

Beauty among the Transcendentals in the *Summa Halensis*¹

JUSTIN SHAUN COYLE
Mount Angel Seminary
Saint Benedict, OR

“SO I THINK, HIPPIAS,” Socrates muses in Plato’s *Hippias Major*, “that I have been benefitted by conversation with both of you; for I think I know the meaning of the proverb, ‘Beautiful things are difficult.’”² Among beauty’s difficult things, at least for readers of Scholastic texts in the last century, stands the question of its transcendental status. Is beauty a transcendental determination of being like one, true, and good? The transcendental question kindles debate in recent literature. Probably it burns hottest in Thomistic camps.³ Sometimes scholars pose the question to the *Summa halensis* (*SH*) too, an early summa confected under the direction Alexander of Hales.⁴ Beauty’s place there, as in Thomas Aquinas’s

¹ My thanks are due Boyd Taylor Coolman, Philipp W. Rosemann, Stephen F. Brown, and Jordan Daniel Wood, who commented an earlier draft of this essay.

² Plato, *Hippias major* 304e, trans. Harold North Fowler in *Plato: Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*. Loeb Classical Library 167 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 323.

³ The best recent study on the transcendental question in Thomas Aquinas is Michael J. Rubin’s “The Meaning of ‘Beauty’ and Its Transcendental Status in the Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2016). Rubin’s work bears the dual virtues of summarizing and analyzing the long debate—he is expert at both tasks.

⁴ Here is a compressed biography: Alexander of Hales, English by birth and scholastic by training, was born around 1186; he studied and began teaching in the faculty of arts at Paris before 1210; he became regent master in the theology faculty around 1221, then the first lecturer to adopt the Lombard’s *Sentences* as his syllabus; he took the Franciscan habit in 1236 while occupying a chair, thereby smuggling the mendicants into the University; and he died in 1245, leaving his

texts, lacks consensus among its readers. That a single interpretive reading of Scholastic arcana should fail consensus hardly scandalizes. What does, however, is how this literature conducts its investigation of beauty's transcendental status without registering the peculiarities of Alexander's transcendental thought.

This article assays beauty's status among the transcendentals by registering those peculiarities. Doing that, I show, reveals something unexpected. *SH* conceives beauty very differently from its readers allow or notice. Alexander—I call him that⁵—evinces little interest in sorting beauty's transcendental status (which he finally denies). He prefers to speak beauty with Trinitarian grammar. For Alexander, beauty does not name one transcendental determination of being among others. Instead, he identi-

great *Summa* unfinished. This disappointed one of his admirers, Pope Alexander IV, who tasked the Franciscans with its completion in his 1255/1256 bull *De Fontibus Paradisi*. Other literary donations include his *Glossa* on the Lombard's *Sentences*, very many sets of disputed questions, and several scriptural commentaries—the majority of which remain unedited. For more on Alexander's life and work, see Kenan B. Osborne, "Alexander of Hales: Precursor and Promotor of Franciscan Theology," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan B. Osborne (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 1–58.

- ⁵ I do not mean to vindicate the uncritical assumption of book I's Quaracchi editors that Alexander of Hales penned the entire *Summa halensis* [*SH*] alone. I mean rather but to respect that the *SH*'s authors (whoever they were) preferred to write scenes under a single name: that of "Brother Alexander." In this way, the business of composing a *summa* follows what Lesley Smith calls "common mendicant pattern of working" ("Hugh of St. Cher and Medieval Collaboration," in *Transforming Relations: Essays on Jews and Christians throughout History in Honor of Michael A. Signer*, ed. Franklin T. Harkins [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010], 258). Whatever the case, by the time Roger Bacon submitted his now-famous *dubium* over Alexander's authorship, he confessed that "tamen propter reverentiam adscripta fuit et vocatur Summa fratris Alexandri [still it is reckoned and called the *Summa* of Brother Alexander out of reverence]" (J. S. Brewer, *Fr. Rogeri Bacon Opera Hactenus Inedita* [London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1859], 326). Still, I think it important to honor the friars' wishes to be read *per nomen magistri*. Wishes for and attempts at pseudepigraphic anonymity, after all, ought to be honored even—or perhaps especially—among the dead.

For more on the authorship problem, see Victorin Doucet, O.F.M., "The History of the Problem of the Authenticity of the *Summa*," *Franciscan Studies* 7 (1947): 26–41; 274–312. For a shorter study, see "Introductory Remarks," in Meldon C. Mass, O.F.M., *The Infinite God and the Summa Fratris Alexandri* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1964), 1–13. On the same, see also the introduction to Walter H. Principe's magisterial *Alexander of Hales's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967).

fies beauty with the very taxis of the Trinitarian persons—it forms their structure, their taxis, their “sacred order.”⁶ It is exactly this taxic shape of Alexander’s theological aesthetics that the literature pays little mind. There is little wonder why: the Trinitarian grammar of beauty in *SH* transgresses the constricted boundaries of the transcendental status question. So this article meets the transcendental question in Alexander’s *Summa* mostly to transfigure it. Only a transfiguration of the question renders Alexander’s elegant and highly distinctive Trinitarian aesthetic again visible.

That, anyway, is what this article seeks: the public display of Alexander’s Trinitarian aesthetic for appreciation and scrutiny. Or so the goal—here is its structure: First, I relay an aporia in the literature over beauty’s transcendentality *SH*. Second, I commend an anonymous thirteenth-century text that reinscribes and reshapes Alexander’s position on beauty. Third and before concluding, I study a forgotten scene in Alexander’s *Summa* to remember his alternative Trinitarian account. That account bears considerable promise, I think. But it must first be recovered from depths that have long since passed out of theological memory.

Is Beauty a Transcendental? An Aesthetic Aporia

I begin by opening an aporetic gap,⁷ one that yawns between two answers to the question of beauty’s transcendental status in *SH*.

The *prima pars* of *SH* seems to subordinate beauty to the good, at least structurally. Alexander affords one, true, and good each a treatise all their own.⁸ Beauty merits no such treatise—not even a *membrum* or chapter. It claims only a single article⁹ within a larger dialectical cycle of questions on

⁶ *SH* I, no. 103, in *Summa Theologica Doctoris Irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis Minorum (Summa halensis)*, 4 vols. (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924–48), 1:163. All Latin from *SH* is from this edition and all translations are my own. Unless otherwise noted, all other English translations are also my own.

⁷ To my mind, only Edgar de Bruyne registers this apparent aporia; see “Les premiers scolastiques” in *Études d’esthétique médiévale III: Le xiii siècle* (Bruges: De tempel, 1946): “Alexander thus begins the metaphysical subjectivism in the doctrine of beauty and perhaps even in that of the transcendental properties” (89; emphasis mine); “Wanting to demonstrate in turn that everything is good and beautiful, Alexander comes across two definitions of beauty of equal value. The first definitely does not have a transcendental meaning” (97; emphasis mine).

⁸ On one, *SH* I, nos. 72–86 (Quaracchi ed., 1:112–36); on true, nos. 87–101 (1:138–58); on good, nos. 102–30 (1:160–99).

⁹ *SH* I, no. 103 (Quaracchi ed., 1:162), or “An idem sit bonum et pulcrum” (“Whether the Good be the same as the Beautiful”).

the good's relation to other terms—to being, to beauty, to the final cause.¹⁰ Some readers parlay Alexander's structural subordination of beauty to the good into a metaphysical hierarchy. Beauty, they think, “becomes more or less an epiphenomenon of the good.”¹¹ Often these readers say vanishingly little about how beauty relates to other transcendentals. On their view, it matters only that beauty does not number among them. That beauty appears indexed to the good means it forms a second-class transcendental, whatever indeed that might mean.

But Alexander's *prima secundae* weaves another tale. Its long treatise *De pulchritudine creati* begins thus:

Next to consider, after the conditions of creatures with regard to quantity, are the conditions of creatures with regard to quality, and these are true, good, and beauty. But truth and goodness were discussed above in the treatise on the essential things said of God. Now follows a consideration of the beautiful or beauty.¹²

True, good—and beauty?¹³ Beauty now stands among the other transcendentals without qualification. Gone are its structural chains to the good. That beauty appears here alongside “true” and “good” persuades other readers to confer upon it a transcendental status.¹⁴ These readers rarely notice

¹⁰ Together these comprise the question *Quid sit bonum secundum rationem suae intentionis* at *SH* I, nos. 102–4 (Quaracchi ed., 1:160–63).

¹¹ The primary proponents of the anti-transcendental reading are Dieter Halcour, “Tractatus de transcendentalibus entis conditionibus,” *Franziskanische Studien* 41 (1959): 41–106, and Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) As I will show below, Aertsen's argument depends heavily upon Halcour's.

¹² *SH* I-II, no. 75: “Vertitur deinde consideratio, post conditiones creaturae ex parte quantitatis, circa conditiones ex parte qualitatis, quae sunt: verum, bonum, et pulcrum. De veritate autem et bonitate dictum est superius in Tractatu de essentialibus dictis de Deo. Siquitur consideratio de pulchritudine et pulcro” (Quaracchi ed., 2:99).

¹³ Aertsen is likely correct to say that the “true, good, beautiful” as a formulation of a “classical” ideal in, say, Victor Cousin's 1836 *Du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien*, or Immanuel Kant's three critiques, or in Friedrich Nietzsche's “Antagonismus von ‘wahr’ und ‘schön’ und ‘gut,’” actually crops up for the first time in *SH* (“The Triad ‘True-Good-Beautiful’: The Place of Beauty in the Middle Ages,” in *Intellect et imagination dans la philosophie médiévale: actes du XIe Congrès international de philosophie médiévale de la Société internationale pour l'étude*, vol. 1, eds. Maria Cândida Pachecho and José F. Meirinhos [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 415–35).

¹⁴ Among these readers are Henri Pouillon, “La beauté, propriété transcendante chez les scolastiques (1220–1270),” in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du*

that “one” has vanished. Neither do they ask after it. They notice only beauty’s sudden presence among true and good. And that is proof enough, it seems, of beauty’s transcendentality.

So opens the aporia before us, clear and vivid: How to construe beauty’s transcendental status as Alexander imagines it? Is beauty a transcendental in its own right? Or is it otherwise accessory to the good?

Recent interest in *SH* on beauty prizes its novelty. “Hales is the first,” de Bruyne argues, “to formulate this question in a precise manner.”¹⁵ Minor qualifications aside, this is very nearly right. Scholars agree that *SH* marks an axial moment in the transcendental question and its development across the Scholastic idiom. Among the most prominent interpretive lines on the transcendental question in *SH* and its influence are those traced by Umberto Eco and Jan Aertsen. Both thread *SH* into their broader work on medieval aesthetics.

Eco first, since it is to him that scholars defer and his whose reading Aertsen disputes. Eco tenders a bashful “yes” to the transcendental question. Yes, he writes, “the *Summa* of Alexander of Hales . . . decisively solved the problem of the transcendental character of beauty, and its distinction from other values.”¹⁶ There is no question for Eco, that is, that *SH* gifts to beauty all the benefits proper to a transcendental. It does all this, too, “in an act of speculative courage.”¹⁷

But how on this reading, recalling the aporia before us, to explain beauty’s apparent subordination to the good in *SH* I? Here Eco assumes *SH*’s speculative courage yields to the prudence of convention. Alexander hesitates to catalog beauty among the transcendentals, Eco claims, “no doubt because of the usual prudent reluctance of the scholastics to give an open and unambiguous welcome to philosophical innovation.”¹⁸ Whatever the reason, Eco meets the aporia by affirming the transcendental status of

Moyen Age (Paris: Vingt et unième année, 1946): 278–79, and Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986). Eco depends heavily on Pouillon’s reading.

¹⁵ De Bruyne, “Les premiers scolastiques,” 90–91; see also 96: “Few Scholastics grasped its depth and coherence.” This is not to say, of course, that others had not raised the question in a theological key. I think specifically of Augustine, Boethius, Dionysius, Eriugena, Anselm, Hugh of St Victor, Alan of Lille, Bernard of Clairvaux, and William of Auvergne. Neither do I mean necessarily to endorse de Bruyne’s claim that *SH* is the first to raise the question systematically. I repeat it only to flag the importance (and paradoxical neglect) of *SH*’s theological aesthetics.

¹⁶ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 23.

¹⁷ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 24. See also Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 45.

¹⁸ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 24; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 45.

beauty. And doing that, it seems obvious to say, means favoring *SH* I-II, no. 75, over *SH* I, no. 103. Still Eco's "yes" remains qualified exactly to the extent that he thinks Scholastic decorum required Alexander to innovate in hushed corridors, in whispers, in secret. "The boldness of [Alexander's] innovation," Eco concludes, "required caution in its implementation."¹⁹

Aertsen disagrees. In his final book, Aertsen razes Eco's arguments with dispatch and without remainder in two moves.²⁰ The first rejects as flaccid Eco's argument from Scholastic prudence. The doctrine of the transcendentals, Aertsen writes hotly, was itself a recent innovation. How on Eco's account to explain why Thomas Aquinas announces some *six* transcendental terms only ten years later and without much hand-wringing?²¹ Second, Aertsen thinks Eco's fevered search for beauty rides roughshod over textual difficulties. Principal among these difficulties, of course, runs the subordination of beauty to the good in *SH* I, n. 103:

The *Summa* does not speak about the beautiful as expressing a universal mode of *being*. The exposition is restricted to the differen-

¹⁹ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 24; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 45. Eco attempts a palimpsest of his source, but he manages only a carbon copy. His source is Pouillon's "La beauté," 278–79, which argues: "Philip the Chancellor's treatise on the transcendental properties of being includes only three properties. Without expressly adding a fourth, Considerans, after Jean de la Rochelle, introduces beauty into this circle and treats it like the other transcendentals: they are the same in substance but differ by reason, bringing it very close to the Good. He affirms its universal extension. On this point Jean de la Rochelle and Considerans innovate. This explains the brevity and relative timidity of their assertions about the transcendental value of beauty. . . . Were they the first to do so? As far as we know, yes." Eco references Pouillon only once in *Art and Beauty*, and not on these points. Eco makes his references plainer in his 1970 *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino*, the original of *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*. Anyhow, I report this not to arraign Eco, but to summon another voice in favor of the transcendental thesis. Pouillon's voice, after all, sounded first among recent scholarship on beauty in *SH*. And it is his too that Eco imitates as he argues for beauty's transcendentality.

²⁰ Aertsen makes similar arguments in his earlier "Beauty in the Middle Ages: A Forgotten Transcendental?," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991): 68–97, and "Die Frage nach der Transzendentalität der Schönheit im Mittelalter," in *Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi: Festschrift für Kurt Flasch*, ed. Burkhard Mojsisch and Olaf Pluta (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1991), 1–22.

²¹ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor to Francisco Suarez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 172 (hereafter, *Transcendental Thought*, to distinguish from *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas*). Aertsen here invokes Thomas's treatment in *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1.

tiation between the *good* and the beautiful. This differentiation is . . . a new element in comparison with pseudo-Dionysius, yet it still does not provide a sufficient reason for the distinctive transcendentalty of the beautiful.²²

Better to class beauty an “epiphenomenon of the good,”²³ Aertsen counsels. After all, beauty is present only where the good is also. Buried within his critique of Eco lies Aertsen’s own position on beauty’s transcendental status. The position Aertsen draws is, as the above suggests, weighted heavily toward protestation. For Aertsen, the extent to which beauty runs subordinate to the good is just the extent to which beauty cannot prove a transcendental under its own steam.²⁴

So run the two interpretive lines on beauty’s transcendentalty in *SH*—neither of which overcome the aporia, really. Both finally boost one text only to knock the other. With Henri Pouillon, Eco privileges *SH* I-II, no. 75, to defend beauty’s transcendentalty. Is not beauty there named a *conditio creaturae* alongside true and good? With Dieter Halcour, Aertsen privileges *SH* I, no. 103, precisely to deny the same. Beauty stands there as an “epiphenomenon of the good,” not as a determination of being on its own.

There is more. Readers familiar with sea battles over beauty’s status in Thomistic waters will recognize that *SH* floats far from safe harbor. The positions Eco and Aertsen draw on beauty’s status in Alexander already anticipate their positions on the same in Thomas. The contest over Alexander’s *SH*, it turns out, is hardly neutral. It is a skirmish—an exercise in reconnaissance for the gathering battle over Thomas Aquinas.

Look again at Eco. Which are his criteria for transcendentalty? He stipulates (1) convertibility with being and (2) intentional distinction. *SH*, Eco concludes, quietly allows beauty to meet this canon without trumpet-

²² Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 172.

²³ Aertsen here reinscribes Halcour’s judgment (see Halcour, “Tractatus,” 49).

²⁴ Aertsen rehearses a similar argument in his earlier “Das Schöne,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* vol 8, *R–Sc*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel: Schwabe, 1992), 1354: “It is striking that the *Summa fratris Alexandri* in its presentation does not add Beauty as an independent transcendental to the ‘first determinations of Being’ (One, True, Good), but rather discusses Beauty in the context of the Good.” See also Aertsen, “Triad,” 429: “The first book of the *Summa halensis* gives an extensive account of the ‘first determinations of being,’ namely, ‘the one,’ ‘the true,’ and ‘the good,’ but does not incorporate ‘the beautiful’ into this list. Eco’s observation that this *Summa* ‘decisively solved the transcendental character of beauty’ seems unfounded.”

ing it. On this point, Aertsen is no doubt correct to register doubt over Eco's indulgent psychologizing. But notice the work this does for Eco. He flags Alexander's hesitation to blazon beauty's transcendentality exactly because he finds the same in Thomas Aquinas. "Not many years separate [Thomas's *Summa theologiae*] from the work of John of la Rochelle. Some element of caution must have remained."²⁵ Thomas "tackled the themes of his *Summa* with reserve; moderation had to be reestablished."²⁶ Otherwise put, Thomas too endorsed beauty's transcendentality furtively—he mimicked *SH*. So much seems clear: Eco's answer to the transcendentality question in *SH* remains overwritten by his answer to the same in Thomas Aquinas.

Aertsen too betrays preoccupation with the Thomistic question. In near perfect counterpoint to Eco, it is Aertsen's denial of beauty's transcendentality in Alexander that betrays his preoccupation. Consider Aertsen's transcendental criteria. Aertsen discounts beauty as a transcendental in *SH* on the grounds that it fails to name an expression of *being*. Yet that transcendentals ought to add something conceptually to being features as one of Aertsen's central criteria for transcendentality in *Thomas*:

The question as to the transcendentality of the beautiful cannot be resolved until it has become clear what universal mode of *being* the beautiful expresses that is not yet expressed by the other transcendentals, and what its place is in the order of these properties.²⁷

This new canon renders "indisputable that [Aertsen] has made the greatest contribution of any scholar to the debate over beauty's transcendental status." Why? Because Aertsen "has manifested the only principle by which one can determine whether beauty is a transcendental in Thomas's thought."²⁸ Surely that is right, at least for the Thomistic question. That debate raging around it needed clear criteria. And these criteria, Aertsen argued, reveal that Thomas denies beauty's transcendental status.²⁹

²⁵ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 45. Eco follows many in assuming John of Rochelle penned *SH* I and *SH* III.

²⁶ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 46.

²⁷ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 337, and *Transcendental Thought*, 176.

²⁸ Rubin, "Meaning of Beauty," 91.

²⁹ Rubin summarizes nicely in "The Meaning of Beauty," 92, that Aertsen "comes to three conclusions: (1) that a 'clarification' of beauty's transcendental status 'is not to be found in Thomas's writings' [Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 351], (2) that 'the attempts of various scholars to find a distinct place for beauty as a transcendental must be regarded as having failed' [353], and (3) that in fact

However successful Aertsen's transcendental canon within Thomistic circles,³⁰ he transposes it now onto *SH*. And as we might expect, his conclusion there portends his conclusion in Thomas. So far as *SH* does not write of "the beautiful as expressing a universal mode of *being*," beauty cannot prove a transcendental.

Together, these notes yield two conclusions. First, the literature has drawn but scarcely overcome an aporia over beauty's transcendental status in *SH*. Second, that literature has read *SH* mostly as a cipher for Thomas's texts. Or deeper reading reveals the debate between Eco and Aertsen to be heavily coded. Their respective criteria for transcendentality, that is, derives from and anticipates their interpretation of Thomas. As a result, their collective reading of *SH* assumes conclusions borrowed from their arguments over Thomas. More, both Eco and Aertsen do this without registering differences between transcendental thought in *SH* and in Thomas.³¹ Neither reader has adopted Alain de Libera's axiom that sometimes to read other Scholastics well, "we must forget Thomas Aquinas."³² Nor has either reader allowed the text to surprise him, to disrupt his expectations.³³ This can be forgiven Eco—whose interest in *SH* remains peripheral—but not Aertsen. It is Aertsen, after all, who stresses the distinctive notes sounded in Alexander's transcendental thought.³⁴ It is he, too, who discerns the peculiarity of Alexander's "trinitarian motive."³⁵ But why,

'the beautiful is not a distinct transcendental' in Thomas's thought [354], but is rather 'the extension of the true to the good' [359]."

³⁰ Several scholars attack Aertsen's guideline as inadequate, such as: Michael Waddell, "Truth Beloved: Thomas Aquinas and the Relational Transcendentals" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2000); Louis-Marie de Bagnieres, *Le mystère de l'être: L'approche thomiste de Guérard des Lauriers*, preface by Serge-Thomas Bonino (Paris: J. Vrin, 2007); and D. C. Schindler, "The Transcendentals," in *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 350–421. See also Rubin's fine taxonomy and evaluation of arguments for and against beauty's transcendentality in Thomas Aquinas in his "The Meaning of Beauty," 88–149.

³¹ These differences are many, though I shall not explore them here. The major difference, however, has to do with Trinitarian appropriation. See note 63 below.

³² Alain de Libera, *Albert le Grand et la philosophie: A la recherche de la vérité* (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 11.

³³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 280.

³⁴ Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 135–76.

³⁵ Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 147. And later, at 674: "From the very beginning the medieval concern with the transcendentals was motivated by a theological interest. The most extensive account of these notions in the thirteenth century appears in the *Summa halensis*, where it serves as the metaphysical basis for the

then, does Aertsen uncritically transpose his canon for transcendentalism in Thomas onto *SH*?³⁶

An Anonymous Proposal

Aertsen is not content merely to overturn Eco. He wants to locate the site of the aesthetic confusion, to map its genesis. He wants to learn who first accords beauty a transcendental status. He discovers a candidate—or a culprit—in an anonymous Franciscan gloss on *SH* called the *Tractatus de transcendentalibus entis conditionibus*.³⁷ The title commits anachronism—it is furnished by an editor, not its author. History hides that author from view. The text circulated under Bonaventure's name for some time, though its true provenance remains unclear.³⁸ Clearer, however, is that it is the first treatise to register beauty among the determinations of being. Or so Aertsen, who follows rather closely Halcour's introduction to his edition of the text.

The passage in question comes early in the *Tractatus*:

explanation of the divine attributes 'unity,' 'truth' and 'goodness.' . . . A specific interest of the relation between the transcendentals and the divine bears upon a fundamental doctrine of Christian theology, the doctrine of the Trinity."

³⁶ This is especially curious given the fact that Aertsen himself, quoting Norman Kretzmann, notices that Thomas "never presents the Trinitarian appropriation of the transcendentals unmistakably in his own voice. . . . This appropriation remains much more in the background of his work than it does in the writings of the representatives of the early Franciscan school at Paris, Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure" (Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 412; see also Kretzmann, "Trinity and Transcendentals," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990], 91).

³⁷ Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 169. See also Halcour, "Tractatus," 47: "The author of Assisi B.C. 186 is actually the first and, strictly speaking, the only one explicitly to present the transcendentals as fourfold! . . . Thus beauty is a transcendental."

³⁸ Halcour assays the authorship question in "Tractatus," 58–63: "Assisi B.C. 186 presents a summary which a student of Alexander's—from his [disputed] questions, from his *Summa [fratris Alexandri]*, and from the works of other masters like Jean de la Rochelle, Odo Rigaldus, Gueric—produced in several redactions. He supplemented and expanded it with his own thoughts to use it either as a concept for the purposes of teaching (perhaps he was a future master) or as a draft for his own commentary on the Sentences. This student might but need not be Bonaventure" (63). Sister Emma Jane Marie Spargo demurs without having herself consulted the text and on the authority of Pouillon alone, "whose judgment . . . need not be questioned" (*The Category of the Aesthetic in the Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure* [St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1953], 34).

We should say that these conditions are established above being, for they add a certain *ratio*. Hence one, true, good, and beauty presuppose the understanding of being, in which they share and redound upon one another: for beauty foreknows good, and good true, and true one, but one being itself, for which reason being is said to be absolute. One adds indivision beyond being; for one is the indivision of being. But true is called the indivision of form from matter or *quod est* and *quo est*. But good is called the indivision of potency from act. Hence, according to appropriation [*secundum appropriationem*], one considers the efficient cause, true the formal, and good the final. But beauty circulates through [*circuit*] all causes and is common to them.³⁹

Aertsen discerns the logic of appropriation at work. This lends evidence to Halcour's claim that the *Tractatus* probably comments or glosses the transcendental treatise of Alexander's *SH*. Perhaps the anonymous friar penned it "as a concept for the purposes of teaching," perhaps "as a draft for his own commentary on the *Sentences*."⁴⁰ Whatever its intimacy with Alexander, Aertsen registers a difference. He thinks the anonymous friar's decision to accord beauty "a place of its own in virtue of its synthesizing function" marks a "surprising" innovation.⁴¹ Aertsen continues. The text's definition of beauty as "circulating through all causes" concocts "an isolated statement," not "explained or grounded."⁴² Aertsen's point is clear. If the *Tractatus* be the first to crown beauty with transcendental status, it does so only by innovating *SH*—or by transgressing it.

An innovation perhaps. But a transgression neither "explained" nor "grounded"? Notice a passage in the *Tractatus* that Aertsen does not. An objection issues from Augustine's by-then cliché definition of beauty in *De*

³⁹ *Tractatus de transcendentalibus*, q. 1: "Dicendum, quod istae conditiones fundantur supra ens, addunt enim aliquam rationem. Unde unum, verum, bonum et pulcrum praesupponunt intellectum entis, in quo communicant, et rursus haec invicem praeintelligunt se: nam pulcrum praeintelligit bonum, et bonum verum, et verum unum, unum autem ipsum ens, quod patet, quia ens dicit absolutum. Unum addit indivisionem supra ens; unum enim est indivisio entis. Sed verum dicit indivisionem formae a materia sive 'quod est' et 'quo est.' Bonum autem dicit indivisionem potentiae ab actu. Unde unum respicit causam efficientem, verum formalem, bonum autem finalem secundum appropriationem. Sed pulcrum circuit omnem causam et est commune ad ista" (Halcour, "Tractatus," 65).

⁴⁰ Halcour, "Tractatus," 63.

⁴¹ Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 170.

⁴² Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 170.

civitate Dei 22.19 as *partium congruentia*. Must this mean that beauty is in bodies only (*pulchritudo est solum in corporibus*)? The *Tractatus* responds:

There is a congruence of parts, a congruence of *ratios*, and a congruence of order. The first is beauty in bodies; the second is beauty in creatures of spiritual substances, according to essential but not qualitative parts, which are matter and form, *quod est* and *quo est*, but this is not in God. In God there is the highest congruence of order, the highest congruence of *ratios*, thus this is the highest beauty.⁴³

This hardly forms a complete explanation, but it is a start. At the very least, the passage explains why the text invests beauty with a “synthesizing function.” Beauty, the anonymous friar learns from Augustine, entails a harmony or congruence of parts. And not just in bodies. The angels too are beautiful because they are composed, however exactly that is.⁴⁴ Of course God remains uncomposed—divine simplicity demands it. But this need not subvert God’s claim to beauty. For in God, anonymous writes, lives the highest congruence of order (*summa congruentia ordinis*), itself the highest beauty (*summa pulcritudinis*).

The text does not detail this order. Neither does it name the order’s constituent “parts.” It teaches only that beauty arranges and orders its constituents—in bodies parts, in angels form and matter (or essence and existence). Beauty reprises this role among the transcendentals, or those *conditiones* which *addunt aliquam rationem supra ens* (add a certain reason to being). Alexander illustrates this “certain reason” by appeal to Aristotle’s immaterial causes. Each adds to the next. So too, each new transcendental performs a “progressive” or “cumulative” function.⁴⁵ And beauty

⁴³ *Tractatus de transcendentalibus*, q. 1: “Aliter dici potest, quod est congruentia partium, est congruentia rationum, est congruentia ordinis. Prima est pulchritudo in corporalibus; secunda in substantiis spiritualibus creatis, non secundum partes quantitativas, sed essentiales, quae sunt materia et forma, ‘quod est’ et ‘quo est,’ haec autem non est in Deo. Sed in ipso est summa congruentia ordinis [et] summa congruentia rationum, ideo et summa pulcritudinis” (Halcour, “Tractatus,” 67).

⁴⁴ The line the text here draws on the constitution of angels is puzzling. The angels seem constituted both by matter and form *and* by essence and existence. How exactly this coheres with other Franciscan texts at the time (Bonaventure’s, say, or else Odo Rigaldus’s or John of Rochelle’s) seems unclear, though it might offer another point of comparison for resolving the authorship question.

⁴⁵ The former term belongs to Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 351; the latter to Boyd Taylor Coolman, in “A Cord of Three Strands Is Not Easily Broken”: The Tran-

comes last, sublating every and each transcendental—which is also every and each cause—within itself. So “beauty circulates through [*circuit*] all causes and is common to them.”⁴⁶

Aertsen thought the *Tractatus*’s synthetic role for beauty neither “explained” nor “grounded.” We have seen it explained, if incompletely. Might it be grounded too?

Beauty as Sacred Order

This section mounts a partial defense of the anonymous *Tractatus* author. The synthetic role he vests beauty with among the transcendentals is not, I claim, a “surprising innovation.” Attention to *SH* shows that the *Tractatus* author writes a legitimate—if not finally exact—icon of Alexander’s aesthetics. That Aertsen can so easily dismiss the nameless author’s claim to legitimate interpretation of *SH*, that interpreters neglect beauty’s synthetic presence among the transcendentals in *SH*, and that aesthetic interest in *SH* is wholly circumscribed by the transcendental question—all this follows from neglect of a single passage in *SH*. This is a pity, since that passage rewards close readers with a rather different and, I think, more delicate pattern of Alexander’s thought on aesthetics. His readers ignore that pattern, not least because they have dialed their scopes for the transcendental question alone.

So far as I can tell, all of *SH*’s recent readers simply cease reading after Alexander’s *respondeo*.⁴⁷ “That is all we find on Beauty,” Pouillon announces after reading it, “in the first part of the *Summa fratris Alexan-*

scendental Brocade of Unity, Truth and Goodness in the Early Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 16, no. 2 (2018): 561–86. Both describe the same phenomenon, that each transcendental is synthetic to the extent that each conceptually contains the transcendentals which precede it. See also Rubin, “The Meaning of Beauty,” 93.

⁴⁶ It is worth noting that Spargo’s judgment that beauty is a transcendental for Bonaventure rests on this text alone, whose authorship she ascribes to Bonaventure: “From the point of view of causality, it can be said that the one refers to efficient causality, the true to formal causality, and the good to final causality. But the beautiful embraces all these causes” (*Category of the Aesthetic*, 36). Spargo’s conclusion gets reinscribed in David E. Ost’s “Bonaventure: The Aesthetic Synthesis,” *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976): 243. For a more sophisticated treatment of Bonaventure on beauty’s transcendentality, see Karl Peter’s *Die Lehre der Schönheit nach Bonaventura* (Werl: Dietrich-Coelde, 1964), esp. 115–29.

⁴⁷ Exceptions here are Pouillon’s “La beauté,” 276, and de Bruyne’s “Les premiers scolastiques,” 110.

dri.⁴⁸ This explains why his and others' interest begins and ends with how to conceive beauty's relation or subordination to the good or the true. But there lingers below an important, tightly compressed argument interred in a response to the second objection. What escapes modern readers, however, rarely eludes Scholastics. The passage does not escape the *Tractatus* author's gaze. For this reason, I read in reverse: the forgotten reply to objection 2 first, the *respondeo* next.

Open curtains, then, on that forgotten scene. There, as in the *Tractatus*, *SH* meets an objection that the Augustinian definition of beauty renders the beautiful coterminous with the corporeal. Alexander responds. "There Augustine defines the beauty of visible or bodily things, but the same might be said of the beauty of fleshy, sensible things *just to the extent that it leads to* beauty intelligible or spiritual."⁴⁹ The created order thus constitutes what Bonaventure later calls a ladder whose parallel rungs chart the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.⁵⁰ Here already in *SH* the beauty that flits across creation's surface discloses its transcendent depths.

All that is typical to any broadly Platonic aesthetic, really. But Alexander presses further still:

For just as [Augustine says that] "the beauty of bodies is from a harmony of the composition of its parts, " so also is the beauty of souls from a harmony of powers and the ordering of faculties [*ex convenientia virium et ordinatione potentiarum*]. And beauty in the divine is from the sacred order of the divine persons [*ex ordine sacro divinarum personarum*], in such a manner that one person is not from another—[a person] from whom another is by generation [*per generationem*], and from [these two persons] a third is by procession (*per processionem*).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Pouillon, "La beauté," 276.

⁴⁹ *SHI*, no. 103 (Quaracchi ed., 1:163).

⁵⁰ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 1.2–3, 4.2, 7.1 (*Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, ed. The Fathers of the College of St. Bonaventure, vol. 5 [Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1891], 297, 306, 312).

⁵¹ *SHI*, n. 103: "Ad secundum dicendum quod illud Augustini definit pulcritudinem visibilem sive corporalem; tamen dicitur de pulcritudine corporali sensibili, in quantum ducit ad intelligibilem sive spiritualement. Sicut enim 'pulchritudo corporum est ex congruentia compositionis partium,' ita pulchritudo animarum ex convenientia virium et ordinatione potentiarum, et pulchritudo in divinis ex ordine sacro divinarum personarum, qua una persona non ab alia, a qua alia per generationem, a quibus tertia per processionem" (Quaracchi ed., 1:163).

The passage proceeds in three steps. It first extends the Augustinian line on fleshy beauty to the beauty of souls. Then it extends the definition of beauty as “a harmony of parts” still more—it stretches even to God.⁵² (Again, a *prima facie* problem given divine simplicity.) Third and most striking, the text submits an explicitly Trinitarian canon for beauty. Notice how this Trinitarian canon already resolves the problem of parts-talk in God. Here, talk of “parts” issues negation. Unlike the body’s limbs and the soul’s powers, God’s “parts” enjoy essential identity and personal difference.⁵³ So God the Trinity has and is God’s “parts.”

This introduces Alexander’s peculiar grammar of divine beauty. For him, it is not God as divine *essence* that makes God beautiful and indeed Beauty itself, as Dionysius and the long Neoplatonic tradition had

⁵² Though Harald Hagendahl does not cite any classical source for Augustine’s definition of beauty at *De civitate Dei* 22.19—well-known also to Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Ulrich of Strasburg—he cites Cicero’s *Tusculanae disputationes* 4.13.30–31 as the source for a near identical passage in Augustine’s Epistle 3, no. 4 (*Augustine and the Latin Classics* [Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967], 319). Oleg V. Bychkov shows that Cicero’s own definition owes to the Stoics, particularly Chrysippus, whom Galen reports as holding that “beauty arises from the symmetry of parts” (see “The Reflection of Some Traditional Stoic Ideas in the Thirteenth-Century Scholastic Theories of Beauty,” *Vivarium* 34, no. 2 [1996]: 141–60).

⁵³ It was by now a Franciscan tradition to deny the soul’s essential identity with its parts. The so-called identity thesis derived mostly from chapter 13 of the pseudo-Augustinian *De spiritu et anima*. It found its strongest thirteenth-century defender in Philip the Chancellor and its strongest opponent in William of Auxerre. In any case, the Franciscan school from Alexander’s *Glossa* on attempted conciliation and seems to have won the day. For early Franciscan positions, see: Alexander of Hales, *Glossa* 1, d. 3, 46a, in *Glossa in quatuor libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi* (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1951), 64–65; John of la Rochelle, *Summa de anima* 60, ed. J.-G. Bougerol (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 181–84; and *SH* I-II, no. 349 (Quaracchi ed., 2:424–25). For William of Auxerre’s position, see his *Summa aurea* II, tr. 9, c. 1, q. 6, ed. J. Ribailier (Rome: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas Grottaferrata, 1982). For more on this tangled Scholastic issue, see, e.g., Pius Künzle, O.P., *Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen: problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen von Augustin bis und mit Thomas von Aquin* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1956); Magdalena Bieniak, *The Soul–Body Problem at Paris, ca. 1200–1250: Hugh of St-Cher and His Contemporaries*, trans. Raffaella Roncarati (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 95–118; and Denise Ryan, “An Examination of a Thirteenth-Century Treatise on the Mind/Body Dichotomy: Jean de La Rochelle on the Soul and its Powers” (PhD diss., National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2010), 115–20.

taught.⁵⁴ No, it is rather God as *Trinity*.⁵⁵ From Augustine, Alexander adopts a grammar of beauty whose definition is harmonious or relational.⁵⁶ Beauty on this view names a harmony of parts. From Dionysius, he adapts a Neoplatonic identification of the cause of beauty with Beauty itself, or a grammar of beauty that is causal. So beauty is a name for the supremely simple God. Then Alexander commingles these: divine beauty is a harmony of God's persons, which are not really "parts." This synthesis, the coalescing of an Augustinian aesthetic with the Dionysian, becomes the style-signature of *SH*'s theological aesthetics. Beauty is at once relational and causal exactly because God is at once Trinity and Creator. And this fits rather comfortably with what the *Tractatus* author writes, even if the latter

⁵⁴ Remember Plotinus's arguments against Stoic grammars of beauty at *Enneads* 1.6: "Nearly everyone says that it is good proportion of the parts to each other and to the whole, with the addition of good colour, which produces visible beauty, and that with the objects of sight and generally with everything else, being beautiful is well-proportioned and measured. On this theory nothing single and simple but only a composite thing will have any beauty. It will be the whole which is beautiful, and the parts will not have the property of beauty by themselves, but will contribute to the beauty of the whole. . . . But how does the bodily agree with that which is before the body? How does the architect declare the house outside beautiful by fitting it to the form of house within him? . . . All these other things are external additions and mixtures and not primary . . . in any case, however, beauty [*to kalon*] is in the intelligible world" (*Plotinus: Porphyry on Plotinus: Ennead I*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library 440 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press], 235–63). Proclus underlines the unity of beauty by naming it the "form of form" in *Theology of Plato* 3.18, reproduced in Brendan Thomas Sammon in *The God Who Is Beauty: Beauty as a Divine Name in Thomas Aquinas and Dionysius the Areopagite* (London: James Clarke, 2014), 72. Neither Plotinus nor Proclus obviously identify beauty with the One, though Dionysius tightens this connection at *Divine Names* 4.7, trans. John Parker in *Dionysius the Areopagite, Works* (London: James Clarke, 1879), 33: "But, the superessential Beautiful is called Beauty, on account of the beauty communicated from Itself to all beautiful things, in a manner appropriate to each, and as Cause of the good harmony and brightness of all things which flashes like light to all the beautifying distributions of its fontal ray, and as calling all things to Itself (whence also it is called Beauty), and as collecting all in all to Itself."

⁵⁵ Not that God as divine essence is somehow other than God as three persons. The difference I highlight here is one of emphasis. I should say, too, that there's a loose connection here to the kind of "Trinitarian aesthetics" Coolman discovers in Hugh of St. Victor, though the latter's grammar of aesthetics seems grounded more in the subjective delight of the persons one in another than in their objective perichoresis (Boyd Taylor Coolman, "In Whom I am Well Pleased": Hugh of St. Victor's Trinitarian Aesthetics," *Pro Ecclesia* 23, no. 3 [2014]: 331–54).

⁵⁶ Or rather simply Stoic. See note 51 above.

does not reproduce all of Alexander's Trinitarian precisions.

Suppose as Alexander does that beauty names the sacred order that comprises the inner life of the Trinity. Suppose too that this order serves as both canon and source of all beauty. What follows? Which are the implications of thinking beauty Trinitarianly? They are at least four—I arrange them in ascending order of importance before returning to the *respondeo*.

A first implication: this passage from Alexander establishes precedent for the *Tractatus*. Not that there exist no variations between them—there are some. The *Tractatus* only susurrates, for instance, the Trinitarian connection that Alexander pronounces.⁵⁷ The former admits that beauty arranges parts in bodies and metaphysical elements in angels. It then locates beauty *in Deo* as *summa congruentia ordinis*.⁵⁸ But the text remains oracular about how this synthesizing feature of beauty works in—and presumably *as*—God. After all, what in God does beauty synthesize? On this point, Alexander's *Summa* completes the analogy. Beauty names the sacred order of the Trinitarian persons (*ex ordine sacro divinarum personarum*), their mutual interpenetration, their taxic order. The “elements” of beauty's synthesis in God, put differently, must be the divine persons. Perhaps a spoor of this Trinitarian logic lingers in the *Tractatus*. Anonymous, recall, writes of beauty that it *circuit omnem causam*. Remember that *circuitio* often replaces the Greek *perichōrēsis* in Burgundio of Pisa's twelfth-century translation of *De fide orthodoxa*. So a Trinitarian correlation is not unthinkable, however gossamer its thread.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Halcour, “Tractatus,” 49: “The author of Assisi B.C. 186 attempts on the other hand to preserve the independence of the transcendental beauty by letting it encompass all causes: for him beauty is, like the other transcendentals, identical with being (and not only with good), but differs from it conceptually. In the same way beauty is convertible with each of the other transcendentals. . . . Yet beauty encompasses all of these causes and is common to all of them. And thus in itself being beautiful comprehends being one, being true, and being good. . . . But whether beauty in the appropriation of the transcendentals belongs to all three ways of divine causation and therefore must be accorded to all three persons of the Trinity—about this our treatise is silent.”

⁵⁸ *Tractatus de transcendentalibus*, q. 1 (Halcour, “Tractatus,” 67).

⁵⁹ The other option is, of course, *circumincessio*. See John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa: Versions of Burgundio and Cerbanus*, ed. Eloi Marie Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1955): 45, 64. See also Gilles Emery, O.P., *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 301, and Peter Stemmer, “Perichorese: Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs,” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 27 (1983): 36. *Circuitio* is used again in Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples's sixteenth-century *Traduction latine des livres de la foi orthodoxe de saint Jean de Damas*; see August Deneff's “Perichoresis,

There runs another major variation between the texts. I mean anonymous's claim that beauty adds conceptually to being just like one, true, and good—something absent in Alexander's *Summa*.⁶⁰ These differences are no doubt deep and serious. But granting that need not mean conceding with Aertsen that the "synthesizing function" the *Tractatus* accords beauty proves nonnative to Alexander's text. The family resemblance between them, I think, seems conspicuous enough.

The forgotten passage also hints at an answer to the transcendental question—this is the second implication. Which are Alexander's criteria for transcendental? So far as it goes, Aertsen's canon for Thomas applies to *SH*. If it be a transcendental, a term must (1) add something to being that the other transcendental terms cannot and (2) find its place among their order.⁶¹ Alexander himself demands the first criterion at *SH* I, no. 72. There he announces that the *primae intentiones* add something conceptually to being (*per rationem additam ad ens*). Alexander stipulates the second too in the three places he arranges an order for the transcendentals.⁶² But to Aertsen's criteria I append a third item, one peculiar to Alexander and that I cannot here detail in full. In *SH*, that is, transcendental determinations of being must be (3) appropriable to one or another person of the Trinity.⁶³ So again, the three criteria: a transcendental (1) adds to

circumincessio, circuminssio: Eine terminologische Untersuchung," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 47, no. 4 (1923): 510.

⁶⁰ *SH* I, no. 72: "Si per rationem additam ad 'ens' ista, quae sunt primae intentiones. . . . Dicendum quod cum sit 'ens' primum intelligibile, eius intentio apud intellectum est nota; primae ergo determinationes entis sunt primae impressiones apud intellectum: eae sunt unum, verum, bonum, sicut patebit" ("If those [terms] add conceptually to being, which are the first intentions. . . . We should say that since being is the first intelligible, its intention before the intellect is known; therefore the first determinations of being are the first impressions before the intellect: they are one, true, and good, as we shall see") (Quaracchi ed., 1:113).

⁶¹ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 337, and *Transcendental Thought*, 176.

⁶² *SH* I, no. 72 (Quaracchi ed., 1:113–15), no. 88 (1:139–41), and no. 102 (1:160–61).

⁶³ *SH* I, no. 89: "Alia vero de veritate increata secundum quod accipitur personaliter et appropriatur Filio, sicut unitas Patri et bonitas Spiritui Sancto, quae est: 'Veritas est summa similitudo principii' etc." ("But others [say] of uncreated truth that it is accepted personally and appropriated to the Son, just as unity is to the Father and goodness is the Holy Spirit, that is: 'Truth is the highest likeness to the principle,' etc.") (Quaracchi ed., 1:143–44). More, Alexander shows that he means "appropriation" in its technical acception. An objection worries that this definition rives truth from the Father and the divine essence. It need not—and that it need not has everything to do with the logic of appropriation. Truth belongs to the divine essence, which is to say that truth is an essential attribute. But on this particular

being, (2) finds its place among the others, and (3) correlates a divine attribute to a personal property.

Beauty fails all three. Against (1), nowhere does Alexander say that beauty adds conceptually to being.⁶⁴ Yet he repeats this again and again of one, true, and good. Against (2), nowhere in the three places that Alexander arranges the order of the transcendentals does he include beauty.⁶⁵ After all, the intrinsic relation between one, true, and good does not obviously yield space for beauty.⁶⁶ And against (3), the case appears rather

definition of truth (among others), truth belongs in a special sense to the Son as *summa similitudo principii*. That is, it corresponds to a particular personal *propria* that distinguishes the Son from the other persons—principally that *summa similitudo principii* guaranteed by his begottenness from the Father. But this does not therefore sequester truth to the Son without remainder. Again, the syntax of appropriation demands a sharp distinction between personal properties and essential attributes. Applying that syntax means that truth belongs to the divine essence and, it follows, to the Father (and to the Spirit too). For more on Alexander's expansive account of Trinitarian appropriation, see *SH* I, nos. 448–61 (Quaracchi ed., 1:641–58).

⁶⁴ The text gets close in one place. *SH* I-II, no. 75 does ask “cum utrumque [Dionysius] addat super ens, quid addit pulcrum super ens quo differt a bono” (“If Dionysius adds both to being, does he add beauty to being according to how it differs from the good?”) (Quaracchi ed., 2:99). But the *respondeo* seems to ignore answering the question as posed. In fact, the text never again speaks of beauty “adding” anything to being, though the *respondeo* assumes that both good and true add to being.

⁶⁵ Ordinarily—at least in other medieval texts—omission of a term need not necessarily disqualify the term's transcendentality. On this point in Thomas's texts, see Rubin, “The Meaning of Beauty,” 21–87 (especially 56–57 on *res* and *aliquid* as precedent). Still beauty's omission from lists of transcendentals in the *SH*, especially when taken together with the third criterion of appropriability, suggests that absence means more in the *SH* than it does in Thomas.

⁶⁶ *SH* I, no. 73: “Dicendum quod istae intentiones, ‘unum, verum, bonum,’ se circummincedunt et inde est quod aliae rationes induunt rationem causae finalis et ita rationem boni: unde ‘verum’ non appetitur nisi quia bonum; ‘unum’ similiter non appetitur nisi quia bonum; nec ‘bonum’ nisi in quantum bonum. Similiter in quantum apprehenduntur intellectu, induunt rationem veri: non enim intelligitur ‘bonum’ nisi in quantum verum; nec ‘unum’ nisi in quantum verum; nec ‘verum’ nisi in quantum verum. Similiter in quantum ordinantur in memoria induunt rationem ‘unius’: non enim ordinatur bonum in memoria nisi ut ‘unum,’ nec verum nisi ut ‘unum,’ nec unum nisi ut ‘unum.’” (“We should say that these intentions, ‘one, true, good,’ interpenetrate one another [*se circummincedunt*] and thus that other *rationes* take up the *ratio* of the final cause and so the ratio of the good: hence ‘true’ is not desired except as good; likewise ‘one’ is not desired except as good; nor is ‘good’ [desired] except insofar as it is good. Likewise insofar as [these] are apprehended by the intellect, they take up the ratio of the good: for ‘good’ is

glaring. In fact, Hans Urs von Balthasar already flags the difficulty. The appropriative character of Franciscan transcendental thought, Balthasar notices—one to Father, true to Son, and good to Spirit—exacerbates “the difficulty of assigning to the beautiful its systematic place.”⁶⁷ Given the criterion of appropriation, it seems impossible that Alexander could endow beauty with a transcendental status. Doing that would mean granting transcendental to a term that flutters free of Trinitarian gravity in a way that no other transcendental does or can.⁶⁸ On Alexander’s account, the *Tractatus*’s claims that beauty (a) names a transcendental and that it (b) synthesizes the others after a pattern analogous to trinitarian *ordo* prove incompatible.⁶⁹ In any case, it is not Alexander’s way. Against Eco, then, I concede Aertsen’s conclusion (though not always his premises). Beauty, it seems, is not a transcendental in *SH*.

What to say then, to complete this second implication, about beauty’s presence among the transcendentals in *SH* I-II, no. 75? Might beauty as sacred order redress the aporia? This would be ideal, since ruling against Eco on the transcendental question should not mean burying textual evidence to the contrary.⁷⁰ An easy option might chalk up the discrepancy between *SH* I, no. 103, and *SH* I-II, no. 75, to different authors. *SH* knew several, after all. Still, I assume continuity before disruption, at least until

not understood except insofar as it is true; neither is ‘one’ [understood] except insofar as it is true, nor ‘true’ except insofar as it is true. Likewise, insofar as they are ordered in memory, they take up the ratio of ‘one’: for the good is not ordered in memory unless it is ‘one,’ neither is true unless it is ‘one,’ nor is one unless it is ‘one’”) (Quaracchi ed., 1:116).

⁶⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Transcendental Aesthetics: Francis, Alexander, Albert, Ulrich, Mechthild,” in *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 4, *The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 377. Balthasar’s source is likely also Halcour, “Tractatus,” esp. 48.

⁶⁸ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 4:377: “Since the One, True, and Good of being referred back to the trinitarian causality of God as Father, Son, and Spirit, *there seemed to be no more room in God for another*” (emphasis mine).

⁶⁹ Halcour notes this difficulty at “Tractatus,” 48: “It is extremely difficult for Franciscan thought in the high middle ages to ground the independence of beauty’s transcendentality . . . [especially because] the three transcendentals of one, true, and good are divided among the three divine persons, among the three modes of divine causes, and among the three modes of knowing of measure, form, and order. Beauty cannot maintain an independent place in this triply structured context.” Aertsen repeats it in “Das Schöne,” 1353: “The reason for this might have been the appropriation of this triad to the persons of the divine Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit), which left no more room for another transcendental.”

⁷⁰ Aertsen says very little about *SH* I-II, no. 75.

continuity proves unlikely.⁷¹ Its likelihood here is already destabilized by the second text listing true, good, and *beautiful*. Why not one, true, and good, as everywhere else in *SH I*?

Here again, attention to the text suggests an answer. There Alexander explains exactly what he lists. And it is not the *primae determinationes entis*.⁷² Instead, he is interested in “the conditions of creatures [*conditiones creaturae*] concerning quality, which are true, good, and beautiful.”⁷³ More, Alexander addresses the sudden absence of “one” from his index. He has already treated unity as a created condition in his questions *ex parte quantitatis*.⁷⁴ So yes, this list of *conditiones creaturae* differs from the list of *primae determinationes entis*. But this does not—or need not—spell disruption. Not, that is, if these passages connote different (if related) things.

Aertsen shows that the *primae determinationes entis* comprise three related spheres: (1) divine attributes, (2) *primae intentiones*, and (3) *primae impressiones*.⁷⁵ As divine attributes the transcendentals work theologically, as first intentions logically, as first impressions epistemically. *SH I-II*’s talk of the *conditiones creaturae* reads otherwise. If the emphasis on the transcendentals in *SH I* has more to do with discerning the Trinitarian source and shape of all being as such, the emphasis here on the *conditiones creaturae ex parte qualitatis* concerns how concrete creatures exist. Whichever

⁷¹ Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), 327: “The so-called *Summa of Brother Alexander*. . . is a compilation, probably undertaken by John of la Rochelle and completed by later Franciscan theologians. . . . Despite its composite character, it has a unity of its own, due to the fact that its component fragments are all borrowed from Franciscan theologians belonging to the same doctrinal school. Owing to this unity of inspiration, it remarkably illustrates what may be called ‘the spirit of the thirteenth-century Franciscan school of theology at the University of Paris.’ Even as a collective work, it has a distinct signification.”

⁷² *SH I*, no. 72 (Quaracchi ed., 1:113).

⁷³ *SH I-II*, no. 75: “Verititur deinde consideratio, post conditiones creaturae ex parte quantitatis, circa conditiones ex parte qualitatis, quae sunt: verum, bonum et pulcrum. De veritate autem et bonitate dictum est superius in *Tractatu de essentialibus dictis de Deo*. Sequitur consideratio de pulchritudine et pulcro” (“After [considering] the conditions of creatures concerning quantity, we turn next to the consideration of the conditions of creatures [*conditiones creaturae*] concerning quality, which are true, good, and beautiful. But we spoke of truth and goodness above in the treatise on the essential names of God. There follows a consideration of beauty and the beautiful”) (Quaracchi ed., 2:99).

⁷⁴ See question 2 of *SH I-II*, *De creatura secundum quantitatem*, which comprises nos. 54–74 (Quaracchi ed., 2: 63–83).

⁷⁵ Aertsen, *Transcendental Thought*, 140.

species of *qualitas* Alexander invokes—Aristotle catalogs four⁷⁶—*qualitas* always concerns the determination of a subject. Or, as the Philosopher has it, “that by which things are said to be such and such.”⁷⁷ Thomas later advises that studies of *qualitas* consider “evil and good, and also changeableness.”⁷⁸ These are precisely the sorts of questions that follow in *SH* I-II: “Whether evil be called beautiful, whether monstrous things should be called beautiful, whether beauty in the world is able to increase or decrease, whether things that are mutable and good contribute to the beauty of the universe.”⁷⁹ And so on. All this recommends a better solution to the textual aporia—better, at least, than the multiple-author solution. True: *SH* I speaks of one, true, and good; *SH* I-II of true, good, and beautiful. But this difference is explained by the fact that each text treats of different things, or rather the same things under a different aspect.⁸⁰ So again, the second implication: beauty is not a transcendental in *SH*.

There follows a third and more important implication. If the above passage meets the transcendental question, it also transfigures it. I mean that It follows from *SH*’s Trinitarian account of beauty that the transcendental question is not the only one to pose. Not that I advocate against asking the question—no, I posed it above. In fact, posing the transcendental question to *SH* forms the condition for the possibility of discovering

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Categories* 8b26–10a11.

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Categories* 8b26–27: “Esti de hē poiōtēs tōn pleonachōs legomenōn” (Greek from Aristotle: *The Organon I: The Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938], 62; translation mine).

⁷⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 49, a. 2, corp.: “Sed modus et determinatio subiecti in ordine ad naturam rei, pertinet ad primam speciem qualitatis, quae est habitus et dispositio . . . ideo in prima specie consideratur et bonum et malum; et etiam facile et difficile mobile” (“But the mode and determination of the subject regarding the nature of the thing belongs to the first species of quality, which is habit or disposition. . . . Thus in the first species we consider evil and good, and also changeableness, whether easy or difficult”; Latin from the Leonine edition, at corpusthomisticum.org/sth2049.html).

⁷⁹ “Utrum malum dicatur pulcrum, utrum res monstruosae dicendae sint pulcræ, utrum pulcritudo possit augeri vel minui in mundo, utrum bona mutabilia conferant ad pulchritudinem universi.” These are, respectively, *SH* I-II, no. 78 (Quaracchi ed., 2:101), no. 79 (2:101), no. 80 (2:102), no. 83 (2:105).

⁸⁰ In other words, *SH* I seems more interested in the transcendental divine attributes—one, true, and good—as such; *SH* I-II in their created traces (*vestigia*). The latter follows a long discussion *De vestigio* at *SH* I-II, nos. 34–40 (Quaracchi ed., 2:44–49). For more on vestiges in *SH*, see Elisabeth Gössmann’s “Die Vestigium-Lehre,” in *Metaphysik und Heilsgeschichte: Eine theologische Untersuchung der Summa Halensis* (Munich: Max Hueber, 1964), 186–89.

beauty's expanded scope. That is, the narrow transcendental question reveals its own limits. Asking it first discloses Alexander's elegant peculiarities on both beauty and transcendentality.

The trouble comes only when readers presume that it is the first and *final* question to ask. Nursing a fetish for the finality of the transcendental question leads Eco to exaggerate and Aertsen to understate. Doubtless Aertsen is right to challenge Eco on the question. But it does not follow that Aertsen himself is correct to banish beauty to the realm of epiphenomena. Beauty may not number among the determinations of being themselves. But that does not and need not render its significance epiphenomenal—far from it. On my reading, beauty's absence from *SH*'s transcendental index invites another explanation. Key to that explanation is the fact that Alexander identifies beauty with the sacred order of the Trinitarian persons, not to a person specifically. The deep significance of beauty, then, lies precisely in its omission.⁸¹ This is because there are three and three only persons that together constitute and individually comprise the Trinity. Plainer still: if one belongs to the Father, true to the Son, and good to the Spirit, then beauty—as Brother Alexander writes—names the sacred order of the Trinitarian persons. Beauty names nothing less than their taxis. And that, to put the point sharply, is no epiphenomenon.

The fourth and final implication of the above passage is that it yields a fresh and distinctively Trinitarian account of beauty, perhaps a medieval supplement to recent theologies of beauty that revolve almost exclusively around Christology.⁸² Attending to and explicating Alexander's theology

⁸¹ I flag a difference between my argument that beauty's omission betrays its significance and Winfried Czapiewski, who argues that beauty's relation to good and true "cannot be grasped directly since the finite spirit can only realize its conformity to being by means of the distinct powers of intellect and will, and thus beauty can only be apprehended through truth and goodness; therefore, despite its being a transcendental, beauty cannot be included in the list of the transcendentals" (Rubin, "The Meaning of 'Beauty,'" 94–95). Aside from our writing on two different figures, the deep difference between my suggestion here and Czapiewski's "ingenious solution" that attempts to make "beauty's absence from the list of transcendentals into evidence Thomas *did* consider it such a term" (Rubin, "The Meaning of 'Beauty,'" 94) is that he argues for beauty's transcendentality, and I against it. See also Aertsen, *The Transcendentals*, 353, and Czapiewski, *Das Schöne bei Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1964), 121–31.

⁸² I think principally of the donation of Hans Urs von Balthasar to theological aesthetics, both in retrieval and systematic construction. Still, both of Balthasar's efforts at retrieval and construction are ineluctably Christocentric. Consider, for example, his chapters on Augustine and Bonaventure in *Glory of the Lord*, vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Styles: Clerical Styles*, trans. Andrew Louth, Francis

sounds a call that I cannot here answer.⁸³ That task, like that of the angels scaling Jacob's ladder, involves two directions—heavenward and earth-bound. It would first, that is, relate Alexander's description of beauty as *ordo sacer divinarum personarum* to Alexander's mostly ignored Trinitarian theology.⁸⁴ If divine beauty be the canon of all beauty, and if divine beauty be the order of the persons, then what exactly is that order?⁸⁵ Next and world-facing, it would then repair back to *SHs* delicate pattern of thought that threads beauty through all of the causes—not unlike what the *Tractatus* describes.⁸⁶

These are tracks along which this essay cannot now move. Instead, I close by returning at long last to the *respondeo* in *SH I*, no. 103. Recall the question: Are beauty and good the same? Alexander begins by reinscribing a passage from Augustine's *De diversis quaestionibus*.⁸⁷ The passage draws a distinction, *cum bonum dicatur dupliciter*. If good as honorable (*honestum*) names what is sought for its own sake, good as useful (*utile*) names a waypoint toward another end.⁸⁸ Then Augustine indexes *honestum* to *intelligibilem pulcritudinem*, *utile* to *divinam providentiam*. The former describes something's intrinsic beauty, the latter how providence works all things toward the good. On Augustine's authority, Alexander identifies beauty with the good as *honestum*, not as *utile*. Why? Their difference arises from how beauty and good relate to the final cause. As *dispositio boni*, beauty has its end in pleasing apprehension.⁸⁹ But the proper end of

McDonagh, and Brian McNeil, C.R.V. [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984]).

⁸³ I explore this topic at greater length across my dissertation, "An Essay on Theological Aesthetics in the *Summa halensis*."

⁸⁴ Exceptions are: Theodore de Régnon's *Études sur la Sainte Trinité*, vol. 2 (Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892); Albert Stohr, *Die Trinitätslehre des hl. Bonaventura: Eine systematische Darstellung und historische Würdigung*, vol. 1, *Die wissenschaftliche Trinitätslehre*, Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 3 (Munster: Aschendorff, 1923); and Kevin Patrick Keane, "The Logic of Self-Diffusive Goodness in the Trinitarian Theory of the 'Summa fratris Alexandri,'" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1978).

⁸⁵ *SH I*, nos. 320–27 (Quaracchi ed., 1:471–81).

⁸⁶ *SH I*, nos. 6–26 (Quaracchi ed., 2:14–37).

⁸⁷ *SH I*, nos. 103 (Quaracchi ed., 1:162). See Augustine, question 30 in *De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus* (PL, 40:19).

⁸⁸ *SH I-II*, no. 76, will later draw an analogous distinction between *pulcrum* and *aptum*: "Videtur ergo differentia pulcri et apti in hoc quod pulcrum dicatur in se ipso, aptum vero secundum quod homini accommodatur vel alteri rei cui convenit" ("Thus it seems that the difference between beauty and aptness lies in this: that beauty is said of the thing itself while aptness is said according to how it accommodates the human or fits something else to it") (Quaracchi ed., 2:100).

⁸⁹ Note here the resonance with the famous dictum from Thomas's *ST I*, q. 39, a.

the good is to delight affection. And delighting affection seems to concern divine providence, and so *utile*. Pleasing apprehension concerns intrinsic beauty, and so *honestum*.⁹⁰

Beauty's relation to the final cause, then, has to do with its intrinsic allure. Later *SH* names this allure *species*. The *species* of any given thing *t* connotes "that by virtue of which [*t*] gives pleasure and is appreciated."⁹¹ So *species* bears something that attracts. What is it? "Something is said to be beautiful in the world," Brother Alexander continues, "when it bears the proper measure [*modum*], species [*species*], and order [*ordinem*]."⁹² Alexander learns from Augustine to read Wisdom 11's triad Trinitarianly—"a triple trace of the Creator."⁹³ This every creature bears.⁹⁴ What enraptures us about something beautiful, then, is exactly its trace of Trinitarian taxis. An appetite for this beauty, Alexander later argues, suffuses the ensemble

8. *SH* likely adapts this definition from William of Auvergne's *De bono et malo*: "Quemadmodum enim pulchrum visu dicimus, quod natum est per se ipsum placere spectantibus et delectare secundum visum, sic et pulchrum interius, quod intuentium animos delectat et amorem sui allicit" ("Just as we call beautiful for the eyes that which of itself is able to please those who see it and afford visual delight, so also we call internal beauty that which delights the minds of those who see it and inclines them to love it"; reproduced in Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, vol. 2, *Medieval Aesthetics*, trans. R. M. Montgomery, ed. C. Barrett [Bristol: Thoemmes, 1970], 221). *SH* I-II, no. 75 (Quaracchi ed., 2:99), develops this point further.

⁹⁰ *SH* I, no. 103 (Quaracchi ed., 1:162).

⁹¹ *SH* I, no. 115 (Quaracchi ed., 1:181).

⁹² *SH* I-II, no. 81 (Quaracchi ed., 2:103). It seems curious at first blush that *SH* should list *species* as the content of *species*. But this is explained at *SH* I, no. 115: "Species dicitur duobus modis. Uno modo dicitur quo res distinguitur; et sic conividitur contra modum et ordinem, quia modus est, quo res limitatur, species, quo distinguitur, ordo, quo ad aliud ordinatur. Alio modo dicitur species, quo res placet et accepta est: et hoc modo dicit rationem boni decurrentia per illa tria" ("Species is said in two ways. In the first way it is said [to be] that by which a thing is distinguished, and thus contrary to mode and order, since mode is that by which a thing is limited, species [that] by which it is distinguished, [and] order that by which it is ordered. In another way species is said [to be] that by which something pleases and is acceptable: and by this mode the *ratio* of the good runs throughout these three") (Quaracchi ed., 1:181).

⁹³ *SH* I, no. 113 (Quaracchi ed., 1:117).

⁹⁴ *SH* I-II, no. 37 (Quaracchi ed., 2:46), no. 39 (2:48), no. 485 (2:673), no. 518 (2:769). De Bruyne's rather neat citation "pulchritudo creaturae est vestigium pulchritudinis increatae" does not, so far as I can tell, actually occur in the text ("Les premiers scolastiques," 110). Perhaps he misremembers *SH* I-II, no. 38: "ut trinitas in creatura Trinitati increatae respondeat" ("that the trinity in the creature might respond to the uncreated Trinity"; 2:48).

of creation.⁹⁵ Or as George Herbert divines: “True beauty dwells on high: ours is a flame / but borrowed thence to light us thither.”⁹⁶ So much, altogether too briefly, on beauty’s relation to the final cause.

Beauty and good differ too in their relation to the efficient cause.⁹⁷ The good concerns *quod fluit a causa secundum indistinctionem*, beauty *secundum distinctionem*. Alexander invokes Dionysius to corroborate. “The good is called first beauty, since from it all things that exist are given the beauty proper to them.” Alexander does not elaborate. He intimates only that beauty’s relation to efficient causality concerns “distinction.”

The mists that shroud this relation dissipate where Alexander details efficient causality later in *SH* I-II. There, he notes that St. Paul’s phrase *per ipsum* typically denotes the Son’s role in formal or exemplar causality.⁹⁸ But not always—sometimes it describes the Son’s efficient causality. As very God, the Son too causes efficiently—or he receives the power to cause efficiently from the Father. But aside from stressing the unity of causality in God,⁹⁹ why spotlight the Son’s efficient causality? Because *per Verbum facta sunt quae facta sunt*. Under that *ratio*, Alexander thinks it fitting to predicate efficient causality of the Son. When we do that, we name an intrinsic connection between “the source of all things and the most perfect beauty.”¹⁰⁰ Since *omnis artifex est sapiens per artem suam*, and since the Son is eternal *ars Patri*, *Pater noscit creaturas esse per Filium*.¹⁰¹ Again, this is fitting, since the Son names the locus of the divine ideas. In him they are

⁹⁵ *SH* I-II, no. 75: “et secundum hunc modum decorum sive pulcrum cadit in naturali appetitu omnium rerum” (“and according to that mode *decor* or beauty falls within the natural appetite of all things”) (Quaracchi ed., 2:99).

⁹⁶ George Herbert, “The Forerunners” (1633), in *George Herbert: 100 Poems*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 144.

⁹⁷ *SH* I, no. 103: “Item, in intentione causae efficientis: bonum respicit quod fluit a causa secundum indistinctionem; pulcrum vero, quod fluit a causa secundum distinctionem. Unde Dionysius: ‘Bonum primum decor dicitur, quia ab eo omnibus entibus proprius decor impartitur’” (“Again, in the intention of the efficient cause: the good concerns that which flows from the cause according to indistinction; but beauty [concerns] that which flows from the cause according to distinction. Hence Dionysius: ‘The first good is called *decor*, since from it is imparted the *decor* proper to all living things’”) (Quaracchi ed., 1:162).

⁹⁸ *SH* I-II, no. 20 (Quaracchi ed., 2:30–31).

⁹⁹ *SH* I-II, no. 8 (Quaracchi ed., 2:17).

¹⁰⁰ *SH* I-II, no. 20: “In illa Trinitate summa origo est omnium et perfectissima pulchritudo et beatissima delectatio” (Quaracchi ed., 2:31). Alexander here glosses Augustine’s *De Trinitate* 6.10.12.

¹⁰¹ *SH* I, no. 453 (Quaracchi ed., 1:649).

one, in creation many.¹⁰² The Son's, then, is the work of distinction. And this details beauty's relation to the efficient cause.

Beauty and good differ last in their relation to the exemplar cause. We call the good "exemplar" in relation to an end, "like an art or rule of operation to a goal [*velut ars et regula operanti ad unum terminum*]."¹⁰³ Again Alexander summons Dionysius to testify. As *lux intelligibilis*, the good "collects and gathers all things" to itself. In this way, good relates to exemplar cause as final cause relates to formal. The final cause, Aristotle taught, holds explanatory priority over the others.¹⁰⁴ What a thing is for determines all else about it, including what it is. *Causa enim finalis ratio est aliarum causarum*.¹⁰⁵ Or so the good to the exemplar.

¹⁰² *SHI*, no. 175: "Respondeo quod licet idem sint secundum rem illa, in hoc tamen differunt secundum dictionis modum. Nam sapientia, exemplar, et ars se tenent plus ex parte Dei cognoscentis, quod omnino est unum; ideo illa non recipiunt pluralitatem, ut dicantur plura exemplaria, plures sapientiae, plures artes; ratio vero et idea ex parte rei cognitae: et propter hoc, sicut res cognitae plures, ita et ideae; et propter hoc quia unaquaeque res habet proprium finem, sunt plures rationes, secundum quas fines determinantur. Propter respectum ergo ideae ad formam et rationes ad finem, cum sint formae rerum plures et fines, dicuntur rationes et ideae plures" ("I answer that while those are identical in the thing, they nevertheless differ in a manner of speaking. For wisdom, exemplar, and art themselves represent more with regard to God's knowledge, which is entirely one. Thus they do not admit of plurality such that they are called many exemplars, many wisdoms, and many arts. But *ratio* and idea [differ] in the things known. And according to this, just as the things known are many, so too are the ideas. And for this reason since each individual thing has its proper end, there are many *rationes* according to which ends are determined. With respect, then, to ideas to the form and *rationes* to the end, since there are many forms and ends of things, it is said that *rationes* and ideas are many") (Quaracchi ed., 1:258). This almost exactly matches Alexander's *Glossa* I, d. 36, no. 5 (Quaracchi ed., 1:357–60), though it differs from Alexander's *Quaestiones disputatae 'antequam esset frater'* I, q. 46, no. 36 (Quaracchi: *Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae*, 1960). For more on this topic in Alexander and later Franciscan thinkers like Odo Rigaldus, Richard Rufus, and Bonaventure, see Rega Wood's "Distinct Ideas and Perfect Solitude: Alexander of Hales, Richard Rufus, and Odo Rigaldus," *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 7–31.

¹⁰³ *SHI*, no. 103 (Quaracchi ed., 1:162).

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* 639b.12–13.

¹⁰⁵ *SHI*, no. 107 (Quaracchi ed., 1: 168). Cf. *SHI*-II, no. 115 (2:181). Quoting Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono* II, Aquinas will repeat this in *In II phys.*, lec. 5, no. 186, and, more pithily, in *De principiis naturae* 4.29: "Unde dicitur quod finis est causa causarum, quia est causa causalitatis in omnibus causis" (Hence it is said that the end is the cause of causes, since it is the cause of causality in all causes"; *De principiis naturae ad fratrem Sylvestrum in Opuscula philosophica*, ed. Raimundo Spiazzi, O.P. [Turin/Rome: Marietti, 1954], 121–28).

Beauty functions differently. Beauty does not gather and collect all things to itself like the good. As *exemplar ipsum*, beauty rather names “distinction and harmony of difference.” For this reason, beauty has less to do with beginnings or ends than it does with metaphysical structure—or order. According to Dionysius, beauty names “the exemplar according to which all things are distinguished.”¹⁰⁶ Beauty relates to the exemplary cause, then, to the extent that beauty rules and norms all distinction.

Rather dense Scholastic business, that—too dense for protracted commentary here. For now, my point is modest. I want only to point up beauty’s presence across Aristotle’s three immaterial causes. Given the *quaestio* under review, we might expect Alexander’s notes on the relation between beauty and good as they concern the final cause. The good and the final cause share an intimate relation, of course—Alexander appropriates both to the Spirit.¹⁰⁷ Less expected, however, is Alexander’s correlation of beauty to the exemplar and efficient causes. It is true that he continues to assay beauty’s relation to the causes in light of the good. But in each case, the good works like a heuristic.¹⁰⁸ Alexander does not mention the good across his explanations to remind the reader of beauty’s subordination to it so much as he wields the good in order to contrast its relation to the causes with beauty’s. Beauty, then, bears its own relation to the causes, different from and unmediated by the good’s. The point, anyway, is that beauty runs across the causes in *SH*—very like what the *Tractatus* describes.

And this raises a final question. Alexander discerns a tight braiding between the causes and the transcendentals: one to the efficient cause, true to the formal, good to the final.¹⁰⁹ Alexander also insists that both these transcendentals and their respective causes function as Trinitarian appropriations. A crude visual might render those relations thus:¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *SH* I, no. 103 (Quaracchi ed., 1:162). Cf. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 4.7

¹⁰⁷ *SH* I, no. 73 (Quaracchi ed., 1:114).

¹⁰⁸ This raises the objection Aertsen notes and Rubin: “Distinction in meaning from the good does not necessarily entail conceptual distinction from all of the transcendentals” (“Meaning of ‘Beauty,’” 78). This seems true, so far as it goes—especially in view of the Thomistic texts that Aertsen and Rubin review. But this objection seems to presume that “conceptual distinction from all of the transcendentals” necessitates a transcendental in its own right. Or at least this is why Aertsen raises the objection: he attempts a refutation of beauty’s transcendentality in Thomas. Why exactly this does not prove a final difficulty for *SH* has everything to do with its peculiar criterion for transcendentality, namely that the transcendentals must function as Trinitarian appropriations (see note 63 above).

¹⁰⁹ *SH* I, no. 73 (Quaracchi ed., 1:114).

¹¹⁰ Readers of Bonaventure will recognize this pattern across his texts too. For similar schematics, see, e.g.: Esther Woo, “Theophanic Cosmic Order in Saint

<i>Transcendental</i>	One	True	Good
<i>Cause</i>	Efficient	Formal	Final
<i>Person</i>	Father	Son	Holy Spirit

But where does beauty belong? How to depict its relations? I rebutted beauty's transcendental above, so it is not clear how it belongs in the first row. And as I just showed, beauty runs across all the causes in a way the other transcendentals do not. So the second row also puzzles. Last, the reply to the second objection explicitly identifies divine beauty with the sacred order of the divine persons. But their order or taxis does not and cannot belong to one person to the exclusion of others. So again, the third row presents a difficulty. I ask again: Where and how does beauty belong?

I propose a solution. It begins by working backward from the Trinitarian persons. If beauty describes the taxis among the Trinitarian persons, then it cannot bear content of its own. It is a structure, an *ordo*—one conditioned by perichoretic relation. So much seems clear: conceiving taxis as subsisting somehow independently of the persons courts absurdity.¹¹¹ But suppose we extend this perichoretic line on beauty to the causes. On this picture, beauty would neither belong to any particular cause nor subsist separately from them. There, like in the Trinity, beauty would run across and under the causes as their structure. Alexander hints at exactly this connection when he elucidates the order of the causes.¹¹² The causes derive their order from the Trinity, in whom they are one (à la divine attributes). But in creation they are many, and so personal appropriations. As appropriations, the causes are normed by Trinitarian order. And if Trinitarian order be identical to divine beauty, beauty structures and runs across the causes too—just as we see in the *respondeo* of *SH* I, no. 103. Thus beauty names order among the persons and the causes, both.

And the first row? How does beauty fit among the transcendentals? Remember first the Trinitarian peculiarities of *SH*'s transcendental

Bonaventure," *Franciscan Studies* 32 (1972): 306–30, esp. 321–23; David Ost, "Bonaventure: The Aesthetic Synthesis," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976): 233–47; esp. 246; Jay M. Hammond, "Appendix: Order in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*," in J. A. Wayne Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure's Theology* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2001), 191–271; and Philip L. Reynolds, "Bonaventure's Theory of Resemblance," *Traditio* 58 (2003): 219–55, esp. 242.

¹¹¹ Alexander raises the question of "an abstractis hypostasibus sit intelligere ordinem naturae in Trinitate et e converso" ("whether, abstracting the hypostases, we can understand an order of nature in the Trinity and vice versa") at *SH* I, no. 327 (Quaracchi ed., 1:481). His answer, of course, is negative.

¹¹² *SH* I-II, no. 8 (Quaracchi ed., 2:16–17).

thought. Alexander claims that one, good, and true “interpenetrate one another [*se circumincedunt*].”¹¹³ Each presupposes the other—no one without true and good, no true without one and true, and so on. That Alexander applies perichoretic grammar to speak the relation between the transcendentals cannot prove accidental. Indeed, here Alexander very nearly overtures the cadence of the Council of Florence’s eleventh session: “The Father is wholly in the Son and the Spirit, the Son is wholly in the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit is wholly in the Father and the Son.”¹¹⁴

What Alexander never claims, however, is that beauty “interpenetrates” one, true, and good. He constantly and consistently relates beauty to one, true, and good, yes. And yet beauty does not feature among them as another transcendental. How then does it relate? Beauty relates to the transcendentals, I submit, just like it relates to the Trinitarian persons first and to the causes next. It names not a person, not a cause, not a transcendental term, but a taxis, an order, a structure. In Alexander, then, beauty names the ordered interpenetration of the transcendentals.¹¹⁵ Why?

¹¹³ *SHI*, no. 73 (see note 66 above).

¹¹⁴ Pope Eugene IV, *Cantate Domino* (1442): “Hae tres personae sunt unus Deus, et non tres dii: qui atrium est una substantia, una essential, una natura, una divinitas, una immensitas, una aeternitas, omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis opposition. Propter hanc unitatem *Pater est totus in Filio, totus in Spiritu Sancto; Filius totus est in Patre, totus in Spiritu Sancto; Spiritus Sanctus totus est in Patre, totus in Filio*. Nullus alium aut praecedit aeternitate, aut excedit magnitudine, aut superat potestate” (“These three persons are one God and not three gods, because they have one substance, one essence, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, one eternity, and all are one, where there interferes no opposition of relation. According to this unity *the Father is entirely in the Son [and] entirely in the Holy Spirit; the Son is entirely in the Father [and] entirely in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is entirely in the Father [and] entirely in the Son*. None precedes the other in eternity or exceeds in magnitude or overcomes in power”; Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd edition, ed. Peter Hünermann, English ed. Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012], nos. 343–44; emphasis mine).

¹¹⁵ For some, my interpretation here may recall Jacques Maritain’s claim that for Thomas, “beauty is the radiance of all the transcendentals united” (*Art and Scholasticism and The Frontiers of Poetry*, trans. Joseph Owens [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1962], 173n66). This reading seems to have been advanced first in B. G. Paredes, “Ideas estéticas de Santo Tomás,” *La ciencia tomista* 2 (1910–1911): 345. Several Thomists repeat it, such as: Francis J. Kovach, “The Transcendentality of Beauty in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Scholastic Challenges to Some Mediaeval and Modern Ideas*, ed. Francis J. Kovach (Stillwater, OK: Western Publications, 1987), 89; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Les perfections divins* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936), 299; André Marc, *Dialectique de l’affirmation* (Paris: Desclée, 1952), 237; Gunther Pöltner, *Schönheit: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung des Denkens bei Thomas von*

Because transcendentals in creation reflect their ground in divine attributes. And those divine attributes exist Trinitarianly—they bear a fitting relation to a personal property.¹¹⁶ They too, Alexander claims, “interpenetrate themselves.”¹¹⁷

To bring these points together: beauty, like one, true, and good, relates to all the causes. But beauty also names a “sacred order,” the very structure of the Trinitarian persons. Divine beauty is Trinitarian taxis. Yet Trinitarian taxis bears no metaphysical content. Neither does it subsist as a cause separate or independent from the others. Nor again does it constitute a transcendental in its own right. Within this redrawn picture, beauty relates to each line on the chart above. But it does so curiously, inexactlly, dimly:

<i>Transcendental</i>	One	True	Good	Beauty*
<i>Cause</i>	Efficient	Formal	Final	All causes*
<i>Person</i>	Father	Son	Holy Spirit	Taxis*

Beauty, the asterisks mean to signal, is not a transcendental, not a cause, and not a specific Trinitarian person. Even still, beauty relates to the transcendentals, the causes, and the persons. Beauty endows their structure, their taxis, their “sacred order.”

So Eco and Aertsen are not altogether wrongheaded to seek beauty’s relation to the transcendentals. Asking after beauty’s relation is not the question that needs transfiguring. I want rather to transfigure the question *as posed*, the one that assumes beauty might number among the transcendentals *in the same way* that one or true or good does. If the motifs

Aquin (Vienna: Herder, 1978), 76. See also Rubin, “Meaning of ‘Beauty,’” 93.

Recent Thomist literature does not find Maritain’s line here terribly persuasive, at least as a description of beauty in Thomas. It is not perfectly suited to my interpretation of beauty in *SH* either, but it is close. Maritain seems to think that because beauty (in Thomas) relates to all the transcendentals, it must be some kind of super-transcendental. He assumes that beauty must itself be a kind of transcendental to relate to the others. It is this that distinguishes Maritain’s reading of Thomas from the aesthetic logic of *SH*. Maritain’s line runs without the Trinity—the *SH*’s does not.

¹¹⁶ Alexander follows Richard of St. Victor in insisting that the order of God’s essential attributes itself follows a Trinitarian taxis. God, on this picture, is his attributes Trinitarianly. For more on the difference between the Richardian-Franciscan axis and the Albertine-Thomist one, see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 313–26.

¹¹⁷ *SH* I-II, nos. 135 (Quaracchi ed., 2:207), claims that divine power, wisdom, and will *circumcindunt se*.

I scrawled above reflect Alexander's, then beauty for him does not stand among the transcendentals as one among others. No, beauty is that *by which* the transcendentals relate one to another. It is their very principle, the means of their circumincession. Or, in *SH*'s preferred idiom: *ipse ordo est pulcher*; order itself is beauty.¹¹⁸ To extend the Trinitarian analogy, asking after beauty's transcendental content is like asking for the content of Trinitarian taxis in abstraction from the persons. At best it indulges irrelevance, at worst heterodoxy. Blindness to the taxic dimension of beauty betrays a blindness to the Trinitarian stimulus behind *SH*'s transcendental thought.¹¹⁹ The extent to which this blindness is born out of the limitations of the transcendental question is exactly the extent to which the question obscures more than it illumines, at least in *SH*.

Finally, and in a loud voice: that beauty does not number among the transcendentals *as typically conceived* does not mean that beauty does not always and everywhere determine being.¹²⁰ Nor does it spell beauty's absence from some or another pitiable being in creation's ensemble.¹²¹ It means only that beauty is present among creatures in a way other than are one and true and good. These, remember, are divine attributes appropriate to the persons and which creatures participate. But Alexander contrives beauty otherwise. Beauty is not a divine attribute but a divine structure, a "sacred order." Determining exactly what this structure is and how it manifests across creation—this anticipates just a single feature of *SH*'s massive project, one that at length yields a codex which Roger Bacon thought "heavier than a horse."¹²²

¹¹⁸ *SH*I-II, no. 77 (Quaracchi ed., 2:100).

¹¹⁹ Their inattention to the taxic and so Trinitarian shape of beauty in *SH* I leads de Bruyne to conclude that "We might hope to find oneself in the presence of an aesthetician, but we are quickly disabused" ("Les premiers scolastiques," 88).

¹²⁰ Rubin is especially good on this: "For a term to be a transcendental, it is not sufficient that it merely transcends the categories. In order to contribute to the explication of being, as is the function of the transcendentals, a term must express a general mode of being that is not already expressed by 'being' or by any other transcendental. . . . Thus, a term can be *transcendental*, or an attribute of every being, without also being a *transcendental*, or a *distinct* attribute of every being" (Rubin, "Meaning of Beauty," 6; emphasis mine).

¹²¹ *SH* I-II, nos. 27–40 (Quaracchi ed., 2:38–48), nos. 75–90 (2:99–114).

¹²² Brewer, *Fr. Rogeri Bacon Opera hactenus inedita* I, 326. The whole quotation runs: "Et adscripserunt ei magnam Summam illam, *quae est plusquam pondus unius equi*, quam ipse non fecit sed alii. Et tamen propter reverentiam adscripta fuit et vocatur Summa fratris Alexandri. Et si ipse eam fecisset vel magnam partem" ("And they attribute to [Alexander] that great *Summa* that is heavier than a horse, even though others, and not he, who wrote it. Still, it is reckoned and called the *Summa*

Conclusion

So: is beauty a transcendental in *SH*? The literature remains deadlocked. But it does mostly to the extent that it reads *SH* as cipher for Thomas Aquinas. Eco tenders a “yes” because he advocates the same in Thomas. Aertsen thinks similarly, if contrariwise. Transcendentalists on the beauty question, he thinks, seem bewitched by the *Tractatus de transcendentalibus*, probably a later gloss on *SH*. The image of beauty sketched there, he argues, bears little relation to its archetype. I demur: the *Tractatus* and *SH* share deep resemblances, even if not final identity. Among the most important of these resemblances is the *Tractatus*’s description of beauty as the highest congruence of order.¹²³ This exhibits traces of the thicker Trinitarian account of beauty in Alexander. Recall that he grounds beauty in the “sacred order of the divine persons.” Of the many implications of Alexander’s account, one answers the transcendental question negatively only to transfigure it. Alexander’s account, that is, teaches his readers that grounding beauty in Trinitarian taxis invites deeper questions than the transcendental one. Questions about beauty’s work within Trinitarian processions, for example, or in creatures, or in their restoration by grace. Studying Alexander’s aesthetics, then, means tracing beauty across various theological loci in his texts.

Andreas Speer argues that if “aesthetics” signals only a modern philosophical discipline scrubbed of theological interest, then we should deny that there ever was any “medieval aesthetics.”¹²⁴ Surely it is absent *SH*, anyway, whose interest in conceiving beauty remains inexorably and unapologetically Trinitarian.

N.V

fratris Alexandri out of reverence, even if he did not write it or a large part of it”; emphasis mine).

¹²³ *Tractatus de transcendentalibus*, q. 1 (Halcour, “Tractatus,” 67).

¹²⁴ Andreas Speer, “Aesthetics” in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 677: “Theoretical reflection on this growth of meaning as well goes beyond an understanding of philosophy in a narrow sense, especially if philosophy is characterized merely by its independence from theology. Most of the aesthetic patterns allude to theological features. . . . Hence, aesthetics must be understood in a comprehensive and expanded manner, which goes beyond the borders defined by a concept of philosophical aesthetics that tries to find its object in the intersection of art and beauty.”