

BEAUTY FOR TRUTH'S SAKE

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I decided I would focus on the title of my book, *Beauty for Truth's Sake*, and so I begin by exploring the relationship between Beauty and Truth, before coming to the question of education and the present challenges for a Catholic university. Beauty, then, *for the sake of Truth*: what does that mean, exactly?

“All human beings by nature stretch themselves out toward knowing,” said Aristotle.^[1] All human beings desire to know the truth, to know reality. There are many who wish to deceive others, but few who want to be deceived. But *why* do we desire truth? What makes truth attractive to us? Immediately these questions take us into the realm of *eros* and of beauty. We desire the truth because in some sense it is beautiful, it draws us towards it. In fact, to be drawn towards something, to desire it, is part of what we mean by calling it “beautiful”.

Is truth, then, *for the sake of beauty*? Did I get my title the wrong way round? I hope not, because it came to me out of the blue and I have always hoped it was a bit inspired. But no – and here is a paradox. We may be drawn to truth by beauty, but truth is beautiful to us *because it is true*. And one might go on to say that the beauty of anything really lies in its truth.

I don't mean, of course, that every truth we discover must be beautiful in the superficial sense of “pretty” or “pleasant”. There are plenty of ugly truths. In the film of *The Matrix*, on revealing the ugly truth of mankind's true state to Neo, Morpheus uses the phrase: “Welcome to the desert of the real.” And yet Neo would rather know the truth, however ugly it is, than be kept in a state of illusion. Not everyone is as brave as Neo, even within the film, but on some level we surely all know that the “*real*” has so many levels of meaning and richness, and that it is interconnected with everything else in such complex and elegant ways, that it cannot help being more beautiful *as truth* than any lie or delusion, even if we cannot hope to see that beauty at first.

So what *is* beauty? According to Aquinas, whose authority is always useful to invoke (even if in this case his definition is a bit bland), it is “that which, when seen, pleases”. Thus it for him is the

quality of *pleasingness* in things. Traditionally, though not necessarily by Aquinas, beauty is often included among the *transcendental properties* of being, in other words as a property in some degree of *everything that exists*, the other “transcendentals” being unity, truth and goodness. I should briefly say a word about each.

Unity is the beginning, Being as it *is*, because everything possesses first an identity. So unity is the property which pertains to the Being of something as it is in itself. **Truth** is Being as *known* – the coherence of idea and reality. **Goodness** is Being as *willed* – or Being as *loved*. **Beauty**, with which goodness is sometimes confused, is being as *enjoyed*, as rejoiced in. This is what Aquinas was getting at with his notion of pleasingness. When we confront a beautiful scene or object we feel a kind of joy. This joy, I think, involves a feeling of liberation. “For the experiences which should be produced by that which is really beautiful are wonder, and sweet amazement, and desire, and a pleasant fluttering of the wings of the soul,” as Plotinus writes.^[2] Our experience of beauty liberates or expands us beyond the boundaries of the self. The encounter with it arouses the desire to unite ourselves with it in order to become “more” than we are.^[3] At the same time, it may strike us as “more than we deserve” or more than we have a right to expect.

The transcendentals, as properties of all created Being, must reflect or tell us *something* about what is in God, since he is their source. If the properties of Being analogously describe the divine nature as a whole, which is found complete and entire and undivided in each of the Persons, we might for example say that our experience of beauty echoes the infinity of God – the fact that his own Being is inexhaustible and therefore he is a continual delight to himself, a source of eternal rejoicing. This does not apply to any one of the Persons more than another, but it does enable us to trace the transcendentals back to their source in God.

There is also a subtle way in which we can trace them back, not only to the divine nature as such, but to the interplay of the Persons in the Trinity. Not by identifying them with the Persons, but by paying attention to the way the Persons are supposed to relate to each other. Thus the self-giving of the Father to the Son and the Son’s reception of the divine nature from the Father in the Holy Spirit illuminate the self-identity of each created thing (and therefore its unity), as well as its expressiveness (and therefore its truth), its perfection (and therefore its goodness), and its transcendence (therefore its beauty). To say the Trinity reveals all these things is to say that Love reveals them, because Love is another name for the Trinity.

The Dawn of Metaphysics

To become conscious of all the transcendentals seems to have a lot to do with our humanity. As far as we can tell, the other animals seem lost in the task of being themselves. They do not agonize about who they are or speculate about why they might be here. Nor do they stand apart from the other creatures in order to give them names, as we do (as Adam does in Genesis and we have been trying to do ever since). Our self-consciousness is part of what gives us our unique capacity for freedom. Man is a speaking animal, a self-reflexive animal, an animal with a certain liberty – a “metaphysical” animal. To know, to love, to rejoice in another, to rejoice in that which is not the self, is the privilege of one who stands apart, and who is capable of making the distinction between self and other. Thus it was that Etienne Gilson said that man may be defined as a creature “who knows other beings as true, who loves them as good, and who enjoys them as beautiful”.[\[4\]](#)

In a relationship of knowledge, love and joy there is always an intimation of that which transcends us. The experience of the transcendentals constitutes the dawn of metaphysics, and it takes place in us at a very early age. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, it happens at the moment when we first recognize our mother’s smile. He writes:

The infant is brought to consciousness of himself only by love, by the smile of his mother. In that encounter, the horizon of all unlimited being opens itself for him, revealing four things to him: (1) that he is one in love with the mother, even in being other than his mother, therefore all being is one; (2) that that love is good, therefore all Being is good; (3) that that love is true, therefore all Being is true; and (4) that that loves evokes joy, therefore all Being is beautiful.

[\[5\]](#)

So our humanity is bound up with our capacity to realize that Being (and therefore everything that exists, in one degree or another) is one, good, true and beautiful. When we are brutalized into ignorance of this fact, or denied the experience of it, the taste of it, then we have become somehow less than human

It should be pretty obvious how this relates to education. The nature of Being as an expression of Love is the essential foundation for humane education. A rediscovery of Being – of the kind Pope John Paul II called for in *Fides et Ratio* – goes hand in hand with a rediscovery of Love. The hoped-

for “civilization of love” would be one in which the metaphysical dimension of all things has been recovered. We could then also speak of a recovery of the “sense of the sacred”. John Paul II writes:

“Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the metaphysical dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself, in God. We face a great challenge at the end of this millennium to move from *phenomenon* to *foundation*, a step as necessary as it is urgent. We cannot stop short at experience alone; even if experience does reveal the human being's interiority and spirituality, speculative thinking must penetrate to the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises.”[\[6\]](#)

Moving “from *phenomenon* to *foundation*”, from creatures to their common Being, we see all things as full of light. This is the theme of Balthasar’s seven-volume work, *The Glory of the Lord*. And he argues, in a way that I find appropriately luminous, that creaturely Being, or the common Being of things around us in the world, which never exists by itself but only in dependence upon God and actually *in* individual things, once it is seen as transparent to the glory of God that is shining through it in the transcendentals, mediates between God and ourselves. That is why we need to awaken our spiritual senses, to open our spiritual eyes. Without this metaphysical sense that enables us to look beyond the surface, things would be merely themselves, individual, opaque and disconnected, related one to another in an almost mechanical fashion. With it, things are transparent to something behind them, they are related interiorly to each other and to their source. Balthasar refers to “*creaturely reality in so far as it is seen and conceived as the all-embracing manifestation of God.*” [\[7\]](#) He even calls this, in a notable phrase, the “kingdom of beauty”.

I have said that the joy associated with beauty is our pointer to the depths of Being in God. Interestingly, in the writings of both C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, the word “joy” is associated with the obscure and poignant memory of this original depth-experience, this sense of a transcendent home. Lewis writes that once one experiences that joy, one will always want it again.

Apart from that, and considered only in its quality, it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But it is a kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is.[\[8\]](#)

Joy in the sense of the German *sehnsucht* contains “the stab, the pang, the inconsolable longing” that indicates precisely the gulf that exists between the Being of God and that of creatures, between *esse subsistens* and *esse non subsistens*. And I think this may be related to the sorrow that the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* refers to as “full of holy longing” and as leading to union with God in perfect love. “Everyone has something to sorrow over,” he writes, “but none more than he who knows and feels that he is [i.e. that he exists over and against God]. All other sorrow in comparison with this is a travesty of the real thing.” He continues: “Such sorrow, when we have it, cleanses the soul not only of sin, but also of the suffering its sin has deserved. And it makes the soul ready to receive that joy which is such that it takes from a man all awareness of his own existence.”^[9] The author goes on to stress that what is lost in that joy is not existence but our *awareness* of existence – an important point to make in these days of false mysticism.

The same joy, “poignant as grief”, is evoked by Tolkien over and over again in the cry of the seagulls and the music of the waves of on the shores Middle-earth, heard by the Elves who carry the memory of the distant West, and by the “joyous turn” or *eucatastrophe* in fairy-tales, where perhaps a glimpse of paradise is attained after long temptation to despair. Of course, the happy ending of the fairy-tale is not a permanent state, and it rarely happens in everyday life that things unexpectedly work out for the best, and yet “over the hills and far away” and “they lived happily ever after” are phrases that speak more truly of the nature of reality than our cynics would admit. The whole of the *Lord of the Rings*, whatever its literary imperfections, is suffused with the kind of light that Balthasar describes as radiating into the world from the glory of God, and that is why it remains so perennially popular. You could almost say that this is a story that “makes the soul ready to receive that joy which is such that it takes from a man all awareness of his own existence.”

Tolkien’s aesthetic theory is embodied in the history of the Elves, which he “winds like a thread” into the lives of Men through a series of marriages, beginning with that of Beren and Luthien, the ancestors of Aragorn and Arwen, described in *The Silmarillion*. The Elves are steeped in this joy, which is at the same time a sorrow, of existing mysteriously in a world that is subject to time, themselves unchanging. For them, the only hope of transcending this barrier between creaturely and eternal Being lies in their relationship with Men, as Tolkien makes clear in the “Debate of Finrod and Andreth” in a planned supplement to *The Silmarillion*. For it is Men who have been given the gift of death, and it is as a Man that the Maker of all things will become incarnate in order to assume and to heal the sorrows of the world. In the end, Men will lead the Elves into a new heaven and a new earth that they could not even glimpse in their dreams.

Mother of the Liberal Arts

Perhaps I have stretched credibility far enough by connecting Scholastic aesthetics and that of Balthasar with the Elves of Tolkien, but I want now to take a further step, into the Russian “silver age”, and try to identify what Balthasar calls the “kingdom of beauty” which is the radiance of Being with that strange, elusive, quasi-personal presence to which the Bible gives the name Wisdom, Sophia, Sapientia. In other words, I want to retrieve for our purposes the insights of the Russian Sophiologists, and reintegrate these with the Latin tradition of the Liberal Arts. This is risky, not least because Sophiology is regarded as somewhat unorthodox even within Orthodoxy. [10] Nevertheless, I suspect it can be done, and I find some support for this in the theologian Louis Bouyer – a friend, it turns out, of both Balthasar and Tolkien.

There are icons of Sancta Sophia in the Greek as well as the Russian Orthodox Church: a great red and gold angel on a throne, sometimes bearing a musical instrument or book on her lap. The biblical references to her are mainly in the Book of Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon, and she is traditionally identified with the Shekinah or Glory of God present in the Temple. The Gnostics, of course, revered Sophia, and their cosmologies sometimes identified seven levels of spiritual being, on each of which she manifests as the feminine complement for a masculine spirit. The writers of Nag Hammadi contrasted the Sophia who remains at God’s side with the Sophia who is at ours, separated from God and wandering in the world. This was the starting point for a spirituality of worldly renunciation. Most of the orthodox Church Fathers, on the other hand, identified the figure of Wisdom, despite its feminine gender, with the Logos, the second Person of the Trinity, or else (following Irenaeus) with the Holy Spirit, the third Person. Scriptural passages about Wisdom have therefore tended to be applied in the Church’s liturgy to Christ – although sometimes also to his Mother, as the “Seat of Wisdom.”

Nevertheless, Sophia continued to pop up in strange places as a feminine figure. As *Philosophia* she appears to Boethius in his sixth-century prison cell, majestic and ageless, and around 1600 the German mystic Jakob Boehme developed an elaborate sophiology that had influence in Catholic circles subsequently through Franz von Baader (d. 1841). Here Sophia was the personified matrix of all archetypes, a pure mirror of God and of creation. Three hundred years later Vladimir Solovyov gave renewed impetus to Sophianic speculation after three visions in Moscow, London, and Egypt revealed what he took to be a feminine/receptive principle in both God and creation, as it were a “world-soul” fallen and raised up through history in freedom.

Solovyov's successor Sergius Bulgakov (d. 1944) concluded that Sophia was the revelation or glory of the Father as disclosed by the Holy Spirit together with the Son: "The Son *and* the Holy Spirit, together, inseparable and unconfused, realize the self-revelation of the Father in his nature."^[11] Sophia is also the "mutual revelation of the Son and the Holy Spirit," who are one in her, just as all three hypostases are one in the divine substance or *ousia*.^[12] Describing her as a "heavenly humanity" filled with the ever-flowing life of the Trinity, "the real unity of the world in the Logos, the coinherence of all with all, the world of divine ideas.... Plato baptized by the Hellenic genius of Byzantium",^[13] he makes her the link between God and the creation, making possible the Incarnation of the Son. She is the "essence" of creation, made from nothing in the "free necessity" of God's tri-hypostatic love. If Holy Scripture tells us that she was with the Father before the beginning of all things (Prov. 8:22), according to Bulgakov this is because she is the perfect Idea of his creation – that is, in his terms, the "Angel" of creation. Pavel Florensky (d. 1937) writes in a similar vein: "Sophia is the Great Root by which creation goes into the intra-Trinitarian life and through which it receives Life Eternal from the One Source of Life. Sophia is the original nature of creation... the Guardian Angel of creation, the Ideal person of the world."^[14]

Arthur Versluis summarizes this Sophianic tradition as follows:

Sophia is the "pure element" in which the spiritual revelation of the Logos, or spiritual sun, takes place; she is therefore also the divine Presence as manifested in the cosmos. That is why Boehme wrote that Sophia is like a prism, through which the pure light of the Godhead is refracted into being; and also why he wrote that one must necessarily approach the Trinity via Sophia: Sophia is not a member of the Trinity – despite various attempts to make her so – but rather is the "medium" or element through which we as created beings approach the Father, the Logos, and the Holy Spirit. This approach, which takes place in the spirituality of our visionaries only in an inward visionary realm, must be an approach to a "Virgin of Light" that is, in an ultimate sense, our own true centre.^[15]

So what do we make of all this? In some ways it strikes me that the personification of Wisdom by the Sophiologists is closer to the Bible's mythopoetic way of thinking than the more abstract philosophical language of the scholastics. Whereas the philosopher speaks of Being, or the transcendental properties of Being, the Bible prefers to say:

“For wisdom is more moving than any motion: she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness” (Wis. 7:24-6, KJV).

But compare this with the way in which Balthasar writes about Being. His style forms a kind of half-way house, philosophical and abstract but at the same time more lyrical than the Scholastics. He describes the Being of creatures as: “something ‘abundant, simple, not subsisting’, ‘universal’, ‘flowing’, participating in an infinite manner and thence in itself infinite, lending form inexhaustibly, which however is distinguished from God by the fact that God subsists in himself, while being only subsists in finite beings.”[\[16\]](#)

I have suggested that beauty exists in all things, that we need to open our spiritual eyes to perceive and receive it as such, that if we do it will lead us to God. Worldly beauty is the radiance of God’s glory shining through created being. But can we now identify this divine glory with Wisdom? In his book on the cosmic glory of God, Bouyer reinforces this interpretation. The world is assumed by our Lord and offered up by him and in him on the Cross, in the Last Supper, and in the Eucharist. This is what is meant by his “giving glory” to the Father. He who has received his own divine nature from the Father, gives back in the Holy Spirit everything that he has, including now the world and the Church that is joined to him through an eternal Covenant. The world, the whole universe connected to his human nature, all those who are joined to his Spirit by their love, is transformed and resurrected, fashioned into a worthy gift for the Father, and in this way the Father is glorified in the Son and the Son in the Father. The glory that the Son gives is the world filled with the Holy Spirit, and it is this spiritualized creation, creation purified and made perfect, that is the Wisdom of God who is mysteriously already present with him in the beginning as his plan and purpose.[\[17\]](#)

Wisdom, then, is God’s original Idea of the world, and also the creation finally conformed to that Idea in the consummation of all things – for the divine essence contains all that is, and nothing is perfectly its own unique self until it coincides with God’s thought of it. Sophia is the original Idea of the world, but also the world resurrected. She is created Being glorified, the Bride of God, the rejoicing of God in his creation.

Wisdom is therefore the glory which was the Son's at the side of the Father before the creation of the world, a glory the Father bestows on him through his crucifixion in historical time, a glory which the glorified Son will then impart to the faithful when he gives them the Spirit, the Spirit of filiation, the Spirit of the Father and the Son.[\[18\]](#)

The beauty of Wisdom inspires rejoicing, because it speaks of an ineffable reality on which everything depends, namely the love which is beyond Being because it rests in itself, in which delight is eternal.[\[19\]](#) In that love is the source of all spiritual beauty, all "glory", all Wisdom. It is beauty that moves us to love the one, the true and the good, not for her sake but for theirs.

The Children of Wisdom

I am conscious that much of what I have said so far, and especially in the previous section, needs to be unpacked, sorted out, and discussed, but all I can do, in the time that remains, is risk a few thoughts on the implications for education.

This is not as big a jump as it might at first appear. For if we can say that it is the beauty of Wisdom that draws us towards our own end, our own fulfilment, our own integrity, in God, then it is not too much of a stretch to add that it is this beauty or radiance of Wisdom that must be described as the hidden life-energy of education, the *reason* we learn, the *reason* we teach. We do so in order to give glory to God – and this means, as we have seen, to give the world, as a whole, to God the Father in the Son.

This is perhaps why tradition describes the seven Liberal Arts, and all the other arts, as the "children of Wisdom". That is how they are depicted in the allegorical carvings that adorn many Gothic churches and many Renaissance frescoes. It is in Wisdom that the Liberal Arts connect together, and it is because they connect together in this way that they are recognized as expressions of the same Spirit. Or else we might put it slightly differently, and say that it is from Wisdom that they all unfold and diversify, in their varied richness and spontaneity, without losing their interior unity. Either way, Wisdom has a kind of motherly role, for it is in the mother that the family coheres, and from her that it comes.

One more step. What happens when the Liberal Arts dissolve, as they have today in many places,

into the arts of *liberalism*? Remember that it is not just beauty alone that is at stake here, but unity, truth and goodness as well. As Balthasar points out in a famous passage: “Our situation today shows that beauty demands for itself at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness, and she will not allow herself to be separated and banned from her two sisters without taking them along with herself in an act of mysterious vengeance.”^[20] And he adds: “We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past — whether he admits it or not — can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love.”

We cannot hold to one purpose and one transcendent end, we cannot know things as possessing meaning and coherence, we cannot act in accordance with reality or our own destiny, if we completely lack a sense of the transcendentals and their coinherence in Wisdom. Of course, we don't need to be able to put this into long words. The sense of truth, goodness, beauty and meaning – the sense of a sacred order – is present in the most uneducated person, and is often lost most easily by the educated. The challenge for educators is how to preserve and nourish this sense of a sacred order, this sense of meaning and beauty that inspires ethics and culture, in a society that teaches cynicism, despondency and ugliness. How do we counter the “dictatorship of relativism” (as the Pope again called it in his address to the people of Scotland on 16 September)?

Obviously one way is to argue *philosophically* for the objectivity of truth, goodness and even beauty. And since “ideas have consequences”, it is important to do so. False ideas and judgments have spread like wildfire through our civilization. Those fires need to be put out. But it is a fact that not everyone listens to philosophical arguments. I sometimes wonder if anyone does. We need to start earlier, and reconsider the way we teach children from the very earliest age. We need to provide the right foundations to enable the next generation to develop sound instincts and intuitions, to awaken the capacity to think metaphysically, to attend to the depth-dimension in things. And that does not mean starting with metaphysics, but with the imagination.

In my book I write about “poetic knowledge” as the basis of a way of teaching that can reintegrate the sciences with the arts. I emphasize the importance of beauty in scientific discovery and mathematics. I suggest that numbers and words are to be understood not as arbitrary counters or labels, but as part of a progressive attempt to uncover the meanings and the *logos* of the world. The old legend that once upon a time there was one natural language, the language of Eden, before God divided it into 72 tongues at the Tower of Babel, bespeaks an intuition that words are more than just

signs. They emerge from a primordial awareness of relationship, even intimacy, with the things we are trying to name and describe. This “connatural knowledge” is the basis for poetic speech. It is tacit, analogical, and of course it is the basis for all kinds of dangerous and “pathetic” fallacies if translated too directly into rational thought. But rational thought cannot sever the connection entirely, even if it would like to, and the most dry and abstract prose depends for its meaning on the metaphors and images buried within it.

Poetry is the purest form of human speech, because it is the most pregnant with meaning. And song or music is perhaps even purer than speech (as Tolkien once again perceived). The ancient conception of education gave great importance to music and harmony, not just as a subject in its own right (the part of the Quadrivium that we might term “music theory”), but because it regarded music as fundamental to the process of learning. The various human faculties, such as reason, imagination, feeling, sensation and memory, function best when they are in balance with each other. The harmony of the human faculties is a kind of music, just as the harmony of the planetary orbits may be called the “music of the spheres”. In the words of Plato’s *Timaeus*:

audible musical sound is given us for the sake of harmony, which has motions akin to the orbits in our soul, and which, as anyone who makes intelligent use of the arts knows, is not to be used, as is commonly thought, to give irrational pleasure, but as a heaven-sent ally in reducing to order and harmony any disharmony in the revolutions within us.[\[21\]](#)

Music, poetry, and the ordered mathematical relationships that make them beautiful, all represent aspects and manifestations of the Logos, the *ratio* and meaning of the world as a whole. To be educated is to be initiated into the music, to become a player or a singer able to add to the symphony.

Conclusion

education needs to be reconceived in the light of Wisdom and the desire for beauty. This must be done not simply by trying to return to an earlier stage of our civilization but by seeking in our own time and in our own way that which the great teachers of Europe also sought and desired in theirs, bringing to bear the full resources of our own intelligence. Medieval civilization bore great fruit in the cathedrals and extraordinary works of philosophy and music, but like all things of time it

ultimately failed. Like Camelot it lasted but a moment and probably contained the seeds of its own destruction from the very beginning. Each civilization sets the terms of the next, and the strengths and weaknesses of Christendom were successively manifested in the Reformation, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, each of which bore fruit both good and bad in their own turn. The achievements of our civilization cannot be denied, especially in the technical field. Yet as has often been remarked, these were purchased largely in headlong flight from Wisdom along a path whose end is still veiled from us. We need to look deeper for the sources and inspiration that will retrieve for us a sense of meaning and enable us to justify our better human instincts.

For the main weakness of our civilization, against which education should protect us, is a tendency to seek happiness in emotional or physical release and self-indulgence, as though we were merely biological machines. The resulting anarchy of passion can only, in the end, be controlled by force – which probably means the force of the stronger among us against the weak – and the results will not be pleasant for any of us. The rediscovery of human nature might as well happen now as later, saving us much trouble and distress. As John Paul II and Benedict XVI have been saying to us, our purpose and happiness, as the kind of spiritual animals that we are, lies in *self-giving love*. The Christian can explain this fact with reference to the Trinity, where three are one and all dissonance is overcome, making God the source of the Music, the highest source of harmony. But you do not have to be a Christian to recognize the truth of this in your experience. Everyone knows that it is love rather than money or power that gives meaning and savour to life. Love is, if anything, higher than Wisdom – or perhaps we should say, it is the highest form of Wisdom. Its radiance is the divine glory. The question is, what is the path of love in our time? What does love demand of us? How can we be faithful to what it shows us, what it promises us? That is a question for each of us to answer for ourselves.

NOTES

[1] Aristotle, the first line of the *Metaphysics*, from *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 1999), 1.

[2] *Ennead* 1:6.

[3] At the level of *eros* we recognize that there are two main ways to expand the self by uniting it with a desired beauty. The feminine way is to try to receive the beautiful into ourselves. The masculine way is to try to project or inject the self into the beautiful. At the spiritual level we do both of these things, and the Christian knows that both ways are rooted in God, who both receives himself and gives himself in the three Persons.

[4] *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, p. 255.

[5] H.U. von Balthasar, *My Work in Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 114. Balthasar does not address what happens if the mother never smiles. Presumably Being must then find some other way to reveal itself as one, true,

good and beautiful.

[6] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (1998), n. 83.

[7] H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, Vol. 4 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 374.

[8] *Surprised by Joy*, 20.

[9] *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. Clifton Walters (London: Penguin Books, 1980), 112.

[10] Balthasar's critique of sophiology may be found in *Glory* VII, p. 271. He thinks that Sophia tends to replace the Word, such that God's free self-expression is replaced with an inevitable emanation (but see his account of "free necessity" at p. 315). In his view, Solovyev's three visions were of the Virgin Mary.

[11] S. Bulgakov, *Sophia*, 46.

[12] S. Bulgakov, *Sophia*, 47.

[13] Cited by Andrew Louth in Stephen C. Barton (ed.) *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?*, 178. Bulgakov is describing Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Paul Evdokimov described sophiology as "the glory of present-day Orthodox theology" in his book *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 66. Not all Orthodox theologians would agree. For a survey focusing on three of the key figures see Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*. Also Michael A. Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology*. Celia Deane-Drummond, in *Creation Through Wisdom*, argues for a Trinitarian view of Wisdom as the feminine face of all three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

[14] Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton University Press, 1997), 237.

[15] Arthur Versluis, *TheoSophia*, 160-61.

[16] H.U. von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, Vol. IV, 374. We can even identify this, if we wish, with the "Living Creature" of Plato's *Timaeus*, in the image of which the whole world was made, provided we remember the distinction between the Being of God and that of creation.

[17] This is the mystery of *theosis*, of the creature's divinization. It is represented in the Coronation of the Virgin, the final mystery of the Rosary, in which Mary and Sophia become indistinguishable. Bouyer puts it like this: "All creation is actually the development of Wisdom from the initial stage when the distinction between it [her] and the Word is purely rational, to the final stage when it becomes real. But Wisdom reaches this separation only to strive – through the entire history of the created world, taken up finally into the flow of divine life, of which it is only a reflection – to be reunited with the Word again, this time forever. The Nuptials of the Lamb are the goal of history, just as the principle of history is in the Lamb's immolation, decided before the creation of the world and carried out at the highest point of historical development" (*Cosmos*, 231).

[18] Louis Bouyer, *Cosmos: The World and the Glory of God* (Petersham, MA: St Bede's, 1998), 192.

[19] We read in the Book of Proverbs that Wisdom is especially associated with *rejoicing* (and therefore with beauty): "I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:22, 29-31).

[20] *Glory of the Lord*, I, 18.

[21] Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* (New York: Penguin, 1965), 65.