

## INTRODUCTION

Since the theme of beauty appears only occasionally in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and in even those passages is regularly addressed in only an indirect way, it is notable that this topic has enjoyed considerable attention from modern interpreters of St. Thomas. These interpreters have delved into the heart of St. Thomas's account of beauty, bringing together its scattered elements into a coherent whole, filling in the gaps inherited from St. Thomas, and exploring its possibilities. One of the fundamental elements of this project, and one that has not gone unnoticed, has been the question of whether "beauty" or "the beautiful" is a distinct transcendental.<sup>1</sup> This question was widely debated among early neo-Thomists and continues to be disputed today.

The source of the dispute lies in the seemingly-conflicting nature of the relevant passages from St. Thomas's writings: in his discussions of the transcendentals (most importantly, in his derivations of the transcendentals from being) he never mentions the beautiful, whereas in other texts he seems to affirm that the beautiful is a transcendental. Various explanations have been presented as solutions to this conundrum. Across the spectrum of neo-Thomist commentators the solutions provided are, in their details, nearly as many as the scholars themselves,<sup>2</sup> owing in no small part to both the paucity of texts directly dealing with beauty and the ambiguity of many of these texts. By far the greater number of Thomists who have written on this subject are of the mind that the beautiful is a

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<sup>1</sup> I will generally speak of "beautiful" (*pulchrum*) instead of "beauty" (*pulchritudo*) in the context of this paper, since it is a question of its being a transcendental. This use is justified by the fact that, in those passages directly relevant to this topic, St. Thomas uses *pulchrum* much more often than *pulchritudo*.

transcendental. However, it seems to me that many of the explanations given by these scholars fail to construct, from St. Thomas's texts, a satisfactory argument for the beautiful as a distinct transcendental, and in large part this seems due to a failure to attend sufficiently to St. Thomas's understanding of the transcendentals. So, since the purpose of this paper is to determine whether, according to St. Thomas, the beautiful is a distinct transcendental, I think it necessary to begin not with St. Thomas's account of beauty but with his account of the transcendentals. To this end, rather than examining the primary texts of St. Thomas one-by-one, I will present a synthesis of his argument, indicating as I go along the texts that I think not only state the various propositions of his argument but also support my reconstruction of the argument, and having recourse to direct textual elucidation according as one text or another is particularly significant for the point in question. In doing so, I will elucidate the properties or characteristics that the transcendentals possess as transcendentals. This will constitute the first part of the paper. In the second part, I will examine St. Thomas's understanding of the nature of the beautiful insofar as it is relevant to the question of its status as a transcendental. I will first present and scrutinize those texts that reveal the nature of beauty or the beautiful, with attention especially to those that discuss the relation of the beautiful to the good or to the true. In the third part, I will draw together the conclusions of the first two parts and present my conclusion, after which I will raise several objections and reply to them.

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<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive yet brief overview of neoscholastic positions regarding whether "beautiful" is a transcendental, see Francis J. Kovach, "Beauty as a Transcendental," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2d ed.

## PART ONE: ST. THOMAS'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRANSCENDENTALS

In order to determine whether St. Thomas considers the beautiful to be a transcendental, it is necessary first to ascertain what, for St. Thomas, constitutes a transcendental.<sup>3</sup> The first thing that should be noted is that, much like the texts in which he discusses beauty, St. Thomas seems always to introduce his discussions of the transcendentals as a way of answering a further question (such as the nature of truth, the nature of the good, or the order of the divine names). This greatly complicates our task, since re-constructing St. Thomas's argument regarding the transcendentals on the basis of such texts will always involve asking the question: "Is St. Thomas's account here complete? More particularly, is this list of the transcendentals exhaustive?" More about this later, but it is important to keep this caveat in mind from the outset.

### *A. The Other Transcendentals, Like Ens, Extend to Every Being*

In his most famous presentation of the transcendentals – *De veritate* I.1 – St. Thomas begins with being and proceeds to derive the names that express modes of being consequent upon every being. However, his procedure in two other significant texts seems to be different: he begins with one or more of the transcendentals as extending to every being and, from this starting-point, proceeds to do what he does in *De veritate* I.1., viz., determine the way in which such transcendentals add to being and in so doing show how the

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<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas uses various terms to refer to what are commonly called "transcendentals": (*nomina transcendentia*, *maxime communia*, and *prima (entia)*) are some of these terms. The terms *transcendentia*, *maxime communia*, and *prima (entia)* are found in, respectively (and *inter alia*), *De virtutibus in communi* 1.2 ad 8; *In De hebdomadibus*, lect. 2 (taken from Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996], 91, n. 51); and *De potentia* 9.7 obj. 6 (in this last text, the objection refers to them as *prima entia*, while in his reply to this objection Thomas refers to them merely as *prima*). I will refer to them according to the most familiar term – *transcendentia* – as "transcendentals."

transcendentals are derived from being. Thus, in these two other texts – *De veritate* 21.1 and *De potentia* 9.7 ad 6 – the co-extensiveness of various transcendentals with *ens* is taken as the given, the fundamental premise of the argument. Upon further examination, however, the seemingly *a priori* derivation of the other transcendentals from *ens* does in fact rest upon at least the possibility of such co-extensiveness. Thus, I take it that this is the starting-point for St. Thomas’s general argument regarding the transcendentals. To express it *in toto*: certain names (such as *bonum* or *verum*) express something real that extends to every being (i.e., that is divided into the ten categories).

St. Thomas expresses this in varying ways in different contexts. In the *De veritate*, he says that the good applies to any being<sup>4</sup> and that the true is co-extensive with being.<sup>5</sup> In the *Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General*, he says of the transcendentals that they “encompass every being” (*circumeunt omne ens*).<sup>6</sup> And finally, in the first book of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, St. Thomas says that the transcendental names, as regards their supposit (versus their meaning), are “always present together.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Question 21, Article 1, ad 10: “Ad decimum dicendum quod quamvis bonum dicat aliquam specialem habitudinem, scilicet finis, tamen ista habitudo *competit cuilibet enti* nec ponit aliquid secundum rem in ente; . . . [emphasis mine]” (Leon. 22.3.595:299-303).

<sup>5</sup> Question 1, Article 1, ad contr. 2: “. . . , et ita patet quod nec verum excedit nec exceditur ab ente” (Leon. 5.1.7:279-80).

<sup>6</sup> Question 1, Article 2, ad 8: “Ad octavum dicendum, quod istud fallit in transcendentibus, quae circumeunt omne ens” (*Quaestiones disputatae*, editio viii revisa, vol. 2, *De virtutibus in communi*, ed. A. Odetto [Marietti: Turin-Rome, 1953], 712).

<sup>7</sup> Distinction 8, Question 1, Article 3, sol.: “Respondeo dicendum, quod ista nomina, ens et bonum, unum et verum, simpliciter secundum rationem intelligendi praecedunt alia divina nomina: quod patet ex eorum communitate. Si autem comparemus ea ad invicem, hoc potest esse dupliciter: vel secundum suppositum; et sic convertuntur ad invicem, et sunt idem in supposito, nec unquam derelinquunt se; . . .” (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, ed. P. Mandonnet, Vol. 1 [Paris: 1929], 199).

*B. The Other Transcendentals Add to Being Only Conceptually*

This co-extensiveness of the other transcendentals with being determines the way in which they add to being. These transcendentals cannot add anything real to being: they cannot add something that is outside the *ratio* of being, for nothing can add to being in this way, nor can they add something that is potentially contained within the *ratio* of being, thereby limiting or determining being (as the categories add to being), for in that case they would no longer be co-extensive with being. Therefore, if these transcendentals add to being at all – and surely they must, for otherwise they would be mere synonyms of being – they must add to it something merely conceptual. For St. Thomas, this means they must add either a negation (*unum*) or a conceptual relation (*verum* and *bonum*), and one that follows upon every being, so that by such addition the transcendentals express general modes of being that are consequent upon every being but are not expressed by the word “being.”

To my knowledge, there are two texts in which St. Thomas lays out this argument explicitly: *De veritate* 21.1<sup>8</sup> and, in a truncated form, *De potentia* 9.7 ad 6.<sup>9</sup> However, although a close consideration of this argument is wonderfully fruitful and worthwhile in itself, we cannot linger over it here. The important point is this: in his account of the transcendentals, St. Thomas assumes their co-extensiveness with being and on this basis –

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<sup>8</sup> Here is the crucial passage: “Sic autem bonum non addit aliquid super ens, cum bonum dividatur aequaliter in decem genera ut ens, ut patet in I Ethicorum.”

“Et ideo oportet quod vel nihil addat super ens vel addat aliquid quod sit in ratione tantum; . . . Cum autem ens sit id quod primo cadit in conceptione intellectus, ut Avicenna dicit, oportet quod omne aliud nomen vel sit synonymum enti, quod de bono dici non potest cum non nugatorie dicatur ens bonum, vel addat aliquid ad minus secundum rationem: et sic oportet quod bonum ex quo non contrahit ens addat aliquid super ens quod sit rationis tantum” (Leon. 22.3.593:136-40, 144-52).

<sup>9</sup> Objection 6: “Praeterea, quatuor prima entia dicuntur, scilicet ens, unum, verum et bonum.” Reply to objection 6: “Ad sextum dicendum, quod inter ista quatuor prima, maxime primum est ens: . . . Oportet autem quod alia tria super ens addant aliquid quod ens non contrahat; si enim contraherent ens, iam non essent prima. Hoc autem esse non potest nisi addant aliquid secundum rationem tantum; . . .” (Ed. P. M. Pession [Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1965], 240, 243).

i.e., by ruling out their adding to being in a way that would contract it – he concludes that the transcendentals add to being only conceptually.

*C. The Other Transcendentals Add to Being Conceptually in a Determinate Order*

As St. Thomas makes clear on several occasions, the other transcendentals make their conceptual addition to being in a determinate order. Rather than each transcendental being constituted by unconnected conceptual additions to being, each transcendental, in fact, proceeds from being in an order determined by its *ratio*. First in the order, of course, is being, since it is that to which all the other transcendentals add. Following being is “one,”<sup>10</sup> which adds to being only a negation, viz., non-division. Because “one” adds a negation rather than a relation,<sup>11</sup> and because the negation of non-division added by “one” is presupposed for the relations constituted by “true” and “good,” “one” is nearest to being.

This is an appropriate point at which to provide a more detailed explication of the way in which the true and the good add to being, especially because the relationship of the beautiful to the true and the good will be crucial for understanding whether it is a distinct transcendental. According to St. Thomas’s account in *De veritate* 1.1, the true and the good add to being a mode of being following upon every being as considered in relation to another. The true adds to being the relation of *convenientia* that obtains between being and the intellect, and the good adds to being the relation of *convenientia* that obtains between

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<sup>10</sup> I do not address the question of the place of *res* and *aliquid* in this order – they are included in only one of St. Thomas’s derivations of the transcendentals, and they do not appear in any of the passages in which he lays out the order of the transcendentals.

<sup>11</sup> *In I Sent.* 8.1.3 sol.: “Alia vero quae diximus, scilicet bonum, verum et unum, addunt super ens, non quidem naturam aliquam, sed rationem: *sed unum addit rationem indivisionis; et propter hoc est propinquissimum ad ens, quia addit tantum negationem*: verum autem et bonum addunt relationem quamdam; . . . [emphasis mine]” (Mandonnet, 200).

being and the appetite.<sup>12</sup> What St. Thomas means by this is explained in greater detail later in the *De veritate* (21.1). Since the true and the good must add to being only conceptually, and since they add a relation to being, that relation must be merely conceptual, i.e., a relationship of the perfective to the perfectible (not vice-versa!). But in what sense is *ens* perfective? For St. Thomas, *ens* can be perfective in two ways. First, any being is perfective of intellect according to the *ratio* of its species: put in reverse order, the intellect is perfected in perceiving the *ratio* of a being. Being as perfective in this way is what the true adds to being. Second, any being is perfective not only according to the *ratio* of its species but also according to the *esse* it has in the nature of things, and to that extent it stands to the appetite as an end. Being as perfective in this way is what the good adds to being.<sup>13</sup>

Given this, how are the true and the good posterior to the one? In *De veritate* 21.3, St. Thomas states that the true is contained in the good, but not vice-versa, since the good perfects not only according to a being's specific *ratio* but also according to the *esse* it has in the thing. The good, then, adds conceptually to the true. But the true itself presupposes, and thus adds to, the one, insofar as nothing is intelligible (i.e., nothing can be in a relationship of *convenientia* with the intellect) except insofar as it is one. This non-division of being, its oneness, having been "established," so to speak, "true" and "good" can then follow, in that

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<sup>12</sup> "Alio modo secundum convenientiam unius entis ad aliud, . . . convenientiam ergo entis ad appetitum exprimit hoc nomen bonum, . . . convenientiam vero entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen verum" (Leon. 22.1.5: 150-51, 156-57, 159-61).

<sup>13</sup> "In quolibet autem ente est duo considerare, scilicet ipsam rationem speciei et esse ipsum quo aliquid subsistit in specie illa. Et sic aliquod ens potest esse perfectivum dupliciter: uno modo secundum rationem speciei tantum, et sic ab ente perficitur intellectus qui percipit rationem entis, . . . ; et ideo hunc modum perficiendi addit verum super ens: . . . Alio modo ens est perfectivum alterius non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in rerum natura, et per hunc modum est perfectivum bonum; . . . In quantum autem unum ens secundum esse suum est perfectivum alterius et consummativum, habet rationem finis respectu illius quod ab eo perficitur; . . ." (Leon. 22.3.593: 179-185, 186-87, 193-97, 198-200; Leon. 22.3.594: 1).

order. So, “one” is included in both the true and the good. Therefore, as St. Thomas concludes, the order of the transcendentals is the following: first is being, after which is “one,” then “true,” and finally “good.”<sup>14</sup>

The critical point here is that the other transcendentals do not arbitrarily add to being. It is not as if the transcendentals follow upon or “proceed” from being as planes do from a factory, one after another with no relation of dependence existing between any of them. Rather, the order of the transcendentals is based upon the *ratio* of each of the transcendentals, so that they follow upon being in a logical order. The order of the transcendentals is like the making of a pearl.<sup>15</sup> If some foreign object, say a grain of sand, gets trapped in a mollusk, that grain of sand slowly becomes covered, layer by layer, with a substance secreted by the mollusk, each layer building upon the last. Just so the transcendentals begin with being as the first, with the other transcendentals following in a determinate, logical order, building upon and presupposing those that come before, so that being always remains at the center of the transcendentals. Like each layer of pearl, each transcendental depends upon those that come before it, for those transcendentals that are prior in the order of the transcendentals to the transcendental in question are included in the understanding of that posterior transcendental.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Considerando ergo verum et bonum secundum se, sic verum est prius bono secundum rationem cum verum sit perfectivum alicuius secundum rationem speciei, bonum autem non solum secundum rationem speciei sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in re: et ita plura includit in se ratio boni quam ratio veri, et se habet quodam modo per additionem ad illam. Et sic bonum praesupponit verum, verum autem praesupponit unum, cum veri ratio ex apprehensione intellectus perficiatur; unumquodque autem intelligibile est in quantum est unum: qui enim non intelligit unum nihil intelligit, . . . Unde istorum nominum transcendentium talis est ordo, si secundum se considerentur, quod post ens est unum, deinde verum post unum, et deinde post verum bonum” (Leon. 22.3.598: 40-58, 59-63).

<sup>15</sup> Or, to use an Aristotelian example, it is like the succession of geometric figures (*De Anima* II.3).

<sup>16</sup> This is clear from what has been said in *De veritate* (*DV*) 21.3 about “good” presupposing “true” and “true” presupposing “one.” It is also evident from *Summa theologiae* (*ST*) Ia 16.4.



So what St. Thomas is claiming in *De veritate* 21.3 is that each of the transcendentals adds not just to being, but to all the transcendentals that are logically prior to it. It is not as if one transcendental adds  $x$  to being, and another adds  $y$  to being, and another  $z$  to being. Rather, one transcendental adds  $x$  to being, the next adds  $y$  to  $x$  and being, and the next adds  $z$  to  $y$ ,  $x$ , and being. Thus “one” presupposes being and adds to being a negation of division, “true” presupposes both being and “one” and adds to these a relation to the intellect, and finally “good,” like the outermost layer of the pearl, presupposes and builds upon all the others.

*D. The Other Transcendentals Are Really Identical with, Convertible with, and Merely Conceptually Distinct from Being and Each Other*

Because the other transcendentals add to being only something conceptual, they differ from being and from each other only conceptually, and are really identical with being and with each other. Therefore, the transcendentals are convertible with being and with each other. St. Thomas expresses this in various ways. *Secundum rem* or *realiter* or *secundum suppositum* or *per essentiam*, the other transcendentals are one with, the same as, convertible with being and with each other; but, *secundum rationem* or *secundum intentionem*, they differ from being and from each other, insofar as they add a *ratio*.<sup>17</sup> Here is one particularly striking expression of this, taken from St. Thomas’s *Commentary on the Sentences*:

These names – being, good, one, true – . . . according to supposit . . . are convertible with each other, and are the same in supposit, nor are they ever apart from each other; . . . [but] according to their meanings, . . . being is prior to the others, . . . [which] add to being not, indeed, some nature but a notion.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See *DV* 1.1 ad 6 and ad contr. 1 and 5, *DV* 21.1 ad 5, and *ST* Ia 16.4.

<sup>18</sup> Distinction 8, Question 1, Article 3, sol.: “Respondeo dicendum, quod ista nomina, ens et bonum, unum et verum, simpliciter secundum rationem intelligendi praecedunt alia divina nomina: quod patet ex eorum

It should be pointed out that St. Thomas argues for the real identity, merely conceptual difference, and convertibility among all the transcendentals not on the basis of their proceeding in a determinate order such as to add conceptually to all the preceding transcendentals, but merely on the basis of their adding something merely conceptual to being. Put another way, precisely because the other transcendentals add to being merely a *ratio* following upon every being (second element of St. Thomas's argument), they are really identical with and convertible with not only being but also with each other (fourth element): this does not depend intrinsically on the transcendentals' proceeding from being in a determinate order (third element).<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, it seems to me that the order in which the transcendentals proceed from being should still be considered the third element of St. Thomas's argument (rather than the fourth), since it describes the nature of the conceptual addition to being, which constitutes the second element of his argument, whereas the real identity and convertibility and merely conceptual difference among the transcendentals is the consequence of this second element. In addition, although St. Thomas nowhere says this, it is even easier to see how the transcendentals are really identical and convertible with each other if they are constituted by successive conceptual additions to being.<sup>20</sup>

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communitate. Si autem comparemus ea ad invicem, hoc potest esse dupliciter: vel *secundum suppositum*; et sic convertuntur ad invicem, et sunt idem in supposito, nec unquam derelinquunt se; vel *secundum intentiones eorum*; et sic simpliciter et absolute ens est prius aliis. Cujus ratio est, quia ens includitur in intellectu eorum, et non e converso. . . . Alia vero quae diximus, scilicet bonum, verum et unum, addunt super ens, non quidem naturam aliquam, sed rationem: . . . [emphasis mine]" (Mandonnet, 199-200).

<sup>19</sup> *In I Sent.* 19.5.1 ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum, quod verum addit supra ens, sicut et bonum et unum. Nullum tamen eorum addit aliquam differentiam contrahentem ens, sed rationem quae consequitur omne ens; sicut unum addit rationem indivisionis, et bonum rationem finis, et verum rationem ordinis ad cognitionem; et ideo haec quatuor convertuntur, ens, bonum, unum et verum" (Mandonnet, 488).

<sup>20</sup> Briefly, since there is only a conceptual difference between the good and being, and since the good is the farthest removed from being in the logical order of the transcendentals, then there must be, *a fortiori*, only a conceptual difference between the good and every other transcendental.

To summarize: St. Thomas's doctrine of the transcendentals, as far as I can reconstruct it, begins with the fact that there are some names – what can be called transcendentals – that signify something that extends to every being, argues from this universal extension to the purely conceptual nature of their addition to being, identifies a determinate order of their conceptual addition to being and to each other, and concludes on the basis of their purely conceptual addition to being that these other transcendentals are really identical and convertible with being and with each other.

## **PART TWO: ST. THOMAS'S UNDERSTANDING OF BEAUTY**

Even more than his discussions of the transcendentals, those passages in which St. Thomas speaks of beauty are terse presentations that serve a larger purpose (usually, responding to an objection to a position St. Thomas is taking regarding the good), so once again we have to construct a synthetic account from St. Thomas's various statements. To that end, I will begin by considering St. Thomas's definitions/descriptions of beauty, proceed to identify the constituents of beauty itself, and distinguish between two kinds of beauty, thereby identifying and attending to beauty as a candidate for the status of a distinct transcendental. Why this order, it might be asked? I have two reasons for it. First, the proper order of presentation is not crucial here, whereas it was crucial in the case of the transcendentals. Second, in *Summa theologiae* Ia 5.4 ad 1, St. Thomas provides a kind of definition of beauty (from its effects, it seems to me) and on that basis proceeds to identify proportion as that in which beauty consists. So I take it that at least the first two steps of my

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procedure here are textually justifiable. The remaining steps will, I hope, proceed naturally from the first two.

### *A. The Nature of Beauty*

St. Thomas's most famous account of beauty is found in *ST Ia 5.4 ad 1*. In distinguishing between the beautiful and the good, St. Thomas states that the beautiful pertains to the cognitive power, and consists in due proportion, because "we call those things beautiful that, upon being seen, please"<sup>21</sup> us. This is St. Thomas's most famous, and (in virtue of its ubiquity) perhaps his favorite, description of the beautiful: *quae visa placent*. But I think a clearer and more fruitful description of the beautiful can be found in *ST I-IIae 27.1 ad 3*: "that, the very apprehension of which pleases" (*id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet*).<sup>22</sup> Taking together, these two replies to objections give us the following account of the beautiful. The beautiful is distinguished from the good in that the good is that which all things desire and, therefore, it is of the nature of the good that appetite rests in it as in an end, whereas it is of the nature of the beautiful that appetite rests in the sheer apprehension of it (via sight, hearing, or intellect). The beautiful, then, adds to the good a certain ordering to the cognitive power and thus properly pertains to formal causality rather than final. More particularly, precisely because the mere apprehension of the beautiful pleases, i.e., gives the

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<sup>21</sup> "Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam: pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent. Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit: quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite proportionatis, sicut in sibi similibus; nam et sensus ratio quaedam est, et omnis virtus cognoscitiva. Et quia cognitio fit per assimilationem, similitudo autem respicit formam, pulchrum proprie pertinet ad rationem causae formalis" (Leon. 4.61).

<sup>22</sup> "Ad tertium dicendum quod pulchrum est idem bono, sola ratione differens. Cum enim bonum sit *quod omnia appetunt*, de ratione boni est quod in eo quietetur appetitus: sed ad rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus. Unde et illi sensus praecipue respiciunt pulchrum, qui maxime cognoscitivi sunt, scilicet visus et auditus rationi deservientes: dicimus enim pulchra visibilia et pulchros sonos. In sensibilibus autem aliorum sensuum, non utimur nomine pulchritudinis: non enim dicimus pulchros sapes aut odores. Et sic patet quod pulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam: ita quod bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitui; pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet" (Leon. 6.192).

appetite rest, the beautiful most properly stands in relation to the cognitive power, not the appetitive power (although this is not to say, of course, that the beautiful has no relation to the appetitive power).

Let's follow the details of St. Thomas's argument here. Beautiful things are those things that please us in our sheer apprehension of them. What, then, is it in such things that makes them pleasing to the powers of apprehending, i.e., to the cognitive faculties? It is their due proportion, because the senses, and every other cognitive power, take delight in things that are duly proportioned. According to St. Thomas here in *ST Ia 5.4 ad 1*, all cognitive powers take delight in things that have due proportion because, in that respect and to that extent, such things are similar to the cognitive powers themselves: all cognitive powers, as duly proportioned faculties, as consisting in a kind of proportion, delight in objects that likewise display due proportion. Let me just point something out in this regard: all cognition "requires a certain proportion between the knowing power and the known object," but there is more than this in the case of a beautiful object: in this latter case, there is a proportion "among the constituent elements of the known object," and this proportion pleases the cognitive power in question because of the latter's own proportion among its constituent elements.<sup>23</sup>

For St. Thomas, the fact that the beautiful most properly stands in relation to the cognitive power means that the beautiful pertains to formal causality: because cognition comes about by assimilation of the knower and the known, and because assimilation is the

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<sup>23</sup> See Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1960), 161. Gilson follows this up by claiming that beauty is, therefore, "the cognition of a substantial similitude between two duly proportionate beings." Although I am not convinced that this is right, still, the *Phaedrus* seems to loom large in the background of St. Thomas's words here.

informing of the cognitive power by the form apprehended by means of a likeness of the thing apprehended, and because such a likeness pertains to form, the beautiful properly belongs to the nature of formal causality.<sup>24</sup>

To sum up, St. Thomas argues from the effect of beautiful things – delight on the part of a cognitive power – to proportion as a constituent of the beautiful. In addition, he relates the beautiful to the cognitive power: it is, indeed, related to appetite, insofar as beautiful things please us, but properly it pertains to cognition because beautiful things please us in the sheer apprehension of them. It is precisely this *ordo* to the cognitive powers that the beautiful adds to the good, and it is in virtue of this *ordo* that the beautiful properly belongs to the nature of formal causality.

Due proportion is not the only constituent of beauty, however. Altogether, taking into account all of the passages in which he lists the constituents or requirements of beauty, St. Thomas speaks of three such constituents: due proportion (*debita proportio* or *consonantia*), wholeness (*integritas* or *perfectio*), and radiance (*claritas*). When we examine St. Thomas's examples for these three constituents, however, a fundamental distinction begins to appear, on the basis of which we must distinguish two different kinds of beauty and, thus, two different conceptions of the constituents of beauty.

### *B. Aesthetic vs. Transcendental Beauty*

In several texts,<sup>25</sup> St. Thomas uses the example of a beautiful body to illustrate the

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<sup>24</sup> “Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit: quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite proportionatis, sicut in sibi similibus; nam et sensus ratio quaedam est, et omnis virtus cognoscitiva. Et quia cognitio fit per assimilationem, similitudo autem respicit formam, pulchrum proprie pertinet ad rationem causae formalis” (Leon. 4.61).

<sup>25</sup> ST II-IIae 145.2; *In De divinis nominibus* 4.5 #339.

constituents of beauty. The beauty of the body, he says, consists in one's having properly-proportioned limbs (in both quantity and position) and a brightness of proper coloring; in such texts St. Thomas usually presupposes wholeness, which he contrasts with being broken or maimed (*diminuta*), in virtue of which brokenness a thing is ugly rather than beautiful.<sup>26</sup> But beauty does not belong only to bodies: human actions can display spiritual beauty, according as they are “well proportioned according to the spiritual radiance of reason”:<sup>27</sup> i.e., to the degree that they are in accord with right reason, human actions are well-proportioned and share in the radiance of right reason.

Now, it is clear that not every body is beautiful, nor every human action beautiful, in the sense in which St. Thomas understands beauty in these texts: only certain bodies, and certain human actions, are beautiful. This conception of beauty is clearly not a transcendental conception, if only for the simple reason that beauty, in this sense, cannot be predicated of all beings, since incomplete, maimed, sullied, or misshapen things lack one or several of these “conditions” or “constituents” of beauty. This conception of beauty is, in fact, a categorical conception – and we find confirmation of this when St. Thomas says in *ST* I-IIae 49 that beauty is a habit or disposition, and thus a kind of quality.<sup>28</sup> Following others, I will refer to this as “aesthetic beauty” (even though “aesthetic” properly refers only to the sensible). Aesthetic beauty, though not limited to corporeal things, is limited to those things that are whole, duly proportioned, and resplendent in their accidental determinations (i.e.,

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<sup>26</sup> *ST* Ia 39.8 resp: “Nam ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem, integritas sive perfectio: quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt. Et debita proportio sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas: unde quae habent colorem nitidum, pulchra esse dicuntur” (Leon. 4.409).

<sup>27</sup> *ST* II-IIae 145.2: “Et similiter pulchritudo spiritualis in hoc consistit quod conversatio hominis, sive actio eius, sit bene proportionata secundum spiritualem rationis claritatem” (Leon. 10.147).

<sup>28</sup> See articles 1 and 4.

according to quantity, position, action, etc.).

Standing in sharp contrast to such passages as these are those passages in which St. Thomas affirms that every being is beautiful. In his *In De divinis nominibus*, St. Thomas seems clearly to follow Dionysius, who says that God is called “supersubstantial beauty” because He gives beauty to all created beings, i.e., He causes radiance (*claritas*) and proportion (*consonantia*) to be in all created beings.<sup>29</sup> God is the cause of radiance in created beings insofar as He gives to them the gift of His luminous radiance. What St. Thomas and Dionysius mean by this is the following: every form, through which a thing has *esse*, is a certain participation in the divine radiance. Through its very form, its very *ratio*, then, every individual thing is and is beautiful, because in having (or rather being constituted by) that form it exists and it shares in the divine *claritas*.<sup>30</sup> This gives us a deeper understanding of the claim that the beautiful pertains to formal causality. Earlier, we saw that beauty consisted in a thing’s being such as to please merely in being apprehended, so that beauty is, properly speaking, ordered to the apprehending power and thus belongs to the nature of formal causality. Now we see St. Thomas explicitly extending this to all beings: beauty pertains to formal causality because all beings are beautiful precisely through their form’s participating in the divine radiance, in virtue of which every being is pleasing in its mere apprehension.

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<sup>29</sup> 4.5 #339: “. . . Deus qui est *supersubstantiale pulchrum*, dicitur *pulchritudo* propter hoc quod *omnibus* entibus creatis dat *pulchritudinem*, secundum *proprietaem uniuscuiusque*: alia enim est pulchritudo spiritus et alia corporis, atque alia huius et illius corporis. Et in quo consistat pulchritudinis ratio, ostendit subdens quod sic Deus tradit pulchritudinem, inquantum est *causa consonantiae et claritatis* in omnibus: . . .” (Ed. C. Pera [Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1950], 113, n. 339). The italics indicate words Thomas took directly from the text of the Latin translation of Dionysius.

<sup>30</sup> 4.5 #349: “. . . *ex pulchro isto* provenit *esse omnibus existentibus*: claritas enim est de consideratione pulchritudinis, ut dictum est; omnis autem forma, per quam res habet esse, est participatio quaedam divinae claritatis; et hoc est quod subdit, quod *singula sunt pulchra secundum propriam rationem*, idest secundum propriam formam; unde patet quod ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur. . . .” (Pera, 114, n. 349).



In addition to causing radiance in created beings, God also causes a two-fold proportion (*consonantia*) in them: first, insofar as they are ordered to Him as to their end; second, insofar as they are ordered to one another.<sup>31</sup> So, although wholeness is not mentioned in this context (and, in fact, St. Thomas rarely includes it when discussing the constituents of beauty), St. Thomas (following Dionysius) has nevertheless shown how everything participates in the beautiful, viz., in virtue of the fact that everything is given radiance and proportion by God Himself.<sup>32</sup>

It is obvious that we are now in the presence of an understanding of beauty that is of a higher order than aesthetic beauty, viz., what is often called “transcendental beauty.” Whereas the human body is aesthetically beautiful insofar as it is whole, well-proportioned in quantity and position, and brightly-colored, the human body (and, indeed, everything) is transcendentally beautiful in being ordered to God and to other creatures and in having a form that is itself a participation in God’s radiance. Most important for our considerations, whereas not every being has aesthetic beauty, every being (even those that are aesthetically ugly) does have “transcendental beauty”: every being, through its form and its ordering to God and to other creatures, is beautiful.<sup>33</sup> This extension of beauty (understood

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<sup>31</sup> *In De divinis nominibus*, 4.5 #340: “. . . Deus sit causa consonantiae in rebus; est autem duplex consonantia in rebus: prima quidem, secundum ordinem creaturarum ad Deum et hanc tangit cum dicit quod Deus est causa consonantiae, *sicut vocans omnia ad seipsum*, in quantum convertit omnia ad seipsum sicut ad finem, . . . ; secunda autem consonantia est in rebus, secundum ordinationem earum ad invicem; et hoc tangit cum subdit, quod congregat omnia in omnibus, ad idem” (Pera, 113, n. 340).

<sup>32</sup> 4.5 #355: “Deinde, cum dicit: *propter quod*..., infert quoddam corollarium ex dictis; et dicit quod, quia tot modis pulchrum est causa omnium, inde est quod bonum et *pulchrum* sunt *idem*, quia omnia *desiderant pulchrum et bonum*, sicut *causam* omnibus modis; et quia nihil est *quod non participet pulchro et bono*, cum unumquodque sit pulchrum et bonum secundum propriam formam . . .” (Pera, 115, n. 355).

<sup>33</sup> A word about the relation between transcendental and aesthetic beauty. Just as even in its first actuality a being is good *secundum quid*, so also it is beautiful in a certain way (i.e., transcendently). And so something is transcendently beautiful, and good *secundum quid*, insofar as it is in first act, i.e., insofar as it is a being

transcendentally) to every being is further emphasized later in the commentary on Dionysius, where St. Thomas, following Dionysius, says that “the beautiful is convertible with the good”.<sup>34</sup> if the good extends to all beings, and if the beautiful is convertible with the good, then the beautiful likewise extends to all beings.

With this connection of the beautiful and the good we return to where we began with beauty, viz., St. Thomas’s description of beauty. Earlier, we saw that St. Thomas affirms that beauty adds to good a certain ordering to the cognitive power; what I had left out in that earlier discussion was the context for this description, viz., St. Thomas’s affirmation that the beautiful and the good are the same in subject and differ only conceptually. It now behooves me to explain this.

In those very same passages from the *Summa* that we considered earlier, in which St. Thomas describes the beautiful as “that, the very apprehension of which pleases” (or as “that which, upon being apprehended, pleases”), St. Thomas begins his discussion with a broader claim about the beautiful and the good, viz., that the beautiful and the good are the same in subject but differ conceptually (*ratione*). His statements and arguments regarding beauty are part of his substantiating this broader claim. In particular, his conclusion that the beautiful adds to the good an ordering to the cognitive power turns out to constitute the conceptual difference between the beautiful and the good: i.e., whereas the good regards the appetite,

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simply. But insofar as it has further actualities, further perfections that it ought to have, that thing is good simply and, *mutatis mutandis*, beautiful aesthetically. At the most basic level, then – that of first *esse* – every being is said to be beautiful transcendentally and to be good relatively. But just as evil things, though good *secundum quid*, are not good simply, since they lack the requisite perfections, so ugly things, though transcendentally beautiful, are not aesthetically beautiful, because they lack the requisite actualities superadded to their first *esse* (i.e., to their transcendental beauty).

<sup>34</sup> 4.22 #590: “Deinde, ponit ea quae consequuntur communem rationem boni; et primo dicit: *sine pulchritudine*, quia pulchrum convertitur cum bono, ut supra dictum est” (Pera, 216, n. 590).

since the good is that which pleases the appetite *simpliciter*, the beautiful regards the cognitive power, since the beautiful is that the apprehension of which pleases the appetite,<sup>35</sup> and the beautiful differs from the good precisely in adding to the good this ordering to the cognitive power.<sup>36</sup> (As a side note, St. Thomas says that this ordering of the beautiful to the cognitive power is the reason that only the most cognitive senses can perceive the beautiful: we speak of beautiful visible objects and beautiful sounds, but we do not speak of beautiful tastes or odors.)

At this point, there are many loose ends that it would be tempting to try to tie up – e.g., the way in which we apprehend transcendental beauty – but for the purpose of this talk, and for the sake of time, we must pass over these considerations. It would be helpful, however, to draw together everything that has been said regarding beauty, looking back on what has been said from the vantage point of beauty in its transcendental sense.

Those things are beautiful the very and mere apprehension of which pleases. Because the apprehending or cognitive powers take delight in what is duly proportioned, beauty consists in due proportion, to which St. Thomas adds radiance (and, sometimes, wholeness). The referents of these constituents of beauty vary – in kind, even – according as the beauty in

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<sup>35</sup> *ST Ia 5.4 ad 1*: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod pulchrum et bonum in subiecto quidem sunt idem, quia super eandem rem fundantur, scilicet super formam: et propter hoc, bonum laudatur ut pulchrum. Sed ratione differunt. Nam bonum proprie respicit appetitum: est enim bonum quod omnia appetunt. Et ideo habet rationem finis: nam appetitus est quasi quidam motus ad rem. Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam: pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent” (Leon. 4.61).

<sup>36</sup> *ST I-IIae 27.1 ad 3*: “Ad tertium dicendum quod pulchrum est idem bono, sola ratione differens. Cum enim bonum sit *quod omnia appetunt*, de ratione boni est quod in eo quietetur appetitus: sed ad rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu seu cognitione quietetur appetitus. Unde et illi sensus praecipue respiciunt pulchrum, qui maxime cognoscitivi sunt, scilicet visus et auditus rationi deservientes: dicimus enim pulchra visibilia et pulchros sonos. In sensibilibus autem aliorum sensuum, non utimur nomine pulchritudinis: non enim dicimus pulchros sapes aut odores. Et sic patet quod pulchrum addit supra bonum, quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam: ita quod bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitui; pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet” (Leon. 6.192).

question is aesthetic (corporeal or spiritual) or transcendental. Transcendental beauty consists in a thing's ordination to God and to other creatures and in the radiance of the form, given it by God, through which it exists and participates in the divine radiance.

Transcendental beauty, then, belongs to every being insofar as it exists, since that through which it has being is also that through which it has beauty, viz., its form. Understood in this manner – i.e., as founded upon the form through which a thing exists – the beautiful is the same as the good, differing from it only conceptually: whereas the good pertains to appetite, and therefore has the nature of an end, the beautiful adds to the good a certain ordering to the cognitive or apprehensive power and therefore has the nature of a formal cause.

### **PART THREE: IS BEAUTY A DISTINCT TRANSCENDENTAL?**

We saw in Part One that, for St. Thomas, whatever extends to every being, by that very fact, adds only conceptually to being (unless it is merely synonymous with being, in which case it adds nothing at all to being) and therefore is really identical with, merely conceptually distinct from, and convertible with being – in other words, whatever extends to every being is a transcendental. We have also seen that the beautiful, according to St. Thomas, extends to every being: all beings are and are beautiful through their form. Therefore, the beautiful adds only conceptually to being, unless perhaps “beautiful” is merely a synonym of “being.” But this can hardly be maintained: if the good adds something to being, and therefore cannot be considered a mere synonym of being, then the beautiful, which itself adds something to the good, certainly cannot be considered a mere synonym of being. Therefore, the beautiful must add something merely conceptual to being and, in virtue

of this, is really identical with and convertible with being and with the other transcendentals.

In a word, on St. Thomas's own account, the beautiful is a distinct transcendental.

This means, of course, that the beautiful must occupy a place within the order of the transcendentals as they proceed from being: in virtue of its conceptual addition to the good, it appears that the beautiful should be placed last in the order of the transcendentals, after the good, as presupposing all the others: the beautiful is that which (*ens*), being apprehended (*verum*), pleases (*bonum*).<sup>37</sup>

But this position – that the beautiful is a distinct transcendental occupying the final place in the order of the transcendentals – is subject to some noteworthy difficulties. First, and most obvious, is the textual objection. St. Thomas nowhere explicitly affirms that the beautiful is a distinct transcendental: his lists and derivations of the transcendentals – even those that are exhaustive – never include the beautiful, and in his discussions of beauty he never explicitly claims for it the status of a transcendental. Adding weight to this objection is the fact that St. Thomas speaks of beauty only in an incidental manner (outside of the *In De divinis nominibus*, in which his more extensive treatment of beauty is required by the nature of the task at hand, i.e., commenting on Dionysius): the true and the good receive independent treatments, for example, in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, the *De veritate*, and the *Summa*, but the subject of beauty arises only in an ancillary fashion (and then only in a truncated form) or in responding to an objection regarding the true or the good.

The textual objection, however, is not damning. For one thing, we are not justified in taking any of St. Thomas's lists or derivations of the transcendentals as exhaustive. If any

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<sup>37</sup> G. B. Phelan, "The Concept of Beauty in St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Selected Papers*, ed. Arthur G. Kirn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967), 178.

one of them is exhaustive, it must be the derivation of *De veritate* 1.1: in all other lists and derivations, four or fewer transcendentals are named, but in *De veritate* 1.1 St. Thomas identifies six transcendentals – the usual suspects plus *res* and *aliquid*. However, St. Thomas does not claim that this list is exhaustive, nor does the language of his derivation compel us to conclude that it is exhaustive. Perhaps most significant in this regard: in a derivation of the transcendentals given later in *De veritate* (21.1), St. Thomas says that the conceptual additions to being that he lays out are the only possible conceptual additions: “that which is merely conceptual can only be twofold, viz., negation and a certain relation” (*non potest esse nisi duplex, scilicet negatio et aliqua relatio*). So *De veritate* 21.1 much more clearly suggests the exhaustiveness of its derivation than does *De veritate* 1.1: but *De veritate* 21.1 lists only four transcendentals, while *De veritate* 1.1 lists six! Put another way, if we applied the seemingly exhaustive principle of division that St. Thomas uses in *De veritate* 21.1 to the derivation of *De veritate* 1.1, we would have to cut *res* from the list of transcendentals.<sup>38</sup> Is St. Thomas contradicting himself or changing his mind? Hardly – St. Thomas, throughout his writings, is clearly not concerned with maintaining uniformity among the lists of the transcendentals: in various early and late writings he lists only the usual four transcendentals, and in various other early and late writings he affirms that *res* is a transcendental.

It must be granted that this answer does not address the entire objection: even though none of the lists or derivations of the transcendentals can be taken as exhaustive, there is still

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<sup>38</sup> A similar situation applies to the list of the transcendentals in *De potentia* 9.7 ad 6: as in *DV* 21.1, St. Thomas speaks of the usual four transcendentals and uses language that indicates, albeit less strongly, the exhaustiveness of his list: “Oportet autem quod alia tria super ens addant aliquid quod ens non contrahat; . . . *Hoc autem esse non potest nisi addant aliquid secundum rationem tantum; hoc autem est vel negatio, quam addit unum (ut dictum est), vel relatio, vel aliquid quod natum sit referri universaliter ad ens; et hoc est vel intellectus, ad quem importat relationem verum, aut appetitus, ad quem importat relationem bonum; . . .*” (Pession, 243).

the brute fact that the beautiful never occurs in any lists or derivations of the transcendentals, and there is the supporting fact that beautiful receives only incidental treatment throughout St. Thomas's writings. The only answer to what remains of the objection, it seems to me, is to reiterate the first reply – that St. Thomas is not concerned in any of his writings to provide an exhaustive list of the transcendentals – and to add that St. Thomas either was not so concerned with what constituted a transcendental, or did not have a sufficiently developed account of beauty, so as to address explicitly the question of the status of the beautiful as a distinct transcendental. It seems foolhardy to me to rely upon the absence of beauty from non-exhaustive lists of the transcendentals as damning evidence against the teaching of St. Thomas, viz., that the beautiful is a distinct transcendental, especially given the generally ancillary treatment St. Thomas gives to the transcendentals and his penchant for inconsistency in his lists of the transcendentals. Ultimately, these textual peculiarities are a double-edged sword: they can work both for and against the thesis that St. Thomas holds beauty to be a distinct transcendental. So, it is better to attempt to explain the “textual silence” in other ways than to make it the determining factor regarding St. Thomas's teaching.

The second group of difficulties to which our thesis is subject is doctrinal, rather than textual, in nature. First, shouldn't we consider beauty as a transcendental of the good, so to speak, rather than as a transcendental of being? That is, as several scholars claim, the beautiful adds merely conceptually to the good, but this does not constitute an addition to being.<sup>39</sup> This objection, however, proposes a false dichotomy: adding merely conceptually to

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<sup>39</sup> See, *inter alia*: Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 344; Mark Jordan, “The Evidence of the Transcendentals and the Place of Beauty in Thomas Aquinas,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (1989), 399; Kevin O'Reilly, *Aesthetic Perception: A Thomistic Perspective* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007),

the good should not be set up against adding merely conceptually to being. As we have seen, St. Thomas makes clear in *De veritate* 21.3 that every transcendental (other than being) adds merely conceptually to the immediately prior transcendental, according to the order in which the transcendentals follow from being, and it is precisely in adding to its prior transcendental that every other transcendental adds to being. Therefore, the fact that the beautiful adds merely conceptually to the good, rather than militating against its being a transcendental, in fact constitutes a point in favor of its being a transcendental.

Second, one could enlarge upon a particular part of the prior objection and ask precisely in what way the beautiful adds to being: meaning, what it is that the beautiful adds to the good (and, thus, to being) that is not already included in the good and the true? The immediate answer, of course, is what St. Thomas repeatedly says: the beautiful adds to the good a certain ordering to the cognitive power. But according to this objection, the ordering to the cognitive power is precisely what the true adds to being, so it would seem that the beautiful is not at all different from the good: meaning, since the good includes and presupposes the true, and the true adds to being the mode of relation to the cognitive power, the beautiful does not appear to add to being a distinct, general mode of being that follows upon every being. Several things should be said in response to this objection. First, and most importantly for our considerations, St. Thomas, we have seen, insists (to the point of interrupting his commentary on Dionysius to make this point) that the beautiful is conceptually distinct from the good because it adds to the good a certain ordering to the cognitive power, and we have also seen that St. Thomas affirms that logically posterior

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108 (cited in Michael Rubin, *Beauty and the Order of Transcendentals in St. Thomas's Thought* [Master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 2011], 58).



transcendentals add to and presuppose logically prior transcendentals. Given these two facts, and barring any change of mind on St. Thomas's part regarding these two facts (for which there is no evidence), we must presume that the addition that the beautiful makes to the good is not the addition that the true makes to being, for that would not be an addition at all: since the true is contained within the good (i.e., the good includes and presupposes the true), and since the beautiful adds something conceptual to the good, it must be something other than what the true adds to being. This means that there must be a distinction between what the true adds to being and what the beautiful adds to the good, if we are to assume consistency on St. Thomas's part. The only question that remains, then, is in what precisely consists this distinction between what the true adds and what the beautiful adds.

I will conclude this talk by sketching two possible answers to this question, the first of which has been suggested (but it seems to me not satisfactorily worked out) by several scholars. This first solution is the following: whereas the good and the true each add a relation or ordering to a power of soul taken separately from the other powers, the beautiful adds a relation or ordering to the cognitive power and to the appetite simultaneously. In other words, the beautiful adds uniquely to being by adding an ordering to the two powers taken jointly. This suggestion does feel a bit contrived: is adding the notion of "jointness" to two already-added notions sufficient for the beautiful to constitute a distinct transcendental? More importantly, though, this solution seems to grant that the ordering to the cognitive power that is added by the beautiful is the same as that added by the true.

But this should not be granted. St. Thomas, in *ST I-IIae 27.1 ad 3*, speaks of the addition of the beautiful to the good as "a certain (*quaedam*) ordering to the cognitive

(*cognoscitiva*) power.”<sup>40</sup> So this is the most suitable point at which to begin crafting a solution, viz., by affirming that the beautiful makes a unique addition to being in adding to the good a certain ordering to the cognitive power. What we must do, of course, is distinguish this addition from the addition made by the true. The true is being as related to intellect, as intelligible, as perfective of intellects through its species; the good is, in addition to the true, being as related to appetite, as appetible, as perfective of anything through its sheer *esse*.<sup>41</sup> The beautiful is, in addition to the true and the good, being as an end for cognitive beings precisely in being apprehended. What I mean is this: with regard to cognitive beings, the true is being as apprehensible, the good is being as desirable upon being apprehended, and the beautiful is being as desirable in being apprehended. This harmonizes well with St. Thomas’s position that something is beautiful “precisely if and when it delights us upon becoming known to us,”<sup>42</sup> for this proposed addition of the beautiful to being encapsulates St. Thomas’s statement in *ST I-IIae 27.1 ad 3* that the beautiful is that the apprehension of which pleases.

This is, of course, barely a start at a solution, and a halting one, at that. There are, it seems to me, some difficulties with this solution, and certainly many things left to explain.

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<sup>40</sup> When describing the true, St. Thomas generally speaks of it as adding a relation to the intellect (*intellectus*). Sometimes (*In I Sent. I.19.5.1 ad 3*), however, he speaks of it as adding a relation to cognition (*cognitio*), and on one occasion (*DV 21.3*) he speaks of it as relating to beings as cognitive (*cognoscitiva*). On the other hand, St. Thomas always speaks of beauty as adding a certain relation to the cognitive power (*vis cognoscitiva*).

<sup>41</sup> See *DV 21.3*: “. . . ; vero enim non sunt nata perfici nisi illa quae possunt aliquod ens recipere in se ipsis vel in se ipsis habere secundum suam rationem et non secundum illud esse quod ens habet in se ipso; et huiusmodi sunt solum ea quae immaterialiter aliquid recipient et sunt cognoscitiva; . . . Sed a bono nata sunt perfici etiam illa quae secundum materiale esse aliquid recipient, cum ratio boni in hoc consistat quod aliquid sit perfectivum tam secundum rationem speciei quam etiam secundum esse, ut prius dictum est. Et ideo omnia appetunt bonum sed non omnia cognoscunt verum; . . . Secundo quia illa etiam quae nata sunt perfici bono et vero, per prius perficiuntur bono quam vero; ex hoc enim quod esse participant perficiuntur bono, ut dictum est; ex hoc autem quod cognoscunt aliquid perficiuntur vero” (Leon. 22.3.599: 68-74, 76-82, 86-90).

<sup>42</sup> Kovach, *Philosophy of Beauty* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 242.

Perhaps we can address these in a few minutes. But let me first, in conclusion, make a final point. It seems to me that the task here is to understand thoroughly the principles and fundamental positions of St. Thomas with regard to this question and, realizing that St. Thomas's account requires fleshing out, to rely on these principles and positions to develop a satisfactory account of the beautiful as a transcendental.