude that is required for sensible beauty must be understood not as an absolute quantity but as a relative one, i.e. as the magnitude that a thing ought to have. What determines a material being’s appropriate magnitude, of course, is its nature, which sets certain limits to how big or small it can be, and thus the “magnitude” that is required for bodily beauty primarily means that a thing falls within the range of sizes determined by its form. Thus, Thomas says in the Sentences commentary that obesity is not a perfection but rather a defect, and specifically a disordering of matter that is failing to properly underlie its form, i.e. to confine itself to the limits imposed by its form. Hence, as Eco notes, when Thomas says that beauty can only exist in a large body, he means that a body does not fully possess sensible beauty unless it has the stature

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32 A smaller object can of course be more beautiful than a larger one if the former exhibits greater brightness and proportion than the latter; for instance, a tiny diamond is obviously more beautiful than a large lump of coal. Still, it does seem that if two objects have equal brightness and harmony, the larger object is more beautiful, as indicated by the fact that a larger diamond is more valuable than a smaller one if they are equally flawless.

33 Nor is Thomas alone in this opinion, as is evident from the awe and fascination that the Hubble space telescope continues to arouse with its images of unfathomably immense celestial objects; furthermore, when we speak of a certain place having a “beautiful view,” we usually mean that a great expanse can be seen from it.

34 In De anima II, 8. Leonine 45/1.101:159-84. “Manifestum est autem quod in omnibus quae sunt secundum naturam est certus terminus et determinata ratio magnitudinis et augmenti; sicut enim cuiuslibet speciei debentur aliquas accidencias propria, ita et propria quantitates, licet cum aliqua latitudine propter diversitatem materie et alias causas individuales (non enim omnes homines sunt unius quantitatis, set tamen est aliqua quantitas <tam> magna ultra quam species humana non porrigitur et alia quantitas tam parua ultra quam homo non inuenitur). Illud igitur quod est causa determinationis magnitudinis et augmenti est principalis causa augmenti. . . . Manifestum est igitur, quod ignis non est principale agens in augmento et alimento, set magis anima. Et hoc rationabiliter accidit, quia determinatio quantitatis in rebus naturalibus est ex forma, que est principium speciei, magis quam ex materia, anima autem comparatur ad elementa que sunt in corpore uiuente sicut forma ad materiam, magis igitur terminus et ratio magnitudinis et augmenti est ab anima quam ab igne.” Eco, The Aesthetics, 100.

35 In Sent. IV, 44.2.2.2. Parma 7/2.1091. “Primo, quia corpulentia quam dos subtilitatis auert, est ad defectum pertinentis, puta aliqua inordinatio materie non perfecte substantis suae formae: totum enim quod ad integritatem corporis pertinet in corpore, resurget tam ex parte formae, quam ex parte materiae.”
needed for it to perform its natural activities well and to thereby achieve its end.\textsuperscript{36}

While magnitude has limits set for it by a thing’s end, its intelligible counterpart, i.e. integrity or perfection, does not since a thing becomes perfect precisely insofar as it approaches and attains its end. As Thomas explains, the word “perfect” (\textit{perfectum}) “is said as if completely made (\textit{complete factum}), just as we say that we have fully walked (\textit{perambulasse}) when we have completed the walking”\textsuperscript{37}; thus, the perfect is what has been fully brought from potentiality into actuality, and consequently finished.\textsuperscript{38} Hence, the three kinds of perfection in a thing correspond to the three stages in its actualization: a thing attains first perfection “insofar as it is constituted in its existence (\textit{esse}),” it attains second perfection “as to it are added certain accidents that are necessary for its perfect activity,” and it attains its final perfection when it “attains something else as its end.”\textsuperscript{39} Every kind of perfection therefore consists in the attainment of an end, namely an actuality that is the terminus and goal of its development, and ultimate perfection consists in attaining the end or goal of the whole being itself.\textsuperscript{40} It follows that, while Thomas identifies

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} “[T]he medieval sensibility had as its physical ideal a certain size and stature in the human body—one thinks of the elongated, athletic figures in Gothic statuary. . . . A person was thought to be truly beautiful if he realized what human nature demanded, and this included a sufficient degree of size and dignity.” Eco, \textit{The Aesthetics}, 102.
\item \textsuperscript{37} \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 2.1.114. Marietti 39. “\textit{Perfecta}, non est accipiendum secundum modum significationis vocabuli, quo perfectum dicitur quasi complete factum, sicut perambulasse nos dicimus, quando ambulationem complevimus; unde quod non est factum, non potest secundum hanc rationem dici perfectum . . .”
\item \textsuperscript{38} \textit{Contra Gentiles} I, 28. Marietti 2.41. “Sed quia omne quod fit, de potentia in actum deductum est et de non esse in esse quando factum est, tunc recte perfectum esse dicitur, quasi \textit{totaliter factum}, quando potentia totaliter est ad actu reducta, ut nihil de non esse retineat, sed habeat esse completum.” See also \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 4.1 arg. and ad 1 [Leonine 4.50] and \textit{In Hebraeos} 1.3 [Marietti 2.346].
\item \textsuperscript{39} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 6.3. Leonine 4.68. “Perfectio autem alicuius rei triplex est. Prima quidem, secundum quod in suo esse constituitur. Secunda vero, prout ei aliqua accidentia superadduntur, ad suam perfectam operationem necessaria. Tertia vero perfectio alicuius est per hoc, quod aliquid aliquid attingit sicut finem.”
\item \textsuperscript{40} \textit{In Metaphysic}. X, 5. Marietti 481. “Et quod perfectum sit extra quod non potest aliquid sumi, patet; quia omnia dicuntur perfecta, eo quod deveniunt ad finem. Extra finem autem nihil est: quia finis est id quod est ultimum in omni re, et quod continet rem. Unde nihil est extra finem.” \textit{De Perfectione} I. Leonine 41.60-6-11. “Simpliciter quidem perfectum est quod attingit ad finem eius quod ei competit secundum propriam rationem; secundum quid autem perfectum dici potest quod attingit ad finem alicuius eorum quae concomitantur propriam rationem.” \textit{In Physic}. III, 11. Leonine 2.136. “Per hoc igitur manifestum est quod \textit{perfectum est cuius nihil est extra ipsum}. Sed nullo carens fine est perfectum; quia finis est perfectio uniuscuiusque.” \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 1.2.47. Marietti 17. “Perfectio enim rei consistit in hoc quod pertingat ad finem.”
\end{itemize}
spiritual or intelligible beauty with the bonum honestum or good in itself, it is nevertheless also inseparable from the useful, or good for the sake of the end, since a thing is only lovable in itself insofar as it is perfect, which it only becomes insofar as it is ordered to its end and thus useful. This impression is confirmed by a few passages in which Thomas says that a thing is not fully beautiful, or even beautiful at all, unless it is attaining or is capable of attaining its end.

Thomas describes this condition not just as “perfection” (perfectio) but also as “integrity” (integritas) or “wholeness,” which suggests that, like the transcendentals, these terms express the same reality but with different meanings, as Thomas confirms in In De divinis nominibus 2.1:

The whole (integrum) and the perfect, however, seem to be the same [in reality]: nevertheless they differ in meaning (ratione): for “perfect” seems to be said of something when it is attaining its proper nature, but “whole” [is said of something] in virtue of the removal of diminishment (diminutionis), just as we say that a certain man is not whole if, after he attains his proper nature, he is mutilated in a certain member.

Here Thomas explicitly states that integrity or wholeness is essentially opposed to diminution or mutilation, just as he implied in Summa Theologiae I, 39.8 when he said that beauty requires integrity because “those things that are diminished (diminuta) are by this very fact ugly.” This text thus shows that “integrity” is originally and strictly applied to things that can be diminished.

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41 Hence, Thomas tells us in Summa Theologiae II-II, 145.3 that the honestum is distinct in meaning from the useful but identical in subject with it. Leonine 10.148. “[H]onestum concurrunt in idem subiectum cum utili et delectabili, a quibus tamen differt ratione, . . . Ipsa etiam virtus, quae secundum se honesta est, refertur ad alium sicut ad finem, scilicet ad felicitatem. Et secundum hoc, idem subjecto est et honestum et utile et delectabile . . .”

42 Lux orta 3 says that “a beautiful sword” is one that “is ordered to cutting,” which of course is the proper end of a sword. Leonine 44/1.270:350-51. “Gladius pulcher, qui ordinatus est ad secandum . . .” Likewise, In Psalmos 25.5 tells us that “a house is not beautiful unless it is inhabited,” which is the proper end of a house. Parma 14.235. “Sed scendium est, quod hic decor est ex habitacione Dei; sicut domus non est pulchra nisi inhabitetur . . .” Finally, In Ethic. I, 13 says that virtuous actions are “good . . . on account of an order to the end,” and “beautiful . . . on account of a due order of circumstances as of certain parts”—thus confirming that a human being cannot become beautiful without also becoming ordered to his proper end, or useful. Leonine 47/1.47:101-108. “[O]perationes secundum virtutem non solum sunt delectabiles, sed etiam pulchrae et bonae; . . . pulcræ autem sunt secundum ordinem debitem circumstantiarum quasi quarundam partium . . .; bonae autem sunt secundum ordinem ad finem.”

43 Marietti 39. “Integrum autem et perfectum idem videntur esse; differunt tamen ratione: nam perfectum videtur dici alicquod in attingendo ad propriam naturam, integrum autem per remotionem diminutionis, sicut dicimus aliquem hominem non esse integrum, si postquam attigit propriam naturam, aliquo membro mutiletur.”

44 Leonine 4.409. “Primo quidem, integritas sive perfectio: quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt.”
and thus to things that have parts since, as Thomas himself notes, one can only be diminished or mutilated if one has parts. Nevertheless, Thomas obviously thinks that one can still apply the term “integrity” to things that have few or no parts since he attributes integrity to angels and even to God in *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8. Evidently, in these cases, integrity does not mean lacking no parts, but simply “lacking nothing”; thus, the end of *In De divinis nominibus* 2.1 says that God is called “whole” because “nothing can be subtracted from the Deity of the Trinity.”

Thomas’s use of the term “integrity” to describe beauty’s first requirement seems to be significant for him since in *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8 he mentions integrity before perfection, and even contrasts this requirement with things that are “diminished” (*diminuta*), which as we have seen is the opposite of integrity, not perfection. Thus, while both integrity and perfection are names for beauty’s first condition, Thomas seems to consider “integrity” the primary name. Since “perfection” has the positive meaning of “attaining one’s proper nature” while “integrity” has the negative meaning of “not diminished,” Thomas’s preference for the latter might be a subtle hint that, while perfection is the essential condition for goodness, it is only a necessary condition for beauty because it only removes the diminutions that make a thing ugly instead of beautiful. As we will see, this impression is confirmed by other evidence in the texts of Thomas.

Nevertheless, that integrity is not the essence or nature of beauty does not mean that it is an unimportant condition for beauty since it plays an indispensable role in explaining the effect

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46 *De malo* 16.5 ad 1. Leonine 23.306:341-45. “[B]ona naturalia in angelis sunt integra quantum pertinet ad nature ordinem, sunt tamen corrupta uel deprauata seu diminuta per comparationem ad capacitatem gratie uel glorie.”

47 Marietti 39. “Et quia a Deitate Trinitatis nihil subtrahi potest, ad hoc significandum addidit: integra.”

48 That being said, perfection is also sometimes described in negative way. For instance, in *Contra Gentiles* I, 28, Thomas says that the “universally perfect” is “that which does not lack the nobility of any genus.” Marietti 2.40. “Et dico universaliter perfectum, cui non deest alieius generis nobilitas.”

49 See *In De divinis nominibus* 2.1 [Marietti 39], cited above in note 43 on p. 281.
by which Thomas defines beauty, namely the pleasure it causes. After all, as we saw in the last chapter, the pleasure caused by beauty is a delight taken in the beautiful object itself, which must therefore be lovable for its own sake since nothing pleases unless it is loved. Thus, since a being is only lovable or good insofar as it is perfect, it follows that if beautiful things were not perfect things, they could not please when seen; as Aertsen puts it, “the beautiful pleases because it is perfect.”

It is therefore clear why Thomas makes sure to mention integrity or perfection when giving his complete lists of beauty’s requirements in *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 and *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8 since, without this condition, the pleasure by which he defines beauty has no explanation.

**ii. Harmony or Due Proportion (Consonantia vel Debita Proportio)**

Thomas points out on more than one occasion that, according to its original and proper meaning, “harmony” (*consonantia*) refers to a proportion between sounds, as is even indicated by the word *consonantia*, which literally means “sounding in agreement.” Hence, in contrast to integrity or perfection, whose sensible analog is an attribute more properly said of visual beauty than auditory beauty, i.e. magnitude, the sensible version of harmony is a trait more properly said of auditory beauty than visual beauty. Still, Thomas makes clear that harmony is a condition for visual beauty as well, in which case the harmony required is a proportion between the colors or shapes of a bodily being. Moreover, Thomas notes that, while “harmony” originally refers just to a proportion between sounds, its meaning has been extended, not only to proportions between

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51. See *In De anima* I, 9 [Leonine 45/1.44:56-60], *Contra Gentiles* II, 64.4 [Marietti 2.200], *In De divinis nominibus* 4.8.385 [Marietti 129], and *In Politic.* I, 3.7 [Leonine 48A.86-87:105-115].
52. See, for instance, *In De divinis nominibus* 11.2.908: “For harmony is nothing other than a concordant sounding in agreement (*concors consonantia*).” Marietti 336. “Nihil enim est aliud harmonia, quam concors consonantia.”
colors, but to every kind of proportion or agreement between things. This broader meaning of the term “harmony” explains how it can be a condition for ontological or transcendental beauty since one can find proportions between things in every category of being.

As has been observed, however, the fact that Thomas identifies harmony not with simply any proportion, but with due proportion, indicates that it is essentially determined in relation to something else, which Thomas tells us on multiple occasions is the end or final cause of the thing or things being harmonized. The reason is that the cause of the proportion between a thing’s parts is the proportion of each of the parts to their common end; hence, for example, the due proportion of members in which bodily beauty consists is the shape or arrangement that is conducive to the body’s performing its proper activities well, i.e. running, jumping, etc. It is true that Thomas frequently says that the due proportion required for beauty is determined by the thing’s nature, but this is a distinction without a difference since, as Thomas himself says, the

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54 *De anima* I, 7. Leonine 45/1.34:159-64. “[U]demus autem quod anima delectatur in omnibus armonizat et offenditur ex hiis que sunt preter debitam armoniam tam in sonis quam in coloribus quam etiam in quibuscunque sensilibibus; unde uidetur harmonia de natura anime esse.”

55 *De anima* I, 9. Leonine 45/1.44:56-60. “Constat quod armonia proprie dicta est consonancia in sonis; set isti transumperunt istud nomen ad oninem debitam proportionem tam in rebus compositis ex diuersis partibus quam in commixtis ex contrarisis . . .” *De divinis nominibus* 4.8.385. Marietti 129. “[P]roportiones autem in sonis vocantur harmoniae et, per quamdam similitudinem, proportiones convenientes quorumcumque rerum harmoniae dicuntur.”

56 As Kovach observes, “there is a proportion . . . between potency and act,” and “hence, in some way, in all beings.” Kovach, “Transcendentalia,” 83-84. For example, see *Sent. II*, 1.2.4 ad 3 [Mandonnet 2.53], *Summa Theologiae* I, 12.1 ad 4 [Levine 4.115], and *Contra Gentiles* II, 53 [Marietti 2.174].


58 For example, as we saw in Chapter One (p. 73), *De divinis nominibus* 4.5.340 [Marietti 113] tells us that there is a two-fold harmony in creatures, i.e. the order of themselves to each other and of each to God, and that the latter harmony is the cause of the former. See also *De divinis nominibus* 4.6.367, which says that “order to the end” pertains to “harmony.” Marietti 119. “Forma . . . pertinet ad claritatem; ordo autem ad finem, ad consonantiam.”

59 *Physic*. VII, 5.6 says that bodily beauty is determined in relation to “the end, which is activity.” “Leone 2.340. “Similiter pulchritudo et macies dicuntur ad aliquid. . . . Huissimodini enim sunt quaedam dispositiones eius quod est perfectum in sua natura per comparisonem ad optimum, idest ad finem, qui est operatio.”

60 See *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 49.2 ad 1 and 50.1 [Levine 6.311 and 6.317-18], *Psalmos* 44.2 [Parma 14.320], *Ethic. X*, 3.5 [Levine 47/2.559:46-52], and *Summa Theologiae* II-II 142.2 [Levine 10.134].
form or nature of the whole is itself ordered to the extrinsic end of the whole being. Hence, harmony is always ultimately determined by a relation to the end.

For this reason, the notion of harmony seems to be identical or at least overlapping with the notion of order for Thomas since, like harmony, order is an agreement between distinct things that arises from their being related to the same end; however, there seems to be a slight difference in meaning between them. Thomas does frequently use the terms interchangeably, and moreover uses each of them to describe both the relationship of parts to each other and of the parts to their common end. Nevertheless, it seems that order primarily refers to the whole that is composed from the parts, and only secondarily to the proportion between them, while harmony seems to primarily refer to the latter, and only secondarily to the former. This impression is confirmed by a text where Thomas says that harmony is an “agreement of order.”

Harmony thus seems to be identical with the “agreement of parts” (convenientia partium) in an order, which has led Kovach to correlate beauty’s other two conditions with the other two requirements of order for Thomas, in order to argue that order is the essence of beauty, and that it has three requirements because there are three requirements for order. According to Kovach,

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61 Summa Theologiae I-II, 49.3. Leonine 6.312. “Est enim de ratione habitus ut importet habitudinem quandam in ordine ad naturam rei, secundum quod convenit vel non convenit. Sed natura rei, quae est finis generationis, ulterius etiam ordinatur ad alium finem, qui vel est operatio, vel aliquod operatum, ad quod quis pervenit per operationem. Unde habitus non solum importat ordinem ad ipsam naturam rei, sed etiam consequenter ad operationem, inquantum est finis naturae, vel perducens ad finem.” Cf. Summa Theologiae I, 91.3 [Leonine 5.393].


63 For harmony, see In De divinis nominibus 4.5 [Marietti 113], and, for order, see In Sent. III, 33.3.1.4 [Mandonnet 3.1078]: “Sed quia in qualibet multitudine est duplex ordo . . . : unus quo ordinatur tota multitudo ad finem communem; alius quo singulariter partes multitudinis ordinantur ad invicem secundum fines proprios . . .” Cf. In Ethic. I, 1.1 [Leonine 47/1.3-4.6-14] and In Metaphysic. XII, 12 [Marietti 612].

64 As will be seen shortly, Thomas states that the proportion between things is only one of the three requirements for order. For harmony, see In De anima I, 9 [Leonine 45/1.44:60-64] and Contra Gentiles II, 64.4 [Marietti 2.200].

65 In De divinis nominibus 5.1.650. Marietti 238. “[O]mnis harmonia, quae est convenientia ordinis . . .”

66 In Sent. I, 20.1.3. Mandonnet 1.509. “[O]rdo in ratione sua includit tria, scilicet: rationem prioris et posterioris; unde secundum omnes modos potest dici esse ordo aliquorum, secundum quos aliquis altero prius
integrity corresponds to the distinction of parts (*distinctio partium*) required by order since integrity consists in the presence of all a thing’s parts, while clarity corresponds to the reason for or cause of the agreement between the parts of the order (*ratio convenientiae*), on the grounds that clarity pertains to the form or the nature of the thing, which is the principle of harmony.

Unfortunately for Kovach, neither identification holds up, for two reasons. First, Thomas never identifies integrity with the distinction of parts required for order, and it would not make sense for him to do so since, as we saw in the last section of this chapter, integrity or perfection can be attributed even to beings in which there is no distinction of parts, such as the angels or even God. Secondly, the *ratio* or principle of the order that is required for beauty is not the clarity of the whole but rather the end of the whole since, as was just mentioned, the order of the parts to each other exists for the sake of the order of the whole to its end. Hence, the reason for the number and arrangement of the conditions for beauty cannot be their correlation to the three requirements for order. Nevertheless, Kovach still might be correct that order is the essence or nature of beauty since, as we have just seen, order and harmony are almost interchangeable for Thomas. Consequently, order will be the essence of beauty if harmony is.

iii. Brightness (*Claritas*)

It is paradoxical but nonetheless true that, of all Thomas’s conditions for beauty, *claritas* is the most obscure to the modern reader since the word has a range of meanings for Thomas that

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67 See p. 282 above.
68 *Contra Gentiles* II, 24. Marietti 2.136. “[O]rdinatio enim aliquorum fieri non potest nisi per cognitionem habitudinis et proportionis ordinatorum ad invicem, et ad aliquid alius eius, quod est finis eorum; ordo enim aliquorum ad invicem est propter ordinem eorum ad finem.” That brightness does not correspond to the principle of order is confirmed by *In De divinis nominibus* 4.6, which says that brightness pertains to form, and *harmony* pertains to order. Marietti 119. “Forma . . . pertinet ad claritatem; ordo autem ad finem, ad consonantiam . . .”
is only partially evoked by its English derivative “clarity.” First, in his texts on beauty, *claritas* seems to have consistently the meaning of “brightness” or “visibility” for Thomas since, as we saw, in both the Sentences commentary and the *Summa Theologiae* he attributes it to things that have a “shining color.” Secondly, however, when he attributes it to light sources like the sun and moon, *claritas* seems better translated as “luminance,” i.e. a brightness that not only is visible itself but also makes other things visible by illuminating them. To add to the confusion, Thomas thirdly uses *claritas* to describe the very act of seeing a bright thing, as when he says that certain people see with greater clarity than others, which he explains to mean that they see with greater “certainty” than others. Fourthly and finally, most confusing of all is Thomas’s attributing of *claritas* to the air through which a bright object is seen, which thus gives *claritas* a meaning that would seem to be the *opposite* of “brightness,” i.e. “transparency,” since anything through which something is seen is itself invisible. In the face of such a diversity of meanings, one is tempted to conclude that *claritas* is a purely equivocal notion for Thomas.

Nevertheless, this dilemma can be resolved by an understanding of Thomas’s theory of light. As we noted in Chapter Three, Thomas follows Aristotle in holding that in bodily vision the visible thing causes a likeness or species of itself in the transparent medium (i.e. the air or water through which the eye is seeing), and this species in turn causes another species in the eye, which then sees the object in virtue of its species. Also like Aristotle, however, Thomas holds that the medium cannot receive a species of the visible object, and therefore cannot communicate it to the eye, unless it has been illuminated by a light source (or lux) and consequently has light (or lumen) present in it, which changes the air or water from being merely potentially transparent.

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69 See *In Sent.* III, 14.1.2.3 [Mandonnet 3.450] in notes 82 and 83 on p. 291 below.
70 See p. 290, notes 79-80 below.
71 In *Sent.* I, 17.2.2 ad 2. Mandonnet 1.417. “[E]adem irradiatione solis efficitur aer clarus et magis clarus, depulsis nebulosis vaporibus qui receptionem luminis impediebant.”
to being actually transparent, i.e. capable of communicating visible objects to the eye.\textsuperscript{72} The light in the air, or \textit{lumen}, is a participation of the air in the brightness of the light source, or \textit{lux}, and is therefore a quality of the air in virtue of which it becomes capable of transmitting \textit{species} to the eye.\textsuperscript{73} Hence, the stronger and brighter the light source (\textit{lux}) is, the more light (\textit{lumen}) is present in the air, and consequently the clearer the eye’s vision is.

Once this theory is understood, it becomes obvious that the four meanings of \textit{claritas} or “clarity” do in fact have a common core of meaning since each one of them describes a different part of the process by which light causes vision in the eye. First, there is the \textit{claritas} of an object that makes itself visible but not others, in which case \textit{claritas} means “brightness.” Second, there is the \textit{claritas} of the light source, which is its ability to cause the vision not only of itself but also of something else, and is thus best translated as “luminance.” Third, there is the \textit{claritas} of the light in the air, which is its ability to communicate the \textit{species} of the light source or of the visible object to the eye, and thus to cause vision only of something other than itself, which is therefore called “transparency.” Finally, there is the \textit{claritas} of the seeing itself, which is the effect of the other three kinds of \textit{claritas} on the eye, and is thus the actualization of light’s capacity to cause vision; thus, since this clarity refers to the degree to which light is succeeding in causing vision perfectly, and since seeing is perfect insofar as it is certain, the clarity of seeing, which is the effect of light, means “certainty.” Hence, the four different meanings of “clarity”—“luminance,” “brightness,” “transparency,” and “certainty”—are in fact analogous cases of the same common meaning: clarity is the intrinsic capacity of light to cause vision, either of itself or of another, which is only actualized to the degree that it is actually causing vision in the eye. As O’Reilly

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{In De anima} II, 14, Leonine 45/1.125:114-16. “Manifestum est quod neque aer neque aqua neque aliquid huiusmodi est actu transparens nisi fuerit illuminatum.”

\textsuperscript{73} See \textit{In De anima} II, 14 [Leonine 45/1.123-30:1-387]. As Jordan observes, “when we say that we see through the \textit{claritas} of the air, we are speaking really of the \textit{claritas} of light in the air.” Jordan, “Evidence,” 398.
puts it, claritas in actu est visio in actu—“clarity in actuality is seeing in actuality.”

Since beauty is defined as that which pleases when seen, the clarity of the beautiful object itself is obviously not the clarity of the seeing, or of something that makes another to be seen but is itself unseen, such as the medium or a light source that is hidden from the seer; rather, it is the clarity of a thing that makes itself visible. Hence, just as we said initially, the meaning of the claritas that is a condition for beauty is “brightness” or “visibility.”

With this point established, it is not difficult to determine what the sensible versions of brightness are as they will be whatever qualities are in and of themselves knowable by sight and hearing, i.e. the proper qualities of these senses. Visual brightness is especially obvious since, just as “seeing” originally and properly refers to the bodily sense but is extended to any kind of knowledge, so the original and proper meaning of brightness is that of colors and light sources. With hearing, it is more difficult because, as one would expect, Thomas does not often describe sounds as clear or bright; however, it seems likely that the brightness or knowability of a sound for Thomas is its pitch since, just as the essential difference between visible things is color, so the essential difference between sounds is pitch. Moreover, just as colors are distinguished by how they affect the eye, pitches are distinguished by how they affect the ear; as Thomas himself points out, a high-pitched sound affects the hearing greatly in a small amount of time, while a low-pitched sound affects the hearing less in a larger amount of time. Finally, in the one text where Thomas calls a sound bright, he does on the grounds that it makes a single tone, which

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74 O’Reilly, Aesthetic Perception, 24-26.
75 See In Sent. II, 13.1.2 [Mandonnet 1.328-330] and Summa Theologiae I, 67.1 [Leonine 5.163].
76 In De anima II, 17. Leonine 45/1.142:164-66. “[S]icut enim non uidentur colores sine lumine, sic non percipiuntur acutum et grave in rebus sonantuis, nisi fiat sonus in actu.”
77 In De anima II, 17. Leonine 45/1.142:176-79. “Et dicit quod ille sonus acutus est qui multum mouet sensum auditus in pauco tempore; grauis autem sonus est qui multo tempore mouet parum.”
further indicates that for him a sound’s brightness is the discernibility of its pitch.\footnote{In I Corinthios 13.1. Busa 6.373. “[A]es licet faciat suum sonum clarum et pulcrum, non tamen facit nisi unum sonum; cymbalum vero quia est concavum multiplicatur ex repercussione ictus in concavitate sonus, et sic reddit diversos sonos, ut sic aes sonans referatur ad illos qui habent verba plana et simplicia, in quibus non est aliqua profunditas; cymbalum vero tinniens referatur ad illos qui proferunt verba profunda, in quibus latent multi sensus.” This impression is strengthened by In De sensu I, 17, which says that a note is heard better when it is played alone than when it is heard in a harmony because things mixed together in this way “obscure each other.” Leonine 45/2.89:38-44. “[E]t idem est de melle quantum ad gustum et de colore quantum ad uisum et quantum ad auditum de una nota, que magis sentitur si sola sit quam si audiatur in consonancia ad aliam uocem, puta in dyapason uel in quacunque alia consonancia: et hoc ideo quia ea quae commiscenent obscurant se invicem.”}

The intelligible brightness of transcendental beauty, however, is far more mysterious, even in comparison with the other factors in intellectual vision. The clarity of the seeing itself by the intellect is pretty straightforward for Thomas since he says that one person sees more clearly than another if he sees with greater certainty\footnote{Contra Gentiles III, 49.9. “Therefore the separate substances know more certainly and clearly than us that God exists.” Marietti 3.67. “Certius ergo scient substantiae separatae et clarius quam nos, quod Deus est.”}; for example, a person who sees that something is necessarily true after grasping the demonstration of it sees that truth more clearly than a person who only sees that it is true on the basis of probable reasoning.\footnote{In Sent. II, 3.3.2 ad 2. Mandonnet 2.117-18. “[S]uperiores perfectius et clarius cognoscunt idem cognitum quam inferiores . . . ; sicut etiam eamdem conclusionem aliter demonstrator, aliter metaphysicus [corrige: dialecticus] cognoscit.” Cf. Summa Theologiae I, 94.1; I-II, 52.2; and III, 10.2 ad 3 [Leonine 5.413-14; 6.334; and 11.150].} Furthermore, while the light source in intellectual vision, i.e. the agent intellect, is certainly mysterious in its own right, as we saw in Chapter Three, it is at least clear that the agent intellect’s brightness is what enables it to make things visible to the intellect, just as the brightness of a physical light source makes things visible to bodily sight. What, however, does it mean for a being to have more or less intelligible brightness—in other words, what is the factor in a being that makes it more or less visible to the intellect? Thomas does tell us that “the very actuality of a thing is as it were its light,”\footnote{In De causis 6. Saffrey 45:13-14. “[I]psa actualitas rei est quoddam lumen ipsius . . . ” Cf. In I Timotheum 6.3. Marietti 2.262. “Unde quantum habet de forma et actu, tantum habet de luce.”} which confirms that a being possesses intelligible brightness insofar as it exists; nevertheless, he does not tell us why it is that a being possesses brightness to the degree that it has being.
Fortunately, there is a text that indicates what the ontological basis for intelligible brightness is: *In Sent. III, 14.1.2.3*, which asks whether the human soul of Christ knows all things as limpidly or clearly as His Divine Nature does. Thomas begins by observing that “clarity or limpidity of vision results from three things”: first, “from the efficacy of the seeing power” for the obvious reason that “those who have a stronger sight see more limpidly”; second, “from the brightness (claritate) of the light under which the visible is seen,” in support of which Thomas notes that “something is more clearly seen in the light of the sun than in the light of the moon”; and third, “from the relation (comparatione) of what is seen,” or of that in which it is seen (such as a mirror), “to the one who sees” since “what is seen from farther away is seen less clearly.”

Thomas concludes that “on account of these three factors the soul of Christ cannot see those things that it sees in the Word as limpidly as the Word Itself does”:

First, since [Christ’s soul] does not have as great a power of understanding; secondly, since the light under which it sees falls short of the uncreated light; thirdly, since the Divine Essence, which is the exemplar of things, in which things are seen, is more conjoined (magis conjuncta) to God than to any creature, since it is identical in reality [with Him].

Of the three factors that determine the clarity of seeing according to this passage, the first two—namely, strength of sight and of light—are both properties of the subject of the seeing (at least in intellectual vision, whose light is that of the intellect itself); however, the third is an attribute of the object of the seeing, namely its “relation” or nearness to the one who sees. Hence, this third factor seems to describe the clarity that we are trying to understand, i.e. the intrinsic brightness.

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82 Mandonnet 3.450. “[C]laritas vel limpiditas visionis contingit ex tribus. Primo ex efficacia virtutis visivae; quia qui sunt fortioris visus, magis limpide vident. Secundo, ex claritate lucis sub qua claritate visibile videtur; sicut clarius videtur aliquid in lumine solis quam in lumine lune. Tertio, ex comparatione visibilis, vel eius in quo aliquid videtur, ad videntem; quia quod a remotiori videtur, minus clare videtur.”

83 Ibid. “Et propter haec tria non potest anima Christi ita limpide videre ea quae videt in Verbo, sicut ipsum Verbum. Primo, ex hoc quod non habet tantam virtutem in intelligendo. Secundo, quia lumen sub quo videt, deficient in lumine increato. Tertio, quia essentia divina quae est exemplar rerum in quo res videntur, est magis conjuncta sibi quam aliqui creaturae, quia est idem ei secundum rem.”
of a being, which is of course a feature of the thing seen rather than of the one seeing. Moreover, Thomas says that this factor of the seen thing’s proximity to the one seeing is found to a greater degree in the vision of God by the Word than by the human soul of Christ for the reason that the Divine Essence, being identical in reality with the Word, is thus clearly “more conjoined” to Him than to Christ’s human soul. Thus, this text implies that what makes a being more or less visible by the intellect is the degree to which it can be conjoined to the mind; in other words, a being’s intelligible or ontological brightness seems to be its conjoinability to the intellect.

This conclusion makes sense in light of what we learned in Chapter Three about Thomas’s theory of knowledge. After all, if knowledge occurs in virtue of the knower being assimilated or united to the known through a species of the latter, then obviously something will be known with greater intensity and certainty, or clarity, insofar as this assimilation or union is more perfect—in other words, insofar as the known is more conjoined to the knower while being known. This principle that clarity of knowledge depends on the degree of conjoining between knower and known is most obvious in sensible vision since the reason that things appear smaller to our eyes (and are thus seen less clearly) when they are seen from farther away is that, by the law of perspective, the angle that they make with the eye is smaller, and so they cause a smaller species of themselves in the eye; hence, if things that were farther away were somehow able to cause an equally large species of themselves in the eye, they would appear as large as things seen from up close.84 Likewise, brighter objects can be more clearly seen from farther away because

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84 De veritate 8.1 ad 12. Leonine 22/2.220:333-38. “[Q]uanto autem aliquid a remotiori videtur tanto sub minori angulo videtur, et ita minus est quod ad visum de visibili pervenit; sed si aequalis forma perveniret a propinquo et remoto, non minus videretur remotum quam propinquum.” Cf. In De anima II, 15 [Leonine 45/1.133-34:118-35].
they are more effective at communicating their species to the eye than darker objects are. That this principle also applies in intellectual vision is confirmed by Thomas in Contra Gentiles I, 47, which tells us that “the perfection of the intellectual operation depends on two things,” first “that the intelligible species is perfectly conformed to the thing that is understood,” and secondly that the intelligible species “is perfectly conjoined to the intellect”; in other words, the perfection or clarity of intellectual seeing essentially depends on the degree to which the knower is conjoined to the known by means of the former’s species of the latter. It therefore only makes sense that the intrinsic brightness of a being is determined by how conjoinable it is to the cognitive power.

One would therefore expect the scale of ontological brightness to correspond to the scale of conjoinability to the intellect; in other words, a being should be brighter the more conjoinable to the intellect it is, and vice versa, which is in fact precisely what we observe in Thomas’s texts. At the bottom of the scale are material things, which Thomas says are dark (obscurum) because their matter makes them only potentially, not actually, intelligible. As it turns out, materiality is also the reason why bodily beings are less conjoinable to the intellect:

[B]odily creatures are not said to be immediately seen, except when that which in them is conjoinable to the sight is conjoined to it: but they are not conjoinable through their essence, due to its materiality; and so they are then immediately seen when a likeness of them is conjoined to the intellect . . .

85 In Sent. IV, 48.1.4.4 ad 1. Parma 7/2.1172. “Sufficit autem ponere quantumcumque spatium circa locum illum ad capiendum multitudinem judicandorum, dummodo ab illo spatio Christum videre possint, qui in aere eminens, et maxima claritate refulgens, a longinquo inspici poterit.” Cf. Summa Theologiae II-II, 132.1 [Leonine 10.78].
86 Contra Gentiles I, 47. Marietti 2.59. “Cum enim per speciem intelligibilem intellectus in rem intellectam feratur, ex duobus perfectio intellectualis operationis dependet. Unum est ut species intelligibilis perfecte rei intellectae coniungatur. Aliud est ut perfecte intellectui coniungatur . . .”
88 In Sent. IV, 49.2.1 ad 16. Parma 7/2.1201. “[C]reaturae corporales non dicuntur immediate videri, nisi quando id quod in eis est conjungibile visui, ei conjungitur: non sunt autem conjungibiles per essentiam suam
As this text makes clear, bodily beings are darker or less visible to the intellect precisely because, owing to the materiality of their being, they are not directly conjoinable to the intellect, but only through an immaterial likeness of themselves. Thus, the reason for a material being’s lesser degree of visibility by the intellect is its lesser degree of conjoinability to it.

If materiality is what makes a being less conjoinable and thus less visible to the intellect, one would expect beings lacking matter to be more conjoinable to the intellect, and thus more clearly known by it. In fact, Thomas repeatedly affirms not only that spiritual beings are brighter than material beings, but that they are more conjoinable to the intellect as well:

[T]hat form by which the intellect is perfected to see separate substances is not a quiddity which the intellect abstracts from things composed [of matter], . . . but is the very separated substance, which is conjoined to our intellect as form, so that the very thing which is understood is also that by which it is understood.

When Thomas says here that an angel’s very essence is conjoined to the intellect, he is speaking somewhat hyperbolically since he makes clear in later passages that the angel is still known by a likeness of it existing in the intellect that differs in reality from it. Still, this species is identical with the angel’s essence in a way that a material thing is not identical with the species by which it is known, i.e. according to the kind of existence it has. A material creature is known in virtue of a species that is itself immaterial, and which therefore has no conformity with it according to
nature, but the *species* by which an angel is known does have a conformity with it according to nature because both are immaterial. As Thomas puts it in one passage, when “one angel knows another,” what is conjoined to his intellect is a species that differs from the essence of the angel being known “not according to material and immaterial existence, but according to natural and intentional existence.”

Hence, spiritual beings are more conjoined to the intellect than material beings and thus more clearly seen because, unlike material things, they have the same kind of being as the *species* by which they are conjoined to the intellect: i.e. immaterial being.

Nevertheless, for Thomas it is only when one leaves the realm of created being that one finds perfect conjoinability to the intellect, and thus infinite brightness or visibility. The reason is that all creatures, even spiritual ones, can only be known by the intellect in virtue of likenesses of themselves existing in the intellect; consequently, they are not conjoined directly to the mind, but only through their likenesses, which *are* conjoined directly to the intellect. God, however, cannot be known through a likeness of Himself because this likeness, being distinct from Him, would be created, and since God’s existence infinitely exceeds that of any creature, “no created form . . . can be a likeness representing the essence of God to the one seeing.”

Hence, the only way for a created intellect to see God is that “the essence of God itself becomes the intelligible form of the intellect”—i.e. God’s very Being must be directly conjoined to the mind:

The divine essence is existence itself. Wherefore, just as other intelligible forms which are not their existence are united to the intellect according to some being (*esse*) by which they inform the intellect itself and put it into act, so the divine

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92 *Summa Theologiae* I, 56.2 ad 3. Leonine 5.65. “[U]nus angelus cognoscit alium per speciem eius in intellectu suo existentem, quae differt ab angelo cuius similitudo est, non secundum esse materiale et immateriale, sed secundum esse naturale et intentionale.”

93 *Summa Theologiae* I, 12.2. Leonine 4.117. “Sed ex parte visae rei, quam necesse est aliquo modo uniri videnti, per nullam similitudinem creatam Dei essentia videri potest. . . . Secundo, quia essentia Dei est ipsum esse eius, ut supra ostensum est: quod nulli formae creatae competere potest. Non potest igitur aliqua forma creata esse similitudo representa videnti Dei essentiam.”

94 *Summa Theologiae* I, 12.5. Leonine 4.123. “Cum autem aliquis intellectus creatus videt Deum per essentiam, ipsa essentia Dei fit forma intelligibilis intellectus.”
essence is united to the created intellect as what is actually understood, putting the intellect into act by itself.\textsuperscript{95}

As this passage indicates, the reason why a creature cannot be conjoined directly to the mind is that its existence is not identical with its essence, but rather is received and determined by that essence, and thus cannot become the existence or actuality of anything else. Consequently, no creature can become the very form of the intellect by which it is known, and must therefore be known in virtue of some form that is a likeness of it.\textsuperscript{96} God, on the other hand, has unreceived and thus unlimited existence, and so, while He does not literally become the form of a creature’s intellect (since then He would be a mere part of it as one of its accidents, which is absurd), He nevertheless “stands to it as a form,” i.e. He actualizes its capacity to know Him.\textsuperscript{97} Hence, “it is singular to the Divine Essence that the intellect can be united to it without any likeness.”\textsuperscript{98}

If God is directly and thus perfectly conjoinable to the intellect, then, since something possesses intelligible brightness insofar as it is conjoinable to the intellect, God should be bright or visible to an unlimited degree—which is exactly what we find in Thomas’s texts. According to him, while all of the blessed see the essence of God, those with greater charity see Him more clearly than those with less, but not because of a difference in the \textit{species} by which they see Him since God Himself is the \textit{species} by which all of them see Him. Rather, the clarity with which a saint sees God depends on how much his soul is illuminated by the Light of Glory, which each

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 12.2 ad 3. Leon. 4.117. “[D]ivina essentia est ipsum esse. Unde, sicut aliae formae intelligibles quae non sunt suum esse, uniuntur intellectui secundum aliquod esse quo informant ipsum intellectum et faciunt ipsum in actu; ita divina essentia unitur intellectui creato ut intellectum in actu.”

\textsuperscript{96} See \textit{Contra Gentiles} III, 51 [Marietti 3.70].

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{De veritate} 8.1. Leonine 22/2.218:201-8. “Non autem oportet quod ipsa essentia divina fiat forma ipsius intellectus sed quod se habeat ad ipsum ut forma; ut sicut ex forma, quae est pars rei, <et materia> efficitur unum ens actu, ita, licet dissimili modo, ex essentia divina et intellectu creato fit unum in intelligendo, dum intellectus intelligit et essentia per seipsam intelligitur.” Cf. \textit{De veritate} 8.1 ad 5 [Leonine 22/2.219:255-60].

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Compendium Theologiae} II, 9. Leonine 42.203:285-88. “Est autem hoc singulare divinæ essentie ut ei possit intellectus uniri absque omni similitudine media quia ipsa divina essentia est eius esse …”
receives according to the measure of His love for God.\textsuperscript{99} In other words, because God is directly conjoined to the intellect as the \textit{species} by which He is known, the only limit to how clearly He can be seen is the strength of the cognitive power that sees Him.

It follows that there is an infinite range of degrees of clarity with which God can be seen by an intellect. Since no creature has an unlimited knowing power, every created intellect sees God with a finite degree of clarity; hence, however clearly some creature sees God, it is always possible for Him to be seen more clearly by a creature.\textsuperscript{100} God, on the other hand, does have an infinite capacity to know, so there is no limit to how clearly God sees Himself, or anything that He sees in virtue of His Essence; as Thomas affirms in several passages, God knows not only Himself but all creatures in virtue of Himself with an infinite degree of clarity.\textsuperscript{101} Here, then, is the strongest confirmation so far that a being’s intelligible brightness is its conjoinability to the intellect: God possesses intelligible brightness to an infinite degree precisely for the reason that He is perfectly conjoined to His Own Intellect and to any other intellect that sees Him.

Thus, while intelligible brightness initially seemed mysterious, it turns out to have an appropriately clear nature for Thomas: a being’s intelligible brightness is the degree to which it

\textsuperscript{99} See \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 12.6 [Leonine 4.125-26].

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 62.9. Leonine 5.119. “Sed cum infinita efficacia requiratur ad Deum comprehendendum, creaturae vero efficacia in videndo non possit esse nisi finita; ab infinito autem finitum quodlibet infinitis gradibus distet; infinitis modis contingit creaturam rationalem intelligere Deum vel clarior vel minus clare.”

\textsuperscript{101} In Sent. III, 27.3.2 [Mandonnet 3.896]: “Modus autem quo Deus diligibilis est et visibilis, excedit modum quo homo diligere et videre potest, quia lux et bonitas ejus est infinita; et ideo non totaliter videtur et diligitur ab alis, quia non diligitur ita intense et ferventer nec videtur ita clare sicut est diligibilis et visibilis, nisi a seipso . . .” In Sent. III, 14.1.2.3 ad 3. Mandonnet 3.450-51. “Unde quamvis aliqua res ab anima Christi sciatur secundum omnem suam cognoscibilitatem, tamen melius cognoscit ab ipso Deo quantum ad modum intelligentis; eo quod minimum intelligibilis intelligit claritate infinita, sicut etiam rem parvam creat potest scientia infinita.”

\textit{Compendium Theologiae} II, 9. Leonine 42.203-204:341-51. “Non est autem possibile quod intellectus creatus Dei essentiam totaliter uideat, ita scilicet quod attingat ad completum et perfectum modum uisionis divinae, ut scilicet Deum uideat quantum uisibilis est. Est enim Deus uisibilis secundum sue ueritatis claritatem quae infinita est. Vnde infinitae uisibilis est, quod conuenire intellectui creato non potest cuius est finita uirtus in intelligendo. Solus igitur Deus per infinitam uirtutem sui intellectus se infinite intelligens, totaliter se intelligendo comprehendit se ipsum.” See also In Sent. III, 14.1.2.1 ad 2 [Mandonnet 3.446-47], IV. 49.2.3 ad 7 [Parma 7/2.1204]. \textit{Compendium Theologiae} I, 106 [Leonine 42.121:14-17], and \textit{De veritate} 8.2 [Leonine 22/2.221-22:55-139].
can be conjoined or united to the intellect, and consequently to be clearly and certainly seen by
the intellect. What follows is that, while all beings have some degree of intelligible brightness—
since every being is at least somewhat conjoinable and thus visible to the intellect—they will not
possess intelligible brightness to the same degree because they are not equally conjoinable to the
intellect. Thus, spiritual beings are intelligibly brighter than material beings since the former
have the same immaterial being as the species by which the intellect knows them, and are thus
more intimately conjoined to the intellect through those species. God, meanwhile, is infinitely
brighter than any creature, spiritual or material, for the reason that He is not only conformed to
but identical with the species by which He is known; thus, He is perfectly and directly conjoined
to the intellect, and is therefore infinitely visible by it. In general, a being will have intelligible
brightness insofar as it conforms to the immaterial species by which it is known since the greater
that conformity is, the more that the being is conjoined to the intellect through its species, and
consequently the greater the clarity and certainty with which the intellect sees it.

2. Beauty’s Conditions in Relation to Each Other

If beauty has a single meaning or ratio, there must be an order between its conditions
since, as we mentioned in Chapter One, Thomas holds that “from one thing a multitude proceeds
in a certain order”\textsuperscript{102}; thus, determining whether there is an order between beauty’s requirements
will help determine whether it has a unique meaning of its own or is merely the combination of
truth and goodness. Such an order between beauty’s conditions would have to consist either in
two of them being subordinated to the other one, or in all three requirements being subordinated
to some fourth notion. Since there is no other notion to which beauty’s three requirements could

\textsuperscript{102} Summa Theologiae I, 77.4. Leonine 5.243. “[C]um anima sit una, potentiae vero plures; ordine autem
quodam ab uno in multitudinem procedatur; necesse est inter potentias animae ordinem esse.”
be subordinated, it follows that, if beauty’s conditions have an order among them, it must consist in two of the requirements being subordinated to one of them.

The condition to which the other two are subordinated would therefore be beauty’s essential condition or nature, just as perfection is the nature or essential condition of the good.\(^\text{103}\) In his *Contra Gentiles*, Thomas states that while the “meaning” (*ratio*) of the good is desirability, the “nature” (*natura*) of the good is “perfection.”\(^\text{104}\) Thomas seems to mean that perfection is the ontological foundation for the merely conceptual relation that “good” expresses, namely being’s conformity to the appetite. This interpretation is confirmed by *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.1, which says that “everything is desirable insofar as it is perfect, for all things desire their perfection.”\(^\text{105}\) Likewise, if beauty has a single meaning, and thus needs a single ontological foundation for this meaning, then one of beauty’s conditions must likewise be the nature or essential condition of the beautiful. This condition would therefore be both necessary and sufficient for beauty, just as perfection is both necessary and sufficient for the good; in other words, just as a thing is good precisely “insofar as” or to the degree that it is perfect, so a thing would be beautiful precisely to the degree that it possessed the nature or essential condition of the beautiful. Moreover, while beauty’s nature would be a condition for the beautiful in itself, the other two requirements would only be conditions for beauty insofar as they were conditions for the first one—just as perfection is the essential condition of the good, while mode, species, and order are only requirements for goodness because they are part of a being’s perfection.\(^\text{106}\)

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\(^{103}\) Aertsen, *The Transcendental*, 305.  
\(^{104}\) *Contra Gentiles* I, 37. Marietti 2.47. “Quod quidem patet et ex ipsa natura boni, et ex eius ratione. Naturaliter enim bonum uniuscuiusque est actus et perfectio eius. . . . Ratio vero boni est ex hoc quod est appetibile.”  
\(^{105}\) Leonine 4.56. “Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit, quod aliquid sit appetibile. . . . Manifestum est autem quod unumquodque est appetibile secundum quod est perfectum: nam omnia appetunt suam perfectionem.”  
\(^{106}\) *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.5. Leonine 4.63. “[U]numquodque dicitur bonum, inquantum est perfectum: sic enim est appetibile. . . . Unde ratio boni, secundum quod consistit in perfectione, consistit etiam in modo, specie et
If beauty in fact possesses an essential characteristic or nature, then there would be not only one order but two orders between beauty’s three conditions: an order of nature and an order of generation. As Thomas explains in *Summa Theologiae* I, 77.4, the order of nature between members of a group are their ranking according to dignity or perfection since “perfect things are naturally prior to imperfect things”; on the other hand, their order of generation is the order in which they come into existence, which reverses the order of nature because “a thing progresses from the imperfect to the perfect.” Hence, beauty’s formal condition would be prior in the order of nature to the other two conditions since, as beauty’s essential characteristic or nature, it is required for beauty in itself and is the reason for the other two being conditions of beauty; however, the other two conditions would be prior in the order of generation since they would serve as the ontological foundation or material cause, as it were, for the formal condition.

It is important to emphasize, however, that this order of generation would only hold among the intelligible versions of beauty’s conditions. The reason is that the sensible versions of integrity (i.e. size and loudness), harmony (i.e. visible and audible proportions), and brightness (i.e. colors and pitches) are diverse kinds of sensible accidents, and moreover are not caused by each other. As a result, a material being can possess one condition for sensible beauty without possessing the others; for example, as Thomas himself mentions, a human being can be well-proportioned but fall short in bodily beauty because he lacks greatness of size. There is thus no necessary order between the sensible versions of beauty’s conditions; consequently, our task for this section is only to look for such an order in the three conditions for intelligible beauty.

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107 Leonine 5.243. “[U]no modo, secundum naturae ordinem, prout perfecta sunt naturaliter imperfectis priora; alio modo, secundum ordinem generationis et temporis, prout ex imperfecto ad perfectum venitur.”  
108 Likewise, one could have “well-proportioned members of the body” without the “brightness of a due color” that is also required, or vice versa. *Summa Theologicae* II-II, 145.2. Leonine 10.147. “Unde pulchritudo corporis in hoc consistit quod homo habeat membra corporis bene proportionata, cum quadam debiti coloris claritate.”
The first step of this undertaking is to find out whether Thomas indicates that one of these three conditions is the essential condition or nature of the beautiful. If and when we have done so, we will then attempt to determine how this condition arises out of the first two, at which point our account of the orders of nature and generation between beauty’s conditions will be complete.

i. Their Order according to Nature

While each of beauty’s three requirements has been designated as its formal condition by at least some Thomists, integrity has had significantly fewer advocates than the other two, and with good reason. For one thing, Thomas mentions integrity much less frequently as a condition for beauty, and never without the other two. Moreover, he does not present it as a factor whose presence is sufficient to make a thing beautiful, but rather as one whose absence is sufficient to make a thing ugly: In Sent. I, 31.2.1 states “there is no beauty except in a large body,”110 while Summa Theologiae I, 39.8 tells us that beauty requires integrity because “those things that are diminished are by this very fact ugly.”111 The obvious implication of these texts is that, while one cannot be beautiful without magnitude or integrity, one can still be ugly with it, namely by lacking proportion or brightness. Integrity is therefore merely a necessary condition for beauty, not a sufficient one, in which case it cannot be the essential condition of beauty for Thomas.

Harmony, however, not only appears in more of Thomas’s texts on beauty than either integrity or brightness, but is also frequently the only one mentioned, as several scholars have

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observed.\textsuperscript{112} Hence, it is not surprising to find a sizable number of Thomists arguing or at least implying that harmony is beauty’s essential condition.\textsuperscript{113} The main problem for this position is that harmony requires a distinction of parts,\textsuperscript{114} so, if harmony is essential to beauty, it is difficult to see how angels can be beautiful since as purely spiritual beings they are not composed of form and matter, and therefore also lack spatially extended parts\textsuperscript{115}; likewise, it is difficult to see how God, Who is utterly simple and thus not composed from parts of any kind, can be Beauty Itself if harmony is the nature of beauty.\textsuperscript{116} Certain Thomists have replied that there is a real distinction (and consequently a proportion) not only between the essence and existence\textsuperscript{117} but also between the substance and accidents\textsuperscript{118} of every creature, including angels;\textsuperscript{119} moreover, even in God there is a real distinction, and therefore an order, between the persons of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{120}

Such a response misses the real point of the objection. If harmony is beauty’s nature—


\textsuperscript{114}De Potentia 10.3. Marietti 2.263. “[O]rdo absque distinctione non est.” See \textit{In Sent.} I, 20.1.3 sol. 1 [Mandonet 1.509]; \textit{In Physic.} I, 10.4 [Leonine 2.34]; \textit{In Politic.} II, 5.2 [Leonine 48A.135:31-38].

\textsuperscript{115}See \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 50.2 [Leonine 5.5-6].

\textsuperscript{116}See, for example, \textit{De spiritualibus creaturis} 1 ad 1. Leonine 24/2.14:426-29. “[U]nde, si quis recte consideret, substantiae spiritualis non inueniuntur esse subjecte nisi accidentium que pertinens ad intellectum et voluntatem.”

\textsuperscript{117}Contra Gentiles II, 53. Marietti 2.174. “In quocumque enim inveniuntur aliqua duo quorum unum est complementum alterius, proportio unius eorum ad alterum est sicut proportio potentiae ad actum: . . . Ipsum autem esse est complementum substantiae existentis: unumquodque enim actu est per hoc quod esse habet. Relinquitur igitur quod in qualibet praedictarum substantiarum sit compositio actus et potentiae.”

\textsuperscript{118}See, for example, \textit{De spiritualibus creaturis} 1 ad 1. Leonine 24/2.14:426-29. “[U]nde, si quis recte consideret, substantiae spiritualis non inueniuntur esse subjecte nisi accidentium que pertinens ad intellectum et voluntatem.”

\textsuperscript{119}Eco, \textit{The Aesthetics}, 101-2; Ramos, \textit{Dynamic Transcendentals}, 83; Kovach, \textit{Die Ästhetik}, 119-20; Granados, \textit{Esbozo}, 40-44. Von Balthasar goes so far as to say that for Thomas every creature “essentially is a proportio between esse and essentia,” which is not quite right—a creature is a \textit{composite} of essence and existence for Thomas, rather than a \textit{proportion} between them. von Balthasar, \textit{The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity}, 409.

\textsuperscript{120}De Potentia 10.3. Marietti 2.263. “Distinctio autem secundum rem in divinis non est, nisi personarum ad invicem . . . ; unde in divinis non est ordo realis nisi quantum ad personas . . .” Kovach, “Transcendentality,” 83.
i.e. if a being’s beauty corresponds essentially to the amount of harmony that it possesses—then the more beautiful something is, the more harmony should be present in it; yet, while God and the angels are undoubtedly more beautiful than bodily beings for Thomas, one actually finds less harmony in the former than in the latter, as is clear from considering the number and variety of proportions in each. While finite spirits only possess the proportions common to all creatures, i.e. of essence to existence and of substance to accident, material creatures have an intricate and complex array of harmonies in addition to these: namely, between matter and form, among the elements in a composite material substance, among the various organs in an animal’s body, etc. That harmony is thus found more in material beings than in immaterial beings is confirmed by Thomas himself when he says in two separate places that “harmony is to be attributed more to the body than to the soul”—a statement indicating that harmony should be attributed still less to pure spirits, which unlike the soul are not united to matter.

As for God, none of the proportions found in creatures exist in Him since He is perfectly simple; moreover, while He does possess a distinction and order that is not found in creatures, i.e. between the three Persons sharing the Divine Essence, this order is not the reason that He is

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123 *In De anima* I, 9. Leonine 45/1.45:140-45. “Vna ratio est, quia diversa proportio inuenitur in diversis partibus corporis: nam commixtio elementorum non habet eandem rationem, id est proportionem, secundum quam est caro et secundum quam est os . . .” As this passage points out, not only do composite bodies have a proportion among their elements, but that proportion is not even the same in all parts of the body.

124 *In De caelo* I, 15.5. Leonine 3.61. “[O]mne animal habet . . . determinatam proportionem partium ad totum . . .”

Beauty Itself. In fact, His Beauty is His Essence,\(^\text{126}\) and therefore is not composed from the three Persons as parts, but rather is wholly possessed by each Person.\(^\text{127}\) Hence, in God harmony is not a condition for beauty at all, much less its essential condition since God is Beauty Itself not in virtue of the order between the Persons but in virtue of the one Divine Essence.\(^\text{128}\)

Some scholars argue that God and spiritual creatures possess harmony in a higher way than bodily creatures, namely as the harmony among a virtual multitude of perfections that are distinct in meaning but identical in reality\(^\text{129}\); however, doing so only concedes that harmony is not really present in them since an order or harmony between things that are only conceptually distinct is itself purely conceptual, and thus does not exist in reality.\(^\text{130}\) What this argument does succeed in proving, however, is that establishing harmony among their parts is the way in which lower and more composite beings imitate the infinitely rich but indivisible unities of higher and simpler beings.\(^\text{131}\) Since harmony is thus only a requirement for beauty to the degree that there is

\(^{126}\) *In Iob* 40. Leonine 26.214:77-81. “... Deus enim non habet circumdatum decorum quasi superadditum eius essentiae sed ipsa essentia eius est decor...”

\(^{127}\) See *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.1 [Leonine 4.396-97]. That the Divine Beauty is identical with the Divine Essence, and thus is equally possessed by each of the Persons, is not contradicted but confirmed by Thomas’s appropriation of “beauty” to the Son since, as we mentioned in Chapter One (p. 69), an appropriated attribute is an attribute of the Essence that is especially attributed to one of the Persons on account of its likeness to that Person’s properties.

\(^{128}\) This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that Thomas always speaks of God’s Beauty in terms of His simplicity, rather than of His Trinity. See, for example, *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5.336. Marietti 113. “[E]t hoc ideo quia Causa prima propter sui simplicitatem et perfectionem sola comprehendit tota, idest omnia *in uno*, unde etsi in creaturis different pulchrum et pulchritudo, Deus tamen utrumque comprehendit in se, secundum unum et idem.”


\(^{130}\) As Thomas himself observes, “where there is no distinction according to reality, but only according to the mode of understanding, there cannot be order except according to the mode of understanding.” *De Potentia* 10.3. Marietti 2.263. “[O]rdo absque distinctione non est. Unde ubi non est distinctio secundum rem, sed solum secundum modum intelligendi, ibi non potest esse ordo nisi secundum modum intelligendi.”

\(^{131}\) *In Iob* 40 appears to confirm this impression when it says that the “very essence” of God “is [His] Beauty, by which is understood [His] brightness or truth, and purity or simplicity, and the perfection of His Essence.” Leonine 26.214:77-81. “Deus enim non habet circumdatum decorum... sed ipsa essentia eius est decor, per quem intelligitur ipsa claritas sive veritas, et puritas sive simplicitas, et perfectio essentiae eius.” Here Thomas lists three constituents of beauty, just as he does in *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8, but has replaced “harmony or due proportion” with “purity or simplicity.” The clear implication is that, although harmony is a condition for beauty in creatures, God fulfills this requirement for beauty by possessing something that is higher and better than harmony, namely simplicity.
division in need of unification, it becomes less necessary as one ascends the scale of unity, being, and beauty. Therefore, harmony cannot possibly be beauty’s formal condition. This conclusion explains why Thomas rarely presents harmony as a requirement for beauty in the angels\(^{132}\) and never as one in God,\(^{133}\) as well as why the texts that only mention harmony as a condition for beauty are almost always discussing bodily beauty in particular.\(^{134}\)

For reasons similar to the ones that we have just given, the majority of Thomists writing on beauty have held that its nature or formal condition cannot be integrity or harmony and must therefore be brightness,\(^{135}\) a conclusion finding immediate support from the many characteristics that brightness and beauty have in common. Some of these similarities are obvious—such as the fact that both of them relate to the cognitive power, and even specifically to the act of vision—

\(^{132}\) In fact, there is only one text where Thomas speaks of harmony in the angels, and only as a condition for the beauty of the whole multitude of angels, not of a single angel. *In Sent. II, 9.1.5 s.c. 2. Mandonnet 2.242.* “Praeterea, in angelis est summa pulchritudo post Deum. Sed in diversorum graduum consonantia ordinata consistit ratio pulchritudinis. Ergo videtur quod in angelis etiam unius ordinis est hujusmodi gradum invenire.”

\(^{133}\) Some might object that Thomas attributes harmony to the Son in *In Sent. I, 31.2.1 and Summa Theologiae I, 39.8*; however, in these texts, Thomas is not discussing why the Son is beautiful, but rather why “beauty” has a “likeness” to the properties of the Son, and should therefore be appropriated to him. Moreover, it should be noted that there is another text, *De 108 articulis 57*, which defends the appropriation of “beauty” to the Son solely on the basis of His likeness to brightness as the “splendor of the Father.” Leonine 42.288:709-712. “Et licet Hylarius non dicat quod Filius sit species patris, potest tamen hoc modo intelligi species uel pulchritudo Patris, sicut dicitur splendor Patris.”

\(^{134}\) See *Contra Gentiles II*, 64.3 and III, 139 [Marietti 2.200 and 3.211]; *In Ethic. II*, 7.2 and X, 3.5 [Leonine 47/1.98:12-17 and 47/2.559:46-52]; *In Isaiam 63* [Leonine 28.244:57-59]; *In Psalmos 44.2* [Parma 14.320]; *In De divinis nominibus 4.21.560* and *4.22.572* [Marietti 207 and 213]; *Summa Theologiae I-II, 49.4* [Leonine 6.315]. Even *Summa Theologiae I*, 5.4 ad 1, which also solely mentions proportion, is discussing sensible beauty since Thomas says there that “beauty consists in due proportion” because “sense delights in things duly proportioned.” Emphasis mine. Leonine 4.61. “Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit: quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite proportionatis, sicut in sibi similibus; nam et sensus ratio quaedam est, et omnis virtus cognoscitiva.” Aside from these passages on bodily beauty, the only other texts in which harmony is the sole condition mentioned are passages on the beauty of moral virtue, whose activities necessarily require making use of the body, or on the beauty of a multitude, which requires division. See *In Ethic. I*, 13 [47/1.47:101-108]; *Summa Theologiae II-II, 141.2 ad 3* [Leonine 10.123]; *In I Timotheum 2.2* and *3.1* [Marietti 2.227 and 2.232]; *In De divinis nominibus 1.2.59* [Marietti 19]; *Contra Gentiles III*, 71.3 [Marietti 3.100]; *Summa Theologiae I, 36.2* [Leonine 4.377].

but there are several unexpected commonalities as well: for instance, both brightness and beauty are identified with glory,\(^\text{136}\) excellence,\(^\text{137}\) and nobility\(^\text{138}\) at some point in Thomas’s corpus. The most important feature shared by brightness and beauty, however, is that both are said to have the character of a formal cause,\(^\text{139}\) and to be identical with a being’s form\(^\text{140}\) or species.\(^\text{141}\) This parallel takes on even more significance when one remembers that two of the words meaning “beautiful” for Thomas—\textit{speciosus} and \textit{formosus}—are cognates of \textit{species} and \textit{forma}.\(^\text{142}\)

Another sign that brightness is the nature of beauty for Thomas is that he consistently

\(^{136}\) Beauty is identified with glory not only by \textit{In Psalmodis} 46.3 [Parma 14.331], but also by \textit{In I Corinthios} 15.6 [Marietti 1.421]: “[S]ed alia quidem est gloria, id est pulchritudo et decor, caelestium corporum, alia autem terrestrium, Eccli. XLIII, v. 10: species caeli gloria stellarum.” The connection between brightness (\textit{claritas}) and glory (\textit{gloria}) is even closer for Thomas since in \textit{In Ioanem} 13.6 he tells us that the latter is even etymologically derived from the former: “for glory (\textit{gloria}) is said as if glory (\textit{claria}).” Marietti 341. “[G]loria enim dicitur quasi claria.” See also \textit{Summa Theologiae} II-II, 103.1 ad 3 [Leonine 9.378]. Likewise, \textit{Summa Theologiae} II-II, 132.1 tells us that “glory signifies a certain brightness (\textit{claritatem}), for which reason to be glorified (\textit{glorificari}) is the same as to be brightened (\textit{clarificari}).” Leonine 10.78. “[G]loria claritatem quandam significat: unde glorificari idem est quod clarificari . . .” Cf. \textit{De malo} 9.1. [Leonine 23.210:71-78].

\(^{137}\) \textit{Summa Theologiae} II-II, 145.3 tells us that the \textit{bonum honestum} (i.e. the good in itself) “has a certain excellence worthy of honor on account of spiritual beauty.” Leonine 10.148. “Nam honestum dicitur secundum quod aliquid habet quandam excellentiam dignam honore propter spiritualem pulchritudinem . . .” Cf. \textit{In Sent.} IV, 33.3.3 ad 2 [Parma 7/2.979-80]. Brightness (\textit{claritas}), on the other hand is used interchangeably with excellence in \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 84.4: “For happiness is the perfect good, to which pertains excellence or brightness (\textit{claritas}).” Leonine 7.109. “[N]am felicitas est perfectum bonum: ad quod pertinet excellencia vel claritas . . .”

\(^{138}\) Thomas speaks of a person’s “nobility or beauty” in \textit{In Galatias} 2.2. Marietti 1.580-81. “[A]ccipere personam proprie est in aliquo negotio attendere, quasi regulam ipsius negotii, conditionem personae nihil facientem ad negotium, puta, cum ideo do beneficium aliqui, quia est nobilis, sive pulcher. Nobilitatis enim seu pulchritudo, nihil facit ad hoc, quod habeat beneficium.” \textit{In I Corinthios} I.4 tells us that “the very word ‘nobility’” signifies a certain “brightness of rank (\textit{claritas generis}).” Marietti 1.245. “Primo quidem claritas generis, quam ipsum nomen nobilitatis designat.” Cf. \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 102.5 ad 10 [Leonine 7.246]. Thomas also says that light is “the most noble quality” in \textit{Compendium Theologiae} I, 168 [Leonine 42.146:13-20]: “Quia igitur anima beata in summo nobilitatis et irtutis etutur, utpote rerum primo principio coniuncta, conferet corpori sibi diuinitus unito, primo quidem esse substantiale nobilissimo modo . . .; dabit etiam sibi qualitatem nobilissimam, scilicet gloriam claritatis . . .” See also \textit{In Sent.} IV, 49.4.5.3 ad 3 [Parma 7/2.1232] on the nobility of light.


\(^{141}\) As we have seen, \textit{species} is identified with beauty in \textit{In Sent.} I, 31.2.1 [Mandonnet 1.724], \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 39.8 [Leonine 4.409], and \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 8.4.775 [Marietti 292], and with brightness in \textit{De veritate} 22.1 ad 12 [Leonine 22/3.616:359-73]. O’Reilly also makes this observation in \textit{Aesthetic Perception}, 24.

\(^{142}\) While \textit{speciosus} is used interchangeably with \textit{pulchritudo} throughout Thomas’s corpus, \textit{formosus}, as we have already seen, is distinguished from \textit{pulchritudo} in \textit{In Sent.} 31.2.1 [Mandonnet 1.724]. \textit{In Ethic.} IV, 8.4 [Leonine 47/2.226-27:50-57], and \textit{Tabula Ethicorum} P [Leonine 48B.133:10-12]; thus, \textit{formosus} strictly means “well-formed” or “shapely,” rather than “beautiful” (\textit{pulchritudo}). Nevertheless, Thomas does identify \textit{formositas} with \textit{pulchritudo} in \textit{In Psalmodis} 26.3 [Parma 14.238], which is cited below in note 182 on p. 313.
portrays it as both a necessary and a sufficient condition for beauty. As we saw above, integrity is never presented as anything more than a necessary condition, while harmony, though it seems to be sufficient for beauty in some beings,\(^{143}\) is merely necessary in others\(^ {144}\) and becomes less and less necessary as one ascends the ladder of being. Brightness, however, is apparently always a sufficient condition for beauty since even the sensible brightness of color automatically confers a certain degree of beauty on a body: *Summa Theologiae* I, 39.8 tells us “those things that have a shining color are said to be beautiful”\(^{145}\)—in other words, we call them beautiful simply because they have bright colors—while *Lux orta* 2 states even more explicitly that just as “colors,” whose “generative mother” is light, “beautify (pulchrificant) the body,” so virtues beautify the soul.\(^ {146}\) That colors alone make things beautiful can only mean that colors are beautiful in themselves,\(^ {147}\) and therefore strongly implies that brightness, which is the perfection of color,\(^ {148}\) is the essential condition of beauty. Even Thomas’s habit of mentioning “beautiful colors” far more often than “beautiful sounds”\(^ {149}\) is an indication that he considers brightness rather than harmony to be the


\(^{144}\) *In Sent.* 31.2.1. Mandonnet 1.724. “[P]arvi homines possunt dici commensurati et formosi, sed non pulchri.”

\(^{145}\) Leonine 4.409. “Et iterum claritas: unde quae habent colorem nitidum, pulchra esse dicuntur.”

\(^{146}\) Leonine 44/1.268:214-16. “Quinto est lux mater generativa colorum; sic beata Virgo mater est iurtutum. Sicut colores pulchrificant corpus, sic iurtutes animam. Quia mater iurtutum est beata virgo . . .” Cf. *In Iob* 28 [Leonine 26.153:216-17], which tells us that gold owes its beauty to its splendor, and *In Sent.* IV, 13.1.2.5 ad 3 [Mandonnet 4.558], which says that a dyed or colored linen cloth is more beautiful than one that is left undyed.

\(^{147}\) *In De anima* II, 22 [Leonine 45/1.160:65-68] does say that a color can be ugly as well as beautiful; however, it seems that a color is ugly precisely because of a defect in brightness. Thus, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 102.5 ad 7 tells us that the “ugliness of color” in leprosy is counteracted by “scarlet, which has a vivid color.” Leonine 7.245. “Haec autem quatuor offerebat contra quatuor defectus leprae: . . . contra turpitudinem coloris, vermiculus, qui habet vivum colorem.” Likewise, *In I Corinthios* 15.6 tells us that sick or dead bodies are “discolored” due to “a weakness of the soul’s operation in the body,” but, when the soul is at its “highest perfection” in the next life, it will make the body “bright and gleaming.” Marietti 1.423. “[I]nfirmi enim et mortui propter debilitatem operationis animae in corpus, efficuntur discolorati, et quando erit in summa perfectione, faciet corpus clarum et fulgidum.”

\(^{148}\) *In Sent.* II, 27.1.2 ad 1. Mandonnet 2.699. “[C]olor non informatur colore, sed forte luce; unde non potest dici color coloratus, sed forte clarus; et similiter nec albedo colorata. . . . [L]ux perficit colorem . . .”

\(^{149}\) Thomas speaks of “beautiful colors” in *In Jeremiah* 11.3 [Parma 14.606], *Compendium Theologiae* I, 165 [Leonine 42.144:1-3], *In De anima* II, 22 [Leonine 45/1.160:65-68], *De veritate* 25.1 [Leonine 22/3.730:213-
nature of beauty since in their original and proper meanings brightness is said only of colors and light, and harmony only of sounds, as we mentioned earlier.\textsuperscript{150}

It is notable, moreover, that the only texts other than \textit{Lux orta} \textsuperscript{2} to speak of “beautifying” (\textit{pulchrificare}) also attribute this action to light. In the first of these, \textit{In De divinis nominibus} \textsuperscript{4.5}, Thomas states that the “brilliant communications of the divine ray” through which God causes brightness in creatures are “beautifying” (\textit{pulchrificae}).\textsuperscript{151} The second passage, meanwhile, is a remarkably significant text (though rarely noted by Thomists\textsuperscript{152}) from \textit{In Psalmos} \textsuperscript{25.5}:

\begin{quote}
And all these, i.e. good works, the gifts of God, and the saints themselves, are the beauty of the house of God, insofar as in them is reflected divine grace, which beautifies (\textit{pulchrificat}) as a light, just as Ambrose says, that \textit{without light all things are ugly}.\textsuperscript{153}
\end{quote}

This text unambiguously proves that Thomas considers brightness to be both a necessary and a sufficient condition for beauty since it tells us that merely reflecting the light of grace is enough to make the saints, their good works, and God’s gifts to them “the beauty of the house of God,” while the mere absence of light is enough to make “all things” ugly.

If Thomas thinks that brightness is beauty’s essential condition, one would expect these terms to be mutually implicative for him, just as goodness and perfection are,\textsuperscript{154} which is exactly

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\textsuperscript{150} See pp. 283 and 289 above.

\textsuperscript{151} Marietti 113. “Quomodo autem Deus sit causa claritatis, ostendit subdens, quod Deus immittit omnibus creaturis . . . traditionem sui radii luminosi . . . ; quae quidem \textit{traditiones fulgidae divini radii}, secundum participationem similitudinis sunt intelligendae et istae \textit{traditiones} sunt \textit{pulchrificae}, idest facientes pulchritudinem in rebus.”

\textsuperscript{152} Only Maritain (\textit{Art and Scholasticism}, 24) and Chereso (\textit{Honor and Beauty}, 24-25) mention it.

\textsuperscript{153} Parma 14.235. “[E]t haec omnia, idest bona opera, dona Dei, et ipsi sancti, sunt decor domus Dei, inquantum relucet in eis gratia divina quae pulchrificat sicut lux, sicut dicit Ambrosius, quod sine luce omnia sunt turpia . . .”

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Summa Theologiae} 5.1 ad 1 [Leonine 4.56] shows that goodness implies perfection (“Sed bonum dicit rationem perfecti, quod est appetibile . . .”), while \textit{Summa Theologiae} 5.3 [Leonine 4.59] shows that perfection likewise implies goodness: “Perfectum vero habet rationem appetibilis et boni . . .”
what we see in his corpus. We have already seen many texts where Thomas says that brightness belongs to the meaning of beauty, but there are a few places where he indicates that the converse is also true. For instance, he writes in *In Sent.* IV, 49.4.5.3 ad 1 that “beauty is contained under brightness,” while in *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 132.1 he says that “brightness has both a certain beauty and manifestation.” Moreover, in a text from the *De virtutibus* the presence of spiritual beauty is Thomas's basis for concluding to the presence of spiritual brightness, which implies that a being’s intelligible beauty is directly proportional to its intelligible brightness.

That brightness and beauty always accompany each other for Thomas, just as perfection and goodness do, finds additional support from his frequent use of the phrase “brightness and beauty” since he is also fond of repeating the phrase “perfection and goodness.” What is more, there is one passage where Thomas actually uses the phrase “brightness or beauty”:

Intemperance is therefore the most disgraceful [vice], for two reasons. . . . Secondly, because it is the most repugnant to [man’s] brightness or beauty, insofar as, in the delights about which there is intemperance, less appears of the

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155 In this text, Thomas is explaining why the seven gifts of the resurrected body that Anselm lists (beauty, swiftness, strength, freedom, health, delight, and duration) fall under and thus harmonize with the four gifts that St. Paul lists (brightness, subtlety, impassibility, and agility). Parma 7/2.1232. “[P]ulchritudo enim continetur sub claritate . . .”

156 Leonine 10.78. “Claritas autem et decorum quendam habet, et manifestationem.”

157 “Justice is said to be the most splendid (*praeclostissima*) of the virtues on account of the beauty of its order.” *De virtutibus* 3.2 ad 14. Marietti 2.801. “[I]ustitia dicitur esse praeclostissima virtutum, propter decorum sui ordinis . . .”

158 This convertibility of beauty and brightness is further supported by the fact that while Thomas often uses the phrase “due proportion,” he never speaks of a “due brightness” but rather only of a “due color,” which shows that it is only sensible brightness, not intelligible brightness, that must be limited by or proportioned to a being’s nature. *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2. Leonine 10.147. “Unde pulchritudo corporis in hoc consistit quod homo habeat membra corporis bene proportionata, cum quadem debiti coloris claritate.” Thus, while an increase in proportion can fail to increase, or even decrease, a being’s beauty—i.e. when the proportion is not “due” or appropriate for the being—an increase in brightness (viz. intelligible brightness) *always* leads to an increase in beauty.

159 See *In De divinis nominibus* 4.21.554 [Marietti 206], *Quodlibet* VIII, 8 [Leonine 25/1.79:17-18], *Summa Theologiae* I, 93.8 ad 3 [Leonine 5.411], *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 142.4 [Leonine 10.136-37], *In I Corinthios* 13.1 [Busa 6.373], and *In I Corinthios* 15.6 [Marietti 1.423]. Thomas also uses the phrase “limpid and beautiful” in *Attendite a falsis* 3 [Parma 24.229], and “limpid” (*limpidum*) is a synonym for “bright” (*clarum*).

160 A search through the Index Thomisticus shows that Thomas uses the phrase “perfect and good” at least thirty times. See, for example, *Summa Theologiae* I, 3.2. Leonine 4.37. “Secundo, quia omne compositionum ex materia et forma est perfectum et bonum per suam formam: unde oportet quod sit bonum per participationem . . .”
light of reason, from which comes the whole brightness and beauty of virtue.\textsuperscript{161}

As Jordan notes,\textsuperscript{162} Thomas has here presented brightness and beauty as interchangeable, something that he also occasionally does with perfection and goodness.\textsuperscript{163}

Another point in favor of brightness being beauty’s formal condition is that brightness is found to a greater degree in higher and more beautiful beings, rather than to a lesser degree like harmony. One sees this correlation between an increase in beauty and an increase in brightness even within the domain of bodily or sensible beauty since Thomas says in \textit{In Sent.} IV, 48.2.3 that “the beauty of celestial bodies”—which, according to another text, is greater than the beauty of earthly bodies\textsuperscript{164}—“consists chiefly in light.”\textsuperscript{165} In fact, Thomas makes clear in a couple of texts that it is precisely the brightness of heavenly bodies that gives them the greatest share of bodily beauty. In addition to \textit{Lux orta} 2, which says that “bodily light” is, among other things, “the most beautiful of creatures, and the delight and consolation of the eyes,”\textsuperscript{166} \textit{In Iob} 41 states that “there is nothing more beautiful in bodily things than the rays of the Sun.”\textsuperscript{167}

For Thomas brightness not only explains why terrestrial bodies are exceeded by celestial bodies in sensible beauty, but even why all material beings are exceeded by spiritual creatures in intelligible beauty. One finds this opinion explicitly stated in \textit{In Psalmos} 50.4, which says that


\textsuperscript{162} Jordan, “The Evidence,” 397.

\textsuperscript{163} \textit{In Ioannem} 17.5. Marietti 422. “Et inde est quod invitamur ad imitationem dilectionis divinae . . . et perfectionis, seu bonitatis . . .” Cf. \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 1.2.45 [Marietti 16] and \textit{In De causis} 4 [Saffrey 32].

\textsuperscript{164} See \textit{In Symbolum} 1 [Marietti 2.196], quoted in note 121 on p. 303.

\textsuperscript{165} Parma 7/2.1176. “Pulchritudo autem caelestium corporum praecipue consistit in luce . . .”

\textsuperscript{166} Leonine 44/1.267:121-24. “Videmus quod lux corporalis est . . . speciosissima creaturarum et delectatio et consolatio ocularum.”

the “brightness” of the sanctified soul is more beautiful than all bodily beauty\(^{168}\); however, this attitude is implicit in his opinions on the difference in brightness between material and spiritual creatures. We have already noted that for Thomas spirits have a greater intelligible brightness than bodies because the being of the former is not limited and obscured by matter, and thus they are more “manifest” to the intellect.\(^{169}\) It is therefore not surprising that Thomas describes the beauty of the human soul,\(^{170}\) of the angels,\(^{171}\) of the Church,\(^{172}\) of grace,\(^{173}\) of Christ,\(^{174}\) and of His Mother Mary\(^{175}\) almost exclusively in terms of brightness.

As compelling as the evidence we have provided so far is, what most of all indicates that brightness is beauty’s formal condition for Thomas is what he says about where beauty is found

\(^{168}\) Parma 14.347. “[C]andor animae sanctificatae excedit omnem pulchritudinem corporalem . . .”

\(^{169}\) See pp. 293-95 above.

\(^{170}\) In Sent. IV, 18.1.2.1 says that the soul’s beauty “consists in its assimilation to God” by means of the “brightness of grace.” Mandonnet 4.936. “Pulchritudo autem animae consistit in assimilacione ipsius ad Deum, ad quem formari debet per claritatem gratiae . . .” Cf. In Sent. IV, 16.2.1.2 ad 3 [Mandonnet 4.785].

\(^{171}\) In De divinis nominibus 4.18.524-25 tells us that an angel is a “created mirror”of God that, “on account of its purity and brightness, receives perfectly all of the beauty that is possible to exist in a creature:” Marietti 188. “[U]nde per quamdam similitudinem, Angelum secundum suam naturam vocat speculum. . . . Sed considerandum est, quod non dicit quod suscipiat totam pulchritudinem Dei; sed in aliquo creato speculo, propter sui puritatem et claritatem, recipit perfecte tota pulchritudo Dei; sed in aliquo creato speculo, propter sui puritatem et claritatem, recipitur tota pulchritudo Dei; sed in aliquo creato speculo, propter sui puritatem et claritatem, recipitur perfecte tota pulchritudo quae est possibilis esse in creatura per assimilacionem ad Deum.”

\(^{172}\) In Psalmos 10.1 states that the Church is “beautiful as the moon,” as it says in the Song of Songs, because, just as the moon receives all of its brightness from the Sun, so the Church receives all of its brightness from Christ. Parma 14.178. “Luna est Ecclesia: Cant. 6: « Pulchra ut luna, » propter ejus claritatem et propter ejus obscurationem. Claritas lunae est a sole; sic claritas Ecclesiae est a Christo: Jo. 1: « Erat lux vera quae illuminat etc.”

\(^{173}\) See texts cited above in note 170 of this chapter.


essentially, namely in reason and in God. *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 180.2 ad 3 tells us that the

esSENCE OF BEAUTy IS FOUNd IN THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

Beauty . . . consists in a certain brightness and due proportion. Each of these, however, is found rooted in the reason (*radicaliter in ratione*), to which pertains both a manifesting light, and the ordering (*ordinare*) of due proportion in others. And so in the contemplative life, which consists in the act of reason, beauty is found in itself and essentially (*per se et essentialiter*).\(^{176}\)

While Thomas says that both brightness and proportion are found “rooted” in the reason—i.e. both have reason as their “root” (*radix*) or ultimate source—he does not say that reason *is* due proportion, but only that reason is responsible for ordering (*ordinare*) due proportion “in others.” Conversely, he does not say that reason merely causes light in other beings, but rather that it *is* a “manifesting light.” Thus, while both brightness and proportion have reason as their cause, only brightness can be said of reason itself, in which beauty is found essentially.

Likewise, the Dionysius commentary tells us that God, Who is “the essence of beauty,”\(^ {177}\) is “the cause” of both brightness and harmony in creatures,\(^ {178}\) but it only attributes brightness to God Himself. As we noted in Chapter One,\(^ {179}\) Thomas states in two different lessons that “every form is a participation in the divine brightness”\(^ {180}\); yet, nowhere in the commentary does he say

\(^{176}\) Leonine 10.426. [P]ulchritudo . . . consistit in quadam claritate et debita proportione. Utrumque autem horum radicaliter in ratione inventur, ad quam pertinet et lumen manifestans, et proportionem debitam in aliis ordinare. Et ideo in vita contemplativa, quae consistit in actu rationis, per se et essentialiter inventur pulchritudo.”

\(^{177}\) Compendium Theologiae II, 9. Leonine 42.204:393-97. “Si enim unumquodque est amabile in quantum est pulcrum et bonum . . . impossible est quod Deus qui est ipsa essentia pulcritudinis et bonitatis absque amore uideatur.” See also In Sent. IV, 18.1.2.2 ad 2 [Mandonnet 4.938].

\(^{178}\) In De divinis nominibus 4.5.339. Marietti 113. “. . . Deus . . . dicitur pulchritudo propter hoc quod omnibus entibus creatis dat pulchritudinem. . . . Et in quo consistat pulchritudinis ratio, ostendit subdens quod sic Deus tradit pulchritudinem, inquantum est causa consonantiae et claritatis in omnibus . . .”

\(^{179}\) See Chapter One, pp. 75-76.

\(^{180}\) In De divinis nominibus 4.5.349. Marietti 114. “[C]laritas enim est de consideratione pulchritudinis, ut dictum est; omnis autem forma, per quam res habet esse, est participatio quaedam divinae claritatis . . .” In De divinis nominibus 4.6.360. Marietti 118. “Dicit ergo, quod ex pulcho causantur omnes essentiae substantialiaes entium. Omnis enim essentia vel est forma simplex vel habet complementum per formam: forma autem est quaedam irradiatio proveniens ex prima claritate; claritas autem est de ratione pulchritudinis, ut dictum est.”
that every harmony in creatures is a participation in the divine harmony.\textsuperscript{181} The reason for this difference is that, as we saw above, harmony requires a distinction of parts and thus cannot be attributed to God, whereas brightness is an intrinsic property of form, and God is Form or Being Itself. In fact, Thomas argues in one passage that “the highest beauty is in God” precisely on the basis that “beauty consists in being well-formed (formositate),” and “God is the very form informing all (ipsa forma informans omnia).”\textsuperscript{182} Hence, it is no surprise when Thomas says in one text that “according to beauty . . . God is called ‘Light.’”\textsuperscript{183} This statement is perhaps the strongest evidence of all that brightness is beauty’s nature for Thomas since it indicates that the reason for God’s being Beauty Itself is that He is Brightness Itself.

On the basis of such a preponderance of evidence, we can therefore safely conclude that brightness is the nature of the beautiful for Thomas, just as perfection is the nature of the good for him. While brightness is therefore first in the order of nature among beauty’s conditions, we still do not know where harmony and integrity fit in that order, but their places in that order can be determined by establishing the order of generation among beauty’s conditions. As we noted above, the order of generation is the reverse of the order of nature so, once we know the latter order for beauty’s conditions, we will know the former.

\textbf{ii. Their Order according to Generation}

If brightness is the first in the order in the order of nature among beauty’s conditions, it follows that brightness is the last in the order of generation, and therefore arises out of the prior

\textsuperscript{181} Thomas does refer to a “divine harmony” once in the Dionysius commentary, but this harmony is “the perfect harmony or order from God,” and is therefore found in God’s effects rather than in God Himself. \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 1.2.59 Marietti 19. “... harmonia divina, idest perfecta consonantia seu ordine a Deo . . .”

\textsuperscript{182} \textit{In Psalmos} 26.3. Parma 14.238. “Summa pulchritudo est in ipso Deo, quia pulchritudo in formositate consistit: Deus autem est ipsa forma informans omnia . . .”

\textsuperscript{183} \textit{In Sent.} I, 8.5.3 expos. Mandonnet 1.236. “Secundo, quantum ad pulcritudinem, et sic Deus dicitur lux.”
two conditions as its prerequisites. This conclusion is confirmed by two texts showing that both of beauty’s other requirements are also requirements for brightness: *In Sent.* IV, 25.2.2.4 states that bodily integrity is required in those who are to be ordained as priests because the “brightness of the person” that is needed for the priesthood “is obscured” by bodily defects, while *In De divinis nominibus* 4.21.554 says even more explicitly that “for beauty and brightness is required the form and the commensuration that pertains to order.” Hence, in order to complete our understanding of the order of generation among beauty’s conditions, we only need to determine whether integrity gives rise to harmony, or vice versa. While some scholars have defended the latter view, most Thomists writing on beauty have argued that integrity precedes harmony in the order of generation, as is confirmed by Thomas’s metaphysics for several reasons.

First, as we noted above, harmony always presupposes the existence of parts between which there can exist a proportion. Hence, if a thing lacks parts that are essential to it, then the harmony that is essential to it cannot exist either; yet, the meaning of integrity is precisely that a thing does not lack anything that is essential to it. Hence, it seems that every harmony (such as that between essence and existence, form and matter, etc.) always presupposes some kind of integrity, namely the presence of the parts between which the harmony exists (e.g. that a thing has both essence and existence, form and matter, etc.).

This impression is confirmed by an article from the *Sentences* commentary, in which

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184 Mandonnet 7/2.910. “[A]liquis efficitur ineptus ad susceptionem ordinis vel propter impedimentum actus, vel propter impedimentum claritatis personae; et ideo patientes defectum in membris impediuntur a susceptione ordinis, si sit talis defectus qui maculam notabilem inferat, per quem obscuretur personae claritas, ut abscissio nasi . . .”

185 Marietti 206. “Requiritur . . . ad pulchritudinem et claritatem forma et commensuratio quae ad ordinem pertinet.” Emphasis mine.


188 See p. 302 above.
Thomas presents integrity as being a necessary condition for harmony. The body of the article begins by stating that “in the human body there can be deformity in two ways”:

In the first way from the defect of some member, as we call ugly those that are mutilated; for a due proportion to the whole is lacking to them. . . . In the other way deformity occurs from an undue disposition of the parts, either from an undue quantity or quality or position, which also does not permit the due proportion of the parts to the whole . . .

According to this passage, a thing can become ugly either through the mutilation of its parts, or by having all of its parts in their completeness but in an “undue disposition” to each other and the whole, which seems to result in a less serious ugliness. While it is obvious that the former cause of ugliness is a loss of integrity and the latter a loss of harmony, both of them result in ugliness for the same reason, namely the lack of a “due proportion of the parts to the whole.” In other words, this text makes clear that harmony is prior to integrity in beauty’s order of nature (since a loss of integrity only causes ugliness because it destroys a part’s “due proportion to the whole”), while integrity is prior to harmony in beauty’s order of generation (since a due proportion of the parts to the whole can only exist if all the parts are present and perfect).

There is another, more fundamental reason to conclude that integrity is conceptually prior to harmony: while integrity or perfection can be defined apart from harmony, the latter cannot be defined without reference to the former. Thomas tells us repeatedly that the meaning of harmony is not just any proportion but a due proportion, and, as we saw earlier, what makes a proportion due is precisely that it is required by a thing’s end. Since a thing is perfect precisely insofar as it is attaining its end, it follows that a being’s proportion will only be due proportion, and so a true instance of harmony, if that proportion belongs to the being’s perfection or integrity.

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189 In Sent. IV, 44.3.1.1. Parma 7/2.1100-1101. “[In corpore humano potest esse deformitas dupliciter. Uno modo ex defectu alicujus membr, sicut mutilatos turpes dicimus; deest enim eis debita proportio ad totum. . . . Alio modo deformitas contingit ex indebita partium dispositione, vel indebita quantitate vel qualitate vel situ, quae etiam proportionem debitam partium ad totum non patitur . . .]” Cf. Quodlibet VII, 5.2 [Leonine 25/1.25-26].
Hence, it appears that the primary way in which integrity gives rise to harmony is the following: insofar as a thing is attaining its end, and so is becoming whole or perfect, its various parts also become proportioned to that end, and consequently become proportioned to each other and to the being’s nature. This conclusion finds support from *In De divinis nominibus* 4.3, which says that the harmony of all creatures with each other is caused by a prior harmony, namely their being ordered to God as their ultimate end.\(^{190}\) Thus, harmony arises out of integrity in two ways: not only does integrity ensure the presence of the parts required for harmony, but it also brings about that harmony because the attainment of a thing’s end, in which integrity or perfection consists, necessarily entails the ordering of a being’s parts to that end and to each other.

Now that we have determined how integrity gives rise to harmony, all that remains for us in this section is to indicate how harmony brings about brightness. Since intelligible brightness is an intrinsic property of every form, as we have seen,\(^{191}\) it follows that harmony can produce an increase in brightness either by bringing a form into existence or by making it more manifest—in other words, by causing either the being or the seeing of some form.

The first way in which harmony does so is materially, i.e. as the immediate subject of some form, since every bodily form can only exist in a matter that is duly proportioned to it.\(^{192}\) Hence, Thomas says in several places that, while the soul is the substantial form of a living being and not just a mere harmony of its parts, it cannot exist without such a harmony; consequently, it

\(^{190}\) *In De divinis nominibus* 4.3. “For things are scattered and separated as it were, insofar as they are ordered to different proper ends, but insofar as they are share in an order to the ultimate end, thus they are gathered together. Therefore the Divine Goodness, insofar as It turns all things to Itself, is principally what gathers together all things scattered.” Marietti 103-4. “Sunt enim res quasi dispersae et segregatae, secundum quod ad diversos fines propios ordinantur, sed inquantum communicant in ordine ad ultimum finem, sic congregantur. Divina igitur Bonitas, inquantum omnia ad seipsam convertit, est principaliter congregativa omnium dispersorum . . .”

\(^{191}\) See pp. 312-13 above in this chapter.

ceases informing the body once that harmony is corrupted.\textsuperscript{193}

Another way in which harmony brings about brightness of form is formally or essentially, i.e. by actually being the form itself that possesses brightness. Because brightness and harmony have such different meanings, and are so often presented by Thomas side-by-side, it is easy to think that the harmony in a beautiful thing is always different from the form that is shining in it; yet, not only is it simply a metaphysical necessity that every real proportion is also a form (since everything has existence through its form),\textsuperscript{194} but Thomas gives several examples of proportions that are also the forms in virtue of which their subjects possess brightness and beauty.

The first example of such a proportion is bodily beauty itself. Thomas writes that bodily beauty is the due proportion of members and colors in a body (just as health is the body’s due proportion of humors),\textsuperscript{195} but he also says that it is a bodily habitus or disposition, and therefore an instance of the first species of quality\textsuperscript{196}; hence, bodily beauty is both a harmony of the parts and a quality or accidental form of the whole.\textsuperscript{197} Likewise, \textit{In Isaïam 63} tells us that Christ is called “well-formed (formosus) on account of his shape (figura), i.e. the due commensuration of his members.”\textsuperscript{198} This statement implies that the accidental form of figure or shape, which

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{In De Anima} I, 9. Leonine 45/1.46:205-211. “[Q]uia proportio huiusmodi non est forma, sicut ipsi credebant, set est dispositio materie ad formam. Et, si accipiatur proportio armonizate compositionis pro dispositione, bene sequitur quod manente dispositione materie ad formam manet forma et destructa dispositione remouetur forma . . .”
\item Of course, purely conceptual proportions will not be forms since they only exist in the mind, not in reality.
\item \textit{Contra Gentiles} III, 139.5. Marietti 3.211. “Sicut sanitas consistit in debita commensurazione humorum; et pulchritudo in debita proportione membrorum . . .” Cf. \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 49.2 ad 1 [Leonine 6.311].
\item See \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 49.2 [Leonine 6.310-11].
\item \textit{In Ethic.} X, 3.5 states that bodily beauty is both a proportion and a form. Leonine 47/2.559:46-52. “[Q]uando autem est aliqua forma quae in sui ratione importat quandam proportionem multorum ordinatorium ad unum, talis forma etiam secundum propriam rationem recipit magis et minus, sicut patet de sanitate et pulcritudine, quorum utrumque importat proportionem convenientem naturae eius quod dicitur pulcrum vel sanum.”
\item Leonine 28.244:57-59. “Iste formosus, a formo . . . ; uel a forma, et sic dicitur formosus propter figuram, id est debitam commensurationem membrorum . . .”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Thomas calls a “quality about a quantity,”¹⁹⁹ is also a harmony of the shaped thing’s parts.

Physical beauty is not the only example of a harmony that is also a form, however. Not surprisingly, another good example appears in Thomas’s discussions of music, where he says that the form of a vocal harmony is the numerical proportion between the notes in the harmony: for example, the form of an octave is the number two since the higher note is related to the lower note as double to half.²⁰⁰ Finally, Thomas also gives an example of a spiritual harmony that is also a form when he says that an act is deformed through the privation of its intrinsic form, which is the due commensuration of its circumstances.²⁰¹

It seems, however, that for Thomas the most important way in which harmony causes brightness is not by disposing the matter for or being identical with some form, but rather by manifesting the substantial form underlying the harmony, i.e. the essence of the being that is duly proportioned. We have already seen that, according to Summa Theologiae II-II, 145.2, “spiritual beauty consists in this, that man’s behavior, or his action, is well-proportioned according to the spiritual brightness of reason”²⁰²—a point made even more clearly by In I Corinthios 11.2:

For just as beauty is said to be in a body on account of the due proportion of members in a fitting brightness or color, so beauty is said to be in human acts on account of the due proportion of words or deeds, in which the light of reason shines. Wherefore also by contrast ugliness is understood to be when something is done against reason, and due proportion is not observed in words and deeds.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Summa Theologiae I, 78.3 ad 2. Leonine 5.254. “Figura autem est qualitas circa quantitatem; cum consistat ratio figurae in terminatioe magnitudinis.” Cf. In Sent. IV, 10.1.3.1 [Mandonnet 4.415].


²⁰¹ Summa Theologiae II-II, 6.2 ad 2. Leonine 8.63. “[D]icitur enim actus deformis per privationem formae intrinsecae, quae est debita commensuratio circumstantiarum actus.” Cf. Contra Gentiles III, 6 [Marietti 3.8].

²⁰² Summa Theologiae II-II, 145.2. Leonine 10.147. “Et similiter pulchritudo spiritualis in hoc consistit quod conversatio hominis, sive actio eius, sit bene proportionata secundum spiritualum rationem claritatem.”

In both texts, words and deeds are spiritually or intelligibly beautiful because their harmony with reason communicates the rational nature of the person whose words or deeds they are. In other words, what Thomas is describing here is the manifestation of a being’s nature by accidents proportioned to that nature. Thus, in intelligible beauty, the primary way that harmony causes brightness is by making a thing’s accidents capable of manifesting its substantial form.  

Thus, the order of generation among beauty’s conditions for Thomas seems to be the following. First is integrity, and specifically the integrity of substantial existence, which is the ground or basis for harmony because it consists in the presence of all of a thing’s essential parts, among which the harmony arises. Then, in the course of a thing’s acquiring more integrity and perfection by approaching and attaining its end, it also acquires more due proportion since as all of the parts of a thing become proportioned to its end, they also become more proportioned to each other. Finally, this harmony brings about brightness, which it does partly by disposing the substance for additional forms that it must acquire in order to be complete, and partly in virtue of being a form itself; however, the primary way in which harmony causes brightness is that, as a being’s accidents become more proportioned to their end, they also become more proportioned to that being’s nature, and consequently manifest the being’s nature more clearly.  

This account of how beauty’s conditions are generated is confirmed by a text that we have already discussed in Chapter Two, De veritate 22.1 ad 12:

For from the very fact that something seeks (appetit) the good, it seeks simultaneously both the beautiful and peace: the beautiful indeed insofar as it is

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204 In fact, for Thomas harmony seems to cause brightness by manifesting a form, not only in spiritual or intelligible beauty, but also in bodily or sensible beauty. As we have just seen, bodily beauty consists primarily in a thing’s shape, i.e. the due commensuration of its members; yet, he also tells us in multiple texts that the accident that most reveals a thing’s quiddity or species is its shape (for example, see Summa Theologiae I, 35.1, In Physic. VII, 5.917, and De veritate 10.7 [Leonine 4.372, 2.339, and 22/2.316:158-61]. It thus follows that, insofar as a thing acquires the due commensuration of its members and colors, i.e. the external shape that it ought to have, its essence or quiddity will likewise become more manifest (and thus acquire more clarity) to the intellect through the senses.

205 See Chapter Two, pp. 124 and 128.
proportioned (*modificatum*) and specified (*specificatum*) in itself... Wherefore, whatever seeks the good for this very reason seeks the beautiful.²⁰⁶

If one remembers that perfection is the essential condition of the good, and that a thing therefore becomes good by becoming perfect, this text seems to be saying precisely that, insofar as a thing “seeks the good”—i.e. becomes perfect by drawing closer to its end—it also seeks the beautiful by becoming “proportioned and specified in itself”; in other words, in acquiring perfection or integrity, and consequently becoming good, a being simultaneously attains a greater degree of harmony and brightness (which, as we saw in Chapter Two, are identified here with *modus* and *species*), and consequently becomes beautiful. This text thus seems to confirm, albeit in a less explicit and more condensed fashion, that the order of generation among beauty’s conditions is the following: integrity or perfection gives rise to harmony or due proportion, which in turn gives rise to brightness. Moreover, since the order of nature between beauty’s conditions is the reverse of the order of generation, this text also confirms that the order of nature between beauty’s conditions is first of all brightness, then harmony, and finally integrity.

With the orders of nature and of generation between beauty’s conditions settled, we now have a more complete picture of their interrelationship and of the role that each one plays in that order. The first is integrity or perfection, which functions as beauty’s foundational characteristic since it is conceptually prior to and provides the ontological grounding for the other two factors; moreover, in doing so, it shows how beauty itself conceptually presupposes goodness and arises out of it since perfection is the essence of the good, but is merely the foundation for beauty. As Aertsen puts it, “the first condition of the beautiful, perfection, is of another kind than the other two” since it is not proper to the meaning of the beautiful, but is rather “a generic condition that

²⁰⁶ Leonine 22/3.616:359-368. “Ex hoc enim ipso quod aliquid appetit bonum appetit simul et pulchrum et pacem: pulchrum quidem in quantum est in se ipso modificatum et specificatum, quod in ratione boni includitur, sed bonum addit ordinem perfectivi ad alia; unde quicumque appetit bonum appetit hoc ipso pulchrum.”
binds the beautiful to the good as good.” Secondly, there is harmony or due proportion, which is the direct result of a thing’s becoming more perfect (and so more proportioned to its end), but is also the immediate cause of brightness since, insofar as a being’s parts become proportioned to its end and to each other, they also manifest the nature or form of the whole more clearly; hence, harmony is beauty’s central and connecting condition, which is probably the reason why Thomas discusses it more than the other two. Finally, beauty’s essential condition is brightness, which presupposes the other two and thus comes last in the order of generation, but is also what directly makes a being beautiful, and so is first according to nature. Our analysis thus agrees with that of Kovach and other Thomists in holding that brightness is beauty’s formal or essential condition, harmony its proximate material condition, and integrity its remote material condition.

B. Beauty, Brightness, and Possession through Vision

Now that we have determined the meanings of the conditions for beauty, as well as the order among them, we can determine whether they can cause *comprehensio*. Moreover, since our investigation of beauty’s conditions indicates that one of them, brightness, is the nature of beauty, asking whether beauty causes *comprehensio* is the same as asking whether brightness causes it. We cannot determine whether brightness causes *comprehensio*, however, until we have adequately determined the nature of *comprehensio* in itself. Hence, this section will first determine the nature of *comprehensio*, then whether brightness causes it, and finally whether our conclusion is confirmed by what we already know about beauty.

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1. The Nature of Comprehensio

Surprisingly, one of Thomas’s most helpful texts on *comprehensio* is a mere reply to an objection, and is found in an article whose entire purpose is to deny that any created intellect can comprehend God. In *Summa Theologiae* I, 12.7, Thomas states that “to comprehend God is impossible for any created intellect” because “that is comprehended which is known perfectly,” or “as much as it is knowable.” Since “everything is knowable insofar as it is a being in act (*ens actu),” it follows that God, “Whose Being (*esse*) is infinite,” is likewise “infinitely knowable,” and therefore to comprehend Him means knowing Him infinitely, just as He knows Himself. Thus, since any creature has only a finite capacity for knowing, even with the help of God’s grace and the light of glory, Thomas concludes that “it is impossible that any created intellect knows God infinitely,” and consequently “it is impossible that it comprehend God.”

Against this negative conclusion, however, the article’s first objection pits the authority of St. Paul, who indicates that the blessed comprehend God when, in his first letter to the Corinthians, he encourages them to “run, that you may comprehend.” Thomas begins his reply by noting that “comprehension is said in two ways,” the first being “strictly and properly, insofar as something is included in the one comprehending,” and according to this meaning “in no way is God comprehended” by any created intellect “since He is infinite” and any created intellect is incomparably inferior to God’s in some degree.

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intellect is finite. In a second way “comprehension is understood more broadly, insofar as comprehension is opposed to the pursuit” of something that one has not yet attained since “he who attains something, when he already holds it, is said to comprehend it.”

It is in the second way, Thomas writes, that God is comprehended by the blessed, as promised not only by Paul but also by the Song of Songs when it says “I held him, and did not let him go”; thus, “in this way comprehension is one of the three gifts of the soul,” and “corresponds to hope” just as “vision corresponds to faith, and enjoyment to charity.” Thomas then proceeds to explain why possession is a distinct requirement for beatitude from vision and delight:

For among ourselves not everything that is seen is also held or possessed, since sometimes distant things are seen, or those things that are not in our power. Nor again do we enjoy everything that we possess, either because we do not delight in them; or because they are not the ultimate end of our desire, so that they may fill and quiet our desire.

Nevertheless, although in the present life one can have vision without possession or possession without delight, all three of these gifts of the soul are enjoyed by those in heaven since they “see Him,” and “in seeing, they hold Him as present, having in their power always to see Him,” and finally, “in holding Him, they enjoy Him as their ultimate end that fills their desire.”

This short passage is one of the best places to begin investigating Thomas’s thought on *comprehensio* since it is a concise introduction to the essential parts of that doctrine. First of all,
the passage makes it clear that the “comprehension” of God by the saints is not comprehension in its original and proper sense, i.e. “including something within oneself,” or “knowing a thing as perfectly as it can be known,” since God cannot be perfectly contained or known by any created intellect. Rather, in this context *comprehensio* has the meaning of “attainment” or “possession” since “he who attains someone, when he already holds him, is said to comprehend him” (though, as we briefly observed in Chapter Four, we would say “apprehend” in English, as in the sentence “the police have apprehended the criminal”). Thus, when used in reference to the requirement for beatitude, *comprehensio* is best translated not as “comprehension,” but as “possession” or “attainment,” which is therefore how we will translate it from now on in this context.

Secondly, this text contains the interesting statement that *comprehensio* “corresponds to hope” just as “vision corresponds to faith, and enjoyment to charity,” which suggests that the three requirements for beatitude are the respective fulfillments of the three theological virtues. Thomas confirms this impression in multiple texts, but especially in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 4.3, where he argues that beatitude requires vision, delight, and possession precisely on the grounds that they are the fulfillments of faith, charity, and hope.

Thomas begins by noting that, “since beatitude consists in the attainment of the ultimate end,” one must deduce “those things that are required for beatitude” from “the very ordering of a human being to the end,” which occurs “partly indeed through the intellect” and “partly through the will.” Through the intellect, a human being is ordered to his end “insofar as some imperfect knowledge of the end preexists in the intellect.” Through the will, however, a human being is ordered to his ultimate end in two ways, the first being “through love, which is the first motion

\[\text{\footnotesize 213 In Sent.: III, 31.2.1.2 [Mandonnet 3.988]; IV, 49.2.3 ad 1, 49.4.5.1, and 49.4.5.3 [Parma 7/2.1203, 7/2.1231, and 7/2.1232]; Summa Theologiae I-II, 65.5 ad 3 and III, 11.2. ad 2 [Leonine 6.427 and 11.160]; De virtutibus 4.4 ad 14 and 5.2 ad 15 [Leonine 2.812 and 2.821]; In Hebraeos 6.1 [Marietti 2.400].}\]
of the will toward something.” Secondly, a human being’s will is ordered to the end “through a real relation (realem habitudinem) of the lover to the beloved,” which “can be in three ways”:

For sometimes the beloved is present to the lover, and then he is no longer sought. Sometimes however he is not present, but it is impossible to attain him, and then once again he is not sought. Sometimes however it is possible to attain him, but he is raised beyond the power of attaining, so that he cannot be possessed immediately, and this is the relation of the one who hopes to what is hoped for . . .

According to Thomas, it is the only the third kind of real relation between lover and beloved, i.e. the relation of hope, that “causes a pursuit of the end.”

Having thus laid out the three ways in which man is ordered to his ultimate end, Thomas now tells us that “to these three correspond certain things in beatitude itself”:

For perfect knowledge of the end corresponds to imperfect [knowledge of the end]; the presence in fact of the end itself corresponds to the relationship of hope; but delight in the end already present follows on love, as was said above. And so it is necessary for beatitude that these three come together, namely vision, which is the perfect knowledge of the intelligible end; possession (comprehensionem), which implies the presence of the end; delight, or enjoyment, which implies the resting of the lover in the loved thing.

Since the “imperfect knowledge” of the ultimate end that is mentioned here obviously refers to the virtue of faith, while “love” and “hope” even more evidently refer to the virtues of charity and hope, this passage is clearly saying that comprehensio or possession is a requirement for our beatitude because it is the fulfillment of hope, just as vision is the fulfillment of faith and delight.

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214 Leonine 6.40. “[C]um beatitudo consistat in consecutione ultimi finis, ea quae requiruntur ad beatitudinem sunt consideranda ex ipso ordine hominis ad finem. Ad finem autem intelligibilem ordinatur homo partim quidem per intellectum, partim autem per voluntatem. Per intellectum quidem, inquantum in intellectu praexistit aliqua cognitionis finis imperfecta. Per voluntatem autem, primo quidem per amorem, qui est primus motus voluntatis in aliquid: secundo autem, per realem habitudinem amantis ad amatum, quae quidem potest esse triplex. Quandoque enim amatum est praesens amanti: et tunc iam non quaeritur. Quandoque autem non est praesens, sed impossibile est ipsum adipisci: et tunc etiam non quaeritur. Quandoque autem possibile est ipsum adipisci, sed est elevatum supra facultatem adipscentis, ita ut statim haberi non possit: et haec est habitudo sperantis ad speratum, quae sola habitudo acuti finis inquisitionem.”

215 Ibid. “Et istis tribus respondent aliqua in ipsa beatitudine. Nam perfecta cognitionis finis respondet imperfectae; praesentia vero ipsius finis respondet habitudini spei; sed delectatio in fine iam praesentii consequitur dilectionem, ut supra dictum est. Et ideo necesse est ad beatitudinem ista tria concurrere: scilicet visionem, quae est cognitio perfecta intelligibilis finis; comprehensionem, quae importat praesentiam finis; delectationem, vel fruitionem, quae importat quietationem rei amantis in amato.”
the fulfillment of love. This correspondence between hope and possession makes sense since, as Thomas tells us on several occasions, the object of hope is necessarily that which one does not possess, just as one has faith in what one does not see.\textsuperscript{216}

The last thing that \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 12.7 ad 1 teaches us about \textit{comprehensio} is that, as we observed in Chapter Four,\textsuperscript{217} Thomas considers “comprehension” or possession to be a distinct requirement for beatitude because he thinks that it is at least somewhat separable from the other two conditions. As Thomas puts it, although possession is found together with vision and delight in the beholding of God by the blessed—since “in seeing” Him, “they hold Him as present,” and “in holding Him, they enjoy Him as their ultimate end”—it is still true that “not everything that is seen is also held or possessed . . . [n]or again do we enjoy everything that we possess.”\textsuperscript{218} In other words, possession is not automatically implied or entailed by vision and delight, and must therefore be set down as a distinct requirement for beatitude.

While it is therefore evident that possession is distinct from vision and delight, it is not yet clear how it is distinct from them. After all, vision and delight are distinguished from each other through being perfections of the intellect and the will respectively, but possession cannot be distinguished from them in this way since there is no third power for it to perfect. Hence, Thomas himself notes that, while delight and vision are “diverse dispositions (\textit{habitus}), one of which pertains to the intellect, the other indeed to the affection,” possession “does not denote a distinct disposition (\textit{alium habitum}) from these two.”\textsuperscript{219} How, then, can possession be a distinct

\textsuperscript{216} See, for example, \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 62.3 ad 2. Leonine 6.403. “[F]ides et spes imperfectionem quandam important: quia fides est de his quae non videntur, et spes de his quae non habentur.”

\textsuperscript{217} See Chapter Four, p. 267.

\textsuperscript{218} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 12.7 ad 1. Leonine 4.127. “Neque iterum omnibus quae habemus, fruimur: vel quia non delectamur in eis; vel quia non sunt ultimus finis desiderii nostri, ut desiderium nostrum impleant et quietent.”

\textsuperscript{219} \textit{In Sent.} IV, 49.4.5.1 ad 3. Parma 7/2.1231. “[F]ruitio, secundum quod comprehensionem includit, distinguetur a visione et dilectione; alio tamen modo quam dilectio a visione; dilectio enim et visio diversos habitus
gift of the soul if it does not perfect a distinct power?

Fortunately, Thomas raises and responds to this very problem in his reply to the second objection of *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 4.3. The objection argues that “happiness is the perfection of a human being according to his intellective part, in which there are no other powers than the intellect and the will”; consequently, since “the intellect is sufficiently perfected by the vision of God,” while “the will” is sufficiently perfected “by delight in Him,” it follows that “possession (comprehensio) is not required as some third thing.” Thomas gives the following response:

Just as hope and love pertain to the will, since it belongs to the same [power] to love something and to tend towards it when not possessed, so also both possession (comprehensio) and delight pertain to the will, since it belongs to the same [power] to possess something and to rest in it.

In saying that both possession and delight “pertain to the will,” Thomas is evidently arguing that, despite the objection’s claim to the contrary, the will is not “sufficiently perfected” by delight, but must also be perfected by possession. That the will has to be perfected by two gifts of the soul, while the intellect needs only one, should not surprise us since we saw in the last chapter that the will’s delight in some being requires not merely love for it but also possession of it; moreover, as Thomas notes in this very text, the intellect is perfected by only one theological virtue, namely faith, but the will is perfected by two, namely charity and hope. Thus, Thomas’s explanation for why possession can be a third requirement for beatitude is that, while there are only two powers of the spiritual soul, one of them has to be perfected by two gifts of the soul.

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nominant, quorum unus pertinet ad intellectum, alter vero ad affectum; sed comprehensio vel fruitio, secundum quod ponitur pro comprehensione, non importat alium habitum ab illis duobus . . .”


221 *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 4.3 ad 2. Leonine 6.40. “[S]icut ad voluntatem pertinet spes et amor, quia eiusdem est amare aliquid et tendere in illud non habitum; ita etiam ad voluntatem pertinet et comprehensio et delectatio, quia eiusdem est habere aliquid et quiescere in illo.”

222 See Chapter Four, p. 233.
As for the question of how the will can be simultaneously perfected by two distinct gifts of the soul, Thomas’s reply to the third objection provides an explanation. The objection begins by noting that “happiness consists in activity,” and that activities “are determined according to objects.” Thus, since “there are two general objects, the true and the good” and since “the true corresponds to vision, and the good corresponds to delight,” the third objection concludes like the second that comprehensio “is not required as some third thing.” Thomas replies:

Possession (comprehensio) is not some activity apart from vision, but is a certain relation to an end already possessed. Wherefore even vision itself, or the thing seen insofar as it is present, is the object of possession.

In saying that possession is not a third activity in addition to vision and delight, but rather a relation, this text resolves the dilemma of how the will can be perfected by both possession and delight since they are not two different activities, but rather an activity and a relation.

As helpful as these replies to objections are, they raise more questions than they answer since they do not tell us what “relation” it is that comprehensio expresses, and moreover seem to attribute possession to different powers of the soul. While the reply to the second objection says that “both possession (comprehensio) and delight pertain to the will” because “it belongs to the same [power] to possess something and to rest in it,” the reply to the third objection tells us that possession is “a certain relation to the end already possessed.” As we noted in the last chapter, this statement implies that the end is possessed through the act of vision itself—an impression that Thomas confirms a few articles earlier when he says that we attain the ultimate end “through

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224 Summa Theologiae I-II, 4.3 ad 3. Leonine 6.40. “[C]omprehensio non est aliqua operatio praeter visionem: sed est quaedam habitudo ad finem iam habitum. Unde etiam ipsa visio, vel res visa secundum quod praesentialiter adest, est obiectum comprehensionis.”

225 See Chapter Four, p. 235.
this, that it is made present to us by an act of the intellect.” 226 We are consequently left with a paradox regarding comprehensio: if we attain or possess the end through an act of the intellect, how can possession be a gift of the soul belonging to the will?

These problems can be resolved through recourse to Thomas’s commentary on the fifth book of the Metaphysics, where he lays out the four possible meanings of “to possess” (habere). The first meaning of “having something” is “to treat it (ducere illud) according to one’s nature in natural things, or according to one’s impulse in voluntary things”; for example, a fever is said to possess a man because it treats him according to its nature as a fever, whereas a tyrant is said to possess a city because he treats it according to his wishes. 227 The second meaning of “having” is to be the subject of some form, as occurs when a statue has a shape. 228 The third is to contain or hold in, which is the sense in which a bottle is said to have water. 229 Finally, the fourth meaning is to restrain or hold back, which is the sense in which a pillar is said to have something on top of it since the pillar is holding that thing back from falling to the ground. 230

It should be quite obvious that the requirement for beatitude called comprehensio cannot be possession in the last of these senses since we certainly do not restrain God when we behold

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226 Summa Theologiae I-II, 3.4. Leonine 6.29. “Sic igitur et circa intelligibilem finem contingit. Nam a principio volumus consequi finem intelligibilem; consequimur autem ipsum per hoc quod fit praesens nobis per actum intellectus . . .”


228 Ibid. Ibid. “Secundus modus est, prout illud, in quo existit aliquid ut in proprio susceptibili, dicitur habere illud; sicut aes habet speciem statuae, et corpus habet infirmitatem. Et sub hoc modo comprehenditur habere scientiam, quantitatem, et quodcumque accidens, vel quacumque formam.”

229 Ibid. Ibid. “Tertius modus est, secundum quod continens dicitur habere contentum, et contentum haberi a continente; sicut dicimus quod lagena « habet humidum », idest humorem aliquem, ut aquam vel vinum . . .”

230 Ibid. Ibid. “Quartus modus est secundum quod aliquid dicitur habere alterum, ex eo, quod prohibit ipsum operari vel moveri secundum suum impetum; sicut columnae dicuntur habere corpora ponderosa imposita super eas, quia prohibit ea descendere deorsum secundum inclinationem.”
Him in the Beatific Vision. Nor can it mean “containing” since, as we saw, Thomas explicitly
denies that the blessed comprehend God in the sense of containing or knowing Him completely.
Finally, comprehensio cannot mean “having” in the sense of “being the subject of” since it is the
intellect to which God is directly conjoined, and which is therefore the subject that receives Him;
yet Thomas tells us that comprehensio pertains to the will rather than the intellect. The meaning
of comprehensio must therefore be the first sense of possession, i.e. treating or using something
according to one’s inclination or desire, since it is this sense of possession that would obviously
be a perfection of the will, which is the seat of desire in the spiritual soul.

One might wonder at this point how the soul can possess God in the sense of “being able
to use” Him since God is the ultimate end, and, as Thomas himself says, use is only concerned
with means and not with ends.231 In fact, as Thomas says in an article on this question, one can
be said to “use” an end by delighting in it since this delight is a further perfection and good that
one derives from the end that causes the delight; hence, in some sense, one has “used” the end in
order to obtain the delight.232 It is in this more extended sense of “using” that one is said to treat
an end in itself according to one’s will, and thus to possess it. Hence, Thomas sometimes defines
possession as “being able to use or enjoy something as we wish.”233

With the help of this definition, we can now explain Thomas’s attributing possession to
the will by distinguishing the roles that each of the two powers have in comprehensio. On the
one hand, it is the will that possesses the being, strictly speaking, because possession properly
means “being able to use or enjoy something,” and man enjoys God with his will, rather than

231 See Summa Theologiae I-II, 16.1 [Leonine 6.115-16].
ipsa requies in fine, quae frutto est, dicitur hoc modo usus finis. Sed id quod est ad finem, assumitur in facultatem
voluntatis non solum in ordine ad usum eius quod est ad finem, sed in ordine ad aliam rem, in qua voluntas
quiescit.”
233 For instance, Summa Theologiae I, 38.1: “We however are said to have that which we can freely use or
enjoy, as we wish.” Leonine 4.392. “[H]abere autem dicimus id quo liberum possimus uti vel frui, ut volumus.”
with his intellect. On the other hand, the will cannot enjoy God unless He is conjoined to the soul since, as we learned in the last chapter, pleasure or enjoyment requires not just knowledge of and love for a thing, but also union with it; as a result, Thomas holds that the attainment of the ultimate end, or happiness, is an act of the intellect because it is the intellect that is directly conjoined to God through the Vision of His Essence. Hence, one could say that the gift of the soul called *comprehensio* is a perfection of the will through the intellect since it is the will that properly possesses God, but it can only do so as a result of His being conjoined to the intellect.\(^\text{234}\)

We have thus completed our understanding of *comprehensio* for Thomas since we now know the “relation” that it expresses: namely, “being able to enjoy God as one wishes,” which relation is caused by the conjoining of God to the soul through the Vision of His Essence.

### 2. The Cause of Comprehensio

While we now understand the nature of *comprehensio* for Thomas, we still do not know exactly why the Vision of God includes perfect possession of Him since, as we observed at the end of the last chapter, knowledge in itself gives the lowest degree of union with and possession of a thing. Moreover, Thomas tends to leave this question unanswered in most of his texts on *comprehensio*. There is one text, however, where he gives a complete account of why the vision of God gives perfect possession of Him: the brief but dense *Compendium Theologiae* I, 164, which was probably written some time between 1265 and 1267.\(^\text{235}\)

Chapter 164 begins by noting a fact that was already discussed at length in our section on

\(^{234}\) *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 11.1 ad 1 tells us that, in the vision of God, “the intellect attains this end [i.e. God] as the executive power (*potentia agens*),” but the will attains Him “as the power moving to the end, and enjoying the end already attained.” Leonine 6.90. “Ipsa igitur visio Dei, inquantum est visio, est voluntatis obiectum. Et hoc modo est eius fruio. Et sic hunc finem intellectus consequitur tanquam potentia agens: voluntas autem tanquam potentia movens ad finem, et fruens fine iam adepto.”

\(^{235}\) Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 349.
brightness (*claritas*), namely that “God . . . is seen by the created intellect in virtue of [His] Essence, not in virtue of some likeness (*similitudinem*) of Him.” Thomas now points out an obvious consequence of this fact: something that is known by an immaterial likeness “can be distant” from the intellect that is knowing it, “as when a stone is present in virtue of its likeness to the eye, but is absent in virtue of its substance.” In the Beatific Vision, however, God is seen “in virtue of His Essence,” from which it follows that in the Vision of God “the very essence of God is conjoined to the created intellect in a certain way.” Hence, Thomas concludes that “just as in the ultimate end what before was believed of God will be seen, so what was hoped for as distant will be held as present, and this is called comprehension (*comprehensio*)”.

This text is immensely instructive for three reasons. First of all, it finally confirms what we have seen implied by a number of Thomas’s other texts on *comprehensio*: the reason that the Vision of God gives the soul perfect possession of Him is that, when He is seen by the created intellect, He is directly “conjoined” (*conjungitur*) or united to the intellect as the very *species* by which it knows Him. That Thomas holds this view was first suggested to us in Chapter Four by *In Sent.* IV, 49.4.5.1, which told us that *comprehensio* is a gift of the soul because the second kind of pleasure in seeing requires “conjoining” (*conjunctio*). Nevertheless, this text did not tell us what the exact nature of this conjoining was. Now, however, we know from *Compendium Theologiae* I, 164 that the “conjoining” on which the perfect possession of God when seeing Him depends is the conjoining of God to the intellect as the very species by which it knows.

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236 Leonine 42.144:1-11. “Videtur autem Deus per essentiam ab intellectu creato, non per aliquam sui similitudinem, qua in intellectu praesente res intellecta possit distare, sicut lapis per suam similitudinem presens est oculo, per substantiam uero absens; sed, sicut supra ostensum est, ipsa Dei essentia intellectui creato coniungitur quodam modo ut Deus per essentiam uideri possit. Sicut igitur in ultimo fine uidebitur quod prius de Deo credebatur, ita quod sperabatur ut distans tenebitur ut presens; et hoc comprehensio nominatur . . .”

237 See Chapter Four, pp. 234-35.

238 It is clear, moreover, that Thomas held this view throughout his career since we find it stated at the beginning of one of his earliest works and at the end of one of his latest works. In *In Sent.* I, 1.1.1.1, which was
Secondly, by showing that the perfect possession of God given by the Beatific Vision is due to His being perfectly conjoined to the created intellect in that vision, this text also helps to explain why knowledge normally gives the least amount of possession: material things are not conjoinable by their essence, but rather only by an immaterial likeness. As the passage itself says, the reason that knowledge of material things like a stone does not give possession of it is that only an immaterial likeness of the stone is present in the intellect, whereas the “substance” of the stone is absent. Thus, what transforms knowledge from being the least perfect form of possession in the case of material things to being the most perfect form of possession in the case of God is precisely Thomas’s doctrine that, whereas material things are known in virtue of an immaterial likeness being conjoined to the intellect, God is known in virtue of His Essence.

Finally, this text indicates that brightness (claritas) is what causes comprehensio or possession through an act of vision. After all, as we showed in our section on claritas above, a being’s intelligible brightness is the degree to which it can be conjoined to the intellect; hence, if a being’s conjoining to the intellect is what causes the soul’s comprehensio or possession of it, it follows that a being’s ontological brightness is not only the degree to which it can be seen with certitude, but also the degree to which it can be possessed through that vision. In other words, brightness causes not only vision but also possession through that vision.

While this conclusion is assuredly counter-intuitive, it makes sense in light of Thomas’s
theory of knowledge. In that account, knowledge is the immaterial possession of reality, and thus requires the real possession of an immaterial species by which the knower is immaterially assimilated and united to the thing known. What follows is that, the more immaterial that the object of knowledge is, the more closely that it is united or conjoined to the knower since it has a greater similarity to the species by which it is united to the knower; thus, it will not only be more clearly known, but also more intimately possessed. In other words, the more immaterial a being is, the more perfectly that it is possessed by means of knowledge or immaterial possession.

Hence, Eco was more right than he knew when he defined clarity or brightness as “the fundamental communicability of form, which is made actual in relation to someone’s looking at or seeing the object.”\textsuperscript{239} Although today the word “communicate” ordinarily means “to impart knowledge of,” its original meaning is simply “to give to another”\textsuperscript{240}; thus, “communicability” can mean a being’s ability not merely to give knowledge of itself to another, but also to give its very being to another. While Eco only meant communicability in the first sense, in Thomas’s metaphysics intelligible brightness has both meanings since for him a being causes clear vision of itself in the intellect precisely insofar as it conjoins or unites itself to the intellect and thus gives its very being to the soul. It follows that intelligible brightness can indeed be fittingly defined as communicability to the intellect since brightness does not merely communicate itself in the sense that it causes the soul to see it, but also in the sense that it gives its very being to the soul, and thereby causes the soul to possess it.

If brightness essentially causes possession of itself through the mere vision of it, and if

\textsuperscript{239} Eco, The Aesthetics, 119. De Blignieres also comes close to our conclusion when he defines beauty as “being as communicative” (ens ut communicans); however, like Eco, he only means that beauty communicates itself in the sense of causing vision of itself, not that it also causes possession of itself. Le mystère de l’être, 123-31.

brightness is indeed the nature of beauty for Thomas, then beauty likewise causes possession through the mere apprehension. To ensure that this reasoning is sound, let us see whether this conclusion accords with the other things we have learned about beauty for Thomas.

3. Confirmations That Beauty Causes Comprehensio

The most obvious confirmation of our conclusion that beauty causes comprehensio is that it gives the most illuminating explanation for the meaning of Thomas’s definition of beauty as “that the mere (ipsa) apprehension of which pleases.”241 By using the word ipsa, which means “mere,” “very,” or “itself,” Thomas is drawing attention to the fact that it is unusual for a thing to please merely through being apprehended since pleasure requires not just that we know and love something, but also that our desire for it is satisfied by the possession of it. The only conclusion that one can draw is that what allows beauty to please merely when seen is that it is possessed merely when seen. Thus, even Thomas’s definition of beauty indicates that what distinguishes beauty is its ability to cause possession of it through the mere knowledge of it.

Another confirmation that beauty causes comprehensio is that, as we said at the end of the last chapter,242 it provides the best candidate so far for the “certain relation to the cognitive power” that Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 says is added to goodness by beauty.243 If what beauty adds to goodness is an ability to be possessed and consequently enjoyed through vision, then it makes total sense that, as Thomas says, the good is that which pleases simply (i.e. when possessed through any kind of activity) while the beautiful is that which pleases when seen (i.e

241 Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3. Leonine 6.192. “. . . bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitu; pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.”
242 Chapter Four, p. 268.
243 Leonine 6.192. “Et sic patet quod pulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam . . .”
when possessed through the specific activity of vision). In other words, a beautiful thing is a good thing that is also possessable through vision. This conclusion is in turn confirmed by our conclusion in Chapter Four that the pleasure caused by beauty does not differ from the pleasure caused by goodness with regard to the reason for the pleasure (since the reason for both is the lovableness of the being itself), but rather with regard to the immediate cause of the pleasure: whereas the good can cause delight by being possessed through any activity, the beautiful can only cause delight by being possessed through the specific activity of vision.

Our conclusion that beauty causes *comprehensio* also helps to illuminate a puzzling phrase in the other of Thomas’s two main texts on beauty, *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1. There Thomas writes that “the beautiful consists in due proportion” because “sense delights in things duly proportioned as in things similar to itself,” which he attributes to the fact that “even sense is a certain proportion, *as is every cognitive power.*” As we observed in the last chapter, those last few words imply that beauty pleases when seen by the intellect because the proportion that beauty has in itself also makes it especially similar or proportioned to the intellect, which many scholars have taken to mean that the reason for beauty’s pleasure is that it especially perfects the intellect. Once we rejected this theory of aesthetic pleasure, it was difficult to see what beauty’s proportion to the intellect could be, or how this proportion could cause aesthetic pleasure. Now, however, we see that beauty’s proportion to the intellect is its brightness, or conjoinability to the intellect, and that this proportion causes beauty’s pleasure because it allows the soul to possess beauty, and consequently to delight in beauty, simply through seeing it.

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244 See *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3, cited above in note 241 of this chapter.
245 Leonine 4.61. “Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit: quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite proportionatis, sicut in sibi similibus; nam et sensus ratio quaedam est, et omnis virtus cognoscitiva.” Emphasis mine. For the way in which sense is a proportion and the significance of this fact for aesthetic experience, see our discussion of *In De anima* III, 2 [Leonine 45/1.181:226-44] in Chapter Four, pp. 216-17.
246 Chapter Four, p. 224.
Another text that our conclusion helps clarify is one that has puzzled us throughout this dissertation: *In Sent.* I, 31.2.1 ad 4, which tells us that “beauty does not have the meaning of desirability except insofar as it takes on the meaning of the good.” This passage is difficult to reconcile with the fact that beauty pleases merely when seen, which indicates that beauty is not just desirable but desirable for itself, and with Thomas’s many statements that the good and the beautiful are both loved by all things; however, doing so becomes easy if the proper meaning of beauty is “that which is possesable through the mere apprehension of it,” for two reasons. First, as Thomas says, not everything that we possess delights us, but only that which is also loved, hence, while beauty is possessable through vision in virtue of its own meaning, it only pleases when possessed through vision because it is identical in reality with the good, which does have the meaning of desirability in itself. Secondly, while beauty does cause love and desire for itself insofar as it is identical with the good, it also immediately brings that desire to rest by causing possession of itself through its mere apprehension. Thus, beauty does not have the meaning of desirability because its nature is to satisfy and quiet desire with the possession of itself through vision, rather than to arouse that desire as is the nature of the good.

Our conclusion also explains how the term “beauty” can have a single meaning despite having two widely dissimilar references, namely intelligible (or spiritual) beauty and sensible (or bodily) beauty. As we mentioned in our Introduction, sensible beauty differs from intelligible beauty both in extension (since it does not transcend the categories but is rather confined to the genus of quality) and in the cognitive powers that can know it (since it is not only intelligible but

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247 Mandonnet 1.725. “[P]ulchritudo non habet rationem appetibilis nisi inquantum induit rationem boni . . . sed secundum rationem propriam habet claritatem et ea quae dicta sunt . . .”

248 *Summa Theologiae* I, 12.7 ad 1. Leonine 4.127. “Neque iterum omnibus quae habemus, fruimur: vel quia non delectamur in eis; vel quia non sunt ultimus finis desiderii nostri, ut desiderium nostrum impleant et quietent.”

249 See Introduction, pp. 8-10.
also sensible); moreover, these two kinds of beauty differ in the types of pleasure they give since, while intelligible beauty delights solely because it is identical with the bonum honestum and thus is lovable for its own sake, sensible beauty also pleases because of its proportion to the senses. Nevertheless, being possessable through the mere apprehension of it is common to each kind of beauty: transcendental beauty is possessable through mere intellectual apprehension (though this apprehension is mediated by the senses in the case of the human aesthetic \textit{visio}), while sensible beauty is possessable through the mere sensible apprehension since it consists in the proper and common sensibles of sight (namely, colors and shapes) and of hearing (namely, sounds and the harmonies between them)—i.e. the physical qualities that are \textit{per se} knowable by these senses, and thus \textit{per se} possessable through their knowledge. Moreover, we saw above that brightness, which seems to be what causes possession through vision, is a necessary and sufficient condition not only for intelligible but also for sensible beauty in Thomas’s thought since he often indicates that bright lights and colors are beautiful just in themselves, even when they are not accompanied by harmony or magnitude.\textsuperscript{250} Thus, beauty is not said equivocally of its intelligible and sensible references because it has a single meaning that is said analogically of each kind: that which is possessable through the mere apprehension, whether of the senses or of the intellect.

Finally, our conclusion that possession through the mere apprehension is beauty’s proper effect also explains why objects of the lower senses cannot be experienced as “beautiful.” As we discussed near the end of the last chapter,\textsuperscript{251} it is impossible for smells, tastes, and touches to be possessed through the mere apprehension since they are always in some way physically united to

\textsuperscript{250} According to Gilson, it is simply “given to us as a fact” by Thomas that “bright colors are beautiful because light itself is beautiful,” so “the wise thing to do is to accept it as such.” According to our theory, however, that light is beautiful in itself is not a mere “brute fact” since it has a clear explanation: light is visible in itself, and is therefore possessable through vision in itself, which is the meaning of beauty. Gilson, “The Forgotten Transcendental,” 163.

\textsuperscript{251} See Chapter Four, pp. 252-53.
the sense organ that perceives them, and are thus physically possessed as well. Hence, a problem that has vexed Thomists for some time is easily solved in light of our conclusion: objects of the lower senses are not experienced as beautiful because they cannot cause beauty’s proper effect, which is possession through the mere apprehension.

There is one major objection, however, to our conclusion. If possession through the mere apprehension is beauty’s proper effect, then it should not be caused by the contrary of beauty, i.e. ugliness. Yet, as we saw in Chapter Four, ugliness pains because it is an evil that is possessed through vision, just as beauty is a good possessed through vision. Therefore, possession through vision cannot be beauty’s proper effect since it is also caused by beauty’s contrary, ugliness.

Nor can one escape from this objection by saying that aesthetic displeasure is caused not by possessing ugliness but by failing to possess beauty since Thomas explicitly argues in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 36.1 that pain is properly caused by the possession of an evil rather than the loss of a good. The reason is that, while the absence of a good and the presence of evil are the same in reality, they are nevertheless distinct in the mind; thus, “since sorrow in the movements of the appetite consists in a kind of flight or withdrawal,” and one withdraws from evil rather than from good, “the evil that is conjoined is more properly the cause of sorrow or pain than the good that is lost.” Therefore, since ugliness is apparently also possessed merely by being seen, it seems that possession through the mere apprehension is not the proper effect of beauty.

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252 See Chapter Four, pp. 238–40.
253 Leonine 6.249. “[S]i hoc modo se haberent privationes in apprehensione animae, sicut se habent in ipsis rebus, ista quaeestio nullius momenti esse videretur. Malum enim, ut in Primo libro habitum est, est privatio boni: privatio autem, in rerum natura, nihil est alid quam carencia oppositi habitus: secundum hoc ergo, idem esset tristari de bono amisco, et de malo habito. Sed tristitia est motus appetitus apprehensionem sequentis. In apprehensione autem ipsa privatio habet rationem cuiusdam entis: unde dictur *ens rationis*. Et sic malum, cum sit privatio, se habet per modum contrarii. Et ideo, quantum ad motum appetitivum, differt utrum respiciat principalium malum coniunctum, vel bonum amissum. . . . Sic igitur, cum tristitia in motibus appetitivis se habeat per modum fugae vel recessus, delectatio autem per modum prosecutionis vel accessus; sicut delectatio per prius respicit bonum adoptum, quasi proprium objectum, ita tristitia respicit malum coniunctum. . . . Sic ergo eo modo quo objectum est causa passionis, magis proprie est causa tristitiae vel doloris malum coniunctum, quam bonum amissum.”
In fact, however, three reasons can be given to show that possession through the mere apprehension is not caused by ugliness, and so is still beauty’s proper effect. First, ugliness is a mere privation or lack of being and, as Thomas often says, non-being does not cause knowledge of itself in the soul, as being does; rather, the knowledge of non-being is caused by the intellect. As Thomas explains, whereas every being has a form in virtue of which “it is adequate to the divine intellect” and “is apt to adequate our intellect to itself,” a privation or negation “neither has something whereby it is adequate to the divine intellect, nor something whereby it produces knowledge of itself in our intellect”; hence, the knowledge of non-being is caused solely by the intellect, “which grasps within itself the meaning (rationem) of non-being,” by negating the species that it has received from reality of the contrary perfection. Now, if privations do not cause the knowledge of themselves by the intellect, they likewise do not cause the possession of themselves through that knowledge. Hence, possession through the mere apprehension is still the proper effect of beauty since, as a mere privation of beauty and being, ugliness does not itself cause the knowledge through which it is conjoined or united to the soul.

Second, not only does ugliness not cause possession through vision, but, in itself, ugliness actually causes a lack of possession through vision, as made clear by its identity with darkness. That ugliness essentially consists in darkness for Thomas is already obvious from our

254 De veritate 1.5 ad 2. Leonine 22/1.19:269-84. “[E]xtra animam duo invenimus, scilicet rem ipsam et negationes et privationes rei, quae quidem duo non eodem modo se habent ad intellectum: res enim ipsa ex specie quam habet divino intellectui aequatur sicut artificiatur arti, et ex virtute eiusdem speciei nata est sibi intellectum nostrum aequare in quantum per similitudinem sui receptam in anima cognitionem de se facit; sed non ens extra animam consideratum neque habet aliquid unde intellectui divino coaequetur, neque unde cognitionem sui faciat in intellectu nostro, unde quod intellectui cuiuscumque aequetur non est ex ipso non ente sed ex ipso intellectu qui rationem non entis acquisit in seipso.” It is because non-being does not cause knowledge of itself that Thomas can still hold that truth, or that which is knowable, is convertible with being since non-being is not knowable in itself, but only insofar as the intellect makes it a being of reason. Cf. Summa Theologiae 1, 16.3 arg. 2 and ad 2 [Leonine 4.210]. “[N]on ens non habet in se unde cognoscatur, sed cognoscitur inquantum intellectus facit illud cognoscibile. Unde verum fundatur in ente, inquantum non ens est quoddam ens rationis, apprehensum scilicet a ratione.”

255 See De veritate 1.8 ad 8 [Leonine 22/1.29:207-11].
conclusion that the essential condition of beauty is brightness since ugliness is the privation of beauty and darkness is the privation of brightness; however, this verdict is also confirmed by the texts we have seen describing ugliness as the darkening or obscuring of a being’s brightness, and especially in *Psalmos* 25.5, where Thomas tells us that “without light all things are ugly.”

Now, for Thomas, just as light is both visible in itself and what makes other things visible, so darkness not only is invisible in itself—since it is only seen or known through contrast with light, i.e. as the absence of light—but also makes other things invisible, in two ways. First, darkness obviously makes invisible the brightness of which it is the absence or privation.

Secondly, as we noted earlier in the chapter, the medieval theory of light holds that a diaphanous medium such as air or water is only actually transparent when light is present in it, and that one therefore cannot see through air or water in which there is an absence of light, or darkness.

Hence, darkness in the air or water not only cannot be seen itself, but also prevents one from seeing any objects lying behind it, thus rendering those things invisible to the eye.

Thomas’s texts confirm that, in both of these ways, the darkness of ugliness causes a lack of vision and consequently a lack of possession through vision. First, every instance of ugliness,  

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256 For example, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 142.4 [Leonine 10.136-37].
257 Parma 14.235. “[S]ine luce omnia sunt turpia.” *In Sent.* II, 12.1.5 expos. [Mandonnet 2.318] tells us that an abyss is ugly *per accidens* because, as its name implies, it is a *byssus* or “without brightness.” Similarly, *In Psalmos* 50.4 states that the soul becomes ugly insofar as “in it the light of reason is obscured,” as a result of which “the soul is made black or dark.” Parma 14.347. “Sed turpitudo ex eo quod inhaeret rebus terrenis, obscuratur in eo lux rationis, quia comparatur animalibus brutis: . . . Et ideo anima efficitur nigra sive obscura.”
258 In Ioannem I.4. Marietti 24. “Nam sicut lumen non solum in seipso et per se visibile est, sed etiam omnia alia per ipsum videri possunt . . .”
259 See, for example, *In De anima II*, 21. Leonine 45/1.156:122. “[I]nuisibile enim est tenebra . . .”
261 De malo 2.9. Leonine 23.54:153-54. “[Q]uedam que est priuatio pura, sicut tenebra, que nichil lucis reliquuit . . .”
262 In *De anima II*, 15. Leonine 45/1.132:21-27. “Dyaphanum . . . est . . . tenebrosum, cum non est actu dyaphanum, set in potencia tantum: eadem enim natura est subjecta quandoque quidem tenebrarum, quandoque autem luminis; et sic dyaphanum cares lumine, quod ei accidit dum est in potencia diaphanum, oportet quod sit tenebrosum.”
precisely because it is the privation of some beauty, prevents one from possessing through vision that beauty of which it is the absence. Second, Thomas often speaks of the spiritual ugliness of sin as making the subject of sin (the soul) darker—and thus less possessable through vision—by causing it to have a “blemish” (macula), which he alternatingly describes as a “detriment of beauty” or a “detriment of brightness.”

Such a blemish, as Thomas explains in one text, can occur in two ways: just as the body acquires a blemish either because of “the privation of that which is required for beauty, such as due color or due proportion,” or because of “the placing over (superinductionem) of something impeding the beauty, such as mud or dirt,” so blemishes in the soul arise either from “the privation of the beauty of grace through mortal sin,” or from “the disordered inclination to something temporal” that is “caused by venial sin.”

This passage suggests that the ugliness of sin causes the beauty of the soul to be less possessed through vision either by removing that beauty entirely (as the ugliness of mortal sin does), or by simply covering that beauty so that it is less visible and therefore less possessable through vision (as the ugliness of venial sin does). This impression is confirmed by *In Sent.* IV, 16.2.2.1 ad 1, which says that the blemish caused by venial sin arises not from “a privation of beauty,” such as is caused by mortal sin, but rather from that beauty’s being “impeded so that it does not appear outwardly, just as the beauty of the face is marred by dirt.” Likewise, *In Sent.*

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263 See Introduction, pp. 11-12.

264 Thomas describes a blemish (macula) as a detriment of beauty in *In Sent.* IV, 16.2.2.1, ad 1 [Mandonnet 4.789] and 18.1.2.1 [Mandonnet 4.936], as a detriment of brightness in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 86.1 and 2 [Leonine 7.118 and 7.119], and then again as a detriment of beauty in *Summa Theologiae* III, 87.2 ad 3 [Leonine 12.318]. That a blemish is opposed to both brightness and beauty for Thomas is yet another confirmation for our prior conclusion that brightness is the nature or essential condition of beauty for him.

265 *Summa Theologiae* III, 87.2 ad 3. Leonine 12.318. “[S]icut in corpore contingit esse maculam dupliciter, uno modo per privationem eius quod requiritur ad decorum, puta debiti coloris aut debitae proportionis membrorum, alio modo per superinductionem alicuius impedientis decorum, puta luti aut pulveris; ita etiam in anima inducitur macula uno modo per privationem decoris gratiae per peccatum mortale, alio modo per inclinationem inordinatam affectus ad aliquid temporale; et hoc fit per peccatum veniale.”

266 Mandonnet 4.789. “[M]acula potest esse dupliciter. *Uno modo per privationem pulchritudinis.* Et sic in veniali non manet aliqua macula, quia gratiam non tollit, quae est animae decor. *Alio modo per hoc quod*
IV, 16.2.1.2 ad 3 tells us that, while mortal sin “removes the beauty of grace,” as a consequence of venial sin “the brightness (claritas) of grace is not taken away, but in a certain sense clouded (obnubilatur)” since “its movement outwards (processus ad exteriors) is impeded,” which is why Gregory says that venial sin conceals (obscurat), but mortal sin darkens (obtenebrat).267

Thus, every instance of ugliness apparently causes the lack of possession through vision, not only of the beauty that is contrary to it, i.e. the being of which it is a privation, but also of the beauty that underlies it, i.e. the being that is the subject of the ugliness.

The last but most important reason why ugliness does not cause possession through the mere apprehension is that, although ugliness is conjoined to the soul through vision, it is actually not possessed through vision strictly speaking, or at least not in the sense of possession caused by beauty. As we saw above, “to possess” has several senses, but its primary meaning and the one to which comprehensio refers is “to treat something according to one’s desire,” and more specifically “to use or enjoy as one wishes” since in the Beatific Vision we possess God in the sense of delighting in Him as we desire. Hence, beauty is possessed in this way because, as a result of its being united to us merely through vision, we are able to take delight in it as we wish.

Ugliness, on the other hand, is clearly not possessed in the sense of being enjoyed by us as we desire since ugliness qua ugliness can only cause pain, not delight. Moreover, one cannot possess ugliness in the sense of treating it according to one’s desire since ugliness is an evil that is united to the soul through the vision of it, and what the soul wishes to do with evil is precisely

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267 Mandonnet 4.785. “[Peccatum mortale ita Deo displicet, quod etiam facit ipsum peccamentem Deo displicentem, inquantum pulchritudinem gratiae quam Deus in ipso amat, auert. Sed peccatum veniale quamvis Deo displiceat, quia inordinatum est, non tamen facit peccamentem Deo displicentem; quia non privatur claritas gratiae, sed quodammodo obnubilatur, inquantum ejus processus ad exteriors impeditur. Et ideo Gregorius dicit quod peccatum veniale obscurat, sed mortale obtenebrat . . .”
to prevent it from being united to the soul.\textsuperscript{268} One is therefore obviously not treating ugliness as one wishes when one sees it since, in and of itself, the very fact that one is beholding ugliness is contrary to one’s wish. Thus, while both beauty and ugliness are conjoined to the soul through vision, only beauty is possessed through that vision since the soul’s union with beauty allows it to enjoy beauty as it desires, whereas the soul’s union with ugliness occurs \textit{against} its desire.

While we have thus shown that ugliness is not possessed through vision, it might be objected at this point that, for possession through the mere apprehension to be beauty’s proper effect, it is not enough for ugliness simply \textit{not} to cause possession through knowledge. After all, a pair of contraries has proper effects that are themselves contrary\textsuperscript{269}; for example, evil does not merely fail to cause love, but also causes hate, which is the opposite of love.\textsuperscript{270} Hence, in order for beauty’s proper effect to be possession through the mere apprehension, ugliness, as beauty’s contrary, must have a proper effect that is the opposite of possession through vision.

In fact, ugliness does have a proper effect that is contrary to possession through vision, namely suffering through vision. Like “possessing” (habere), “suffering” (passio) has a range of meanings since, in its most general usage, it can refer to being acted on in any way; according to its strictest sense, however, “suffering” only refers to a thing’s being acted upon in a way that is harmful to it because “something is said to suffer from the fact that it is dragged (trahitur) by the

\textsuperscript{268} As Thomas says in \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 36.4, “it is manifest, however, that it is contrary to the inclination of the appetite that it be united to an evil as present.” Hence, Thomas concludes that one of the causes of evil is a “greater power,” i.e. a power greater than the soul, since “that which is contrary to something’s inclination never happens to it except by the action of something stronger.” Leonine 6.252. “Manifestum est autem hoc esse contra inclinationem appetitus, ut malo praeessentialiter inhaeret. Quod autem est contra inclinationem alicuius, nuncquam advenit ei nisi per actionem alicuius fortioris. Et ideo potestas maior ponitur esse causa doloris ab Augustino.”

\textsuperscript{269} \textit{Compendium Theologiae} I, 173. Leonine 42.148:1-2. “[C]ontrariorum contrarii sunt effectus.”

\textsuperscript{270} See \textit{Summa Theologiae} I-II, 29.1 [Leonine 6.203].
agent,” and “that which recedes from what is agreeable to it seems most of all to be dragged.”

It is thus evident that suffering in the strict sense is the opposite of possession in the strict sense since to possess means “to treat a thing (or act upon it) according to one’s inclination,” whereas to suffer means “to be treated by a thing (or be dragged by it) contrary to one’s inclination.”

Now, Thomas says that pain or sorrow is a case of suffering in its narrowest meaning, which makes sense. After all, “sorrow occurs through some evil being present,” and “from the very fact that it opposes (repugnat) the motion of the desire,” an evil “weighs down (aggravat) the mind, insofar as it prevents it from enjoying what it desires.” Hence, whereas a good is possessed when it is present, an evil is suffered when it is present since a good that is united to the soul can be enjoyed by the soul as it wishes, but an evil that is united to the soul oppresses it with sorrow or pain. Ugliness, of course, is an evil that is united to the soul through knowledge; thus, while the beautiful is a good that is possessed through the mere apprehension of it, the ugly is an evil that is suffered through the mere apprehension of it. Our discussion of ugliness has therefore confirmed that beauty and ugliness have contrary proper effects.

Hence, we can now consider it fully established that comprehensio or possession through the mere apprehension is the proper effect of beauty for the following reasons. First of all, the nature or essential condition of beauty, namely brightness, is the proper cause of possession

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272 Ibid. Ibid. “Sed et in hoc est diversitas: nam quando huiusmodi transmutatio fit in deterius, magis proprie habet rationem passionis, quam quando fit in melius. Unde tristitia magis proprie est passio quam laetitia.”

through vision. Secondly, the effect by which Thomas defines beauty, namely pleasing merely when seen, essentially depends on possession through the mere apprehension. Thirdly, this conclusion that beauty’s proper effect is possession through the mere vision enables one to resolve a number of *aporiae* in Thomas’s thought on beauty. Finally, it has been shown that the contrary of beauty, ugliness, has a proper effect that is the opposite of “possession through the mere apprehension of it,” namely “suffering through the mere apprehension of it.”

C. Beauty in Thomas’s Metaphysics: The Extension of the True to the Good?

At the end of the last chapter,274 we concluded that if beauty causes *comprehensio*, but the extension of the true to the good does not, then possession through the mere apprehension is beauty’s proper effect, and beauty should be considered a distinct transcendental that expresses a unique relation of being to possession through the mere vision of it. If both cause *comprehensio*, however, then beauty is identical in meaning with the true taken as good, and is a mere synonym for the combination of two transcendentals rather than a distinct transcendental in its own right. Hence, now that we have established that beauty causes *comprehensio* with its brightness, we must further determine whether the extension of the true to the good does so as well.

In one sense, of course, one can easily prove that the true accepted as good causes *comprehensio* since it is really identical with being and therefore with beauty, which we have just shown to cause *comprehensio*. Such reasoning, however, only proves that the extension of the true to the good causes *comprehensio* insofar as it is identical with beauty, not in virtue of its own meaning or *ratio*, which is what we would need to prove in order to conclude that beauty is identical in meaning with the true taken as good. After all, the good causes knowledge insofar as

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274 See Chapter Four, pp. 268-69.
it is identical in reality with truth, and the true causes love insofar as it is identical in reality with goodness, but they are nonetheless distinct in meaning.

The question before us is therefore whether comprehensio is caused by the meaning of “the extension of the true to the good.” The meaning of the true taken as good obviously cannot cause comprehensio in virtue of its including the notion of the good since the comprehensio that beauty causes is possession through an act of vision, and the good relates to the appetite, not the cognitive power. Moreover, while brightness, which causes comprehensio, is said by Thomas to be “contained” in the meaning of the good, it is only so included insofar as it is identified with species and thus with part of a being’s perfection, which is the actual essence of the good. On the other hand, truth and brightness both relate to the cognitive power, and consequently might be identical in meaning, in which case truth would cause comprehensio just as brightness does. Hence, we must determine whether brightness and truth are, in fact, the same in meaning since the ability of the true taken as good to cause comprehensio depends on this identity.

There is good reason for thinking that brightness and truth are the same in meaning since not only do both relate to the cognitive power, but there are several texts where Thomas seems to identify them. Early in the Sentences commentary, for instance, one of the reasons that Thomas gives for the appropriation of beauty to the Son is that “beauty consists . . . in splendor and the proportion of parts” and “truth has the nature of splendor”; later in the same work, he writes

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275 See Chapter Two, 47-50.
276 One might object that the true taken as good could also cause comprehensio if brightness were identical, not with either truth or goodness, but with their combination. Nevertheless, brightness is evidently not identical with the true taken as good, for two reasons: 1) if it were, then it would not merely express a relation to vision, but also a relation to the appetite, which is not the case; and 2) if brightness did have a relation to the appetite, then, since brightness seems to be the nature of beauty, beauty would also have a relation to desire, which In Sent. I, 31.2.1 ad 4 denies.
that “the brightness of God is said to be the truth of His Essence, by which He is knowable.”  

Another text that mentions beauty, brightness, and truth together is *In Iob 40*, which says that the “very essence” of God “is [His] Beauty, by which is understood [His] very brightness or truth, and purity or simplicity, and the perfection of His Essence.” Thomas also speaks of God’s “brightness or truth” in *Compendium Theologiae I*, 106, while *In II Corinthios 3.3* speaks of the “brightness of the divine light, i.e. of the divine truth.” It is thus easy to understand why these texts lead Aertsen to conclude that “‘clarity’ is identified by Thomas with ‘truth.’”

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that *every one* of these texts is speaking, not just of any brightness and truth, but only of the *divine* brightness and truth. This is a significant restriction since all the divine attributes are identical in reality, even those that are really distinct in creatures. Moreover, immediately after using the phrase “brightness or truth,” *In Iob 40* also speaks of God’s “purity or simplicity”—two terms that, while similar, are also undoubtedly distinct in meaning. Hence, Thomas’s speaking interchangeably of brightness and truth in God might mean not that they are identical in meaning but that, because both of them relate to knowledge, they are very close in meaning and consequently, like purity and simplicity, are almost entirely indistinguishable in the utter perfection of the Godhead.

Moreover, there are multiple indications in Thomas’s texts that brightness and truth are

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278 *In Sent. IV*, 49.2.3 ad 7. Parma 7/2,1204. “[C]laritas Dei dicitur veritas suae essentiae, per quam cognoscibilis est, sicut sol per suam claritatem . . .”


280 Leonine 42.121:14-17. “. . . ursit intellectus nostri in intelligendo non possit adaequari ueritati ipsius secundum quod cognoscibilis est, cum eius claritas seu ueritas sit infinita, intellectus autem noster finitus.”

281 Marietti 1.463. “Et ratio huius est, quia obtusi sunt sensus eorum . . . et sensus eorum imbecilles et obtusi sunt, nec possunt videre claritatem divini luminis, id est divinae veritatis, absque velamine figurarum.”

282 Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 357.

283 See *Summa Theologiae I*, 13.4 [Leonine 4.144-45].

284 Whereas God’s “simplicity” signifies His utter lack of composition (see *Summa Theologiae I*, 3 [Leonine 4.35-49]), His “purity” signifies His utter lack of contamination by evil or by baser things (see *In Sent. I*, 17.2.4 ad 3 and 44.1.3 ad 3 [Mandonnet 1.424 and 1.1023], as well as *Summa Theologiae II-II*, 7.2 [Leonine 8.65]).
distinct in meaning—the first being that these terms are said absolutely (*simpliciter*) in different ways for Thomas, just as he says is the case for “good” and “being” in *Summa Theologiae I*, 5.1 ad 1. According to this text, which we discussed both in our Introduction and in Chapter Two, it is because the word “being” expresses a thing’s actuality, which is contrasted with potentiality, that “something is called a being absolutely (*simpliciter*) on the basis of what first distinguishes it from what is merely in potentiality,” i.e. its “substantial existence.” Consequently, on the basis of any additional actualities it acquires, e.g. the accident of whiteness, it is only said to exist “in a certain respect” (*secundum quid*). Goodness, however, expresses a thing’s desirability, and so, since a thing is desirable insofar as it is perfect, “that which is ultimately perfect is called good absolutely”; meanwhile, “that which does not have the ultimate perfection that it ought to have, even though it has some perfection insofar as it is in act, is nevertheless not said to be perfect absolutely, nor good absolutely, but in a certain respect.” Hence, on the basis of its “primary” or “substantial” existence, “something is called a being absolutely and good in a certain respect, i.e. insofar as it is a being,” but on the basis of its “ultimate actuality” or final perfection, “something is called a being in a certain respect, and good absolutely.”

That truth, like being, is said absolutely (*simpliciter*) of a being on the basis of its first actuality is affirmed by Thomas in at least two places. In *Summa Theologiae I*, 16.4, one of the

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286 Leonine 4.56. “[L]icet bonum et ens sint idem secundum rem, quia tamen differunt secundum rationem, non eodem modo dicitur aliquid *ens simpliciter*, et *bonum simpliciter*. Nam cum ens dicat aliquid proprie esse in actu; actus autem proprie ordinem habeat ad potentiam; secundum hoc simpliciter aliquid dicitur ens, secundum quod primo discernitur ab eo quod est in potentia tantum. Hoc autem est esse substantialia rei uniuscumque; unde per suum esse substantialia dicitur unumquodque ens simpliciter. Per actus autem superadditos, dicitur aliquid esse *secundum quid*, sicut esse album significat esse secundum quid: non enim esse album auert esse in potentia simpliciter, cum adveniat rei iam praeexistenti in actu. Sed bonum dicit rationem perfecti, quod est appetibile: et per consequens dicit rationem ultimi. Unde id quod est ultimo perfectum, dicitur bonum simpliciter. Quod autem non habet ultimam perfectionem quam debet habere, quamvis habeat aliquam perfectionem inquantum est actu, non tamen dicitur perfectum simpliciter, nec bonum simpliciter, sed secundum quid. Sic ergo secundum primum esse, quod est substantialia, dicitur aliquid ens simpliciter et bonum secundum quid, idest inquantum est ens: secundum vero ultimum actum, dicitur aliquid ens secundum quid, et bonum simpliciter.”
reasons that he gives for the true’s being conceptually prior to the good is that “the true is more closely related to being . . . than the good,” which is the case because “the true regards existence itself absolutely and immediately (ipsum esse simpliciter et immediate), while the meaning of the good follows on existence (esse), insofar as it is in some way perfect.” In contrasting truth’s following on being “absolutely and immediately” with goodness’s doing so insofar as being is perfect, this text clearly implies that, like being (ens), truth is said absolutely of a being on the basis of its first actuality, and only in a certain respect on the basis of its second actuality.

Thomas both confirms and explains this impression in De veritate 1.10, where he aims to show that beings can only be false in relation to the human mind, not absolutely. In his reply to an objection claiming that beings can be false just as they can evil, Thomas writes:

Perfection is two-fold; namely first, and second: the first perfection is the form of each thing, by which it has existence; . . . the second perfection is the operation, which is the end of the thing. . . . From the first perfection, however, results the meaning of truth in things; for from the fact that a thing has a form, it imitates the art of the divine intellect, and produces knowledge of itself in the soul. But from the second perfection follows on it the meaning of goodness, which arises from the end; and so evil in the absolute sense is found in things, but not the false.

This passage does several things. First, it explicitly states that the meaning of truth follows on “the form of each thing, by which it has existence,” i.e. its substantial existence, whereas that of the good follows on the being’s “second perfection” or “operation,” i.e. its ultimate perfection. Secondly, this text explains why truth follows directly on a thing’s substantial existence: a being

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287 Leonine 4.211. “[L]icet bonum et verum supposito convertantur cum ente, tamen ratione differunt. Et secundum hoc verum, absolute loquendo, prius est quam bonum. Quod ex duobus apparet. Primo quidem ex hoc, quod verum propinquius se habet ad ens, quod est prius, quam bonum. Nam verum respicit ipsum esse simpliciter et immediate: ratio autem boni consequitur esse, secundum quod est aliquo modo perfectum; sic enim appetibile est.”

288 De veritate 1.10 ad s.c. 3. Leonine 22/1.33:229-42. “[D]uplex est perfectio, scilicet prima et secunda: prima perfectio est forma uniuscuiusque per quam habet esse, unde ab ea nulla res destituitur dum manet; secunda perfectio est operatio, quae est finis rei vel id per quod ad finem devenitur, et hac perfectione interdum res destituitur. Ex prima autem perfectione resultat ratio veri in rebus: ex hoc enim quod res formam habet arte divini intellectus imitatur et sui notitiam in anima gignit; sed ex perfectione secunda consequitur in ipsa ratio bonitatis, quae consurgit ex fine. Et ideo malum simpliciter inventur in rebus, non autem falsum.”
is true insofar as it “imitates the art of the divine intellect, and produces knowledge of itself in the soul,” both of which require only that “a thing has a form.” Finally, this passage states that, because a being is true simply by having a form, but good only on the basis of its operation, it is possible for a being to be evil absolutely speaking, but not for it to be false absolutely—which means that every being is true absolutely simply by existing. Thus, this passage leaves us in no doubt that truth is said absolutely of a being on the basis of its substantial existence.

Brightness, on the other hand, is said absolutely of a being not on the basis of its first actuality like being and truth, but rather like goodness on the basis of its ultimate perfection, as should be clear at this point for several reasons. First, we have seen in this chapter that a being only possesses brightness insofar as its form is manifested by its accidental perfections, which thus requires not only harmony or due proportion, but furthermore integrity or perfection, just as the good does.\(^{289}\) Hence, while every being is bright at least in a certain respect (\textit{secundum quid}) simply by having a form,\(^{290}\) only a fully perfect being is bright absolutely.

Furthermore, we have also concluded that brightness is the nature of beauty, which is itself said absolutely of a being only when that being has reached its ultimate perfection. That a being is only beautiful without qualification when it is fully perfect is confirmed not only by common sense, but also, as we saw in our Introduction,\(^{291}\) by Thomas himself in \textit{De virtutibus} 1.9 ad 16: “in order for something to be absolutely good, it is required that it be entirely perfect, just as in order for a thing to be beautiful absolutely [\textit{pulchrum simpliciter}] it is required that

\(^{289}\) See pp. 313-21 above.
\(^{290}\) \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 4.5.349 Marietti 114. “[C]laritas enim est de consideratione pulchritudinis, ut dictum est; omnis autem forma, per quum res habet esse, est participatio quaedam divinae claritatis; et hoc est quod subdit, quod \textit{singula} sunt \textit{pulchra secundum propriam rationem}, idest secundum propriam formam; unde patet quod ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur.” Cf. \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 4.6.360 [Marietti 118].
\(^{291}\) See Introduction, p. 14, note 56.
there be no deformity or ugliness in any part.”

Thus, since a being’s spiritual or intelligible beauty corresponds exactly to its degree of intelligible brightness, and vice versa, it follows that, just as beings are only beautiful in an absolute sense when they are fully perfect, so they are only bright in an absolute sense when they are fully perfect.

Finally, we have also seen that ugliness essentially consists in darkness, just as beauty essentially consists in brightness. Thus, although a being cannot be false absolutely speaking, a being can be dark absolutely speaking, just as it can be ugly and evil. Yet, as we just learned from De veritate 1.10 ad s.c. 3, the reason why evil can be found in nature is that a being is only absolutely good when it is fully perfect. Thus, if brightness, like goodness, has a contrary that can be found in reality, then like goodness it must be said absolutely only of what is fully perfect.

This impression is confirmed by Summa Theologiae II-II, 132.1, where Thomas says that the “absolutely bright” (simpliciter clarum) is that which “can be seen by many and by those far away.” Obviously, this is not a level of brightness possessed by every being, as would be the case if brightness was said absolutely of a being on the basis of its substantial existence, which every being necessarily has. It follows that a being is only absolutely bright when it has attained its ultimate perfection since only then does its form or nature shine with enough splendor that it “can be seen by many and by those far away.” Hence, the ways that “brightness” and “truth” are said absolutely of a being could not be more different since beings are absolutely true simply by existing, but absolutely bright only when they have reached their final perfection.

292 Marietti 2.733. “Ad hoc autem quod aliquid sit bonum simpliciter, requiritur quod sit totaliter perfectum; sicut ad hoc quod aliquid sit pulchrum simpliciter requiritur quod in nulla parte sit aliqua deiformitas vel turpitudo.”

293 See pp. 306-13 above.

294 Certain beings are said to be false because their appearances are likely to cause a false judgment in the human intellect, e.g. “false gold” or “fool’s gold,” which is a different element from gold but has the appearance of gold. Nevertheless, these beings are true absolutely speaking because they still perfectly conform to the divine intellect, and beings are said to be true essentially in relation to God’s Mind but only accidentally in relation to the human mind. See De veritate 1.10 [Leonine 22/1.31-32:79-138] and Summa Theologiae I, 15.1 [Leonine 4.199].

295 Leonine 10.78. “Quia vero illud quod simpliciter clarum est, a multis conspicii potest et a remotis . . .”
It appears that this contrast between how brightness and truth are said of beings can be explained by a difference in the ways that they relate to the knowing subject. As we mentioned in Chapter One,\textsuperscript{296} the original and proper meaning of truth is not truth of being, or ontological truth, but rather truth in the mind, or logical truth; moreover, logical truth is found primarily in the act of judgment\textsuperscript{297} since the meaning of truth is the adequation of intellect and reality, and, as Thomas tells us in several texts, it is in the act of judging that the adequation of mind and reality is completed.\textsuperscript{298} Consequently, it seems that for Thomas a thing’s ontological truth, or truth of being, relates primarily to the mind’s act of judgment and only secondarily to its act of simple apprehension for the reason that beings are true insofar as they are adequated to the mind, and this adequation is only completed in the judgment. In other words, it appears that one could describe a being’s truth as its ability to cause a correct judgment about itself in the mind.

Brightness, on the other hand, relates to vision, and thus to the intellect’s act of simple apprehension rather than judgment since, as we noted in our third chapter, only apprehensions can be described as visions.\textsuperscript{299} In fact, brightness relates not just to vision, but to certainty of vision since, as we discussed earlier in this chapter, the greater the brightness (\textit{claritas}) that an object of vision has, the greater the clarity (\textit{claritas}) or certainty with which the mind will see it. Thus, while the mind attains logical truth (\textit{veritas}) insofar as it is correct in its judgments about reality, it attains clarity (\textit{claritas}) insofar as it sees reality with a greater and greater certainty.

Though subtle, this difference between truth and clarity in knowledge has significant consequences. As we have seen, the clarity or certainty with which a being can be seen depends

\textsuperscript{296} See Chapter One, pp. 30-34.
\textsuperscript{297} See Chapter Three, p. 179.
\textsuperscript{298} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 16.2. Leonine 4.208. “Et ideo, proprie loquendo, veritas est in intellectu componente et dividente . . .” Cf. \textit{De veritate} 1.3 [Leonine 22/1.10-11]; \textit{In Šent.} 19.5.1 ad 7 [Mandonnet 1.489.].
\textsuperscript{299} See Chapter Three, pp. 182-83.
on the degree to which it is conjoined to the mind; consequently, a being possesses intelligible brightness insofar as it is conjoinable to the intellect, i.e. insofar as it has a conformity of nature to the intelligible species by means of which it is known. The correctness or adequation in which truth consists, however, does not require such conformity, as shown by Contra Gentiles I, 59.

According to this text, “the adequation of the intellect and the thing,” which is the nature of truth, means only that “the intellect says that what is is, and that what is not is not”; hence, “truth in the intellect pertains to that which the intellect says, not to the operation by which it says it”:

> For it is not required for truth of the intellect that the very act of understanding be adequate to the thing known, since the thing is sometimes material but the act of understanding is immaterial: but that which the intellect in understanding says and knows must be adequate to the thing, so that namely it may be so in reality as the intellect says.300

As this text makes clear, the attainment of truth by the mind requires only that the known being conform to the intellect’s judgment about it, not that it has the same kind of being as the mind.

Thus, while a being only possesses brightness insofar as it is conjoinable to the intellect, a being possesses ontological truth simply by being able to cause a correct judgment about itself in the mind, which, as we learned from De veritate 1.10 ad s.c. 3, requires only that it “has a form.”301

Hence, the ultimate reason why a being is true (or knowable) simply by existing, but bright (or conjoinable to the mind) only insofar as it is perfect, seems to be that a thing can be fully known without being fully conjoined to the soul, as is clear for several reasons. First, as we saw in our third chapter,302 knowledge (which is the effect of ontological truth) does not require a likeness or conformity according to nature between knower and known, but only a conformity

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300 Contra Gentiles I, 59. Marietti 2.70. “Cum enim veritas intellectus sit adaequatio intellectus et rei, secundum quod intellectus dicit esse quod est vel non esse quod non est, ad illud in intellectu veritas pertinet quod intellectus dicit, non ad operationem qua illud dicit. Non enim ad veritatem intellectus exigitur ut ipsum intelligere rei aequetur, cum res interdum sit materialis, intelligere vero immateriale: sed illud quod intellectus intelligendo dicit et cognoscit, oporet esse rei aequatum, ut scilicet ita sit in re sicut intellectus dicit.”

301 See pp. 350-51 above.

302 See Chapter Three, pp. 164-66.
according to representation, i.e. by means of a species.\textsuperscript{303} Moreover, it is because the known only has to be conjoined to the knower through its \textit{species}, and not according to reality, that, as we saw in the last chapter, knowledge in itself is the weakest kind of union and possession.\textsuperscript{304} Finally, as we saw in this chapter,\textsuperscript{305} Thomas says that bodily beings, because of their matter, are fully known by the mind even when they are only conjoined to it through an immaterial likeness of themselves since they are only conjoinable to that degree.\textsuperscript{306} That bodily beings can be fully known by the soul without also being fully conjoined to the soul shows that ontological truth, or knowability \textit{by} the mind, is distinct in meaning from brightness, or conjoinability \textit{to} the mind.

This distinction in meaning between brightness and ontological truth can be expressed in a few different ways. First, ontological truth is a being’s ability to be known, but brightness is a being’s ability not only to be known but to be seen—i.e. to be known with certainty or clarity. As a result, ontological truth also consists in a being’s \textit{adequation}, or conformity according to representation, to the intellect that knows it, whereas brightness consists in a being’s \textit{conjoining}, or conformity according to nature, to the intellect that knows it. Finally, while truth is a being’s ability to cause knowledge of itself in the intellect, brightness is a being’s ability to unite itself to the intellect \textit{through} that knowledge, and thus to be possessed by the soul. This conclusion finds support from the substantial number of Thomists writing on beauty who argue that “brightness” (\textit{claritas}) expresses a greater conformity to the intellect than the one that is expressed by “truth”

\textsuperscript{303} Thomas makes this point explicit in \textit{De veritate} 2.5 ad 5. Leonine 22/1.63:344-46. “[A]d cognitionem non requiritur similitudo conformitatis in natura sed similitudo representaionis tantum . . .”

\textsuperscript{304} See Chapter Four, pp. 265-67.

\textsuperscript{305} See p. 293 above.

\textsuperscript{306} In \textit{Sent.} IV, 49.2.1 ad 16. Parma 7/2.1201. “[C]reaturae corporales non dicuntur immediate videri, nisi quando id quod in eis est conjungibile visui, ei conjungitur: non sunt autem conjungibiles per essentiam suam ratione materialitatis; et ideo tunc immediate videntur quando eorum similitudo intellectui conjungitur . . .”
Moreover, this conclusion accords with common sense, which tells us that, while all beings are unqualifiedly true, not all beings are unqualifiedly bright, splendid, or radiant.

At the same time, however, our conclusions regarding brightness and truth also make sense of why Thomas identifies them in God. After all, there is not merely a “conformity of representation” between God and the species in virtue of which He is known but an identity since God is the very species in virtue of which He is known, both by Himself and by the saints. Consequently, the difference between adequation and conjoining, and thus between truth and brightness, is diminished in God’s perfect simplicity since both are to be attributed to the fact that in the Beatific Vision God Himself is directly united to the intellect.

If brightness and truth are thus distinct in meaning, then truth does not cause possession through the mere apprehension, and consequently neither does the true taken as good. Since possession through the mere apprehension is beauty’s proper effect, this dissertation can at last safely conclude that beauty is distinct in meaning from the true taken as good.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to determine whether comprehensio or possession through mere apprehension is beauty’s proper effect, for which we had a three-step plan of execution: in the first section, we would determine the nature and order of beauty’s three objective conditions; in the second section, we would determine whether beauty’s conditions, and thus beauty itself, could cause comprehensio; and finally, in the third section, we would determine whether the true accepted as good could also cause comprehensio. In our first section, we came to agree with the opinion of many Thomists that integrity or perfection is the remote material condition for beauty,

harmony or due proportion is the proximate material condition for beauty, and brightness is the very nature of beauty, i.e. its essential or formal condition, just as perfection is the very nature or formal condition of goodness. Our second section found that, since *comprehensio* or possession of a thing essentially depends on the degree to which it is conjoined to the knower, and since a being’s intelligible brightness is its ability to be conjoined to the mind, it follows that brightness essentially causes possession of itself through the mere vision of it, and therefore so does beauty since brightness is the nature of beauty. Finally, in the third section we concluded that the true accepted as good does not cause *comprehensio* because truth does not express the conjoinability of being to the intellect, as brightness does, but merely the adequation of being to the intellect. Since *comprehensio* or possession through vision is therefore apparently the unique and proper effect of the beautiful, it follows that beauty does indeed have a meaning that distinguishes it from truth and goodness: that which is possessable through the mere apprehension.

This conclusion should not surprise us since, as we saw in our second chapter, Thomas himself evidently considered beauty to be distinct in meaning from the combination of truth and goodness.\textsuperscript{308} Moreover, the definitions of ontological truth (i.e. the knowable) and goodness (i.e. the lovable) do not indicate that the capacity to cause possession through the mere apprehension is somehow included in their meanings. Finally, the distinction in meaning between beauty and the true taken as good is even indicated by the fact that, as Thomas himself notes, nobody calls the objects of the lower senses beautiful. Since pleasant smells, tastes, and touches are assuredly both knowable and lovable, it seems that, if beauty were the same in meaning as the true taken as good, there should not be anything strange about calling them “beautiful,” just as there is nothing strange about calling them “both true and good.” Thus, the simplest way to explain why we can

\textsuperscript{308} See Chapter Two, pp. 136-43.
call objects of the lower senses “true” and “good,” but not “beautiful” is the following: beauty has a unique meaning of its own, i.e. “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it,” which distinguishes it from truth and goodness, and which cannot be attributed to smells, tastes, and touches because they are always physically possessed when they are known.

Some might object that the definition of beauty as “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it” is overly speculative and detached from experience since the ability to be possessed through vision is primarily found in spiritual beings, whereas the only beauties that man experiences in this life are those of material beings. In response, it should first be noted that the greater ability of spiritual beings to be possessed through the mere vision of them is not pure conjecture but in fact a necessary consequence of Thomas’s theory of knowledge. If knowledge is the immaterial possession of reality, then, the more immaterial a being is, the more perfectly that it is possessed by means of immaterial possession or knowledge.

Furthermore, in my opinion, the conclusion that the meaning of beauty is “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it” can in fact be drawn solely from the human experience of beauty, for several reasons. For one thing, one cannot delight in what one does not possess in some way, so the fact that beauty pleases us merely by being seen shows that it is also possessed merely by being seen. Moreover, the two kinds of beauty that we encounter in this life, i.e. sensible and intelligible beauty, essentially consist in being possessable through the mere vision of them. Sensible beauty is simply the due commensuration of those qualities that can be possessed through the mere sensitive apprehension, whether of sight (i.e. size, shape, and color) or of hearing (i.e. volume, harmony, and pitch); what is more, a being’s sensible beauty does not please merely because of its own intrinsic value, but also because it makes visible (and

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309 As Thomas points out, even when delights one in the anticipation of a good that one does not yet possess, one is still possessing it in intention, though not yet in reality. See *Summa* I-II, 11.4 [Leonine 6.92-93].
so makes possessable through vision) the being’s nature. As for intelligible beauty, while we do not directly possess it through the mere apprehension—since we do not have an immediate intellectual perception of reality but rather acquire all our knowledge by beginning with sense experience—it is nevertheless commonly experienced that, the greater the spiritual beauty of a person’s soul, the more that this beauty shines out in their words and actions, and is thus able to be both seen and possessed by the human intellect. Thus, we even experience purely intelligible beauty as being characterized by possessability through the mere apprehension.

Nevertheless, the fact that beauty essentially causes possession through vision is indeed easy to miss, primarily because it is so easily taken for granted. The union through vision that we enjoy with beauty is given to us without our having to work for it; moreover, in this life, it is a far less intense union than the more physical kinds of union that we usually seek with objects of our desire. Thus, when confronted with the delight that beauty gives when seen, it is easy to surmise that beauty pleases without being possessed, rather than by being possessed through knowledge alone. As we have seen, this is in fact the position taken by most Thomists writing on beauty, which I would argue is the reason that they have not reached our conclusion that the proper effect of beauty is possession through the mere apprehension. The sole exception to this disappointing trend is once again Granados, who not only asserts that brightness (claritas) is the nature of beauty but even argues that it causes possession through the mere apprehension.

310 Of course, a being’s sensible beauty does not perfectly manifest its nature, which is the reason that we human beings do not know any being perfectly in this life, as Thomas notes in In Symbolum prooemium (cited in Chapter Two, p. 97, note 43).
311 Granados, Esbozo, 46.
312 According to Granados, brightness can be defined as “that perfection capable of perfecting the most perfect beings in the most perfect way possible” for the reason that it “perfects and produces pleasure in the most exalted way in which something can perfect and be perfected: through immaterial possession.” Granados, Esbozo, 47-48: “[L]a claritas equivale . . . a la perfección de la perfección . . . . La fórmula ‘perfección de la perfección’ quiere apuntar . . . a aquella perfección capaz de perfeccionar a los seres más perfectos del modo más perfecto
In concluding that for Thomas beauty does in fact have a distinct meaning, namely “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it,” we have thereby eliminated one of the only two possible places for it in Thomas’s thought, i.e. the true taken as good. It therefore seems that beauty must be a distinct transcendental in Thomas’s metaphysics. Nevertheless, as Aertsen says, we can only conclude that beauty is a transcendental in Thomas’s thought when it is known not only what general mode of being beauty expresses but also how beauty fits into the order of transcendents. Hence, our concluding chapter will attempt to show how beauty fulfills the defining feature of the transcendents, along with their other marks, and fits into their order. 

possible. Con ello pretende indicarse: . . . c) que ésta perfecciona y produce placer del modo más cabal en que algo puede perfeccionar y ser perfeccionado: por la posesión inmaterial . . .” Emphasis Granados’s.
CHAPTER SIX

THE MEANING AND TRANSCENDENTAL STATUS OF BEAUTY

Introduction

In our first chapter, we learned that beauty’s transcendental status cannot be determined without first establishing the meaning of beauty since only then can we know whether beauty expresses a unique general mode of being and fits into the order of transcendentals. Hence, we will begin this chapter by presenting a precise definition of beauty, which we will then use to show that beauty not only expresses a distinct general mode of being (and so fulfills the essential feature of the transcendentals), but also possesses their traits according to reality and meaning. Finally, we will consider the objection that beauty’s being added to the order of transcendentals destroys the fittingness of that order’s ending with the good. The ultimate goal of this chapter is not to prove beyond all doubt that beauty is a transcendental in Thomas’s metaphysics; rather, we simply wish to argue that beauty can be added to the order of transcendentals in a way that harmonizes with Thomas’s account of that order, and perhaps even completes it.

A. The Meaning of “Beauty”

As we said in our Introduction,\(^1\) terms of universal extension cannot be defined in terms of a genus and specific difference, but rather only by means of their proper effects. In the last chapter, we saw that possession through the mere apprehension of it is the proper effect of the beautiful, in the same way that knowledge is the proper effect of the true and love is the proper effect of the good. Hence, we conclude that, just as the meaning of “truth” is “that which is

\(^1\) See Introduction, pp. 7-8.
knowable” and that of “goodness” is “that which is desirable,” so the meaning of “beauty” in Thomas’s metaphysics is “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it.”

What confirms the validity of this definition is the degree to which it accounts for the various features of beauty that we have encountered in this study. First of all, it is because the beautiful can be possessed through the mere apprehension of it that it can delight through the mere apprehension of it since delight requires not merely knowledge of and love for a being, but also possession of it. Moreover, beauty’s having the meaning “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it” can explain why beauty’s nature or essential condition is brightness, as is indicated throughout Thomas’s writings, since a being is conjoined to the cognitive power and consequently possessed through vision insofar as it is bright. Likewise, this definition of beauty explains why there are two kinds of beauty since spiritual or intelligible beauty is that which can be possessed through the mere apprehension of it by means of the intellect, while bodily or sensible beauty is that which can be possessed through the mere apprehension of it by means of the senses. Finally, it is because “beautiful” means “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it” that smells, tastes, and touches cannot be experienced as beautiful since they are always possessed materially or physically when they are sensed, and therefore are incapable of being possessed solely through being apprehended.

It might be objected, however, that the definition of beauty reached by this study conflicts with the definition that Thomas himself gives of beauty as “that the mere apprehension of which pleases.”\(^2\) After all, Thomas’s definition indicates that beauty’s proper effect is *pleasure when seen*, rather than *possession through seeing*, as we have concluded. Hence, it seems that either the definition we have reached is invalid, or else it invalidates the definition given by Thomas.

The best response seems to be that, strictly speaking, beauty’s proper effect is possession through seeing rather than pleasure when seen, as becomes apparent when one considers what a proper effect is. For Thomas, a proper effect does not only follow necessarily from its cause, but also uniquely from its cause: for example, love is the proper effect of the good, not just because it is the nature of the good to cause love for itself, but because the good is the only cause of love.³ Pleasure, however, has not just one, but three causes, namely knowledge, love, and possession, the first two of which are caused by truth and by goodness, respectively. On the other hand, it has been shown at this point that possession through the mere apprehension of it is not caused by either truth, or by goodness, or by their combination, but is caused by beauty. Hence, whereas pleasure in the mere vision of it is the joint effect of truth, goodness, and beauty, possession through the mere vision of it is the unique and therefore proper effect of beauty.

Nevertheless, Thomas’s initial definition of beauty in terms of the delight that it gives is not thereby invalidated since it is still true in a sense that this pleasure is beauty’s proper effect. Truth is only able to cause one of the requirements for pleasure in the mere apprehension of a being, i.e. knowledge, while goodness is able to cause two of them, i.e. knowledge and love, because it conceptually includes truth’s relation to knowledge. Beauty, however, conceptually includes both truth and goodness, and thus contains their relations to knowledge and love in its meaning; hence, beauty is able to cause all three conditions for pleasure in the mere vision of a being because its meaning includes the relations to the first two conditions for this pleasure, i.e. knowledge and love, and adds a relation to the last requirement for it, i.e. possession through the mere vision of it. Beauty can therefore legitimately be defined as “that the mere apprehension of which pleases” since no other transcendental can cause pleasure in the mere apprehension of it.

³ See Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 [Leonine 6.192].
Moreover, in addition to being valid, Thomas’s definition of beauty as that which pleases when seen is also the necessary starting point for the investigation of beauty. After all, in the experience of beautiful things, the pleasure that they give when seen is more noticeable than the possession that they give of themselves when seen; indeed, it is very easy to entirely miss the fact that beautiful beings are possessed when seen, whereas it is impossible to miss the fact that they please when seen. Hence, it was entirely appropriate for Thomas to initially define beauty by the pleasure that it causes by means of its true proper effect since that proper effect is hidden and can only be disclosed by reasoning back from the pleasure that it causes.

Finally, not only can one deduce our definition of the beautiful from the one that Thomas gives, but the reverse is true as well. As we saw in our section on the nature of *comprehensio*, the meaning of possession is “being able to use or enjoy as one wishes,” and to enjoy simply means to take delight in a good that is present. Hence, from the definition of beauty as “that which can be possessed through the mere apprehension of it,” one can infer that it is also “that which pleases merely when seen” since, just as one cannot take delight in the mere vision of beauty without possessing it through that vision, so possessing beauty through the mere vision of it necessarily means taking pleasure in it. The two definitions are thus mutually implicative.

**B. Beauty and the Marks of the Transcendentals**

Now that we have defined the beautiful in Thomas’s thought, we can use that definition to help determine whether beauty is a transcendental by seeing whether the meaning of “beauty” is indeed a unique general mode of being and whether it allows “beauty” to fulfill the traits of the transcendentals according to reality and according to meaning. We will begin with the question

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4 See Chapter Five, pp. 329-31.
5 See *Summa Theologiae* I, 11.1 [Leonine 6.90].
of whether beauty expresses a distinct general mode of being since that is the essential mark of the transcendental, and then proceed to beauty’s fulfillment of the other marks.

1. The General Mode of Being Expressed by Beauty

As we saw in Chapter One, the general modes of being expressed by truth and goodness are essentially relations of being to the soul, and so are distinguished from each other by traits on either side of the relation, i.e. the object (being) and the subject (the soul). Hence, for beauty to express a unique general mode of being and thus to be a transcendental, it must be shown to express a relation of being to the soul that can be distinguished from those of truth and goodness according to all the aspects of these relations, both subjective and objective. We have already distinguished beauty according to one of those aspects, namely the effect that it has in the soul since, just as (ontological) truth causes knowledge and goodness causes love, so beauty causes possession through the mere apprehension. Therefore, we will now consider whether beauty can be distinguished from truth and goodness according to the other aspects of their relations.

Because the relational transcendentals express relations of being to the soul, they are essentially distinguished by the powers of the soul to which they relate. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that this way of distinguishing truth and goodness is used in De veritate 1.1, Thomas’s main text on the transcendental, and in the majority of his texts on these terms, and thus is evidently his preferred method of distinguishing them. Hence, one of Aertsen’s objections to beauty’s being a transcendental arises once again: if relational transcendentals are distinguished by the powers to which they conform, how can beauty express a unique general

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6 See Chapter One, pp. 40-41.
mode of being in relation to the soul if there is no third power to which it can conform?

We are now finally in a position to respond to this objection, thanks to our investigation of *comprehensio* or possession in Chapter Five. There we learned that the gift of the soul known as *comprehensio* is a perfection of the will *through* the intellect since it is the will that possesses God, i.e. is able to enjoy Him as it wishes, but this possession results from God’s being perfectly conjoined to the intellect as the *species* by which it sees Him.⁸ Therefore, since *comprehensio* or possession through the mere apprehension is the proper effect of beauty, the relation of being to the soul that beauty expresses is evidently a relation of perfecting the will through the intellect, or, even more concisely, a relation of conformity to the will *through* the intellect.

We therefore conclude that the general mode of being expressed by “beauty” is “being as conformed to the will through the intellect,” which not only follows necessarily from what this study has concluded regarding the nature of the beautiful, but is even implied by Thomas’s own discussions of beauty’s meaning. For one thing, pleasure is of course a perfection of the will, and vision or apprehension an activity of the intellect; hence, when Thomas defines beautiful things as “those things that please when they are seen (*quae visa placent*)” in *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.4 ad 1,⁹ and the beautiful itself as “that the mere apprehension of which pleases (*id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet*)” in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 27.1 ad 3,¹⁰ he is already indicating that beauty perfects one power of the soul (the will) through the other (the intellect). Furthermore, our definition of beauty as “the conformity of being to the will through the intellect” not only recognizes the fact that beauty directly relates to the cognitive power, as Thomas says in both

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⁹ Leonine 4.61. “[P]ulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent.”
¹⁰ Leonine 6.192. “[P]ulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.”
these texts from the *Summa Theologiae*, but also provides a complete explanation for beauty’s “certain relation to the cognitive power” and how this relation differs from truth’s relation to the intellect: whereas truth relates to the intellect as perfecting it, beauty relates to the intellect as perfecting the will by means of the intimacy of its union with the intellect.

Some might object that we are contradicting our second chapter’s rejection of the theory espoused by Kovach and others that beauty’s general mode of being is the conformity of being to both the intellect and the will since we also are describing beauty as a transcendental that relates to both powers. In fact, however, what we rejected in Chapter Two was the notion that a relation to both powers jointly or simultaneously would be a distinct general mode of being for beauty to express; by contrast, our account says that beauty relates, not to both powers equally and at the same time, but rather directly to one power (i.e. the intellect) and ultimately to the other (i.e. the will). We therefore agree with Kovach that the general mode of being expressed by beauty is a relation to the soul involving both powers, but, unlike Kovach, we can give a coherent account of how it does so: by perfecting one power through its conformity to the other power. In so doing, our account also provides an answer to the problem that Kovach was trying to solve, namely how

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13 Distinguishing our theory from Kovach’s is made easier by the fact that, just as we have done, Kovach offers a definition of beauty’s general mode of being in the style of *De veritate* 1.1. According to him, just as “this word ‘good’ expresses the conformity of being to the appetite,” and “this word ‘true’ expresses the conformity of being to the intellect,” likewise “this word ‘beautiful’ expresses the conformity of being to the soul having an intellect and a will”—in other words, the conformity of being to both intellect and will at the same time, as equally rooted in the spiritual soul. By contrast, in our view the word “beautiful” expresses the conformity of being to the will through the intellect, i.e. directly to the latter and ultimately to the former. Kovach, *Die Ästhetik*, 214. “Während nämlich hinsichtlich der einzelnen vires animae der junge Thomas gelehrt hat: “Convenientiam . . . entis ad appetitum exprimit hoc nomen bonum . . . Convenientiam entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen verum,” so mag der in der Ästhetik des Dionysius-Kommentars zur Reife gelangte Thomas in vertieftem Verständnis die Stelle geschrieben haben: — convenientiam entis ad animam intellectum et voluntatem habentem exprimit hoc nomen pulchrum.”
there can be three relational transcendentals when there are only two powers of the soul. As our account explains, there is one transcendental that perfects the intellect directly (truth), one that perfects the will directly (goodness), and one that perfects the will through the intellect (beauty).

One might also wonder why the will needs to be perfected by a second transcendental relating to it through the intellect, especially since the intellect does not also need to be perfected by a transcendental relating to it through the will. The reason for this difference is that, while the intellect is perfected by a being simply by receiving an immaterial *species* of it and consequently knowing the being through this *species*, the will is perfected by the very existence of a being in reality.\(^{14}\) Hence, while the first perfection of the will is to be conformed to a being through love for it, the will is not fully perfected by what it loves until it is united to the very existence of the beloved,\(^{15}\) which is why the appetite always seeks a real union with whatever it loves.\(^{16}\)

It is for this very reason that the will is perfected by two theological virtues and two requirements for beatitude but the intellect is perfected by only one of each. As Thomas writes in *Summa Theologiae* I, 4.3, although a human being is ordered to his ultimate end “through his intellect” merely “insofar as some imperfect knowledge of the end preexists in the intellect,” he is ordered “through the will” in two ways: first of all “through love, which is the first motion of the will toward something,” but secondly “through a real relation (*realem habitudinem*) of the

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\(^{14}\) *De veritate* 21.1. Leonine 22/3.593:179{-}97. “In quolibet autem ente est duo considerare, scilicet ipsum rationem speciei et esse ipsum quo aliquid subsistit in specie illa. Et sic aliquod ens potest esse perfectivum dupliciter: uno modo secundum rationem speciei tantum, et sic ab ente perficitur intellectus qui percipit rationem entis, nec tamen ens est in eo secundum esse naturale; et ideo hunc modum perficiendi addit verum super ens. . . . Alio modo ens est perfectivum alterius non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in rerum natura, et per hunc modum est perfectivum bonum; bonum enim in rebus est . . .” For our discussion of this text, see Chapter One, p. 46.

\(^{15}\) *Contra Gentiles* III, 26.12 tells us that love for an end is imperfect before one possesses it, but perfect afterwards. Marietti 3.35. “[S]i amor iam habiti perfectior sit, hoc causatur ex hoc quod bonum amatum habetur. Aliud igitur est habere bonum quod est finis, quam amare, quod ante habere est imperfectum, post habere vero perfectum.”

\(^{16}\) *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 28.1. Leonine 6.197. “[D]uplex est unio amantis ad amatum. Una quidem secundum rem, puta cum amatum praesentialiter adest amanti. . . . Primam ergo unionem amor facit effective: quia movet ad desiderandum et quaerendum praesentiam amati, quasi sibi convenientis et ad se pertinentis.”
lover to the beloved.” This real relation must be one in which it is possible to attain the beloved but “not immediately,” which is “the relation of the one who hopes to what he hopes for” and “the only relation that causes a pursuit of the end.” Consequently, “to these three correspond certain things in beatitude itself” since “perfect knowledge of the end corresponds to imperfect” while “the presence in fact of the end itself corresponds to the relationship of hope” and “delight in the end already present follows on love.”

Hence, just as there is only one theological virtue that perfects the intellect, namely faith, but two theological virtues that perfect the will, namely charity and hope, so there is one requirement for beatitude that perfects the intellect, namely “vision, which is the perfect knowledge of the intelligible end,” but two that perfect the will, namely “delight, or enjoyment, which implies the resting of the lover in the loved thing,” and also “possession (comprehensionem), which implies the presence of the end.”

While possession and delight are thus alike in being perfections of the will, they differ in that delight is an activity performed solely by the will, but possession is an “action” that the will cannot do by itself. As Thomas writes in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 3.4, while the will seeks and is perfected by the attainment of the end, the attainment itself cannot consist in an act of the will.

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17 *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 4.3. Leonine 6.40. “[C]um beatitudo consistat in consecutione ultimi finis, ea quae requiruntur ad beatitudinem sunt consideranda ex ipso ordine hominis ad finem. Ad finem autem intelligibilem ordinatur homo partim quidem per intellectum, partim autem per voluntatem. Per intellectum quidem, inquantum in intellectu praeexistit aliqua cognitio finis imperfecta. Per voluntatem autem, primo quidem per amorem, qui est primus motus voluntatis in aliquid: secundo autem, per realem habitudinem amantis ad amatum. . . . Quoquoque autem possibile est ipsum adipisci, sed est elevatum supra facultatem adipiscentis, ita ut statim haberis non possis: et haec est habitudo sperantis ad speratum, quae sola habito facit finis inquisitionem. . . . Et istic tribus respondent aliqua in ipsa beatitudine. Nam perfecta cognitio finis respondet imperfectae; praesentia vero ipsius finis respondet habitudini spei; sed delectatio in fine iam praeistent consequtur dilectionem, ut supra dictum est.”


19 *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 4.3. Leonine 6.40. “Et ideo neceesse est ad beatitudinem ista tria concurre: scilicet visionem, quae est cognitio perfecta intelligibilis finis; comprehensionem, quae importat praesentiam finis; delectationem, vel fruitionem, quae importat quietationem rei amantis in amato.”

20 In *Metaphysic*. V, 20.1062 tells us that “having (habere), while it is not an action, nevertheless signifies in the manner of an action.” Marietti 277. “[H]abere enim, licet non sit actio, significat tamen per modum actionis.”
since otherwise one would possess an end from the moment that one starts to desire it. Rather, one attains the end that one has desired through the activity of a power other than the will. For example, one does not possess and enjoy food simply by hungering for it but only by eating it; likewise, spouses do not seek to be united with each other solely through love, but also through the marital embrace, having children together, and all the shared activities of family life.

Hence, if the will’s being perfected by something requires not only love for it but also possession of it, then the will can only be fully perfected by all of being if there is an activity of some power other than the will through which every being can be possessed by the soul. Yet the only power other than the will that has every being as its object is the intellect, and thus the only kind of possession that one can have of every being is possession through the knowledge of the intellect. It follows that, in order to fully perfect the will, every being must not only possess the transcendental attribute of goodness, which causes the will’s primary and essential perfection, or love, but also the transcendental attribute of beauty which, through the conjoining of being to the intellect that it causes with its brightness, in turn causes the ultimate perfection of the will, i.e. possession of and consequently delight in being. Hence, it is not merely possible but necessary for there to be two transcendentals that perfect the will, namely the good and the beautiful.

Now that we have determined that the essence of beauty’s relation to the soul is a conformity of being to the will through the intellect, we must examine the characteristics that it has on both sides of that relation, i.e. the subjective and the objective. The subjective side of beauty’s relation to the soul is its proper effect, i.e. possession through the mere apprehension,

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21 Summa Theologiae I-II, 3.4. Leonine 6.29. “Dico ergo quod, quantum ad id quod est essentialiter ipsa beatitudo, impossibile est quod consistat in actu voluntatis. Manifestum est enim ex praemissis quod beatitudo est consecutio finis ultimi. Consecutio autem finis non consistit in ipso actu voluntatis. . . . Et hoc manifeste apparet circa fines sensibiles. Si enim consequi pecuniam esset per actum voluntatis, statim a principio cupidus consecutus esset pecuniam, quando vult eam habere. Sed a principio quidem est absens ei; consequitur autem ipsam per hoc quod manu ipsam apprehendit, vel aliquo huitusmodi; et tunc iam delectatur in pecunia habita.”
which we have already established to be distinct from the proper effects of truth and goodness, i.e. knowledge and love; however, we have yet to show that beauty’s relation to the soul is also distinct from those of the true and the good with respect to the objective sides of those relations. In the course of this study, we have learned that relational transcendentals can be distinguished objectively in three distinct ways: by the principles of being according to which they perfect the soul, by their natures or essential conditions, and finally by the ways in which they are predicated absolutely (simpliciter) of a being. We will now examine whether beauty can be distinguished from both truth and goodness according to each of these three traits.

As we saw in Chapter One,²² *De veritate* 21.1 and 21.3 both make clear that relational transcendentals can be distinguished from each other not only by the powers that they perfect, but also by the principles of being according to which they perfect these powers. According to the first text, there are two such principles in every being, namely “the very nature of the species (ipsam rationem speciei)” and “the very existence by which it subsists in that species,” and two ways of perfecting the soul that correspond to these principles. Truth of being perfects the soul “according to the nature of the species alone” because it perfects the intellect, which “perceives the nature of a being” but nevertheless does not have the being present in it “according to natural existence”; goodness, on the other hand, perfects the soul “not only according to the nature of the species, but also according to the existence that it has in reality” because the good perfects in the manner of an end, i.e. by causing desire for itself in its natural existence.²³

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²² See Chapter One, pp. 47-48 and 52-53.
²³ Leonine 22/3.593-94:179-209. “In qualibet autem ente est duo considerare, scilicet ipsum rationem speciei et esse ipsum quo aliquid subsistit in specie illa. Et sic aliquod ens potest esse perfectivum dupliciter: uno modo secundum rationem speciei tantum, et sic ab ente perficitur intellectus qui percipit rationem entis, nec tamen ens est in eo secundum esse naturale; et ideo hunc modum perficiendi addit verum super ens: verum enim est in mente ut Philosophus dicit in VI Metaphysicae, et unumquodque ens in tantum dicitur verum in quantum est conformatum vel conformabile intellectui. . . . Alio modo ens est perfectivum alterius non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in rerum natura, et per hunc modum est perfectivum bonum;
Since this passage makes clear that the only two principles in every being are its specific nature and existence in reality, there is no third principle according to which beauty could perfect the soul; nevertheless, it could be argued that beauty perfects the soul according to the proportion between these two principles. As we discussed earlier in this section,²⁴ the perfection that beauty brings about in the soul is the possession of beauty by the will through the apprehension of it by the intellect. In other words, beauty perfects the soul by uniting the will to the beautiful being’s existence in reality through the intellect’s perception of that being’s specific nature. Moreover, as we saw in the last chapter,²⁵ the degree to which a being can be possessed through the mere vision of it depends on the conformity according to nature between a being and the intelligible species in virtue of which it is known, and this conformity further depends on the proportion between the being’s specific nature and its existence in reality.

A bodily being has this proportion to the least degree because its essence is individuated by matter and is therefore not identical with the specific nature that it shares with other members of its kind. As a result, a bodily being differs greatly from the species by which it is known (and so is only possessed to a small degree when known in virtue of that species) because the being is material but the species is immaterial. An angel, meanwhile, has a greater proportion between its specific nature and its existence in reality since its essence does not contain any matter and is thus identical with its specific nature; consequently, an angel is known in virtue of a species that does not differ from it in the kind of the existence that they have—since both are immaterial—and is thus more intimately possessed through the knowledge of it. Nevertheless, there is not a

 bonum enim in rebus est ut Philosophus dicit in VI Metaphysicae. In quantum autem unum ens secundum esse suum est perfectivum alterius et consummativum, habet rationem finis respectu illius quod ab eo perficitur . . . unde Philosophus dicit in I Ethicorum quod « bonum optime diffinierunt dicentes quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt ». Sic ergo primo et principaliter dicitur bonum ens perfectivum alterius per modum finis; sed secundario dicitur aliquid bonum quod est ductivum in finem, prout utile dicitur bonum vel quod natura est consequi finem . . .”

²⁴ See pp. 366-67 above.
²⁵ See Chapter Five, pp. 291-98 and 331-35 above.
perfect conformity between an angel’s specific nature and its existence in reality since its essence is distinct from its act of existing (actus essendi). Hence, an angel is still known in virtue of a species that is distinct from it in reality, and is therefore not perfectly possessed when known.

In God, however, there is not only a conformity but an identity between His Essence and His Existence, and this identity is the reason why God not only can but must be the very species in virtue of which He is known by the blessed.26 Hence, it is because of the perfect conformity according to nature (or rather identity) between His specific nature and His existence in reality that God is likewise identical with the species in virtue of which He is known, and is therefore possessable through the mere apprehension of Him (or beautiful) to the highest degree.

One can therefore argue that, whereas the true perfects the soul solely according to a being’s specific nature, and the good perfects the soul not merely according to the specific nature but also according to the being’s existence in reality,27 beauty perfects the soul not just according to the being’s specific nature and its existence in reality, but also according to the proportion between these two principles. Hence, it seems that one can distinguish beauty from truth and goodness with regard to the principles of being according to which they perfect the soul.

The next trait according to which the relational transcendentals can be distinguished on the objective side of their relations is their nature or essential condition. The nature of the good is perfection since the meaning of the good is desirability, and a thing is desirable insofar as it is perfect.28 The nature or essential condition of truth, meanwhile, appears to be adequation since

26 See Chapter Five, pp. 295-97.
27 De veritate 21.1. Leonine 22/3.593:181-97. “[A]liquod ens potest esse perfectivum dupliciter: uno modo secundum rationem speciei tantum, et sic ab ente perficitur intellectus qui percipit rationem entis, nec tamen ens est in eo secundum esse naturale; et ideo hunc modum perficiendi addit verum super ens: verum enim est in mente . . . , et unumquodque ens in tantum dicitur verum in quantum est conformatum vel conformabile intellectui . . . . Alio modo ens est perfectivum alterius non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in rerum natura, et per hunc modum est perfectivum bonum; bonum enim in rebus est . . . .”
28 See Chapter Five, p. 299.
Thomas defines truth as the adequation of mind and reality\textsuperscript{29}; moreover, for Thomas the reason that a being is true simply by having a form is that, in virtue of this form, a being conforms to the idea of it in God’s Intellect and is capable of causing a correct judgment about it in the human intellect\textsuperscript{30}—in other words, a being is true insofar as it is actually adequated to the divine mind, and the human mind is potentially adequated to it. Now, we have already argued that the nature of beauty is brightness, and furthermore that brightness is not only distinct from both perfection and adequation, but also presupposes each of them.\textsuperscript{31} It follows that beauty is distinct from truth and goodness with respect to their natures or essential conditions as well.

Finally, the relational transcendentals can also be distinguished according to the ways in which they are said of a being absolutely (\textit{simpliciter}). As we saw in the last chapter,\textsuperscript{32} the true is said absolutely of a being on the basis of its first actuality or substantial existence because it is in virtue of this existence that it is actually adequated to God’s intellect and the human mind is potentially adequated to it; the good, meanwhile, is based on perfection, and so is said absolutely of a being on the basis of its second actuality or ultimate perfection, which is its proper activity. Beauty, however, does not simply require perfection as the good does, but also brightness, which consists in a thing’s activity being so proportioned to its nature or substantial form that this form shines in and through the activity\textsuperscript{33}; hence, it seems that beauty is said absolutely of a being not simply on the basis of its first actuality or even of its second actuality, but rather on the basis of

\textsuperscript{29} For example, \textit{De veritate} 1.3. Leonine 22/1.10-11:27-29. “Veri enim ratio consistit in adaequatione rei et intellectus . . .”
\textsuperscript{30} See \textit{De veritate} 1.10 s.c. 3 [Leonine 22/1.33:229-42] and Chapter Five, pp. 350-51.
\textsuperscript{31} See Chapter Five, pp. 348-56.
\textsuperscript{32} See Chapter Five, pp. 349-51.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Summa Theologiae} II-II, 145.2. “[S]piritual beauty consists in this, that a human being’s conduct, or his action, is well-proportioned according to the spiritual brightness of reason.” Leonine 10.147. “[P]ulchritudo spiritualis in hoc consistit quod conversatio hominis, sive actio eius, sit bene proportionata secundum spiritualem rationis claritatem.” See also \textit{In I Corinthios} 11.2 [Marietti 1.346] and \textit{Contra impugnantes} 2.6 ad 22 [Leonine 41.121:1342-52].
the proportion between a being’s first actuality and its second actuality. If beauty is thus said absolutely of a being in a different way than truth and goodness are, it follows that beauty can be distinguished from truth and goodness according to all of their objective traits.

It therefore seems that beauty does express a unique general mode of being since it can apparently be distinguished from the general modes expressed by truth and goodness in all the ways that those modes are distinguished from each other, as can be seen in Figure 3 on p. 392 and in the following summary. First of all, because the proper effect of beauty is possession through the mere apprehension of it, which is a perfection of the will through the intellect, the general mode of being expressed by beauty is “the conformity of being to the will through the intellect,” which distinguishes it from “the conformity of being to the intellect” expressed by truth and from “the conformity of being to the will” expressed by goodness.

Moreover, because beauty’s general mode of being is a relation of being to the soul, this mode can be further distinguished from the side of either being or the soul. From the side of the soul, beauty’s general mode of being can be described as a relation to its proper effect, namely possession through the mere apprehension, which thus distinguishes it from truth, whose proper effect is knowledge, and from goodness, whose proper effect is love. Additionally, in relating to possession through the mere vision of it, beauty also relates to a distinct theological virtue, i.e. hope, and to a distinct requirement for beatitude, i.e. possession or comprehensio, just as truth relates to faith and vision, and goodness to charity and delight.

From the side of being, beauty’s relation to the soul can be distinguished from those of the true and the good in three ways. First, beauty can be distinguished by the principle of being according to which it perfects the soul: while truth perfects the soul only according to a being’s specific nature, and goodness perfects the soul according to both the being’s specific nature and
its existence in reality, it appears that beauty perfects the soul not only according to the being’s specific nature and its existence in reality, but also according to the proportion of the latter to the former. Second, these three transcendentals can be distinguished on the basis of their natures or essential conditions since adequation seems to be the nature of the true, perfection is the nature of the good, and brightness appears to be the nature of the beautiful. Finally, one can distinguish beauty from truth and goodness according to how they are predicated absolutely (simpliciter) of a being since truth is said absolutely of a being on the basis of its first actuality, goodness on the basis of its second actuality, and beauty on the basis of the proportion between the former and the latter. If all of these distinctions are granted as valid, then beauty fulfills the primary and essential characteristic of the transcendentals: it expresses a unique general mode of being.

Since beauty seems to possess the defining feature of the transcendentals, namely the expression of a distinct general mode of being, then beauty apparently also possesses their three marks according to reality and their three marks according to meaning since these traits follow necessarily from the transcendentals’ essential characteristic. Nevertheless, we will briefly go through each of these marks in order to show how it is fulfilled in the case of beauty.

2. Beauty and the Marks according to Reality

It is already clear that beauty possesses the marks of the transcendentals according to reality for Thomas since, as we saw in Chapter One, he attributes these marks to the beautiful in several texts34; nevertheless, in order to clarify how beauty fulfills these marks, we will attempt to demonstrate that beauty does so from what we have learned about beauty for Thomas. Now, when Thomas wishes to demonstrate that the good is identical with being in reality, he starts by

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34 See Chapter One, pp. 68-82.
reasoning back from the meaning of the good, namely desirability, to the nature of the good, namely perfection, and then argues that the latter is identical with actuality or existence.\textsuperscript{35} Hence, we will follow the same procedure in showing that beauty possesses the marks of the transcendentalists according to reality: identity, convertibility, and coextension.

That beauty is identical with being in reality can be shown from the meaning of beauty: “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it.” A thing is possessable through the mere vision of it insofar as it is conjoined to the intellect in the act of seeing, and the intrinsic conjoinability of a being to the intellect is its brightness since the clarity or certainty with which a being is seen depends on its degree of conjoining to the seer. Hence, brightness is the essential condition for beauty because a being is possessable through vision to the degree that it is bright. Since a being is conjoinable to the intellect through its form,\textsuperscript{36} a being’s brightness comes to it from its form, through which it also receives its being,\textsuperscript{37} and so a being’s brightness is identical with its actuality, which is “a certain light within it.”\textsuperscript{38} Thus, since beauty essentially consists in brightness, which is identical with being, beauty and being are identical in reality.

From beauty’s identity with being in reality, it follows that beauty is also convertible and coextensive with being in reality. If beauty is really identical with being, then every being is

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.1. Leonine 4.56. “[B]onum et ens sunt idem secundum rem: sed differunt secundum rationem tantum. Quod sic patet. Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit, quod aliquid sit appetibile . . . . Manifestum est autem quod unumquodque est appetibile secundum quod est perfectum: nam omnia appetunt suam perfectionem. Intantum est autem perfectum unumquodque, inquantum est actu: unde manifestum est quod intantum est aliquid bonum, inquantum est ens: esse enim est actualitas omnis rei, ut ex superioribus patet. Unde manifestum est quod bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem: sed bonum dicit rationem appetibilis, quam non dicit ens.”

\textsuperscript{36} As \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.4 ad 1 states, “knowledge occurs in virtue of assimilation, and similitude regards the form.” Leonine 4.61. “[C]ognitio fit per assimilationem, similitudo autem respicit formam . . . .”

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 4.5.349. Marietti 114. “[O]mnis autem forma, per quam res habet esse, est participatio quaedam divinae claritatis.” Cf. \textit{In De divinis nominibus} 4.6.360 [Marietti 118]

beautiful, and every beautiful thing is a being. Beauty and being can therefore be predicated conversely of each other, and so beauty has the mark of convertibility according to reality with being and the other transcendentals. Likewise, from its convertibility with being and the other transcendentals it follows that beauty is coextensive with them since, if every being is beautiful and every beauty is a being, then beauty is found everywhere that being is. Thus, from beauty’s expression of the general mode of being “that which is possessable through the mere vision of it,” it follows that beauty also possesses all the mark of the transcendentals according to reality.

3. Beauty and the Marks according to Meaning

It is not difficult to show that beauty has the first mark of the transcendentals according to meaning, i.e. (5) distinction. If beauty indeed expresses a distinct general mode of being, then it clearly adds something in meaning to “being,” namely a purely conceptual relation of conformity to the will through the intellect. Hence, beauty apparently also possesses the mark of distinction in meaning from “being” and all the other transcendentals.

A problem arises with the mark of (6) order, however. If the possession to which beauty relates is a possession through the mere apprehension or knowledge of the being, then it would seem that beauty precedes goodness, just as knowledge precedes love. In fact, it even seems that beauty precedes truth since the conjoining to the intellect that beauty causes with its brightness is itself what causes the knowledge of being since a being is known as a result of the knower’s being assimilated to the being through its species. Hence, it seems that the only way to find a place for beauty in the order of transcendentals is to alter that order by inserting beauty between

\[39\] It might be objected not every beautiful thing is a being since there can be a beautiful thought that does not exist (e.g. a gold mountain); however, a beautiful thought still has existence in the mind, and is therefore a “being of reason.”
“something” and “true,” in which case beauty would not have a place in this order.

This problem is easily resolved, however, in light of our discussion of beauty’s proper effect.40 There we noted that, while beauty is conjoined to the intellect, it is possessed by the will since to possess a thing is to be able to use or enjoy it, and it is the will that enjoys beauty.

Now, in addition to conjoining, enjoyment or pleasure requires knowledge and love as its causes; hence, before one can enjoy or delight in something, one must first know and love it. Yet, if one cannot enjoy something without first knowing and loving it, then likewise one cannot possess something without first knowing and loving it since, again, possession simply means “being able to use or enjoy as one wishes.” Hence, while the conjoining to the intellect that beauty causes with its brightness precedes knowledge and love, the possession by the will that it causes follows knowledge and love since, just as you cannot love a thing without knowing it, so you cannot possess a thing through the mere apprehension of it, i.e. be able to enjoy it simply by seeing it, without first knowing and loving it. Since beauty’s proper effect is possession through the mere vision, rather than conjoining, beauty does not precede truth and goodness in the order of transcendentals, but rather comes after them at the end of the order. Hence, Thomas’s order of transcendentals does not need to be revised for beauty to have a distinct place in that order, and beauty fulfills the second mark of the transcendentals according to meaning.

The conclusion that beauty has a place in the order of transcendentals, namely at the end of the list and after goodness, finds support from two other considerations. First of all, what we have argued is the nature of the beautiful, namely brightness, presupposes the nature of the good, namely perfection, since a being becomes bright by acquiring due proportion, which results from acquiring integrity or perfection. Secondly, one of the reasons for truth’s being prior in meaning

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40 See pp. 361-64 above.
to goodness is that the good perfects the soul not just in the way that truth does, i.e. according to a being’s specific nature, but also in a further way, i.e. according to the existence of a being in reality; likewise, goodness is prior to beauty in meaning because beauty perfects the soul not just in the way that the good does, i.e. according to the being’s specific nature and its existence in reality, but also in a further way, i.e. according to the proportion between the being’s specific nature and its existence in reality. These considerations confirm that beauty fulfills the second mark of the transcendentals according to meaning, i.e. fitting into their conceptual order.

Finally, it follows from beauty’s possession of the second mark of the transcendentals according to meaning that it also has the third and last one, namely (7) conceptual inclusion of all prior transcendentals. If what beauty adds in meaning to being follows on what goodness adds to being, then beauty’s conceptual addition is made directly to the good rather than being. Thomas himself indicates when he says in Summa Theologiae I-II, 27.1 ad 3 that “the beautiful adds to the good a certain relation to the cognitive power.” If beauty’s meaning is constituted through addition to that of the good, then beauty includes the good in its meaning, and therefore the five other transcendentals as well since the good adds to and includes these conceptually. Beauty therefore possesses the third mark of the transcendentals according to meaning and their seventh mark overall, namely 7) conceptual inclusion of all prior transcendentals.

C. The Last Transcendental

When we first started to investigate the systematic question of beauty’s transcendental

41 De veritate 21.3. Leonine 22/3.598:46-53. “Considerando ergo verum et bonum secundum se, sic verum est prius bono secundum rationem cum verum sit perfectivum aliciuus secundum rationem speciei, bonum autem non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in re: et ita plura includit in se ratio boni quam ratio veri, et se habet quodam modo per additionem ad illam. Et sic bonum praesupponit verum . . .”

status—i.e. whether beauty’s being a distinct transcendental is entailed or required by Thomas’s metaphysics—we adopted as the guideline for that inquiry the one given by Aertsen, i.e. that “the question as to the transcendentality of the beautiful cannot be resolved until it has become clear what universal mode of being the beautiful expresses that is not yet expressed by the other transcendentals.” I would argue that this guideline has now been fulfilled since it seems that beauty does indeed express a distinct general mode of being, namely the conformity of being to the will through the intellect, and therefore possesses the marks of the transcendentals not only according to reality—identity, convertibility, and coextension with being—but also according to meaning—distinction, a place in their order, and inclusion of prior terms in that order. Hence, it appears that the systematic question of beauty’s transcendental status can be answered in the affirmative: Thomas’s metaphysics does in fact entail that beauty has a place in the order of transcendental, namely after goodness and thus at the end of the current order.

In fact, beauty seems to be the last member of the order of transcendental, not just in the sense of coming after all the other ones that have been enumerated so far, but even in the sense that there cannot be any terms coming after it in that list. The last mark of the transcendental according to meaning is that each new member conceptually includes the one that immediately precedes it, so any transcendental that comes after beauty would have to conceptually include it, just as beauty adds to and includes goodness; yet what term could possibly include beauty in its meaning, given that beauty not only includes all six prior transcendental in its meaning, but also adds to them the meaning “that which can be possessed through the mere vision of it”? Even if there were terms other than beauty being proposed as viable candidates for membership in the

order of transcendentals, which there are not,\textsuperscript{44} it seems very improbable and even inconceivable that they could conceptually include a term as rich in meaning as beauty. Hence, if beauty is in fact a distinct transcendental, then it apparently does not only come at the end of Thomas’s list of transcendentals, but in fact ends that list by precluding the addition of further members.

We therefore conclude that the complete order of the transcendentals in Thomas’s metaphysics is the following. First, of course, is “being” (\textit{ens}), or “that which is” (\textit{quod est}), which is the primary conception of the mind because it expresses being’s existence or actuality, and everything is knowable insofar as it is actual. The second is “thing” (\textit{res}), or “that which is determinate” (\textit{quod est ratum}), which follows directly on “being” because it expresses the essence that receives and determines a being’s existence, and which is implied by the “that which” (\textit{quod}) in the definition of “being” as “that which is” (\textit{quod est}). From “thing” follows “one” (\textit{unum}), or “that which is undivided” (\textit{quod est indivisum}), since it is due to being determined by its essence that a being is divided from its negation, but is undivided in itself. Fourth is “something” (\textit{aliquid}), which means “that which is diverse, or divided from others” (\textit{quod est diversum, vel divisum ab aliis}), and which thus follows on “one” because it is in virtue of their intrinsic unity that beings form a multitude, and so are divided not simply from their negations but from beings that are truly “other” (\textit{aliud}). The next is “true” (\textit{verum}), or “that which is knowable” (\textit{quod est cognoscibile}), which expresses the conformity of being to the intellect, and which follows on “something” because a being is only intelligible insofar as it is

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{44} As Waddell points out, when people discuss whether it is possible to add new terms to the list of transcendentals in \textit{De veritate} 1.1, they are “thinking, of course, of beauty in particular.” Waddell, “Truth or Transcendentals,” 216. The only exception to this rule is Clarke, who argues that not only “beautiful” but also “active” should be added to the list of transcendentals in “The Transcendental Properties,” 294. While Clarke is certainly right that every being is active insofar as it exists, “active” is not a distinct transcendental from goodness for Thomas since the reason that beings have a necessary inclination to action is that “operation is the ultimate perfection of each thing,” and every being loves and desires its perfection. In other words, being’s activity is part of its perfection and goodness.
\end{footnote}
distinguished from others. Sixth is the “good” (bonum), or “that which is desirable” (quod est appetibile), which expresses the conformity of being to the will, and therefore follows on “true” because knowledge is the cause of love. Finally, it is my opinion that the seventh and last of the transcendents is “beautiful” (pulchrum) because it has the meaning “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it” (quod est comprehensibile per ipsam apprehensionem cuius), and thus expresses the conformity of being to the will through the intellect; moreover, in my opinion “beautiful” follows on “good” because one can only possess a being through the mere vision of it (i.e. be able to enjoy it as one wishes merely by seeing it) insofar as it is bright, which presupposes that is perfect, and thus lovable or good. Hence, the order of transcendents that I consider to be required by Thomas’s metaphysics is nearly identical to the order that is presented in his writings, and differs from it only by adding “beautiful” at the end of the order, as can be seen by comparing my diagrams of them, Figure 2 on p. 87 and Figure 4 on p. 393.  

This conclusion is, of course, a controversial one, and, while this dissertation has tried as much as possible to anticipate possible objections to its thesis, there are undoubtedly others that can be raised. Nevertheless, in my opinion, this study has succeeded in refuting all of the most serious objections to beauty’s being a transcendental, and especially the primary ones that were raised by Aertsen: that relational transcendents must relate to distinct powers of the soul, and there is no third power to which beauty can relate; that beauty adds to and is consequently a transcendental of the good rather than being; that the relation to the cognitive power that beauty

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45 I do not mean to suggest that adding beauty is not a significant change to the order of transcendents presented by Thomas. Rather, I simply wish to point out that, unlike other accounts of how beauty can be added to the order of transcendents, my account does not require any further changes to this order in order to accommodate beauty.

46 See Chapter Two, pp. 117-20, and Chapter Six, pp. 365-70.

adds to goodness is the same as the one that truth adds to being\textsuperscript{48}; and finally that beauty is a mere synonym for the combination of two transcendentals, i.e. “the extension of the true to the good,”\textsuperscript{49} rather than a distinct transcendental in its own right.

There is one objection, however, that we have left unanswered until now, which one might call “the fittingness objection”: adding beauty to the order of transcendentals ruins the fittingness of that order’s ending with the good. As we said in Chapter Two, Aertsen seems to make this argument when he says that the order of transcendentals “is completed in the ultimate, the good,” on the basis of Thomas’s statement in \textit{Summa} I, 5.1 ad 1 that the good has the nature of the ultimate because it consists in perfection.\textsuperscript{50} Hence, by adding beauty to the end of the list and thus making the good merely the \textit{penultimate} transcendental, it seems that one has ruined the fittingness of having goodness, or “the ultimate,” as the last transcendental.

As we said in Chapter Two, although this argument is based on the true premise that good has the nature of the ultimate, it only works if there is not, in fact, a term that possesses the nature of the ultimate to an equal or even greater degree than the good—which is precisely what beauty turns out to be. That beauty is more ultimate than goodness is evident first of all from the fact that beauty has a greater number of conditions than goodness since a being is good insofar as it is perfect, but a being is beautiful to the degree that it is “bright” (\textit{clarum}), which presupposes “harmony or due proportion” (\textit{consonantia vel debita proportio}) and therefore also “integrity or perfection” (\textit{integritas vel perfectio}). What follows is that more is required of a being for it to be absolutely beautiful (\textit{pulchrum simpliciter}) than for it to be absolutely good (\textit{bonum simpliciter}): to be good without qualification a being must be entirely perfect, but to be beautiful without

\textsuperscript{48} See Chapter Two, pp. 131-33, Chapter Four, pp. 263-67, and Chapter Five, pp. 346-56.

\textsuperscript{49} See Chapter Two, pp. 133-44 and Chapter Five, pp. 346-56.

\textsuperscript{50} Aertsen, \textit{The Transcendentals}, 352. \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, 5.1 ad 1. Leonine 4.56. “\textit{Sed bonum dicit rationem perfecti, quod est appetibile: et per consequens dicit rationem ultimi.”}
qualification a being’s perfection must also be fully manifest to others, or bright (*clarum*).

Thomas himself seems to make this point when he discusses what the Divine Name of “Lord” (*Domine*) entails according to Dionysius in *In De divinis nominibus* 12.1:

This is therefore what he says, that “dominion is not merely the exceeding of those who are worse,” . . . “but” it is also “the perfect and complete possession both of beauties and of goods”; he says, however, “of beauties and of goods,” for *it is not only required that he who dominates abound in goods, but also, in order that he be held in reverence, it is required that those goods be conspicuous, which pertains to the meaning of beauty.* [Emphasis mine]

This text strongly implies that Thomas considers beauty to be more ultimate than goodness since he says that it “pertains to the meaning of beauty (*pertinet ad rationem pulchritudinis*)” not only that someone “abound in goods,” but also “that those goods be conspicuous,” which Thomas says is the reason why Dionysius identifies dominion with “the perfect and complete possession” of beauties as well as goods. Hence, this passage supports our conclusion that beauty is more ultimate than goodness because goodness requires only that a being is perfect, whereas beauty further requires that a being is bright (*clarum*), i.e. conspicuous or manifest.

In addition to being more ultimate than the good with regard to their objective conditions, beauty seems to be primarily more ultimate than the good in their relations to the soul since, as we have argued, the good’s relation to love precedes beauty’s relation to possession through vision. Moreover, it seems that the possession through vision caused by beauty does not simply follow the love caused by the good in the order of the soul’s acts, but also completes that order, as is implied by Thomas’s statements about the circle in the acts of the soul in *De veritate* 1.2:

The motion . . . of the cognitive power is terminated in the soul: for it is required that the known be in the knower in the mode of the knower; but the motion of the

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51 Marietti 355. “Hoc est ergo quod dicit quod dominatio non tantum est excessus peiorum, . . . sed etiam est perfecta et omnimoda possessio et pulchrorum et bonorum; dicit autem: pulchrorum et bonorum: non solum enim oportet eum qui dominatur abundare in bonis, sed etiam, ad hoc quod in reverentia habeatur, oportet illa bona esse conspicua, quod ad rationem pulchritudinis pertinet.”
appetitive [power] is terminated in the thing. It is for this reason that the Philosopher in the third book of the De anima posits a certain circle in the acts of the soul, insofar, namely, as the thing that is outside the soul moves the intellect, and the thing understood moves the appetite, and the appetite strives for this, that it may arrive at (perveniat ad) the thing from which the motion started.\(^{52}\)

This text is justly famous among Thomists for the “circle in the acts of the soul” that it describes, which is composed of a motion from being to the soul in the process of knowledge, and a motion from the soul to being in the process of love, as is depicted in Figure 5 on p. 393. A detail often overlooked in this text, however, is that what the appetite “strives for” (tendit ad) in the second half of the circle is “that it may arrive at (perveniat ad) the thing from which the motion started,” which is thus what closes and completes the circle. Since for Thomas arriving at or attaining is synonymous with possession or *comprehensio*,\(^{53}\) which beauty causes through an act of vision, it follows that beauty closes and completes the circle of fire with its proper effect.

Moreover, since the attainment beauty causes is possession through knowledge rather than through some other activity, it follows that, the more beautiful a being becomes and thus the more that it is possessed simply through being known, the more that the term of the motion from the soul to being (i.e. complete attainment of being) draws closer to the term of the motion from being toward the soul (i.e. knowledge of being). In fact, the two are absolutely identical in the Vision of God, or Beauty Itself, Who gives absolutely perfect possession of Himself through the mere vision of Himself. Thus, in addition to completing it, beauty tightens the “circle in the acts of the soul” to the vanishing point, as depicted in Figure 6 on p. 394. Beauty is thus more truly ultimate than goodness in the circle between being and the soul since the motion that closes the

\(^{52}\) Leonine 22/1.9:62-71. “Motus autem cognitiva virtutis terminatur ad animam, oportet enim quod cognitum sit in cognoscente per modum cognoscentis, sed motus appetitivae terminatur ad res: inde est quod Philosophus in III De anima ponit circulum quendam in actibus animae, secundum scilicet quod res quae est extra animam movet intellectum, et res intellecta movet appetitum, et appetitus tendit ad hoc ut perveniat ad rem a qua motus incepit . . .”

\(^{53}\) Summa Theologiae I, 12.7 ad 1. “For he who attains someone, when he already holds him, is said to possess him.” Leonine 4.127. “Qui enim attingit aliquem, quando iam tenet ipsum, comprehendere eum dicitur.”
circle, i.e. the motion from the soul to being, is started by the love caused by goodness, but is completed and tightened by the possession through vision caused by beauty.

While other reasons can be given to explain why beauty, rather than the good, is “the ultimate” that completes the order of transcendentals,54 the decisive proof of this conclusion is that beauty completes a circularity not only in the acts of the soul, but even in the transcendentals themselves. In fact, it is a circularity pointed out by Aertsen, who notes that “the relational transcendentals correspond to the triad 'being-thing-one' but in reverse order”:

Something’ is the counterpart of “one,” as Thomas himself states: “just as being is called ‘one’ insofar as it is undivided in itself, so it is called ‘something’ insofar as it is divided from others.” “True” corresponds to “thing,” because the conformity of being with the intellect is an adequation in which being is assimilated according to its “reality,” that is, its quiddity or species. Finally, 'good' corresponds with “being,” because the conformity of being with the appetite is the ordering of the appetite to something in its own being. The unfolding of the transcendentals transpires in a circular pattern.55

The circularity that Aertsen points out here is simply the logical consequence of *De veritate* 21.1 and 21.3, where Thomas says that, while the true perfects the soul solely according to a being’s specific nature, the good perfects the soul according to a being’s existence in reality. Hence, not only does “something” correspond to “one,” as *De veritate* 1.1 states,56 but “true” corresponds to “thing” and “good” to “being” since “thing” expresses being’s quiddity or specific nature, and “being” expresses being’s actuality, or existence in reality. There is thus indeed a remarkable circularity in Thomas’s order of transcendentals, which we have depicted in Figure 7 on p. 395.

Once one sees this circularity depicted schematically, one sees how beauty not only can

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54 For instance, because the meaning of goodness is “that which is lovable,” it is attributed not only to what is lovable as an end (i.e. the good in itself, or *bonum honestum*) but also to what is lovable as a means to the end (i.e. the useful) or as giving rest to the desire (i.e. the pleasant). The beautiful, however, is identical only with the *bonum honestum*, so it can only be attributed to what is loved as an end, and not to what is loved solely as a means or as pleasurable. See *Summa Theologiae* I, 5.6 [Leonine 4.64-65] and *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 145.2 [Leonine 10.147].
56 See Chapter One, p. 38.
but should be added to the circle. Beauty expresses a being’s ability to be possessed or attained by the will through the intellect, and thus to satisfy the soul’s longing for it; hence, beauty could be seen as adding a line at the top of the circle that goes from the good to being, as seen in Figure 8 on p. 395. This is a fitting addition for several reasons. First, putting beauty on the same level as the good signifies that both perfect the same power, namely the will, while beauty’s adding a line that connects goodness to being shows that it fulfills the will’s desire for being (to which the good relates) by causing the attainment of being through vision. Secondly, that “beautiful” adds a line going in the opposite direction of the line added by “something” is a fitting representation of how the division of beings from each other, which “something” expresses, is overcome by the union of being to the soul, which beauty causes with its brightness. Thirdly, adding beauty to the circle clarifies the nature of the circularity in the order of the transcendentals, as being first an outward motion from being to the soul, which is expressed by “thing,” “one,” and “something,” and then a returning motion from the soul to being, which is expressed by “true,” “good,” and “beautiful.” Finally, of course, beauty completes this circle by adding a line that ends in “being” where the circle began, which is fitting for the reason that beauty expresses a being’s ability, not just to cause knowledge of itself (as is expressed by truth), but to communicate its very existence to the soul through that knowledge. Beauty is therefore what causes the final union of being and the soul that fulfills the soul’s motion toward being.

Hence, adding beauty to the list of transcendentals does not merely leave unharmed the necessity and fittingness of this order as indicated by Thomas but actually completes it since beauty expresses the culmination of the circle that this order traces between being and the soul.

57 De Blignieres also argues that there is a certain correspondence between “beautiful” and “something,” though he does so on somewhat different grounds, namely that the harmony between object and subject in the experience of beauty requires a distance between them. de Blignieres, *Le mystère de l’être*, 125-26 and 130.
the joy of the soul in its union with and possession of being through vision. Beauty does not merely end the list of transcendentals in the sense of precluding the addition of further members to that list, as we have already seen, but also ends it in the sense of perfecting and completing it. It is therefore quite fitting indeed if beauty is, as it seems to be, the last transcendental.

**Conclusion**

Our investigation has at least reached a verdict: while Thomas himself does not take any position on whether beauty is a transcendental, as we saw in Chapter One,\(^{58}\) it seems that beauty is in fact a distinct transcendental in his metaphysics. Not only is beauty identical in reality with the other transcendentals, but it also seems to be conceptually distinguished from them by the meaning “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it.” and therefore appears to express a distinct general mode of being, namely the conformity of being to the will through the intellect. Moreover, it can be argued that beauty not only possesses all the characteristics of the transcendentals and therefore has a place in their order, but even gives a fitting completion to that order. This study therefore seems to have confirmed the opinion of many Thomists that beauty belongs to the order of transcendentals in Thomas’s thought.

In fact, our conclusion not only accords with the views of transcendentalists on the question of whether beauty is a transcendental, but even to some degree on the question of how beauty is a transcendental. We have already argued that, while Kovach is wrong in claiming that beauty relates jointly or equally to intellect and will, he is right in saying that it relates to both of these powers since in fact it seems that beauty relates directly to the intellect and ultimately to the will. Likewise, Maritain’s view that beauty is “the radiance of all the transcendentals united”

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\(^{58}\) See Chapter One, pp. 85-86.
seems to be correct in the sense that, if beauty is indeed the last transcendental, it thus includes all the others in its meaning since each transcendental conceptually includes all the ones prior to it. Especially close to our conclusion is Febrer’s theory that beauty is “being as proportioned to the intellect by its perfection” since we have argued that the nature of beauty is brightness, which presupposes perfection. Finally, there is even some agreement between our account and von Balthasar’s theory that beauty is being as related to the senses since it is indeed true that the only way for human beings to enjoy the beauty of being in this life (though not in the next) is through the apprehension, not only of the intellect, but also of sight and hearing.

The scholar whose views harmonize the most with our conclusions is Granados since he is the only other scholar who maintains that for Thomas beauty does not please without being possessed, but rather by being possessed solely through knowledge. Furthermore, this position on aesthetic pleasure leads Granados to conclude, just as we have done, that it is the nature of beauty to cause possession of itself through the mere apprehension of it, which it does by means of its brightness. Hence, although our account of how beauty is a transcendental may be more elaborate than that of Granados, we are nevertheless fundamentally in agreement with him.

Most importantly, this conclusion accords with and confirms the intuitions that Thomas himself seems to have had regarding the beautiful. As we said in Chapter Two, it seems likely that Thomas rejected the view of his teacher Albert that beauty is only the true taken as good, or the combination of truth and goodness, because he had an intuition that the statement “being is not only true and good but also beautiful” is not redundant.59 Our investigation has argued that this intuition is correct: it is not redundant to say that being is beautiful as well as true and good because the word “beautiful” expresses something new about being, namely that it is intrinsically

59 See Chapter Two, pp. 144-45.
capable of being possessed by the will through the mere apprehension of the intellect. Since our investigation’s conclusions thus appear to harmonize with Thomas’s own opinions on beauty, it seems to me that beauty should be considered a transcendental in Thomas’s metaphysics.
Figure 3: The Traits of the Relational Transcendentals in Thomas’s Metaphysics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational Transcendental</th>
<th><strong>True</strong></th>
<th><strong>Good</strong></th>
<th><strong>Beautiful</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEANINGS AND GENERAL MODES OF BEING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>That which is knowable</td>
<td>That which is desirable</td>
<td>That which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Mode of Being</td>
<td>Being as conformed to the intellect</td>
<td>Being as conformed to the will (directly and absolutely)</td>
<td>Being as conformed to the will through the intellect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRAITS ON THE SIDE OF THE SUBJECT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power of the soul to which it relates directly</th>
<th>Intellect (Cognitive Power)</th>
<th>Will (Appetitive Power)</th>
<th>Intellect (Cognitive Power)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power of the soul to which it relates as perfecting</td>
<td>Intellect (Cognitive Power)</td>
<td>Will (Appetitive Power)</td>
<td>Will (Appetitive Power)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper effect in the soul</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Possession through the Mere Apprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement for beatitude (or gift of soul) that it causes</td>
<td>Vision (Visio)</td>
<td>Delight (Dilectio)</td>
<td>Possession (Comprehensio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological virtue that it fulfills and to which it relates</td>
<td>Faith (Fides)</td>
<td>Charity (Caritas)</td>
<td>Hope (Spes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRAITS ON THE SIDE OF THE OBJECT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect(s) of being according to which it perfects the soul</th>
<th>Specific Nature Only</th>
<th>Specific Nature and Existence in Reality</th>
<th>Specific Nature, Existence in Reality, and Proportion between them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential condition or Nature</td>
<td>Adequation (Conformity to intellect according to representation)</td>
<td>Perfection</td>
<td>Brightness (Conjoinability to intellect, or Conformity to intellect according to nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said absolutely (simpliciter) on basis of . . .</td>
<td>First Actuality (Substantial Existence)</td>
<td>Second Actuality (Ultimate Perfection)</td>
<td>Proportion between First Actuality and Second Actuality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4: The Derivation of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Metaphysics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Transcendentals</th>
<th>Other Primary Notions</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being (ens)</td>
<td>Non-Being (non ens)</td>
<td>The negation of being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thing (res)</td>
<td>Division (divisio)</td>
<td>Arises primarily between being and non-being, but also among beings on account of their including one another’s negations. Therefore presupposes “thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One (unum)</td>
<td>Multitude (multitudo)</td>
<td>Means “that which is undivided in itself.” Presupposes “division” because it expresses the negation of division in a being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something (aliquid)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Things that are divided from one another but are one in themselves. Therefore presupposes “one.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True (verum)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Means “that which is knowable.” Presupposes “something” because a being is knowable insofar as it is distinguished from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good (bonum)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Means “that which is desirable.” Presupposes “true” because a being is only lovable insofar as it is knowable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful (pulchrum)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Means “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it.” Presupposes “good” because a being is only possessable or enjoyable through the mere apprehension of it insofar as it is lovable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: The Circle in the Acts of the Soul
Figure 6: The Tightening of the Circle in the Acts of the Soul by Beauty

**As Beauty Increases**

Knowledge (Truth)

Soul

Being

Attainment (Beauty)

Love (Goodness)

**The Vision of Beauty Itself**

Perfect Knowledge (Truth)

Soul | God

Perfect Attainment (Beauty)

Perfect Love (Goodness)
Figure 7: The Circularity of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontological Aspect</th>
<th>Psychological Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Existence</td>
<td>3. Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Essence</td>
<td>2. Intellect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indivision</td>
<td>1. Division</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ontological Aspect:
1. Existence
2. Essence
3. Indivision

Psychological Aspect:
3. Will
2. Intellect
1. Division

Being

Figure 8: The Circularity of the Transcendentals in Thomas’s Metaphysics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontological Aspect</th>
<th>Psychological Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Existence</td>
<td>3. Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Essence</td>
<td>2. Intellect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indivision</td>
<td>1. Division</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ontological Aspect:
1. Existence
2. Essence
3. Indivision

Psychological Aspect:
3. Will
2. Intellect
1. Division

Soul
CONCLUSION

The goal of this dissertation was to determine whether beauty is a distinct transcendental for Thomas Aquinas. In the Introduction, we showed that this question actually consists of two questions, a historical one and a systematic one: “Did Thomas himself consider beauty to be a distinct transcendental?” and “Does the metaphysics left by Thomas imply or entail that beauty is a distinct transcendental?” Moreover, we saw that neither question can be answered in isolation from a third question: “What is the meaning of ‘beauty’ in Thomas’s thought?”

In Chapter One, we took up the historical question of beauty’s transcendental status, which we aimed to resolve by comparing Thomas’s writings on the transcendentals with his texts on the beautiful. We discovered that, of the seven marks of the transcendentals, their essential feature of expressing general modes of being and their three features according to meaning (i.e. distinction, order, and inclusion) are utterly unique to them, but their traits according to reality (i.e. identity, convertibility, coextension) are also shared with certain terms that are not distinct transcendentals, namely synonyms of the transcendentals. These marks according to reality turned out to be the only characteristics of the transcendentals that Thomas definitely attributes to beauty, though he also never denies that beauty possesses the others; moreover, while none of the lists are clearly intended to be exhaustive, there is no good explanation for why Thomas left beauty off of them if he in fact did consider it a transcendental. Hence, we concluded that one cannot determine from Thomas’s writings whether he held or rejected the view that beauty is a distinct transcendental, and that he most likely did not have a definite opinion on the issue since he treats of beauty only in passing, and seems to be uncertain about its precise meaning.
Chapter Two began this study’s investigation of the systematic question of beauty’s transcendental status, by examining both the arguments that certain Thomists have made in favor of beauty’s being a transcendental, and the arguments that Aertsen has raised against it. While we came to agree with Aertsen that “the attempts of various scholars to find a distinct place for beauty as a transcendental must be regarded as having failed,”¹ his conclusion that beauty is “the true taken as good” for Thomas, rather than a distinct transcendental,² was contradicted by our analysis, which not only rejected his arguments against beauty’s transcendental status, but also discovered that throughout his career Thomas quietly but consciously rejected the view of his teacher Albert that beauty is the true taken as good. Nevertheless, we found that the extension of the true to the good is the only possible place for beauty outside the order of transcendentals, as it is the one theory that explains how beauty can be transcendental (i.e. a term that transcends the categories) without being a transcendental (i.e. a distinct attribute of being): namely, by being a mere synonym for the combination of two transcendentals, the true and the good. Moreover, we saw that Aertsen’s theory cannot be definitively ruled out until we know what the meaning of beauty is for Thomas. Hence, it became the goal for the rest of the dissertation to discover what the meaning of beauty is—and thereby whether it is a distinct transcendental—in the only way possible: determining the exact nature of beauty’s proper effect, i.e. pleasing when seen, and then reasoning back to the cause of that effect, i.e. the essence of beauty.

In Chapter Three, we began the search for beauty’s meaning by exploring the nature of aesthetic visio, i.e. the vision or apprehension of beauty for Thomas, since this perception is the specific difference by which Thomas defines beauty’s proper effect, i.e. pleasing when seen. After drawing from Thomas’s writings the distinctive features of aesthetic visio, we briefly

¹ Aertsen. The Transcendentals, 353.
² Ibid., 354, 359.
reviewed both the nature of knowledge and the process of human knowing in Thomas’s thought. We then examined several candidates for aesthetic *visio* to see whether they accorded both with Thomas’s description of *visio* and with his theory of knowledge in general. We found that, notwithstanding the popular consensus among contemporary Thomists that aesthetic *visio* is some special sort of non-conceptual knowing, for Thomas it is actually just “ordinary” intellectual knowledge, albeit the highest form of it: the act of understanding (*intellectus*) or contemplation. For the human being, the activity of contemplation is mediated by the senses and thus occurs in the intellect’s turn to the phantasm; however, this activity is purely non-sensible and intellectual in its highest forms, i.e. in the perfect acts of intellectual vision enjoyed by the angels, the saints, and God. Hence, although aesthetic perception is a composite of intellectual and sense knowledge in human beings, it is a purely intellectual activity in higher beings.

The fourth chapter proceeded to investigate the effect by which Thomas defines the beautiful, i.e. the pleasure it causes when seen. We saw that, since Thomas defines beauty as that the *mere* apprehension of which pleases, for him aesthetic pleasure can only be one of the kinds of pleasure that are caused solely by the knowledge of either the senses or the intellect—i.e. the delight of the sensuality in the agreeable stimulation of the senses, the delight of the will in the activity of knowing itself, and the delight of the will in the object of knowledge. Hence, we examined each of these to see whether it could be the proper effect of beauty. What we found was that, while sensual delight necessarily accompanies the vision of sensible beauty, and delight in the act of knowing always accompanies the vision of transcendental beauty, the proper effect of transcendental beauty is delight in the object known since it is the only kind of pleasure that is caused always and only by beautiful beings, and that has a contrary pain caused always and only by beauty’s contrary, ugliness. Moreover, recognizing this delight as the proper effect...
of beauty immediately resolves a number of problems in Thomas’s aesthetics that have vexed Thomists for years. This pleasure requires not only knowledge of and love for a being, but also possession of it through the act of knowing; as a result, we concluded that most contemporary Thomists have been wrong about aesthetic pleasure for Thomas. According to them, beauty pleases when seen because it satisfies a desire merely for the act of knowing it and thus without being possessed; for Thomas, however, beauty satisfies a desire for itself, which it does by being possessed solely through knowledge. Since possession is a requirement for delight that is distinct from knowledge and love, we realized that, if beauty causes possession through vision and the true taken as good does not, then beauty expresses a unique general mode of being (i.e. a relation to possession through the mere apprehension as its proper effect) and is thus a transcendental.

Hence, in Chapter Five we sought to determine whether possession through the mere vision is beauty’s proper effect by seeing whether such possession is both caused by beauty’s three objective conditions and not caused by the true accepted as good. We began the chapter by examining the nature of and order between beauty’s three conditions, and found that brightness seems to be the nature or essential condition of the beautiful, harmony or due proportion appears to be its proximate material condition, and integrity or perfection seems to be its remote material condition, just as other Thomists have concluded. Then, we found that because comprehensio or possession is the result of conjoining, and a being’s brightness is its ability to be conjoined to the intellect, beauty does indeed cause possession through vision by means of what appears to be its essential condition, namely brightness, as is also apparently confirmed by numerous aspects of Thomas’s theory of beauty. Lastly, we concluded that possession through vision is not caused by the true taken as good since goodness does not relate to the cognitive power, and the relation to the intellect that is expressed by truth is not conjoinability, or conformity according to nature,
but rather adequation, or conformity according to representation. The chapter concluded that possession through vision is indeed beauty’s proper effect, in which case beauty does express a unique mode of being and therefore appears to belong to the order of the transcendentals in Thomas’s thought, though it was not yet entirely clear how it does so.

Finally, in Chapter Six, we set out to give a complete account of beauty’s meaning and transcendental status in Thomas’s thought. We began by presenting a definition of the beautiful in Thomas’s metaphysics as “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it,” and then used this definition to argue that beauty thus expresses a unique general mode of being, i.e. the conformity of being to the will through the intellect. Moreover, we tried to show how beauty also fulfills all the other marks of the transcendentals, namely those according to reality and meaning. Once it had been shown in this way that beauty in fact seems to meet the requirements for being a transcendental, we considered the objection that beauty’s membership in the order of transcendentals ruins the fittingness of that order’s being ended by the good, and discovered that, far from marring Thomas’s order of transcendentals, beauty in fact provides a fitting completion to it. Hence, we concluded that beauty is the last of the transcendentals in Thomas’s thought—a verdict drawing support from the fact that Thomas himself seems to have thought that “beauty” expresses something unique about being, as is the proper function of the transcendentals.

This conclusion obviously has a number of implications for Thomas’s thought, which we can only begin to enumerate here. For one thing, if beauty is a distinct transcendental, then, like the others, it expresses a distinct “aspect” of being according to which being can be considered; hence, it appears that the study of being insofar as it is beautiful is not reducible to the study of being insofar as it is true and good, and is thus a distinct and necessary part of studying being insofar as it is being in metaphysics. Likewise, since the transcendentals are also attributed to
God analogically as some of His transcendent attributes, beauty’s being a distinct transcendental would mean that it is also a distinct name of God, in which case the study of God insofar as He is Beauty Itself is not the same as studying Him insofar as He is Truth Itself and Goodness Itself, but is rather a distinct part of theology in its own right. Finally, our conclusion that beauty is a relational transcendental, along with truth and goodness, indicates that the so-called “classical triad” of truth, goodness, and beauty does indeed hold true within Thomas’s thought, and expresses three ways in which all of reality relates to the human soul.

There are also specific issues in Thomas’s thought for which our discoveries regarding beauty have obvious implications. For example, our conclusion that for Thomas every being insofar as it is a being is beautiful, or possessable through the mere apprehension, provides yet more confirmation of Thomas’s commitment to the identity theory of knowledge, in which the knower not only knows reality directly, but is even united to reality through that knowledge. Hence, we have found another reason for rejecting the view of recent scholars that Thomas has a representationalist theory of knowledge, despite his insistence to the contrary.

Likewise, if Thomas holds that the reason for aesthetic pleasure is that one is being united to a loved being through knowledge, then, since the human intellect’s knowledge of singulars is necessarily mediated by sense experience, it follows that man only truly experiences beauty for Thomas if the colors and sounds that he perceives are real attributes of material things. If these

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3 As we have seen, Thomas himself engages in such a “theology of beauty,” or the study of God insofar as He is Beauty, in texts such as In De divinis nominibus 4.5 and 4.6, In Sent. I, 31.2.1, and Summa Theologiae I, 39.8. Aertsen argues that the “classical triad” is in fact an invention of the modern era in both The Transcendentals, 353-54 and “The Triad « True-Good-Beautiful »,” 415-35. While Aertsen does seem to be correct that the triad does not appear in the thought of the ancient philosophers, an argument could be made that the “classical triad” is actually a “Christian triad” since, as we have seen in this dissertation, the three relational transcendents (truth, goodness, and beauty) seem to correspond to the three theological virtues (faith, charity, and hope). What is more, Aertsen himself argues that this triad first developed in the Middle Ages when Christian theologians finally began to distinguish the beautiful and the good, which had been regarded as almost entirely identical by the Greek philosophers.

4 See Chapter Three, pp. 166-68.
sense qualities were only the subjective content of our minds (as most modern philosophers have held), then sight and hearing would not really unite us to material things, and would thus give no possession of them through the mere apprehension of them. Hence, Thomas’s theory of beauty confirms his commitment to the view that not only colors and sounds but sense qualities in general exist in reality⁶ since, if they did not, then the experience of beauty as understood by Thomas would be impossible in this life, and all our so-called aesthetic experiences would be mere illusions. Finally, that being is possessable through the mere apprehension for Thomas makes it more understandable why he holds that man’s ultimate beatitude consists in attaining God through an act of intellectual vision since God, of course, is Beauty Itself, and is therefore perfectly possessable through the mere apprehension of Him.

The implications of this study for Thomas’s thought on beauty in particular are obviously too many to mention here, but the most important one is that future studies of Thomas’s theory of beauty need to be guided less by modern interpreters of his thought, such as Maritain, Gilson, and von Balthasar, and more by Thomas’s thought in general since only the latter can shed light on Thomas’s actual views regarding beauty. Under the influence of these luminaries, the vast majority of Thomists have attributed to Thomas the opinions that aesthetic perception involves neither abstraction nor conceptualization, and that the reason for aesthetic pleasure is not the beautiful being itself but the activity of knowing it—which, as a careful study of Thomas’s texts have shown us, are actually the opposite of the views that Thomas himself held. Moreover, these influential Thomists seem to have gotten Thomas wrong because they were themselves heavily influenced by modern aesthetics, and especially by the aesthetics of Kant, who originated the

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⁶ For a thorough presentation of Thomas’s sense quality realism, and a defense of his color realism in particular, see Christopher A. Decaen, “The Viability of Aristotelian-Thomistic Color Realism,” *Thomist* 65/2 (2001): 179-222.
views that aesthetic knowledge is non-conceptual and that the reason for aesthetic pleasure is the “harmony of the faculties” provoked by the object.7 Hence, Thomists have been wrong about Thomas’s thought on beauty because they have developed that thought with the views of philosophers whose principles are incompatible with those of Thomas.

The motivation for supplementing Thomas’s thought on beauty with the aesthetics of more recent thinkers seems to have been the common conviction among Thomists that, because Thomas never wrote a separate treatise on the beautiful, he either never truly had an aesthetics in the sense of a coherent account of beauty,8 or, if he did have one, we cannot know what it was.9 It is hoped that this study has proven both these impressions wrong. That Thomas’s reflections on beauty are dispersed throughout his corpus instead of being confined to a single work simply means that they are inseparable from the rest of his thought10; thus, one can use the other more developed areas of Thomas’s philosophy to clarify and reconstruct his theory of beauty, as has been the method of this study.11 Moreover, while Thomas’s philosophy of beauty was only a

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7 Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgment, 91, 96-104, and 167-78. Quoted in note 236 on p. 209 and in note 176 on p. 263.
8 According to Aertsen, “one cannot speak properly of ‘the aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas’ because nowhere in his writings is there “a systematic treatise on this theme” or even “an extensive discussion” of it, but “only scattered remarks about the subject.” Aertsen, “Forgotten Transcendental?”, 70. Likewise, von Balthasar says that “beauty is seldom a central concern for St. Thomas Aquinas, and for the most part his discussion is dependent on material presented to him by tradition,” which he “calmly reviews . . . without, so it would seem, making an original contribution of his own to aesthetics in the strict sense.” von Balthasar, The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity, 393.
9 Emblematic of this attitude is Dasseleer, who concludes that Thomas’s aesthetics is undecidable from a strictly historical point of view, and consequently that the best we can hope for is an aesthetics that takes Thomas’s thought as a starting point, not the aesthetics of Thomas himself. Dasseleer, “Esthétique <<<thomiste>>”, 315.
10 Emmanuel Chapman regards it as fortunate that Thomas “did not leave any special treatises on aesthetics” because “these were to come much later as a kind of dessert to top the supposedly all-inclusive philosophical systems from which beauty had somehow escaped.” Chapman, “The Perennial Theme,” 335.
11 As William Knight points out, “a philosophy of the Beautiful lies by implication within a speculative system, when it is not explicitly announced”; thus, for example, “even if Plato had never touched the subject in any of his dialogues, it would have been possible, from a study of his ideal theory . . . to foresee more than the outward form which a philosophy of the Beautiful would assume in any school which drew its inspiration from him.” Hence, while “the sentences of Thomas Aquinas on the subject are like the fragmentary bones of the mammoth, found as fossils in the drift, a whole volume may be written on his doctrine de pulcro.” William Knight, The Philosophy of the Beautiful, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906), 4. Likewise, Callahan argues that Thomist
small concern of his and so was never fully worked out by him, it is nonetheless remarkably rich and perceptive, and even uniquely so; indeed, it is my opinion that the theory of beauty implicit in Thomas’s writings is superior not only to the aesthetics of modern thinkers, but even to those conceived by contemporary interpreters of Thomas such as Maritain, Gilson, and von Balthasar. Thomas’s thought on beauty therefore does not need to be developed or interpreted in the light of these later thinkers, but rather simply needs to be drawn out from his thought as a whole.\textsuperscript{12}

Finally, this dissertation has important implications regarding beauty not just in Thomas’s thought but in reality. First of all, we have a new candidate for the definition of beauty, i.e. “that which is possessable through the mere apprehension of it,” which, in my opinion, accounts for the various characteristics of beauty better than any other definition. Moreover, while beauty is often described as a mere combination of truth and goodness or even a diluted mixture of the two,\textsuperscript{13} according to our new definition beauty is a distinct attribute that, while presupposing and including truth and goodness in its meaning, nevertheless expresses something new about reality. Finally, while many thinkers seem to take beauty as a beginning to our encounter with reality,\textsuperscript{14}

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\textsuperscript{12} As Vigjen notes, “Aerts of a Thomistic aesthetics rests upon a projection of elements of modern philosophy backward into the past,” but this need not be the case. After all, “as John F. Wippel has convincingly shown in regard to Aquinas’s metaphysics, it is legitimate to place the various elements of Aquinas’s philosophical thought into an harmonious synthesis as long as one uses a sound argumentation during the ‘moment of proof,’ as Wippel calls it.” Thus, “a sort of Summa aesthetica remains possible.” Vigjen, “A Note,” 83.

\textsuperscript{13} Schindler, for example, says that beauty “contains within itself both truth and goodness” because “in beauty, there is a ‘truth-like’ movement of the object’s being taken spiritually into the subject (vision), though this is not truth per se” since “the grasp is not an explicit comprehension,” and, “at the same time, there is a rapture, a movement of the subject toward the object that imitates the good, but is not the good per se” since it is “not a real possession or enjoyment, but specifically a disinterested pleasure.” As a result, Schindler has unintentionally reduced beauty to an attenuated truth (since one does not fully know it) and an attenuated good (since one does not desire to possess it), rather than a splendor that arises out of an excess of truth and goodness, and which can consequently be possessed and enjoyed simply by being seen, as we have argued. Schindler, “Beauty and the Analogy of Truth,” 314.
which beckons us forward to a greater acquaintance with it through goodness and truth, this new definition of beauty indicates that beauty is essentially not a beginning but an end since it expresses being’s ability to be attained through vision and thus to give rest to our desire for it.

We can thus finally answer the question posed at the end of this study’s Introduction: why does it matter whether beauty is a distinct transcendental or not? There it was pointed out that the significance of determining beauty’s transcendental status would not become clear until we had learned the meaning of beauty for Thomas. We predicted, however, that in finding out whether beauty has a unique meaning of its own and thus whether it is a distinct transcendental, we would learn something not only about being, but even about ourselves and God.

That prediction seems to have been confirmed since, if our conclusion that beauty is a distinct transcendental is correct, then we have indeed learned a few things. First, if we are right that beauty expresses a distinct attribute of every being, namely a being’s ability to be possessed through the mere vision of it, it follows that all of reality is intrinsically capable not just of being known and loved, but of being united to the soul through knowledge and consequently enjoyed through that knowledge. Moreover, if beauty is in fact a distinct relational transcendental and thus expresses a unique way in which reality perfects the human soul, then a human being finds the fulfillment of his nature not only in knowledge of and love for reality, but also in union with it, and specifically through the spiritual union of vision. Finally, if “Beauty” is indeed a distinct Divine Name that expresses God’s ability to be perfectly possessed simply through being seen, then it is because of His Infinite Beauty that the mere Vision of God utterly satisfies the desire of the saints for Him, and thus makes them entirely blessed.

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14 This position is most obvious, of course, in the thought of von Balthasar, and is even permanently enshrined in his order of transcendental, where beauty precedes the good and the true. See Chapter Two, pp. 96-97.
This last implication of our study’s conclusion is perhaps the most significant one for Catholics since it seems to clarify one of the Catholic Faith’s most important yet mysterious doctrines: that the Vision of God is alone sufficient to make the saints in heaven perfectly happy or blessed (beatus), for which reason it is known as the Beatific Vision.¹⁵ A Catholic might well wonder how this can be since the greatest desire of the saints is not merely to satisfy their curiosity about God by seeing His Essence, but rather to satisfy their infinite longing for God by become perfectly one with Him. How, then, can merely seeing God be enough for them? The conclusion of this dissertation suggests an answer: to see God is to be perfectly one with Him and therefore perfectly satisfies the saints’ desire for Him because, as Infinite Beauty, God is perfectly possessable through the mere apprehension of Him. In other words, if our study’s conclusion is correct, the Beatific Vision is Beatific because God is Beauty Itself.

It therefore seems that the experience of beauty in this life plays an important role in helping us on the road to heaven. If our final end is the perfect possession and enjoyment of God through the mere sight of Him—in other words, the ultimate experience of Beauty—then every aesthetic experience is a foretaste of our supernatural beatitude. Of course, these little tastes of heaven pass quickly, but their very ephemerality reminds us that we were not meant to find our final rest here on earth. It is precisely the inability of aesthetic experiences to give us lasting peace in this life that helps us realize there is only one Beauty that can truly satisfy us. Hence, created beauties not only console us on our journey to Heaven, but also encourage us to keep our eyes on the destination, so that, like David in Psalm 27, we might pray: “One thing have I asked

of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

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