

A Cord of Three Strands Is Not Easily Broken:
**The Transcendental Brocade of Unity, Truth,
and Goodness in the Early Franciscan
Intellectual Tradition**

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Introduction

IN HIS UNJUSTLY INFAMOUS “Regensburg Address,” Pope Benedict XVI made this now famous observation:

One must observe that in the late Middle Ages . . . there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God’s *voluntas ordinata* [ordained will]. Beyond this is the realm of God’s freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done. This gives rise to . . . the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God’s transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions.¹

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, “Faith, Reason, and the University: Memories and Reflections,” University of Regensburg, September 12, 2006, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html.

Three features of this passage merit mention: (1) a concern about a conception of a deity whose nature is constituted by a will (*voluntas*) so radically free that it is constrained or determined by absolutely nothing; (2) a genealogy that locates the origins of this view in certain late medieval Franciscan thinkers, often dubbed “voluntarists”; and (3) an implied preference for a different God, whose will is in some sense “bound” by characteristics that human reason would recognize as truth and goodness. In short, the Pope explicitly worries about the pernicious legacy of a medieval Franciscan theology of “a capricious God” and implicitly invites speculation about what it might mean, alternatively, for God to be “bound to truth and goodness.”

The problem that worried the Pope is fairly well known. It begins with the concept, late medieval in origin, of a “voluntarist deity” whose nature it is to be absolutely free of everything, including any putative “divine nature,” fettered by absolutely nothing, constituted as and by its sheer freedom to will.² Entailed in this is the notion that a particular divine attribute, such as divine will (or power), could be conceived as in some sense primary, such that all other attributes could be relegated to a derivative status in relation to it. That is, one might conceive of truth and goodness as reducible to will, such that the true and the good could be “collapsed,” as it were, or subsumed into it. In this case, “true” and “good” would be defined on no other basis than what in fact God wills or does, and in principle, God could at any time will true and good to be other than “our [current] sense of the true and good.” This is a “capricious” deity, “unbound” by truth and goodness.

This account of the divine that Pope Benedict summarizes is part of an oft-repeated genealogy of modernity that locates its deep source in a late medieval intellectual tradition often associated with certain Franciscan thinkers, especially John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, and recently dubbed “nominalism-voluntarism.”³ As of late, though, this “sinister genealogy” has come under critical scrutiny.⁴ Adjudicating this debate, however, is not the concern of this

² While Pope Emeritus Benedict fingers Scotus as the originator of this conception, as has much recent scholarship since the 1990s, especially that emanating from or associated with “radical orthodoxy,” it may well be rather later medieval thinkers, sometimes dubbed “nominalists,” who first conceived of God in this fashion.

³ See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 13.

⁴ In *Postmodernity and Univocity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), Daniel

essay. What follows, rather, is an act of *ressourcement* that hopes to uncover in a high medieval theological tradition a distinctive model for conceiving of a deity “bound by truth and goodness.” The Pope’s comments above provide a fitting point of departure for this task. For, truth and goodness are not random divine attributes, but rather members of a triad of philosophical notions, along with “one,” or “unity,” that are known today as the “transcendentals”: universal properties of all of reality.⁵ A popular variation, “the good, the true, and the beautiful”—often mentioned in the promotional materials of liberal arts universities—is perhaps more familiar today. But “unity, truth, and goodness” is the original formula.⁶ And, as it turns out, these transcendentals figure centrally at a particularly important juncture in the development of medieval theology, a development that may provide inspiration, if not an actual framework, for conceiving of just such a God.

Although philosophers have been thinking for millennia about the meaning of unity, truth, and goodness (and others too) *individually*, this particular triad was first assembled in the early thirteenth century, as a unified intellectual framework for understanding all of reality in the most comprehensive manner possible. Ironically, noteworthy is the fact that it is the founders of the earliest *Franciscan* intellectual tradition (i.e., Alexander of Hales and his students, including St. Bonaventure,⁷ whose thought is sufficiently unified in itself and

Horan reconstructs the development of this “sinister genealogy” in what he calls “the Scotus story,” which blames Scotus for the ills of modernity etc., and which Horan then calls into question (see chs. 1–2). In *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Inquiry* (New York: Routledge, 2014), Paul DeHart challenges the “radical orthodoxy” scholarship’s idiosyncratic reading of Thomas as a proposed corrective to the ills of late medieval Franciscan metaphysics and its modern results. In a series of articles, Richard Cross defends Scotus’s metaphysics against Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and others (“‘Where Angels Fear to Tread’: Duns Scotus and Radical Orthodoxy,” *Antonionum* 76 [2001]: 7–41; “Scotus and Suárez at the Origins of Modernity,” in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric and Truth*, ed. Wayne Hankey and Douglas Hedley [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005], 65–80).

⁵ Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor to Francisco Suarez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 14: “While the scholastics believed the transcendentals to be the most general predicates of things, Kant said they are actually ‘nothing but logical requirements and criteria of all knowledge of things’ (Kant’s italics).”

⁶ On the question of beauty as a transcendental, see footnote 22 below.

⁷ Apropos the Seraphic Doctor, John Milbank’s most recent work argues that it was actually Bonaventure who paved the foundation for the voluntarist deity

distinct from later developments to warrant the label “Early Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,” or “EFIT,” for short), who (with aid from the medieval Arabic philosopher Avicenna) first deployed this transcendental triad as a way of conceiving not only of created reality but also of its creating Source. They thereby proffered a systematic paradigm for conceiving of a God “bound by truth and goodness.”

In what follows, the so-called *Summa Halensis* (*SH*) will be the central focus. Also known as the *Summa theologiae* of Alexander of Hales or the *Summa fratris Alexandri*,⁸ this massive work of early Franciscan theology is now assumed to be a composite work of both Alexander himself and his students, especially John of la Rochelle and (later, after Alexander’s death) William of Melitona.⁹ In light of these authorial ambiguities, the author will be designated the “Halensist.”

A Brief Introduction to the Transcendentals in the Middle Ages

To begin, a brief description of what the transcendentals are and how they enter the medieval conversation is in order. As Jan Aertsen has recently noted in his book *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, “transcendental philosophy” begins with the work of the Arabic

of the later medieval Franciscan tradition (*Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* [Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014], 45).

⁸ The first truly critical edition was produced at Quaracchi between 1924 and 1948, the *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica* [*SH*] (Quaracchi, IT: Ad Claras Aquas, 1924–1948). Other earlier editions include: Venice (1474–14755); Nuremberg (1481–1482); Papia (1489); Lyons (1515–1516); Venice (1575–1576); Koln (1622 reprint of Venice). A complete list is found in Irenaeus Herscher, “A Bibliography of Alexander of Hales,” *Franciscan Studies* 5 (1945): 434–54. All English translation of *SH* in this article will be my own translation done from the twentieth-century Quaracchi edition.

⁹ See Victorin Doucet, “Prolegomena in librum III necnon in libros I et II Summa Fratris Alexandri,” in Alexandri de Hales, *Summa theologica* (Quaracchi, 1948), who argues that books I and III of this *Summa* are largely the work of John of la Rochelle (360–361), while book II was likely written by an anonymous friar, drawing heavily on Alexander’s own writings (367). Books I–III were largely done by 1245, when John and Alexander died. In the mid-1250s, William of Melitona and others completed *SH* at the order of the Pope Alexander IV (334 and 359), but their work was probably limited to two insertions in the first and second books and to book IV, on the sacraments, which has not yet been published in a modern critical edition (337 and 356).

philosopher Avicenna (AD 980–1037).¹⁰ Avicenna noted that any and every thing that is, is; and everything that is, is one, otherwise it would not be knowable as something (e.g., even a loose assembly of concert listeners is in some way a single crowd). Accordingly, *ens* and *unum* are the most fundamental properties of all things, insofar as anything that is, both necessarily is and is necessarily one. In *Metaphysics* of “*The Healing*” 1.5, Avicenna named “being” (existence), “thing” (essence, or *quidditas*), and “necessary” as such properties, and in *Metaphysics* of “*The Healing*” 3, he added “one” to the list. These properties apply to all things whatsoever, and they transcend all other differences between things. This leads to the claim that “being” and “one” are “convertible” (initially made by Aristotle himself): they “run together,” and thus they are universal properties of reality. Avicenna also insisted, importantly, that, when the human mind knows any particular thing, what it actually knows first, even though implicitly, is being (*ens*), thing (*res*), and one (*unum*)—which he designated the “primary notions of the intellect.”¹¹ These are the seminal insights that flowered in the Western medieval doctrine of the transcendentals, and Avicenna is rightly seen as the original sower thereof.

¹⁰ In what Aertsen has called “the second beginning of metaphysics” (*Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 75–76), Avicenna’s *De philosophia prima sive scientia divina* (which, in the form of a commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, is actually “an independent and original account that gives first philosophy a new and comprehensive structure”) was translated into Latin in the second half of the twelfth century. Henceforth, it exerted no little influence on university Scholastics, including the EFIT, until the mid-thirteenth century, when eclipsed by Averroes (see Marie-Thérèse D’Alverny, *Avicenne in Occident* [Paris: Vrin, 1993]).

¹¹ Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 22. Here Aertsen raises the question of whether Avicenna’s interests were largely logical and gnoseological and concludes that these are basically features and structures of the human mind—or at least they could be construed thus—and thus he notes that an interesting bridge to the transcendental philosophy of Kant emerges, accordingly: “In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B 113) he points to the ‘Transcendental Philosophy of the Ancients’ and quotes the proposition ‘so famous among the Schoolmen: *quodlibet ens est unum, verum, bonum*.’ At the same moment, however, he distances himself from the traditional conception. ‘These supposed transcendental predicates of things are nothing else but logical requirements and criteria of all knowledge of things in general’ (B 114). ‘Transcendental’ in the Kantian sense is concerned with the mode of cognition of objects, insofar as this mode of cognition is possible *a priori*.”

Yet, it is important to note that Avicenna's "doctrine of the primary notions is not [yet] the theory of the transcendentals as it was developed in the [Latin] Middle Ages."¹² What is most significant for the present analysis is that Avicenna does *not* include truth and goodness in his list. That addition is a Christian, medieval contribution, and it is done in a rather self-conscious way, if Albert the Great is any indication. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, the Dominican notes:

It should be said that, according to the Philosopher, "being" and "one" are before all things. For the Philosopher did not posit that truth and good are dispositions generally, concomitant with being, since he did not consider being insofar as it flows from the first, wise, and good being; rather he considered being [only] insofar as the intellect terminates in it by resolving the posterior into the prior and the composed into the simple.¹³

Presumably referring to book IV of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Albert goes on to contrast the Philosopher's oversight with the insights of certain *sancti*, "holy ones," who *did* consider being in relation to its origin from the first, true, and good being, and thus added "true" and "good" to "being" and "one."¹⁴ Strikingly, Albert here links the Western medieval introduction of "true" and "good" into the transcendental discussion to a distinctively Christian insistence on a doctrine of creation and its relationship to a Creator whose essential attributes include wisdom and goodness.

Albert does not name these *sancti* (he may have Dionysius in mind), but it seems that the crucial move of adding goodness and

¹² Aersten, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 100.

¹³ Albert, *In I sent.*, d. 46, N, a. 14: "Dicendum, quod secundum Philosophum, ante omnia sunt ens et unum. Philosophus enim non ponit, quod verum et bonum sunt dispositiones generaliter concomitantes ens . . . Quia Philosophus non considerat ens secundum quod fluit ab ente primo et uno et sapientie et bono, sed ipse considerat ens secundum quod stat in ipso intellectus resolvens posterius in prius, et compositum in simplex . . . Et ideo sic generaliter considerando ista, ut consideraverunt Sancti, dicemus . . . Hoc autem ideo dico, quia ista a Sanctis prima ponuntur et in quolibet" (*Opera Omnia*, ed. Auguste Borgnet [Paris: Vivès, 1890–1899], 26: 450; translation mine).

¹⁴ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 21: "[Albert's] opposition of the *Philosophus* and the *sancti* shows his awareness that different traditions of thought (both the Greek and the Christian) and different motives affected the doctrine of the transcendentals, as it came to be developed by the *theologi*."

truth was first taken by two prominent and influential masters at Paris in the first third of the thirteenth century: William of Auxerre¹⁵ and, especially, Philip the Chancellor, in his *De bono*.¹⁶ Yet, while Philip initiates the conversation in influential ways,¹⁷ his “account bears the marks of a first draft; it is rather terse and sometimes little explicit.”¹⁸ One must in fact look to the *Summa Halensis* to find the first full-fledged account of the transcendentals¹⁹ in the Middle Ages.²⁰ While scholarship has long noted the expanded role that the transcendental triad of unity, truth, and goodness plays in the *Summa Halensis*, Aert-

¹⁵ See Boyd Taylor Coolman, *Knowing God by Experience* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 54–56 and bibliographical material in the notes there.

¹⁶ See Henri Pouillon, “Le premier traite des proprietes transcendentales, La *Summa de bono* du Chancelier Philippe,” *Revue Neoscholastique de Philosophie* 42 (1939): 40–77.

¹⁷ Lydia Schumacher writes: “Philip the Chancellor’s *Summa de Bono* (1225–8) is an important ‘transitional text’ mediating between Avicenna and his Franciscan receptors. Although Philip nowhere uses the term *transcendens* in the sense of ‘transcendental,’ referring instead to the *communissima* or *primae intentiones* or most common properties, he nevertheless provides the first systematic discussion of the transcendentals, which itself bears signs of the influence of Avicenna. The background to this first *Summa* centered on the good was evidently the dualist Cathar heresy—which posited a good God as the creator of spiritual being and an ‘evil’ God as the creator of matter—which was posing a serious threat to orthodoxy at the time. The first eleven questions of his *Summa* formulate the doctrine of the transcendentals as it came to be known subsequently. First and foremost, Philip codifies the list of transcendentals—the first of which is being, which is in turn ‘determined’ on his account by ‘one, true, and good’” (“The Early Franciscan Doctrine of the Transcendentals: Rethinking the Relationship between Medieval and Modern Thought” [unpublished manuscript]).

¹⁸ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 128.

¹⁹ Aertsen points out that the term *transcendens* in the sense of transcendental does not seem to be used in the thirteenth century, though an anonymous thirteenth-century text attributed to Bonaventure does seem to use the term in this way (*Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 29; see also *Tractatus de transcendentalibus entis conditionibus*, ed. D. Halcour, in *Franziskanische Studien*, vol. 41 [1954], 41–106). Philip’s *Summa de bono* (1225–1228) uses the term *communissima*, not *transcendentia*. Nor was the term used in *SH*. Not until Scotus does the term become common.

²⁰ It should be noted, though, that the *SH* completely adopts Philip the Chancellor’s contributions: a distinction between intentional and extensional language, his insistence on one, true, and good as being the fundamental triad of transcendentals, his particular approach to defining them and the terminology of “concomitant conditions” of being (*Summa de bono*, prol., q. 7).

sen notes that the *Summa Halensis* “deserves more attention than it has received so far”²¹ and that, in it, “the evolution since the beginning of the doctrine of the transcendentals is remarkable.”²²

Before proceeding, a brief summary description of the medieval theory of the transcendentals as it evolved throughout the thirteenth century will be useful, even if some of that development occurred after the 1240s, as it will serve to clarify what sometimes remains implicit in the EFIT.²³ Generally speaking, the transcendental notions are real, formal, conditions of being that “escape classification in the Aristotelian categories by reason of their greater extension and universality of application.”²⁴ They are “formal” (as opposed to “virtual”), meaning “that the *ratio* [of e.g., truth] . . . *as such* is to be found *intrinsically* in the thing of which it is predicated.”²⁵ These conditions are not created by the mind, but rather discovered in actual things, and thus they are “predicated of real things” and they “signify some formal aspect or perfection characteristic of existing objects.”²⁶ Put otherwise, any existing thing “has a capacity of producing in our mind different concepts of itself,” even though “there is no actual distinction nor composition” in the thing.²⁷ This formal distinction “differs from the purely conceptual

²¹ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 135.

²² Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 139–40. *SH* also contains the first scholastic treatise to raise the difficult question of the relation between the “the good” and “the beautiful” (no. 103), which became the point of departure for Scholastic reflections on *pulchrum* (Justin Shaun Coyle, “Is Beauty a Transcendental in the *Summa halensis*? An Aesthetic Aporia” [unpublished paper]).

²³ See Johann Fuchs, *Die Proprietäten des Seins bei Alexander von Hales* (Munich: Druk der Salesianischen Offizin, 1930), and especially Alan B Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1946). The following account is drawn from Wolter’s text.

²⁴ Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 1.

²⁵ Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 7.

²⁶ Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 8. For this reason, they are sometimes called “first intentions.”

²⁷ This is where John Duns Scotus will apply his famous “formal distinction.” For him, there must be something real in a thing, something that is not equal to the entire reality of the thing itself, that gives rise to the formally and intentionally distinct concepts of one, true, and good, to which these transcendental notions correspond. The formal distinction provides an objective basis in things for real concepts. The formal distinction is something less than a real physical distinction (*realis simpliciter*) that exists between two or more

distinction in so far as the latter has no intrinsic basis in the thing itself for a difference of concepts.”²⁸ As conceived in the mind, the transcendentals “add to the notion of being certain formal aspects which are neither implicitly nor explicitly contained in the simple *ratio* ‘a being’”; in actual things, “they are formally distinct from one another and from the formal perfection signified by the quidditative concept, a being.”²⁹ In short, they are “formally distinct objective perfections” of being. Moreover, they are not actually added to a thing in a causal event distinct from the causal event that produces the thing³⁰—they are concomitant, and thus “coextensive with being.”³¹ So, “in every physical entity or *res* the perfections expressed by the concepts being, one, true, good are all *unitive contenta* in one real indivisible whole.”³²

The Triadic Structure of Being: “Intra-Entitative” Relationality

The *Summa Halensis* defines the transcendental notions in three different places, each of which affords insight into the EFIT’s understanding of them. In the first, the Halensist deploys the somewhat obscure notion of “in-division,” a lack of actual multiplicity or plurality, to make an initial claim about the presence of unity, truth, and goodness in every entity:

There is an in-division of principles so as to constitute something in being simply—and by this there is unity; and there is an in-division [of principles] so as to constitute something in

physical entities. At the same time, it is not a mere distinction created by the mind (*distinctio rationis*). The formality (transcendental notion in a thing) is not a physically distinct thing, but a positive something that is somehow less than a thing; the *ratio objectiva* of a distinct formal concept. Each formality has its own proper quiddity or *ratio*; no formality has a distinct existence, but rather exists by the existence of the thing of which it is an aspect; they therefore cannot be separated from the thing, even by the power of God (Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 21–23).

²⁸ Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 19.

²⁹ Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 100.

³⁰ Though they do “presuppose a subject which they modify or qualify” (Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 101).

³¹ As John Duns Scotus would later put it: “Of whatever ‘being’ is predicable *in quid*, ‘truth, unity, and goodness’ are predicable *in quale*” (Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 101).

³² Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 101.

cognizable being—and by this there is truth; and there is an in-division of principles by which they constitute something ordered to its end—and by that there is goodness.³³

Here, in what has been called the “negation strategy” of Philip the Chancellor, the Halensist distinguishes these three formal aspects of any being.

A second text goes further, by introducing a Chancellorian distinction between intention and extension³⁴ and by beginning to link the members of the triad to each other in order to offer a basic definition of each:

Although one, true, and good coincide in reality, their intentions differ. . . . For “one” adds in-division to being (*ens*): hence, unity is the in-division of *ens*; “true” adds the in-division of *esse* to the in-division of *ens*: hence truth is the in-division of *esse* and of that which is; but “good” adds the in-division of *bene esse* to the in-division of *ens* and of *esse*. Hence the good

³³ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Est enim indivisio principiorum ut constituunt rem in esse simpliciter: et ab illa est unitas in rebus; et est indivisio secundum quod constituunt illam in esse cognoscibili: et ab hac est veritas; et est indivisio principiorum secundum quod constituent rem in ordine ad suum finem: et ab illa est bonitas.” The Halensist also states here here: “There is a distinction according to which a thing [*res*] is separated from another thing in being [*in esse*], and there is a distinction according to which a thing [*res*] is separated from a thing with cognizable being; for a thing is discerned from a thing insofar as it is and insofar as it is cognizable. Unity accomplishes the first distinction through itself; but truth [accomplishes] the second [distinction]” (“est discretio secundum quam separator res a re in esse, et est discretio secundum quam separatur res a re ut habet esse cognoscibile; discernitur enim res a re in quantum est et in quantum cognoscibilis est. Primam discretionem efficit per se unitas, secundam vero veritas”).

³⁴ Philip deployed analytic tools from medieval terminist logic to distinguish between *intentional* and *extensional* language and to distinguish between what a term *supposits* (the reference of terms to any extra-mental entity) and what it *signifies* (the concept applied to the entity). “Professor of Theology” and “Director of Undergraduate Studies,” for example, are *intentionally* distinct, since “professor” and “director” are different notions. Yet, they could be *extensionally* identical if one and the same individual held both positions. In that case, “professor” and “director” would clearly *signify* differently, but they would *supposit* or refer to the same person. Similarly, “being” is convertible with “one,” “true,” and “good” with respect to what they *supposit*, but they are distinct conceptually and intentionally in what they *signify*.

is said to be the in-division of act from potency, and act is the completion or the perfection of the possibility of a nature.³⁵

Continuing to speak of “in-division,” this complex text distinguishes between *ens*, *esse*, and *bene esse* (these seem to correspond to the vague “principles” mentioned in the first text), which it associates with the adjectives—one, true, good—in order to provide a definition of the grammatical substantives: unity, truth, and goodness. Because *ens* is one, it has unity. Because *ens* is also true, *esse* is “added” to *ens*, and that is truth. Because *ens* is also good, *bene esse* is “added” to *ens* and *esse*, and that is goodness.

Insight into what precisely is meant here comes from the very last sentence. The good that is *bene esse* is the actualization of a potency or the realization of the possibility of a nature. The implication seems to be that *esse* corresponds to an entity’s nature and the potencies entailed therein. *Ens*, *esse*, and *bene esse*, accordingly, might be well-rendered as “simple being,” “being in potency,” and “being in act”—or again “one entity” (*ens*), “one entity of a specific nature” (*esse*), and “one entity of a specific actualized nature” (*bene esse*). Again, it should be noted that these are formal and conceptual distinctions, rather than real divisions. It is *not* the case that something is initially an *ens* and then *esse* and *bene esse* are subsequently added to it. Nor is there some *actual* progression in any given entity, from *ens* to *esse* to *bene esse*, as so many stages or phases of an entity’s existence. These are intentionally, not extensionally, distinct, and they are simultaneously, not sequentially, present in any being. Perhaps it could be said that: because being is one, it is an *ens*; because it is true, it also is or has *esse*; and because it is good, it also is or has *bene esse*.³⁶

³⁵ *SH* I, T3, Q2, M1, C2 (no. 88): “‘Bonum’ vero addit ad indivisionem entis et esse indivisionem secundum bene esse: unde bonum dicitur indivisio actus a potentia, et actus dicitur complementum sive perfectio possibilitatis, ad quam res nata est.” According to the Quarrachi editors, this definition of the good comes from Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono* II: “Item, alia [definitio boni] extrahitur ab Aristotele et aliis philosophis: Bonum est habens indivisionem actus a potentia simpliciter vel quodammodo” (“Again, another definition is drawn from Aristotle and from other philosophers: the good has an indivision of act from potency simply or in a certain way”; translation mine).

³⁶ See also *SH* I, T3, Q3, M1, C1, A3, ad 3 (no. 104): “Similarly, it should be said that the saying ‘the good is self-diffusive, etc.’ said absolutely, is about the highest good, yet [that saying] is contracted to every good substantially, since in every good substance there is an essence, from which [there is] a power,

Nonetheless, it is crucial to note that these formal dimensions of being constitute a real and particular relationship *between* the members of the triad. For the Halensist, being has a particular triadic structure and that structure can be described as the cumulative logical “layering” of the transcendental notions. The third definitional text makes this point explicit:

The intention of “being” naturally precedes the intention of “one,” and the intention of “one” [naturally precedes] the intention of “true” and “good”: for the intention of “being” is more absolute [*absolutior*] than the intention of “one”; . . . and the intention of “one,” which is of “being” considered absolutely, is more absolute [*absolutior*] than the intention of “true” and of “good,” which are of being in relation. Likewise, the intention of “true” is more absolute [*absolutior*] than the intention of “good,” as the being of a thing can be considered with or without its utility or order.³⁷

Here, we have a clear expression of the triadic transcendental structure of being couched in terms of a natural or logical order and of the odd-sounding “relative absoluteness.” The basic points are this: something must exist “before” it can be one, for one is always one thing; similarly, there must be one thing “before” it can exist as a specific kind of one thing; and a thing must exist as one certain kind of thing “before” it can express or realize its nature. The meaning of “before” here, of course, is of logical and formal priority, not temporal and actual.³⁸

and from which power [there is] an action, and the act leads to the end/goal” (“Similiter dicendum quod haec “bonum est diffusivum” etc. absolute dicta, est de summo bono, tamen contrahitur ad omne bonum substantialiter, quia in omni bono substantiali est essentia, a qua est potentia, et a potentia actio, et actio resultat in finem”).

³⁷ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “dicendum quod intentio ‘entis’ naturaliter praecedit intentionem ‘unius’ et intentio ‘unius’ intentionem ‘veri’ et ‘boni’: absolutior enim est intentio ‘entis’ intentione ‘unius’, sicut ostensum est et absolutior intentio ‘unius’, quae est entis in quantum consideratur absolutum, quam intentio veri et boni, quae sunt entis comparati. Item, intentio veri absolutior est intentione boni, sicut esse rei consideratum sine sua utilitate vel ordine, et esse rei cum sua utilitate et ordine.”

³⁸ From the vantage point of the later medieval Franciscan tradition, this Halensian interest in the logical ordering and relationships among the members of the transcendental triad appear to be both novel and short-lived. Scotus seems to have little to no interest in such (see Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 126–27).

In these three texts, the *Summa Halensis* (building on Philip the Chancellor) offers what appears to be the first complete medieval Scholastic account of the transcendental properties of being. Three observations are in order. First, the medieval Christian introduction of “true” and “good” into the list of transcendentals, noted by Albert the Great, is fully integrated in the *Halensian* account. Second, the crucial development is the introduction and specification of a relational structure between them. As Aertsen notes, “what is absent in Avicenna” and undeveloped in Philip “is an account of the inner relations and order between these notions.”³⁹ Giving greater precision to Aertsen’s claim: the transcendental properties are not here three discrete and isolated ways of construing being. It is not sufficient to say simply that being is simultaneously one, true, and good. Rather, each and every entity is metaphysically constituted by a relational triadic structure in which unity, truth, and goodness “accumulate,” presuming what is logically prior and enabling what is logically posterior. That is to say, in the EFIT, the transcendentals are interrelated among themselves according to a specific ordering—an intra-entitative relationality. Their status as intentional notions, rather than extensional entities, does not preclude a particular, unalterable, and nonnegotiable ordering among them. Third, the fundamental structure of being is governed by this irreducible presence of truth and goodness: it cannot be reduced to sheer being or mere unity. Being, on this account, could be said to be “bound by truth and goodness” in the sense that being is intrinsically and irreducibly true and good.

A Transcendental Ontology of Triadic Relationality

The pioneering emphasis of the *Summa Halensis* on the relational structure of being is not limited to its claim about *intra*-entitative relationality. The insistence that being is not only one but also true and good prompts the Halensist to extend the scope of the inherently relational structure of being. A remark from the third definitional text facilitates a transition to this expanded purview: “the intention of ‘one,’ which is of ‘being’ considered absolutely, is more absolute than the intention of true and of good, *which are of being in relation*” (emphasis added). For the Halensist, truth and goodness in particular are inherently relational notions. Hence, they are not only relatedly present dimensions *within* entities; they also enable and structure relationships *among* and *between*

³⁹ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 47.

entities. What could be called the *inter-entitative* transcendental rationality of being has three dimensions for the Halensist: the ontological, the anthropological/epistemological, and the theological.⁴⁰

Tri-Dimensional Inter-Entitative Relations

Most basically, first of all, the presence of not only unity but also, and especially, truth and goodness in being is the condition for the possibility of relationships *among* entities:

Considered absolutely, as divided from others and in-divisible in itself, an entity is defined as “one.” As related to another by some distinction, an entity is defined as “true”; for “true” is that by which something is distinguished [from something else]. As related to another by fittingness or order [*convenientiam sive ordinem*], an entity is defined as “good”; for “good” is that by which something is ordered.⁴¹

Here, unity establishes not only in-division within an entity but also separation from other entities. Truth establishes not only an entity’s particular nature but also its particular nature as distinct from other kinds of entities, and thereby intelligible as one thing and not another.⁴² Goodness establishes not only an entity’s actualization but also its relative ordering among other actualized entities.

⁴⁰ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (n. 73): “Being [*ens*] is the first intelligible; but the first determinations of being are ‘one’ and ‘true’ and ‘good’: for they determine being [*ens*] inasmuch as the *esse* of things is considered in its own genus, and also according to the relation of their *esse* to the divine cause, and according to the relation of those things to the soul, which is the image of the divine essence” (“*Ens est primum intelligibile; primae autem entis determinationes sunt ‘unum,’ ‘verum,’ ‘bonum’*: determinant enim ens secundum quod consideratur esse rerum in proprio genere, et etiam secundum relationem esse earum ad divinam causam, et secundum relationem rerum ad animam, quae est imago divinae essentiae. Secundum autem quod esse rerum consideratur in proprio genere, triplicatur entis determinatio”).

⁴¹ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Secundum quod ens aliquod consideratur absolutum, ut divisum ab aliis et in se indivisum, determinatur per ‘unum.’ Secundum vero quod consideratur aliquod ens comparatum ad aliud secundum distinctionem, determinatur per ‘verum’: ‘verum’ enim est quo res habet discerni. Secundum vero quod consideratur comparatum ad aliud secundum convenientiam sive ordinem, determinatur per ‘bonum’: ‘bonum’ enim est ex quo res habet ordinari.”

⁴² Cf. SH I, T3, Q2, M1, C3 (no. 74).

Tri-Dimensional Subject–Object Relations

Secondly, the presence of unity, truth, and goodness in being is also the condition for the possibility of relationship *between* entities and rational creatures. For the Halensist, these objective determinations of being correspond to the very structure of the rational subject, allowing a three-dimensional relationship between subject and object: “Again, in relation to the soul, the same determination is triplicated. For the being of something is related to the soul triply: that is, as a thing is ordered in the memory, grasped by the intellect, and loved by the will.”⁴³ In any subject–object encounter, the object is held in memory as a single entity: as one, understood as a particular kind of entity; as true, and desired or loved as actualized; as good, since actualization brings about the inherent attraction of goodness. “Good adds to being the idea of desirability, for something is only desirable as actualized [*complementum*].”⁴⁴ Since, moreover, any entity has these three fundamental determinations, in any subject–object encounter, what is known first and foremost (even if implicitly?) is being, along with unity, truth, and goodness. Following Avicenna⁴⁵ and preceding Thomas Aquinas,⁴⁶ the Halensist thus calls “being” and its transcendental properties the “first intelligibles”: “since ‘being’ [*ens*] is the first intelligible, its concept is

⁴³ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Item per comparationem ad animam triplicatur eadem determinatio. Nam esse rerum tripliciter comparator ad animam: videlicet ut res ordinentur in memoria, percipiuntur intelligentia, diligantur voluntate.”

⁴⁴ SH I, T3, Q3, C1, A1 (no. 102): “‘Good’ refers to being along with its act [*ens cum actu*], that is, with its complete realization [*complementum*], whether in utility or in order: and thus it adds to being the idea [*ratio*] of appetibility or desirability, for it is only desirable as completely realized [*complementum*], whether useful or delectable” (“Bonum vero dicit ens cum actu, id est cum complemento, sive utilitate et ordine: et ideo addit enti rationem appetibilis sive desiderabilis, nec est desiderabile nisi in quantum complementum, sive utile sive delectabile”).

⁴⁵ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of “The Healing”* 1.6, parallel English–Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by M. E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 5, a. 2, corp.: “Now the first thing conceived by the intellect is being; because everything is knowable only inasmuch as it is in actuality. Hence, being is the proper object of the intellect, and is primarily intelligible” (“Primo autem in conceptione intellectus cadit ens, quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est, in quantum est actu, ut dicitur in IX Metaphys. Unde ens est proprium obiectum intellectus, et sic est primum intelligibile”; translation from <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP005.html#FPQ5A2THEP1>).

known by the intellect; therefore the first definitions of being are the first impressions in the intellect: one, true, and good.”⁴⁷

Tri-Dimensional Creator–Creation Relationship

Lastly, this transcendental triadic structure of being—*within* every entity, *among* all entities, and *between* entities and rational subjects—is a function of a more fundamental relationship: that between created being and its Creator. For the Halensist, the “divine Cause is a threefold cause: efficient, formal or exemplar, final,” and the being of creatures, “which flows from their Cause,” accordingly, “receives a threefold impression.”⁴⁸ The Halensist explains that: “[since] the *esse* of creatures conforms to the efficient cause, there is unity: so, just as the efficient cause is one, undivided, . . . so [the creature] is made, as far as possible, to be undivided”;⁴⁹ “[since] the *esse* of creatures conforms to the formal, exemplary cause, there is truth: so, just as the exemplary cause is the first art [*ars*] of truth, so the creature, as much as is possible,

⁴⁷ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C1 (no. 72): “‘Ens’ sit primum intelligibile, eius intention apud intellectum est nota (Avicenna, *Metaphysics of ‘The Healing’* 1.6); primae ergo determinationes entis sunt primae impressiones apud intellectum: eae sunt unum, verum, bonum, sic patebit.” The Halensist continues here: “They cannot, therefore, have anything prior, specifically, for their notification. If then their notification occurs, this will be only through subsequent things, as either through negation or through consequent effects” (“Non poterunt ergo habere aliqua priora specialiter ad sui notificationem. Si ergo notificatio fiat eorum, hoc non erit nisi per posterior, ut per abnegationem vel effectum consequentem”).

⁴⁸ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Secundum quod esse rerum comparator in relatione ad causam divinam, simili modo triplicatur determinatio. Causa enim divina est causa in triplici genere causae: efficiens, formalis ut exemplar, finalis. Quae quidem causalitas, cum sit communis toti Trinitati, appropriator ut causa efficiens Patri, exemplaris Filio, finalis Spiritui Sancto. Secundum hoc, esse in creatura, quod fluit a causa, triplicem sortitur impressionem, ut in conformatione ad causam” (“Insofar as the being of a thing is compared in relation to the divine cause, its determination is triplicated similarly. For the divine cause is a cause in a threefold kind of cause: efficient, formal as exemplar, final. This causality, though it is common to the whole Trinity, is appropriated as follows: efficient cause to the Father, exemplar to the Son, final to the Holy Spirit. According to this, being in creatures, which flows from a cause, has a threefold impression, as conformed to its cause”).

⁴⁹ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Impressio ergo dispositionis in esse creaturae, secundum quam fit in conformitate ad efficientem causam, est unitas: ut sicut efficiens causa est una, indivisa, multiplicata in qualibet creatura, sic fit, ut sibi possibile est, esse indivisum.”

is made in imitation of this art: and this is to possess truth”;⁵⁰ “[and since] the *esse* of creatures conforms to the final cause there is goodness: so, just as the final cause is the highest good, so for every creature there is an inclination and conformity to the highest good: and this is the goodness of creatures.”⁵¹ In short: “The transcendentality of one, true, and good is founded on the precise causality of the first principle. . . . Because this causality is threefold, there cannot be more than three general conditions of being.”⁵²

This inter-entitative relational structure of being can be summarized thus: because divine causality is irreducibly threefold, creation is thrice-related to God. Because creation reflects its Creator, creation is not only transcendently “watermarked” by a threefold impression, but it everywhere exhibits the relationality inherently instantiated by unity, truth, and goodness. In fact, it is not too much to claim that every entity *simply* is a function of this relatedness: first, to its Creating Cause through efficient, formal, and final causality; second, within itself, as one, true, and good; third, to other entities, since its unity distinguishes it from other entities *generally*, its truth relates it to other entities according to specific *difference*, making it intelligible as specifically distinct from others, and its goodness relates it to other entities according to some order (*ordo*), arrangement, conformity, and end; and, fourth, to human perceivers, as retainable, intelligible, and desirable, as an entity relates to the capacities of rational creatures, whose minds are structured to receive these three most common impressions of being. In a fine passage that synthesizes (nearly) all these relational dimensions, the Halensist summarizes:

In any being whatsoever, there is unity from the efficient cause, through which it is ordered and preserved in the mind: for the mind joins together those things which it retains according to some coordination of relation to “one” and as distinct. Like-

⁵⁰ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Item, impressio dispositionis, secundum quam fit in conformitate ad causam formalem exemplarem, est veritas: ut sicut causa exemplaris est ars prima veritatis, sic creatura, secundum quod sibi possibile est, fit in imitatione artis: and hoc est habere veritatem.”

⁵¹ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Praeterea, impressio secundum quam fit in conformitate ad causam finalem est bonum: ut sicut causa finalis est summa bonitas, sic cuilibet creaturae sit inclinatio et conformitas ad summam bonitatem: et haec est creaturae bonitas. Unitas esse creaturae monstrat unitatem efficientis, veritas veritatem exemplaris, bonitas bonitatem finis.”

⁵² Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 40.

wise, there is truth in any being from the exemplary cause, through which it is known by the intellect. Lastly, there is goodness from the final cause, through which it is loved or approved by the will.⁵³

The *Summa Halensis* thus offers a transcendental metaphysics in which being is irreducibly structured not only by unity, truth, and goodness, but by the particular relationship among those three properties. Once again, this is an account of being “bound by truth and goodness” in which truth and goodness are inherent and intrinsic properties of being.

A Transcendental Brocade

Though logically ordered by and “accumulatively layered” along a specific metaphysical progression (*from one, to true, to good*), this transcendental structure of being, taken as a whole, also admits of a certain reciprocity among the transcendental notions. In light of the triad’s irreducible presence, being, on the Halensian account, can be turned and viewed, like a multi-faceted gem, from the perspective of any one of the three notions, such that the other two are seen in or as “colored by” the light of the first:

Those intentions [one and true] adopt the intention of the final cause, and so the intention of the good; hence the true is *desired* only because it is good; likewise, the one is *desired* only because it is good. Again, [one and good], as understood in the intellect, adopt the intention of the true: for the good is *understood* only inasmuch as true; nor is the one *understood* except as true. Again, [true and good], as ordered in the mind adopt the intention of the one: for a thing is only *present* in the mind as one, and true and good are only *present* there as one.⁵⁴

⁵³ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Est igitur in ente quolibet a causa efficiente unitas, per quam ordinetur in memoria et servetur: memoria enim ea quae retinet secundum aliquam coordinationem relationis ad ‘unum’ et discretionem componit. Item, a causa exemplari est veritas in quolibet ente, per quam percipitur ab intelligentia. Item, a causa finali est bonitas, per quam diligatur vel approbetur voluntate.”

⁵⁴ SH I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73).

On at least three levels, this passage describes well a remarkable interconnectedness of the transcendental notions on the Halensian account. First, what could be termed the objective relational presence of the transcendentals is in view, the particular fashion in which they are intrinsically present in being. Without ceasing to be formally, and thus irreducibly, distinct from one another, they nonetheless are so interrelated that any two can in some sense be “adopted by” the intention, the *ratio*, of the third: the good *is*, in some sense, true and one; the true *is*, in some sense, one and good; the one *is*, in some sense, true and good. But, again, this identity is extensional, not intentional or formal. No member of the triad can be reduced to or subsumed by another. Second, this objective structure of being facilitates a relationship with rational creatures: as already noted, one, true, and good correspond with memory, intellect and will, respectively. Third, the objective structure also enables a remarkably integrated encounter between knowing subject and object known. In any encounter with being, the notions are not only inseparable; they are all known in the distinct, irreducible light of each. One never simply perceives one of the transcendentals on its own, in isolation from the others: unity and truth are always encountered *as* good; unity and goodness are always experienced *as* true; unity is always perceived *as* true and good. While the members of the triad can be formally and intentionally distinguished, they can never, in reality, be separated, and in fact are so profoundly integrated that they interpenetrate one another. They are “woven together” such that, at any and every point, they are always encountered in and through their interrelationship to one another—a kind of transcendental brocade.

An Integrated Consummation of the Halensian Transcendentals in Trinitarian *Perichoresis*

At one point in this discussion, the Halensist articulates this transcendental metaphysics in suggestively Trinitarian language: “It should be said that these intentions, ‘one,’ ‘true,’ and ‘good,’ mutually indwell one another [*se circumincedunt*].”⁵⁵ The compound Latin term used here, paired with a reflexive pronoun, can mean “they move forward together,” or even “they circle around one another other.” The phrasing

⁵⁵ *SH* I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Dicendum quod istae intentiones, ‘unum, verum, bonum,’ se circumincedunt.” The Latin translator uses the word (at least in its noun form) for Damascene’s *perichoresin* in *De fide* 1.14 (PG, 94: 859).

elegantly evokes not only the foregoing account of the transcendental notions but also a crucial link to the Halensian doctrine of the Trinity, which has been lurking in the shadows until now. What Aertsen has called the distinct “Trinitarian motive”⁵⁶ propelling the early Franciscan account of the transcendentals should now be faced directly. As already evident above, the Halensist correlates the transcendental structure of being with the threefold causality (efficient, formal, final) of its Creating Source. There is no question that the EFIT’s account of the transcendental structure of being is derived from a prior account of the nature of God. The rhetorical strategy of presentation thus far adopted, that of beginning with created being before turning to its Creator, is in the service of moving from the better known to the lesser known, from the created effect to its uncreated Cause.⁵⁷

The conceptual technology by which the Halensist forges a link between created and uncreated being is the Aristotelian account of causality, now aligned with the ancient Christian tradition of Trinitarian appropriations:

For the divine cause is a threefold cause: efficient, formal or exemplar, final. And this causality, since it is common to the whole Trinity, is *appropriated* as the efficient cause to the Father, exemplar [cause] to the Son, final [cause] to the Holy Spirit. According to this, *esse* in creatures, which flows from a cause, receives a threefold impression, in conformity to its cause.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy at Transcendental Thought*, 147.

⁵⁷ This Trinitarian impulse also appears in Philip the Chancellor’s approach. Schumacher writes: “For Philip, the addition of ‘true’ and ‘good’ to Avicenna’s enlistment of ‘one’ as a determination of ‘being’ is essential to accounting for the efficient, formal, and final causation of beings. This three-fold causality is ultimately traceable to God on Philip’s understanding, and in specific, to the members of the Triune God, that is, the Father, Son and Spirit, respectively. Thus, Philip subsequently elucidates the relations amongst these primary notions, insofar as they mimic the relations amongst the persons of the Godhead. Finally, he spells out their relation to the highest, divine, good, as well as that good’s relation to created goods” (“The Early Franciscan Doctrine of the Transcendentals”).

⁵⁸ *SH* I, T3, Q1, M1, C2 (no. 73): “Secundum quod esse rerum comparator in relatione ad causam divinam, simili modo triplicatur determinatio. Causa enim divina est causa in triplici genere causae: efficiens, formalis ut exemplar, finalis. Quae quidem causalitas, cum sit communis toti Trinitati, appropriator ut causa efficiens Patri, exemplaris Filio, finalis Spiritui Sancto. Secundum hoc, esse in creatura, quod fluit a causa, triplicem sortitur impressionem, ut in conformatione ad causam.”

Recalling the above-noted correlation between the three Aristotelian causes and the three transcendental notions (one, true, good), the applicability of the notions to the Triune God follows directly: “Those intentions also differ according to their relation to their cause: ‘one,’ in the principle, in the *ratio* of the efficient cause; ‘truth’ in the *ratio* of the formal [cause]; ‘goodness’ in the *ratio* of the final cause: *which [notions] are appropriated to the Trinity.*”⁵⁹

For the Halensist, then, the reason that created being has a three-fold transcendental structure is that its Uncreated Source is also one, true, and good: “These intentions thus are not separate from the essence of a thing, as a vestige of the first cause, which is the Trinity of one essence.”⁶⁰ As is clear, the three intentions pertain to the divine essence as a whole and as such; they are not the defining personal properties of the three Persons, but only appropriated to them. Nonetheless, the Halensist unambiguously prioritizes these three attributes in its doctrine of God, organizing its entire discussion of the divine nature around these three and their derivatives in book I. In the preface to that discussion, moreover, the Halensist foregrounds their interrelatedness within the divine nature: “These three notions are of a single coordination [*sunt unius coordinationis*].”⁶¹

The Transcendental Triad in Bonaventure

In order better to appreciate the overall coherence and the trajectory of reflection in the EFIT on this particular point, it will be rhetorically

⁵⁹ *SH I*, T3, Q2, M1, C2 (no. 88): “Differunt intentiones istae secundum relationem ad causam, quae est; ‘unum,’ principium in ratione efficientis, ‘veritas’ in ratione formalis, ‘bonitas’ in ratione causae finalis: quae appropriantur Trinitati.”

⁶⁰ *SH I*, T3, Q2, M1, C2 (no. 88): “Istae ergo intentiones non separantur ab essentia rei velut vestigia primae causae, quae est Trinitas unius essentiae.”

⁶¹ *SH I*, preface to tractate 3. It should be noted that the *SH* does not predicate one, true, and good of both created and uncreated being in a univocal way, but rather insists on their analogical relation; see *SH I*, Intro, Q2, M3, C2 (no. 21): “Therefore, it should be said that, univocally speaking, there is no *convenientia* between God and creatures, but only through analogy, such that if good were predicated of God and creatures it is said of God by nature [*per naturam*] and of creatures by participation [*per participationem*]. Similarly, every good [predicated] of God and of creatures is said according to analogy” (“Dicendum ergo quod non est convenientia Dei et creaturae secundum univocationem, sed per analogiam: ut si dicatur bonum de Deo et de creatura, de Deo dicitur per naturam, de creatura per participationem. Similiter omne bonum de Deo et de creatura dicitur secundum analogiam”).

strategic to turn from the *Summa Halensis* to its textual expression in its most famous student, St. Bonaventure, who is perhaps the apogee of the EFIT in this respect.⁶² If the *Summa Halensis* hints at a kind of circum-incession of the transcendental triad within the divine nature, Bonaventure goes further.

First, in his mini-*summa* masterpiece, the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure appears to adopt the Halensian teaching on the transcendentals in the following passage:

Since the First Principle is most exalted and utterly perfect, it follows that in it are found the most noble and most general properties of being [*conditiones entis*] to the highest degree. These are one, true, and good, which are not associated with being in its individuals [*supposita*] but with its very principle [*ratio*]. For “one” describes being as numerable, and this is because it is not susceptible of division in itself; “true” [describes being as] as intelligible, and this by virtue of being inseparable from its proper form; and “good” [describes being as] as communicable, and this by reason of being inseparable from its proper operation. This triple indivisibility has a logical ordering in that the true presupposes the one, and the good presupposes the one as well as the true. Thus it follows that these three properties, as being perfect and transcendental, are attributed to the First Principle to the highest degree, and, as having an orderly reference, are attributed to the three persons. It follows then, that supreme oneness is attributed to the Father; supreme truth, to the Son, who proceeds from the Father as his Word; and supreme goodness, to the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both as their Love and Gift.⁶³

Here Bonaventure not only reproduces the Halensian teaching on the transcendentals but also applies them—with their Halensian

⁶² As Justin Shaun Coyle has noted in an unpublished paper: “Bonaventure’s identification of the transcendentals with the doctrine of trinitarian appropriation betrays the style signature of Franciscan theology. What some have termed a ‘trinitarian motive’ [Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 147] behind Franciscan treatises on the transcendentals is already on vivid display in the *Summa halensis* of Bonaventure’s teachers and, in more muted shades, in Bonaventure’s earlier *Commentary on the Sentences*.”

⁶³ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* 1.6.2 (trans. Dominic V. Monti, *Works of St. Bonaventure* 9 [St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2005]).

definitions, logical ordering, and cumulative structure—to the divine nature itself. Properly speaking, unity, truth, and goodness are not the personal properties of the Persons, but rather essential attributes of the whole divine essence. Like the Halensist, Bonaventure nonetheless attributes them to the three Persons in order to illumine their relational identities. In some fashion, accordingly, the interrelations of the transcendental triad should mirror the actual relations of the Persons. This is indeed what emerges in Bonaventure's unfinished magnum opus, the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, in which he describes the relations between the divine Persons thus:

So the Father is in Himself and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit; and the Son is in the Father and in Himself and in the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is in the Father and in the Son and in Himself, by reason of circum-incession, which is characterized by identity with distinction.⁶⁴

Here, Bonaventure describes the *perichoretic* interrelations (adopting the Greek term of art mediated to the western Middle Ages by John of Damascus in *De fide orthodoxa* 4) between the divine Persons in a manner strikingly similar, both conceptually and lexically, to the Halensian teaching on the mutual indwelling of the transcendentals. For Bonaventure, the Halensian logic of the transcendentals, of their inter-relational ordering, applied to the divine Persons, is such that, while the Persons are *intentionally* distinct from one another, *extensionally* they “con-cur,” they “move forward together,” they mutually indwell one another. One can never have one without the others. All three are always “circum-incessive.”

In sum, the EFIT's account of how God is three Persons in one essence betrays a consistent predilection for what might be termed a “comprehensive Trinitarianism.” Here, not only are there three Persons in God, but the one divine essence is also fundamentally characterized by a particular triad of divine attributes (one, true, good) whose interrelatedness mirrors the personal relations of the Trinity, which attributes, accordingly, may be appropriated to those Persons.

It is this account of the one divine essence that is relevant to the present argument. On this early Franciscan account, the First Cause

⁶⁴ Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days* 21.2 (trans. José de Vinck, *The Works of Bonaventure* 5 [Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1970]).

or First Principle, like its created analogue described extensively in the foregoing, is primarily and intrinsically characterized by unity, truth, and goodness. Not only that, but in God, the members of the triad have an irreducible interrelationship whose analogue is found in created being. None exist apart from the others, and they are logically “cumulative”: upon divine unity rests divine truth; upon both divine unity and truth reposes divine goodness. In this God, divine unity could never be conceived apart from divine truth and goodness; divine goodness or truth could never be reduced to divine unity.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, some overriding theological benefit may be gleaned from this early Franciscan tradition, wherein all of created reality, every created entity, and created being itself, are characterized by these three transcendental properties: unity, truth, and goodness. Of no little significance, though, is that, here, unity, truth, and goodness are not simply discrete, concomitant, and coextensive conditions of being, as they seem to be, more or less, when treated by John Duns Scotus.⁶⁵ Rather, in the EFIT, these three properties are not only, formally speaking, irreducibly distinct from one another; they are also inextricably coordinated with and related to one another. None can exist without, or be reduced to, the others. They are not merely (in a Chalcedonian idiom) extensionally “undivided,” but intentionally “unmixed.” They are also, in a Trinitarian lexicon, mutually co-inhering and indwelling one another.

Not only that, in the EFIT, as Pope Benedict XVI wished for in his Regensburg Address, “our sense of the true and good” is indeed “an authentic mirror of God.” The triadic structure of created being analogically reflects the triadic nature of Uncreated Being. The *circumincessio* of the transcendental triad in created being represents and resembles the coordinated structure of unity, truth, and goodness in the divine essence, which itself reflects the *perichoresis* of the divine Persons, the particular structure of the Trinitarian relations in God. In sum, the EFIT weaves a transcendental brocade of unity, truth and goodness—a *cord of three strands not easily broken*—by which we might conceive of a God “bound by truth and goodness.”

As contemporary scholarly arguments continue to rage over the

⁶⁵ See Wolter, *Transcendentals*, 126–27: “Of the three *conditiones concomitantes esse* unity receives the greatest attention. Truth and goodness . . . lose a great deal of their importance in Scotus’ metaphysics.”

genealogies of modernity, which often trace its initial fault line somewhere in the century or so prior to William of Ockham, some have suggested the *desideratum* of patient, careful, detailed analyses of particular moments and figures in that medieval landscape against which sweeping narratives might be better judged.⁶⁶ While a single article does not constitute such an analysis, it might signal to the cartographers of intellectual history the presence of certain spots on the current map that need more attention. The EFIT may well be such a spot.

At the same time, the theological *desideratum* of those who construct such genealogies is often a comprehensive worldview, an account of the whole of reality in which no place is “insulated in some degree from the decisive impingement of the transcendent,”⁶⁷ where nothing escapes the imprint of its Trinitarian Creator and Redeemer. For, in the standard narrative, in the thought of the nominalists, following Duns Scotus:

The Trinity loses its significance as a prime location for discussing will and understanding in God and the relationship of God to the world. No longer is the world participatorily enfolded within the divine expressive *Logos*, but instead a bare divine unity starkly confronts the other distinct unities which he has ordained.⁶⁸

Here, modernity is saddled with “impoverished philosophical notions of being as sheer givenness without inherent order, meaning or beauty,”⁶⁹ in contrast to the “unsullied ontological vision” of pre-modernity,

⁶⁶ See, for example, DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy*, 12: “Is it uncharitable to suggest that one of the reasons the genealogical approach has proved so attractive in recent scholarship of all kinds is that it’s pretty easy to make the history come out the way one wants? To construct a detailed account of the twists and turns of intellectual history over a long period that would truly bear the enormous burden of proof required for generating meaningful theses that remain true to the subtle details of the material—that is a task requiring deep investigations in detail of many figures, years of experience, and a cautious, seasoned faculty of historical judgment. On the other hand, it is fatally easy to come up with a take on intellectual history that looks convincing when one doesn’t really swoop down and spend time examining the detailed features of a particular patch of the country.”

⁶⁷ Dehart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy*, 10

⁶⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 15.

⁶⁹ DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy*, 3

lush with rich (i.e., non-univocal, analogical, participatory) notions of being. As has long been noted, a good case can be made that the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas offers the best example of the latter, and so accordingly should be actively appropriated at the present time.⁷⁰ No doubt it should be. But the foregoing analysis of the EFIT suggests another possible paradigm, a framework that appears even more thoroughgoing and comprehensive in its imposition of a “Trinitarian discipline”⁷¹ on all of reality, including the “Trinitarian watermark” it inscribes on being itself.⁷²

Recently, Khaled Anatolios has advocated the retrieval of the “comprehensive Trinitarianism” of Nicene Christianity, forged in the crucible of the fourth-century debates. If inspiration for such were sought in the intervening tradition, along the way back to the twenty-first century, one could do worse than to linger over this early Franciscan intellectual tradition. N V

⁷⁰ DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy*, 29: “[Milbank’s] ‘Only Theology Saves Metaphysics,’ . . . echoed his own earlier findings that that Aquinas suggests a Trinitarian imprint upon all creatures in his assigning them a threefold mode of perfection (substance, operation, finality).”

⁷¹ I am indebted to Justin Shaun Coyle for this felicitous phrasing.

⁷² Though the matter cannot be pursued here, it is perhaps worth noting that St. Thomas’s mature discussion of the divine nature in the *Summa theologiae* does not similarly privilege these three attributes over other divine attributes, nor does it treat these three in any sense as coordinated or circumincessive triad.