to be found in the whole endeavor. He treats Chesterton with the scholarly detail we usually accord to canonical figures. Chesterton is not a canonical figure, however, but a prophet especially without honor in his own country. Oddie eschews polemic, but it is a little disingenuous of him, for example, to describe Chesterton's horror at the persecution of the Jews without referring to the elaborate accusations of anti-Semitism that, however unjustly, have done so much to damage his reputation. Globally, Chesterton has considerable but very sporadic influence. A book on that influence would be welcome, but—more crucially still—there needs to be a punchy book about the various ways in which Chesterton very much still matters. He is a pioneer in the now-fashionable study of popular literature, for example, and wrote what is perhaps the first important essay on detective fiction. His presentation of fantasy not as an escape from realism but as a paradoxical ally of it has made him highly attractive to writers of the stature of Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco and more recently Roberto Bolano. As Oddie points out, his "small is beautiful" politics and his rejection both of state capitalism and of collectivism could surely be coming into its own in our particular time of crisis. Most importantly of all, of course, he is a great apologist, equally free from fundamentalism and from stuffy ecclesiastical establishments. His works on Christianity helped convert Dorothy Sayers and C. S. Lewis. His presentation of faith as a rational and essentially human commitment could in my view serve us well against Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris and all the new propaganda for secularism and scientism that has had a very marked impact on young people in the United Kingdom and to a lesser extent in the United States.

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Aesthetic Perception: A Thomistic Perspective. By Kevin E. O'Reilly. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-84682-027-4. Pp. 131. $55.00.

This is a book for which the world has waited two generations. Consequently, its argument may appear antique; O'Reilly's main interlocutors are Jacques Maritain and Umberto Eco, whose writings on Aquinas were published decades ago. And yet, the questions it answers were never satisfactorily resolved and merit our attention now; furthermore, O'Reilly's inspiration by recent Continental thought (Gadamer, chiefly), and his use of the main resources of the new Thomist thought that has emerged since Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1980), makes his study something that *should have* been written decades ago but probably could not have been, simply because approaches to his subject—Thomas Aquinas and Beauty—were inadequately conscious of the full complexity of Aquinas' thought.

In the first half of the twentieth century, one might have expected closely researched studies of the idea of beauty in Aquinas as a matter of course. Its early decades witnessed the rise of literary criticism as, initially, a wide-ranging but ill-defined literary genre unto itself, open to philosophical and theological questions and arguments about aesthetic judgment alike while bound by none of them. This genre developed subsequently into an institutionally sanctioned discipline whose wandering ambitions were increasingly encompassed by arguments about the nature and integrity of literature as a *real* aesthetic object. In John Crowe Ransom's words, this growth from genre to discipline had as its end the arrival of the "ontological critic" and as its means, the university as "Criticism, Inc." During this same period, the Thomist Revival was spreading across and beyond the Catholic intellectual world. The access of lay Catholics to the formal study of Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, led to some curious events—not the least of which was the emergence of the philosophies of art and beauty, according to Aquinas, as one means by which the traditional teachings of the Church could meet the most pressing questions of the modern world.

The first and most significant such contribution would be Maritain's small book, *Art and Scholasticism* (1920). The application of Aquinas' moderate metaphysical realism to art may have seemed an auspicious project for the self-styled ontological critic, but the overlap of the Thomist revival and the rise of literary criticism did not end there. Both literary criticism and the revival of Aquinas arose in response to the skepticism and naturalism that haunted modern life; criticism promised to establish that aesthetic experience was not grounded merely on subjective feelings but on real qualities and principles, while Thomism responded more directly, but also in more rarified language, to these modern anxieties by paying due to modern rationality, while combating its materialist reductions or the despairing philosophical idealism to which it sometimes led. The expositors on the scholastic theories of art and beauty promised more than a historical account of antique doctrines, just as literary critics promised more than a refined standard of taste. Together, they adumbrated a vision of totality: the critics called it culture, the Thomists called it the Real.

Maritain's book stood out among those of trained scholastics as the most compelling and accessible account of art and beauty, containing two particular claims that spoke directly to the postwar modernist period. First, Maritain suggested that the virtue of making art entailed a kind of concrete or sensuous intellection: art was entirely intellectual, but it proceeded by means of connatural or intuitive processes at the level of the concrete thing, rather than by the discursive means of the reason (*ratio*). Second, Maritain claimed beauty for one of the transcendental properties of being (adding it to the traditional medieval list of unity, truth, and goodness). According to Aquinas, the constitutive attributes of beauty are integrity (*integritas*), proportion (*proportio*), and splendor (*claritas*). Maritain accounted for all these terms, but emphasized *claritas* as a thing's showing forth of its ontological mystery, its depths of being, which revealed its participation in Being Itself, God.

Man's encounter with beauty was always, therefore, an analogous encounter with fundamental reality—with, that is to say, God under the name of beauty.

The myriad articles and monographs on scholasticism and beauty that followed Maritain generally dilated upon these two points. Was beauty, in fact, a transcendental? And, how do we have aesthetic experience? Only decades later, however, would a sustained and thoroughly researched historical account of Aquinas' embryonic aesthetics appear; Umberto Eco's *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (1956, revised 1970) presented a rigorous body of citations from the Angelic Doctor's work and drew, thereby, conclusions far more sure-footed than were Maritain's. According to Eco, beauty was indeed a transcendental, but its chief formal element was proportion, rather than clarity. Integrity was, as it were, the interior proportion of an existent thing to its essence; something had integrity to the extent that it fulfilled itself. Clarity was merely the experiential consequence of the proportion of a thing when it struck upon the consciousness of a person. When we see the formal proportions of a beautiful entity, we experience its splendor. In the main, then, something was beautiful to the extent that its form's total number of relations were all proportioned; one could judge something truly beautiful only if one perceived the endless web of proportions: a thing's existence to its essence, its form to the subject perceiving, and also a form's relation to the whole hierarchical order of creation leading beyond itself to God. On the strength of this argument, Eco would conclude that Maritain's discussions of intuitive or the connatural knowledge of beauty was ahistorical and un-Thomistic.

Years later, Eco would add the conclusion that Aquinas' account of beauty was untenable. In order to see and evaluate the proportions of a thing, one must have the clear knowledge of it gained only through the acts of reasoning and judgment; thus one perceives beauty only *a posteriori*, having come to a discursive knowledge of it. One cannot know the beautiful without a concept, according to Aquinas, and so Maritain must do violence to his master in making any arguments about intuitive intellection. In his revised edition, Eco would not dismiss Maritain in favor of Aquinas, however. If seeing beauty were a matter of cognizing a many-splendored web of proportions by means of discursive reason, then we would have no means of accounting for our familiar experience of encountering beauty instantly, intuitively, as if before the intellect could begin its grinding lucubration. Further, if beauty were chiefly a matter of perceiving essential forms in relation (proportion) to other forms, then we would be incapable of seeing beauty, because, according to Aquinas, we can have no direct knowledge of individual essences. Only God would see beauty thus, and so Aquinas' aesthetics does not account for human experiences of beauty but only an ethereal metaphysics suitable for God alone.

After Eco, with few exceptions, this argument fell silent. In just over a decade, the wobbly academic houses of the ontological critics would collapse as Vietnam led university students to demand political relevance rather than metaphysical affirmations of the art work. And, with the Second Vatican Council, the study of

Aquinas in general, but above all Aquinas as metaphysician, was left in the dust as new theological trends led to work at once more historically probing and varied (the renewed interest in Patristics of *Ressourcement*) and more contemporary and antifoundational, with phenomenology's popular advent seeming to dismiss the need for any sure doctrines of being as unwarranted concessions to positivism.

O'Reilly's monograph is at once a welcome return to an argument left hanging in the air and a sure footed application of the insights more recent historical theology and the revived Thomism of the last couple decades has given to the meaning of Aquinas. He follows Eco in his account of the constitutive elements of beauty, duly emphasizing proportion, while constraining the meaning of clarity far more than Eco did. To be clear, Eco had insisted that clarity *for Aquinas* was primarily the appearance of the objective conditions of beauty to a knowing subject, but he left intact the older notion of clarity as the vision of a beautiful thing's participation in God as being and beauty itself, which Maritain had derived from the writings of Aquinas' master, Albert the Great; for Eco, these were layers of meaning in Aquinas whose compatibility could not be certainly resolved. O'Reilly ignores this complication in favor of the still more difficult task of showing that Eco's understanding of clarity as the "aesthetic *visio*," the subject's perception of beauty, may best be understood in terms of Maritain's theory of "poetic knowledge" or "creative intuition."

Drawing above all on Rafael-Tomás Caldera's *Le jugement par inclination chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (1980), O'Reilly insists that there is no theory of "pure reason" in Aquinas. Rather, knowing and loving, the movements of the will and of the reason, are conceptually distinct but one in being and action. The reason may be prior to the will in the sense that it knows the good that the will desires, but the formation of the will helps determine to what the reason attends and therefore what it knows. All knowledge is by inclination insofar as the true is the good—that is, the desired end—of the intellect. Moreover, O'Reilly adduces a compelling case that Aquinas grounds and surrounds discursive reasoning and judgment (*per modum cognitionis*) with judgment by connaturality or inclination (*per modum inclinationis*). We know first principles by such intuitions; the virtuous man acts virtuously above all by connatural rather than discursive means; and those infused with faith by grace "suffer" divine things in that mode as well. If first principles, moral action, and divine truth may all be known by nondiscursive means, then surely we may propose that the aesthetic *visio*, the perception of the beautiful, operates in that manner as well.

If Maritain was correct after all that Aquinas conceived the making and perception of beauty as a matter of "creative intuition," it is not clear that he grasped this insight with the critical nuance O'Reilly provides. In Maritain's many writings on the subject, he seems to insist that such intuition, however intellectual, operates to the exclusion of concepts and therefore of discursive reasoning—a point O'Reilly overlooks in the process of realizing a brilliant synthesis of Maritain's notions of

connaturality with Eco's just insistence that proportion is the central ontological element of beauty. When we perceive a beautiful thing, we really are perceiving and judging, part by part, the network of formal proportions constitutive of that thing in itself and in its relation to others. The mind judges a true proportion and finds it good, then moves on to another, and so on and so forth—potentially until it reaches the term of all such judgments, which would be the proportion or ordering of the thing to the final cause of all created nature, God. This is a discursive, a dynamic, and a dialectical movement:

> In studying a particular artifact, I posit a series of judgments. At the term of these judgments, I rest in the delight afforded to me by the understanding attained. No longer does *ratio* proceed by way of multiplicity; rather, it terminates in unity, which is grasped by *intellectus* [the intuitive knowledge described above]. On the basis of this resolution—itself the result of a prior resolution and grasped by an act of intellectual insight—reason can move on toward new discovery, that is to say, towards a deeper aesthetic appreciation of the object in question. This movement of reason once more terminates in understanding. In this way, aesthetic contemplation can be regarded as the origin and term of each act of rational enquiry, these acts endeavoring to penetrate the artistic artifact more deeply. (46)

Aesthetic perception is affective, but so is all human reasoning. When we contemplate a beautiful object, we gain experience in the training of the reason and the will alike. What we encounter is ontologically beautiful—we encounter something real—even as our own subjective appetites will sometimes limit what we *can* encounter and will sometimes develop *by means of* the encounter. Following Maritain, O'Reilly suggests that the beautiful is ultimately ordered to God: our experience of beauty, when rightly ordered, will lead to the contemplation of the formal relation (the proportion) of the creature to the divine; moreover, for something to be truly, rather than relatively, beautiful in itself it must be so ordered as well. Our capacity to know and recognize the beautiful is one that must be developed if we are to be *fully* human, but not all beautiful things are fully so, because they may lack that highest of proportions: the ordering to the last end of all creatures.

In the process of making this claim, O'Reilly (following Jan Aertsen) distances himself from Maritain and Eco alike by contending that beauty is not a transcendental property of being but is strictly "the true experienced as good" (98)—a claim that explains much about the various and confusing historical career of literary criticism and aesthetic theory alike. For, if beauty is not a transcendental, it may be that neither a particular human faculty nor a single branch of knowledge can be strictly concerned with it. Criticism and theory demonstrably vacillate between concerns

with the epistemology of art (how does it speak truth, if at all?) and the ethics of it (how does art represent or provide claims and instruction about the Good?). The mind engaged in aesthetic experience itself weaves between these concerns, unable to decide between them because it is always engaged with both of them at once. O'Reilly gives us a renewed sense of the metaphysical reality that subtends our experience of beauty, explaining in the process why the contemplation of art is essential to the full realization of human life even as art and literature have not been, and perhaps cannot be, resolved into sciences (perfect disciplines) of their own.

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God, the Bible, and Human Consciousness. By Nancy Tenfelde Clasby. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. ISBN 978-0-230-60543-5. Pp. xii + 255. $79.95.

Nancy Tenfelde Clasby's work is an attempt to correct a perceived imbalance within biblical interpretation. In her view, logos has become the dominant matrix for understanding the meaning of scripture, at the expense of mythos, a complex symbolic language that can provide "a route to understanding that is orderly, coherent, and deeply meaningful" (2). While logos, with its emphasis on truths that are "literal, univocal, objective, verifiable and limited" (2) is valuable, Clasby argues , it needs to be balanced by the less appreciated mythos, the means by which, through human history, the highest cultural insights were encoded in ritual and the arts. Despite the fact that logos has become the prevailing system for codifying experience, mythos is more useful for a consideration of the "play of energies, attitudes, intentions, vectors of force that comprise the nonquantified aspect of experience" (5). "Mythos reflects a world in process, living and dying" (5) in a way that logos cannot.

Clasby claims that "when speech, worship and the arts arrived together, they constellated a new and distinctively human awareness of reality. Symbolic representation brought about an axial change in consciousness" (24). She also argues, in support of mythos, that the contemporary environment, with recent developments in the cognitive sciences, understandings of narrative structure, and conclusions in myth theory concerning a monomyth that pervades many cultures, it is easy to conclude that there is an ongoing relevance for the concept of mythos.

After these introductory chapters, Clasby begins a broad discussion of the biblical canon, emphasizing the symbolic qualities of each book or collection of books to affirm her thesis regarding the value of mythos. With but a tenuous adherence to mainstream, systematic Christian theology, Clasby draws on a wide