Studia Gilsoniana
A JOURNAL IN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Anthony AKINWALE, O.P. – Dominican University, Ibadan, Nigeria
Lorella CONGIUNTI – Pontifical Urban University, Rome, Italy
Włodzimierz DŁUBACZ – John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
Adilson F. FEILER, S.J. – University of the Sinos Valley, São Leopoldo, Brazil
Urbano FERRER – University of Murcia, Spain
Silvana FILIPPI – National University of Rosario, Argentina
Peter FOTTA, O.P. – Catholic University in Ruzomberok, Slovakia
Rev. José Ángel GARCÍA CUADRADO – University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain
Curtis L. HANCOCK – Rockhurst Jesuit University, Kansas City, MO, USA
Juan José HERRERA, O.P. – Saint Thomas Aquinas North University, Tucumán, Argentina
John P. HITTINGER – University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX, USA
Liboire KAGABO, O.P. – University of Burundi, Bujumbura, Burundi
George KARUVELIL, S.J. – JDV–Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Pune, India
Henryk KIEREŚ – John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
Renée KÖHLER-RYAN – University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney, Australia
Enrique MARTÍNEZ – Abat Oliba CEU University, Barcelona, Spain
Vittorio POSSENTI – Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Italy
Peter A. REDPATH – Adler-Aquinás Institute, Manitou Springs, CO, USA
Joel C. SAGUT – University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines
[James V. SCHALL, S.J.] – Georgetown University, Washington D.C., USA
Callum D. SCOTT – University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa
Peter L. P. SIMPSON – City University of New York, NY, USA
Rev. Jan SOCHOŃ – Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski University in Warsaw, Poland
William SWEET – St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, NS, Canada
Lourdes VELÁZQUEZ – Panamerican University, Mexico City, Mexico
Berthold WALD – Theological Faculty of Paderborn, Germany
EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-chief
Fr. Paweł TARASIEWICZ – Adler–Aquinas Institute, Manitou Springs, CO, USA

Associate Editors
Fr. Tomasz DUMA – John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
Jeremie SOLAK – Spring Arbor University, MI, USA

Linguistic Editors
Stephen CHAMBERLAIN – Rockhurst Jesuit University, Kansas City, MO, USA
Donald COLLINS – University of Western Ontario, London, Canada
Thierry-Dominique HUMBRECHT, O.P. – J. Vrin’s Equip Gilson, France
Thaddeus J. KOZINSKI – Wyoming Catholic College, Lander, WY, USA
Artur MAMCARZ-PLISIECKI – John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
Florian MICHEL – Institut Pierre Renouvin, Paris, France
Ángel Damián ROMÁN ORTIZ – University of Murcia, Spain

Contact
Email Box: ptarasiewicz@holycatholic.edu
P.O. Box: Al. Racławickie 14/GG-037, 20-950 Lublin, Poland

PUBLISHERS

International Étienne Gilson Society
33 Prospect Hill Road
Cromwell, CT 06416-2027
USA

Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu
(The Polish Society of Thomas Aquinas)
Katedra Metafizyki KUL (Department of Metaphysics)
Al. Raclawickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland
CONTENTS

Scripta Gilsoniana

RICHARD J. FAFARA: Gilson on Philosophy and Civilization .......... 213

Scripta Philosophica

MICHAL CHABEREK: A Textual Analysis of John Paul II’s Teaching on Evolution .................................................................................................................. 231

ANTHONY DAUM: St. Thomas Aquinas and Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange on Wonder and the Division of the Sciences ..................... 249

WILLIAM HAGGERTY: On Not Taking the World for Granted: E. L. Mascall on The Five Ways ................................................................. 277

GABRIEL RAGAN: The Structure of a Person as the Basis for Determining the Common Good as Understood by Mieczysław A. Krapiec ........................................................................................................ 305

The article “Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Notion of Person”—originally published in Studia Gilsoniana 8, no. 2 (April–June 2019): 319–349—was removed from the journal on Aug. 2, 2019, due to a violation of the anti-plagiarism policy followed by Studia Gilsoniana.

PETER A. REDPATH: A Modest Proposal for Resolving the Apparently Never-Ending Evolution Debate: Reconsidering the Question 351

JUAN CARLOS RIOFRÍO MARTÍNEZ-VILLALBA: The Effects of Beauty and the Redemption of the Ugly ................................................... 401

DONNA E. WEST: Thirdness along the Intuitional Path: Reflections from Maritain and Peirce .............................................................. 431

Miscellanea

ALEXANDRA CATHEY: Edith Stein on the Highest Expression of the Feminine Genius ................................................................................. 479
Book Reviews

Jude P. Dougherty: *The Universe We Think In* by James V. Schall
Scripta Gilsoniana
Richard J. Fafara

Gilson on Philosophy and Civilization

In his paper presented at the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy held at Harvard in 1926, Etienne Gilson interrogated history to determine “the role of philosophy in the history of civilization.”¹

Gilson outlined three general tendencies among historians of philosophy. First, there are those who reduce the history of philosophy to a study of sources and find the explanation of philosophy outside of itself. Gilson cited Herder, Taine, Marx, and Durkheim as representatives who maintain that philosophies are the necessary products of causes in history such as physical or social elements outside of the philosopher. Even the philosopher’s personality remains only a particular effect of those elements. Second, there are those philosophers who try to go beyond the sources of a given philosophy and even beyond the concepts and images in which it is expressed to find the original intuition which generates it. These historians want to surpass the materials that com-

pose a philosophy and locate its originating intuition. Neither of these first two views of history is irreconcilable with one other.

Nor is a third position that Gilson proposed which is not sensitive to what the social milieu imposes on a philosopher nor to the effort by which the philosopher avoids these constraints. On this view:

Philosophy is above all love of wisdom and there is no wisdom without truth. But truth depends neither on society nor on the creative genius of philosophies; it is simply truth. Of course, no one can pride oneself on possessing truth alone and completely but its content manifests itself little by little, by the age-old effort of researchers who discover it. So whether one considers their historical filiation or their individual structure, the systems of philosophy appear as uniquely conditioned by the necessary relations that link the ideas. Neglecting as accidental all of the historical, social or individual elements that enter into the composition of systems of thought, the history of philosophy so understood retains only their truth value; it is essentially philosophy.²

Whereas history recognizes only philosophies, e.g., that of Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas and Descartes, Gilson introduced a non-historical concept of philosophy.

Gilson supported his position with two arguments. First, each philosophy appears as the expression and mirror of a civilization, i.e., as regards what the philosopher owes to his period of time and that which his individual genius contributes. But if philosophy has no other function than to bring a clear awareness of itself to each civilization, its scope would not exceed the period of civilization that it expresses. We find, however, that Plato and Aristotle remain relevant to our time. They still have much to say to us because their historical thought contains a timeless element which makes such thinkers perpetually contemporary with all human reason. Socrates’s method, Plato’s idea, Aris-

² *Ibid.*, 530. All translations are mine.
totle’s nature and Bergson’s pure duration have their youth guaranteed by the necessity internal to essences that reason thinks which is more immutable than science itself. This non-historical truth of philosophy is higher than that of historical civilizations. Each civilization’s worth stems from its participation in that truth which surpasses it; to the extent a civilization participates in the truth, it inscribes a message that time can no longer erase.

Second, regardless of the epoch or form of civilization on which a philosopher depends, he finds himself in the presence of ideas, in the presence of necessary essences whose content escapes his free choice. When one idea appears to a philosopher in the splendor of its truth, the philosopher moves to free and detach it from all that does not pertain to its essence, so much so that Gilson defined all philosophy as “a metaphysical experiment pushed to the limit on the content of one idea” or “nothing other than the universe thought in function of an essence.” As Gilson elaborated in subsequent works such as *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* and *Being and Some Philosophers*, everything occurs as if the history of philosophy, taken as a whole, is that of a vast investigation on the content of human thought—an investigation taken up

---

3 *Ibid.*, 534, my translation. Gouhier characterized Gilson’s pursuit of the impersonal essence of various systems as attaining that which is “de plus essentiellement personnel.” Each essence “est liée à une attitude originelle, complexe d’intentions, de réactions et d’idées qui doivent être lentement reconnues; l’histoire du philosophe, celle de ses écrits et celle de son système ne seront dépassées qu’après avoir été poussées le plus loin possible et même il conviendrait que ce dépassement fût un prolongement. L’analyse de M. Gilson vise toujours ce qu’il y a de plus intérieur et, par suite, tend vers ce point où chaque pensée tourne, affronte ou méconnaît ses propres difficultés” (Henri Gouhier, “L’unité de l’expérience philosophique,” *La vie intellectuelle* 56 (1938): 404–412, reprinted in Gouhier’s *La philosophie et son histoire*, 127–134 [citation from *ibid.*, 129]).


unceasingly and unceasingly enlarged, which reveals essences to the intelligence, in defining them. For Gilson, the history of philosophies becomes the history of philosophy. He treats individual philosophies as experiments of reason.

The three different interpretations of the history of philosophy that Gilson outlined correspond to three different views of the role of philosophy in the history of civilization. If philosophies dissolve into elements taken from social milieu, which give birth to them, every philosophy is an ideological expression of a given state of civilization. If, on the other hand, philosophies are original products of creative activity, philosophy no longer results from a civilization, it creates civilization. But if philosophies are expressions of an eternal truth, dominating men and societies, which discovers itself progressively by the mediation of philosophers, philosophy is neither effect nor cause but transcendent with regard to every given state of civilization.

Gilson then asked whether history allows us to determine which of these three interpretations is true, or to what extent each is true. First, history shows philosophies, even those extremely distant from us in time such as Plato’s, respond to questions posed by a given state of science and society. No one can interpret St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, without taking into account the integral influences of Aristotle, St. Augustine, and Catholic doctrine on his thought. Similarly, Descartes was influenced by the mathematical physics of his time, the corpuscular philosophy of the 16th century, and by St. Augustine. What is not disputed is the fact that there is not one philosophy that does not have deep roots in the social milieu in which it was born. According to Gilson, “the more powerful, original, the thought that a historian analyzes, the more it reveals itself as receptive and assimilating” which is why “each great philosophy is first of all a belvedere from which we
regard the civilization of which it is the summation. But this does not suffice to explain completely philosophy’s genesis. Although philosophy directly represents the civilization it expresses, it is not a result of it. Something more than the elements it borrows from a civilization is required.

Second, supposing that all of the social influences needed for a philosophy are readily available to a philosopher, they are also at the disposition of all others submitted to the same social influences. Yet each philosophy appears as unique and irreducible to any antecedent system. Even a philosophy that repeats the formulas of its predecessors confers a unique sense on them. Consider, for example, the notion of substance as it appears in Aristotle, St. Thomas, Descartes, and Spinoza. The great philosophies may represent their times not only because they gather ideas from them, but also because they try to synthesize them.

The intellectual currents of any epoch do not take form themselves in human minds. Rather, each current affirms itself with such force that it seems incapable of progressing unless it suppresses the others, thereby turning human minds into a place of conflict only able to affirm necessary and contradictory ideas, but not able to reach resolution. This leaves two options: accepting skepticism or the suicide for thought, or waiting patiently until the currents can find their balance in the thought of a great philosopher. Thomas Aquinas, for example, went beyond the conflict of the theological tradition of St. Augustine and the doctrines of Aristotle to show that what seemed to be two antagonistic truths were in reality one. Likewise, Descartes showed that Galileo’s mathematical physics did not necessarily mean abandoning great truths about God and the soul, which were the metaphysical foundation needed for true physics. Kant retained the truths of God and the soul in the

---

face of Newtonian physics with a double critique of reason that showed under what conditions physics and ethics are possible. Human thought spontaneously tends toward realizing unity without which there is neither order nor peace and both are found only in the agreement of ideas among themselves, of sentiments among them and with ideas, of actions finally with the sentiments and the ideas. The agreement of ideas constitutes the base of the edifice and prepares, beyond the agreement of each one with himself, the agreement of men among themselves. The philosopher, in thinking for himself, thinks for all men and reestablishes an equilibrium by always adjusting spiritual values and in, assuring their order, making possible their advancement.

Third, philosophy endures beyond the civilization that it expresses. With effort, we understand that the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant and others still have something to teach us today because each great philosophy contains eternal truth that goes

\[\text{Ibid., 532.}\]

\[\text{8 In 1926, Gilson was in the final stage of directing Henri Gouhier’s doctoral work on Malebranche in which we find a more elaborate presentation of a similar world of ideas: “The ‘ideas’ of a philosopher belong to two worlds. There are those that are the product of his reflection; they have been mulled over at leisure, purified by analysis, and joined together into a system, a logical poem that sings the triumph of reason when, freed from time, it was able to reach eternal things. But underneath these clear ideas, there are those that participate in that other system that is the living person. These are more tendencies than concepts. They have not yet been collected into a definition, and they extend into each other, a landscape without lines like the colors of the sky. They live in those regions of the soul where heredity, education, social influences and other fay creatures sow seeds that will later blossom into passions, into beliefs, into worries, without it being possible for us to follow the mysterious labor of their development. An interior temple where all the gods have their altar, it is from there that both cries of revolt and words of love escape; it is there that systems plunge their roots, for it is there where questions are perhaps posed and where certainly solutions are formulated” (Henri Gouhier, \textit{La vocation de Malebranche} [Paris: J. Vrin, 1926], 135). Gilson wondered “si la vie philosophique n’est pas précisément un effort constant pour amener les irrationnels qui sont en nous à l’état de rationalité” (Etienne Gilson, “La notion de philosophie chrétienne,” \textit{Bulletin de la société française de philosophie} 31 [séance du 21 mars 1931]: 46–47).}\]
beyond the accidental and the historical, a nontemporal element that makes these men perpetual contemporaries to all human reason. Moreover, all great philosophies are efforts of conciliation, not eclecticism. Regardless of the historical period, each great philosopher seeks not an agreement of ideas in mutual concessions that can be assented to, nor an attempt to adapt his idea to others. Instead, the goal is to probe its necessary and permanent depths so as to release an idea in a pure state and make the differences that divided his predecessors vanish. Given Plato’s idea, the being of Parmenides and the becoming of Heraclitus appear as illusions. St. Thomas’s analogical nature all at once satisfies the rights of God and those of a creature in making the God of Denys the Areopagite appear as postulated by the universe of Aristotle; and Descartes’s cogito or viewpoint of pure thought sees Aristotle’s physics as a false spiritualism and Epicurus’s atomism as a materialism without a foundation. The entire history of philosophy is nothing more than this experience unceasingly begun again. This is why the great philosophical systems generate an interest more vast than the particular civilizations they express.

Beyond the problems of each generation are the problems that man himself poses. And just as we have to go deep within ourselves to get beyond ourselves, we have to reduce ideas to their pure essences to render them necessary and universal. Philosophy performs that reduction and that work goes beyond the limits of a particular time or form of civilization. It is not even an event localized in the past, a unique moment in irreversible history. It is more an event beyond the conditions of space and time, persisting in some way in an eternal present. Socrates’s method, Plato’s idea, Aristotle’s nature and Bergson’s pure duration have their youth guaranteed by the necessity internal to essences
that reason thinks and more immutable than science itself.\textsuperscript{9} So if civilization is not simply the way of life of a nation and a particular time, but also the treasure of accumulated truths and spiritual values common to entire humanity, philosophy engenders not only order in thoughts, it engenders the truth; or, rather it only engenders order because it engenders the truth. Thus, there is no internal contradiction among the three ways of writing the history of philosophy that Gilson distinguished. Philosophy clearly is a result of history, but it also creates it, and its creative effort is essentially a nontemporal act of submission to the truth.\textsuperscript{10}

Gilson’s address at the International Congress in 1926 remains interesting for a number of reasons. It shows, in a certain sense, why and how Gilson found reasons to philosophize in the history of philosophy. While it appears natural for a thinker to be a philosopher and a historian of philosophy, the question is how the two coexist in the same mind. Two of Gilson’s famous students and subsequent colleagues had opinions on this matter. Describing Gilson the historian meeting Gilson the philosopher as Gilson’s “own secret,” Professor Pegis hazarded this interpretation of Gilson’s work:

It is as though Gilson the historian, studying the human pursuit of truth in widely separated centuries and under widely separated conditions, has discovered that as a philosopher he is rooted to

\textsuperscript{9} From the 1920s onward, Gilson maintained the \textit{sui generis} existence of philosophy in which doctrines only serve to verify concretely the abstract necessity of certain intelligible relations, but had difficulty locating the concepts that constitute it: “Depuis Parmenides, un monde de concepts et de relations conceptuelles flotte dans (dans quoi?); disons flotte; il suffit d’en accepter une pour se trouver engagé dans des déterminations déjà en partie reconnues et auxquelles la pensée ne peut plus se soutraire. Voyez Malebranche. Il recommence l’occasionnalisme des As’harites, parce qu’il part comme eux d’Allah” (9 June 1966 letter of Gilson to Henri Gouhier, cited after “Lettres d’Étienne Gilson à Henri Gouhier,” choisies et présentées par Géry Prouvost, \textit{Revue Thomiste} XCIV, no. 3: \textit{Autour d’Étienne Gilson: Études et documents} [Juillet–Septembre 1994]: 477).

\textsuperscript{10} Gilson, “Le rôle de la philosophie dans l’histoire de la civilisation,” 534–535.
one and the same spot. In a word, beyond and through men he has seen man, beyond and through the philosophers he has seen philosophy, and beyond the caravan of philosophical opinions and doctrines he has seen truth.\textsuperscript{11}

For Professor Gouhier, Gilson was a philosopher, not because he first lived and then philosophized, but precisely because, from the start, he could never live without meditating on his life. Gilson “had been a philosopher from the start because he had always known and loved life in its fullness. . . . Gilson’s activity had always largely overwhelmed the vast culture of the specialist.”\textsuperscript{12} Describing Gilson as “a man who forced himself to think about his humanity,” Gouhier located the starting point of Gilson’s philosophy in a humanism.\textsuperscript{13} An understanding of man taken in his entirety includes the notion of civilization and Gilson’s reflection from the beginning to the end of his career centers on man in all his diverse experiences. Gilson, the philosopher and historian, but also the lover of art and music, and the traveler who appreciated various cultures more fully because of his mastery of their languages, did not consider civilization as something accidental to man. For Gilson, it is in civilization that human nature has its life and being.

Gilson serves as a good example of the contention in his paper that philosophy is always young and new because it cannot be repeated and must be thought anew. It is original in every age like the lives of men themselves. In the case of Gilson, he confronted questions not in the history of philosophy, but as they arose in his life. The articles on art, aesthetics, and the interior life that Gilson wrote about while a machine gun lieutenant during World War I do not treat theories professed on a given subject; they go right to the heart of a philosophical ques-


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, 165.
They engage philosophy in trying to explain what makes a person an artist and to define the conditions of a humanity worthy of that name. In other words, Gilson philosophized to live intelligently. His call to philosophy sprang first from his need to know what makes man an artist. The exigence of aesthetic experience provoked a reflection on all of man’s functions: one cannot truly seize the significance of art without grasping the significance of science, metaphysics, ethics, and religion. If philosophy did not follow the history of philosophy, these two disciplines, at first separated, came together in the paper he delivered in 1926.

Gilson found no contradiction among the three ways of writing history outlined in his paper at Harvard and found all three justified in terms of being historically true. His third, non-historical, basically metaphysical conception of philosophy developed and deepened over time but did not change. Gilson understood that fundamental philosophical oppositions are not so much between truth and error as between partial truths and the whole truth. The method Gilson employed in his philosophical works delineating the philosophical conclusions that necessarily follow from a principle was purely dialectical in nature; hence, all of its conclusions are only probable. Determining what men have thought the truth to be led Gilson to see, within the framework of history, the nature and laws of philosophical thinking. But because certain conclusions necessarily follow from a principle does not prove the conclusions are necessary in themselves or that the principle from which they flow is true or false. History only guarantees that the conclusions have necessarily emerged from the principle, and it is then up to philosophers to see the truth. If they cannot accept the conclusions because they are not in accord with reality, they must give up the principle; and

---

if for the same reason they cannot accept the principle, they must deny the conclusions. Thus, the dialectic of history can help philosophers arrive at the truth, but it cannot give it to them: “the only task of history is to understand and to make understood, whereas philosophy must choose, demonstrate, and judge. Applying to history for reasons to make a choice is no longer history, it is philosophy.”

As Gilson understood it, the proper method of philosophy does not rest on the history of philosophy, but rather on the intellectual intuition of principles and the direct perception of their truth. Nothing is more important than a philosopher’s choice of his own principles. Metaphysical knowledge is not a conclusion drawn from principles, but the immediate grasping of principles themselves and especially being, which is the absolutely first principle. Moreover, the intuition of principles is necessary and not probable knowledge, for it cannot be otherwise. The metaphysician resorts to experimentation in philosophy because the intellectual intuition of principles is difficult and insecure. Auxiliary methods are useful in order to gain the intuition and to deepen and maintain it. Experience in the history of philosophy is not metaphysical experience itself. It does not make one see, but leads one to the point from where one sees.

Gilson’s brilliant philosophical works constitute an impressive body of evidence that his own metaphysical position respects the facts of the human condition as well as the lessons of the history of philosophy. Gilson opted for “that kind of philosophy which consists neither in thinking about thought nor in directly knowing reality but in knowing

---

15 Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, ix–x.

the relation of thought to reality,” and asked “history what that relation has been in order to ascertain what it should be.”\textsuperscript{17} He concluded that the principle of all principles was that “a philosopher should always put first in his mind what is actually first in reality. What is first in reality need not be what is the most easily accessible to human understanding; it is that whose presence or absence entails the presence or absence of all the rest in reality.”\textsuperscript{18} For Gilson, such a principle, the correct object of philosophy which grounds the unity of philosophical experience, has neither past nor future because it is, that is, it is being. As such, the truth about it cannot be proved, it can only be seen—or, as history reveals, overlooked.

These insights led to Gilson’s own contribution to the history of philosophy which consisted of a philosophical synthesis of an existential metaphysics and a philosophical realism, both of which remained within the bosom of theology. The philosophical anthropology flowing from Gilson’s Christian philosophy, I think, is well equipped to study the human person within contemporary society and cultures. It can grapple successfully with the tragic loss of confidence in human reason and the resulting pathologies and threats to human freedom so prevalent in Western civilization today. Such a philosophy can constitute the basis for a civilization of freedom and unmask civilizations of totalitarianism.

* 

Due to its long historical memory, a country such as Poland, more so than countries in Western Europe, can serve as an excellent laboratory in which to sustain and nurture a Christian philosophy like Gilson’s. The “Iron Curtain” that surrounded Eastern European societies blocked information coming from Western Europe so Eastern Eu-

\textsuperscript{17} Gilson, \textit{Being and Some Philosophers}, x.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, ix.
Europeans could not follow closely the changes that since World War II dramatically restructured Western Civilization. But Poles, in general, and Polish intellectuals, in particular, have retained a picture of the civilization which preceded these changes: one in which Christianity had relative strength and classical metaphysics and epistemology were discussed and part of educational curricula, one which presupposed a continuity between antiquity and Christianity and modern times, one in which the Enlightenment and Romanticism were considered dissenting voices in a civilization that remained classical and Christian, and one which had little in common with the attempts by the European Union and its elites to fashion a new European identity turning peoples into a post-historical, post-national, post-metaphysical, post-Christian, and even a post-religious society held together by an ideology of “Europeism.” The long historical memory of Poles can help them see Europe from a broader perspective historically and philosophically and remain true defenders of Western civilization in the genuine sense of the term.

---

**Gilson on Philosophy and Civilization**

**SUMMARY**

In his essay “The Role of Philosophy in the History of Civilization” presented at the 6th International Philosophical Congress at Harvard in 1926, Gilson outlined three general trends among historians of philosophy. Some reduce the history of philosophy to study sources and find explanations of the philosophy beyond itself. Others try to go beyond the source of a given philosophy to find the original intuition that generates it. A third position, which Gilson espoused, is ahistorical. It depends neither on society nor on the creative genius of philosophers; it is simply truth. Systems of philosophy are uniquely conditioned by the necessary relations that link the ideas. If philosophies are expres-

---

sions of an eternal truth, dominating men and societies, which discovers itself progressively by the mediation of philosophers, philosophy is transcendent with regard to every given state of civilization and the worth of a civilization depends upon the extent it participates in truth. Gilson’s conception of philosophy can go far in restoring Western civilization’s loss of confidence in human reason with its resulting pathologies and threats to human freedom today.

KEYWORDS
Gilson, civilization, philosophy, history of philosophy.

REFERENCES
Michał Chaberek

A Textual Analysis of John Paul II’s Teaching on Evolution

At one of the libraries I visited, *The Acts of the Holy See* \(^1\) covering the period of 20\(^{th}\) century occupy five shelves. Out of these five, two shelves (about 40\%) belong to the pontificate of John Paul II alone. It’s noticeable, therefore, that the Vatican under John Paul II produced—on average—twice as many ecclesiastical teachings per year than it did under any other 20\(^{th}\) century pope.

When it comes to John Paul II’s teaching on evolution, however, all his statements, scattered in different documents, can be fitted on one page of typescript. This is really not much compared to his voluminous teachings on marriage, family, freedom, economy, interreligious dialogue and various other topics. Despite this fact, today’s Catholic theologians and public speakers willingly refer to John Paul II to present the current state of the Church doctrine regarding the theory of evolution. For example, they typically quote the Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences delivered by John Paul II in 1996.\(^2\) What is often forgotten, however, is that the Address is quite a low-ranking document

---

\(^1\) Each year the Holy See publishes a volume of *The Holy See Acts* (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis, AAS*), which contains documents of the popes, Roman Curia and Congregations, among them papal addresses and encyclical letters.

and that Catholic teaching on the matter of evolution has a much longer tradition than the one dating two or three decades back. Moreover, the message of the Papal Address of 1996 is not as clear as it is usually believed, to the extent that Cardinal Christoph Schönborn labeled it rather “vague and unimportant.” All these facts encourage us to look closer at John Paul II’s treatment of the topic of evolution in order to retrieve its full content.

The Meaning of the Words “More than a Hypothesis”

The core fragment of John Paul II’s 1996 Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences reads: “Today, almost half a century after the publication of the encyclical [Humani Generis by Pius XII], new knowledge has led to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis.” As it becomes clear from the context, the Pope says that new knowledge provides a good argument for calling evolution “not just a hypothesis” but “a theory”—a theory which is more and

---


4 Ioannes Paulus II, “Ad Pontificiae Academiae Scientiarum sodales,” no. 4, AAS 89, 188: “Aujourd’hui, près d’un demi-siècle après la parution de l’encyclique, de nouvelles connaissances conduisent à reconnaître dans la théorie de l’évolution plus qu’une hypothèse.” The official translation of this particular phrase in the Papal address (i.e., John Paul II, “Address to the Plenary Session on the Subject The Origins and Early Evolution of Life [22 October 1996],” no. 4, in Papal Addresses to The Pontifical Academy of Sciences 1917–2002 and to The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 1994–2002 [Vatican City: The Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 2003; hereafter cited as PAS 2003], 372: “Today, almost half a century after the publication of the Encyclical, new knowledge has led to the recognition of more than one hypothesis in the theory of evolution.”) does not do justice to the French original. For this reason we employ here our own translation of this particular phrase. All remaining fragments of the Address are quoted after the official translation (PAS 2003). An alternative English translation is given in: John Paul II, “Message to The Pontifical Academy of Sciences: On Evolution” (available online—see the section References for details): “Today, more than a half-century after the appearance of that encyclical, some new findings lead us toward the recognition of evolution as more than an hypothesis.”
more probable and better confirmed by the new empirical data. This one phrase is often believed to set the Catholic standard for discussing evolution.\(^5\) However, there are at least a few problems with the common interpretation of the Pope’s utterance that I want to point out here.

**No Definition of Evolution**

John Paul II does not provide any explicit definition of evolution, and yet the way one defines the term “theory of evolution” strongly impacts one’s attitude toward it. If evolution means no more than “change over time,” it does not seem reasonable to challenge it on any grounds, whether scientific, theological or philosophical. Changes in nature and in culture are visible and obvious to both scientists and laymen. Under this definition, evolution is not only a “theory,” but a “fact.”

On the other hand, if one understands the “theory of evolution” as a type of a great materialistic story designed to explain all cultural and natural phenomena in purely materialistic terms, then it is very unlikely that the Pope sympathized with such a view. Given the basic Christian beliefs (such as the providential care of God over the universe and divine active engagement in the human history), it seems that John Paul II must have meant essentially cosmic and biological evolution in some way guided by God. Only this kind of evolution, namely theistic evolution, could have been seriously taken into account by the Pope.

Theistic evolution is an idea that God used evolution as the so-called “secondary cause” to bring about the forms of the universe we observe in the natural history of the universe. (One example of these forms are biological forms appearing as different species in the fossil record). Different authors have different explanations of how God

works in evolution, but the common denominator is that without divine
guidance the universe could not form itself into the marvelous struc-
tures discovered and explained by science. God either starts the evolu-
tionary process or guides it, or does both. But if this is the case (i.e., if
God is involved in evolution), we should ask whether theistic evolution
is a scientific concept, which can be judged in scientific terms, or it is a
theological concept, which is neither a theory nor a fact, but rather a
subject of faith.

To help answer this question, one may notice that the Pope’s
statement has only a “descriptive” rather than a “normative” value. The
Pope describes the state of the matter as it is presented by modern sci-
ence—according to him, the body of scientific data has grown to the
point that no one should call evolution a mere “hypothesis.” Thus, the
Pope’s evaluation of the theory of evolution considers it a scientific
enterprise, rather than a theological one.

The Pope’s statement cannot be considered normative for the
simple reason that popes, given their ecclesiastical authority, are no
experts in scientific matters. Their evaluation of scientific theories can-
not be normative in the same way as it is in the case of theological is-
ues. The First Vatican Council confirms this principle by pointing out
that papal infallibility relates only to matters of faith and morality.\(^6\) It
follows that the pope may be wrong in his teaching on evolution re-
gardless of whether scientists are correct or not.

As John Paul II’s utterance on evolution has then only a descrip-
tive value, it does not establish any principle that could be applied in
theology. Neither does it support any new theological concept that

---

\(^6\) First Vatican Council, Session 4 (18 July 1870), *First dogmatic constitution on the
Church of Christ*, Chapter 4, no. 9 (available online—see the section References for
details): “[W]hen the Roman Pontiff speaks ex cathedra . . . he defines a doctrine con-
cerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine
assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeem-
er willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals.”
could possibly be derived from it, such as a moderate form of theistic evolution (e.g., evolution limited to cosmic and biological realms, leaving out the question of human origins).

Two Reservations

After expressing his conviction about the growing “reliability” of evolutionary theory, John Paul II seems to make two reservations. First, he points out that, “A theory’s validity depends on whether or not it can be verified; it is constantly tested against the facts; wherever it can no longer explain the latter, it shows its limitations and unsuitability. It must then be rethought.”

It is significant that the Pope chooses to remind this obvious meta-scientific rule while evaluating the theory of evolution. This suggests that the Pope was aware that some of the facts of nature are not easily explainable within the neo-Darwinian framework, which remains the most widely accepted explanation to the evolutionary process in biology.

Secondly, John Paul II says that, “rather than the theory of evolution, we should speak of several theories of evolution. On the one hand, this plurality has to do with the different explanations advanced for the mechanism of evolution, and on the other, with the various philosophies on which it is based.”

Thus, according to the Pope, the “theory of evolution” cannot be considered one, well-defined concept, rather it is an abstract notion differently interpreted in different philosophical and scientific schools.

Having noted both reservations, we should conclude that there was not much novelty in the Pope’s 1996 Address compared to the earlier ecclesiastical teaching. Evolution, whether cosmic or biological, had been considered a theory (rather than a hypothesis) for decades by

---

7 John Paul II, “Address to the Plenary Session on the Subject The Origins and Early Evolution of Life,” no. 4, in PAS 2003, 372.
8 Ibid.
many scholars. John Paul II himself called it a theory in a series of lectures he delivered in 1949. It seems, therefore, that the meaning of the 1996 Address has been exaggerated. One of the possible reasons why this happened is that the Address was delivered in a popular way, as a speech which was broadcast and popularized by world mass-media. But to fully understand John Paul II’s position on evolution, this one utterance is not enough. We must take into account his earlier, more authoritative statements from 1985 and 1986. Before we do so, however, we need to notice that the 1996 Address in its closing parts contains even more important remarks regarding the origin of man and the problem of hominization. These fragments require separate consideration.

9 The series was first published in Polish in 1950 and 1999, and then in English in 2016. See Karol Wojtyła, Considerations on the Essence of Man—Rozważania o istocie człowieka, trans. John Grondelski (Lublin-Roma: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu & Societa Internazionale Tommaso d’Aquino, 2016), 151–153: “[T]he theory of evolution concludes that man emerges from certain animal forms, namely from those whose organisms build most closely approximates man’s. As proofs of its truth, it points to supposed intermediate forms through which development occurred. Taken from that perspective, the theory of evolution must be regarded as a natural scholarly hypothesis which is still searching for a fuller justification for itself and a final precision of its conclusions (e.g., on the matter of the genealogical line). Because it is a hypothesis, we cannot now take this theory with absolute certainty and on its basis develop some conclusions with regard to man’s essence itself.” Moreover, it is not even clear whether a strong distinction between a scientific hypothesis and a scientific theory is universally accepted among philosophers of science and scientists. While some see the difference and claim that a hypothesis is “a well-educated prediction of an outcome that would occur from a scientific experiment” and a theory is “a comprehensive explanation of natural phenomena supported by extensive evidence gathered through observations and/or experiments” (Gregg Hartvigsen, A Primer in Biological Data Analysis and Visualization Using R [New York: Columbia University Press, 2014], 88–89), there are others who overlook the distinction and hold that “a hypothesis is a theory or model of the world that allows one to make forecasts, and the creation and updating of such models is just a technical description of how we learn” (Kenneth A. Posner, Stalking the Black Swan: Research and Decision Making in a World of Extreme Volatility [New York: Columbia University Press, 2010], 22).

The Problem of Hominization in the 1996 Address

The emphasis on human dignity and the irreducible character of each human person constitutes a hallmark of the entirety of John Paul II’s teaching. No wonder that even the 1996 Address contains reaffirmation of the unique place of man among creatures:

The human individual cannot be subordinated as a pure means or a pure instrument, either to the species or to society; he has value per se. He is a person. With his intellect and his will, he is capable of forming a relationship of communion, solidarity and self-giving with his peers.  

The topic of human origins is introduced by the Pope with this re-statement of the exceptional value of every human being. Human dignity and the resemblance to God, as Thomas Aquinas confirms, derives primarily from the human intellect. As a consequence, any theory of origins that diminishes human dignity by proposing that the human mind emerges from matter is “incompatible with the truth about man.” John Paul II links this judgment with Pius XII’s encyclical Humani Generis. Pius XII decisively stated that even if the human body is derived from a lower “living matter,” his soul is created directly by God. According to both popes, therefore, there cannot be an evolutionary origin of the human soul.

The following fragment of the Address (no. 6) raises the most problematic issue. The Pope continues:

With man, then, we find ourselves in the presence of an ontological difference, an ontological leap, one could say. However, does not the posing of such ontological discontinuity run counter to that physical continuity which seems to be the main thread of research into evolution in the field of physics and chemistry?

---

11 Ibid., no. 5, in PAS 2003, 373.
12 Ibid.
Consideration of the method used in the various branches of knowledge makes it possible to reconcile two points of view which would seem irreconcilable.\textsuperscript{13}

To better see the problem that the Pope encountered, we need to recall how the origin of man is understood in biological sciences and among theologians proposing theistic evolution. To put it in a simple way, science proposes a descent of man from other animals through a continual process of generation with modifications. Since in science there is no room for inexplicable supernatural events, this process of the emergence of man must be continual, which means there cannot be a physical leap between non-human and human creatures. But this kind of a leap is implied by the direct creation and infusion of the soul. The reason is that the human soul is the form of the body. The infusion of the soul, from the metaphysical perspective, must necessarily transform the body in such a way that the new, rational form can be accepted by the material component. This vision implies that between a non-human and the human species there must be a physical disconnection, no matter how minute. As a consequence, the descent of man cannot be completely explained by biological sciences.

To see the problem even more clearly, we need to introduce three concepts of the origin of man. The first is based on the historical and literal reading of the Genesis account. Man was created directly and immediately by God. His body was molded of the dust of the earth and the clay model was livened by an immediate creation and infusion of the soul. This concept is called special creation. It has been almost universally abandoned after \textit{Humani Generis}.

The second concept is called special transformism—this is the concept adopted in theistic evolution. According to special transformism, the first human emerged by the infusion of the new form (rational

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, no. 6, in PAS 2003, 373.
soul) into an animal body which involved some kind of transformation of the physical structure of the body.

Finally, the third concept is the one proposed by scientists according to whom man emerged spontaneously as a product of natural evolution from animals. There is no room for physical discontinuity in the process of the generation of man, because this happened according to the universal laws of nature, in this case the laws of evolution and biological generation. Hence, biological sciences can explain the origin of man in purely natural terms.

Now, the problem which John Paul II encounters is that of reconciling the second and the third concept. On the one hand, special transformism accepts the fundamental tenet of evolutionary biology, namely that man descended from animals through biological generation. On the other hand, however, special transformism cannot accept the perfect continuity of this process due to the philosophical and theological requirements concerning the human soul. For example, if the rational soul is not just an epiphenomenon of highly organized matter, it must be infused externally, from outside of the order of nature. This, however, would make the emergence of human rationality inexplicable for natural science. The solution proposed in the Pope’s Address is strikingly vague: “Consideration of the method used in the various branches of knowledge makes it possible to reconcile two points of view which would seem irreconcilable.”\(^{14}\) The sentences which follow only sketch the limits of different sciences, but do not provide a solution to the problem itself. One can adopt the clearest division between the experimental and the philosophical sciences and still see the conflict between the two concepts—not because the disciplines are contradictory, but

\(^{14}\) *Ibid.* Another translation of this phrase available online reads: “An appreciation for the different methods used in different fields of scholarship allows us to bring together two points of view which at first might seem irreconcilable” (John Paul II, “Message to The Pontifical Academy of Sciences: On Evolution”).
because one specific problem presented by them gains contradictory explanations. Therefore, we can see that the 1996 Address presents one of the greatest difficulties of special transformism (and by extension of theistic evolution) without offering any meaningful solution.

**Papal Statements from 1985 and 1986**

In 1985, in his Wednesday catechesis, John Paul II said that allowing chance as a primary force that builds and shapes the universe would be equivalent to “giving up the search for an explanation,” “admitting effects without a cause,” abdicating “human intelligence” and refusing “to think.” This seems like a very strong statement against evolution understood as a blind, unguided process (atheistic evolution). In the same catechesis, John Paul II unambiguously defended a “marvelous finality” visible in the material universe. Again, John Paul II did not say anything that would stray from the long and well-established Christian tradition.

Christians are sure that the Church does not allow evolution as a purely materialistic, purposeless process, with chance as the main explanation of evolutionary changes. But, to be precise, any materialistic concept excluding God and finality would be incompatible with Chris-

---

15 Giovanni Paolo II, *Udienza Generale* [General Audience] (10 July 1985; available online—see the section References for details), no. 7: “Parlare di caso per un universo che presenta una così complessa organizzazione negli elementi e un così meraviglioso finalismo nella vita, significa rinunciare alla ricerca di una spiegazione del mondo come ci appare. In realtà, ciò equivale a voler ammettere degli effetti senza causa. Si tratta di una abdicazione dell’intelligenza umana, che rinuncerebbe così a pensare, a cercare una soluzione ai suoi problemi. [To speak of chance for a universe which presents such a complex organization in its elements and such marvelous finality in its life would be equivalent to giving up the search for an explanation of the world as it appears to us. In fact, this would be equivalent to admitting effects without a cause. It would be to abdicate human intelligence, which would thus refuse to think and to seek a solution for its problems.]” (English translation cited after: Schönborn, “Finding Design in Nature.”)

16 See Giovanni Paolo II, *Udienza Generale*, no. 5.
tian doctrine altogether. Saying that John Paul II rejects a purely materialistic concept seems to belittle the full meaning of the utterance. Adopting such a general interpretation of the Pope’s statement is almost tautological—it seems too obvious to account for the full meaning of the statement. Thus, it is likely that John Paul II wanted to say something more than just exclude an obviously non-Christian idea. Unfortunately, explaining in a positive way what the Pope meant is difficult and prone to overinterpretation. For this reason, the crucial question of whether the Pope sees evolution as an acceptable alternative to creation remains open. The only thing we know is that John Paul II rejected atheistic or purely materialistic interpretations of evolution.

In spite of the significant statements on finality made by John Paul II (and later repeated by Benedict XVI), even this aspect of the papal teaching is not completely clear. For example, it is not clear whether the Logos and Reason governing the world (as Benedict XVI puts it) is only an idea that seeks to describe the realm of essentially deterministic and chaotic phenomena of nature, or rather it is the source of an order detectable in biological and physical structures.\(^\text{17}\) Papal statements do not provide an unequivocal answer to this question. And this vagueness triggered much discussion and controversy during the past two decades.\(^\text{18}\)

Probably the most “pro-evolutionary” statement by John Paul II is that from 1986: “Indeed, the theory of natural evolution, understood in a sense that does not exclude divine causality, is not in principle opposed to the truth about the creation of the visible world, as presented

---


\(^{19}\) In the Italian original: “non contrasta, in linea di principio.”
in the Book of Genesis.” This utterance deals with theological problems, and addresses the role of the Holy Scripture in judging evolutionary theories. In contrast to evaluating evolution as a scientific theory, when it comes to theological matters, religious authorities, such as popes, do have competence and can provide authoritative and—under some conditions—even infallible judgments. Thus, this passage is indeed crucial for the current ecclesiastical debate on creation and evolution: If there is no incompatibility between evolution and the Biblical message, Catholic creationists lose their most powerful argument—Biblical Revelation. In that case the debate is over.

And yet, the passage is scarcely noticeable in scholarly publications and was never popularized by the media similarly to the 1996 Address. A possible reason is that this papal statement presupposes that the Bible might be in opposition to evolution and thus biblical arguments might be not only relevant, but even decisive in the debate over the origins. This, however, is the principle of older theology which is very often ignored in contemporary ecclesiastical (specifically Biblical) scholarship.

20 Giovanni Paolo II, Udienza Generale [General Audience] (29 January 1986; available online—see the section References for details), no. 3. The English translation after: John Paul II. “In Creation God Calls the World into Existence from Nothingness” (General Audience, 29 January 1986), in Interdisciplinary Encyclopedia of Religion and Science, ed. the Advanced School for Interdisciplinary Research (Rome: Pontifical University of the Holy Cross), available online—see the section References for details. John Paul II spoke in a similar manner in his “Address to the Plenary Session and to the Study Week on the Subject Cosmology and Fundamental Physics with Members of Two Working Groups Who Had Discussed Perspectives of Immunisation in Parasitic Diseases and Statement on the Consequences of the Use of Nuclear Weapons” (3 October 1981), no. 2: “The Bible itself speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its make-up, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise, but in order to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe. . . . The Bible . . . does not wish to teach how heaven was made but how one goes to heaven” (PAS 2003, 250).

21 This principle was expressed by several older theologians. For example, St. Augustine wrote: “I have learnt that a man is not in any difficulty in making a reply according to his faith which he ought to make to those who try to defame our Holy Scripture. . . .
According to more than a few scholars, be it scientists or theologians, the Book of Genesis—if it has any historical and realistic meaning at all—is a text which says something different from what it simply says. Rather, it has a “hidden sense” which an inspired author had in his mind, and which we seek to discover. Since there are no clear rules of how to discover that intended sense, it is mainly human reason which creates that “hidden and deeper” meaning, and adjusts it to the demands of time and circumstances. In consequence, when a new theory is proposed—no matter how well founded or unfounded it is—Christians are expected to adjust their understanding of Biblical message to match the theory. At the end of the day, the Bible loses its normative character regarding anything in the universe (worldview) and becomes merely a piece of literature from the ancient past. Its message is entirely relegated to the invisible, the spiritual or the symbolic.

In the traditional Christian approach, however, the Bible is not a “message in itself,” but rather requires a context for proper interpretation. This context is delivered not just by the “critical exegesis,” but rather Holy Tradition, that is, the teachings of the Church fathers, doctors and saints. From the dawn of Christian era, the Church was dealing with the problem of the genesis of the universe and succeeded to provide some convincing answers. The question of the origin of species did not start with Darwin. Obviously, some of the older biblical inter-
pretations turned out to be untenable due to the progress of natural science. One spectacular example is the controversy between geocentrism and heliocentrism. Yet, science cannot overturn all classic Christian biblical interpretations by putting forward a physical theory, or by establishing a new scientific paradigm. Science can influence the Christian understanding of the Bible, but science cannot invalidate the truth of faith. Besides studying the findings of science, believers need to also find the limits of science and establish which questions properly belong to theology alone and which to biology and other scientific disciplines.

To see how this works, let’s refer to a few examples. There is a massive scientific argument that dead people do not rise from the grave. Nevertheless, Christians believe that it happened in the case of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Science says that virgins do not give birth. Nevertheless, Christians believe that God transcended the limits of nature and accomplished the virginal birth in the one specific case of Jesus Christ. Examples could be multiplied.

These kinds of claims are justified by one fundamental principle of the Christian understanding of the universe, or the Christian worldview, which says that even though nature is essentially self-explanatory, that is, all natural effects can be traced back to their natural causes, there are some events that happen beyond the order consisting of natural chains of causes and effects. In other words, some events in the physical universe do not have a physical explanation. And this is not just a possibility, but rather the actual way of how God deals with the universe. The greatest evidence of the veracity of this principle are miracles which happen throughout all of the history of humankind. The crucial question when it comes to the problem of origins is whether God must have used only natural causes when forming the universe or, perhaps, God transcended the order of nature in the history of creation. This would be analogous to the way God transcended the order of nature many times in the history of salvation. Unfortunately, we do not
find an answer to this fundamental problem in John Paul II’s utterances from 1985 and 1986.

Conclusion

The above considerations lead to the conclusion that John Paul II’s 1996 Address does not resolve the question of Christian understanding of evolution and, additionally, creates a problem of the correct understanding of the human soul in terms of Thomistic metaphysics. Moreover, his earlier teaching on evolution also appears as fragmentary and ambiguous, as one that requires greater precision and further development, especially for the sake of the Catholic theology of creation. Are the teachings of Benedict and Francis (John Paul II’s successors) on evolution more specific and precise? Clearly, this is a question for another article.

A Textual Analysis of John Paul II’s Teaching on Evolution

SUMMARY

The author considers John Paul II’s treatment of the topic of evolution in order to retrieve its full content. He starts with an analysis of the Pope’s 1996 Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, especially addressing the problem of the meaning of the words that “the theory of evolution . . . [is] more than a hypothesis,” and the problem of hominization. Then, he explores papal statements from 1985 and 1986. Finally, he concludes that John Paul II’s teaching on evolution appears as fragmentary and ambiguous and, as such, requires greater precision and further development, especially for the sake of the Catholic theology of creation.

KEYWORDS

John Paul II, evolution, theory of evolution, evolutionism.
REFERENCES


Anthony Daum

St. Thomas Aquinas and Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange on Wonder and the Division of the Sciences

This essay is a comparison between St. Thomas Aquinas’s and Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange’s conceptions of philosophical wonder and the division of the sciences. While these two great philosopher-theologians are separated by almost 700 years, they have largely compatible views on these topics. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that Garrigou-Lagrange (1877–1964), being a Dominican himself, is deeply indebted to Aquinas, but he does also make some significant developments of his own, which is to be expected.

Thomas Aquinas needs no introduction, but, these days, Garrigou-Lagrange does. He is simply one of the greatest philosopher-theologians within the Thomistic tradition of the last century and whose most famous student was Pope St. John Paul II. Garrigou-Lagrange has, up until recently, been largely forgotten for two intertwined reasons. First, he was (in)famously labeled as “the Sacred Monster of Thomism” (which forces most people to make an immediate judgment based on their personal views of Thomism as practiced in the early 20th century).¹

¹ See, for example, Richard Peddicord’s The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005).
Second, immediately following the Second Vatican Council, there was a widespread rejection of Thomism and the manualist tradition which it promoted. Thus, Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange appeared to be relegated to the dustbin of time. Recently, however, there has been a great renewal in Thomism and particularly those great commentators that came after Aquinas. Among these is Garrigou-Lagrange. He wrote no less than 28 books and hundreds of articles, and this essay will use one of his works which was translated just last year.²

This essay comes in two parts. First, the notion of philosophical wonder will be treated. This will be followed by part two on the division of the sciences. This division is somewhat artificial because philosophical wonder and the division of the sciences are deeply intertwined, but it is done for the purpose of greater clarity on each topic.

**Philosophical Wonder**

*Introductory Notes*

In order to understand St. Thomas Aquinas’s and Garrigou-Lagrange’s doctrines of wonder, it is important to establish the existence and essence of wonder in ancient times. Neither Aquinas nor Garrigou-Lagrange should be credited with coming up with the notion of wonder, though they do have their own unique understandings of it. Since this will only be a *brief* historical study, we will focus only on the two most important places of this doctrine in Plato and Aristotle.

While there is evidence of a notion of wonder before Plato, Plato is the one who *officially* established wonder as the foundation for philosophy when he records Socrates as saying that the “sense of wonder (θαυμάζειν) shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only

---

beginning of philosophy (ἀλλη ἀρχη φιλοσοφιας).\(^3\) Another translation has it that wonder “is where philosophy begins and nowhere else.”\(^4\) In the context of *Theaetetus* (the source of this quote), it is clear that wonder is understood as a recognition of tension between sense experience (in this case, a constant number of dice) and the judgment of the intellect (the group of dice being considered as greater or smaller in comparison with another group).\(^5\) It is this tension (wonder), which is composed of both fear (of the unknown) and hope (that the unknown can be known) which leads one to think in a philosophical matter about the nature of reality.

Aristotle follows Plato on this score. He states in his *Metaphysics* that “it is through wonder (θαυμάζειν) that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; wondering originally at obvious difficulties, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters.”\(^6\)

Besides the explicit agreement with Plato at the beginning, Aristotle adds two important points that were only implicit in Plato. First, wonder begins with “obvious difficulties.” For example, wonder does not begin with considering the relationships of subatomic particles. Rather, wonder begins by considering why a stick appears to bend when placed in water. In the latter, there is an obvious opposition between sense experience (the stick appears to be bent) and intellectual

---


\(^5\) Ibid., 154c–155c.

judgment (the stick is not really bent), which leads one to wonder about the cause of such opposition.

The second important addition by Aristotle is that, after this initial experience of wonder, there is a “gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters.” That is, philosophers are not satisfied with answering the question of water refraction. Instead, they seek the “greater matters,” such as: what is the cause of all that is, what is the distinction between essence and existence, and why is there something rather than nothing? Thus, through wonder, a philosopher tends to follow a natural progression to more and more abstract (intellectual) questions which require different, more intellectual activities to answer.7

Aquinas on Wonder

While Aquinas acknowledges the reality and necessity of wonder, he rarely deals with it in an explicit way within his corpus. The most concentrated and explicit exposition of wonder is his Commentary on the Metaphysics (of Aristotle), almost exclusively in Book 1, Lesson 3.8 Since it is a commentary, Aquinas obviously follows Aristotle, but he adds more depth to the few words Aristotle devotes to wonder.

While it has been noted above that wonder is concerned with causes, this is something that is made explicit by Aquinas: “That they [scientists/philosophers]9 seek to escape from ignorance is made clear

7 This will be dealt with below when we deal with the division of the sciences. Certainly, Aristotle has some more to say in this section in Metaphysics about wonder, but this will be dealt with below within the context of Aquinas’s commentary.
9 It is worth noting at the onset that for Aquinas (and practically all those before him) science and philosophy speak of the same reality. Both are concerned with necessary truth (i.e., truth concerning reality that is immutable; as opposed to practical truth which “could be otherwise”), organizations, and causes. It is only in modern times that science and philosophy have been severed from each other, though, as will be argued below, Aquinas would have a difficult time calling modern science “science” at all.
from the fact that those who first philosophized and who now philosophize did so from wonder about some cause.\textsuperscript{10}

Following Aristotle, Aquinas argues that scientists/philosophers progressed in wonder from less important problems to more important, and more obscure, problems.

\[T\]hey began to raise questions about more important and hidden matters, such as the changes undergone by the moon, namely, its eclipse, and its change of shape, which seems to vary inasmuch as it stands in different relations to the sun. And similarly they raised questions about the phenomena of the sun, such as its eclipse, its movement and size; and about the phenomena of the stars, such as their size, arrangement, and so forth; and about the origin of the whole universe, which some said was produced by chance, others by an intelligence, and others by love.\textsuperscript{11}

Thus, there is a movement from considering more particular, material realities to more universal, immaterial realities.\textsuperscript{12}

Aristotle goes on to say that “someone who puzzles or wonders . . . thinks himself ignorant . . . So if indeed it was because of a desire to avoid ignorance that they engaged in philosophy, it is evident that it was because of a desire to know that they pursued scientific knowledge, and not for the sake of some sort of utility.”\textsuperscript{13} Aquinas comments that it is precisely from ignorance that wonder arises. That is, a primary condition for wonder is that one must \textit{consciously acknowledge} that one does not know the relationship between the contraries he is aware of.

This acknowledgement of ignorance, however, is not enough, for, as Aquinas continues, “Since wonder stems from ignorance, they

\textsuperscript{10} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Commentary on the Metaphysics}, bk. 1, l. 3, no. 54.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{12} Which will be important to keep in mind when the division of the sciences is dealt with below.
[scientists/philosophers] were obviously moved to philosophize in order to escape from ignorance. It is accordingly evident from this that ‘they pursued’ knowledge, or diligently sought it.”¹⁴ Thus, in addition to acknowledging ignorance, one must seek to escape from ignorance. This, it seems, is where most people get hung up. There are many (the *hoi polloi*,¹⁵ as is often called in Plato and Aristotle) who will acknowledge that they are ignorant of many aspects of reality, but there are remarkably few who are willing to put in the effort to escape it. This is why few call themselves scientists/philosophers, and why even fewer actually deserve the name.

Lastly, in this section, Aquinas briefly paraphrases Aristotle and says that “they [scientists/philosophers] pursued knowledge . . . only for itself and not for any utility or usefulness.”¹⁶ This is an important point that will have implications in the divisions of the sciences dealt with below. Briefly though, Aquinas understands science/philosophy as something primarily speculative rather than practical or productive. On the contrary, what is today called “modern science” is held in great esteem for what it can do for us (e.g., make cell phones, vaccines, satellites, etc.); the speculative aspects of these sciences are largely ignored (unless there is something practical/productive directly associated with it) and scoffed at as “useless” (though, technically, this is not an improper classification).

---

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, bk. 1, l. 3, no. 55.
¹⁵ The *οἱ πολλοί* (*hoi polloi*, “the many”) will be referred to often in this essay. Some take it to be a derogatory remark, which has a little merit, but, frankly, it is the most accurate classification of what I am speaking of—namely, those who are not real scientists/philosophers. The term *hoi polloi* is intentionally general, since it has nothing to do with social standing, education level, age, etc. For example, even in Plato’s time, there were people of high social standing who were highly educated, and yet rightly classified among the *hoi polloi*, since they failed to attain the intellectual habit of wonder (let alone science/philosophy) and settled for common knowledge instead.
¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, bk. 1, l. 3, no. 55.
The next section where Aquinas comments on wonder comes a couple of paragraphs later in Aristotle’s text, where Aristotle notes the relationship between wonder and metaphysics (which, as the highest science in Aristotle’s conception, is truly called “wisdom”). Aristotle begins:

The acquisition of it [wisdom/metaphysical knowledge], however, must in a way leave us in a condition contrary to the one in which we started our search. For everyone, as we said, starts by wondering at something’s being the way it is . . . when they do not have a theoretical grasp on their cause.\textsuperscript{17}

Aquinas reiterates what he said above in commenting on this that the philosopher moves (almost naturally) from wondering about less important and obvious matters to more hidden matters. He goes on to argue that “the object of their wonder was whether the case was like that of strange chance occurrences,” or whether they were “determined by some cause.”\textsuperscript{18} For something like a particular turnout of a roll of the dice is not—strictly speaking—caused, but is rather a matter of chance.

Aquinas then moves on to commenting on the somewhat cryptic first line of Aristotle, “The acquisition of it, however, must in a way leave us in a condition contrary to the one in which we started our search.” Aquinas notes that “[s]ince philosophical investigation began with wonder, it must end in or arrive at the contrary of this, and this is to advance to the worthier view.”\textsuperscript{19} This “worthier view” is nothing more than knowing the causes of the effects which the philosopher is wondering about. For, “when men have already learned the causes of these things, they do not wonder.”\textsuperscript{20}

---

\textsuperscript{17} Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics}, 983a11–14.
\textsuperscript{18} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Commentary on the Metaphysics}, bk. 1, l. 3, no. 66.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, no. 67.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}
disposition of the scientist/philosopher, but rather the beginning of all science/philosophy which must be overcome.

**Garrigou-Lagrange on Wonder**

Since Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange comes 700 years after St. Thomas Aquinas, it should be no surprise that Garrigou-Lagrange has a more developed notion of wonder. His conception of wonder is found principally in his work *The Sense of Mystery: Clarity and Obscurity in the Intellectual Life.* While Garrigou-Lagrange does use the language of “wonder” (at least, according to Minerd’s translation), he makes use of it in the context of what he calls “mystery.”

Sometimes people (the *hoi polloi*) wrongly think that a mystery is something that simply cannot be known. This is not how Garrigou-Lagrange uses the term. For him, a mystery is something in which there is an intrinsic meeting between clarity and obscurity. It is worth going into some detail Garrigou-Lagrange’s vocabulary.

The French term which often comes up in his work is *clair-obscur* which could be literally translated as “clear-obscure.” In Minerd’s translation, he uses the term “chiaroscuro,” which is “the style of painting utilizing light and darkness in a self-aware manner, utilizing contrasts for artistic effect. A chiaroscuro, with its interplay of light and dark, gives a vision at once clear and obscure—like a mystery.” While it is easy enough to understand what he means by “clarity” (i.e., that which is grasped by the intellect without much effort), his use of “obscurity” requires some exposition.

Obscurity, for Garrigou-Lagrange, is not caused by something absurd or irrational (below reason), rather it is caused by something *supra*-rational (above reason; or, at least, above what a person’s reason

---

21 See note 2.
Commenting on St. Teresa of Avila saying, “I especially have more devotion or love for the mysteries of the faith that are more obscure,” Garrigou-Lagrange comments, “She knew that this obscurity differs absolutely from that of absurdity or incoherence—and that it comes from a light that is too strong for our weak eyes.”

He is pulling a concept here from the Christian mystical tradition, which finds a prominent place among the Carmelite mystics, that the “darkness” or, here, “obscurity” on the way to God does not stem from a lack of light or clarity, but rather too much light and clarity. He says more directly later on that “it is necessary to distinguish the inferior sort of obscurity, which arises from incoherence and absurdity, from the superior sort of obscurity, which comes from a light that is too powerful for the weak eyes of our mind.” Thus, obscurity is the effect of something which has too much goodness or truth beyond what our intellects can grasp, rather than something bad or false (such as absurdity or incoherence).

By referring to obscurity as clarity that is “too strong” for our “weak” eyes, Garrigou-Lagrange is implicitly invoking the important concept of virtual quantity. Briefly, virtual quantity is a measure of intensity/degree of perfection of a particular quality, ultimately rooted in its degree of esse. In the context of obscurity and clarity of intelligible things, our minds must have the particular virtual quantity of intelligence in order to comprehend a particular intelligible. If the intelligible considered is of a properly-proportionate virtual quantity to our intellectual capacity/power (neither too high nor too low for it), it can be clearly understood. If, however, the virtual quantity of the intelligible is higher than (e.g., *ipsum esse subsistens*) or disproportionately

---

23 Ibid., 74.
24 Ibid., 141.
lower than (e.g., a void) our intellectual capacity, the result is obscurity. The lower virtual quantity has just as much ability to result in obscurity, than the higher virtual quantity, because, as noted above, virtual quantity is rooted ultimately in *esse*. As such, our intellects have a similar difficulty in conceiving being itself as it does pure non-being.

It is worth distinguishing further between the obscurity which can be overcome and that which cannot be overcome. Firstly, it must be noted that in *The Sense of Mystery*, “mystery” (particularly the obscure part of it) is both natural and supernatural. Both of these areas have sciences (habits of the intellect) which allow one to overcome *some* of the obscurity. That is, some obscurity is simply due to the fact that we have not studied wide/deep enough. There is, however, some obscurity which cannot be overcome by attaining the perfection of a particular intellectual habit, even within the natural order. When one comes up against obscurity in the proper sense, mystery in the proper sense (that which reason cannot overcome), the only option left to fulfill the sense of mystery is contemplation.

What separates those who live the intellectual (scientific/philosophical) life from those who do not is this sense of mystery which Garrigou-Lagrange equates with “the philosophical spirit.” The philosophical spirit “seeks to connect, in an explicit and distinct manner, all things to the most universal, simple, first principles. That is, the philosophical spirit wishes to connect all things to the most general laws of being and of the real.”

26 This spirit, however, is rare: “[I]t [the philosophical spirit] is quickly led to see the mysteries of the natural order where the common outlook sees no mystery.”

27 Once again, the “common outlook” (i.e., that of the *hoi polloi*) fails to see the tension between what is clear and what is obscure, even in the natural, sensible

---

order; it fails to wonder. This could be due to a variety of factors, but Garrigou-Lagrange pins it down to the fact that “common knowledge . . . [does] not seek to link [concrete and complex facts] to first principles and the ultimate causes (except in a very vague manner that has nothing of a truly scientific character).”28 That last point is worth emphasizing: it is not that common knowledge does not make any effort to make causal connections, it just does it “in a very vague manner” in which there is no emphasis on consistency and systemization which allows for a fully formed (habitual) sense of mystery (wonder) to take hold within a person. Thus, the hoi polloi “never see any mystery, any profundity, in the same place where the philosopher is astonished with that wonderment that is, as Aristotle has said, the very beginning of science.”29

Given this conceptualization of the sense of mystery as the beginning of science, the more scientific sciences are those that search “not only for the constant laws or relations of phenomena but also, instead, for causes” and that do not stop until they arrive at the ultimate cause.30 That is, the true scientist/philosopher is not satisfied merely with knowing proximate causes (“the constant laws or relations of phenomena”) but also, and more importantly, knowing ultimate cause(s) (the first cause, the uncaused-cause, God). Thus, the true scientist/philosopher seeks to move beyond vague concepts of common sense to “the distinct concept of philosophical reason.”31 This distinct concept of philosophical reason is the overcoming/satisfaction of wonder, the sense of mystery. As noted above, this is done by study and contemplation. In fact, Garrigou-Lagrange argues that “contemplation

28 Ibid., 128.
29 Ibid. Here, Garrigou-Lagrange references the section of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* which St. Thomas comments on above.
30 Ibid., 129.
31 Ibid., 138.
is the sense of mystery.” Thus, if the sense of mystery is the beginning of all genuine science worthy of the name, all science, ultimately, leads one to contemplation of the truth which cannot be fully grasped (comprehended) by the intellect.

A Synthesis of Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange on Wonder

As should be clear from the expositions above, wonder is not a simple, childish concept. On the contrary, philosophical wonder is a complex psychological act and habit in which fear, hope, profound study of causality (both proximate and final), and contemplation come together to produce, proximately, physical/metaphysical wisdom and, ultimately, human happiness. I will go through these one by one as much as possible, though they all intertwine at some point or another.

Philosophical wonder is an act. One must freely choose to wonder about a discrepancy between sense experience and intellectual apprehension/judgment (between clarity and obscurity); it does not happen automatically. One must take the time and effort to use the intellectual faculties in such a way as to try to understand the reality of the thing wondered about and the cause of the opposition.

Philosophical wonder is a habit. Wonder (the sense of mystery) is the beginning of science/philosophy. Science/philosophy, according to Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange, is itself an intellectual habit (not merely a body of knowledge or a textbook or an experiment or an academic degree or a job title). As a habit, science/philosophy is a constant disposition toward truth. Thus, wonder must also be habitual (rather than one discrete act) in order to constantly propel the advancement of

32 Ibid., 140.
33 The same fear, hope, profound study of causality, and contemplation are also necessary to produce theological wisdom (not to be confused with the infused gift of wisdom), granted that the object of wonder is divine revelation. Both Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange are in agreement on this point.
the sciences (of which there appears to be no end on this side of eternity).

*Philosophical wonder consists in fear.* The thing we are fearing when we wonder is ignorance, primarily ignorance of the cause of the mystery. That is, wonder contains within it a fear of being unable to fully answer the question, “Why am I unable to fully understand *this thing*?” Fear is that which impels to make a decision: either we choose to seek an answer to that question or we flee from it (either intentionally or in a mood of indifference).

*Philosophical wonder consists in hope.* As noted above, both Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange (following the ancients before them) take it as a fact that those who have a habit of philosophical wonder are always a rare breed, and it is precisely at this “step” at which one either becomes a true scientist/philosopher or one settles for the common knowledge of the *hoi polloi*. Hope “says” to the intellect that it is possible to overcome/settle this fear of ignorance. Without this hope, one is unable to progress to the “steps” of study and contemplation; one will simply back out in one form or another.

*Philosophical wonder leads to a profound study of causality.* What a scientist/philosopher primarily wonders about are causes, both proximate and ultimate. Proximate causes are those which have a direct causal relationship with the thing studied.\(^{34}\) For example, a soul is the proximate cause of a body being alive. While proximate causes can satisfy a particular intellectual habit (the goal of a particular science), the fear contained in wonder cannot ultimately be overcome/settled without coming to know in some way the ultimate cause of the thing studied. The “ultimate cause” can be taken in many ways. For example, one could consider what is the “ultimate cause” within the bounds of a

---

\(^{34}\) Close indirect causes can also be considered as proximate causes, though only secondarily to direct causes.
particular genus (e.g., the commanding general of a military is the “ultimate cause” of the military), but this is taking the term “ultimate cause” in an improper way. Strictly speaking, the ultimate cause of all that is, for both Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange, is God. As such, all sciences, ultimately, lead one to God, and this helps us to understand the last “step” of wonder.

*Philosophical wonder ultimately leads to contemplation.* Since all sciences ultimately lead to (point to) God as the ultimate cause of all that is, and since God, by definition, is above and beyond all human reason, God cannot be comprehended completely by the intellect but only contemplated (looked at, sitting in the presence of), and science (and the philosophical wonder which causes all science) ultimately leads to contemplation. Throughout this essay thus far, I have consistently referred to the fear of ignorance being overcome/settled. The reason “settled” is included is because, ultimately, the ignorance about God cannot be overcome (in the sense of complete comprehension) but only settled in contemplation.

*Philosophical wonder proximately causes physical/metaphysical wisdom.* Wisdom, for Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange, is chiefly knowing the causes (order) of things and, secondarily, is about ordering oneself and other people and things according to the objective order of reality. Whether or not philosophical wonder causes physical or metaphysical wisdom depends on the object being wondered about and whether one is wondering about the proximate or ultimate causes of the object. For example, if one is wondering about the proximate cause of a tree, one will be lead to the physical wisdom of knowing that the causes are sunlight, water, and soil. If one wonders about the ultimate cause (properly speaking) of the tree, one will be lead to the metaphysical wisdom of the prime mover (God). Though if we wonder about an intrinsically metaphysical object such as the soul or an angel, even won-
dering about the proximate cause would lead us to metaphysical wisdom since the proximate cause of metaphysical realities is God.

Philosophical wonder ultimately causes human happiness. This requires a little background. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, Chapters 7 and 8, Aristotle argues that θεωρία (theoria), theoretical/speculative contemplation, is the highest (“most divine”) action a human being can undertake, and, thus, θεωρία is that which will make us happiest. At the natural level, these are the speculative sciences (most especially metaphysics) which give us an understanding (to varying degrees) of the object of θεωρία. As argued above, all speculative sciences ultimately lead one to consider God as the first cause of his multitudinous effects, and so philosophical wonder (the cause of all science) ultimately causes human happiness in the form of θεωρία of God as the first cause of all that is.

The Division of the Sciences

Given that wonder considers proximate and ultimate causality and, thus, the order of reality, and that it is the proximate cause of all science, science itself also has the order of reality as its primary object. Consequently, the branches of science can be singled out by the *end* for which the order is considered (e.g., contemplation, action, or art), by *which* the order is considered (e.g., quality, quantity, or being qua being), and by *how* the order is considered (e.g., abstractio totius, abstractio formae, seperatio).\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) It is also worth noting here that the division of the sciences expounded upon below will be primarily focused, though not exclusively, on the division of the speculative sciences—as opposed to practical sciences (e.g., ethics) and artistic sciences (e.g., painting). This is for two reasons. First, this is the area that St. Thomas Aquinas and Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange focus on in their writings, and second, the speculative sciences are “science” in the most proper sense, as argued above.
Aquinas on the Division of the Sciences

The two most notable places where Thomas Aquinas expounds on his notion of the division of the sciences are at the very beginning of his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* (of Aristotle) and the much more exhaustive exposition in his *Commentary on the De Trinitate* (of Boethius). First, I will present Aquinas’s conception found in his *Commentary on Ethics*, and the *Commentary on the De Trinitate* will follow.

Aquinas starts his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* with a propaedeutic of sorts which, while not appearing to have much to do with the division of the sciences, is actually essential for understanding his conception of the division of the sciences. He begins by referencing back to one of the great maxims of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: “It is the business of the wise man to order.”36 By fronting his brief exposition with this reference (which appears to be only tangentially relevant), Aquinas is actually revealing his hand, but this requires some explanation. First, the act of ordering (in this case, the sciences), Aquinas argues, is an act of wisdom. Second, “wisdom is the most powerful perfection of reason whose characteristic is to know order.”37 Third, the highest form of natural wisdom, for Aquinas, is metaphysics. Thus, it is primarily the task of metaphysics to divide the sciences. It therefore follows that this would place metaphysics at the top of the hierarchy of the sciences. In the midst of that little quote, Thomas Aquinas reveals the basic principles of the division of the sciences: metaphysics is on top and the rest are divided (measured) according to their relationship to metaphysics (the most intellectual/scientific science).


Aquinas continues: “Now order is related to reason in a fourfold way.” First, there is an order “that reason does not establish but only beholds,” which is the order of nature. This is the order that the intellectual habits (speculative sciences) are primarily concerned with. Second is the order “that reason establishes in its own act of consideration.” This order is also used by the intellectual habits in order to systematize and explain the knowledge attained by them (e.g., logic). Third is the order which reason “in deliberating establishes in the operations of the will.” This is the order that concerns the practical sciences such as ethics and politics. Finally, there is the order which can be caused by reason in external things. This is the order that the arts, such as carpentry and painting, are concerned with. These distinctions are among those of different human acts rather than among the sciences per se. This is so because Aquinas primarily sees science as something speculative, and so the artistic sciences and practical sciences are only properly called “science” insofar as they relate to the speculative sciences.

The Commentary on the De Trinitate (of Boethius), in turn, contains within it what is by far the most robust exposition on the division of the sciences that Thomas Aquinas wrote. Unfortunately, it is outside of the scope of this essay to deal with every aspect of his exposition. Thus, the primary focus will be on question five, articles one and three. In order to get a better grasp of what Aquinas has to say, it is worth starting off with what Boethius has to say in his own words.

---

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 This is not to say that this idea is particular to Thomas Aquinas. In fact, it will be shown below that Boethius also held this idea (which, it is argued, he took from Aristotle).
Boethius begins with the maxim, “It is the scholar’s duty to try to formulate his opinion about each thing as it actually is.” By fronting his discourse with this maxim, Boethius is establishing that what he seeks to do is divide the sciences according to their real distinctions, instead of artificial and external impositions. He then immediately dives in: “There are three divisions of speculative science.” They are natural science, mathematics, and what he refers to as theology. Boethius sees the division of these three sciences as having primarily to do with the formal object of the science. As Maurer summarizes:

Natural science studies the forms of bodies along with the bodies themselves in which they exist. Mathematics studies, apart from matter, forms of bodies that must exist in matter (e.g., lines, circles, numbers). Theology studies forms that are entirely separate from matter (e.g., God).

Thus, for Boethius, the division hinges upon the object being more or less separate from matter per se (“a distinction in forms ready-made in the world”). Aquinas, for his part, agrees with this threefold division, but emphasizes a different means to attaining this division.

Thomas Aquinas emphasizes the act of the knower over the object known when dividing the sciences. More specifically, Aquinas considers the particular intellectual acts necessary for one to know the various sciences as the primary principle for dividing the sciences, and

---


44 It is important to note that, here, “theology” is not referring to what would come to be called “sacred theology” (or theology derived from sacred scripture) but what is often termed today as “natural theology” or “philosophical theology.” The term “theology” is used because the ultimate object of metaphysics is God. This line of thinking goes back at least to Aristotle (see especially his *Metaphysics*, bk. XII).

45 Thomas Aquinas, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, xv–xvi.

the object of the individual sciences as secondary. First, however, he considers the speculative sciences as a whole. In question five, article one (Is Speculative Science Appropriately Divided into these Three Parts: Natural, Mathematical, and Divine?), we get one of Aquinas’s most direct statements on the notion of speculative science:

The theoretical or speculative intellect is properly distinguished from the operative or practical intellect by the fact that the speculative intellect has for its end the truth that it contemplates, while the practical intellect directs the truth under consideration to the activity as to an end.\textsuperscript{47}

While the notion of division of the various human acts was dealt with above (i.e., speculative, practical, artistic), what is noteworthy is that Aquinas begins this whole discussion not with the sciences themselves, but with the intellect. Thus, the human knower (scientist/philosopher) is, for Aquinas, the principle of the division of the sciences. This is not to say that this division will be purely subjective and arbitrary, but it does argue for the position that science/philosophy is primarily a human act and habit.

Aquinas does, however, recognize the importance of the object of the speculative sciences. He says, “The speculative sciences are differentiated according to their [object’s] degree of separation from matter and motion.”\textsuperscript{48} In this regard, he makes three main distinctions.

Starting off, “there are some objects of speculation that depend on matter for their being, for they can exist only in matter.”\textsuperscript{49} This includes both natural science and mathematics.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, he further distinguishes between those objects which “depend on matter both for their

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} For Aquinas, natural science, natural philosophy, and physics are all the same thing and are used interchangeably.
being and their being understood” and those objects which “depend upon matter for their being” but not “for their being understood.”\textsuperscript{51} The former concerns natural science while the latter concerns mathematics.

Natural science concerns objects which depend on matter both for their being and for their being understood because natural science primarily considers motion. Motion, here, is taken in the Aristotelian sense which means practically all change, though conspicuously excluding generation and destruction (coming into and going out of being). This is just a fancy way of saying that natural science concerns itself with qualities which manifest themselves in natures.\textsuperscript{52} Qualities, of course, must inhere within a substance (usually physical, though not necessarily). Thus, qualities depend on matter for their being (e.g., there must be a green something) and for their being understood (e.g., green is understood only insofar as one has experienced green in physical objects).

The objects of mathematics depend upon matter for their being but not for their being understood because mathematics concerns itself with quantity (e.g., lines and numbers). For example, a seven inch line can be understood and defined without recourse to matter (matter is not essential for their definition), but a seven inch line has real existence only in a material object, not apart from the substance in which it inheres.

Finally, there are objects which do not require matter either for their being or for being understood. This is the area of theology/divine science/metaphysics.\textsuperscript{53} He makes a further, though less significant, distinction here between those objects which can never exist in matter.

\textsuperscript{51} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{The Division and Methods of the Sciences}, 14 (emphasis mine).
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid.}, 29.
\textsuperscript{53} Once again, these terms generally refer to the same thing in this work. It is worth noting, however, that Aquinas specifically singles out “metaphysics” for a pedagogical reason, namely that it should be learned after (meta) physics.
(such as God and the angels) and objects which can exist in matter ("substance, quality, being, potency, act, one and many, and the like").54 The above sums up well Aquinas’s view on the objects of the sciences.

When one moves to article three of question five (Does Mathematics Treat, Without Motion and Matter, of What Exists in Matter?), one finds in Aquinas’s reply that he is dealing with much more than mathematics per se. Beyond that, Aquinas deals with a much more fundamental concept which is essential to understanding his notion of the division of the sciences: abstraction.

He begins his reply by laying out the two operations of the intellect: “one called the ‘understanding of indivisibles’, by which it knows what a thing is, and another by which it joins and divides, that is to say, by forming affirmative and negative statements.”55 Or, more simply, there is understanding by which we know essences and judgment by which we unify or divide what we have grasped through understanding. For example, through our understanding we grasp what man, reason, and animal are, but it is only through judgment that we can say “man is a rational animal.”

Aquinas argues that there are two sorts of abstraction which correspond with these two intellectual operations. The first, abstracting through simple apprehension (understanding), is the “absolute consideration of some intelligible essence or nature.”56 The second is abstracting through judgment, whereby we unite or divide based upon the real existence (esse) of things. This is referred to as “separation” rather than “abstraction” in this work.

54 Thomas Aquinas, The Division and Methods of the Sciences, 14.
55 Ibid., 34–35.
56 Ibid., xviii.
Aquinas makes a two-fold distinction within the first form of abstraction. First, there is the “abstraction of form from sensible matter.” An example of this would be when we abstract the soul from the human body. Second, there is the “abstraction of the universal from the particular.” An example of this form of abstraction would be when we abstract the general nature of “man” from a multitude of particular men.

Separation, however, is given a distinct term for the reason that it is a fundamentally different act. Separation, unlike abstraction, concerns “things that can exist separately” or “that the one does not exist in the other.” Thus, separation takes existence into account. Because separation concerns things that can exists separately, it is primarily a negative judgment. That is, separating two things means that this thing is not that thing. For example, in separation we can say that “man is not a plant;” while these two things can and do have a real, separate existence, we cannot say that we abstracted man from a plant. In abstraction, however, we are usually considering the union of part and whole or the union of form and matter; for example, abstracting the vegetative soul from the matter of a plant. A vegetative soul, however, cannot have a separate existence from the vegetative matter, since they are really united. Thus, the act of separation cannot be done in this case.

Aquinas takes this act of separation as useful, above all, in supremely intelligible (immaterial) things. He gives the example of substance “which is the intelligible matter of quantity, [and] can exist without quantity. Consequently, the consideration of substance without quantity belongs to the order of separation rather than to that of abstraction.” Consideration of substance qua substance is, of course, a matter

57 Ibid., 40.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 37.
61 Ibid., 40–41.
for metaphysics, and this leads into the significance of these different orders of abstraction/separation.

The point of laying out these different intellectual acts is that they are precisely, and primarily, how Aquinas divides the sciences. His conclusion is worth quoting in full:

We conclude that there are three kinds of distinction in the operation of the intellect. There is one through the operation of the intellect joining and dividing which is properly called separation; and this belongs to divine science or metaphysics. There is another through the operation by which the quiddities of things are conceived which is the abstraction of form from sensible matter; and this belongs to mathematics. And there is a third through the same operation which is the abstraction of a universal from a particular; and this belongs to physics and to all the sciences in general, because science disregards accidental features and treats of necessary matters.\(^{62}\)

This requires some fleshing out. We will start with the third operation: abstraction of a universal from a particular (also called *abstractio totius*). This is the intellectual act/habit which belongs to natural science because it primarily studies the natures of material things. Natures cannot be considered without recourse to both matter and form (i.e., the *whole* thing), but they can be considered without individuals *per se*. Interestingly, Aquinas also argues that this mode of abstraction, understood in a general way, belongs to all the sciences. This is so because all science, properly speaking, “leaves aside individual or accidental features of their object of study and concentrate on those that belong to it necessarily and universally.”\(^{63}\)

The second operation, that of abstraction of form from sensible matter (also called *abstractio formae*), is the proper abstraction of the


mathematician because the mathematician considers the form of quantity. Now, this form is not a substantial form, because substantial forms cannot be conceived of apart from matter, nor is this form an accidental form abstracted from the substantial form. Rather, it is an abstraction of accidental form of quantity “from the sensible qualities and the activities and passivites of material substance.”\textsuperscript{64} This particular clarification needs to be made because, in Aquinas’s time, arithmetic and Euclidean geometry were the only types of mathematics known to him, and neither of these consider the form of quantity apart from the substance in which it inheres.\textsuperscript{65}

The first operation, the intellectual act/habit of joining and dividing, belongs to metaphysics. This is “radically different” from the other two modes of abstraction because it is “effected through negative judgment.”\textsuperscript{66} But why must metaphysics study its subject through a negative judgment? This is so because the proper subjects of metaphysics (e.g., being, goodness, truth, substance \textit{qua} substance, etc.) do not need to exist in matter, though some of them can. Thus, this truth is grasped by the \textit{denial} that these things are “necessarily bound up with matter and material conditions.”\textsuperscript{67} Maurer concludes: “Through a judgment of this sort he [the metaphysician] grasps being in its pure intelligibility, and primarily in its value of existence, and forms the metaphysical conception of being as being.”\textsuperscript{68}

\textit{Garrigou-Lagrange on the Division of the Sciences}

Unfortunately, Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange does not spend nearly as much time as Aquinas on the division of the sciences. He

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., xxi–xxii.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., xxi.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., xxii.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., xxiii.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
does, however, have an interesting take on the matter due to the fact that he came of age during a time where the separation of science and philosophy was becoming more and more prevalent. Thus, he is able to shed some light on the issue of the modern split. It is worth noting on the onset that *The Sense of Mystery* is work primarily focused on metaphysics and theology, and so it looks at the question of the sciences from the perspective of wisdom.

Garrigou-Lagrange starts off a section with considering “what differentiates the philosophical spirit” (wonder; that which is the proximate cause of all philosophy) from “knowledge obtained by the cultivation of sciences that are inferior to philosophy (e.g., the experimental sciences and mathematical sciences).”

There is a lot packed in this consideration as it is worded. First, by distinguishing between the philosophical spirit and the knowledge of the rest of the sciences, Garrigou-Lagrange is implicitly stating that metaphysics is most properly philosophical/scientific. Thus, second, metaphysics is hierarchically above the rest of the sciences. Third, the other sciences, specified as the experimental sciences and mathematical sciences, are “inferior to philosophy.” This is not an easy phrase to unpack, but it seems that Garrigou-Lagrange is saying that all science is ordered (finds its place) according to what is most fully philosophy (metaphysics). Fourth, if the experimental sciences include the natural sciences (and it would seem that they do), then we have the traditional trifold distinction between metaphysics, mathematics, and natural science.

He goes on: “In other words, in what does the acquired habitus of wisdom, of which Aristotle and St. Thomas speak, differ from the spirit of the positive sciences and the spirit of geometry?”

While this is basically restating the question, Garrigou-Lagrange adds something sig-

---

nificant by calling the various “spirits” of the sciences an “acquired habitus.” Thus, following Aristotle and Aquinas, the sciences are intellectual habits.

He answers, “It is clear that it differs from them above all and essentially by its formal object and by the point of view under which it considers its object.” While this is specifically treating metaphysics versus all other sciences, could this not be taken as a summary statement of what Aquinas argued above? Both the formal object (quality, quantity, being) and the point of view under which it considers its object (abstractio totius, abstractio formae, seperatio) are necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the division of the sciences.

Garrigou-Lagrange proceeds to something which is genuinely new: the “positive” sciences (i.e., the modern notion of science). He argues that the positive sciences “establish the laws of phenomena” and “consider the real as sensible (i.e., as an object of external or internal experience).” This he distinguishes from “the philosophy of nature” which has for its object “ens mobile, ut mobile . . . known not only according to its phenomenal laws but according to its first causes.” Unfortunately, he does not expand this point, but it appears that he is arguing that the distinction between what the modern world calls “science” and what the perennial tradition calls “natural science” is that modern science does not consider the first causes of the phenomena it studies.

**Conclusion**

St. Thomas Aquinas and Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange offer convincing portraits of science (philosophy). Their approaches to philosophical wonder and the division of the sciences are a perfect supple-

---

ment to contemporary discussions of what science is, how we do it, and what its purpose ultimately is.

For Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange, science is an intellectual habit whereby we can come to know the order of reality (necessary truths) and the One who orders it (God). Science should be so taught as to elicit wonder rather than cold facts and formulas, since it is wonder which urges us on to seek, more and more, the primary causes of things. The purpose of science is, ultimately, to contemplate the necessary truths about physical and metaphysical reality. Since this corresponds with the highest action of the highest power of the human being, the intellect, science is also the means to attaining one of the highest forms of human happiness.

St. Thomas Aquinas and Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange on Wonder and the Division of the Sciences

SUMMARY

The author makes a comparison between St. Thomas Aquinas’s and Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange’s conceptions of philosophical wonder and the division of the sciences. He claims that, for Aquinas and Garrigou-Lagrange, (1) science is an intellectual habit whereby we can come to know the order of reality (necessary truths) and the One who orders it (God), (2) science should be so taught as to elicit wonder rather than cold facts and formulas, since it is wonder which urges us on to seek the primary causes of things, (3) the purpose of science is, ultimately, to contemplate the necessary truths about physical and metaphysical reality, (4) science is the means to attaining one of the highest forms of human happiness.

KEYWORDS

Thomas Aquinas, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, wonder, science, philosophy, intellectual habit, reality, God, causes, contemplation, happiness.

REFERENCES


William Haggerty

On Not Taking the World for Granted: E. L. Mascall on The Five Ways

Considered one of the leading proponents of natural theology in the 20th century, Eric Lionel Mascall (1905–1993) taught philosophy and theology at King’s College London for most of his career. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he insisted that classical theism, embodied in the writings of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, could be successfully revived for a modern audience. Known for his vigorous defense of neo-Thomism, Mascall offered an unusual interpretation of The Five Ways. While modern scholastics typically read the proofs as syllogistic exercises, Mascall maintained that God’s existence could not be deduced, but must be grasped by way of a unique type of metaphysical intuition. In my paper, I want to re-examine his position, explore his reasons for adopting it, and raise several questions concerning its significance for the history of neo-Thomism.

Let us take a closer look at his position. In his initial remarks, Mascall suggests that each of the Ways can be represented by a simple *modus ponens* argument. Thus, for example, his version of the *Third Way*, stripped of its complexity, can be reduced to the following syllogism:

William Haggerty — Gannon University, Erie, Pa., USA
e-mail: HAGGERTY002@gannon.edu • ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5834-7790
If there exists a contingent being, there must exist a Necessary Being. But there do exist contingent beings. Therefore, there exists a Necessary Being.¹

Mascall believes that the challenge here does not lie in showing how the conclusion follows from the premises, but rather in establishing the truth of the major premise. He does not see how this can be done without “begging the conclusion.”² Why does he think so? He explains that the major premise depends upon the truth of the minor premise—the claim that there exist contingent beings. Yet if this is the case, if the major ultimately rests upon a grasp of contingency, it cannot be known through any discursive method but must be sought through a careful examination of finite beings themselves. However, once one comes to recognize in experience that a finite being does not provide for its own existence (that it is a contingent being), the major premise and the conclusion follow directly. While it is true that one may formalize this process in an argument, Mascall maintains that the proof is simply the explicitation or unpacking of an apprehension. Thomas presents this transition in syllogistic terms but, inasmuch as he is concerned with “ontological relations” rather than “logical relations,” the Ways do not require familiarity with the rules of logic so much as a closer inspection of finite being.³ In the end, the existence of God cannot be derived from premises; it must be grasped in a “cognitive act.”⁴

¹ E. L. Mascall, *Existence and Analogy: A Sequel to “He Who Is”* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), 67. I am grateful to Professor David A. Nordquest of the Philosophy Department at Gannon University for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.


In a later work, Mascall links his position to a central tenet of Thomas’s metaphysics. The *Ways* illustrate what he considers the “fundamental characteristic” of finite being—its “inability to account for its own existence.” This inability, technically expressed in the real distinction between essence and existence, remains the sole “datum” underlying all of the proofs. For Mascall, two basic features comprise the makeup of any particular being: its “concrete existence” and its evident “contingency.” Its “concrete existence” expresses its “ontological self-centeredness”—a finite being is always grasped as a “something in itself.” But though it is true that every such being retains this “core of impenetrability,” Mascall notes, it does not seem to possess in its nature “any reason why it should exist at all”—it remains something which “might not and need not have been.” The recognition of contingency is central here: the presence of a being whose existence is not “self-maintained” but “received from without,” reveals by its metaphysical composition the “creative activity” of God.

Mascall is quick to distance his position from any kind of ontologism. In this experience, one does not perceive God immediately, but only acknowledges the fact of His existence. Since what is grasped is “the presence of a cause in the perceived effect,” the apprehension has a sort of mediated immediacy: one’s perception is direct, inasmuch as God is discovered in experience, but it is mediated, inasmuch as it is only through an encounter with finite beings that one can reach the Infinite. In such an effort, the intellect does not merely record the be-

---

ing’s “bare particularity” in existing; rather, by penetrating to the core of its nature, it seizes on the very cause “whereon (its) finitude rests.” To avoid confusion, Mascall borrows a term from the Augustinian tradition by way of St. Bonaventure—calling the act a contuitus or contuition.

In making his case, Mascall often cites the work of two colleagues who held similar positions. According to Mark Pontifex and Austin Farrer, because God is contained in the concept by which we know finite beings, there is no need to establish His existence by formal argument. For Pontifex, what one actually apprehends in finite being is the “double concept” of “effect-implying-cause”—since the “being” and its “source” always appear together as “foreground” to “background” in our knowledge, any attempt to separate or “isolate” them is self-defeating. Similarly, Farrer contends that God must be found within what he calls the “cosmological relation,” a unique cognitive act in which one apprehends not “the-creature-without-God or God-without-the-creature” but “the creature-deriving-being-from-God and God-

---

12 Mascall, *Words and Images*, 85. In a footnote, Mascall does not directly refer to the medieval theologian, but cites the study *Medieval Mystical Tradition and Saint John of the Cross*, by a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey (London: Burns and Oates, 1954), 70. However, Professor H. P. Owen, who later defended Mascall’s position in his *The Christian Knowledge of God* (London: The Athlone Press, 1969), claimed that the term originated with the work of Bonaventure. In writing of the notion of contuition, he quotes from Etienne Gilson’s *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (Patterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 400–401: “This indirect apprehension by thought of an object which itself eludes us, the presence of which is in some way implied in that of the effects which follow from it, receives the name contitus in St. Bonaventure’s teaching. Intuition is just the direct vision of God which is refused us; ‘contuition’, in the proper sense, is only the apprehension in a perceived result of the presence of a cause which we cannot discover intuitively . . .”

Mascall admits that, considered strictly as proofs, the Ways appear circular. What then is the point of argument if it does not lead to God’s existence? He thinks there is a two-fold purpose: since Thomas seeks to “induce and defend the contuition of God in finite beings,” argumentation is useful both before and after the apprehension has taken place.\(^\text{15}\) The proofs no doubt help prepare the mind: though it is possible to grasp “in a flash” the contingency of being, usually the contuitive power requires some “interior or exterior dialogue” to prompt it.\(^\text{16}\) Such dialogue compels the intellect to focus its attention; it establishes that “frame of mind in which the apprehension of finite beings in their dependence on God is possible.”\(^\text{17}\) The arguments also serve to defend the apprehension after it has taken place by showing that it is not an unreasonable experience, and that it should never be “dismissed as an illusion.”\(^\text{18}\)

* 

Why does Mascall willingly adopt a position that most Thomists would consider unconventional, if not downright unorthodox? I think there are two separate grounds for his reading: the first is textual in nature; the second goes to the heart of his understanding of Thomism. Let us first examine the textual problem which consists of two issues familiar to students of the Ways. The first issue has to do with the interrelation or—better yet—the unity of the proofs. Thomas apparently assumes that all of the Ways conclude to the same Being, but there is

---


\(^{15}\) Mascall, *He Who Is*, 73.

\(^{16}\) Mascall, *The Openness of Being*, 111.

\(^{17}\) Mascall, *Existence and Analogy*, 90.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 90.
the possibility, as some critics suggest, that they actually result in five different beings, a “kind of celestial committee.” Where is the evidence, Mascall asks, that all of the arguments lead to the same God?

The second issue concerns Thomas’s use of the regress formula, a topic Mascall addresses in connection with the *First Way*. He begins by calling into question a possible interpretation of this formula which he believes represents a fundamental misunderstanding of Thomas’s argument. According to this reading, in rejecting an infinite regress of moved movers, Thomas supposedly arrives at an unmoved Mover which, though first in a finite series, nonetheless remains a part of the series. The conclusion here would suggest that, while God has an immediate impact on the second mover, He has but an indirect connection to subsequent movers. Mascall argues that such an interpretation conflicts with Thomas’s real intention: in using the phrase “non est producere infinitum,” he notes, the Angelic Doctor is not concerned so much with rejecting an infinite regress, but with showing that, even granting its possibility, such a series would still need a cause. In other words, the argument not only demands a mover to begin the series, it requires a creative cause that fully sustains it as a whole. The problem is that Thomas does not make this clear: the *First Way* might establish the existence of a Mover with a “radically different nature,” but it fails to make the case for the more vigorous account of divine causality found in the *Treatise on Creation*. And Mascall claims that the diff-

---


20 Mascall, *Existence and Analogy*, 43–44. Mascall here criticizes a popular objection to the *First Way* which is based upon this reading of the regress formula. According to this objection, he notes, “we only arrive at a first mover which is itself a member of the series, and is therefore nothing like the Christian idea of God. It would bear the same relation to the other members of the series as the integer ‘one’ bears to the succeeding members of the series of integers, ‘two’, ‘three’ and the rest. Its status is essentially the same as theirs, except that it happens to have no predecessor.”


On Not Taking the World for Granted

283
culty here lies with the inadequacy of the regress formula itself. In speaking of the Second Way, he notes:

It is of course perfectly true, as has often been pointed out, that all that is demonstrated is the impossibility of an infinite regress of essentially subordinated causes. . . . The fact remains that any argument based upon the notion of a regress can never prove more than that God acts at the beginning of the sequence, whether that sequence be a temporal sequence or not. 23

Mascall thinks his approach does much to resolve these two issues. When read in the traditional fashion, the Ways appear “incoherent with the rest of St. Thomas’s system.” 24 However, when they are viewed in the light of contemplation, as dialogues focusing on characteristics which reveal the radical dependence of finite beings, their problems tend to disappear. Taken as distinct proofs, their interrelation is ambiguous because they appear to be derived from “five different kinds of act of inspection of finite being,” and thus conclude to “five different beings infinite in five different respects.” 25 Nevertheless, once one grants, along with Mascall, that the arguments are nothing but distinct “syllogizations” of one and the same contemplative act in which God is formally “implicated in it as First Mover, First Efficient Cause and all the rest,” they unquestionably find their unity and their termination in “one infinite being.” 26

Mascall also dismisses the problem of infinite regress, finding a solution in his reading of the Fourth Way. Thomas here affirms the degrees of perfection among finite beings not in order to arrange them into any dependent order, he notes, but to emphasize their common limitation in being. From this point, the proof establishes the existence

23 Ibid., 75–76.
24 Ibid., 79.
25 Mascall, He Who Is, 78.
26 Ibid., 74.
of a cause “which possesses (the perfection) unconditionally.” Mascall suggests that Thomas could easily have introduced a version of infinite regress here but chose not to do so. He speculates that his use of this argument in the first three ways was something of an “historical accident”: having inherited the formula from Aristotle, and being driven by apologetic concerns, the Angelic Doctor was eager to show that the proof “would lead not to the God of Aristotle but to the God of Christianity.” However, despite being saddled with a defective regress formula, Mascall argues, Thomas can still accomplish his main task: because the Ways are not proofs but “discussions” meant to induce a contuition, they need only establish the radical contingency of finite being.

But Mascall’s interest here does not turn on textual difficulties alone. What makes his reading so unique is his claim that contuition lies at the heart of Thomas’s work. The key to his treatment is found in a distinction originally introduced by theologian Josef Pieper in his classic study Leisure: The Basis of Culture. Pieper there recalls that the great medieval teachers distinguished between a two-fold function of the human intellect—dividing understanding between ratio and intellectus. He explains:

The Middle Ages drew a distinction between the understanding as ratio and the understanding as intellectus. Ratio is the power of discursive, logical thought, of searching and of examination, of abstraction, of definition and drawing conclusions. Intellectus, on the other hand, is the name for the understanding in so far as it is the capacity of simplex intuitus, of that simple vision to which truth offers itself like a landscape to the eye.

---

27 Mascall, Existence and Analogy, 77.
28 Ibid., 77.
Pieper adds that such thinkers accorded equal measure to each function, contending that the graceful coordination of *ratio* and *intellectus* was critical to every act of understanding. Now Mascall believes that this relation, so crucial to the medieval tradition, has been replaced in modernity by an unhealthy emphasis on *ratio*, one that has led to the impoverishment of Western thought.

Mascall’s diagnosis of the problem begins with an examination of early modern thought which originated in the Cartesian effort to establish indubitable truth while avoiding error. To achieve this end, modern thinkers typically restricted the range and capacity of the intellect, demanding, in Mascall’s words, that the mind “detach itself from its object, attend only to the object’s sensible characteristics, and confine its own activities to observation and ratiocination.”

These features describe the epistemological position of John Locke. By restricting the perceptual act to the “registration” of sense-images, Locke confined the intellect’s role to a strictly discursive function, insisting that it could do no more than deduce, from the perceived sense qualities, “the existence of some inapprehensible substance.” Inasmuch as the intellect had no share in perception, Locke reasoned, it could never apprehend or grasp the being directly; it operated solely as *ratio*, never as *intellectus*.

In sketching the history of British empiricism from Locke to Logical Positivism, Mascall finds throughout the same neglect of *intellectus* and the same Cartesian longing for “infallible knowledge.” Whether the empiricist spoke of sense-images, sense-data or *sensibilia*, the goal always centered on the elusive quest for epistemically “safe” objects—that is, for “objects for whose nature we could not possibly be

---

31 Ibid., 33.
32 Ibid., 67.
deceived.” This requirement, and the corresponding drive for clear and distinct ideas, was actually a flight from the world which resulted in a divorce between perception and reality. By shrinking the perceptual act to sensation, the empiricist could no longer make any connection between the human intellect and “the world of cats and cabbages and human beings.” And, given this tendency, it was not surprising that British philosophy eventually devolved into various forms of skepticism—a decline, Mascall notes, which was foreshadowed in the work of Locke: the inferential leap from the “perceived sensory object” to the existence of an inapprehensible “trans-sensory object” could never be more than an act of faith on the part of the knower. Moreover, by embracing the demand that the only genuine knowledge consists of clear and distinct ideas, the empiricists embraced a criterion that eliminated from their consideration any part of being that could not meet this standard. By thus stripping reality of significant value, they were left with an “emaciated and sterile” world; a world, Mascall notes,

in which depth has been sacrificed to clarity, and in which nothing has any inside, a world in which there are no questions left to answer, not because they have all been answered but because they have been condemned as being no questions at all.

By contrast, the medieval position, which Mascall associates with St. Thomas, differs from the modern view not only in its effort to balance ratio and intellectus, but also in its singular emphasis on the capacity of the human intellect to apprehend real beings. Whereas modern theory, with its stubborn reliance on ratio, emphasizes “detachment from the object,” and deliberately restricts its vision to the “sensible surface” of things, the “traditional view” encourages “involvement”—even sympathy—with its object and fosters a contemplative yearning to

---

33 Ibid., 66.
34 Ibid., 71.
35 Ibid., 75.
delve beneath the surface to uncover the “intelligible metaphysical being.”

Mascall claims that the difference between medievals and moderns on this issue arises from their distinct attitude to the perceptual act. Perception for the Lockean terminates in the sense-quality which is—to use the Scholastic phrase—the *objectum quod*, the direct object of the intellect. In the medieval account, the perceptual act begins in sensation, but it also possesses a “non-sensory component.” Against the claims of British empiricism, Thomas insists that sense-data, though vital to the knowing process, function primarily as the *objectum quo*, the means by which the intellect is able to grasp being. In his estimate, the principal act of intellection is not an inferential movement of *ratio*; rather, it is an act of *intellectus*, or “contemplative penetration,” in which, through the instrumentality of the senses, the intellect is able to apprehend the true “*objectum quod*, the intelligible trans-sensible being.” Mascall confesses that, by stressing *intellectus* in this manner, Thomas tends to lower expectations with respect to knowledge. As we have seen, in their quest for epistemically safe objects, the empiricists amassed an arsenal of clear and distinct ideas, but since such knowledge only skimmed the surface, it eliminated from their consideration the world of real things. By affirming the capacity of *intellectus* to penetrate beneath the sense-data and thus reach the trans-sensible being of things, Thomas realizes that real beings possess an “inside,” and that—to the extent that this is so—one must learn to sacrifice clarity of vision for depth of understanding. Thus, while one can acquire genuine knowledge of real beings, it is a knowledge which always remains “ob-

---

36 Ibid., 65.
37 Ibid., 70, 82.
scure and opaque,” because its object, the real world of “cats and cabbages and human beings,” is “essentially mysterious.”

It is because the world has this character of mystery that it is not a “problem” awaiting an answer, but an “object inviting contemplation.” To solve the technical issues which plague modern science, Mascall notes, one need only call upon the “detached and dispassionate examination” of ratio. When confronted with a mystery, however, one must adopt an “attitude of humble and wondering contemplation.”

This act of wonder should not be confused with the systematic “wondering how” one associates with problem-solving and which often consists in listing “sensible qualities” and exploring “their relationships”; while such a limited technical approach does proceed from the given fact that finite beings exist, it never raises questions about that existence. On the contrary, the “act of contemplative penetration,” which is contuitive apprehension, is fundamentally an act of “wondering at finite beings themselves.” Mascall stresses the limits of our vision here: as we search ever more deeply beneath “the phenomenal skin” of experience, first to apprehend the physical objects and persons that immediately surround us, and then to uncover the God who is the ontological ground for both, we recognize that, insofar as “in each case the object is a mystery,” our understanding must remain “correspondingly obscure.”

It is in light of this treatment of intellectus that we can appreciate Mascall’s preference for contuution. He suggests that his interpretation

---

38 Ibid., 76.
39 Ibid., 78. Mascall’s treatment of the difference between “problems” and “mysteries” owes much to the work of Gabriel Marcel.
40 Ibid., 76.
41 Ibid., 79.
42 Ibid., 80–81.
43 Ibid., 80.
44 Ibid., 82–83.
of the *Ways* complements Thomas’s work in metaphysics, epistemology and psychology. First, his reading not only re-affirms the traditional emphasis on *intellectus*, it also shows how the modern reliance upon *ratio* diminishes the proofs. Despite all of his talk about the opacity of our intellectual vision, he claims that contuitive apprehension provides us with knowledge of God that is certain. The trouble with the Scholastic interpretation is that it agrees with the standard position outlined in British empiricism. By confining the intellect’s function to *ratio*, the empiricists rejected the possibility of acquiring any sure knowledge of being; the mind, restricted to sense-images, can only infer the “existence of some inapprehensible substance” from its data. But any such movement of reason, isolated from the power of *intellectus*, rests on little more than a “probability,” a “pure leap in the dark”: if the intellect has no genuine knowledge of the *objectum quod*, there is no objective ground for its operation. When the *Ways* are read in this fashion, they suffer the same fate as any Lockean inference, and thus represent an empty exercise in “discursive ratiocination” by which one formally assents to the proposition that “God exists.” Mascall considers this process a poor substitute for the surety found in the contemplative “recognition of God”; as prompts for contuition, the *Ways* do not trade in probabilities, nor do they require an inferential leap of any kind, grounded as they are in the ability of *intellectus* to grasp the nature of finite being.

Secondly, Mascall suggests that his approach, by embracing the demands of Thomas’s realism, helps restore the integrity of the perceptual act, something that had been abandoned in the British tradition. He recognizes that, for St. Thomas, it is neither the “intellect that knows” nor the “sense that senses,” but the whole person who understands

46 Ibid., 75.
47 Ibid.
through the intellect and perceives through the senses. Because there is one percipient, there is but one perceptual act in which the person reaches “the actually existing extra-subjective being.” In this account, the full understanding of any being requires both operations of the intellect—conceptualizing and judging—but each of these acts in turn demands the contribution of the senses which make known both “the particularity and the existence” of sensible things. And if, by means of this graceful coordination of sense and intellect, one not only apprehends the essence and existence of finite being, but also reaches its causal source, there is little need for ratio or argumentation. Now Thomas’s treatment of this relation—which Mascall calls the “unity of the perceptual act”—is precisely what is missing from modern empiricism. Because perception for the Lockean involves “two successive acts” which are only loosely connected, there can be no genuine interaction between sense and intellect, for even if the senses could provide an objectum quo, the intellect, conceived as pure ratio, lacks any power to see or “read” within such sense-data the objectum quod or “inner essence of things.”

Thirdly, Mascall thinks his interpretation reveals the “radically existential nature of St. Thomas’s thought.” By installing the real distinction as the central datum underlying the proofs, he aligns himself with the existential Thomism of Etienne Gilson. According to Gilson, in purging Aristotelian thought of its essentialism, Thomas “transformed” Greek metaphysics by giving priority to the esse-essentia dis-

---

48 Mascall, Existence and Analogy, 56.
49 Ibid., 53.
50 Ibid., 56.
51 Ibid., 57.
52 Ibid., 53.
53 Ibid., 79.
Inasmuch as contuitive apprehension begins with the actual existent, it agrees with this emphasis. By grasping, in an existential judgment, the *actus essendi* of any finite being—even the “most humble and insignificant,” Mascall insists, we can gain direct access to “self-existent Being itself,” and thereby acknowledge the transcendent cause responsible for the “act by which finite existents exist.”

Finally, in restoring *intellectus* to its rightful place, Mascall maintains that Thomas does not neglect *ratio*; rather, he better defines the “relation between argument and intuition.” Thomas’s “quasi-syllogistic” proofs, though logically tight, chiefly serve in the “formation of an act of intuition.” To illustrate, Mascall draws a “parallel” case from mathematics. In the effort to master any proof, there is a difference between simply being “convinced by a long chain of reasoning” and attaining an “intimate grasp” of a theorem. When first exploring an argument, a student might assent to the validity of each step and feel compelled to accept its conclusion, but he remains “dissatisfied” as long as he fails to see “how the premises and conclusion are related as parts of a whole.” To “understand why” a proof works, he must grasp it as a “definite form,” seeing “the conclusion as involved in the premises.” Such an insight may happen “suddenly,” but it typically arrives only “after a long and painful consideration” of detailed argumentation. To Mascall, such proofs should be judged “elegant” or “messy” to the degree that they are successful in stimulating an “intuitive grasp” of this kind. The *Ways* perform a similar function in rousing a contui-

---

54 Ibid., 45.  
55 Ibid., 51, 79.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Ibid.  
59 Ibid.  
60 Ibid.
tion: though they “carry complete conviction”—logically speaking—their primary function is to enable the student to get hold of the nature of finite being.61

*  

What little comment there has been on Mascall’s position has been mainly negative. In his fine study on *The Cosmological Argument*, for instance, William Lane Craig dismisses contuition: since each of the *Ways* is a “distinct and demonstrative” proof, he notes, none can be considered a mere “expression” of the inadequacy of finite being. “One may wish to advance such a position,” Craig writes, “but it does not represent Aquinas in any way.”62 At first glance, it would be difficult to disagree with this assessment. Thomas makes his position clear in *Question 2* of the *Summa*: the *Ways* are demonstrations aimed at establishing God’s existence discursively; they are not “monstrations” used to stimulate the contuitive power.63

Craig’s judgment here seems a bit harsh, and I think something should be said by way of an apologia. In defending Mascall, however, I would not want to suggest that I am in complete agreement with his position or even that he has read Thomas correctly. Rather, I want to argue that, while his work is largely consistent with the Thomist philosophical tradition, there remain serious difficulties with his notion of contuition.

In support of Mascall, I will restrict myself to three brief comments. First, it should be noted that, however unorthodox his treatment of the *Ways* initially appears, it is not all that different from the traditional reading. There is—with both approaches—the same grounding in

our experience of finite beings, the same emphasis on the real distinction between essence and existence, and the same ascent from knowledge of contingent being to the recognition of a non-contingent creative cause. While not fully endorsing contuition, theologian Aidan Nichols believes that Mascall captures what is essential in Thomas’s understanding of “the relation between things and God,” and suspects that the *Ways* may indeed be a type of “formalized articulation” of experience which Thomas uses to “prepare a human being for due sensitivity” to the fragility of finite being.\(^{64}\)

Secondly, though we may tend to side with Craig on the textual issue, we cannot question Mascall’s Thomist credentials. In addition to the heavy reliance upon Gilson, his work is filled with the names of other distinguished neo-Thomists. In building his case, he enlists the support of Jacques Maritain, suggesting that contuition is almost identical to Maritain’s notion of the “natural contemplation” of “divine things” acquired through “intellectual connaturality.”\(^{65}\) Moreover, his general treatment of Thomas’s account of knowledge, with its stress upon the primacy of *intellectus*, owes much to the pioneering work of the French Jesuit Pierre Roussellot. Mascall even summons the Sacred Monster of Thomism to his defense, noting that the *Ways*, in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange’s august judgment, represent little “more than philosophical refinements of one broad general proof” which is often employed “unreflectively . . . by quite untrained people.”\(^{66}\) This is not to say that any of these scholars would necessarily agree with Mascall’s position, but simply to suggest that his treatment is grounded in a rich, exhaustive study of neo-Thomism.

---


\(^{65}\) Mascall, *He Who Is*, 76.

\(^{66}\) *Ibid.*, 37
My third point concerns Mascall’s historical treatment of his subject. If his assessment of the British tradition is correct, and the modern scholastics share the empiricists’ obsession with ratio, they also inherit their unfortunate tendency to neglect intellectus. This is a serious charge, but we must not forget Mascall’s deeper point in connection to the proofs: the preoccupation with logic-chopping helps obscure a central reason why the Ways have become so unpalatable to modern tastes. Many people remain untouched by the proofs not because they lack the deductive wherewithal to follow argumentation, but because they do not possess the “leisure” necessary for a quiet reflection on finite beings. Whatever our final judgment on contuition, we can certainly sympathize with Mascall’s claim that, when the proofs are isolated from their original grounding in experience, they become sterile academic exercises. And we would do well to follow his advice when he recommends that, in order to revive “the plain man’s apprehension of God in his creatures,” we must not only develop a “reverent attitude to finite beings,” but also acquire the requisite intellectual humility to “accept (our) own finitude.” If such is not present, we will never be able to see the “Creator at work in his creatures.”

Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, there are problems with Mascall’s position. I would like to focus on two. First, his study turns upon his understanding of the relation between ratio and intellectus, but there is some question as to whether his position is fully in line with St. Thomas. Mascall writes as if these are two separate powers; however, in Question 79, article 8 of the Summa, Thomas insists that they are simply distinct functions of the same power, a point made clear by their

---

67 Ibid., 80.
68 Ibid., 77, 81.
69 Ibid., 81.
“respective actions.” Intellectus consists in the apprehension of “intelligible truth,” whereas ratio involves the activity of proceeding from “one thing understood to another” in order to grasp truth. Thomas offers by way of contrast the case of the angelic intellect: angels do not employ ratio because, already in possession of “perfect knowledge,” they have “no need to advance” in understanding. In exploring the difference between the two functions, he draws a further analogy: ratio is likened to intellectus, he notes, as “movement is to rest” or “acquisition is to possession.” Just as any movement among natural beings begins from “something immovable” and terminates in “something at rest,” so in the case of intellection, ratio first advances “by way of inquiry and discovery” on the basis of “things simply understood”—an intellectus of the first principles—and then returns again, “by way of judgement,”
to those very same principles in order to examine “by analysis what it has found.” Now just as “movement and rest” originate from the same power in natural things, Thomas concludes, so it is “by the same power” that “we understand and reason.”

What strikes one about this passage is the clear emphasis Thomas places upon the interaction between *ratio* and *intellectus*: insofar as the two functions are rooted in one power, they are interrelated and—to a great degree—interdependent. To advance in knowledge, the intellect must proceed by way of reasoning, yet every step of *ratio* begins and ends with an act of *intellectus*. The example of “movement and rest” is helpful, but the undeveloped case of “possession and acquisition” is equally illuminating. If we were angels, Thomas suggests, our knowledge would be complete and immediate; we would “apprehend the truth simply without mental discussion.” Since such intellectual capacity is unavailable to us, we must struggle to acquire what we do not yet possess, proceeding slowly with great effort in order to reach the truth. Now the question is whether Mascall’s reading agrees with Thomas’s account. His explicit aim is to correct what he considers to be an undue emphasis on *ratio* in modernity, yet one might suggest that, in attempting to restore *intellectus*, he turns in the other direction, unduly neglecting the role of reasoning. When this happens, when “discursive ratiocination” is diminished, not only is the power of *intellectus* exaggerated, but its connection with *ratio* is also severed.

Let us see how this plays out. There is no doubt that argumentation takes a back seat in his treatment. When the *Ways* are employed almost exclusively to induce a contuitive apprehension, they become subordinate to that task. Reducing the proofs to mixed hypotheticals might be useful for pedagogical reasons, but it tends to make them less interesting and may even distort their meaning. We also see this reductive tendency at work in his resolution of the textual issues. In claiming that all of the *Ways* arise from the same contuitive act, Mascall does
secure their deeper unity, but he also neglects what really fascinates scholars—the distinct “syllogizations” Thomas weaves from this act. And though he may dismiss the regress formula as an “historical accident,” nonetheless this argument remains central to any adequate reading of the first three Ways.

Along with this neglect of ratio, there is a corresponding elevation of intellectus in Mascall’s account. British empiricism apparently fails because it denies the intellect’s capacity to “read that which is within the sense qualities” and thus grasp the “inner essence of things.” This is all well and good, but in his desire to save the British academy from itself, Mascall sometimes gives too much credit to intellectus. For instance, while praising Roussellot’s characterization of the intellect as a “faculty of intussusception,” given its unique ability to penetrate to the nature of “being itself in all its complexity and fecundity,” he later rebukes this same author for taking a “rather extreme view of (its) limitations.” And though Mascall is aware of the profound gap between the angelic and the human, denying that our limited minds can fathom the “ontological richness” of any essence, his notion of contuition sounds suspiciously like Thomas’s description of the angelic intellect which can grasp causes immediately in effects, and thus has no need “to syllogize from effect to cause.”

But the real question concerns his understanding of the relation between ratio and intellectus. As we have seen, to illustrate how the Ways prompt a contuition, Mascall exploits the difference between “being convinced by a chain of reasoning” and acquiring “an intimate grasp” of a mathematical theorem. Employed as a defense of his position, this example serves him well: the proofs stimulate the mind to

---

71 Mascall, He Who Is, 84–85.
72 Ibid., 78, 84.
73 Summa Theologiae, I–I, q. 58, a. 3.
74 Mascall, He Who Is, 79.
contuit finite beings as they really are. However, if the example is taken to represent his understanding of the working relation between argument and intuition, it should give us pause. In the scenario he envisions, argumentation supposedly contributes to the “formation of an act of intuition,” but it is not precisely clear how it does so.75 Mascall seems to suggest that the constant repetition of the steps “through a long and painful consideration” of the proof somehow triggers an insight by which the student gets hold of the form, but this remains something of a mystery.76

The relation between ratio and intellectus becomes more tenuous when one considers his description of the student at work on the proof. When first struggling, he appears saddled with a decidedly Lockean mind, one shrunk to the level of ratio and almost bereft of the power of intellectus. His perception stops short at the surface because, as Mascall admits, at this stage he can only “assent” to “an external fact”; he sees “how the conclusion is derived from the premises,” yet he does not know why it is true.77 On the other hand, when he eventually grasps the argument “in the solid” as it were, he appears in full command of intellectus, but one stripped of any trace of, or need for, ratio. No longer skimming the surface or assenting to facts, the student has “penetrated to the nature of the object and made it part of himself”; he not only knows why the proof works logically, he “sees the conclusion as involved in the premises.”78

If we take this passage as it stands, it presents something of a distortion of Thomas’s position: ratio first proceeds without intellectus, and then intellectus operates without ratio, but there seems little connection between the two. Mascall appears to join a Lockean mind to an

---

75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
angelic intelligence in an impossible shotgun wedding. In Question 79, Thomas tells a different story: the light of *intellectus* illumines every move of *ratio* as it advances in truth. Thomas no doubt would agree with Mascall that the ultimate goal here is to grasp the argument’s “form”; this is to see the proof “as a whole” and to know how its parts fit within the whole. Yet, as far as the Angelic Doctor is concerned, securing an “intimate grasp” of any argument requires the coordination, and integration, of *ratio* and *intellectus*.

My second question concerns the nature of contuition. As we have seen, Mascall turns to contuition because he believes that the *Ways*, considered as proofs, do not work. Yet there is some question as to whether he has avoided the discursive process. In a critical study of his work, W. E. Kennick claims that the so-called contuitive act whereby we see God “indirectly through finite and sensible beings” is simply “inference in disguise.” Mascall consistently maintains that we reach God through one act of intellection—that to see finite beings as “they really are” is to see them as “God-dependent,” to apprehend them in that unique bond that Farrer calls the “cosmological relation.” But Kennick spots a problem here: while Mascall initially admits that we only apprehend finite beings in experience, he later claims that we see “God-and-the-creature-in-relation.” How is this possible? Kennick thinks that Mascall falls into this trap because of earlier assertions: he rejects ontologism, and thus denies the direct apprehension of God, but he also rejects any form of inference as a means to establish God’s existence. His sole remaining option is to assert that we know God through contuition. But Kennick thinks this surely involves an inferential move which requires not *one* but *two* acts of intellection: a first act

80 Ibid., 230.
81 Ibid., 231.
in which we grasp the contingency of finite beings; and a second one in which we infer the existence of non-contingent being. He provides a nice counter-example:

Is this not like telling me that if I look in a certain place what I shall see is not the cat-without-the-mat, nor the mat-without-the-cat, but the cat-and-the-mat-in-relation though I cannot see the cat directly at all. If all I can see is the mat, how can I be said to see the cat-and-the-mat-in-relation, unless all you mean by this is that from seeing some peculiar features of the mat I can infer the presence of the cat which I cannot see.\textsuperscript{82}

This would apply, with some qualification, to the case of contuition: one might infer God’s existence from certain features of finite beings, but there is no question of apprehending Him directly or indirectly. And Kennick points out that Mascall cannot escape this difficulty by citing the medieval distinction between ratio and intellectus or by emphasizing the intellect’s magical capacity to grasp the “intelligible metaphysical being” of things.\textsuperscript{83} Even if all this were the case, once Mascall admits that our apprehension only encompasses finite beings, contuition becomes just another inference. And the analogy with cats and mats holds: just as from the casual inspection of the “seen mat” we can only deduce the “unseen cat,” so from “the intellectually apprehended features of finite beings,” we can indeed arrive at “the intellectually unapprehended being of God,” but only by way of inference.\textsuperscript{84}

Kennick seems correct in his analysis. Unfortunately, Mascall cannot follow him down this path; he rejects any discursive process, admitting that the “existence of a being in which essence and existence are really distinct does not logically imply the existence of a being in

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 233.
which essence and existence are identical.”

But this leaves him with a further problem according to Kennick: without any grounding in the traditional argument, there is really no basis for contuitive apprehension. In other words, if the real distinction does not logically entail the proposition “God exists,” if there is no contradiction in holding it while simultaneously denying that finite beings are God-dependent, there is certainly no difficulty in claiming that one can see finite beings as they really are without necessarily apprehending God as their creative source. When all is said and done, Kennick concludes, Mascall’s attempt to revive natural theology on “non-argumentative” grounds is a “failure” and amounts to little more than a woozy combination of “linguistic and logical truisms” and an “attitude of wonder . . . directed at things which most of us take for granted.”

This is a telling phrase on Kennick’s part. As a good Christian, Mascall never takes anything for granted. Indeed, he considers the attitude of contemplative wonder an essential prerequisite for the practicing theist: in speaking of contingency as the basis of Thomas’s proofs, he declares that we can never “become theists if we take the world for granted; but so long as we do not take it for granted we are within measurable distance of taking it as granted to us by God.”

The problem is that Kennick sees no good reason why we should not take the world for granted. When he considers the real distinction between essence and existence, he does not see a “metaphysical truth” disclosing the “creative activity” of God, but simply an expression of the obvious fact that “finite beings come into existence and pass away.” And radical contingency for him never translates into ontological dependence. In the end, the experience of contuition depends upon whether or not

---

88 Ibid., 229
one sees God’s presence in finite beings, and Kennick simply does not see it. What accounts for his distinct lack of wonder at the sight of things “that are and cannot be”? Has he failed to develop that “reverent attitude to finite beings” that Mascall considers so essential for the apprehension of God in His creatures? Or has his contuitive power become so deadened by a secular culture that it can no longer function adequately? In seeking an answer to such questions, we must examine anew the ultimate basis of Mascall’s own teaching.

---

On Not Taking the World for Granted: E. L. Mascall on The Five Ways

SUMMARY

Considered one of the leading proponents of natural theology in the 20th century, E. L. Mascall (1905–1993) taught philosophy and theology at King’s College London for most of his career. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he insisted that classical theism, embodied in the writings of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, could be successfully revived for a modern audience. Known for his vigorous defense of neo-Thomism, Mascall offered an unusual interpretation of The Five Ways. While modern scholastics typically read the proofs as syllogistic exercises, Mascall maintained that God’s existence could not be deduced from premises, but must be grasped by means of a unique type of “metaphysical intuition” which he called “contuition.” In my paper, I will re-examine his position, explore his reasons for adopting it, and finally raise several questions concerning its significance for the history of neo-Thomism.

KEYWORDS

The Five Ways, Mascall, Aquinas, neo-Thomism, contuition, natural theology, Locke, British empiricism, scholasticism, theistic proofs, ontologism, ratio, intellectus.

REFERENCES


89 Ibid., 85. This phrase is a quotation from G. K. Chesterton’s A Second Childhood, one of Mascall’s favorite poems.
Gabriel Ragan

The Structure of a Person as the Basis for Determining the Common Good as Understood by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec

Relying on the tradition of classical philosophy, Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec lists the essential properties of the human person as follows: intellectual knowledge, free will, love, religiosity, subjectivity of law, completeness, and dignity. These properties highlight the spiritual aspect of a human being. The first four properties point to the irreducibility of the person to nature, whereas the last three to his irreducibility to society. It is thus possible to say that the person transcends both nature and society. Moreover, the spiritual dimension of man is integrated with his corporeal life as a result of the fact that the human person is constituted of a spiritual soul and a material body.

This article makes an attempt to analyze Krąpiec’s anthropological views in order to show the reasons why some elements of the structure of man as a person—resulting from the human mode of access to truth, goodness, beauty and religion—are essentially significant for de-
termining the common good that lies at the foundation of all forms of human social life.³

**Knowing, Willing, Loving and Believing:**

**A Natural Basis for the Common Good**

*Intellectual Knowledge*

Since earliest recorded time, the philosophers have noticed that man is different from all other natural creatures. They have concluded from the fact that the results of human knowledge are universal terms which are timeless, without place, constant and immaterial. Since man routinely gains and demonstrates knowledge, he has to have a certain power that is also timeless, unchangeable and immaterial. This unique power of the human person is referred to by different terms: mind, ratio, intellect, cognitive ability. The human knowledge of generalities and species is obviously different from the sensory knowledge proper to animals. The human ability of accessing general knowledge has been interpreted differently. Some explain it as resulting from a simple reason that understands similarly to how the eye sees. Others notice that we do not recognize immaterial things directly—that is why they talk about active and passive intellects. Still others deny the immateriality of knowledge and claim that what we declare to be immaterial is, in fact, a very complex empirical knowledge. Differences in knowledge, however, between humans and animals are striking, especially with regard to other activities which result from knowledge: morality, creativity, free communities (not just herds or masses), art, science, the transformation of the environment, the development of societies and individuals, etc. We do not find anything parallel in animals. The first basic characteris-

---
tic of ours is knowledge. Knowledge, however, does not mean operating on the content of consciousness (i.e., thinking), but understanding a particular thing in the aspect of its abstract essence.\footnote{Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, \textit{Ja – człowiek [I—Man]} (Lublin: RW KUL, 2005), 180.}

Animals always perceive in a particular time and space. They have only a sensory knowledge. Man, in turn, has also a knowledge other than that which comes from senses.\footnote{Cf. \textit{ibid.}, 188.} The meaning (essence) of things is something suprasensory (transcendent, metaphysical). Essential characteristics of beings are thus unchangeable, timeless and immaterial.\footnote{Cf. \textit{ibid.}, 182.}

While the philosophical system of innate ideas or a priori categories accentuates rational knowledge and empiricism emphasizes sensory knowledge,\footnote{Cf. \textit{ibid.}, 199.} empirical rationalism reconciles them both by showing the path to escape their absurd consequences. It was first presented by Aristotle and then supplemented by St. Thomas Aquinas.\footnote{Cf. \textit{ibid.}, 206.}

In empirical rationalism, we point out that human knowledge has its origin in a real thing which, at the same time, is an object of cognition. A man who is getting to know something knows it in his own way: even a material thing is known by him immaterially (i.e., intellectually). The immaterialism of human knowledge is first guaranteed by the thing itself, as it consists not only of a matter, but also of a form knowable to the knowing person. Secondly, it is guaranteed by the immateriality of the cognitive power of the knowing person. Man thus knows in a complex way. His knowing starts with his senses being exposed to an object. In sensory perceptions and images, he discerns and recognizes objective properties which are immaterial; he grasps the meaning (essence) of a thing and can then think about it. The result of human cog-
nitive process is an immaterial image (notion, representation) of an object (its essence). Explaining human knowledge this way results in escaping empiricism (for it confirms the immateriality of knowledge) and idealism (for it affirms the real thing as an origin and source of knowledge). Consequently, the knowledge of an object (a real thing) can go extremely deep—i.e., it can continuously gain deeper and deeper insight into the comprehension of the object’s being.

The image of a real being has also its cultural consequences. Since every thing in the world has its own inner property called “a truth,” the image—being a picture of the inside of a being—exercises its influence on the inside of a knowing man by actualizing his cognitive ability and enriching his rationality.9

**Will for the Good**

Man’s intellectual knowledge is correlated with his ability to will. Knowing something as a good entails willing it, trying to achieve it or unite with it. Food, for example, is a good for those who seek to satisfy their hunger; health and friendship are goods for those who look for means of living, etc. What one wants has its consequences, because obtaining or receiving goods is that which enriches us. Therefore, goods are related to man’s ability to make decision. For the latter is actually combined with the activity of the will which is naturally inclined to the good. Through making decisions, the person not only seeks to gain some good, but also undergoes inner formation: it is through repeated choosing what is truly good that the person is made perfect in his action. The choosing of true goods makes man’s actions more firm, his will stronger, and his decisions more mature. Man’s intellectual knowledge and desire for the good culminate in love.10

---


10 See also *ibid.*, 622–625.
Love

Love is much more than a desire. It manifests itself especially in man’s ability to sacrifice for the sake of others. Love is thus one of the most important characteristics of a person. It places him at the highest level of the hierarchy of being. It is based on man’s ability to recognize the dignity of the other person (*bonum honestum*): the person should be treated never as a means, but always as an end in himself. The more a man loves, the more he becomes a person.11

Religion

In philosophy, the ability to believe in God is understood as seeking the fullness of truth, goodness and beauty. In religion, it is described as holiness. Every man, in his own life, encounters imperfections—especially when he realizes that his knowledge is not unlimited, his actions are not perfect, his works are unable to be absolutely beautiful, or that his life is temporary and fragile. It all drives him to seek help and support which could reinforce him and give a new meaning to his life. Such a reinforcement and meaning is found in religion. Man finds there a relationship with Absolute Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, which not only supports him as a contingent being, but also develops him as a person.12

*  

The importance of intellectual knowledge, will for the good, love and religion in the life of man consists in the fact that they justify his transcendence over nature and constitute the pillars of his culture. Addi-

---


tionally, they are essential elements of the common good. This is because the common good is based on the good of man. All the forms of social organization—the family, society, the state, etc.—if they are to assist their members to develop, they need to respect those four factors of the life of men as persons. The realization of the common good then consists in fostering the search for truth, the pursuit of good, the inspiration for love, and the practice of religion. The state is thus to promote—beside peace and economic prosperity—scientific research, moral education, unselfish love and religious freedom. Moreover, the reverse is also true: the concern for the common good includes efforts to prevent falsehood, evil deeds, hatred, and religious fundamentalism. Since the common good is ordered to the fulfillment of the human person, the action of the state and other forms of social life is assigned to the development of truth, goodness, love and religion in the life of their members.

**Dignity, Completeness and Subjectivity:**
**Social Expressions of the Common Good**

*Personal Dignity*

It is an obvious fact that lifeless things cannot give an ultimate sense to man’s life. Though people often cling to technology, wealth, and comfort, their lives are eventually given a meaning not by things, but rather by persons. This is because people are placed higher in the hierarchy of beings than things. Each man is a *bonum honestum*, a worthy being, that is, a being endowed with a special value. Thus, only persons—including God, the Absolute Person—are those who can give sense to the life of other persons. This being someone else’s sense of life defines dignity: possessing dignity means being worthy of someone
else’s life. The dignity of a person is that which makes others treat him in a special way. It finds its expression in one of the Kantian categorical imperatives that reads: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.” This transfers to society which also has to “treat humanity” as an end, not a means.

**Ontic Completeness**

In the structure of man’s being, there is everything that makes him human, there is no lack of any existential or essential. That is why it can be truly said that the person is complete: man is not a person (substance) in potency, but a person (substance) with potentials. From the outside (society), man’s essence needs nothing to maintain its identity. This property (i.e., ontic completeness) is decisive in answering the question of the relation between individual and society. Which of the two is sovereign as a being: society or the person? The answer cannot be other than that: since the person is a substantial being, he has to be recognized as prior to and higher than society which is merely a relational being. For this reason, society serves an auxiliary function in the life of man. Man does not need society to be human in an ontic sense, but he needs society to actualize his potentials (i.e., gain the fullness of his humanity).

The relationship between man (the person) and society is two-fold. First, due to his ontic completeness (“first act”), man is a sover-
eign being: although he is not an absolute being, man maintains his identity (i.e., is human) even without society—although he is a contingent being, man does not need any recognition from a society to be human, nor does he need any inclusion in a society to become human. Man is himself from the very moment of his conception. Second, although he is ontically complete, man is a being with potentials: he needs assistance from other persons (a society) to develop his “second act.”

The assistance of society is indispensable for man both in material and spiritual aspects, because only living together with others enables man not only to overcome different existential threats and difficulties and multiply the effects of his own work, but also to progress in acquiring intellectual and moral virtues and thus building his own character (personality). Nevertheless, it is not so much that society makes man, but that society cooperates—as a necessary correlate—in man’s development.

Following the distinction between man’s ontic independence (owing to his “first act”) and his potentiality (ordered to his “second act”) makes it possible to avoid two well-known distortions: collectivism and individualism. While the former insists on the entire subordination of man to society, the latter gives absolute primacy in determining society to man. Neither of these two extremes, however, adequately explains reality, for man, at the same time, transcends society in one respect and depends on it in another. Again, while transcending society by being complete in his substance, man depends on society by being limited in possessing the means to realize his personal potentials.

---

16 On the relationship between the first and second acts, see Krąpiec, “Man in The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy,” 607–608: “The action of a being is this being’s ‘second act’, which is rationally justified in ontic terms by its ‘first act’, which is its form.”


18 Cf. Krąpiec, Ja – człowiek [I—Man], 423.
Legal Subjectivity

What is the very first source of positive law? Krąpiec holds that positive law arises neither from itself, nor any procedure, authority or social contract. It is an expression of the fundamental right of a man to his own good—law is to promote and facilitate the realization of man’s good, and to protect it from evil. The basic good of a man is his development, since each person has a natural disposition to develop. Just because of his development, a man can demand others to carry out some beneficial action or order them to cease some harmful action. This principle is applied by positive law to specific conditions and circumstances. Thus, one man is for another a source of positive law.

At the same time, a man is a subject of positive law. Man’s legal subjectivity is based on the existence of human rights—the latter, though unwritten, are a prerequisite for written law. Human rights include, for example, the right to life, health, rest, marriage, and true information. Many of them are rightly covered by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

It is noteworthy that the good of man is the purpose of both written (positive) law and human rights. Since positive law is then to protect man’s good, any form of legal act that violates this good (e.g., laws permitting abortion, euthanasia, eugenics, same-sex marriage or parenthood) cannot be recognized as just and binding in conscience.

The personal dignity, ontic completeness and legal subjectivity of man thus ground the fact of his enjoying a special status in society. They also play a fundamental role in determining the common good.

---

19 Cf. *ibid.*, 422.
Personal dignity requires the state to take actions which aim only at the
good of man. Ontic completeness grounds man’s sovereignty and ex-
plains the reason for protecting him against the acts of humiliation and
manipulation. Legal subjectivity reveals the ultimate goal of law and
defines the extent of its binding power. All these properties of man de-
termine essentials for discerning and achieving the common good—the
full development of man as a person.

**Conclusion:**

**The Common Good as a Good of the Person**

It is natural for men to associate. They are not self-sufficient, so
when they live together, they can meet their needs and do it efficiently.
Men are not self-sufficient not only physically, but spiritually as well.
Social bonds help develop (actualize the potentials of) the human pe-son. Society is unified by achieving a chosen goal which is called the
common good. A good, however, that a society is trying to achieve
but that divides the society, cannot be recognized as a really common
good. The really common good is that which does not exclude any
member of society.

It is noteworthy that man is able to achieve together with others
not only material goods, but also spiritual goods. This is because man is
open both to the world of things and that of persons. The life of pe-

---

22 St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno* 1, 1: “Nam unus homo per se sufficienter vitam tran-
sigere non posset. Est igitur homini naturale quod in societate multorum vivat.” Available
online—see the section *References* for details.

23 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Politicorum* 1, 1, 2: “Omnis communitas est
instituta gratia alicuius boni. . . . Omnes homines omnia quae faciunt operantur gratia
eius quod videtur bonum; sive sit vere bonum, sive non. Sed omnis communitas est
instituta aliquo operante. Ergo omnes communitates coniectant aliquod bonum, idest
intentunt aliquod bonum, sicut finem.” Available online—see the section *References*
for details.
fully subject to natural law. The knowledge of natural law allows to predict the behavior of non-humans. This does not apply entirely to man whose special properties (being manifested in intellectual knowledge, will for the good, love and religion) place him beyond the predictable world of nature.

Though different from the life of natural beings, the life of man is open to those natural beings. Man can even communicate with them. Communication, however, is most effective only among persons, since lower beings (e.g., animals) are not equal partners for dialogue. For communication is not just an exchange of words, but it also brings about a change in the sphere of existence. It can be a mutual gifting in a friendly relationship when one gives oneself and receives another. Or, more clearly, it can be a reciprocal gifting in love whereby one acquires a new way of existence: being for another (leading to a unification of persons who love one another). When communication based on such a gifting is no longer only between “I” and “thou” but occurs in a group, it creates a community, a social “we.” Krapiec underscores that the “I–thou” relationship is the foundation of the family, whereas the “we” relationship is the basis of the state. He regards the family and the state as natural forms of social life—while serving the family, however, the state surpasses it in terms of self-sufficiency.

The development of man as a person in society is realized when one improves one’s intellect, will, and creative abilities. The intellect is developed by knowing the truth, the will (and emotions)—by striving for the good, and the creative abilities—by engaging intellect and will (and emotions) in the production of new works. Such a development is to be supported by society as a whole and its members individually.

---

25 Cf. ibid., 324.
26 Cf. ibid.
27 Cf. ibid., 328.
For society to become a favorable environment for the development of human persons, it is not enough that its members participate in producing material or spiritual aspects of the common good, nor is it sufficient for them to act fairly toward each other; what is also needed is their commitment to creating a “cultural ecological niche” in which a person can grow.28

It is noteworthy that the common good understood as a promotion of the development of man as a person is not antagonistic—i.e., it does not lead to conflicts, divide society, or cause injustice among members of society.29 It is not antagonistic also because—unlike in the case of material goods—it provides benefits to everyone in society. For example, one’s acquisition of virtues does not deprive another of anything but, on the contrary, contributes to strengthening their relationship—the more virtuous persons, the more perfect friendship (love) between them, and, consequently, the more perfectly united, educated, organized and co-ordinated society.

In the light of M. A. Krąpiec’s anthropological considerations then, the properties of man as a person give clear evidence that the development of human spiritual potentials should be recognized as the common good of all forms of human social life.

The Structure of a Person as the Basis for Determining the Common Good as Understood by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec

SUMMARY

The author makes an attempt to analyze the anthropological views of Mieczysław A. Krapiiec in order to show the reasons why some elements of the structure of man as a

28 Cf. ibid., 328, 332.
29 Cf. ibid., 328, 338.
The Structure of a Person as the Basis for Determining the Common Good

person—resulting from the human mode of access to truth, goodness, beauty and religion—are essentially significant for determining the common good that lies at the foundation of all forms of human social life. He analyzes such parts of the human person’s structure as intellectual knowledge, will for the good, love, religion, personal dignity, ontic completeness and legal subjectivity.

KEYWORDS
Mieczysław A. Krapyć, man, person, common good, intellectual knowledge, will, good, love, religion, personal dignity, ontic completeness, legal subjectivity.

REFERENCES
Peter A. Redpath

A Modest Proposal for Resolving the Apparently Never-Ending Evolution Debate: Reconsidering the Question

Somewhere the eminent twentieth-century historian of philosophy Étienne Gilson contends that most philosophical mistakes arise from badly-framed questions. This article takes Gilson’s contention as a proximate first principle, a starting point. Its major thesis is that Charles Darwin’s failure to understand the complicated nature of the question he was considering in his two famous works (i.e., *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection: Or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Existence* and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*) could likely be responsible for the apparently endless debates that have ensued since his time in Western culture about the question of the origin of species.¹

Many people today claim that these two works are studies in modern “physical science,” “biology,” that prove the evolution of the

human species from some sort of more primitive species. Part of my chief purpose in this article is to show why, whether or not evolution is a reality, (1) Darwin’s teaching in these works cannot be “scientific” in a modern, classical, or any, sense and that, consequently, in them, (2) Darwin did not scientifically prove the reality of evolution of species. If I achieve these modest goals, I think a reasonable conclusion that accompanies this success should be that Darwin’s intellectual sloppiness could be responsible for a large part of the seemingly interminable nature of the evolution debate since his time.

My chief thesis in this article is that, while the question of the origin of genera and species is principally and primarily a metaphysical problem, Darwin’s ignorance of the nature of philosophy and metaphysics and the complexity of the problem of the nature of genera and species caused him mistakenly to frame this metaphysical problem as one of physics, more precisely as one of biology, which Darwin reduced to a natural history of living, physical beings. By so doing, I contend that, unwittingly, Darwin revived in the domain of modern physics and biology a centuries-old debate initially introduced into Medieval logic by the third-century A.D. (ca. 232–304) Greek Aristotelian commentator Porphyry the Phoenician: the Problem of Universals. This unintended mistake that Darwin made helps explain why this debate is difficult to put to rest.

**A Brief History of the Medieval Problem of Universals**

Porphyry had first presented this problem to Medieval intellectual history in his famous *Introduction (Isagoge)* to a logical work of Aristotle (the *Categories*) by saying:

At present, regarding genera and species, I shall refuse to say whether they subsist or whether they are placed in the naked understandings alone or whether subsisting they are corporeal or
incorporeal, and whether they are separated from sensibles or placed in sensibles and in accord with them. Questions of this sort are most exalted business and require very great diligence of inquiry.²

After announcing that he would later consider the nature and mode of existence of genera and species, as a good teacher, at the start of a work in logic written for beginners, Porphyry postponed until later problems that, Gilson says, “belong to advanced metaphysics.” According to Gilson, such problems involve examining the mode of existence of genera and species, what philosophers have commonly called “universals,” or “general ideas”—e.g., whether they are subsistent realities considered in themselves, mind-independent realities, or simply mental conceptions; material or immaterial; and, supposing they are immaterial, examining whether they exist apart from material things or do so only as existentially united to them.³

Gilson thinks that this problem is chiefly metaphysical, not logical, because it is “one of those fundamental problems which the human mind stumbles upon every time it tries to grasp, beyond all particular sciences, the conditions that make knowledge itself possible.” When some practitioner of a particular science, or art, confronts such a problem, that person tends not to recognize that this problem falls outside the order of questions proper to that practitioner’s specialization. In some cases, Gilson observes, that person will attempt to resolve this problem according to the methods of his or her discipline, as if it were a problem proper to that person’s discipline, as if he or she is simply tracing back his or her discipline to its fundamental implications.⁴

---

² Étienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), 8.
⁴ Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, 5–6.
Gilson presents Peter Abailard (1079–1142) as a prime example of a Medieval thinker who made the error of mistaking a metaphysical problem for a logical problem and then attempting to solve this problem by logical methods. Gilson thinks Abailard did so because in Abailard’s time scholars had identified science, philosophy, with logic. Questions like, what is a definition?, species?, genus?, generic and specific difference? are proper objects of speculation for a logician. What is the nature of our ideas and their relation to things?, and, do general substances exist inside or outside the mind?, are not. Properly speaking, these questions are concerns of metaphysics, not of logic or physics.

Yet these were exactly the kind of philosophical questions that would naturally arise in the mind of any normal human being who also happened to be a great logician, because, as Gilson indicates, they arise on the border that divides logic from normal human metaphysical interest. “An almost invisible line indeed,” Gilson says. “Yet as soon as you cross it, you find yourself in an entirely different country, and if you do not notice it, you get lost.”

In making the preceding observations about a practitioner of some science, or art (like that of the logician Abailard) confronting and mistakenly attempting to solve “according to the methods of his or her discipline” a problem that “falls outside the order of questions proper to that practitioner’s specialization” as if the problem in question is “proper to that person’s discipline, as if he or she is simply tracing back his or her discipline to its fundamental implications” (logical methods in the case of Abailard regarding the order of questions proper to metaphysics), Gilson made a stunning discovery upon which he never appears to have capitalized: Most philosophical, as well as all mistakes that propose to begin actually-doable and actually-undoable human pursuits, do not start from badly-framed questions. They start from fail-

---

5 Ibid., 10–11.
ing precisely, or at all, to recognize the genus a person, or organization, is initially confronting and methods that can be profitably applied to generate knowledge in relation to that genus. The genus to which a subject belongs comprises the composite/organizational whole that determines whether one question, or a whole order of them, is proper to a practitioner’s specialization!

I make the above claim because, as Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas well understood, all intelligent questions, questions capable of generating advance in intellectual discovery, knowledge (not endless intellectual dead-ends, conflicts) essentially demand: (1) that a person have at least a generic understanding of the nature of the being, subject, about which he or she is asking questions; and (2) that the person asking the questions refer them to the subject according to a uniform method capable of advancing knowledge about the respective subject. For example, to engage in intellectually profitable investigations (those that advance human knowledge, discovery) about the human heart both a biologist and a medical doctor would have to know that: (1) they are studying the human heart and (2) they are doing so according to the methods of their respective sciences: as life-generating according to the science of biology and as health-generating according to the methods proper to the science of the medical doctor.

Framing any kind of good question (especially, scientific, philosophical, ones) presupposes: (1) that a person has at least a generic understanding of the subject about which he or she is talking and (2) that he or she is doing so according to some consistently-applied way, or method, that can actually generate new knowledge of the subject. For these reasons, precisely because it attempts to include as subjects about which a mathematician is attempting to solve a mathematical problem non-mathematical subjects (subjects that do not belong to the genus of mathematics) and does so in a way (according to a generic method) that no serious mathematician would attempt to use to solve a mathematical
problem—thus, asking whether Socrates, or Plato, of Athens was a better third-baseman for the 1950s Brooklyn Dodgers is a badly-framed question.

In my opinion, the seemingly-endless evolution debates to which the contemporary world is still being subjected was initially, and unwittingly, generated by Darwin’s ignorance of the nature of real genera and species. This ignorance caused him to engage in a process of asking badly-framed questions that generated logical fallacies of question-betting and circular reasoning that continue to this day. To help end this unnecessary intellectual taffy-pull is the project upon which I now embark.

A Brief History of the Problem of
Universals, Genera and Species
(in Relation to Pre-Modern Western Philosophy
and the Ancient Greek Problem of the One and the Many)

While many contemporary philosophers still tend to speak of Mediaeval philosophy as though it had dealt almost entirely with the problem of universals, as if the Middle Ages had given birth to this problem, in actuality this problem had first arisen in Greek antiquity as simply one more instance of the philosophical Problem of the One and the Many.

Contemporary “philosophers” tend to present the Problem of the One and the Many in antiquity (which, during the Middle Ages, will become what is often called the “Problem of Universals”) as if it were a problem unique to Greek physics, as the starting point on the road to the Greek discovery of logic, in which philosophy supposedly reached full bloom. This account is wrong.

Philosophy in Greek antiquity was a sustained reflection upon the Problem of the One and the Many, or on the relationship between genera and species. The “Problem of the One and the Many” was not a
problem unique to ancient philosophical physics. It was the chief problem considered by the whole genus of ancient Greek philosophy from Thales through Plotinus.⁶

Contemporary “philosophers falsely-so-called” tend to present the Problem of the One and the Many in antiquity as if it was a problem unique to Greek physics because, like Abailard and René Descartes, contemporary “philosophers” tend to reduce philosophy to logic, to a dialectic of competing logical systems or bodies of knowledge. This is not what philosophy was for the ancient Greeks.⁷ Ancient philosophy was a study of the many different ways that things could be one and many and the different principles and causes that were involved to explain these ways of being one or many.

Another way to restate my claim is that the whole of ancient philosophy is a sustained reflection on the problem of the relationship between genera and species. Philosophy started in ancient Greek physics with an attempt by thinkers such as Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximines to understand which of the four everlasting material elements (earth, air, fire, or water) existed as the most primitive generic body, the substrate, or principle, that, somehow, contained the other three species of matter and from which the other three emerged or started to “appear.” All the ancient Greek physicists were sense realists, just as were all the ancient Greek poets and the early Greek sophists.⁸

---

⁶ For a detailed defense of this claim, see Peter A. Redpath, *Wisdom’s Odyssey: From Philosophy to Transcendental Sophistry* (Amsterdam, Atlanta, Ga.: Editions Rodopi, B. V., 1997), 1–62.


⁸ For a detailed defense of this claim, see Redpath, *Wisdom’s Odyssey*, 1–62.
The ancient Greek physicists made no distinction among physics, mathematics, logic, and metaphysics because they had not developed logic as a separate, formal division (genus) of learning; and, initially, they had reduced mathematics and metaphysics to physics. For the early Greek physicists everything that exists (even the gods) emerged, or was generated, from some material that had previously existed and somehow contained whatever it generated. The chief problem these early physicists had was to try to figure out which was the first everlasting, common matter (the genus), from which all the other species of matter had initially emerged and how this emergence occurred and continues.

Today, some teachers of ancient philosophy will sometimes refer to the ancient Greek physicists subscribing to a notion of evolution of species. *Strictly speaking, the notion of evolution of species is essentially incompatible with ancient Greek thought because evolution presupposes novelty, newness in existence, progress.* Western theology, especially the notion of creation *ex nihilo* and the teachings of St. Aurelius Augustine, appear to be the remote historical foundation for the modern notion of evolution. Outside a created universe in which progressive good and new, more-or-less-perfect, species, that had never before existed can all at once come into being, or “evolve,” the idea of evolution is rationally incoherent, in principle unintelligible. For this reason, since the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* had not been doctrinally defined within Christendom until toward the thirteenth century and had not taken hold widely within Christian culture until after the Italian renaissance and its influence on the rest of Europe, reasonable is that a teaching about evolution such as that of Darwin would eventually arise a short time later.9

---

9 St. Augustine, *Confessions*, bks. 11–13. Available online—see the section *References* for details.
The ancient Greeks tended to subscribe to a cyclical understanding of the universe. In such a universe, nothing new can happen. Consequently, nothing can evolve, no newness can come to be. Whatever happens simply repeats what has already existed. Such a universe has no notion of novelty, newness, in the modern and contemporary, evolutionary, progressivist sense.

This does not mean that no one in antiquity had recognized the appearance of new species or the disappearance of old ones. Some ancient physicists were aware of anomalies in fossil records, and even the first philosophers thought that one kind of matter was somehow the most primitive, appeared first, and somehow contained, and acted as the substrate for, other kinds of matter. The problem of the relationship between genera and species had existed in the West long before it started to become expressed in terms of the Medieval problem of universals. It comprised the chief problem of ancient Western philosophy.

Medieval thought simply moved this problem of the relationship between the One and the Many to a new plane, which sought to trace the origin of genera and species in faculties of the human soul to facultatively-independent principles; and attempted to understand how the transition occurs from the one mode (genus) of existence (inside the human intellect) to the other (outside the human intellect). Such a move was not entirely new. Long before Porphyry or Abailard, in ancient physics, Parmenides had started to move the Problem of the One and the Many to a different plane (genus), from physics to metaphysics.

Parmenides is sometimes portrayed today as a metaphysician. Parmenides could not possibly have been a metaphysician for the simple reason that Parmenides had thought that all being is physical, that, as Aristotle says, “that which is was identical with the sensible
world.” For this reason, among others, the great historian of ancient philosophy Joseph Owens correctly recognized that “Parmenides . . . appeared to Aristotle and the Greek doxographers as a physicist in the ancient sense, a philosopher of nature.”

Like Abailard, Parmenides had existed on the frontier of a new scientific genus: the new science of metaphysics. Hence, he was unable easily and precisely to distinguish metaphysical problems from problems in physics in which his ideas had become incubated. Not being fully aware that he was glimpsing complicated problems belonging to a yet-to-be discovered genus behind and beyond those that physics is able properly to investigate or resolve, Parmenides apparently had thought, as Gilson observes about Abailard regarding logic, that he was simply tracing back physics to its fundamental principles.

Parmenides had rocked the world of ancient physics by undermining one of the basic metaphysical principles upon which ancient physics had rested. He had called into question the ancient Greek physical assumption that an everlasting matter could generate anything.

Parmenides had maintained that, if being is identical with perfect unity, if the original matter is essentially everlasting and one, then this matter is essentially without parts and is, therefore, unchangeable. As such, nothing, no species or individuals, can emerge from it. Being (the one, unchangeable, always the same) is being (one, unchangeable, and always the same) and non-being (the changeable, the multiple, the always different) is non-being (many, changeable, always different).

The world of ancient physics had stayed rocked by the thought of Parmenides at least until the time of Plato, when, as Aristotle tells us,

---

12 Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, 5–6.
Plato “gave separate existence to these universally predicated substances.” Plato had attempted metaphysically to solve the problem that Parmenides had introduced into ancient Greek physics by maintaining that, if we can separate matter as a principle of existence from another principle that causes matter to exist in different ways, matter can be everlasting and change can still occur in the physical world. So, Plato maintained that, while matter is everlasting, considered in itself it is qualitatively indefinite, is, at best, an inert quantified body.

Another principle, which Plato called a “Form” or “Idea,” makes matter qualitatively definite so as to be able to generate action. But Plato had maintained that this principle (a Species/Form/Idea) is immaterial and exists apart from the material world. Physical things change by reflecting or participating in Forms, Species, Ideas that exist apart from individually existing material beings.

Hence, by causing species to exist apart from individual beings, Plato had caused species to become everlasting and had made them incapable of evolving or of being principles of generation and action existing within material beings. By so doing, as Aristotle notes, Plato transformed the Problem of the One and the Many into the Problem of Universals, the problem of how what we judge to be general relates to what we judge to exist as individual. As Aristotle says:

But if the principles (that is, genera and species) are universals, either the substances composed of them are also universal, or non-substance will be prior to substance; for the universal is not a substance, but the element or principle is universal, and the element or principle is prior to the thing of which it is the principle or element.

All these difficulties follow naturally, when they make the Ideas out of elements and at the same time claim that apart from the substances which have the same form there are Ideas, a single

---

separate entity. . . . The statement that all knowledge is universal, so that the principles of things must also be universal and not separate substances, presents indeed, of all the points we have mentioned, the greatest difficulty.  

One such difficulty, as Aristotle maintains, is that, in different senses, the statement, judgment, that “all knowledge is universal” is true and false. Just as the term “sight” can refer to the specific ability to see color in general and the individual act of seeing “this” color, so Aristotle says that, in a sense “knowledge is universal, and in a sense it is not.” Another difficulty is that,

if we know each thing by its definition, and the genera are the principles or starting points of definitions, the genera must also be the principles of definable things. And if to get knowledge of the species according to which things are named is to get the knowledge of things, the genera are at least starting points of the species.  

In short, to put this problem in terms of physical science, physicists seek to apply universal definitions (principles, units of intelligibility) to understand and articulate in a universal way the principles of the motion of individually-existing things (apply a one to a many). To do so scientifically these principles must exist in these individual things as the proximate starting points, causes, generators, of their motions; and a physicist must be able to articulate (express in terms of scientific judgments) these principles as universal and necessary starting points of the different motions and actions of every individual member of a species of motion.

If first principles (genera and species) are universals that exist apart from individual things and not in individual things, how can they be intrinsic sources (proximate principles, causes, generators) of indi-
individual motion or action? And if genera and species exist only apart from individual things as generalities of the human mind or separate Forms or Ideas existing in another world, how can they be intrinsic and scientific principles of motion or action?

Unhappily for posterity, after positing this problem, Aristotle did not adequately resolve it. He left it unsolved for Porphyry to pass on to the Latin Middle Ages. Being largely ignorant of the nature of ancient Greek philosophy, Porphyry did so mainly as a problem of logic, not as a problem of metaphysics that had originally grown out of problems in ancient Greek physics.

The Medieval debate about the problem of universals remained largely unchanged from the time of Abailard until the thirteenth century, when, as Jorge J. E. Gracia maintains, “the terms of the controversy changed somewhat because of the introduction of new terminology found in the recent translations of Aristotle and the commentaries upon them by Averroes and Avicenna.”16 Gracia says that talk about genera, species, universals changed to talk about natures. And the conversation started to focus on the kind of being and unity natures have. Reportedly, St. Thomas Aquinas took the classic moderate position by arguing that we can consider natures “absolutely or in relation to the mind or individual things.”17

What Gracia tells us is that the thirteenth-century discovery of “new terminology” found in recent translations of Aristotle and Arabic commentaries at least somewhat moved the talk about genera and species out of sole province of the genus of logic and back into the genus


of metaphysics. Absolutely considered, no matter where it might, or might not, exist (the way a metaphysician should consider it) a nature would be what a definition includes. In this sense, we cannot say that natures have or lack being or unity because, considered simply according to what they signify (or their intelligible content), natures do not expressly include or exclude these in their definition. For example, “the nature man is neutral with respect to being and unity.” When I talk about the nature “man,” I could be talking about one man or the species “man,” about an existing or non-existing man. If, absolutely considered, we define “man” as rational animal, then we exclude from our consideration whether the nature about which we are talking is numerically-one man or the species man, an existing or non-existing man. We are simply talking about the intelligible content that the definition signifies.

According to Gracia, in Aquinas’s classic formulation, we refer being and unity to natures only when we consider natures relationally to mind-dependent or mind-independent realities:

In relation to the mind, natures are concepts properly speaking and, therefore, are universal and have mental being. In relation to individual things, natures are individual and have individual being. Man, when understood, has both being and unity, the being proper to a mind, where it is found as a concept, and the unity proper to universals, because it can be used to think about not any man in particular but about each and every man. Man, considered in relation to individual men, has both individual being and unity, the being and unity of each man where it is found as their nature.

Armand A. Maurer makes Gracia’s point about the relation of genus and species to a thing’s nature in a slightly different way: “Both genus and species designate relations: genus the relation of an essence

---

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
to many things different in species (for example, animal to rational and irrational animal); species the relation of an essence to many things different in number (for example, man to Peter, Paul, etc.).”

By indicating that “genera” and “species” refer to relations of essences, not to essences or natures considered as such, Aquinas provided the means for solving the problem of universals and a host of other philosophical difficulties. Up to his time, thinkers who addressed this problem had tended to treat universality as a property of concepts and essences. They had tended to think that the concept “man” was universal in the mind that represented a singular essence in things.

According to Aquinas, universality is a property of relation, not of essences, natures, or concepts. For him the concept man is not a universal or singular. Considered in and of itself, the idea is simply a sign of an essence or nature, a “sign-vehicle” (to use John N. Deely’s way of speaking), that we are intellectually considering, thinking about, judging, predicating in a universal way.

Universality in the mind is a property of predication, judgment, of the fact that we can, or cannot, predicate, the term in a universal way; saying, or not saying, it about, all individual men. For Aquinas, strictly speaking, universality is not a property of concepts, substances, natures, or essences. For him, strictly speaking, no universal concepts, substances, natures, or essences exist.

---


23 I derived my understanding of St. Thomas’s teaching about genera and species chiefly from reading Maurer, especially his *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Division and Methods of the Sciences, Questions V and VI of his Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*. 
This does not mean, however, that Aquinas denied the existence of real universals (in a way he did; in a way he did not) of real genera and species, that he has nothing to add to help resolve this current debate. Just what he can contribute I will attempt to show in my consideration of Darwin’s treatment of the question of the origin of species in his two major works and whether or not, precisely speaking, this treatment merits the name “scientific.”

**Why Darwin’s Teaching about Genera and Species Cannot Be Scientific**

For three chief reasons I maintain that Darwin’s two major works cannot be studies in science or modern physical science: (1) Darwin did not accept the existence of real species. In fact, he had no precise understanding of the meaning of “species.” As the full title of his most famous work, *On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, suggests, Darwin confounded the notion of species with a race, or population, a multitude of individuals that inhabit, and dominate, a geographical region and have common ancestral parents, original individuals (called “species”) that first settled a place and geographical region from which other individuals have historically descended.24 (2) Darwin had equally defective understandings of “science,” “physical science,” and a general notion of matter that underlies modern physics. (3) By conflating the idea of a species with that of a “race” historically descended from an original species, Darwin had committed a logical fallacy of “circular

---

reasoning” called “begging the question,” that is, assuming in a premise what a person is claiming to prove in his or her conclusion.

Whether we talk about “science” or “physical science,” we must talk about some species of human knowledge that, to some extent, claims to demonstrate universally necessary conclusions that essentially, necessarily, refer to some psychologically-independent reality. As Darwin’s work *On the Origin of Species* indicates, Darwin was a nominalist. He had claimed that “species” was just a convenient name, which he had used as a handy labeling-device.

Nominalists deny the real foundation of universal judgments. Or they claim that, while some real foundation for universal judgments might exist, we cannot apprehend this foundation by natural human reason. As Deely rightly notes, “The denial of real relations is the very essence of nominalism.”\(^{25}\) Since Darwin had thought that universals are just names for individuals, strictly speaking, his theory of evolution cannot be scientific or exist as a scientific theory because a nominalistic science is an oxymoron, is no science at all.

The true universal judgments a scientist makes are scientific precisely because they express necessary relations really existing within organizational wholes (real genera and species) that act as proximate principles, causes, for generating the kind of unity and action they do within and through these wholes. Darwin could not have explained the origin of species because, as Larry Azar has rightly proven, and Darwin had readily admitted, Darwin did not think that real species exist.\(^{26}\)

All sciences study a real genus, a multitude of species related, in the present, to one generic nature as effects to a proximate and proper cause. Strictly speaking, the origin of a species is a common nature, a

---


\(^{26}\) Larry Azar, *Evolution and Other Fairy Tales* (Bloomington, Ind.: Authorhouse, 2005), 452.
proximate genus really existing as a generic principle of unity and action within real species and (through real species) in the present within real individuals. The origin of presently-existing species is not a species existing in the past to which some presently-existing individual is historically related as a racial descendant.

For example, the genus animal exists in, and proximately causes, the species lion, dog, and human being just as the genus figured body exists in and causes the species linear, circular, and triangular bodies. Linear, circular, and triangular bodies are not historical descendants of figured bodies. Isosceles triangles are not historical descendants of the genus triangle, some ancient missing-link figure that a contemporary triangle vaguely resembles. They are figured bodies, instances of the quality figure existing as a proximate cause in material bodies causing their matter to extend in place in dimensional and angular ways.

Analogously, as a real species, considered as such, human beings are not historically descended from some remote, domestic or wild, species any more than, as Aristotle observed in his Politics, citizens are historical descendants of the founders of a political order (for, after all, founders of a political order, or genus, most of all deserve the title “citizen”).

If what I am saying is false and what Darwin is claiming is true (that species are historical descendants of parents who originally settled a geographical region), as Aristotle had recognized millennia ago, since they cannot be historically descended from themselves, if a “citizen” is someone descended from a parent who is a citizen, the founders of a city could not be citizens of the city (even though, strictly speaking, the founders of a political order, more than anyone else, appear to deserve the title “citizen”). Analogously considered, Darwin is assuming in

---

27 See Aristotle, Politics, bk. 3, ch. 1, 1275b30–35. Available online—see the section References for details.
one of his founding premises what he maintains is one of his biological conclusions: that the original species from which human beings were historically generated could not have been human.

We cannot even start to engage in scientific speculation without being able to recognize the existence of many species all belonging to the same genus, or something conceived after the fashion of a genus, that, in the present, because of its action in them as a proximate principle, or source, of their action, causes them to belong to the same species and makes them recognizable to us.

For example, to do human dentistry, dentists first have to admit that they know the existence and the nature of a human tooth and admit that they have some knowledge of some sort of generic, organic, matter commonly present in all species of teeth that causes them to be species of teeth, not of eyes or ears. To be able to recognize a species, we first have to be able in the present to perceive it as a really and presently existing member of a really and presently existing genus.

As Gilson, following St. Thomas, once keenly observed, what we first perceive is not individually-existing things considered as such. We first sense generically, then specifically, and, finally, individually. As he says in an article entitled “In Quest of Species,” if we really do not see species, how do we account for the fact that we say things such as we see a horse, man, and so on?

What I perceive by sense is in itself something particular, but my perception of it is something confused. By observing it more closely, and analyzing it, reason forms a clearer notion of it. Seen from a distance, what I see is some thing. If it gets nearer, I see an animal; still nearer, a man. Finally, I see John or Peter. In the end, I think I am perceiving by sense, not the sensible qualities of the object, but its very nature. Of course, that is largely an illusion; but there is some truth in it, and in his commentary on Aristotle’s De anima, Thomas Aquinas says why that illusion is justified up to a point. Both the same man, the same soul, perceive by
the senses and conceive by the intellect. One should not say that our senses perceive this and our intellect conceives that, but rather that men know by sense and intellect. The two modes of knowledge communicate in the unity of the knowing subject. In Thomas’ own words, “Taken at its summit, man’s power of sensing somehow participates in understanding because in man sense is conjoined to intellect.” In short, because I know that what I am perceiving is a dog, I say I see a dog. In so doing, I merely say that I see what I know I am seeing.28

Unlike Gilson, however, Darwin thinks that a genus is simply a historically remote, and largely unrecognizable, somewhat wild-ancestor of a bunch of presently-existing individuals.29 Hence, his whole method of study involves question-begging, consists in circular reasoning.

To know a species we must first know its genus, as a proximate cause somehow existing within it. We cannot know what an ancient genus is as a remote, historical, original species unless we can first recognize a presently-existing species that is the proximate effect of a presently existing genus that acts as a proximate cause of that species existing in the present. We cannot recognize a presently-existing species by saying it resembles a long-dead, wild ancestor that is extinct and, because we have never seen it, unidentifiable to us.

In short, incredible as it may appear, Darwin: (1) does not precisely distinguish individuals from varieties, varieties from species; (2) does not accept the real existence of species; and (3) makes no distinction between a species and a genus except to maintain that a genus is a pre-existing, primitive species that generated historical descendants.30

30 For a more detailed critique of all these problems in Darwin, see Azar, Evolution and Other Fairy Tales.
Regarding individuals, varieties, and species, Darwin says:

I look at the term “species” as one arbitrarily given, for the sake of convenience, to a set of individuals closely resembling each other, and that it does not essentially differ from the term “variety,” which is given to less distinct and more fluctuating terms. The term “variety,” again in comparison to mere individual differences, is also applied arbitrarily, for convenience’s sake.\(^{31}\)

For convenience he calls “species” “strongly-marked permanent varieties,” and “varieties” incipient species, “groups of forms, unequally related to each other and clustered round certain forms—that is, around their parent-species.”\(^{32}\) Such sloppy use of language is not scientific.

Much like Menon in Plato’s *Meno*, Darwin thinks varieties and species are just different names we give groups of individuals that closely look alike.\(^{33}\) He also thinks a genus is simply a name for groups of species that closely resemble each other. Simultaneously, he holds that a genus temporally exists before a species because a genus is simply an ancient species, the original, or parent, species that all subsequent species remotely resemble and from which they all temporally descended through minute variations.

Moreover, he maintains that we can recognize the existence and reality of species and genera by means of our external senses by (1) collecting minute differences between and among species that occur slowly over time and (2) recollecting how these differences resemble some common ancient ancestor that we never sensed, but can somehow remember, which originated all these differences. Apparently he thinks that we can find the common matter (this ancient ancestor, genus) that makes two species the same by minutely examining with our senses the


way multitudes of species are different and, through this method, discover the common sameness between them.

As Plato showed us centuries ago, we can never identify how two things are the same by describing in minute detail a common, sensory difference between them for the simple reason that differences make beings different, many. They do not make beings the same, one. To know how two beings are the same, we must intellectually apprehend these principles, abstractly, by turning our souls away from visible, sensory effects to seek the invisible cause, the common matter causing qualitatively unequal specific differences in perfection of possession of generic unity that we can never sense with any one or all of our senses. We only sense a genus in and through the species parts in which it exists as a unifying cause of the species unequally relating the species to numerically one-act, generic unity, or aim.34

My opinion is that Darwin’s method in his two major works suffers from the same problem as that of prisoners in Plato’s cave. The problem of the origin of species is not essentially a problem of physics or biology.

It is essentially a metaphysical problem demanding a metaphysical method for its framing and solution. We can never resolve it by confounding biology with natural history and attempting to find the genus from which a species originates by trying to locate this genus with our senses through historical descent with variation from primitive species.

The problem of the origin of species cannot be solved without first solving the problem of the origin of genera. And, to answer this question, since species are parts of a genus (unequally related as different parts to the same whole genus), among other difficulties, a person who claims to be a “scientist” needs to be able to answer questions about the natures and origin of: all wholes and parts, unity, diversity,

34 Ibid., 531E–532D.
sameness and difference, equality and inequality, opposition, contrariety and contrary opposites (i.e., beings that are somewhat the same and somewhat different) belonging to the same whole genus.

The reason for this is that all science studies some limited multitude. No science studies an infinite multitude because it studies multitudes related as parts of a whole: a genus, or organizational whole, composed of a multitude of species unequally possessing some quality of generic unity ranging from opposite extremes of the most to least perfect. For example, the science of medicine studies healthy and unhealthy bodies ranging from the most perfectly healthy to the most deprived and diseased. Analogously, the same is true of politics, economics, and so on. Politics studies war and peace. Economics studies wealth and poverty. And all these sciences study anything essentially related to promoting or impeding the maximum quality, perfection, of its subject.

So, for example, medicine studies diet, exercise, prescription drugs, medical devices, educational practices and institutions, and so on. Economics studies anything and everything that promotes or impedes wealth. And, analogously, politics studies anything and everything that promotes or impedes peace.

Why is this? Strictly speaking, medical doctors, economists, and politicians cannot answer these questions because these problems are essentially metaphysical, not physical, medical, political, economic, or, even, historical. To solve them, a person needs to be able to answer the questions of whether or not a genus is created in time, or exists with no temporal beginning. If it is not created in time, a person needs to be able to explain how the physical universe can be everlasting and contain all the above-mentioned somewhat-opposing, principles needed to generate multitudes as parts of an organized whole. Contemporary medical doctors, physicists, economists, politicians, biologists, and historians are no more competent to solve these problems than was Darwin.
The material universe is itself a finite genus, organized whole, in which all other material genera and species exist. If it were a universe with no limits to its extent, it would not be an organized whole, and could have no finite relationships (relationships being a kind of opposition) existing within it. It would have no internal unity and no “within” or “without,” and gravitational force and mass (finite, material resistance and receptivity to action from another) could not exist within it and would be unintelligible. Because we human beings can only know things in terms of locating them as individuals, finite limits (defining them within specific differences, within proximate genera), even if it were an unbounded material universe (genus), in principle, such a universe (organizational whole) and its essential parts would be existentially and intellectually incoherent (conceptually contradictory, oxymoronic), and unknowable to us.

If, on the other hand, we try to explain the origin of species within an everlasting material universe in which matter is eternal and everlasting like it was for Parmenides, this is an absurd task, an undoable deed.

The only universe in which a theory of evolution makes sense is one that is created ex nihilo (like the Judaeo-Christian one) or a non-Judeo-Christian one everlastingl, createdly, co-existing with and perpetually caused by, an infinitely-powerful God.

Not realizing the problem he sought to resolve was metaphysical (not biological, physical, or historical in nature) doomed Darwin’s project to failure from the start. While this problem might have a scientific solution, the sciences of ancient and modern biology and physics are unequipped to provide this solution. Strictly speaking, the problem of the nature and origin of genera and species is a problem that biology and physics are totally incapable of properly framing, much less solving.
Darwin turned to evolutionary history to solve his problem of the origin of species because the origin of a species is a genus and because, epistemologically considered, Darwin could not figure out how a genus can be anything other than a mentally-recollected, or remembered, being. If general being exists only in the mind, as a property of ideas or judgments, how can real species or genera exist? If species are only individuals, then, strictly speaking, real species do not appear to exist now or at any time.

Darwin tried to resolve this dilemma historically and epistemologically (not biologically) by maintaining that the reason we now attribute a species name to a multitude of individuals is because we see some sort of resemblance between these presently-existing individuals and a remote historical species that Darwin mistakenly called a “race” (from which all its species have supposedly evolved). Thus, for Darwin, a genus is simply “name” for a recollected universal, an original species, a historical universal that does not now and never did exist as a generic principle within a species here and now that causes a species to act the way it does here and now. (Hence, the general absence of the term “genus” in Darwin’s “biological” works.)

In Chapter Three of his *Origin*, entitled “Struggle for Existence,” Darwin starts to explain how he thinks the process of evolution originates from this historically-remote genus (which he thought to be a “species”). “When we look at the plants and bushes clothing an entangled bank,” Darwin says, “we are tempted to attribute their proportional numbers and kinds to what we call chance. But how false a view is this!” Darwin exclaims.35

Law, not chance, is the cause. The term “struggle for existence,” which Darwin says he uses “in a large and metaphorical sense,” refers

---

to the natural fact that “each organic being is striving to increase in geometrical ratio.”

Darwin rightly understands that all organic beings are related, and that we cannot comprehend real genera or species without, to some extent, looking at real relations and granting the existence of final causes. But his claim that some sort of natural inclination exists within species to reproduce geometrically is questionable, especially since Darwin does not accept the existence of real species and many members of the human species reproduce freely and for many different reasons. The claim that this is a scientific law from the standpoint of modern, classical, or any scientific, physics is specious.

When referring to “natural selection,” Darwin tells us he is using this term “metaphorically.” “By nature,” he says he means “only the aggregate action and product of many natural laws, and by laws the sequence of events as ascertained by us.” Put another way, “natural selection” is simply “selection by natural law” metaphorically understood.

In short, natural selection is just an analogous way of referring to “natural law.” It is an analogous adaptation of the classical Aristotelian moral principle that human beings are naturally inclined to seek the good and avoid evil transformed into a metaphysical principle, an eternal law (providential guidance of all things toward their proper good), and then reduced to biology conceived of as natural history. Hence, Darwin says, “natural selection can only act through and for the good of each being.”

The closest that Darwin comes to identifying real species is his reference to them as “domestic races,” immigrant populations that have moved into a new geographical region to inhabit it and take it over to

---

36 Ibid., 62.
37 Ibid., 64.
38 Ibid., 66.
become natives.\textsuperscript{39} In this sense, Darwin appears to be identifying a genus with what Aristotle had called the “natural place” toward which a historical species tends to move and is able to survive as most fit for it (because a species only exists, can survive, within its genus!).

As an Enlightenment thinker, Darwin rejects the notion of natures existing within things. Like many Enlightenment Protestant thinkers, he replaces the notion of nature, or real substances, with “law.” Many Protestant intellectuals of this period tended to do this as a means, conjoined with nominalism, of denying the existence of any internal, universal, principles of action (natures, forms, or essences) in individual things.\textsuperscript{40} In this way they thought they could attribute all action in the universe to external relations, which they sometimes called “spirits,” by which God regulated the action of every created thing.

Hence, Darwin has no way rationally of arguing for the reality, existence, or evolution, of species. At best, for him, an individual substance is a collection of accidents, a bundle of legally-related incidental differences. The best Darwin can do in this situation to attempt to explain the origin of higher kinds, higher species or substances, is to try to readapt Aristotle’s doctrine of natural place and the classical notion of natural law as a principle of natural movement to the neo-gnostic, spiritualism of his age, which has replaced real natures, substances, with spirits (or laws) as causes of material motion.

For him, natural selection is simply a social feeling, or spirit, that dominates an immigrant population, part of the system of nature, inclining it to move to and take over a geographical region that it can call home; and in which it can start to generate beings of higher, more domesticated, social feeling. Hence, he says that, “natural selection will

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 34–37.

\textsuperscript{40} To see how Sir Isaac Newton did this in his physics, see Peter A. Redpath, Masquerade of the Dream Walkers: Prophetic Theology from the Cartesians to Hegel (Amsterdam, Atlanta, Ga.: Editions Rodopi, B. V., 1998), 9–32.
always act according to the nature of the places, which are either unoccupied or not perfectly occupied by other beings.”

Despite Darwin’s attempt to reframe the issue, the whole problem of evolution is scientifically impossible to frame, much less intelligently to discuss, apart from accepting the reality of different, qualitatively unequal, kinds of substances. The notion of external “law” binding individuals in higher relations of social consciousness cannot account for evolution of greater kinds of substances for the simple reason that higher substances cannot exist in a physics that denies the existence of qualitatively different kinds of matter. Classical Aristotelian physics accepted the existence of living and non-living matter, corruptible and incorruptible matter, higher and lower forms. Modern physics accepts none of these. Hence, strictly speaking, the notion of evolution is not something modern physics can even intellectually consider, much less resolve.

Still Darwin attempts to explain evolution of higher kinds in terms of natural law by maintaining that those beings survive in the struggle for existence that are best able to domesticate, to fit into some geographical place and take it over. The dominant population then becomes the race (genus) that can trace itself back historically to common geographical parents.

Hence, present species are lineal, historical, descendants of long-dead, or extinct parent-species (their genus), that first inhabited a geographical region they could fittingly domesticate. They vaguely resemble some long-dead “ancestor” through many slight variations that happened slowly over a long time. (Or, put in the more Biblically-fundamentalistic terms that Darwin had been trained in his youth, they vaguely resemble this individual who “begat” that individual.)

41 Ibid., 89.
Because this long-dead ancestor had been just recently a somewhat wild, undomesticated, ancient species, just recently having moved from living in the wrong place, or places, into its natural place, Darwin maintains that later descendents no longer greatly resemble their original species, or genus.

And because they are made up of individual differences, we can never find the missing link between them and us for the simple reason that, as Plato recognized centuries ago, we can never get a proper understanding of a scientific genus by adding up individual differences (because a scientific genus is not a difference or a concatenation of differences). A scientific genus is what all specific differences share in common, their common matter, proximate subject, principle, cause, internal generator. Scientific genera and species are not sensible or nonsensible differences, or laws, at all.

No matter how much, or how quickly or slowly, we add up differences between the size, shape, color, and other differences of bees, we will never discover in these differences singly or collectively the living, sentient, specific matter that makes a bee a bee. No matter how much, or how quickly or slowly, we add up differences between a plant and an animal or an animal and a human being, we will never find the transitional common matter, the generic matter, that transforms, or displaces, the vegetative matter of a plant into sentient matter of an animal; or the sentient matter of an irrational animal into the living matter of a rational animal. No matter how much, or how quickly or slowly, we add up differences, or legal and historical relations, we will never get a scientific genus or species because scientific genus and species refer to common subjects, principles, which we cannot directly sense, that underlie differences and ground laws. Scientific genera and species
are not any one or the total of such differences or bundle of legal relations.\footnote{Plato, \textit{Republic}, bk. 7.}

In classical physics substantial change never involves one species morphing over time into another. The specific matter of a fish can never evolve through minute differences over time into the specific matter of an ape any more than a circle can evolve through small differences over time into a square, or a football team can evolve into a debating society.

For a quantified, continuum, body (say, a piece of wood) to change from being circular to becoming square, for example, the identical piece of wood must first become dispossessed of its triangular shape, reduced to a generic body qualitatively capable of being circular (the wooden body, now no longer triangular capable of assuming a square shape), and then made circular. The final stage of becoming square could involve two instantaneous acts (one in which it is circular; the next in which it is square); or the final stage could be the final act of series of acts that occur over time in which the triangular shape is slowly removed and the square shape is slowly approached. In this case, the next to final stage still occurs in one act and the final stage in another. Hence, no time separates the final dispossession of one shape and the possession of the other.

Triangles are triangles, are triangles. Squares are squares, are squares. The species triangle can never become the species square, and the species square can never become the species triangle. A generic body, like wood, that is square can become a generic body that is circular, or vice versa. A human being who is a football player can become a human being who is a baseball player, but football will never evolve into baseball.

In classical physics, evolution of one species of substance into another is unobservable to the external senses because it can never oc-
cur even in principle; and because its specific and generic matter are unobservable to the external senses. Sensibly observable are its quantified and qualified matter; not its specific or generic matter. Wood, considered as such, is not empirically observable.

Wood of a specific quantity and quality (of qualified, determinate dimensions) exists. This, in turn, means that the mechanisms through which evolution occurs are unobservable, even in principle, to the external senses. Hence, strictly speaking, Darwin cannot sensibly, or mathematically, observe natural selection or change of species occurring.

Among others, one reason for this is that a real genus generates, causes, is the proximate principle of, its species. Real species do not generate the genus. A real genus is an organizational cause unifying a qualified multitude into parts of an organizational whole through unequal relation of the parts to numerically-one generical aim or act (like a general contractor uniting a multitude skilled technicians as specific parts of homebuilding activity). A real genus is what, today, Westerners would call “an organizational whole,” generating, through the harmonious action of its internally-existing specific parts, numerically-one organizational action.

As Gilson observes in a footnote appearing on page twenty of his brilliant monograph Painting and Reality: “Order is the only kind of unity that multiplicity can receive.”

That is, the only kind of unity a multitude can have is as parts of an organizational whole. And, while Gilson fails to mention the following fact in this book, the only way to transform an indeterminate multitude into parts of an whole (an order, or organization) is through unequally and co-operatively-generating numerically-one aim, or co-operative organizational act.

---

As Gilson realized, along with Aristotle and St. Thomas, what we first, and can only, perceive with the help of our external senses is an existing unity. If something does not exist, if it does not possess the act of existing as an actual unity, or whole, we cannot know it. What we first, and always, perceive, and later wonder about as sensible, philosophical subjects, are acting subjects, numerically-one organizational wholes: individually-existing, operational organizations; qualitatively-different, acting organizations; numerically-one organizational generators of action organizationally unified through unequal, and harmonious, relation to numerically-one final act.

In short, what we first, and always, perceive is a unity of order, or organization, not of discrete and unrelated individuality. And ordered, or organizational, unity can only exist within a multitude of species-parts unequally contributing to generating numerically-one organizational harmony (generic unity and act) through execution, exercise, of numerically-one, co-operative, generic (or organizational) action.

In perceiving this or that in a confounded way as a something, or some one thing, we are perceiving a harmoniously-acting, composite-unity, qualitatively different from some other harmoniously-acting composite-unity. We first perceive “a something” by sensing some harmonious unity, order, within a multitude of harmoniously-ordered parts constituting a composite whole.

Darwin, in contrast, appears to think that: (1) what we first perceive are Humean-like, discrete individuals; (2) a “species” is just a name for discretely-existing individuals; and (3) a “genus” is simply a name for a multitude of species capable of surviving the struggle for life by developing a species of consciousness within a geographical location toward which they are naturally selected to gravitate: by locating and inhabiting a suitable geographical region (the geographical region containing its fitting, or suitable, species thus becoming the “genus” for the individuals in question).
He appears to understand that: (1) the perfection of a genus is the final cause of the existence of species, gives species a collective aim causing them to relate in cooperating to generate a common activity; (2) all species of individual, physical beings exist and survive only within a genus; and (3) beings that understand the chief aim of their genus are most able to survive within it. No matter what the genus, aimless beings, being that do not understand the way they relate generically to other species within their genus and in relation to other genera and species, are the least likely, fit, to survive.

Properly understood, change of species is a kind of substantial change. Substantial change involves dispossession of specific differences and reduction of a subject undergoing change to the conditions of its generic matter. Before acquiring a new specific form, its generic matter has to become dispossessed of its present specific form and neutralized to the qualitative ability and disposition of assuming another specific form.

For an irrational animal, for example, to evolve over time into a rational one, the changing subject would have to remain over some time an animal with generic matter dispossessed of any specific difference neutrally disposed to become rational or irrational. Impossible. To exist as a determinate, or definite, individual, an individual must at all times exist within a species. And no species can exist without the existence of individual members.

Like transition from living matter to non-living matter, all substantial change occurs in an instant of time, not over a process of time. Time as a process occurs between two instants of time; in the case of substantial changes, between two instances of substantial changes in which what had been one substance, now, instantly, becomes another. Hence, strictly speaking, substantial change is a qualitative organizational change (from one organizational whole to a qualitatively and
completely different one, with qualitatively different organizational parts and aims) unobservable to the external senses.

Moreover, because it occurs in an instant, while secondary causes can prepare for this change to occur by properly qualifying a generic matter to become receptive to new specific differences (become a new organizational whole), and while they might even be one of the causes involved in effecting a substantial change, because all substantial change occurs in an instant, strictly speaking, evolution, as Darwin conceives it, could never be its cause.

In modern physics, generic and specific change can never occur because modern physics, following Descartes, identifies matter with quantity, with something essentially inert. What is essentially inert cannot act, much less, evolve, become more or less perfect in qualitative, organizational unity and action.

What Are Scientific Genera and Species?

If scientific genera and species, universals, are not legal, historical, or geographical relations (as Darwin appears to have conceived them), what are they? Because Western philosophy derived its notion of genus and species chiefly from the work of Aristotle related to the nature of a real genus, one way to attempt to answer this question is to consider how Aristotle first understood the notion of a genus. In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle distinguished four senses of genus:

(1) Continuous generation of things that have the same specific form. In this sense a “genus” means an uninterruptedly-generated multitude of individual beings sharing the same specific material principle as their begetter, like the race of human beings are generated from their principle, their specific nature: “human nature.”

(2) Historical descent from some common first parent. In this sense we derive the name “genus” from the first generator, like Helen
(from whom the race of Hellenes arose) not from the material principle (human nature) by which Helen was able to generate descendents. Hence, a genus consists of the race of Hellenes because they share Helen as a common historical parent.

(3) The proximate subject of necessary specific accidents, properties, from which these accidents proceed as effects from their necessary subject, principle, and cause. In this sense, in geometry, a surface body is the genus of all plane figures (triangles, circles, squares, and so on) because it is the underlying subject, to which these relate as effects, present in this subject as is the necessary condition of their generation and continued existence.

(4) An intelligible whole that exists as part of a definition of an essence and is predicatable of many species. St. Thomas understood Aristotle to have derived this notion of the logical sense of a genus from one of the constituent parts of an essence: its matter. He said that Aristotle got this sense of genus from his understanding that an essence is composed of two wholes that combine to become its parts. One whole is matter (a subject). The other whole is form (a quality).

For example, if we define man’s whole nature or essence as a rational animal, even though “genus,” as something predicatable universally is not material, we derive this notion of genus from our understanding of “sentient nature” (animal). Hence, we say the genus of the species man is “animal.” We get the notion of species by adding a difference (rational or irrational) to sentient nature in a way analogous to adding a quality to a subject, which thereby modifies and specifically limits the subject.

Hence, in a way, the genus animal acts as the subject for qualification by the formal difference rational or irrational to cause a subject

---


45 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, bk. 3, l. 8, c. 442.
about which we now think to be transformed from being a generic subject into a specific one. For this reason, in his famous “Treatise on Man” (I, q. 77, a. 3, respondeo) of his *Summa theologiae*, regarding specification of human rationality, St. Thomas locates the specific difference of our human rationality *in a per se otherness within the sensitive, or animal, part of the intellectual soul*, which is sometimes found with and sometimes without reason.

By analogous extension from this metaphysical conception of animal rationality, since the logical sense of genus is a whole potentially containing, or divisible into, sensory and rational natures, or potential parts, logicians can predicate the abstractly-considered essence “animal” of rational and irrational animals because, in a way, it contains both.

Regarding this logical sense of “genus,” absolutely considered, the essence “animal” is not exclusively rational or irrational animal. It includes rational and irrational natures. The essence simply refers to some one or multitude of material being(s) that has a sensory nature, no matter how dumb or how smart.

When we think of this one essence as a genus, we think of it as a complex whole (a one) containing a multitude of natures (a many, potential parts that, considered in themselves, are intelligible wholes, species). The genus potentially contains, it does not exclude, the differences of its species. One part of this whole essence is animal nature, sensory matter that can be rational or irrational. The other part is its form, rationality or irrationality qualitatively proportionate to sensory matter.

Hence, we would not attribute to the essence animal as a genus the rationality of angels or God. Human rationality is the formal difference that makes animal matter become humanly rational, not irrational, animal matter.
A crucial point to recognize when talking about genera and species in relation to essences or natures is that we are talking about wholes containing parts that relate to an essence or nature as a part of greater whole. “In one sense a genus is a whole because inasmuch as it is predicated of several things, and in another sense it is a part inasmuch as a species is composed of a genus and a difference.”

Another crucial point to recognize is that this is the logician’s, not, as St. Thomas maintains, the metaphysician’s, mathematician’s, or physicist’s understanding of a genus. Properly speaking, according to Aquinas, genus for a philosopher, scientist, should be Aristotle’s third understanding of it above. Darwin, however, clearly uses the term “genus” in Aristotle’s second understanding and conflates it with Aristotle’s fourth understanding of “genus,” the logical sense, which Darwin interprets as a nominalistic whole.

Hence, Darwin tends to view a genus to be a multitude of individuals sharing common parents who, by natural selection, have domesticated a geographical region. These common parents represent the logical species “irrational animal,” systems of non-social feelings from which, through small differences impelled by natural law (natural selection), over a long time, rational, or social, animals (animals with social feelings) have supposedly evolved. If St. Thomas is right, Darwin’s understanding of genus cannot be correct, or scientific.

**Why Darwin’s Teaching about Biology Cannot Be Scientific**

When we talk about modern physical science, we are talking about a subject that has its roots in a mechanistic theory of the unity of matter, that material beings differ in degree, not kind. Going back to Descartes, modern physical science has worked under the assumptions

---

that: (1) only one common matter exists for all physical beings; matter is inert extension devoid of activity; (2) the physical world is a machine; (3) spirit, a reality wholly diverse from matter, is the only active reality in the universe (knowingly or unknowingly modern science identifies spirit with “law”); and (4) that only mathematics and its methods can enable us to know matter’s nature.

Strictly speaking, Darwinian evolutionary theory makes no sense in the world of modern physics, which, for centuries, has viewed physical reality as a machine whose matter is universally the same (extended and inert). While contemporary physics might be moving away from a mechanistic understanding of matter, the modern physics coming from Descartes rejects the notion that different kinds of matter, different kinds of substances, exist. And evolution presupposes the existence of qualitatively different, higher, progressively more perfect, better, kinds of matter, different kinds of substances. These two views are contrary opposites. As such, they cannot simultaneously be true.

Darwinian evolution makes no sense within classical Aristotelian physics because Aristotle had considered species to be immutable, everlasting.

Darwinian evolution appears only to make some sense within the context of a substantially-altered Aristotelian physics modified by an Augustinian, or secularized-Augustinian, interpretation of Christian revelation’s teaching about creation, which cannot be science in the modern, Enlightenment, or any rational, sense. Moreover, Darwin’s teaching about biology cannot be biology in the modern sense because he thinks of biology in terms of “natural history.”

---

48 For St. Augustine’s teaching about creation, see his *Confessions*, bks. 11–13.
If Darwin’s Teaching about Evolution and Biology Cannot Be Scientific, What Is It?

My opinion is that Darwin’s understanding of evolutionary biology is a conflation of ancient biology, classical natural law and eternal law theory, Aristotle’s physics of natural place, secularized-Augustinian fundamentalism, and Enlightenment Romanticism. Darwin thinks of natural selection as the driving force, invisible hand, or spirit behind natural history (the species-consciousness of the human race) much in the same way that Adam Smith sees an invisible hand, or law, existing in free trade, or Georg Hegel thinks of Absolute Spirit moving the history of human consciousness. As such, natural selection is simply a secularized version of the Calvinistic invisible hand of providence at work in the struggle for existence freely separating members of the “elect” from the non-elect based upon their being favored by the natural law of election (history’s spirit of increasing sociability of human consciousness) to dominate a geographical region and become a species part of a real genus.

Darwin thinks that man is social-animal-consciousness driven by species-specific social instincts and sympathy at work in the process of natural selection (divine election) to emerge from his primitive, precivilized condition and, through domestication, grow in love of humanity in a domestically-suitable geographical region. Natural selection is simply the spirit of humanity emerging from a Rousseau-like precultural state of savage nature to the Enlightened state of a nineteenth-century English socialist.50

Darwin’s teaching is not science, or biology, in the modern or classical sense. Instead, it appears to be mytho-poieic musings about

---

human origins that Darwin pieced together from different parts of his religious and secular educational background.

I make this claim to make sense out of Darwin’s work, not to disparage it. Recall that Galileo Galilei maintained that, prior to making intellectual advances, we must first stretch the human imagination. And recall that ancient Greek poetry was the necessary condition for the development of ancient Greek philosophy. Recall that tremendous advances in painting, sculpture, music, and engineering during the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance preceded the great developments in astronomy and physics made by thinkers such as Johannes Kepler, Galileo, and Sir Isaac Newton. Such poetic musings are a necessary epistemological condition for philosophical, scientific, advancement.

Not being a philosopher and wanting to move biology beyond the mechanistic physics of his time, Darwin had to make some sort of move like this to stimulate intellectual advancement. Still, precisely speaking, the moves he made were not philosophical, not science.

Darwin’s family history gives us some sense of how he went about stretching his imagination. Darwin’s family was closely associated with a group of nineteenth-century English evangelical-Protestant socialists. These included the Clapham sect, the Bloomsbury group, the Wedgwood family, William Wilberforce, Grenville Sharp, Henry Thornton (governor of the Bank of England), Charles Grant (director of the East India Company), Sir James Stephen (under-secretary of the Colonial Office), John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Unitarians and Quakers of different sorts, who considered themselves to be leaders of a new intelligentsia centered around training of clergy at Cambridge Uni-

---

52 See Redpath, Wisdom’s Odyssey.
versity in Evangelical thought centered around “the Calvinist emphasis on original sin and the doctrine of divine election.”

Darwin’s father, Robert, had married into the Wedgwood family. Charles married his first cousin Emma Wedgwood (his mother’s brother’s daughter). Darwin’s grandfather, Erasmus, rejected the mechanistic interpretation of matter. He thought that man was “an organic being, not a machine.” In some way, this was an attempt to return biology to classical Aristotelian realism.

Darwin followed his grandfather and similarly rejected the notion that the physical world was a machine. Like many Romantic thinkers of his time, Darwin followed Jean-Jacques Rousseau in identifying the meaning of nature chiefly with what is pre-cultural, uncivilized, barbaric. Darwin’s starting point of his reflections on evolution relates to what he calls the “astonishment” he “felt on seeing a part of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore” and realizing “such were our ancestors.” Like Rousseau reflecting on the nature of Émile prior to emerging beyond his selfish, pre-moral, stage, Darwin concludes “there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians.”

At the time Darwin proposed his thesis, he was opposing the belief advocated by some other thinkers of his age “that man came into the world as a civilized being, and that all savages have since undergone degradation.” Darwin’s personal travels and observations had caused him to adopt an opposite view.

---

55 Ibid., 14.
58 Ibid., 509.
Despite popular depictions of Darwin as irreligious and that he thought of natural selection in terms of blind chance, Darwin maintained that he was not irreligious. And he forcefully denied that natural selection was, or involved, blind chance. Hence, he said:

I am aware that the conclusions arrived at in this work will be denounced by some as highly irreligious; but he who denounces them is bound to show why it is more irreligious to explain the origin of man as a distinct species from some lower form, through the laws of variation and natural selection, than to explain the birth of the individual through the laws of ordinary reproduction. The birth both of the species and of the individual are equally part of the grand sequence of events, which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts at such a conclusion, whether or not we are able to believe that every slight variation of structure,—the unity of each pair in marriage,—the dissemination of each seed,—and other such events, have all been ordained for some special purpose.  

Moreover, Darwin thought his view of evolution “accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator, that the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining birth and death of the individual.” A chief problem that Darwin had, however, that someone like Aquinas did not have, was that, unlike Aquinas, because the existence of secondary causes presupposes that they have natural powers of their own, that God is not the sole and total cause of everything. Enlightenment Protestant intellectuals tended to deny the reality of such causes. And, unlike Aquinas, Darwin’s Protestant, fideistic, background inclined him toward a literalist reading of Scripture from which he had trouble extricating himself. Like St. Au-

---

59 Ibid., 915.
60 Darwin, The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, in Darwin 1955, 373.
The Evolution Debate: Reconsidering the Question 393

gustine before him, Aquinas had no difficulty reading Scripture analogously.⁶¹

Darwin could not do so, despite the fact that he displays a keen appreciation of the need for physical scientists to be able to reason analogously. Hence, like Darwin the evolutionist, Aquinas was quite ready to admit that crossbreeding and influence of secondary causes could occasionally produce new species within a genus and that Christian revelation’s teaching about creation is true.⁶²

Clearly, Darwin is no scientist in the modern sense or contemporary. Nor is he irreligious or atheistic. Precisely speaking, he appears to be a neo-gnostic spiritualist, a secularized Calvinist fundamentalist who has lost his faith but still calls upon Calvin and Augustine to help him make sense of reality.

His doctrine of evolution is one more variant of the Enlightenment spiritualism, secularized Augustinianism, a mytho-poieic history, fairy tale, that sees the human species as animal consciousness emerging from a backward state of intellectual darkness to the British socialist light of truth through the spirit of tolerance interpreted via analogous redactions of Aristotle’s teaching about natural place and natural law.⁶³

As such, strictly speaking, we have no rational foundation for calling it “science.” It is about time we stop doing so.

Nonetheless, I think that Darwin vaguely perceived a problem with the way that modern and classical physicists, logicians, and philosophers have used, and continue to use, the terms “genus” and “species.” In my opinion, a good likelihood exists that none of the major religious or non-religious fundamentalistic opponents in the evolution

---

⁶¹ See Augustine, Confessions, bks. 11–13.

⁶² St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, I, q. 73, a. 1, ad 3. Available online—see the section References for details.

⁶³ For a more detailed examination and critique of modernity, especially the Enlightenment, as secularized Augustinianism, see Redpath, Masquerade of the Dream Walkers.
debate has a proper understanding of the nature of a scientific genus or species.

Darwin understood these in a historical, nominalistic, and racial sense. These cannot be a scientific sense of genus and species. Modern critiques of Darwin often understand these in the logician’s sense, of a one predicated of many, and think that universality is a property of mind/consciousness alone, usually of an idea.

None of these understandings of genus and species is the proper way for science to understand genus and species or an appropriate understanding that can contribute to the question of the origin of biological species.

Darwin, at least, to some extent, was convinced that real species exist and that individual members of a species could not exist apart from environmental conditions necessary to support them, that the existence of real species demanded that real natures exist in relation to other real natures within a real genus. Hence, like Aquinas before him, to some extent, Darwin had recognized that the existence of mental or real species is relational, involves the relation of one nature to something inside or outside the mind. Darwin’s chief problems were that he did not know precisely what genera and species are and that he had a similarly impoverished understanding of science and Western intellectual history.

**The Proper Way to Understand “Genus” and “Species” as Scientific Terms**

Science is of the universal, Aristotle told us centuries ago. But he also warned us that science is not the study of some universal substance. Universals are not substances and substances are not universals. Such being the case, what is the universal, the genus, that any and every
real science, every legitimate philosophy, studies? St. Thomas Aquinas gives us a distinction that helps us to answer this question.

Aquinas says that the way a logician understands universality differs from the way a geometrician, physicist, or metaphysician understands it. The logician identifies universality with predication, with the way we can mentally consider, mentally relate, a conceptual content, one nature, definition, or essence to many subjects. The geometrician, physicist, or metaphysician, on the other hand, consider universality in terms of a chief subject of proper accidents, as relationally being the proximate principle or cause of a multitude of effects that, in some respect, by emerging from it, inhere in their proximate cause and universally relate to it as in a principle.⁶⁴

In this sense a scientific genus consists in the relation of an acting nature, a causal nature, to its proximate and necessary effects. While individually-existing substances cannot be abstractly-considered universals, this in no way proves that, as Darwin appears rightly to have understood, universality has no existence as a psychologically-independent relation between a proper cause and its effects within an organizational whole, or real genus. *Properly speaking, this is the universal that science, philosophy, studies.*⁶⁵

Inasmuch as we accept the reality of universals, we must accept the reality of wholes, parts, and their essential internal relations. For effects are related to a cause as parts to a whole. Many modern and contemporary thinkers accept the reality of wholes and parts, but think they can reject the reality of final causes and causal universals. By so doing, once again, modern and contemporary thinkers cannot even coherently enter the debate about the origin of genera and species: because the only way a multitude becomes transformed from being an

---


⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, bk. 6, l. 3, c. 1205.
indeterminate mass into being parts of a real whole is by being unequally and qualifiedly related to numerically-one common or universal act, a common end.\textsuperscript{66} In this way, for example, a bunch of men become transformed from being ordinary, but qualified, people into firefighters: by having requisite skills to fight fires and by contributing partial acts to fight some really-existing, numerically-one, same whole fire.

Darwin, on the other hand, was smart enough not to deny the reality of final causality, which Aristotle, and St. Thomas had called “the cause of all causes.”\textsuperscript{67} Being related to a common end, or numerically-one universal act, transforms some multitude from being a disconnected, indeterminate, mass into being parts of a whole.

By denying the reality of final causes, modern and contemporary thinkers make evident that they do not understand the nature of part/whole relationships, or science properly understood; and are unqualified to enter into, much less resolve, the debate about evolution. For without being able to understand real part/whole relationships they cannot possibly understand the nature of real genera and species and how these notions are used differently in logic, physics (including biology), metaphysics, and other disciplines.

* 

In conclusion, as far as I can see, the modern “scientific” debate about the origin of species is largely worthless because the likelihood is that most of the religious and non-religious people involved in it are largely ideological fideists who do not understand the nature of genera, species, science, or philosophy.

Most of us today have little precise understanding of these notions. Both main groups involved in the debate appear to me to be composed chiefly of fundamentalists (one side religious, the other side

\textsuperscript{66} Gilson, \textit{Painting and Reality}.

\textsuperscript{67} St. Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle}, bk. 5, l. 3, c. 782.
secular), neither of which appears to have a proper idea of the way to consider the problem, much less solve it.

Moreover, if we expect to make any headway in the evolution debate in the future, I think we need to take heed of Pope Benedict XVI’s call for revamping the Western notions of reason and science so we can properly divide and relate the different sciences and their methods. Devoid of such a change, one that (1) contains an updated notion of substance that allows for the existence of real differences in substantial kinds, and (2) can adequately explain the difference among sciences like biology, physics, and metaphysics, I think the current “scientific” debate about the reality or non-reality of the origin of species is largely fruitless.

A Modest Proposal for Resolving the Apparently Never-Ending Evolution Debate: Reconsidering the Question

SUMMARY

The author makes an attempt to show why (1) Darwin’s teaching in *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* cannot be “scientific” in a modern, classical, or any, sense and that, consequently, in them, (2) Darwin did not scientifically prove the reality of evolution of species. He claims that, while the question of the origin of genera and species is principally and primarily a metaphysical problem, Darwin’s ignorance of the nature of philosophy and metaphysics and the complexity of the problem of the nature of genera and species caused him mistakenly to frame this metaphysical problem as one of physics, more precisely as one of biology, which Darwin reduced to a natural history of living, physical beings.

---

KEYWORDS

REFERENCES


Juan Carlos Riofrío Martínez-Villalba

The Effects of Beauty and the Redemption of the Ugly

This paper aims to discuss the aftermath effects of beauty, the ugly, and the ways of how to get rid of the ugly. Firstly, we will attempt, in lieu of a definition of beauty, to examine the three classical conditions for beauty, which would otherwise be regarded as in some sense a mystery. Secondly, we will turn to the effects of beauty by analogy to the six effects of love as elucidated by Thomas Aquinas; in addition, we shall add three other effects of beauty found in classical Greek thought: catharsis, epiphany, and pleasure. Thirdly, we will review, by way of contrast, the corresponding effects of the ugly; as we do so, we shall propose just how the ugly may be “redeemed” by beauty.

The Underlying Notion of Beauty

A Mystery

For a long time now, philosophers could be said to have agreed on at least one thing: “All that is beautiful is difficult.” Plato, Greater Hippias, 304e, in Plato in Twelve Volumes, vol. 9, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1925). Available online—see the section References for details.
am not ready yet. Beauty is a riddle.” We are all idiots in the face of beauty, which remains one of the great human mysteries. Beauty could hardly be a mystery for animals, which are lacking something in an aesthetic capacity for beauty.

When we ask what is beauty, we soon tend to find ourselves immersed in a paradox. For beauty is all but inexplicable. But the most obvious things are often the least explicable: how do we explain that the heavens are immense, that loneliness makes us sad, that the earth keeps us from falling? Or that beings exist? And, as regards beauty itself: why is the moon so beautiful? Why are stars so pleasant? Maybe the most adequate way to answer is with St. Augustine’s words: “If no one asks me, I know; if I wish to explain to one that asketh, I know not.” Or, in a similar vein, “I don’t know what beauty is, but when I see it, I know it.”

Beauty exists, whether we know what it is or not. One scientific proof is quite sufficient: just look at a beautiful woman. Innumerable artworks celebrate feminine beauty. Or look at the sky as the light slowly fades in a bright red sunset. Beauty enchants, and we simply accept it. Even in our modern age it is felt that beauty manifests the depths of things, that our own well-being is conditioned by an unfathomable mystery. It seems impossible to find someone who could refute the person who, in the early hours of the night, discovers a huge moon rising over the mountains and exclaims, “What a beautiful moon!” Who could contradict him?

Unlike arguments about the true, when someone exclaims about beauty, sceptics can hardly be bothered to object. Some people may not believe that truth exists, but few can deny beauty. Even so, we do find

---


millions of aesthetic relativists and other such confused people. Macbeth’s witches had already screamed: “The beautiful is ugly and the ugly is beautiful!”

Voltaire urged us to consult a toad about his ideal beauty: “He will answer you that it is his toad wife with two great round eyes issuing from her little head, a wide, flat mouth, a yellow belly, a brown back.” Or to ask the devil: “He will tell you that beauty is a pair of horns, four claws, and a tail.”

In these modern times, truth and beauty have become subjective, they have lost their anchor in reality, such that a degraded conception of beauty predominates in the world. Just as each person has his/her own truth, each person sees beauty in her/his own way, such that, in the absence of any absolutes, there is no truth, no beauty at all. What a sad story, this oblivion of beauty!

In such a world, something may even seem beautiful to you, though it is not beautiful at all. For example, take a song like “Baby” by Justin Bieber or “Stupid Hoe” by Nicki Minaj, or any other equally inane remix you may recall from the days of your youth. You may have laughed with your friends at the absurd lyrics, but it may also have been playing in the background as you were declaring your love. And so, as the years pass by, an otherwise cheesy song may still seem beautiful to you. But what is beautiful about it? The old friendships or “Stupid Hoe”? A youthful love or “Baby”? Because we have associated the song with something that really mattered in life, quite unconsciously, the song itself seems beautiful.

In Search of Beauty

Where can we find beauty? Outside us? Or within? It is a mark of the modern age that beauty has become, so to speak, caged within

---

4 Cf. William Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, 1: “Fair is foul, and foul is fair.” Available online—see the section References for details.

the subjectivity of the person. Anyone may now declare anything to be beautiful. As one consequence, beauty has been reduced to the domain of art. Thank God, beauty has not become quite so imprisoned within us. If a corrective is needed, we have only to look back to the thoughts of the classical philosophers.

For Plato, beauty was closely associated with the principle of all that exists, the Good or the One. Beauty was not identical with the One, which utterly transcends our experience, but was rather a manifestation of the *hyperuranion*, or place beyond the heavens, wherein the One dwells. Even today it is felt that, in its depths, beauty manifests some unfathomable mystery that is intimately related to our own well-being.

In lieu of the Platonic first principle, the Good or the One, Aristotle proposes the “unmoved motor,” an eternal act that moves the universe without itself being moved. The desired things and intelligible things—Aristotle argues—are moved by this motor; the motor moves both without being moved. In their primary forms, these two are identical. The object of the appetite is the apparent good (*τὸ φαινόμενον καλόν*), and the primary object of the will is beauty (*τὸ ὑπαρχόν καλόν*).\(^6\)

Whether as desirable or intelligible, all that is moved is both good and beautiful, not only in the heavens but even in the moral life of human beings. Note that, in Aristotle’s extension of the concept, beauty has become an object not only of the intellect but also of the will.

Fast forward some sixteen hundred years and, with Aquinas, the beautiful has all but taken its place among those other transcendental predicates, such as the good, which can be said to “transcend” all of the Aristotelian categories and so be predicable of all things: “All things

---

are good, inasmuch as they have being.” Ever where the view is lost in the distance, a boundless horizon that suggests the infinite. More beautiful than a rock is a mountain, but there are mountains everywhere in the universe. The fullness of being is manifest in what is most beautiful. A life, even the smallest one, is worth more than a mole of hydrogen, even as it explodes in an exuberant and incessant way for thousands of years. Even within life—classically defined as the capacity for self-movement—there are different intensities: vegetative, animal, human life, due to the different capacities for self-movement. But human life is the most beautiful, its value is so superior that we do not speak even of its “value,” but rather its “dignity.”

For Aquinas, “the ‘beautiful’ is something pleasant to apprehend.” Beauty is “that” which is apprehended through the window, but also “that” which I apprehend. There is the subjective apprehension of beauty, and yet, objectively, the starry sky at night remains beautiful though no one may be present to see it. Better to have friends than to read a novel about friendship; more poignant is the sight of real poverty than its depiction in painting; more inspiring is a heroic action than the equestrian statue that honors him.

---


8 See Robert Spaeman, Persons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 181. Ignacio Yarza also comments on the relation between value, beauty and being: “[I]t might be said that being is the absolute condition of all value, and also the substantive foundation of beauty. Beauty is linked to a transcendental property; that’s why it will always be an analog and dynamic value. For this reason there is a wide analogy of beauty and an immense variety of it” (Ignacio Yarza, Introducción a la estética [Pamplona: Eunsa, 2000], 175).

9 S.Th., I–II, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3.
Aquinas was an intellectualist because he understood that the beautiful “relates to the cognitive faculty; for beautiful things are those which please when seen.” Beauty could lack the apprehension by one or more senses, but never by the intellect. A painting cannot be heard, nor a song seen, but both are apprehended as beautiful by the intellect which is fascinated by them and by the will which loves them. Neither can our eyes apprehend ultraviolet light, or the full light spectra that birds can see, nor can our ears hear more than ten full octaves (frequencies between 20 and 20,000 Hz). Nevertheless, Aquinas’s discourse on beauty opens a door to other human dimensions of beauty. If, for Plato, beauty is an idea that seduces the intellect or the will, for Aquinas, beauty is always immediately apprehended by a human sensory potency (primarily those of sight and hearing). Beauty requires a human sensory potency that tends toward a particular good, an “appetite” that is con-naturalized with that which it receives, because “‘beauty and goodness are beloved by all things;’ since each single thing has a connaturalness with that which is naturally suitable to it.”

To summarize what we have found thus far in our search for beauty, let us employ the etymology for the German word for beauty, Schönheit. This noun derives from the verb schauen, which means “to contemplate.” Thus, Schönheit or beauty originally means simply “what

---

10 S.Th., I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1. This statement is made within the context of a comparison of two transcendentals, the good and the beautiful. As with all transcendentals, they are alike in one sense, while unlike in another sense: “Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty. But they differ logically, for goodness properly relates to the appetite (goodness being what all things desire); and therefore it has the aspect of an end (the appetite being a kind of movement towards a thing)” (Ibid.).
11 S.Th., I–II, q. 26, a. 1, ad 3.
can be contemplated.” And so, if beauty is to be seen, two things are needed: (1) the extramental existence of something beautiful that can be seen, and (2) an intellect that, through sensory potencies, can both see and be affectively pleased with what is seen. Within the Romance languages, the word “beauty” (belleza in Spanish, beauté in French) has its origin in the feminine form of the Latin adjective bellus, bella, bellum. It is interesting to note that bellus is a contraction of benelus which is the diminutive form of bonus, the Latin word for “good.” Thus, beauty is both ontologically and etymologically related to the good.

**The Promise of Beauty**

In accord with the platonic intuition of beauty, though beauty cannot be identified with the One, it is nevertheless a manifestation of the One. Some of the brightest stars in the sky, which are also the largest, nevertheless appear to be small because they are so distant from us. A few of these stars, among the some four thousand that can be seen in either hemisphere, may no longer even exist; they may have died as their light had been traveling through space for millions of years. There are stars that, though records show they were seen long ago, now no longer exist. If it is the light that manifests the beauty of a star, but a star that no longer exists, then is not the light as well as the beauty that it manifests in some way separate from the star?

Beauty, as it is manifest in the light of a star, is yet a promise of something deeper and more valuable. As with the other transcendentals—the true and the good—beauty tends to remain hidden. And hidden within beauty is ever more beauty, a bottomless depth into which you may immerse yourself ever more deeply. Beauty is a treasure mine where you must dig to get for diamonds, just in order not to be

---

12 Cf. Walter Brugger, *Diccionario de Filosofía* (Barcelona: Herder, 1975), 71. The word later came to mean what is bright, shiny, glowing, and so gradually giving rise to the present meaning of the word.
deprived of their light. Every beautiful object is an epiphany because, as it manifests itself, it promises still more. What is not manifest is not beautiful; it has no light, there is only darkness. Cultivating hay flowers would be a bad business: they open only at sunrise, but then die at sunset.

Just in order to subsist, beauty calls to eternity. It is a mystical experience that all of us have had: clocks stood still at the first sight of something beautiful. An hour passed by in a second. The eternal now. A fragment of eternity broke into our life; everything made sense. If detached from the limits of time, beauty is an invitation to infinity. As Schelling described it, the beautiful is “the infinite finitely displayed.”¹³ Great works of art and music have survived many generations because they manifest such beauty. Pope John Paul II rightly said that “art is by its nature a kind of appeal to the mystery.”¹⁴

Who then can say what beauty is in any absolute terms? It seems that no man, but only God, can. Far from grasping the nature of beauty, the grace of beauty, which is heaven-sent and sacred, we can only grasp at the sparks of such a dazzling beauty. Not even that, but only the reflection of such a beauty. For, just as Moses could not bear to see the face of God, could we bear the excessive light of such a beauty? Perhaps that is why beauty has been signified in art with a halo that illuminates a holy person. It is easier to see the things that God illuminates. In their light, the stars shout that God exists, and, as the hay flowers turn toward the light, they echo the message.¹⁵ Without God, beauty would be improbable.

¹⁵ This idea is repeated time and again in Scripture, e.g.: “[S]ince he was the very source of beauty that created them” (Wisdom, 13:3); “[S]ince through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures we may, by analogy, contemplate their Author” (Wisdom, 13:5).
Three Conditions for Beauty

By way of both a summary of the foregoing and a transition to what follows, let us briefly consider the three conditions or requirements for beauty as Aquinas has listed them:\footnote{See S.Th., I, q. 39, a. 8, resp.}

1. \textit{Brightness} or \textit{clarity}. One requirement for beauty is luminosity or brightness, “whence,” as Aquinas states, “things are called beautiful which have a bright color.” The luminous colors of a painting contrasted by shadows can be beautiful, but less so if the colors are dulled with age. The luminous sound of a symphony contrasted with a momentary silence can be beautiful, but less so if it is difficult to hear. Nothing, of course, can be beautiful in the complete absence of luminosity. The “nothing” of a mute silence or complete darkness has nothing of beauty in it.

As luminosity or brightness implies a physical beauty, Aquinas sometimes prefers to speak of the “clarity” of beauty, such as the clarity of an idea, the very manifestation of a deeper principle, the radiance of truth that emerges resplendent. Truth is beautiful in this way; a lie is not beautiful. And love is beautiful if it is love of the true.\footnote{Cf. Plato, \textit{Phaedrus}, 249d–e, in \textit{Plato in Twelve Volumes}, vol. 9, trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1925). Available online—see the section \textit{References} for details.} In other words, love, if it is true, will “manifest” beauty.

2. \textit{Integrity} or \textit{perfection}. The greater the integrity or unity, the more beautiful a thing is, and the more perfect. As with the other transcendentals the true and the good unity is also convertible with beauty. Actions are beautiful if they are well finished. A fully actualized human being may be said to be beautiful who possesses a sense of maturity, wisdom, courage and the other virtues necessary for life. Beauty is fullness.
The integrity of a thing is deficient in beauty if it does not possess all of its parts. As Aquinas comments, “those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly.” There is no dispersed beauty. A cat is beautiful, unless a truck has run over it and split it into two. A living and a dead animal have the same organs, but the latter is ugly. Death is so ugly that even an allusion to death can be ugly. A terminal disease is ugly, such that even a comment about death may cause offense if one lacks the horizon of eternal life.

3. Due proportion or harmony. In De ordine, St. Augustine examined the relationship between beauty and order. When everything is in order, with due proportion, measure, moderation and harmony, no more, no less, that is beauty. The most beautiful action is that which is best ordered toward its ultimate end. A heroic action is beautiful if it is ordered toward a great end such as peace or liberation from tyranny. No one would die to save a mosquito; such an utter absence of due proportion would at once provoke both amusement and horror.

Paradoxically, a certain defect in proportion may not be ugly. For, as Aquinas comments, “an image is said to be beautiful, if it perfectly represents even an ugly thing.” The difference between the beautiful and the ugly, such as in the case of Socrates’s nose, may be nothing more or less than a centimeter. Here, we have a first hint how the ugly may be redeemed by the beautiful. Emerson once wrote that “when we grow old, beauty becomes an inner quality.” In old age, though the skin has deteriorated, the years may have allowed a number of virtues to be engendered inside by way of refinement, culture,

---


experience. Within the mystery of the person, beauty has always something creative to offer.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{The Phenomenology of Beauty}

\textit{The Discovery of Beauty}

It would be impossible to grasp beauty if there were no beauty. Beauty is more than just a tranquilizer. Beauty requires the existence of paradise, something full of splendor and grace, something upon which to rest the eyes of the soul. One could be a happy bug in the midst of paradise, surrounded by beauty but without even realizing it. That would be the very essence of mediocrity. For mediocrity involves being in front of greatness, but without realizing it. How many people populate our cities, oblivious to libraries full of splendid books and concert halls full of exceptional music? Today, though there are more people than ever, they seem more isolated and lonely. Hell can be in heaven.\textsuperscript{21} If you cannot love Beauty, then anguish, repulsion, and hatred will stifle the spirit and turn beauty into a demon. For beauty brings joy only to those who know how to love it.\textsuperscript{22}

The discovery of beauty is an event that demands our sole attention. The perception of beauty involves the entire human being: one’s senses, one’s culture, habits and virtues, one’s love, one’s understand-

\textsuperscript{20}Cf. Luz González Umeres, “¿Es lo bello un trascendental personal?” \textit{Persona: revista iberoamericana de personalismo comunitario} 11 (2009): 76–80. Citing Leonardo Polo’s conception of personal “radicals” (e.g., coexistence, freedom, knowledge and love, the “character of adding,” giving and accepting, intimacy, the irreducibility, and novelty), Umeres believes that beauty ought also to be considered a personal radical.

\textsuperscript{21}Several mystics define hell as the inability to love a God who invites us to love. The idea has also been suggested by Karl Rosenkranz who defines the ugly as a “hell of the beautiful” \textit{(Aesthetics of Ugliness}, trans. Andrei Pop and Mechtild Widrich [London: Bloomsbury, 2015], 31).

\textsuperscript{22}Cf. \textit{G. K. Chesterton: A Selection from His Non-Fictional Prose}, selec. W. H. Auden (London: Faber, 1970), 177: “There is the great lesson of ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ that a thing must be loved before it is lovable.”
ing. A deaf ear is an aesthetic barrier, while an attentive ear is the gateway to a musical paradise. But even if one had the ear of Mozart, who at the age of 14 was able to transcribe the Miserere of Gregorio Allegri after hearing it in performance in the Sistine Chapel, the best of music will not be enjoyed if we do not cultivate an aesthetic taste for music. Almost all people are able to see the same range of colors, but relatively few can fully appreciate masterpieces in the museums or even cave paintings. Taste can be taught. To savor abstract art, it is necessary to know how to decode a work; otherwise the work is banal. So too, we must cultivate our taste and our intellect. Many statues and monuments are absurd until the symbolic content has been decoded. Consider the Bebelplatz in Berlin, the monument to the burning of books under the Hitler Youth in 1933. It is a simple frosted plate of glass flush with the floor surface, and illuminated from below. At first, it seems banal, until someone explains that below the glass there is a library with long bookshelves, but with no books. For, as the creator of the exhibit intended to express, although the books had been burnt, the light of the ideas within those books would rise to the sky. Truth will yet overcome barbarism.

The perception of beauty involves us completely, but not in the same way. Without sight, it would still be possible to grasp the beauty of a melody, and, without hearing, it would still be possible to see a sunset. What is indispensable is the intellect in its relation to the true. Lacking such an intellect, not even the most perfect animals can have aesthetic taste. As opined in the Greek classics, beauty manifests the One, the Good and the True. Light must first be available, then beauty, and finally the good.\textsuperscript{23}

We have said what we needed to say. Beauty requires the good and the true, but it is not a question of an exact truth or of a material

good. On the contrary, if beauty generates hope, it is because it reflects the eternal, the infinite, and with a reflex that does not leave us indifferent, but gets us totally involved.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{The Effects of Beauty}

A quick gloss on the history of beauty: the Greeks discovered beauty, the medievals linked it to the intellect and will, modern thinkers held it within themselves, while contemporary intellectuals killed it by diluting it into triviality. A simple brushstroke that leaves a background upon which thousands of colors may be painted, though they may also not be painted. But it is enough to conclude that, at this point in the history of beauty, it is possible to study beauty within the self, taking into account the phenomena that occur in the body, the mind and the will.

One of the most spectacular explanations of the phenomenon of love is that given by St. Thomas Aquinas, far ahead of his time in displaying a quite refined phenomenological technique. Our thesis is that this discussion of love can be applied analogously to the phenomenon of beauty, because beauty has a subjective side situated in the will. His discussion of love appears in the \textit{Summa Theologiae} in a question regarding the effects of love.\textsuperscript{25} There are six replies: union, mutual indwelling, ecstasy, zeal, passion and what we shall call obnubilation. To these, let us also add three other specific effects of beauty, as they appear in various Greek and modern thinkers: catharsis, hope and delight. As we follow the thread of Thomas’s splendid discussion of the effects of love, we shall add a few of our own comments.

1. \textit{Union}. The first effect of love is union, an affective and effective union. Affections enable us to approach genuine closeness with the

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Yarza, \textit{Introducción a la estética}, 181.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{S.Th.}, I–II, q. 28.
beloved object. In antiquity, it was Aristophanes who wrote that two lovers strive to become one, and that “the craving and pursuit of that entirety is called Love.” It is not as though he meant a material union, a sort of anthropophagy that would cause the destruction of both or one of them. On the contrary, “they seek a suitable and becoming union—to live together, speak together, and be united together in other like things.” Someone might be so fascinated by Rembrandt’s *Prodigal Son* that they would desire to acquire this splendid picture in order to have kept it close by. If the painting is not for sale or funds are lacking, at least the person may endeavor to visit the Hermitage where the work hangs, in order to examine up-close the brush strokes and colors from every angle. And if the airfare to St. Petersburg is not affordable, then the person must probably be content to go on the Internet and feast their eyes on a copy of it. In any case, it is important to note that the painting cannot for long be out of the person’s sight, or far from the person’s heart.

It is interesting that Thomas holds that “the union caused by love is closer than that which is caused by knowledge.” This unitive power happens also with beauty: a beautiful woman is loved more than she is understood; loved even if she were full of puzzles and her actions inexplicable. “Love is blind,” people say, but it is blind because of the beauty we encounter.

2. *Mutual indwelling*. In our heart, in our memory, in our mind, and even in our crazy fantasies, we carry beautiful objects that we have seen long ago. These dwell in us, we become their homeland, and we

---

26 S.Th., I–II, q. 28, a. 1, ad 2.
28 S.Th., I–II, q. 28, a. 1, ad 2.
29 S.Th., I–II, q. 28, a. 1, ad 3.
dwell in them. We dwell in them because “the lover is not satisfied with a superficial apprehension of the beloved, but strives to gain an intimate knowledge of everything pertaining to the beloved, so as to penetrate into his very soul.” Who buys a painting, but then does not take time to observe it? And while examining the beloved painting, who would not be curious about a new detail when they discover one? In reality, we are gradually becoming more immersed in the beauty, because it is not easy to remain dispassionate about it and, in any case, it is probably irresistible.

3. Ecstasy. Think of a day full of gloomy problems, or of a life full of melancholic suffering, where suddenly a huge glowing moon appears in the sky, profoundly suggestive. In that moment, one might become entirely forgetful of oneself, lost in enquiries before the moon, such that, in the viewing, the viewer finds oneself in heaven.

One suffers ecstasy when one is “placed outside oneself.” This may be

due to his being raised to a higher knowledge; thus, a man is said to suffer ecstasy, inasmuch as he is placed outside the connatural apprehension of his sense and reason, when he is raised up so as to comprehend things that surpass sense and reason; or it may be due to his being cast down into a state of debasement; thus a man may be said to suffer ecstasy, when he is overcome by violent passion or madness.

We have already seen how beauty is a promise, how it shows something but suggests more; it always manifests something deeper.

The effect of such a love is akin to that of mutual indwelling because it “makes the lover dwell on the beloved.” But the greatest ecstasy is produced by the love called friendship because the one who

---

30 S.Th., I–II, q. 28, a. 2, resp.
31 S.Th., I–II, q. 28, a. 3, resp.
32 Ibid.
loves no longer reserves something for oneself but only seeks the good of the beloved. Many have claimed the same for the romantic contemplation of the beautiful lover. For this beauty can also precipitate a great ecstasy, a glory. Who has ever professed one’s love and failed to experience the glory, when the beloved accepts it?\footnote{Cf. \textit{S.Th.}, I–II, q. 28, a. 3, resp., where Thomas maintains that ecstasy “is caused by love directly; by love of friendship, simply; by love of concupiscence not simply but in a restricted sense. Because in love of concupiscence, the lover is carried out of himself, in a certain sense; in so far, namely, as not being satisfied with enjoying the good that he has, he seeks to enjoy something outside himself. But since he seeks to have this extrinsic good for himself, he does not go out from himself simply, and this movement remains finally within him.”}

4. Zeal. It “arises from the intensity of love. For it is evident that the more intensely a power tends to anything, the more vigorously it withstands opposition or resistance.”\footnote{\textit{S.Th.}, I–II, q. 28, a. 4, resp.} Aquinas provides examples: a husband may harbor jealousy in relation to his wife because he wants her only for himself and will not tolerate that this exclusivity would be hindered by the company of others; or, having a zeal for God, a person repels any word contrary to the honor of God (similarly, with regard to zeal for a friend).\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} And so it is, too, with beautiful things, whose disappearance would never be tolerated. Beauty merits protection. There are laws that protect the beauty of nature and that of the greatest works of humanity. We ourselves experience this zeal for beautiful things. The preservation of beauty is a task for everyone. Beauty cannot cease to exist.

5. Passion. Beauty is grasped by the human potencies that “suffer” it. The eye suffers colors, the ear music, the intellect truth, the will the good. A potency must be adapted to its object in order to experience beauty; without this coadaptation it would be impossible to grasp beau-
ty. With respect to this passion of love, the Angelic Doctor describes some of the effects “suffered” by those who love:

[I]t is to be observed that four proximate effects may be ascribed to love: viz. melting, enjoyment, languor, and fervor. Of these the first is “melting,” which is opposed to freezing. For things that are frozen, are closely bound together, so as to be hard to pierce. But it belongs to love that the appetite is fitted to receive the good which is loved, inasmuch as the object loved is in the lover . . . Consequently the freezing or hardening of the heart is a disposition incompatible with love: while melting denotes a softening of the heart, whereby the heart shows itself to be ready for the entrance of the beloved. If, then, the beloved is present and possessed, pleasure or enjoyment ensues. But if the beloved be absent, two passions arise; viz., sadness at its absence, which is denoted by “languor” . . . and an intense desire to possess the beloved, which is signified by “fervor.” And these are the effects of love considered formally, according to the relation of the appetitive power to its object. But in the passion of love, other effects ensue, proportionate to the above, in respect of a change in the organ.

These effects, and others, are also “suffered” by those who contemplate beauty. Beauty arouses admiration and, when beauty is extraordinary, it shocks. The most shocking is the sublime, something possessing a degree of greatness that stands above the rest. Kant distinguishes the beautiful from the sublime: “The sublime moves, the beautiful charms.” He illustrates this by writing:

The sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peak rises above the clouds, the description of a raging storm, or Milton’s portrayal of the infernal kingdom, arouse enjoyment but with horror; on

36 Aquinas explains that “love denotes a certain adapting of the appetitive power to some good” (S.Th., I–II, q. 28, a. 5, resp.).
37 S.Th., I–II, q. 28, a. 5, reply to the objections.
the other hand, the sight of flower-strewn meadows, valleys with winding brooks and covered with grazing flocks, the description of Elysium, or Homer’s portrayal of the girdle of Venus, also occasion a pleasant sensation but one that is joyous and smiling.\textsuperscript{39}

Though, in reality, the sublime is a kind of beauty, it is a “sublimated beauty.” To us, the sublime manifests itself as superhuman, worthy of wonder, often immense or infinite. It is the greatest appeal to the existence of the Absolute.

Let us return to Dostoyevsky’s \textit{The Idiot}, at the point when prince Myskin has been bewitched by a lady: “You are very beautiful, Aglaya Ivanovna, so beautiful that one is afraid to look at you.”\textsuperscript{40} Great beauties leave us stunned, speechless. The soul fears losing such beauty, or hurting it in the least.

6. \textit{Obnubilation}. In the science of optics, obnubilation is a disease in which all objects appear to the eye as if seen through a cloud. Like it or not, all our actions are obnubilated by our feeling for the things we love and for what we consider to be beautiful. For the love of beauty is that which moves the world.\textsuperscript{41} This claim is supported by Aristotle’s idea of the Unmoved Mover who appears as the most beautiful object of desire,\textsuperscript{42} or simply as “a God standing to the world as the Be-

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{40} Dostoyevsky, \textit{The Idiot}, 118.


\textsuperscript{42} Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics}, bk. 12, trans. W. D. Ross: “The object of desire . . . move[s] without being moved. . . . But the beautiful, also, and that which is in itself desirable are in the same column . . .” Available online—see the section \textit{References} for details.
loved stands to the Lover.”

Thus, everything in this world is moved by the love of beauty.

Beauty is the final end: it is an end in itself, it is sought for itself, it does not allow any substitution. Beauty is to be preferred in itself, it is that “which attracts us by its own power and draws us by its own dignity.”

Beautiful things are useless, a painting is useless. But beauty is glory. Beauty would be negligible if it were not the principal aim of life.

7. Transformation and catharsis. Beauty transforms the world and transforms us. The act of love transforms the good and the true into something beautiful: when we speak with love, when we say “it is good that you exist!” the loved one is transformed before us and begins to shine—the beloved’s existence is justified in itself.

At the same time, beauty does not leave us indifferent. Beauty provokes admiration, excitement, knowledge, reflection . . . and finally purification. Plato was anti-tragic: he did not like tragedies; he viewed them as pure deception. By contrast, Aristotle enjoyed theater, poetry and music. He understood that spectators were able to see themselves reflected in the plot of a tragedy and so could clarify, illuminate, and elevate their own passions. For Aristotle, tragedy causes catharsis, and

---


45 To use Cicero’s words for the sake of discussion about beauty. Aquinas uses them in his *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 145, a. 1, ad 1: [W]herefore Tully says . . . that ‘some things allure us by their own force, and attract us by their own worth, such as virtue, truth, knowledge.’”

catharsis reveals and enables our feelings to be what they must be.\textsuperscript{47} We must remember that catharsis was the touchstone of the poetic. “Catharsis is not a simple emotional state but an emotional discharge that releases the one that suffers from the excesses of passion, so that the spirit regains balance or measure necessary for action.”\textsuperscript{48}

I myself believe that there are two types of catharsis, conscious and unconscious. The first requires reflection. As opined by Chesterton, fairy tales are true, not because they can persuade us that dragons exist, but because they explain to us how dragons can be defeated. But to get to such a life-changing insight, we need to meditate upon dragons. In addition to such a conscious catharsis, a catharsis may be unconscious when, for example, we see a movie that can enable us to mourn, to live with our sorrows, to smile at life, to improve our attitude, or simply to allow us to disconnect for a couple of hours from the concerns of the week.

8. \textit{Epiphany} and \textit{hope}. Beauty also leaves an impression on the intellect, whereby it knows more, knows better and knows with hope. It \textit{knows more} by contemplation which allows one to recognize what is already known in a new dimension, the dimension of beauty. It \textit{knows better} because of its epiphanic character. A beautiful work, art or poetry reveals in an instant what a treatise would take much longer to reveal. More than a psychological model, more even than a photograph, a good portrait can reveal in a single glance the character and mood of one who

\textsuperscript{47} There is an interesting debate about the meaning of \textit{catharsis} in Aristotle. A popular interpretation, centered on \textit{Politics} VIII 7.1342a4–16, asserts that, for Aristotle, tragic catharsis is helpful only for healing people who suffer hysterical emotions. A revised understanding, constructed with the study of more works by the Stagirite (\textit{On Poets}, \textit{Poetry}, \textit{Ethics}, etc.), suggests to us that for the philosopher the labor of catharsis is also helpful for the education of healthy people. See Richard Janko, “Introduction,” in \textit{Aristotle, Poetics I}, trans. Richard Janko (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), ix–xxvi.

\textsuperscript{48} María Antonia Labrada, \textit{Belleza y racionalidad} (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1990), 179.
is sitting. Remember the words “troppo vero, Velázquez, troppo vero!” that Innocent X said when he first saw his portrait.\textsuperscript{49} A short work of fiction can show, in a more immediate way, a wide array of truths about the human being and society for which a treatise of anthropology or ethics would require a hundred pages.

The intellect \textit{knows hopefully} because, as we have seen, beauty does not manifest the truth in a precise and detailed way, but in an ob-nubilated way. It suggests rather than describes; it promises rather than lists the details. It is an appetizer prior to the main course, which allows us to admire what we have not seen yet, and to better enjoy what we have not yet enjoyed.

9. \textit{Pleasure} or \textit{delight}. Finally, all authors would probably agree that beauty brings delight. For, by definition, beauty is pleasant. All human potencies are recreated by the beautiful—the eye by seeing it, the ear by listening to it, the intellect by knowing it, the will by loving it, etc. For “man alone takes pleasure in the beauty of sensible objects for its own sake.”\textsuperscript{50} Only a human being has an intellect, which enables contemplation. A dog cannot contemplate a bone; it simply bites it and tears it apart. Beauty has something divine, and only those who have the divine image can contemplate it.

Pleasure is born in the contemplation of the finished perfection of beauty. One deeply recollects one’s psychic forces in beauty; one reaches a sublime state of being. When beauty is sublime, ecstasy is complete. One reaches out of oneself to encounter the suprahuman. That is why there the pleasure is mixed with admiration, respect, and a shudder of astonishment.

\textsuperscript{49} Cf. Shirley Glubok, \textit{Great Lives: Painting} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1994), 214: “When the pope first saw the results he said, ‘All too true.’ The portrait brought the artist great respect.”

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{S.Th.}, I, q. 91, a. 3, ad 3.
The Phenomenology of the Ugly

The Ugly and the Horrible

The ugly exists. This is quite obvious. There are abominable events in history, there are mythological horrors, there are unspeakable cruelties, as when Saturn devoured his son, Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia, Oedipus killed his father, and the like. The ugly is embodied in the Gorgons, sphinxes, harpies, cyclops, centaurs, hydraz . . . and also in our own lives—for the ugly is just around the corner. When we go outside, we discover the ugly everywhere: litter on the ground, insults as we climb on the bus, and so on. We cannot rid ourselves of the ugly even in a museum where, next to a beautiful work of art, we find a painting that appals us, that simply should not be hanging there.\textsuperscript{51}

If beauty is transcendental, if it can be predicated of all that exists, how can the ugly even exist? The answer is analogous to that given in relation to the problem of good and evil. Just as evil is the absence of good, the ugly is the absence of beauty. That is just how a monster is painted: the most endearing form is chosen—that of a human, a child—and then the form is altered, without arms, without eyes, without tongue, without other due properties. Beauty is withdrawn from the form in order to create the ugly. If beauty is bright, harmonious and whole, the ugly is the opposite: a butchered lamb, a broken diamond, a dark alley, a speech full of contradictions, a nose that is one centimeter too large or small.

\textsuperscript{51} Cf. Larry Shiner, The Invention of Art: A Cultural History (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 227: “‘Anti-art’ movements such as dada and Russian constructivism or the authors of anti-art gestures such as Marcel Duchamp or John Cage, for example, were often ambivalent toward the category of art and the art institutions they attacked, and those institutions in turn were quick to recuperate anti-art works and actions.”
All created things have certain beauty, but also some defect. Even demons are beautiful, as they are angels: they possess a singular intelligence that any human would envy. Literature is full of repellent heroes who nevertheless steal our hearts. Who would not prefer the tender Beast over the bland Prince in *The Beauty and the Beast*? Who would not identify more with the disfigured spectrum of *The Phantom of the Opera* rather than the pretentious Raoul? We also find beauty in a stick man named Pinocchio, in a hunchback named Quasimodo, and many other unfortunate characters with good hearts. The lesson is that, it seems, there is no joy in this world without sorrow, no beauty without the ugly. It is our eternal complaint in life but, at the same time, our eternal hope: everything could be better.

The ugly is not the *nothing*, nor even the negligible, but it is *what should be beautiful*. A grain of sand offers no promise, and so it cannot be ugly. Outer space, that enigmatic emptiness that fills the void between stars, neither can it be ugly. But a walk in the cold rain, a honeymoon full of fights, a marriage that fails, those are ugly.

When the beautiful is destroyed, the ugly emerges. There is no right to degrade beauty. In the degradation of the beautiful, there is an injustice. The bombing of civilians in War II was detestable, but the bombing of the Convent of Monte Cassino, where many incunabula works and magnificent letters of antiquity were stored, was an absurdity. The ugly arises when the promise of the fullness and ecstasy of beauty is breached, or when the affections are stretched toward an impossible promise, to what will never be. We grieve for not living up to another’s expectations. This is the source of the classic complaint of an unrequited love: “you are too beautiful and, by comparison, I am not.”

At its extreme, the ugly is the horrible. The horrible is the fall of the majestic, an offense to the infinite. *Corruptio optimi pessima est,*
philosophy says.\textsuperscript{52} A bunch of rotting grapes may be ugly, but the presence of gangrene on an arm would be horrible. Office politics can be ugly, but constant bickering within a family can be horrible. In sum, the most horrifying ontological ugliness is depicted in the story of the Dragon and his sin, that beautiful star that shone in the sky, but then fell from above like lightning,\textsuperscript{53} dragging one third of the stars with it.\textsuperscript{54} It is the story of a beautiful creature that turned ugly.\textsuperscript{55} Who can find reason in such behavior? No one. What was accomplished? Nothing.

\textit{Life in Hell}

In principle, if the ugly is the opposite of beauty, its effects will also be. As we have seen, beauty unites, as it causes mutual indwelling, ecstasy, zeal, noble passions, obnubilation, hope and a catharsis that all occur with great pleasure. On the other hand, nobody wants to befriend a gruesome criminal, live at a garbage dump, be possessed by a thousand demons. Rather than unite, the ugly causes disgust, revulsion; we jump back instinctively from terrifying images, people leave towns that are haunted.

The ugly does not bring hope, but rather it depresses us. There seems no escape from it. As with the most unbearable pain, the ugly preoccupies us, accelerates the heart, makes us shudder. There is no outgoing ecstasy, but only a bitter imprisonment within the ego. The ugly enslaves a person, not by tying the hands, but by blocking the eyes

\textsuperscript{52} Cf. J. Budziszewski, \textit{Companion to the Commentary} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 46: “As Aristotle had written in his comparison of political regimes, ‘That which is the perversion of the first and most divine is necessarily the worst.’ The Latin adage, \textit{corruptio optimi pessima est}, ‘the corruption of the best is the worst,’ would have been ringing in the ears of St. Thomas’s readers.”
\textsuperscript{54} Cf. Rev 12:4–9.
\textsuperscript{55} Certainly other beautiful spirits that were created did not fail, but the most beautiful that reneged was Lucifer.
and ears. The ugly sinks the spirit. A society without beauty destroys the innocence of the children, our sense of humor, even the will to live. Rousseau already glimpsed it: “Take this love of the beautiful from our hearts, and you take all the charm from life.” A face where a smile has not passed for a long time reflects a soul where beauty has no place.

Mutual indwelling is not possible. People seek to forget the ugly, but can only succeed with difficulty. They try to drown it out, employing every distraction, including alcohol and drugs. No wonder, then, that Nietzsche viewed the ugly “as a sign and symptom of degeneration.”

The ugly brings neither pleasure nor noble passions; instead it provokes hate and suffering. And so, we have no zeal for the ugly. The ugly must be bombed and destroyed, banished to hell and, if possible, annihilated once and for all. Neither is there any epiphany in the ugly that inspires truth, nor a catharsis that would elevate. On the contrary, if a muse inspires beauty, a demon only inspires terror. A sublime beauty elevates, makes time stop, carries us fleetingly into a blissful eternity; the horrifyingly ugly is unbearable, a second becomes a hopeless eternity. It is with good reason that Thomas Aquinas described hell as having no end and heaven as being eternal.

Finally, nothing is accomplished in the name of the ugly. For, as we said, all is done for love. Why then sin, ugly actions, and the crimes against humanity? The answer is to be found in Plato’s *Symposium*,

---


58 Cf. *S.Th.*, III Supp., q. 99, a. 3: “[T]he punishment of the damned will have no end.”

59 Cf. *S.Th.*, I–II, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1, where Aquinas speaks of achieving man’s happiness by participating in eternity.
where Socrates states that Eros is a “demon” which mediates between gods and men so as to make them love only the beauty of the body. And indeed, the “demon” of love for the beautiful has often enchanted people, who will then sacrifice everything to possess these trivial beauties which the devil displays to them. So blinded with such tawdry lights, they forget the highest and most splendid things. It is difficult to avoid being entangled by the demon. But such paltry beauties are transient. They disappoint because they promise much and deliver little. Hence, the abysmal sadness of Greek culture.

No one seeks the ugly for its own sake, but rather only because it appeared to be beautiful. Once the beautiful is revealed to be only an appearance, once the beautiful vanishes, only sadness remains. This is how the “demon” of beauty acts: he places an appetizing bait in his trap, a delicacy beautiful to the eyes of the intended prey, in order to devour the prey once it falls into the trap. If the demon would inadvertently reveal himself, ugly as death, he would not catch anything.

Redemption of the Ugly

Only beauty can redeem us. An ignominious insult from the boss, a back-breaking work, can become beautiful, if endured to support one’s starving children. The worker is thus ennobled in the midst of the

60 Plato’s *Symposium*, 203a: “Many and multifarious are these spirits [δαίμονες], and one of them is Love ["Ἠρως"].”

61 Augustine described such an entanglement: “But the framers and followers of the outward beauties derive thence the rule of judging of them, but not of using them. And He is there, though they perceive Him not, that so they might not wander, but keep their strength for Thee, and not scatter it abroad upon pleasurable weariness. And I, thought I speak and see this, estangle my steps with these outward beauties . . .” (*Confessions of St. Augustine*, 147).

62 Cf. Brugger, 73. If humans would not let the devil seduce them, they would perceive beauty as a reflection of the afterlife, of the absolute perfection of God and His creation. So the heart ascends the fragmentary beauty of this world to the primitive pure beauty.
dehumanizing work. In its utter senselessness, the ugly can begin to make sense. It begins with the promise of a single flower within the desert until, over time, the ugly is overrun by an abundance of beauty.

There was a time when I thought that a love poem could only be written with a hundred nice words and a flower. But, like Cyrano de Bergerac, I was wrong when I imagined that love could be attained with letters and poems. I was wrong and I realize it. Love poems, rather, are like nails on the hands, a pierced chest, a gaze blurred by tears and blood. A love poem is a crown of thorns, a cross, an ignominious death. A love poem is the broad path that was opened up in the chest with a spear. Now, I know, love is not won by letters or poems, but in a life when there is pain, the pain of love. If you want to write a genuine love poem, it must be written with the ink of days upon the paper of life. Though the cross was the worst, the ugliest that the Romans could contrive, God turned it into a love poem. Only Beauty can redeem us from our ugliness. If beauty did not exist, there would be no redemption.

It is not enough, though, that Beauty exists. We may be committed to the beautiful, but we need also a warrior spirit. Beauty is not easy to attain. We need to acquire a love for beauty, but we must battle the dragons of life. Whenever we want, there is beauty to be found within. If, for instance, we lose the ability to laugh at our faults, we lose a capacity to embellish this valley of tears. If Beauty exists, it is worth giving up everything for it.

So, it is here that any philosophy of beauty must end and a chapter on the theology of beauty must begin.

---


64 Several of the ideas expressed here have their parallel in spiritual or theological documents. Cf. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, *The Way* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 2006), 171: “Surely God’s Love is worth any love;” *ibid.*, 780: “Deo omnis gloria: all the glory to God;” *ibid.*, 783: “If life’s purpose were not to give glory to God, how contemptible, how hateful it would be.”
The Effects of Beauty and the Redemption of the Ugly

SUMMARY

This paper ponders on the aftermath effects of beauty, the ugly, and the hypotheses on how to get rid of the ugly. Due to the impossibility of addressing the effects of something that is entirely unknown, the author first attempts, in lieu of a definition of beauty, to examine the three classical conditions for beauty, which will otherwise be respected as in some sense a mystery. Secondly, he turns to the effects of beauty by analogy to the six effects of love as elucidated by Thomas Aquinas; in addition, he adds three other effects of beauty found in classical Greek thought: catharsis, epiphany, and pleasure. Thirdly, he reviews, by way of contrast, the corresponding effects of the ugly; and then he proposes how the ugly can be “redeemed” by beauty.

KEYWORDS

Thomas Aquinas, transcendentals, beauty, ugly, love, catharsis, epiphany, pleasure.

REFERENCES


The Effects of Beauty and the Redemption of the Ugly


Donna E. West

Thirdness along the Intuitional Path: Reflections from Maritain and Peirce

This inquiry exposits Maritain’s and Peirce’s account of the preconditions for emergence of event relations.¹ This spotlights Maritain’s model of how to prepare for the receipt of objective intellection, as well as Peirce’s treatment of abductive inferencing. It further identifies the foundational representations (signs) which compel the intuitional/inferencing process. The ultimate illustration of inferencing for Peirce² is

¹ Katherine Nelson is largely responsible for developing psychological accounts of event representations. She posits that a script including beginning, middle and end structures events, often exemplified in narrative practices (although event representations emerge prior to language (Patricia J. Bauer, “Recalling Past Events: From Infancy to Early Childhood,” Annals of Child Development 11 [1995]: 25–71). Fivush and Haden (see their “Narrating and Representing Experience: Preschoolers’ Developing Autobiographical Accounts,” in Developmental Spans in Event Comprehension and Representation: Bridging Fictional and Actual Events, ed. P. van den Broek, P. Bauer, and T. Bourg [Hilldale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997], 175) augment this definition with the claim that event structures “are driven by the protagonist’s wish to achieve a goal.” Based upon these accounts, this inquiry attributes recognition of a temporal sequence to happenings—together with their connection with spatial contexts. These smaller happenings cohere in a kind of story (Katherine Nelson, “Event Representations: Then, Now, and Next,” in Developmental Spans in Event Comprehension and Representation: Bridging Fictional and Actual Events, ed. P. van den Broek, P. Bauer, and T. Bourg [Hilldale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997], 1–28).

² 1908: CP 6.455.
imputing meaning relations between events within different universes. Although Maritain does not explicitly address the role of inferencing to determine novel event relations, he bears witness to how intuitions (comprising inferences which emerge suddenly) establish the foundation for truth-seeking. They do so by virtue of a logical nexus assumed (absent investigation) to operate between events. Both Peirce and Maritain advocate that inferring event relations depends upon two distinct kinds of knowledge: from empirical sources in Secondness/sensible experiences, as well as from an objective (in the sense of modern usage), transcendental (extra-categorical attributes of being) state in Firstness. In the latter, intuitions emerge from unbidden pictures vividly flashing across the mind’s eye, while in the former, embodied action templates trace lived experiential paths with objective import. Although both knowledge sources give rise to iconic and indexical signification, it is initially the indexical function which compels inferential reasoning—the bases for intuitions. With respect to the former source, acting

---

3 Peirce’s notion of event relations entails not a momentary temporal point in time, consonant with his concept of individual—a Scotistic determination, but a continuum-based model in which continuity is driven by propositional/argumentative logic. This is so given Peirce’s requirement that all signs, including event representations, must be associated with meanings (interpretants), and hence contain at least implied propositions (1906: CP 8.338; 1905: CP 4.538).

4 “The third Universe comprises everything whose being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different Universes. Such is everything which is essentially a Sign—not the mere body of the Sign, which is not essentially such, but, so to speak, the Sign’s Soul, which has its Being in its power of serving as intermediary between its Object and a Mind” (CP 6.455).


upon objects by direct involvement or by observation (both empirical) illustrates direct involvement in movement within and across events, experiencing their contours. The embodied nature of these enactments can facilitate the inferencing process—establishing the event’s syntax—who does what to whom, and in what sequence. Accordingly, many action schemas, which draw upon Peirce’s percepts/perceptual judgments, make use of inferential skills; and index particularly hastens inferences by highlighting relational event paths. Drawing attention to objects in their spatial array as observed in their co-context—a primary function of index—compels inferences; it elicits conjectures pertaining to how the objects might function in an event scheme, and the relevance of their consequences. The notable advantage of indexical signs is the element of Thirdness—suggesting, not naming nor exemplifying relations by analogy (as with symbols and icons, respectively). Unlike other kinds of signs whose relationship with objects is explicit, index stands for its objects implicitly. In fact, the implicit nature of these relations leaves them vulnerable to being unnoticed.

Integrating transcendental with empirical sources, which both Maritain and Peirce advocate, supplies checks and balances in an effort to discern truth via objective intellection; but exploring the special role of Thirdness in determining relational paths remains uncharted. Accordingly, both models recognize that intuitions are derived in substantial part from sources beyond empirical ones, mystical sources. But, whether intuitions surface as primary cognitions (having relevance to

9 “[Thirdness] is that which is what it is by virtue of imparting a quality to reactions in the future” (1903: CP 1.343).
animal and plant life) is still an open question. If they emerge as vivid images, they may be entertained by other life forms, as suggested by Kemple.\(^{10}\) By encapsulating the potential for objective meanings in elementary event representations, potentiality for future meanings is enshrined. The upshot for both models is that the triadic nature of event signs (sign, object, meaning/effect) is present even in primordial forms such as matter, by virtue of its potency to insinuate subsequent intuitions into the sign’s fabric. In other words, despite its latency, the potency of Thirdness has its presence, implicitly for Maritain, explicitly for Peirce (in which thought defines fact).\(^{11}\) This “conformity of fact to thought” establishes the foundation for a promise to turn over relevant objective meanings implicit in primary states of being, and in the relations existing among concurrent and contiguous states of affairs.

**Intuition as Intellectual Apprehension**

Maritain asserts that preparation to receive intuitions entails practice of three mystical exercises: prolonging psychic states, feeling anguish, and fidelity to one’s metaphysical existence. While Maritain\(^{12}\) borrows the first two from Bergson and Heidegger, respectively, the third is his own contribution. Prolonging psychic states is orchestrated as follows:

---


\(^{11}\) “This element of our daily & hourly experience, the element of the conformity of fact to thought,—this element whose being such as it is consists in this that it has such reference to an object independent of it as to bring a third thing (the interpretation) into the same triadic relation to that same object,—this character of a *sign*, the being an exponent of thought, is what I call the element of Thirdness in the phenomenon” (1903: MS 462: 84–86).

We have here a psychological experience which is not yet the metaphysical intuition of being, but which could have led to this intuition, for, enveloped in this psychological duration, implicitly given there, is existence, the irreducible value of esse; it is therefore a path, an approach, to the perception of existence.

Duration of being illustrates the need for some awareness of the stable features which comprise the essence of the individual despite environmental/contextual factors. This initial step to receiving intuitions precludes consideration of subjective, arbitrary or capricious factors which might intrude, and hence interfere with achieving objective dispositions. The second step toward reaching readiness entails further insulation from adherence to ego-based interpretation, namely, suffering. This process requires tearing the self from itself: “[N]o one can be a metaphysician without first passing through the experience of anguish . . .” Maritain emphasizes that the self needs to be “save[d] from nothingness, snatch[ed] from nonentity. Yes, this kind of dramatic experience of nothingness may serve as an introduction to the intuition of being.” Here Maritain determines that anguish is a necessary precondition for recognizing intuitions, given its means to subvert the ego to a place of humility/respect for otherness. Apprehending the insufficiency of subjective operations is paramount. It acknowledges that the often-misleading nature of idiosyncratic perceptions is too compelling to allow objective truth-seeking processes to have prominence, given their inability to establish which hunches/inferences have promise as objective virtues. In fact, an awareness that begins and ends with ego often short-circuits the process of listening rather than “fabricating answers” which Maritain cautions against.

---


14 Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 132. Kemple (in his *Ens Primum Cognitum in Thomas Aquinas and the Tradition*, 125) frames this problem in terms of Thomistic “intentionality,” with “the etymological signification of ‘tending-towards.’” Here “in-
anguish as “lived,” further intimates the need for ego to repeatedly feel the agony of excising self from the process of intellection. The third posture/attitude (fidelity) finally approaches entry into metaphysical realms:

We may observe that all the consistency, steadfastness, firmness, and victory over disintegration and oblivion contained in this virtue and suggested by the word ‘fidelity’ are strictly dependent upon a certain steadfastness in reality itself in virtue of which I dominate the flux of my own life and possess my metaphysical consistence.

He sums up the three-fold process of hearing intuitions as follows:

The first of these experiences, that of duration, is more of the speculative order, at once psychological and biological. The two others are more of the practical and moral order, the psychological factor being invested in the ethical.¹⁵

Despite attempts toward ego denial, ascertaining fidelity may still fall short of the metaphysical knowledge necessary to receive what Maritain characterizes as intuitions:

And what is especially dangerous in all these ways of approaching being is that one runs the risk of remaining imprisoned in one or the other of the concrete analogues of being, the one that he will have chosen as path of approach. The experience in question gives information only of itself. This is indeed the drawback of pure experience in philosophy and the stumbling block of every metaphysics which wishes to be experimental. The experience, though valid for the particular domain in which the intuition in question has arisen, cannot be extended to a vaster intelligible

---

domain and cannot take on an explanatory value, except in an arbitrary manner.¹⁶

Here Maritain encapsulates the characteristics which differentiate a metaphysical state promoting intuitions from a lesser state: amplifying actual experience by analogy, and drawing upon the explanatory adequacy of the relation recognized within the inference. Absent access to the explanatory value of the event relation, and its application to wider genres (by analogy), preparation could not reach sufficiency for intuitional status; and with respect to the third and ultimate stage for preparation (fidelity), even minimizing self-interest (deferring to otherness) can fail to provide the light sufficient to ascertain the metaphysical state necessary to engage in objective intellection. Maritain is clear that employing experiential data as the yardstick to extract inferential material falls short of intuitional status, presumably because its temporal and spatial actualization limit the means to draw explanatory hypotheses to determine future applications of these relations—hence precluding inclusion of other places, times, and participant roles.

Maritain’s emphasis on attaining a metaphysical state to receive intuitions demonstrates his clear vision of the transcendental process leading to receipt of the intellectual absolutes necessary to ascertain event inferences. He notes that a primary component to ultimately arrive at intuitions is “trans-objective real offering itself as object.”¹⁷ “Offering [one’s] self as object” requires an elevated kind of being which depends upon the three kinds of preparation cited above; such is transcendental at its core, consequent to subjecting the self to objective principles—becoming an object such that self enters into the observable fabric of all things. This process materializes upon receipt of eidetic moving images containing mystical qualities:

¹⁶ Ibid., 126.
¹⁷ Ibid., 120–121.
The typical mode of intellectual apprehension or eidetic visualization—the degree of immateriality, of spirituality, in the manner of seizing the object and of conforming to it, required of itself by the trans-objective real offering itself as object . . . constitutes what the ancients called . . . the objective light under which things are . . . knowable to the intellect.\(^{18}\)

For Maritain, eidetic visualization constitutes a practical form which can be exercised by life forms other than human. But when it attains sign status, accompanied by a concept or mental word, it has the supreme power to preempt the highest state of knowledge—allowing the mind to subsume the object (or “seize” it):

[I]ntellectual knowledge is accomplished thanks to a mental word or concept, a presentative form uttered by the intellect within itself, and in that form the intellect intentionally becomes . . . the thing taken in . . . one of its intelligible determinations.\(^{19}\)

By classifying the issue under consideration beside other concepts within the same mental system, the concept/mental word advances from the practical effect of the simple vivid image to a more speculative effect—proceeding from sensorimotor action schemes to propositions/assumptions which contain raw material for inferences. Naming the action (by articulated or unarticulated words) makes more explicit the implicit inferences of the action relations as represented in the eidetic image; hence, the inferences implied in the image rise to the level of “seizing the object” as a “transobjective offering.” In fact, these specific eidetic images (which Maritain identifies) may well be equivocal to Peirce’s abductions, in that their initial flash of insight illuminates the consequences; afterward (like mental words) additional images explain the phenomenon.

\(^{18}\)Ibid.

Maritain identifies three levels of eidetic visualization/intensive visualization: physical abstraction (not allowing material qualities to be primary), quantitative abstraction (relations of order and measure proper to quantity), and metaphysical abstraction (foregrounding the intelligible).\textsuperscript{20} The third level is not ascertained without traveling through the prior levels; objective intellection requires attenuation from appearances, as well as the affirmative recognition of foundational relations implied in appearances. To advance to the third stage, these foundational relations must be applied to would-be contexts, qualifying as intellectual apprehension whereby “onticity of being” is the objective. Here, eidetic visualization of selective previous relations become material for future meanings—advancing the state of knowledge to “being as such.”\textsuperscript{21} Beyond achieving the objectively transcendental, what elevates the intellect is inferring subsequent ontological relations from already observed event relations, with recognition of their outcomes. This extension of relations into futurity demonstrates not merely a use of signs beyond space and time restrictions, but a definite awareness of their expanded use—perhaps equivocal analogous to meta-semiotic semiosic competency. For Maritain, the specificity/sharpness intrinsic to salient mental images obviates objective principles, and when accompanied by symbolic signs (e.g., “mental words”) brings about the ultimate metaphysical state of intellectual apprehension, namely, intuition (cf. infra for expansion).

By contrast, Peirce insists that abductive reasoning is the factor responsible for arriving at this intellectual objectivity—using the con-


sequence as the point of departure. Here abductions posit plausible explanations for vital relations between consequences and the factors which give rise to them. Whether abductions actually qualify as intuitions though is hardly likely for Peirce, despite their similarities, because (like abductions) intuitions lack the requisite status as first cognitions. Even when intuitions appear to be first cognitions, they arguably depend upon other percepts/cognitions, such that even the most primary cognition implicitly depends upon previous cognitions and hence upon inferences. But, apart from his early repudiation of the existence of intuitions, Peirce’s semiotic (after further development) suggests modification to a more moderate position—that indexical signs approach the status of intuitions, because they imply logical relations by means of their natural spatial and temporal situatedness to their objects. As such, object-meaning relations can be inferred by virtue of co-occurrence with the indexical sign, e.g., smoke implies fire, or pointing fingers imply performatives (especially obviated when performatives comply with imperative meanings). “An index is a real thing or fact which is a sign of its object by virtue of being connected with it as a matter of fact and by also forcibly intruding upon the mind, quite regardless of its being interpreted as a sign.” Because of its direct physical and temporal association with its object, index implies performative meanings (with its objects) which are especially imperative in nature—forcing the attention to particular entities. In this way, index intrinsically contains propositional value—that the object merits attention because of its meanings/effects, or that it suggests augmented, future

24 1868: CP 5.213.
25 1903: CP 4.447.
meanings. Index’s reference to individual objects in the immediate here and now of the context delegates to it a unique function—individuating relations and topical shifts across objects, and monitoring meaning alterations. By extension, the propositional function of index (with subject and predicate) supplies the raw material to infer actual and future relations; and novel propositions implying event relations are more likely to surface thereafter with accompanying indexes when compared to other sign types because their proximity and directionality uniquely imply logical relations between objects in the same and alternative contexts. If interpreters entertain those indices which suggest plausible propositions, they open themselves to receipt of il lume naturale, given the implied relations to be inferred between indexical signs and their objects:

[I]t is to be expected that [man] should have a natural light, or light of nature, or instinctive insight, or genius, tending to make him guess [nature’s] laws aright, or nearly aright. This conclusion is confirmed when we find that every species of animal is endowed with a similar genius.

---


27 Cf. Donna West’s: *Deictic Imaginings: Semiosis at Work and at Play* (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2013), and “The Work of Peirce’s Diсisign in Representationalizing Early Deictic Events,” *Semiotica*, no. 225 (2018): 19–38. Deely (see his *Purely Objective Reality* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009], 29–30) likewise recognizes that inferring relations is foundational to semiosis, but does not address the role of index in this phenomenon: “For while relation is like all the other accidents in requiring an esse in alio (a modification of subjectivity), it is unlike all the other accidents in not consisting in that modification but only resting upon or provenating from that subjective modification as from a foundation or basis in subjectivity.”

28 1903: CP 5.604. Cf. 1893: MS 408: 148–149. Peirce more clearly defines instinctive insight deriving from natural light in a 1913 letter to F. A. Woods: “I use the word instinct in the precise sense of an animal’s faculty of acting (whether physically or psychically) in a reasonable (or better ‘an adaptive’) manner, when the animal (human or other) would be unable by reasoning to reach the requisite conclusion” (Kenneth
As hinted at earlier, Maritain determines that vivid images (which may be propelled by Peirce’s notion of instinct) are the most propitious source for exploiting the natural light, because they possess a power surpassing embodied action schemes. As such, the component of Thirdness in the indexical sign elevates eidetic images to propositional status—creating an embryonic forum to construct events in future universes. Maritain illustrates how eidetic visualizations first have a practical import, then a psychic purpose. They first preempt certain cultural expressions of episodes ritualized in chants and/or incantations—their practical effect. But he illustrates that their ultimate effect as instruments of natural light is to signify objective propositions. As such, they supply a forum to practice how relations would be were they to materialize in the future. This has the effect of hastening viewer’s inferences by means of specific moving pictures of novel states of affairs/relations. Even from the outset, eidetic images insinuate future intuitions with the implication that subsequent meanings/effects are likely to surface. They likewise amplify/consolidate/reify concepts of past experiences. But, to receive these new relations which usher in fresh meanings the subject’s awareness must first be cauterized from all presumptions, such that one’s being does not miss the “voice” of the intuition by dependence on subjective factors. In this vein, Maritain cautions against dependence upon previous experience as the primary source—without sufficiently seeking the light of intellectual absolutes. The former results in sterile facts of subjective past happenings, uninformed by dynamic inference-making principles. The influence of mystical factors then is paramount for Maritain along the path toward receiving the natural light/grace of intuitions. This mystical element exploits the potency of meaning in


elementary event signs, when it transforms past experience into material for predictive future event relations. It orchestrates this by subverting idiosyncratic memories, and by encouraging new expectations for objective, resultative states of affairs which obviate the potential for interventions relevant to all entities, extending to would-be participants and conditions.

The Influence of Mystical Factors

Maritain’s warning against overreliance upon affective influences, precluding the transcendental process, further convinces us of the indispensability of mystical factors to receive intuitions: “Being proceeds such an intuition not as for that sort of sympathy requiring a twisting of the will back upon itself . . . but of the intellect and by means of a concept, an idea. The concept of being, the notion of being corresponds to this intuition.” For Maritain, intuition requires a purge which guards against myopic conclusions, in which self convinces the self of the efficacy of hunches by virtue of a fleeting act of the will, or from feelings to align with some capricious attraction. Instead, the intuitions encapsulating the inference must be interpreted according to a mystical source—the light of an absolute virtue, such that being/essence takes precedence over subjective impressions of event relations. Becoming subject to this mystical source for receipt of objective truths, prevents subjects from “‘twisting’ . . . the will;” it insulates against drawing conclusions from experiential data alone. It is arguably the case that this mystical source derives ultimately from the use of signs. Maritain’s characterization of intuitions as “sudden,” further supports his cautionary directive against adopting inferences drawn simply from empirical sources. He insists that subjects receive this mystical virtue of

31 Ibid., 122.
objective essence via a flash of insight or light—without grasping at their preconceived answer, often blurred by idiosyncratic experience. In fact, this light often presents itself not to the mind or body, but to the soul—as “mystical grace:”

There is a kind of sudden intuition which a soul can receive of its own existence or of the being inviscerated in all things whatsoever. . . . It may even happen that in the case of a particular soul this intellectual perception may present itself under the guise of mystical grace. . . . It often happened that by a sudden intuition I experienced the reality of my own being, of the deepest first principle of placing me outside of nothingness. . . . Its violence often frightened me; that intuition gave me . . . knowledge of a metaphysical absolute.

By retiring from one’s subjective being, with its capricious perceptions, one can empty the self of acquired knowledge, setting the stage to receive an essence which readily recognizes the import of other essences—animal, plant, as well as inanimate substances. In fact, rejecting adherence to one’s initial identity (heavily derived from past experiences) has a turbulent effect or “kind of violence,” because the new order of being replaces the accustomed, known being. This process may be stabilizing and destabilizing at the same time—“placing me [the subject] outside of nothingness.” Being shunted “outside nothingness,” is apprehended only after rejecting earlier illusions brought about by self-constructed answers. “Outside nothingness” constitutes a new situatedness supplying the degree of objectivity necessary to acquire a meta-

---


33 Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 122. This is similar to Peirce’s notion of “instinct” in that both are sudden, and can give rise to plausible inferences; this has its genesis in Bergson’s use of “instinct:” “[S]ocieties swayed by pure instinct, in which the individual serves the interests of the community” (Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Audra and C. Brereton [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1935], 118–119). This instinct need not preclude intelligence.
physical existence—the potency of a something can only surface in the context of other somethings.

Similarly for Peirce, *il lume naturale* serves as a platform for receipt of inferences, although inferences are not synonymous with the second order status of intuitions. Like Maritain’s account, this light emerges suddenly, as a flash of insight, from instinct, although it does not specify ascendance to a transcendental state, but to an emergent logical principle of abductive inference: “the abductive suggestion comes to us like a flash. It is an act of insight, although of extremely fallible insight.”

Whereas for Maritain, intuition guides the subject to a “metaphysical absolute,” Peirce’s insight is anything but absolute. Peirce continues to demur the final nature of *il lume naturale* when making the assertion in *Grand Logic*: “The Light of Nature itself represents itself as able to show how the Outward World is. But experience shows its forecasts are untrustworthy.” Here Peirce’s Final Interpretant emerges reminding us that potentiality for new meanings/effects is continually present in the sign. Like Maritain, Peirce insists that past experiences/empirical sources when taken alone are untrustworthy to reliably give rise to sound inferences; consequently, some metaphysical influence (for Peirce in the form of hypostatic abstractions) enlightens percepts/perceptual judgments to discard parochial viewpoints in an effort to adopt new habits of mind/behavior: “[M]an is so completely hemmed in by the bounds of his possible practical experience, his mind is so restricted to being the instrument of his needs, that he cannot mean what transcends those limits.” Consequently, direct experience must be tempered by hypostatic abstraction—a Firstness-based focus on a single attribute/aspect which surfaces in consciousness, but which, itself encompasses unconscious elements—the process allows one to in-

34 1903: CP 5.181.
35 1893: MS 408: 149.
36 C.1905: CP 5.536.
fer propositions by perseverating upon particular qualia. In this way, Peirce accounts for how the mystical informs empirical sources to arrive at more plausible inferences—not shaping propositions from limited experience.

Although Maritain likewise recognizes the need to avoid seeking answers from past experience alone to reach metaphysical knowledge, he emphasizes the preparation necessary—vitiating preconceived concepts: “[W]e have become sufficiently empty to hear what all things murmur and to listen instead of fabricating answers.” 37 For Maritain, mystical factors are pivotal to inferential reasoning—for revelation of intellectual absolutes, particularly those which guard against the insinuation of subjective affect/meanings. As alluded to earlier, Maritain posits that empirical sources are insufficient to apprehend the nature of events’ contributory effects. His model in fact, arguably proposes a developmental pattern, such that each stage gives weight to distinct influences in the path toward embracing intuitions. Although this pattern is not explicitly invariant, it does suggest a U-shaped developmental sequence—beginning with notice of undifferentiated percepts, to intuitions flowing from idiosyncratic and social factors, finally arriving at intellectual objective principles toward revelation of absolute truths. This trajectory is consolidated in the following assertion:

Thus all human thought, with its great and at first undifferentiated primordial ramifications, passes . . . through a diversity of conditions, or stages of experience and practice. As it progressively diversifies, human thought passes from the condition of magic to the condition of logic. 38

Although the nuts and bolts of this process remain unelaborated, Maritain does more than hint at how human thought can advance from un-

37 Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 123.
38 Maritain, Redeeming the Time, 212.
differentiated awareness to mystical, and even magical concepts of event relations, ultimately transcending to a more speculative thought system governed by objective logical principles. Every phase of Maritain’s U-shaped paradigm illustrates a mystical influence—higher stages ultimately actuate a more metaphysical Being. The process initially involves a more magical character, requiring active, embodied enactments which derive from a more subjective perspective which ignores transcendence to “outside nothingness.” Afterward, cultural and social practices convert the purely practical into a directed magical regime in which conjectures as to the etiology of practices acquire causal qualities. To complete the cycle, “trans-objective intellection” translates unlikely conjectures of causality into likely ones—establishing the dominance of logical and objective principles.

Social sources for intuitions are likewise obviated in Maritain’s notion of being:

Being superabounds everywhere; it scatters its gifts and fruits in profusion. This is the action in which all beings here below communicate with one another . . . By this action they exchange their secrets, influence one another for good or ill, and contribute to or betray in one another the fecundity of being . . .

The key for Maritain is adopted from a Bergsonian framework. Bergson alludes to it in terms of a “miraculous hallucination,” detailing how a woman was saved from death by stepping into an empty lift, only to be saved at the last minute by a man operating the lift: “At this point she emerged from her fit of abstraction. She was amazed to see that neither man nor lift were there. . . . She had been about to fling herself into the gaping void; a miraculous hallucination had saved her life.”

---


40 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 120.
were initially performed individually (either eidetic memories or actual behaviors) recast as cultural practices—such that the teleology of the conduct/set of conduct is redefined according to culturally-based causes and effects determined for and by the group. The social and transcendent-al character of these newly derived purposes for events is propelled by “etiological” myths, because in their recital, they represent a continued commitment to perpetuate the “action” and “life” of ancestors:

This power alone permits the tribe to enter into community with its ancestors of the mythical period, in some way to participate in them, to make actual their presence, and to ensure that their action is renewed . . . it [the recital of chants] is equivalent to an act; it concerns to the ultimate degree the very life of the group.41

Accordingly, paramount in transitioning from notice of percepts is recognition of the origin which underlies particular rituals. When rituals are memorialized in incantations and chants, they draw upon practical, social and historical purposes; and as such they stabilize the community in their repetitive, unchangeable character. In fact, it is to the etiological property of myth’s that Maritain attributes the power to imbue the community with shared purposes because of the practical similarities (in cultural structures) which chants and incantations establish across generations: “[Primitive man’s] myths have a character which is above all practical.”42

It is obvious that chants/incantations encourage conjecture beyond a static practical benefit, when they give rise (ordinarily via reference to the source for the practice) to possible conduct/beliefs which could effectuate an outcome. This advancement emerges when these rituals incorporate a logical/speculative character. According to Maritain, this habit change is instrumental in importing a higher level of

41 Maritain, Redeeming the Time, 213.
42 Ibid., 212.
knowledge than that emanating from subjective/practical sources: “The myth from the very fact that it makes known the origin of things, recalls to them [the tribe] their origin in order to induce them [tribal members] to act . . . thus to speak to things in order to make them propitious . . .” The propitiousness of the event sequence (its benefits) is illustrated in “speaking to them.” As such, the “inducement to act” follows. Spoken signs have the power to organize the action into a template toward a sought-after purpose/destination, much like Vygotskii’s “inner speech,” in which success at settling upon a conscious course of action to explain and produce the consequence is enhanced by accompanying mental words. These mental words may, in fact, emerge from vivid mental images, demonstrating the ultimate import of eidetic visualizations and their implementation as action schemes in the acquisition of intellectual apprehension. When myths become etiological they acquire a speculative character:

[T]he myths known as “etiological” already respond to a need for knowing; but if they are examined closely it is seen a remarkable circumstance, that . . . they thus exemplify an extraordinarily curious passing over of the practical sign of magic into a speculative sign.

What Bergson and Maritain mean by recognition of “etiology” and “cause” is that “[things] will then be more or less charged with submissiveness and potency . . .” Submissiveness is a necessary mental pre-condition for the recognition of the intellectual light, in its deferral beyond self to encompass the influence of community, more objective

---

factors. Potency is realized in the recognition of implicit relations, that when origin is apprehended, relations across events are inferred.

**Promoting Intuitions/Abductions through Virtual Habit**

Although objective apprehension/intuition is by far the most primary faculty facilitating receipt of sound inferences, more mystical sources can be drawn upon (magic, virtual worlds, creative hallucinations). Any of these sources can reveal the nature of new event connections. Provided that the explanation uncovered by the exercise (new belief) has the potential to lead to trustworthy affirmations, it can inform credible hypotheses. Even affirmations drawn from non-magical sources (e.g., the empirical) can often be misleading, perhaps consequent to the fact that they do not rely upon conscious realization of event relations. A simple awareness of the presence of entities and their effects ordinarily suffices—a fact consonant with the state of the art in memory-based investigations. Because conscious awareness of the presence of entities is not necessary to exact relational inferences, it is obvious that the means to infer is not derived from sensory impressions alone. Since inferences can flow from either mystical or empirical sources (absent conscious awareness), inferential logic can operate in species other than humans. Hence, inferences which propose connections between events need not rise to the level of metalanguage; conduct alone (of any member of animate life) can imply that the hunch has been adopted. Accordingly for Maritain, the light which uncovers whether to act on an emerging hunch shines into the awareness of sentient and nonsentient beings alike, verifying that something less than consciousness is necessary to apprehend the explanatory worthiness of proposed event relations:

---

Moreover, it is in things themselves that metaphysics finds its object. It is the being of sensible and material things, the being of the world of experience, which is its immediately accessible field of investigation; it is this which, before seeking its cause, it discerns and scrutinizes—not as sensible and material, but as being. Before rising to the level of spiritual existents, it is empirical existence, the existence of material things, that it holds in its grasp—though not as empirical and material, but as existence.\(^{48}\)

For Maritain, a necessary ingredient to take on metaphysical existence—such that the transcendental self is brought back into the fabric of the historical and social framework—is the groundedness of inferences in metaphysical processes. In keeping with this argument, magic can serve as a source for intuitions, when it has a truly metaphysical character.

As Maritain makes explicit via Bergson,\(^ {49}\) what translates magic into myth is the awareness of causality or origin: “[Things] will then be more or less charged with submissiveness and potency: they will hold at our disposal a power which yields to the desires of man, and of which man may avail himself. . . . [The workings of magic] begin the act which men cannot finish.”\(^ {50}\) Here Maritain agrees with Bergson that magic can result in the apprehension of novel and workable inferences, provided that it is “submissive” to the logical order of events, and that its meaning/effect contains a real potency to create new habits of mind and of action. As such, magical exercises can supersede those of myth, in that in magical forums historical/cultural practices are open to worthy alterations. Maritain elaborates on how this process plays out for “primitive man” and for nonhuman animals when he likens the mystical influence to that of “magic:” “[A]nimals make use of signs. They live in a kind of magical world; biologically united to nature, they use signs


\(^{49}\) Maritain, *Redeeming the Time*, 203.

belonging to a psychic regime which is entirely imaginative.”51 Here Maritain implies at least a primitive level of awareness for non-sentients (that may not reach consciousness) that a sign stands for an object, regardless of whether the two are in proximity or whether consciousness is operating. Kemple echoes and even amplifies Maritain’s point of view: “Thus, signification is not limited to intellectual human knowledge, but extends through animal cognition, the interactions of plants, and even of purely inorganic beings as well.”52 Kemple claims that some semiosic capacity (use of signs) operates in plant life, attributing to plants some degree of primitive relational awareness.

Without addressing other potential semiosic systems, Maritain distinguishes children’s use of magic from that of animals, intimating that children, even early on, can employ semiotic, not merely semiosic skills. The former requires at least a primitive degree of consciousness to extract implied information, which most animals do not exploit. As a consequence of reliance upon conscious engagement of relational logic, children’s magical exercises can result in intuitions, when new relations between events are inferred:

Knowing this relationship of signification will come later [in children’s development], and this will be to have the idea, even if it is merely implicit, of that which is signified. Animals and children make use of this signification; they do not perceive it. When the child begins to perceive it (then he exploits it, he toys with it, even in the absence of the real need to which it corresponds)—at that moment the idea has emerged.53

52 Kemple, Ens Primum Cognitum in Thomas Aquinas and the Tradition, 127.
What appears to distinguish younger from older children’s semiotic skills for Maritain is the emergence of metacognitive awareness so that deliberation on the “idea” can become a regular practice. While (like non-human animals) children’s object–sign relations are first unconscious and wholly imaginative, especially at the prelinguistic stage, they become more conscious, and even reflective of relational cognition, when they utilize eidetic images and mental words for truth-seeking. For Maritain, although intuitions can be derived from magical genres, eventually impossibility of events within particular forums is offset by more objective representations/principles—“exploiting and toying with it [signification] even in the absence of the real need to which it [signification] corresponds.” “Toying” with the sign’s meaning/effects apart from contexts in which the sign and object have co-occurred, reifies the emergence of meta-skills, and illustrates integration of a speculative system, in which the object is “seized,” and, in turn, possibility assumes a more prominent place. In this context, the “idea” or “mental word” initially attenuates unfounded connections between two concurrent or contiguous events; this attenuation minimizes the compelling suggestion that co-present entities/events are logically related based merely upon proximity of space and/or time. This dissociation or decoupling from the physical context makes way for the influence of speculative logic and the birth of intuitions, because the same sign is applied to novel, more abstract genres. This “idea of the signified” when two or more events are connected logically (not by co-presence), constitutes the most fertile ground upon which Thirdness can insinuate itself. Here, the relational representations are rescued from the purely observable to incorporate invisible/unobservable influences across events; thus Maritain implicitly embraces Peirce’s Thirdness. In attributing new meanings/effects to signs—after “ideas” of new event relations surface, children demonstrate their meta-knowledge that signs
are inherently comprised of foundational potency, especially obviated when logical relations are inferred between absent objects.\textsuperscript{54}

Peirce addresses attenuation between present events, those in the past, and those intimating futurity by analogy, when he examines event inferences in the context of hallucinations: obsessional, social, and creative.\textsuperscript{55} He further addresses how creative hallucinations qualify as abductions. In his later writings, Peirce is clear that certain kinds of hallucinations can (however infrequently) elicit plausible inferences, i.e., events proposed to have a viable logical relationship: “Hallucinations were so very common, while hallucinations coincident with truth beyond the ken of sense were so very rare.”\textsuperscript{56} Despite their infrequent emergence, Peirce insists that only those hallucinations which derive from sources other than direct experience of observables (given the ease with which the latter are misperceived and misappropriated) can ever suffice to “flash a suggestion before our contemplation,” such that novel envisagments propel plausible inferences. The precise kind of hallucinations which qualify as propellers of sound inferencing are the last of three types/grades; the two initial types do not result in abductions: “Hallucinations proper, obsessional hallucinations, will not down at one’s bidding . . . there are also social hallucinations.”\textsuperscript{57} Peirce describes the most productive type earlier in the same passage. He illustrates how an unnamed painter exercised the creative kind of hallucination when recounting how the painter changed his action and beliefs

\textsuperscript{56} 1903: CP 7.603.
\textsuperscript{57} 1903: EP 2: 192.
consequent to a pictorial insight, a virtual habit. This depiction in the inner world of the painter (sudden mental image of the change in color of the backdrop curtain), ultimately provided the scaffold for the entire painting. Peirce recounts how the painter explained to him that the different color (of the curtain) “suited the picture better.” Despite the painter’s inability to subsequently provide an explanation for the effect of the color alteration, the change still constituted a trigger for developing sound inferences/abductions. The painter’s unexpected vivid mental depiction alone effectuates the change upon the whole of the painting, in that it “flashes the new suggestion before our [the painter’s] contemplation.” The upshot of these unbidden, creative hallucinations begins with the anomalous result, whereupon particular viable explanations can be proposed. But, the proposal entails a concerted plan (though it need not be conscious/intentional); and the proposal is subject to continual updates (from sense data and insights). Sense data are tantamount to Peirce’s use of “percept,” while individually conceived projective insights are equivocal to his notion of “fancy.”

In any case, for Peirce, these future percepts and fancies must logically homogenize with already accepted values and ontological principles expressed in predisposed and learned beliefs and action patterns to result in abductions. In other words, what governs the integration of the world of experience with that of interpretation is the individual’s predilections, namely, their innate dispositions and acquired patterns of belief and conduct (hence their characterization as habits of

58 Peirce, because of the amplified Thirdness-based effects it can give rise to, elevates a non-actual event to status beyond the actual and refers to it as a virtual habit: “By ‘virtual touch’ Milton’s Adam meant something that was not touch, but we might all the delight [sic] that touch can bring. So a determination is not a habit . . . but it works all the effects of habit, and is, therefore, strictly speaking, a virtual habit” (1909: MS 620: 26).

59 1903: EP 2: 192. Peirce follows by revealing his limited means to experience these forms of hallucination: “I myself am so utterly destitute of such hallucinatory imagination that I was astonished” (Ibid.).
mind). Peirce indicates that although the two worlds (inner and outer) are initially distinct, they become homogenized in habit:

Every sane person lives in a double world, the outer and the inner world, the world of percepts and the world of fancies. . . . A man can be durably affected by his percepts and by his fancies. The way in which they affect him will be apt to depend upon his in-born disposition and upon his habits.\(^{60}\)

Peirce is clear that habit (either acquired or consequent to predeter-
mined visualizations/patterns of belief and/or action) determines how fancies/percepts are ultimately interpreted in Thirdness. Furthermore, without changes in assumptions/conduct, habits could not materialize, since their very nature defies mechanistic action, modes of thought, and reaction.

Peirce painstakingly illustrates how children can target their compulsions and feelings to arrive at new habits of action and belief via envisioning specific images and implementing them.\(^{61}\) He further demonstrates how believing/acting in recommended ways establishes habits—proceeding from resolutions to determinations. These recommendations are tantamount to self-initiated commands or suggestions from others as to how to act to produce the desired outcome. This process affects habit-changes (Thirdness) at early stages in each sign’s use: “inner exertions of power” can be directed by “an act of giving a compulsive command to one’s self. Some books call it self-hypnotiza-
tion.”\(^{62}\) Here Peirce claims that Thirdness begins even at the point of ascribing feelings to actions or action to feelings, because it supplies a template to convert undirected affect associated with the event produc-
tion to directed affect, especially when the observer prescinds—fashing on a single issue in the mind. At the same time, this process of

\(^{60}\) 1907: CP 5.487.
\(^{61}\) 1911: MS 674: 11–14.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 11–12.
toggling between prescinding and compulsions toward action infuses behavior with the impetus to comply with the imperative/suggestion; and this impetus to act is paramount for Peirce, because a “resolution” (without purpose) fails to possess the impetus or “force” to direct the action plan of the organism. For Peirce, resolutions lack the force to become habits because their absence of clarity/specificity fails to qualify as determinations—resolutions do not permit modification of the old mechanistic pattern. In contrast, because determinations require specificity supplied by the vividness of the mental image, they qualify as abductions and virtual habits:

The effectiveness of the virtual habit relatively to that of a real habit is, I say, unquestionably than in proportion to the vividness of the imaginations that induce the former relatively to the vividness of the perception . . . therefore, I venture to think, be a sort of self-hypnotizing effect, when we strain, in some obscure way, to influence our future behaviour by calling up as vividly as we can the image of a given sort of stimulus and that of our responding to it in the desired way. For we seem to command our organism or our soul as if we said to it: “You will act thus: do you hear? Thus! Thus!! Thus!!” 63

Here Peirce emphasizes the effect of vivid mental images as inferencing material—a procedure which translates what Peirce refers to as terms into propositions/assertions. As such, proposed picture events constitute potent event signs (worthy propositions) because they inject a plan/logical organization into newly conceived explanations and their courses of action. 64

In short, other less direct factors, such as magic or creative hallucinations may have an even greater effect in the business of accessing logical truths. They can inform knowledge underlying objective states

---

of affairs/being—hence illustrating a speculative purpose for magic and play-based ventures. For Maritain,

Being, seen in this light, is neither the vague being of common sense, nor the particularized being of the sciences and of the philosophy of nature, nor the derealised being of logic, nor the pseudo-being of dialectics mistaken for philosophy. It is being disengaged for its own sake, in the values and resources appertaining to its own intelligibility and reality . . .

**Thirdness as the Soul of Signification**

C. S. Peirce’s emphasis on Thirdness in the sign (although not utilized directly by Maritain) supplies an indispensable tool to characterize objective intelection. Maritain’s claim that in the sign resides its representational character, although implicitly rooted in Peirce’s semiotic, emphasizes the nature of the relation between sign and object, rather than how the sign itself houses would-be meanings/effects. Peirce’s Thirdness provides greater potency to the sign, because incorporating the Interpretant into the sign augments signification at the inception of sign use, since it embraces all of the signs’ future meanings/effects. Housing meaning in the sign imbues it with the promise of future meanings from the outset of its existence. In this way, the whole of potential meaning/effects is contained in the sign even prior to emergence of the interpretation. Peirce’s Interpretant allows the sign to house expansions in the sign’s use with time and across species. This illustrates the indispensability of what Deely⁶⁶ refers to as “provenation”—that signs, from their inception, contain all of the yet unexpressed meanings/effects consonant with their future use. Deely defines

---

provenation as “to come or issue forth, appear, arise, be produced.”

The early presence of these seeds prior to attaching meaning to the sign equivocates sentient, nonsentient, and inanimate—the potential obtains for both groups, independent of any awareness of signification. The potential sign meanings are present even within the its most basic use/appearance, when awareness is questionable, expectations of would-be meanings still hold as a promise to fill a seemingly empty slot.

It is obvious that Peirce’s promise of Thirdness within the sign (in its pregenerative form), by way of “provenation,” hastens a new order of things—since meanings can be fostered in elementary living systems (perhaps even in inanimate systems, as well). This transpires by virtue of “interpretive reactivity.”

Krampen’s illustration of plants reacting to forces of nature such as: raindrops, the pressure of air/wind/water, or a light source such as the sun, demonstrates this kind of reactivity. In the case of rain water, the leaves react by curving downward to direct the rain toward the plant’s roots. In the case of the latter, plants lean toward the sun to enhance receipt of nutrients. This constitutes “interpretive reactivity,” in that the plant, itself, changes its stature in expectation of a sought-after consequence, namely, its nutritional benefit. “Meaning factors are those stimuli among the stream of impingements pressing upon the plants from all sides that are relevant to their life.”

---

67 John Deely, *Semiotic Animal: A Postmodern Definition of Human Being Transcending Patriarchy and Feminism* (South Bend, Ind.: St Augustine’s Press, 2010), xiii. Deely openly uses the term as a neologism from the Latin *provenire*, given that it is seldom used as a verb in English, compared to the noun form “provenance,” indicating the source of a given item (*Ibid.*).


tivity illustrates the presence of a basic form of meaning demonstrated by a behavior change whose purpose is to elicit a particular consequence; hence it contains a primary form of Thirdness. The key is that the reaction upon confronting the same environmental factor must not remain static/mechanistic; the process must be open to eliciting changes in meaning/effects.  

In continuing to follow a Peircean framework, Deely\(^{72}\) extends Krampen’s assertions regarding the origin of the reactivity, and how it transpires. Like Maritain’s account, Deely attributes potency (the promise of future meanings) to the sign from its inception, of which sentients and non-sentients alike can avail themselves:

How, then, can all this work in the realm of inorganic nature? Not *constantly*, as in the “genuine Thirdness” realm of life. But why not in a ‘pregenerative Thirdness’ *intermittently*, like a match struck to light a cigarette which sputters out before it flames sufficiently to achieve its purpose.\(^{73}\)

In highlighting Thirdness as “pregenerative,” Deely asserts an indispensable and distinctly Peircean claim regarding the origin of Thirdness and its ontogeny in the sign. His 2015 position intimates that although elementary systems (e.g., plants) may not engage in semiosic processes (they do not actually use signs), the operation of habit can allow potential semiosic and semiotic meanings.\(^{74}\) Accordingly, the future meanings are, nonetheless, present in the sign prior to its characterization as sign. “At that moment when the first living substance emerges, of course, and only then, the flame of sign activity is true and

---

\(^{71}\) For further explication, cf. West, “Indexical Scaffolds to Habit-Formation,” 215–240.


\(^{73}\) *Ibid.*

Deely forges what Peirce merely made implicit, that even before signification operates, meanings insinuate themselves in future sign use. He further articulates that the capacity accounting for representational differences across sign users (all living creatures) is not consciousness, but something far more fundamental, namely, Thirdness, the promise of ascribing augmented meanings even when only basic relations are actualized. Even in more conscious living systems, pre-generative Thirdness can surface as conscious or unconscious meaning potential. The latter materializes as sudden, instinctual flashes of insight, while the former is more intentional in changing self’s or other’s habits of conduct or belief. Peirce characterizes the more conscious, more intentional form of Thirdness as urgings/submissions containing alternative meaning relations.

Conversely for Maritain, potency in the sign refers to the character of the objects and their transcendental qualities. This kind of potency does not approach the triadic character of Peirce’s sign; any meaning potential is minimized by a more semiological approach, in which only the sign and the object have explicit validity. Maritain attributes to the sign a transubstantive function; as such, he reconstitutes it (after Thomas Aquinas) as a “vicar of the object.” He elaborates as follows: “The fruit of understanding, it [the sign] has as its intelligible content the object itself.” Yet, by deploying the nomenclature of “vicar,” Maritain engages in a kind of epistemological sleight of hand; the term implies a kind of displacement or detachment between sign and object, allowing for a brand of significatory slippage usually reserved for the semiolo-

---

75 Deely, “From Semiosis to Semioethics,” 780.
76 Cf. West, “Peirce’s Legacy to Living and Non-Living Systems.”
77 Cf. 1905: CP 8.338.
78 Maritain’s: The Person and the Common Good, 204, and The Degrees of Knowledge, 124.
79 Maritain, The Degrees of Knowledge, 132.
gists—in the respect that he directly folds meaning into the signifier, Maritain appears more semiological than semiotic, per se. Maritain highlights this model of meaning as follows:

On the other hand, precisely as a means of knowing, presentative forms are purely and formally vicars of the object, pure likeness-es of the object (i.e., in the soul, they are the object itself divested of its proper existence and made present in an immaterial and intentional state). By this title they do not determine the faculty as a form determines a matter or a subject. They determine it according to a wholly immaterial and suprasubjective union in virtue of which one becomes the other intentionally, first in initial act and then in second act through its vital operation.\textsuperscript{80}

For Maritain, the sign transcends its past and present manifestations, such that it becomes substantially part of the fabric of otherness on a transcendental plane—to the degree that the appearance of one (the sign) is indistinguishable from the other (object), despite any obvious differences in form. This representational property is consonant with the concept of transubstantiation, one becomes the other; and appearance is but the accident by which the other is revealed. Although Peirce’s triadic semiotic gives great weight to the representational character of signs (how they refer to their objects)—only one of which depends upon likeness, icon, his insistence that meaning is part of the sign (by way of the Interpretant) distinguishes it from Maritain’s approach. Maritain’s characterization of the sign as a vicar highlights the iconic relations between sign and object, while Peirce’s triadic system incorporates signs whose representamen (sign vehicles) fail to resemble the object at all; but, the signs still represent legitimately. In fact, their power to do so may exceed that of icons, since the meaning holds in spite of little or no similarity. In short, it is the meaning holding be-

tween symbolic or indexical signs and their objects which advantages Peirce’s semiotic. Although not acknowledged in Maritain’s semiotic account, Peircean Thirdness is nevertheless a latent force which renders the sign substantially identical to its object, despite the fact that their accident/appearance is vastly different. The presence of Thirdness (meaning) between sign and object may well constitute the likeness to which Maritain refers. But, whereas “likeness” for Maritain is equivocal to same-ness of representational quality, for Peirce it measures meaning same-ness between sign and object—both contributing to the same effect. In other words, shared meaning is formed in and through the interpretant, the primary vehicle of Thirdness for Peirce, because of its unique status in establishing novel relations.

The Soul of the Sign

The sign’s potency or life, for Maritain, is equivocal to its soul:

Matter [body/sign] itself is a kind of non-being, a mere potency or ability to receive forms and undergo substantial mutations; in short, an avidity for being. In every being made of matter, this pure potency bears the impress of a metaphysical energy—the “form” or “soul”—which constitutes with it a substantial unit and determines this unit to be that which it is.81 This potency consists in an implied promise that infinitely further relations can be associated with the sign in question—leaving open the possibility for new event meanings to emerge. Maritain characterizes it as “a metaphysical energy” or “an avidity for being.” As such, this potency is present even in primitive forms of being. This is so since every being, even plants, are composed of matter. Maritain does not limit the existence of potency to conscious beings capable of deliberate interpre-

81 Maritain, The Person and the Common Good, 35–36.
tation, because the “impress” of this energy is “in every being made of matter.”

Peirce notes that although the sign’s soul offers critical, alternative meanings/effects to the mind, in doing so, the meanings become limited to meanings which are in fact adopted. In adopting a meaning, other meanings are precluded:

A *this* is accidental; but it only is so in comparison with the continuum of possibility from which it is arbitrarily selected. A *this* is something positive and insistent, but it only is so by pushing other things aside and so making a place for itself in the universe.82

So, despite the indispensable purpose of Thirdness as an intuition informing others’ minds, maintaining the sign’s very life (avidity83), Peirce determines that Thirdness can narrow meaning potential.84 This limitation is, nonetheless, necessary to pre-certify that the validity of novel hunches is seriously considered. The limitation demonstrates that potency often emanates from impotency.85 Despite the limitations, Thirdness still constitutes a dynamic force beckoning members of the continuum (animates, inanimates alike) to adopt alternative ways of feeling, acting, and thinking.

It is the dynamicity of the sign, to incorporate alternative meanings/effects (“soul of the sign”) that draws sign users to seek new sign relations, enriching the sign’s functionality. The stabilizing life force of the soul energizes future interpretants, grounding sign development in its interpretant, and providing the promise to discover what is positively possible. In short, the sign’s potency is so substantial that without it,

82 1898: NEM 4: 136.
85 1868: MS 932.
attaching alternative interpretants to the sign would be “cut off at the outset,” which Peirce cautions against; and the readiness necessary to abduce would-be meanings would be truncated. Precluding meaning augmentation is especially relevant with respect to Peirce’s Final Interpretant, since expectation of the “ultimate opinion” would be frustrated were meaning averted. It is within the sign’s soul that the promise of meaning change resides toward reaching the Final Interpretant. This entails uncovering new relations relevant to reinterpretations of past happenings, percepts/judgments of present experiences, as well as reflections of the effects of future episodes. Proceeding toward the Final Interpretant facilitates integration of affective, experiential, and more objective logical relations. In short, the promise of Thirdness to be discovered in seeking the Final Interpretant comprises the sign’s soul; it compels attention to and notice of relations which supply augmented meanings—insinuating alternative and often invisible relations. In fact, without the promise of this potency, many new meaning relations would go unnoticed.

The sign’s soul is encapsulated in the core of Peirce’s semiotic with the hope of reaching the Final Interpretant:

But we must also note that there is certainly a third kind of Interpretant, which I call the Final Interpretant, because it is that which would finally be decided to be the true interpretation if consideration of the matter were carried so far that an ultimate opinion were reached.

Potency/avidity within the sign is nothing short of vigilance toward reaching the ultimate opinion—which constitutes an objective view-

---

86 C. 1890: CP 1.390.
point whose purpose is an absolute truth of how events relate. This is Thirdness at its core—the raw material for abductive inferencing. In this way, semiosis is activated, enlivened, and continues to energize meaning relations. Without the soul, (the promise of Thirdness) signs would lack what Peirce calls an “intermediary” between the object and the mind:

The third universe comprises everything whose being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different universes. Such is everything which is essentially a sign—not the mere body of the sign, which is not essentially such, but, so to speak, the Sign’s Soul, which has its being in its power of serving as intermediary between its Object and a Mind.90

Peirce’s use of “intermediary” highlights the indispensable role of an elementary form of Thirdness (a pregenerative form) within the sign to suggest invisible relations among Objects, operational even within more primary systems of sign use. Critical here is Peirce’s claim that something within the sign itself mediates relations between objects in the outer and inner worlds, and even extends to “relations between objects of different universes,” emphasizing the function of the sign to remain open to would-be interpretants, and to the process of presenting, urging, or submitting these would-be meaning relations “the reasonableness of which will be acknowledged” by others.91

In Peirce’s semiotic account, the soul of the sign is indispensable for another but related reason—it promotes his quintessential expression of Thirdness, namely, habit. It does so by excluding mechanical stand-ins—forms which hold fast to single meanings/effects between signs and objects.92 Peirce adamantly demonstrates the inadequacy of

---

90 1908: CP 6.455.
the sign as a body uninhabited by a living meaning-based component which propels the inner sight (insight) of determining new relations. For Peirce, “body” alone can never qualify as sign (cf. supra), because a form which never ceases to be associated with a single relation lacks the vitality to amplify meaning connections between objects within the same or different universes. Drawing upon Poinset, Deely\(^93\) elaborates on this in characterizing relations as “suprasubjective”—going beyond intersubjective relations that hold in \textit{ens reale}. By “suprasubjective,” Deely clarifies how relations survive their actual uses by existing independent of the “original participants.” Deely’s characterization elaborates upon Peirce’s semiotic, in that meanings hoped for in the final interpretant are legitimized. The potency of Thirdness must operate in the sign (its soul) to capture new relations as habit change (belief or action). The potency offered by habit-change rescues the sign from sterility—from perseverating with mechanistic meanings/effects.\(^94\) The sign’s openness to predict or react to others’ propositions/arguments via presentments, urgings, and/or submissions demonstrates avidity through semiosis (the pervasion of signs in the universe) not merely for sentient beings, but for the semiosphere at large.

**Sign Potency as Responsibility**

Human sign use (given its conscious, reflective character) bears the greatest responsibility to promote the potency (soul) present within

---


\(^94\) “Were the tendency to take habits replaced by an absolute requirement that the [battery] cell should discharge itself always in the same way, or according to any rigidly fixed condition whatever, all possibility of habit developing into intelligence would be cut off at the outset” (c. 1890: CP 1.390).
every sign. Since they know that they are using signs, and are more disposed to ascertaining objective truths with such signs, humans can more adequately predict, and plan for others’ reactions and outcomes. As Deely aptly notes:

[W]hile all animals are aware of related objects in the construction of their lifeworlds or Umwelten, only human animals become aware directly of the insensible relations themselves in that dimension of awareness which opens the way to the development of culture in its species-specific difference from the social organization generic to animals.95

In promoting Peirce’s concept of potency in the sign, Deely lays a great responsibility upon humans to harness their own and other’s belief/behavior patterns through future plans. Deely comments that these habits are often encoded in socio-cultural contexts, and require emotive, logical and moral anticipatory skills, perhaps tantamount to meta-semiotic competencies.96 This socio-cultural responsibility is described by Deely as “metasemiosis,” which requires a higher consciousness—knowledge about sign meaning/effects. Such forms “the foundational imperative of moral life.”97 This metasemiosic competency makes humans sensitive to potential would-be outcomes (be they affirmative or negative), and holds them particularly responsible for the plight of others in that process. As such, human sign users are impelled to actively foster new legitimate courses of action/mind to preserve the semiosphere. Accordingly, the sign’s soul (its activity as a primary force urging responses to signs), requires forward-thinking habits of behavior and mind toward

95 Deely, “From Semiosis to Semioethics,” 772.
96 Cf. West’s: “Indexical Scaffolds to Habit-Formation,” and “Peirce’s Legacy to Living and Non-Living Systems.”
97 Deely, “From Semiosis to Semioethics,” 783.
grasp of the Final Interpretant. By this means, past and future relations among diverse universes can be consolidated.\textsuperscript{98}

Conscious knowledge of signification calls certain members of the continuum to bring before the mind of another alternative relational perspectives. This obligation is tantamount to an imperative. It particularly makes its mark when meanings or effects are shared and elaborated among sign users in their socio-cultural milieu, because unless interpreters ultimately have a common ground or a “place to stand”\textsuperscript{99} such that the sign has some similar meaning across users, for Peirce, the sign consists of form only (body), and ignores the soul—the impetus hastening semiosis, meaning negotiation as illustrated in the endoporeutic principle.\textsuperscript{100} Absent a “place to stand” (potential shared meanings) flowing between conscious sign users, the intended sign lacks “avidity/"activity and does not qualify as sign. This “avidity/"activity is tantamount to an energy for Peirce to evoke a response to the sign, be it emotive, action-based, or elicitation of some logical force. In any case, this “avidity” or energy entails sensitivity to one’s part in the inferencing process, resulting in a recommendation for a course of mental or practical action.\textsuperscript{101}

\begin{footnotes}{98}{1908: CP 6.455.}
\begin{footnotes}{99}{“No man can communicate the smallest item of information to his brother-man unless they have που στωσι [a place to stand] of common familiar knowledge; where the word ‘familiar’ refers less to how well the object is known than to the manner of knowing” (1908: MS 614).}
\begin{footnotes}{100}{Cf. Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, \textit{Signs of Logic: Peircean Themes on the Philosophy of Language, Games, and Communication} (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 186. To clarify, “Endo” means internal, while “poreutic” refers to passage into. Although endoporeutic processes are largely governed by illustrations of receptive competencies within the individual, they likewise apply to the receptivity of the masses to access and embrace propositions.}
\begin{footnotes}{101}{Cf. 1909: MS 637: 12.}
Short\textsuperscript{102} elaborates on the kinds of interpretants particularly relevant when the endoporeutic principle is operating. It is the Immediate Interpretant, not merely the Dynamic Interpretant, which influences another’s complexion of conduct. In fact, absent some common meaning, the message receiver would not be afforded even the most primitive knowhow to determine what the sign producer is suggesting that he do or think. In short, the most primary internal attribute of the sign is its modal nature (housed in the immediate interpretant)—commanding, suggesting, recommending, urging, or hinting at an alternative template for future responses, hence affecting habit-change. Acting/responding or expecting a change in thought or conduct in response to the sign upon its presentation, urging or submission,\textsuperscript{103} demonstrates the need to share interpretants; openness to others’ meanings establishes a channel either to impose action-habits upon another (imperatives), or to submit meanings to their reason (subjunctive prospects). As a consequence, new common ground is created, such that the give-and-take of signification hastens the “avidity” or life of the sign by nourishing its meaning/effect. Behavioral assumptions (including belief structures) are attached to the sign which, upon its presentment, compel the sign’s effect (meaning/changes), facilitating its “avidity,” or what Deely\textsuperscript{104} refers to as the sign’s “activity.” The activity of the sign is “lit” from the inception of the sign and continues to be enlivened through semiosis.

Inferences (as intuitions or abductions) housed within the “soul” of the sign promote and regulate other’s modes of mental and/or practical conduct: giving rise to novel emotive turns, to altered action sequences, and/or to modifications in logical approaches. This imperative and subjunctive effect of every sign materializes in several distinctive


\textsuperscript{103} 1905: CP 8.338, and 1908: CP 8.371.

\textsuperscript{104} Deely, “From Semiosis to Semioethics,” 780.
ways: first as an obvious force in Secondness which brutally comes into physical contact with another member of the continuum (animate or inanimate), orchestrating another physical response. The imperative component of signs can alternatively surface as invisible vehicles to affect change in the belief or conduct structures of another. In either case, the responsiveness that ensues often highlights commonalities in the interpretants which underlie the signs, be they of the Energetic or Logical kind, given presumptions of what the sign partner expects, or in compliance with what nature requires from an organism. Reaction to the imperative/subjunctive effect of the sign evidences the interlocuter’s complexion of mind—a decision is made whether to conform to the implied directive. The force of the imperative may vary from a command to subjunctive-like suggestions. In short, the soul of the sign ranges from more obvious compulsive adherence, to urgings, to admonitions, to simple recommendations, in which appeal is made as to the reasonableness of the argument to be submitted—to the mind of another.105 In any case, it is obvious that the soul of the sign has a modal complexion—fostering meanings from pregenerative Thirdness, as well as encouraging the consideration/adoption of alternative modes of belief and conduct.

**Conclusion**

Were one to look beyond surface trimmings, the similarities between Peirce and Maritain are far more notable than are the differences, particularly the sources which account for objective intellection, and the presence of future meanings in primary forms. They concur that integrating external with internal sources is paramount to establish meanings/effects between events. Nonetheless, differences include the

---

way in which meaning is grounded in the sign. Whereas Peirce distinguishes the Interpretant as a necessary element of the sign, responsible for foundational pregenerative Thirdness—implying relations which are later inferred, Maritain emphasizes transcendental factors enhancing the mental objectivity to receive these Thirdnesses as spontaneous intuitions for sign use. In short, although both acknowledge that intellectual apprehension constitutes the vehicle to infer event relations—such that knowledge relies upon the combinatorial influence of past experience informed by eidetic mental images suggesting future intellectual apprehension—the particular sign component responsible for intellectual readiness is of a different character. For Peirce, Thirdness via his Interpretant constitutes the seeds pregnant within every sign for future inferencing (quite apart from mental preparation); and the signs which hint at potential event relations consist in moving icons—the involved index implying event relations.\footnote{Cf. Frederik Stjernfelt, \textit{Natural Propositions: The Actuality of Peirce’s Doctrine of Dicisigns} (Boston: Docent Press, 2014); and West, “The Work of Peirce’s Dicisign in Representationalizing Early Deictic Events,” 19–38.} Maritain arrives at the issue of meaning potential quite differently—not from provenation from within the sign itself, but by achieving a transcendental state by which objective, spiritual truths are ascertained. While Peirce’s model emphasizes the promise of new meanings within the province of every sign, Maritain’s details the process of shedding subjectivity to uncover veiled objective Thirdnesses.
Thirdness along the Intuitional Path: Reflections from Maritain and Peirce

SUMMARY
This article exposits Maritain’s and Peirce’s account of the preconditions for emergence of event relations. It spotlights Maritain’s model of how to prepare for the receipt of objective intellection, as well as Peirce’s treatment of abductive inferencing. It further identifies the foundational representations (signs) which compel the intuitional/inferencing process. Both Peirce and Maritain advocate that inferring event relations depends upon two distinct kinds of knowledge: from empirical sources in Secondness/sensible experiences, as well as from an objective transcendental state in Firstness. In the latter, intuitions emerge from unbidden pictures vividly flashing across the mind’s eye, while in the former, embodied action templates trace lived experiential paths with objective import.

KEYWORDS
Peirce, Maritain, intuition, inferencing, eidetic visualization, index, event relations, virtual habit, thirdness.

REFERENCES


Peirce, Charles S. (i. 1866–1913). Unpublished manuscripts are dated according to the Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce, edited by Richard Robin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), and cited according to the convention of the Peirce Edition Project, using the numeral “0” as a place holder. Cited as MS.


Miscellanea
Alexandra Cathey

Edith Stein on the Highest Expression of the Feminine Genius

The feminine genius is the ability of women to make a sincere gift of themselves to others.¹ Keeping in mind the spiritual nature of woman’s vocation, that is, to be spiritual wife and spiritual mother, Edith Stein unpacks what it means for women to make a sincere gift of themselves to others in family, professional, and religious life through their personal outlook, active sympathy, intuitive grasp, and emotional perception.² She also shows how the feminine genius, rooted in woman’s spousal and maternal nature and vocation, can become perverted when the flesh practices an unrestrained rule over the soul. This unrestrained rule of the flesh over the soul is expressed in the heart’s hatred, anger, envy, etc. To root out these obstacles, obstacles which prevent her from building loving relationships, women need to spiritualize their bodies by cultivating love, peace, gentleness, etc., in their hearts³ and

³ See ibid., 320–327.
undertaking emotional formation. Through emotional formation, which teaches them to make correct value judgement, women can safeguard the correct hierarchy of values by first and foremost upholding the dignity of life.⁴

Now, if Edith Stein is right that the world needs “maternal arms and maternal hearts” ready to embrace the wounded and comfort the sorrowful,⁵ the world needs women who selflessly come to the aid of those in need and, without hesitation, wisely know precisely how to meet their specific needs. In other words, the world needs women who see in the Blessed Virgin Mary the highest expression of the feminine genius.

In this article, I will present (1) Edith Stein’s insights into what it means to walk with Mary and how her imitation provides women a secure path to nurturing a healthy emotional life necessary for fruitful spiritual motherhood and spiritual companionship, and (2) Edith Stein’s life which offers a concrete and relatively recent example of how the imitation of Mary helps women unlock their feminine genius.

**Women’s Walk with Mary**

In the Blessed Virgin Mary, women find the exemplar of the wife and the mother and the highest expression of the feminine genius. Mary selflessly interested herself, and continues to do so, in the concerns of

---

⁴ See *ibid.*, 328–334.
⁵ In the words of Stein, “Millions of children today are homeless and orphaned, even though they do have a home and a mother. They hunger for love and eagerly await a guiding hand to draw them out of dirt and misery into purity and light. How could it be otherwise than that our great holy mother the Church should open her arms wide to take these beloved of the Lord to her heart? But for this she needs human arms and human hearts, maternal arms and maternal hearts.” Freda Mary Oben, *Edith Stein: Scholar, Feminist, Saint* (New York: Alba House, 1988), 73.
others; it is her gift and happiness. In this section, I will draw from Scripture to show how Mary expressed her feminine genius in her interactions with others, especially as portrayed in the Mysteries of the Rosary. For, in contemplating the Mysteries of the Rosary, Mary demonstrates the fullness of the maternal and spousal calling through the sharing of her feminine emotional life.

Mary is the highest expression of the feminine genius, because she gives the entirety of her being as a gift to God and to humanity. She accompanies all people on their journey to Christ as they unite their lives to the Joyful, Glorious, Sorrowful, and Luminous Mysteries, and knows precisely when it is time to weep or laugh, to mourn or to dance. Life is a Rosary. Women, by attuning their hearts to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, can learn how to accompany others with the wisdom and sensitivity of Mary as a guide.

Meditating on the Mysteries of the Rosary gives women a secure path toward fruitful spiritual motherhood and spiritual companionship. The Immaculate Heart of Mary rejoiced when it was time to rejoice and wept when it was time to weep. She rejoiced at the Annunciation of the Incarnation by the Archangel Gabriel and responded with the most wonderful fiat, her total surrender to God. The joy of her heart was rooted in giving herself freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully to our Lord as His handmaid. We experience the richness of her emotional life and of her incredibly humble and grateful attitude in her Magnificat.

---


7 Stein says, “The deepest feminine yearning is to achieve a loving union which, in its development, validates [her] maturation and simultaneously stimulates and furthers the desire for perfection in others; this yearning can express itself in the most diverse forms, and some of these forms may appear distorted, even degenerate. . . . Such yearning is an essential aspect of the eternal destiny of woman. It is not simply a human longing but is specifically feminine and opposed to the specifically masculine nature.” Stein, *Woman*, 94.
during the Visitation: Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχή μου τὸν Κύριον.⁸ Women can attune their hearts to Mary’s as she expressed the intensity of her joy; her soul magnified, extolled, lauded, and celebrated the Lord.

Women can also enter into the scene of the Nativity of Our Lord and experience the “at last” moment as Mary beholds the face of Jesus for the first time; this image of our Lady can give women great comfort and strength as they endured the pangs of labor.

Mary, who had the privilege of comforting her son Jesus, reflects the various maternal images of God seen throughout Sacred Scripture.⁹ Women can also learn from Mary how to grapple with mixed emotions. The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, an occasion for celebration for Jewish families, was the day her son’s death was prophesied: “[A] sword will pierce even your own soul.”¹⁰ Then again, she experienced complex emotions when her son was lost, and, then, when he was found. The response Jesus gave her mother must have underwhelmed her heart: “‘Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.’ And He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?’”¹¹ How many times do mothers suffer for their children without their children’s knowledge or understanding? She experienced the most profound sorrow, but not one devoid of hope and trust in God, while her Son agonized in the garden of Gethsemane, while He was scourged at the pillar by Roman soldiers, when He was crowned with a wreath of thorns, when He carried the Cross, and, most especially, when He was crucified.

---

At the Crucifixion Mary’s maternal heart and rich emotional life shines through. The sword that Simeon\textsuperscript{12} predicted would pierce her heart became the very channel through which she embraced all of humanity as mother and companion.\textsuperscript{13} John Paul II unites Mary’s suffering with the suffering of all women and highlights the role that woman’s sensitivity plays in suffering:

As we contemplate this Mother, whose heart “a sword has pierced” (cf. Lk 2:35), our thoughts go to all the suffering women in the world, suffering either physically or morally. In this suffering a woman’s sensitivity plays a role, even though she often succeeds in resisting suffering better than a man. It is difficult to enumerate these sufferings; it is difficult to call them all by name. We may recall her maternal care for her children, especially when they fall sick or fall into bad ways; the death of those most dear to her; the loneliness of mothers forgotten by their grown-up children; the loneliness of widows; the sufferings of women who struggle alone to make a living; and women who have been wronged or exploited. Then there are the sufferings of consciences as a result of sin, which has wounded the woman’s human or maternal dignity: the wounds of consciences which do not heal easily. With these sufferings too we must place ourselves at the foot of the Cross.\textsuperscript{14}

Women can unite their maternal hearts with Mary’s and, in this way, be a source of healing for humanity’s woundedness by never losing trust and hope in the Lord.

As women walk with Mary through the Mysteries of the Rosary, she leads them ever closer to Christ. In fact, for Stein, imitation of

\textsuperscript{12} See Luke 2:35.

\textsuperscript{13} See John 19:26.

Mary is not all that different from the imitation of Christ. Nevertheless, Mary is the feminine form of the Christian image:

The imitation of Mary is not fundamentally different than the imitation of Christ. The imitation of Mary includes the imitation of Christ because Mary is the first Christian to follow Christ, and she is the first and most perfect model of Christ. Indeed, that is why the imitation of Mary is not only relevant to women but to all Christians. But she has a special significance for women, one in accord with their nature, for she leads them to the feminine form of the Christian image.\(^{15}\)

Mary is the ideal feminine form of the Christian image, because she is the purely developed character of spouse and mother.\(^{16}\) As spouse, she is trusting and faithful. As mother, she is devoted and does not consider the child as her own property: “She has welcomed Him from God’s hand; she lays Him back into God’s hands by dedicating Him in the Temple and by being with Him at the crucifixion.”\(^{17}\) John Paul II praises our holy Mother, whose life, at the center of Salvation History offers a powerful insight into the dignity and the vocation of women. He says, “Mary, the woman of the Bible, is the most complete expression of this dignity and vocation.”\(^{18}\) Moreover, Mary is “the new beginning of the dignity and vocation of women, of each and every women,” because she represents a return to the beginning in which one find the women as she was intended to be in creation and in the eternal mind of God.\(^{19}\)

“Mary collaborates with every woman wherever she is fulfilling her vocation as woman authentically.”\(^{20}\) Mary perfectly represents

\(^{15}\) Stein, *Woman*, 201.  
\(^{17}\) *Ibid.*  
\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*, § 11.  
\(^{20}\) Oben, *Scholar, Feminist, Saint*, 51
woman’s personal outlook, active sympathy, intuitive grasp, and emotional perception. Women should imitate Mary and trust that she truly does concern herself with our lives and our relationships, in the good times and in the bad. The *Memorare* expresses this trust in our holy Mother: “[N]ever was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.”  

No matter the need or the cost, Mary concerns herself with the human condition and comes to our aid with tenderness and power:

> [Mary] is the ideal type of woman who knew how to unite tenderness with power. She stood under the cross. She had previously concerned herself with the human condition, observed it, understood it. In her son’s tragic hour she appeared publicly. Perhaps the moment has come for the Catholic woman also to stand with Mary and the Church under the cross.

Women too are called to make a sincere gift of themselves, without holding back, to the human condition and to fight evil as God’s instruments of love with feminine tenderness and power.  

Like Mary, women are called to fight against evil and always remain vigilant the needs of others.

God combats evil through the power of woman’s maternal love. That power exists independently of woman’s marital status and should be extended to all persons with whom she comes in contact. Everywhere, there is a need for such love, and it is essential to woman’s nature that she give it. Just as the Mother of Christ appeared publicly at the crucifixion, so, too, a woman must be involved today in the struggle between good and evil.

---


23 For “Mary appeared publicly in the most dramatic confrontation between good and evil: the Crucifixion.” *Ibid.*, 55.

Mary is a powerful witness of feminine gentleness and strength. She perfectly expresses all the feminine spiritual powers; she is quiet, warm, clear, empty of self, and mistress of her soul and body. With her as a role model, women make the perfect weapon of God to combat evil.\textsuperscript{25} In other words, to become God’s instrument, women need to imitate Mary’s \textit{fiat}, her total surrender to God. Her \textit{fiat} reflects the perfect image of womanhood in the service of love and is the highest expression of the \textit{feminine genius}.

\textbf{Edith Stein’s Walk with Mary}

In this section, I will focus on how imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary helped fashion Edith Stein’s heart and transformed her into a spiritual mother and spiritual companion as a teacher, a religious sister, and, finally, as a martyr. Stein’s conversion began with her witnessing a friend’s deep faith and incredible peace at the death of her husband.\textsuperscript{26} This was the first time Stein experienced the essence of the Christian faith: the power of the mystery of the cross. It was her reading of St. Teresa of Avila’s autobiography that marked her final decision to enter the Catholic Church. Stein was baptized on January 1, 1922. Her whole life changed after her conversion. The famous lecturer and recognized intellectual left the limelight to teach at a quiet Dominican teacher training school for high school girls, novices, and nuns in Spyer, St. Magdalene’s.

\textsuperscript{25} Since woman is especially receptive to God’s workings in the soul, “[her] mission is to allow herself to become a flexible instrument in God’s hand, His special weapon to combat evil.” Oben, \textit{Scholar, Feminist, Saint}, 45.

\textsuperscript{26} “Adolf Reinach died at the front in November, 1917. His funeral was in Gottingen in December. Edith went to see her friend, his widow Anna Reinach. To her surprise she found a woman at peace rather than a despairing widow. Anna was able to stand up to the blow because of her strong Christian faith. . . . Edith’s ability to recognize the workings of another soul gave her at this time a real awareness, a living recognition and knowledge of the power of the cross.” \textit{Ibid.}, 15.
At Spyer, Stein was able to make a total and sincere gift of herself to her students in her vocation as teacher and to express her feminine genius to her students. She believed that the most exalted vocation of all women is the formation of youth due to woman’s unique gift of empathy and concern for others. In her pedagogy, Stein emphasized the importance of women to be educated by authentic women in order that they be formed in accordance with their feminine nature and vocation.

One can only teach what one practices oneself—Stein most certainly was an authentic woman who took seriously her responsibility to lay a secure moral and religious foundation for her students.

Although she had wanted to enter into religious life immediately after her baptism, her spiritual director did not allow her due to her distinction as a lay woman and to avoid further hurting her mother. During this period of time at Spyer, Stein immersed herself in Scripture and Liturgy and experienced a transformation of heart; she became balanced, recollected, gentle, patient, modest, and humble. Her spiritual guide attests to her character:

I have seldom met a person in whom so many and such laudable characteristics were united. At the same time, she remained entirely a woman with tender, almost motherly sensitives. Mystically gifted, she was unpretentious with simple people, scholarly with scholars, a seeker with seekers, I would almost say a sinner with sinners.

---

27 Oben writes, “To win children for heaven is genuine maternity: it is the most exalted vocation for all women. To awaken divine sparks in a child’s heart is a joy not of this world.” Ibid., 52.
28 Stein, Woman, 107.
29 Ibid., 209.
30 Ibid., Scholar, Feminist, Saint, 53.
31 Ibid., 19.
32 Ibid., 65.
Before her conversion, Stein was described as “deliciously mischievous” and “witty almost to the point of malice.”

Although she still enjoyed laughing until tears ran down her face, now she was the laughingstock as she recounted humorous stories about herself and her family. Recalling Stein’s years at Spyer, one of her student’s at St. Magdalene’s testified: “The most fundamental trait of her character was surely a warm love that could penetrate into another’s mind, suffering with him, and helping him as only a Christ-centered saint is able to do.”

Oben writes:

Her critical, even caustic bent had been replaced by the spiritual maternity she was to consider woman’s greatest gift. . . . Her colleagues and students describe her as gentle, patient, modest, loving, humble, happy, lovable, serene, balanced, charitable, and holy.

It is undeniable that Stein’s personality underwent a transformation through the power of grace and through her fiat in imitation of Mary. As Oben writes, “Edith herself is an exciting instance of Mary’s pure womanhood. In both, [Stein] the Saint and the Queen of Saints, intellect, will and heart were set in perfect balance by love.” In response to her surrender to God, she grew closer to Mary as she tried to imitate the Blessed Mother’s fiat.

Stein, recognized as the intellectual leader of Catholic feminism in Europe, challenged Catholic women to step into the complexities of the human condition and not ignore the challenging questions of the day:

---

33 Ibid., 19.
34 Ibid.
36 “The unquenchable formation of the feminine heart is the Divine Heart which alone is able to lead each woman to her perfect fulfilment as woman.” Ibid., 44.
37 Ibid., 48, 50.
38 See Stein, Woman, 96–97.
Let’s get to the point. . . . Do we grasp social problems, the burning problems of today? Do they concern us also? Or are we waiting until others find some solution or until we are submerged by the billows of chaos? . . . We must get in touch with the social ferment of the masses and understand their physical and spiritual needs. . . . In the mind field of today’s society, can we justify looking backward continuously while our adversary wages war against our views?39

Against the background of Nazism, Stein urged women to immerse themselves in the fight against evil. Stein lived what she preached. Foreseeing the danger awaiting Jews and Christians, she wrote a letter to Pope Pius XI, after failing to obtain a private audience with him, urging him to speak out against Nazism on behalf of the Jewish people.40 Stein not only bravely spoke out against Nazism, she also courageously decided to stay in Germany, even though she had opportunities to leave.41 She chose to embrace the cross.

At Münster, in the Church of St. Ludgeri, she spent thirteen straight hours of prayer, during which she made the decision to enter the Carmel to live out her supernatural vocation. As Oben explains, “It was the intention of her innermost being to offer up her prayer and life in reparation for both Jew and Nazi, for the persecutor as well as the persecuted.”42

On Good Friday, with her passion upon her, Sister Benedicta wrote this poem, which she dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Today I stood with you beneath the Cross,
And felt more clearly than I ever did
That you became our Mother only there.

39 Ibid., 224–225.
40 Oben, Scholar, Feminist, Saint, 26.
41 Stein had previously considered going to work in London and was also given the opportunity to teach in South America, where her brother Arno lived. Ibid., 26.
42 Ibid., 27.
Even an earthly mother faithfully
Seeks to fulfill the last will of her son.
But you became the handmaid of the Lord;
The life and being of the God made Man
Was perfectly inscribed in your own life.
So you could take your own into your heart,
And with the lifeblood of your bitter pains
You purchased life anew for every soul.
You know us all, our wounds, our imperfections;
But you know also the celestial radiance
Which your Son’s love would shed on us in Heaven.
Thus carefully you guide our faltering footsteps,
No price too high for you to lead us to our goal.
But those whom you have chosen for companions
To stand with you round the eternal throne,
They here must stand with you beneath the Cross,
And with the lifeblood of their bitter pains
Must purchase heavenly glory for those souls
Whom God’s own Son entrusted to their care.  

Sister Benedicta understood that Mary was inviting her to stand with her at the foot of the cross.  

At 5:00 PM on August 2nd, 1942, Sister Benedicta and her sister Rosa were picked up by the SS at Echt Carmel and were taken to Amersfoort Prison Camp. The last words heard by the nuns as the two


44 On Passion Sunday, Sister Benedicta wrote this note to her prioress: “Dear Mother, I beg your Reverence’s permission to offer myself to the Heart of Jesus as a sacrificial expiation for the sake of true peace; that the Antichrist’s sway may be broken, if possible without another world-war, and that a new order may be established. I am asking this today because it is already the twelfth hour. I know that I am nothing, but Jesus wills it, and He will call many more to the same sacrifice in these days.” Oben, *Scholar, Feminist, Saint*, 34.

45 Rosa had become a member of the Third Order. See Paul Hamans, *Edith Stein and Companions: On the Way to Auschwitz* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010) for a biography of her.
sisters left the convent were Sister Benedicta’s as she said to Rosa: “Come, let us go for our people.”⁴⁶ She had written her last will in June, in which she concluded with a joyful acceptance of her death for the glorification of God, for the intentions of the Church, for the deliverance of Germany, for world peace, and for her family, living and deceased.⁴⁷ Stein and her sister were taken to three different camps within a week and were killed in the gas chamber at Auschwitz; they were immediately designated for death as they walked out of their train.⁴⁸ Stein revealed her feminine genius up to her last breath.

Survivors of the camps witnessed Stein’s feminine genius the last week of her life and testified to her incredible love. While many of the mothers, in great despair, had given up caring for their own children, “Sister Benedicta at once took care of the poor little ones, washed and combed them, and saw to it that they got food and attention. As long as she was in the camp she made washing and cleaning one of her principal charitable activities, so that everyone was amazed.”⁴⁹ Even an SS guard remarked,

> When I met her in the camp Westerbork I knew this was truly a great woman. She was in the hell of Westerbork only a few days, walking among the prisoners, talking and praying like a saint. Yes, that’s what she was. That was the impression which this elderly woman gave, though, on the other hand, she was quite young. She spoke in such a clear and humble way that anybody who listened to her was seized. A talk with her was like a visit to another world.⁵⁰

Sister Benedicta died a martyr on August 9th, 1942, in Auschwitz. On October 11th, 1998, John Paul II canonized her and declared

---

⁴⁶ Oben, Scholar, Feminist, Saint, 36.
⁴⁷ Ibid., 34.
⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.
⁴⁹ Ibid., 36.
⁵⁰ Ibid., 37.
her co-patroness of Europe the following year.\textsuperscript{51} She is the only female philosopher acknowledged, among the likes of Church Fathers, Medieval Doctors, and more recent thinkers such as John Henry Newman and Jacques Maritain, in John Paul II’s Encyclical Letter \textit{Fides et Ratio}, as a courageous thinker whose philosophical enquiry was enriched by engaging the data of faith.\textsuperscript{52} On the occasion of her canonization, the Pope says this about St. Teresa Benedica of the Cross: “The love of Christ was the fire that inflamed the life of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.”\textsuperscript{53}

Edith Stein, seized by the love of Christ, understood the intimate relationship between love and truth, of feeling and truth. She took recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a source of strength and consolation during the horrific period in human history instilled with Nazi ideology and crime. Stein’s walk with Mary, during which she joined her own joyful, sorrowful, glorious, and luminous life experiences to those of Christ’s, reveals the transformative power of the imitation of Mary as women strive to unlock their \textit{feminine genius} in order that they may be the wives and the mothers their home and society needs.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51} John Paul II declared Saint Bridget of Sweden and Saint Catherine of Sienna co-patronesses of Europe on the same day.

\textsuperscript{52} Of her and the other great philosophers, John Paul II says, “One thing is certain: attention to the spiritual journey of these masters can only give greater momentum to both the search for truth and the effort to apply the results of that search to the service of humanity. It is to be hoped that now and in the future there will be those who continue to cultivate this great philosophical and theological tradition for the good of both the Church and humanity.” Pope John Paul II, \textit{Fides et Ratio}, Encyclical Letter on the Relationship between Faith and Reason (14 September 1998), § 74. Available online—see the section References for details.

\textsuperscript{53} John Paul II, \textit{Homily for the Canonization of Edith Stein} (11 October 1998), § 5–6. Available online—see the section References for details.

\textsuperscript{54} “How well Edith Stein incarnates the essence of holiness. As a woman of intellectual and spiritual stature, she is a witness to authentic feminism.” Oben, “Translator’s Preface to the First Edition,” in Stein, \textit{Woman}, xi.
Conclusion

In the light of the above considerations it can be concluded that Edith Stein, understanding the meaning and power of the feminine genius, challenges women today to prepare their hearts for their great mission—to cultivate a civilization of love and a culture of life—by transforming them into pure vessels of love in imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: the highest expression of the feminine genius. The life of Stein herself demonstrates how imitation of Mary provides women a secure path towards spiritual motherhood and spiritual companionship and how this walk with Mary unlocks the feminine genius from their hearts.

---

**SUMMARY**

Edith Stein sees the highest expression of the feminine genius in the Blessed Virgin Mary. This article presents (1) Edith Stein’s insights into what it means to walk with Mary and how her imitation provides women a secure path to nurturing a healthy emotional life necessary for fruitful spiritual motherhood and spiritual companionship, and (2) Edith Stein’s life which offers a concrete and relatively recent example of how the imitation of Mary helps women unlock their feminine genius.

**KEYWORDS**

Edith Stein, feminine genius, the Blessed Virgin Mary, spiritual motherhood, spiritual companionship.

**REFERENCES**


Jude P. Dougherty

The Universe We Think In
by James V. Schall*

Recently deceased on 17 April 2019, James V. Schall, S.J., was Emeritus Professor of Government at Georgetown University (known to generations of students at Georgetown, simply, as “Fr. Schall”). As the title of the book suggests, after retirement, he continued to write with all the verve of a young man amazed by what is going on in the world. The Universe We Think In is a collection of fourteen essays, plus a conclusion that brings it all together. What appears to be his last published essay may be found in the April, 2019 issue of the New Oxford Review, where he writes under the title, “Mind the Gap, On the Presence and Absence of Things.” The absence is modern philosophy’s propensity to neglect the innate or purposeful direction of human life.

James V. Schall was formed in an intellectual tradition represented in the twentieth century by philosophers Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, and Joseph Pieper. A scholar of first rank, in the classroom, for college students, James Schall, was noted for bringing the abstract to earth and the abstruse to clarity. Given his omnivorous intellect there is hardly any contemporary issue of consequence that eluded his attention. He could quote Plato and Harold Berman of Harvard University on one

---

Jude P. Dougherty — The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., USA

e-mail: judeandpat@aol.com • ORCID: no data

page, and on the next, Charlie Brown and Lucy [comic strip characters created by the thoughtful Charles Schulz].

In the spirit of Richard Weaver’s *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948), he speaks of “the world we discover and the world we make.”¹ In the world we make, we are not bound by any reality; we can make ourselves over into whatever we want to be. In such a polity, there is no accountability, no standard to which words and actions may be judged. “This is why classical metaphysics and Christian theology are so dangerous [to those who subscribe to this subjectivism] and are met with furious opposition.”² The multi-culturalist’s notion that all views of life are equally good and acceptable is a form of this subjectivism with its own consequences. A polity formed in such a light would have no interest in passing on the words and deeds of men who lived before. Schall expresses it this way: “To know who we are as a polity, we need to know what we have been and done. We need to know the record of great men and terrible tyrants, as well as the deeds and words of ordinary people.”³ That is why we have monuments, poems, and written words.

Chapter Seven is devoted to the nature of political philosophy. “Politics,” Schall writes, “are concerned with human action and interaction insofar as men are organized together by custom and law to attain the common good.”⁴ Politics, he finds, is a legitimate object of philosophical enquiry. “The academy is,” he says, “or ought to be, a sphere in which not only politics but what is beyond politics can be freely and reasonably addressed. The good of any polity requires that it create a space for what is not just political.”⁵ It is as only through a free and

---
¹ Schall, *The Universe We Think In*, 41.
open discussion of ends that the politician comes to understand the
good of citizens who are to be ruled and guided by the policies he
adopts, given the many options available. The temptation to tyranny
lurks. If a party adopts a particular philosophy, “it then allows no pur-
pose but itself.”\(^6\)

The only way a polity can be held accountable for the acts of its
leaders and citizens is if there is a standard to which all words and ac-
tions are to be measured. Aristotle tells us that politics is the highest
practical science, but not the highest science as such. Practical
knowledge presupposes an end that is given to it, not one that is con-
structed or made by man. The highest science is metaphysics, whose
proper object is the whole, all there is. Metaphysics opens one to the
transcendent. It enables one to recognize a natural order, the immaterial
component of human nature, and speak to the ends of human life.
Schall points out that if we deny the force or existence of the metaphys-
ical report, we are then free to construct a world in the light of our pref-
ences. Absent an objective order to which our actions are accounta-
ble, “we are free to construct our own world as if the truth of things did
not exist.”\(^7\)

A particular target at this point is Machiavelli, often called the
founder of modern political philosophy. A Renaissance humanist,
Machiavelli is an empiricist who vigorously rejected not only the meta-
physics of Aristotle, but also the Catholic moral tradition influenced by
Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the present volume,
Schall does not spend much time addressing it; but he does say, “From
Machiavelli’s premise as, carried forward by Hobbes, the good state is
not that one in conformity with human nature. Rather it is one that cor-

\(^6\) *Ibid*.

responds to what the prince or democrat wants.”\(^8\) What the prince wills is the law, and he is entitled says to use any means, even unsavory ones, to ensure the continuation of his rule.

Modern politics is defined by the loss of accountability to a natural order. Modern politics has been an endeavor to replace the normal with the perfect polity of its own design. “In so doing it has distorted our understanding of ourselves, of our death, of our sins, of our very being.”\(^9\)

Near the end of this volume, Schall adds this insight: “When we speak of Rousseau or Marx, or, before them, of Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke, we are looking primarily at intellectual history from our time back to those ideas and theses that made the world, as it has become, a world in which the ‘fantasies’ of the modern philosophers are no longer abstractions.”\(^10\)

Those not fortunate enough to have had Professor James Schall in the classroom, would do well to add this book to their reading list.

---

The Universe We Think In by James V. Schall

SUMMARY

This paper is a review of the book: James V. Schall, The Universe We Think In (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019). The author discusses the reasons and consequences of modern philosophy’s propensity to neglect the innate or purposeful direction of human life.

KEYWORDS

James V. Schall, modern philosophy, metaphysics, politics, human nature.

\(^8\) Ibid.


\(^10\) Schall, The Universe We Think In, 172.
REFERENCES