

The Discovery of the Relative Transcendental Properties

By

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Abstract

This work is an evaluation of the relative transcendentals—truth (*verum*), goodness (*bonum*), and beauty (*pulchrum*)—within the framework of Thomistic metaphysics. These are properties of being considered not in isolation, but in relation to the faculties of the human soul: truth to the intellect, good to the will, and beauty to both intellect and will in a unified contemplative act. The central problem addressed is the realistic base of these transcendentals and their cognitive consequences—whether they are merely conceptual constructs or real aspects of being itself as encountered by a rational nature. The objective is to critically examine their metaphysical grounding, clarify their mutual distinctions and unity, and evaluate their existential significance. Using the philosophical method of analysis—drawing principally from Aquinas, Krapiec, Maryniarczyk, Blanchette, and Aertsen—the study shows that these transcendentals are coextensive with being, irreducible to one another, and culminate in the divine simplicity of *ipsum esse subsistens*. The Findings reveal that truth, goodness, and beauty are not accidental features of reality but necessary modes of being's manifestation to the intellect and will. This study is significant in offering a philosophically rigorous tool for academic exploration. It revitalizes the metaphysical discourse on the transcendentals and provides a foundation for further inquiry in philosophical anthropology, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics.

Key Words: Truth, transcendental, metaphysics, being, Transcendental Properties

Introduction

Metaphysics, in its most profound sense, is the science of being as being (*ens in quantum ens*). Yet, the immediate grasp of being is not an isolated act of intellectual abstraction, but a deeply rooted experience grounded in the human soul. The soul, as Aristotle noted and Aquinas developed further, is “in a sense, all things,” possessing within itself the faculties that mirror the very structure of reality: the intellect and the will. These powers not only make man capable of knowledge and love, but also place him in dynamic relation with all that exists. The soul, therefore, becomes the point of convergence through which the relative transcendentals—truth (*verum*), goodness (*bonum*), and beauty (*pulchrum*)—are encountered as the expressive dimensions of being in relation to cognition and desire.

Thomas Aquinas, drawing on the legacy of Aristotle, taught that being (*ens*) is the first object of the

intellect, and that its intelligibility gives rise to the first conceptions of the mind—what he called the transcendentals. These properties, coextensive with being, are not accidental additions but necessary dimensions that follow upon being itself. They are not superadded predicates to being; they are the necessary ways in which being manifests itself to a knowing and desiring soul. Among them, Aquinas distinguishes a subset known as the relative transcendentals, which emerge when being is considered in ordine ad aliud—in relation to another (De Veritate, q. 1, a. 1). These are not mere mental constructions or logical derivations, but real aspects of being as it is encountered by the human person.

In this framework, truth arises from the conformity of being with the intellect. Being is not mute but speaks; it discloses itself, offers itself to be known. The convertibility of being and truth (*ens et verum convertuntur*) is not a mere logical identity, but a metaphysical intimacy: for anything that is, is knowable, and is therefore true (ST. I, q. 16, a. 3. Prima Pars 1-49). Yet this knowability is not static, it is dynamic, grounded in the conformity of being to its own essence (metaphysical truth), and in the adequation of the intellect to reality (logical truth) (Blanchette, 195). The soul, in knowing, does not impose truth, but discovers it because being is already true in se, prior to any judgment. As Krapiec rightly observes, the intellect is naturally ordered to being, just as the eye is to light. Without being, there is no knowing (138).

Goodness, in turn, proceeds from the relation of being to appetite. The good is being as perfective, as that which all things desire, not by arbitrary will, but by nature's own orientation toward fulfillment. The good, therefore, is not subjective sentiment but objective finality. Being, insofar as it is, is already good; for it possesses perfection to some degree (Aquinas, ST. I, q. 5, a. 3). The structure of goodness lies in its rootedness in essence and its orientation toward end – *bonum est diffusivum sui per modum quo causa finalis dicitur movere* (Maryniarczyk, 93). It is by final cause that being is drawn into order, for the good is the cause of causes: that for the sake of which all things act (Aquinas, ST. I, q. 5, a. 2). And in rational creatures, this orientation becomes conscious, giving rise to ethical life, moral judgment, and ultimately the desire for the summum bonum – God, who alone is Good by essence. These two: truth and goodness, stand as twin expressions of the soul's natural relation to being: the intellect seeks what is true, the will seeks what is good. Yet in both, it is being that offers itself, already rich with rationality and finality. The human person does not bestow these qualities but receives them in wonder and inquiry.

Beauty is grasped from the simultaneous act of intellect and will, which are enchanted and drawn into contemplation of reality. Prior to the independent act of the intellect and the specified movement of the will, there exists an “inner unity” of the agent at the initial intentional psychic contact with being. This contact “awakens an inclination toward the knowable object, arousing an embryonic attraction” (181) The outcome is a disinterested fascination of what is beheld. This metaphysical

experience is prior essentially to truth and good, since both are particularizations of a unified act of the whole psychic life of the agent.

The encounter with being as intelligible, perfective, and final discloses a metaphysical order, one not constructed by the mind, but discovered through it (Heidegger). In this light, the relative transcendentals are not to be treated as secondary to the science of being, but as its necessary interior articulations. They reveal the richness of being not merely in its facticity but in its communicability, its openness, and its self-diffusion. To study the transcendentals is to study the ways in which being relates to the soul, and how the soul, in turn, is constituted by its encounter with that which is.

This paper is a metaphysical contemplation of being in its relational modes, as true, as good, and as beautiful, each irreducible to the other, yet all united in the mystery of *ens commune*, and culminating in the absolute simplicity of the *ipsum esse subsistens*, the source from whom all truth, goodness, and beauty proceed and toward whom all things are ordered.

Transcendental verum

To apprehend truth as a transcendental is to engage being not in abstraction but in its primordial relation to the intellect. In Thomistic metaphysics, *truth (verum)* is not simply a predicate of propositions; it is a **mode of being**, a manifestation of being's **intrinsic intelligibility**. Being is not closed in upon itself; it is **open to the intellect**, disclosive, self-manifesting. As Aquinas famously teaches, “being and truth are convertible” (ST. I, q. 16, a. 3) (*ens et verum convertuntur*). This implies that whatever is, **insofar as it is**, is knowable and therefore true. But this convertibility is not a tautology; it reveals a profound **ontological structure**: the soul encounters being as ordered to knowledge. As Blanchette expresses it: “this coming together of being with intelligence... cannot be thought of as purely incidental or external to being. It follows necessarily from our very conception of being as we try to express it more completely” (195).

Herein lies the heart of the transcendental verum: being and truth are **really identical** and **rationaly distinct**. That is, truth adds nothing to being in reality, but it expresses being **under the aspect of its knowability**. Transcendental verum is categorized into three namely: metaphysical/transcendental truth, logical truth and divine/ontic truth.

i. Metaphysical Truth

Metaphysical truth, sometimes called **ontological or transcendental truth**, is truth *in re*, that is, truth as it exists *in* the thing. A being is metaphysically true insofar as it conforms to its **essence**, that is, it possesses **the act proper to its nature**. In this regard, Krapiec writes: “There is nothing in thought that was not somehow derived from being” (139). This truth precedes all cognition and judgment; it is rooted in the being's internal **rational structure**, whereby it is capable of being known. Aquinas puts this precisely when he affirms: “A thing is said to be true insofar as it is

conformed to the divine intellect” (ST. I, q. 16, a. 1.). Thus, metaphysical truth is not a matter of assertion but of **actuality**: a being is true insofar as it *is* what it ought to be. This leads to the principle that **every being is intelligible**; not in the sense that every being is fully comprehended, but in the sense that there is **nothing in being that resists being known** *in se*. Blanchette clarifies: “Whatever we cognize, we cognize as a being. Every being is knowable in the sense that in every being as being there is nothing that would prevent its cognition” (195). Thus, metaphysical truth stands as the **foundation** for all other kinds of truth, it is the truth of being itself.

ii. Logical Truth

Logical truth (*veritas in intellectu*) arises in the **judgment** of the intellect, when it conforms to reality. It is classically defined as the adequation of the intellect and the thing (*adaequatio intellectus et rei*). In this second sense, truth is **relational**: it does not rest in being alone, but in the **correspondence** between mind and being. Aquinas states: “truth resides formally in the intellect, and materially in things” (ST. I, q. 16, a. 1, ad 1.). The intellect receives its content from being, and when it judges correctly, i.e., it **affirms what is** or **denies what is not**, truth results. According to Blanchette, ontological truth is grasped when truth is viewed from the side of the object while logical truth manifests itself when truth is viewed from the side of the subject, the intellect (199). This structure reflects the **dual metaphysical order**: being is already true metaphysically, but truth in the **logical** order requires the **intellect's affirmation** of that being. Heidegger's insight, though not Thomistic, adds an existential nuance. He views truth not simply as correctness but as *aletheia*, “un-hiddenness,” where being is disclosed (261-263). Yet this “uncovering” presupposes, as Aquinas maintains, that being **is already open** to be known.

iii. Ontic or Divine Truth

The third and most profound order is **divine or ontic truth**, truth in its **absolute and subsistent** form. In Aquinas's metaphysics, God is pure subsistent being (*ipsum esse subsistens*). As such, **truth and being are identical** in Him. God is not true *by participation*, as creatures are, but *per essentiam*, He is truth itself (45). Creatures are measured by the divine intellect; they are metaphysically true because they **conform to the archetype in God**. As Aquinas writes: “God knows all things, not because they inform Him, but because He causes them” (ST. I, q. 14, a. 8.). Thus, divine truth is the **source and measure** of all created truth. Human cognition is a **participation** in the eternal truth of the divine Logos. It is this participation that allows both metaphysical and logical truth to exist.

The principle of intelligibility of Being

Underlying all three dimensions of truth is the **intelligibility of being** itself. Being is not mute; it is **radiant by virtue of its form** (*species*), and this radiance is what the intellect grasps. Krapiec supports this view stating: “there is nothing in thought that was not somehow derived from being” (139). This shows some dependence, conformity and relation between the intellect and being. This relation manifests one important characteristic of being, its intelligibility (Krapiec, 139). This intelligibility grounds the **ontological priority** of being over knowledge. All that is known is known

as being, and the condition for knowledge is that being is already ordered to the intellect. Blanchette writes: “Being is not something we think of as closed up within itself... We think of it only as disclosing itself in our knowing as that which is” (195). Hence, truth is not a construct, but a **metaphysical encounter** with being in its openness. It is the **soul's first reception** of reality's meaning.

Hence, the transcendental *verum* is the manifestation of being's **openness to intellect**. In metaphysical truth, being is true in itself; in logical truth, the intellect conforms to being; in divine truth, God is truth subsisting. Together, they articulate the **structure of reality as intelligible**, and the soul's natural ordination to truth. Far from being accidental, truth is the first gift of being to the soul, the first resonance of reality in the mind. To seek truth is not merely to organize ideas, but **to respond to being's invitation**, to know, to affirm, and to contemplate what is.

Transcendental bonum

In the classical tradition of Thomistic metaphysics, to speak of the good (*bonum*) is not to wander into ethical sentiment, but to uncover the **desirability inscribed in the very heart of being**. Thus, Aquinas affirms: “every being, as being, is good” (ST. I, q. 5, a. 3). (*omne ens, in quantum est ens, est bonum*). This is not an added property from outside of being but a *transcendental mode*, a relation of being to the appetite, just as truth is a relation of being to the intellect. The good, then, is not extrinsic to being but coextensive with it. Wherever there is being, there is some measure of goodness. But what does this mean experientially? It means that **the most basic impulse of life, to continue, to act, to flourish, is grounded in a metaphysical order of goodness**. A child reaching for food, a tree growing toward sunlight, a student labouring for excellence, all of these are empirical signs of what Aquinas and Aristotle describe as the movement toward the good.

The Nature of the Good as a Transcendental

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas leans on Aristotle when he declared: goodness is what all desire (I, q. 5, a. 1) (*bonum est quod omnia appetunt*). Desire here is not mere emotional craving; it is a universal metaphysical tendency. From atoms forming molecules to parents sacrificing for their children, reality is inundated with purposiveness. This reveals the foundational identity of **being and good**: *ens et bonum convertuntur*. Goodness is being *under the aspect of desirability*, being that fulfils, perfects, or satisfies an end. As Krapiec notes, “whatever is being, is also a good... beings are goods” (155). This metaphysical affirmation is not reducible to the psychological sentiment of liking. In fact, **we do not desire things because we subjectively deem them good; we desire them because they are, in some real way, objectively good**, that is, apt for fulfilling the capacities of our nature. As Krapiec insists, the goodness is in being; something is desired because it is good (155).

Structure and Kinds of Goodness

Goodness unfolds in a tripartite metaphysical structure: **perfection, finality, and participation**.

i. Goodness as Perfection

Perfection (*perfectio*) is not a luxury of being; it is its internal logic. A thing is good insofar as it is perfect, and it is perfect insofar as it fully actualizes its nature. Thus, a clock is good when it tells time; a tree is good when it bears fruit; a person is good when their intellect and will are properly ordered to truth and love. Aquinas writes: “everything is said to be good so far as it is perfect” (ST. I, q. 5, a. 5) (*unum quod que dicitur bonum, in quantum est perfectum*). Yet perfection differs across natures. A pebble is perfect as a pebble; it is not less good than a lion because it is not a lion. Goodness is **analogical**, not univocal. Each being is good in the mode of its being.

ii. Finality and the Will

If truth is the intellect's orientation toward being, goodness is the will's motion toward the end. Every act, conscious or unconscious, moves toward some end perceived as good. The carpenter makes a chair because he sees its usefulness; the teacher teaches because of the fulfilment it brings to both self and students. These acts disclose the metaphysical law of **finality**: “every agent acts for an end” (ST. Ia-IIae, 1, 1) (*omne agens agit propter finem*). Krapiec observes that the pain of failure is a lived sign of this teleological structure: when a human act fails to reach its end, the soul feels frustration. This shows that action is not blind—it is **ordered toward the realization of value**. Even in non-rational beings, this teleology operates. A seed grows into a tree; iron sinks in water; water seeks its level. These natural tendencies reflect the **cosmic love of being**—an expression Krapiec uses to denote the inner drive of things toward their proper actuality.

iii. Participation and Divine Goodness

Finally, all goodness in creation is **participated goodness**. No creature is good *per essentiam*. Only God, as *ipsum esse subsistens*, is good **by essence**, not by derivation. All finite goods point beyond themselves to their infinite source. As Aquinas writes: *Deus est suabonitas*—“God is His goodness” (ST. I, q. 6, a. 3). This means that the good is not only an aspect of metaphysical structure but the very **destination** of all desire. The desire for truth, for love, for beauty, for justice—all these link us to the Absolute, the *Summum Bonum*, the Good Itself. This metaphysical structure resonates existentially. When we pursue love, justice, friendship, meaning—we are not inventing value. We are **responding to the goodness already inscribed in being**, and ultimately seeking its divine source. As Krapiec puts it: “We are, through our being, connected with the will of the Absolute... the effect of this ontic bond is called goodness” (154).

In line with Thomistic thought, three modes of good can be distinguished according to the motivation for action: honourable good, pleasurable good and useful good. A good is called honourable (*bonum honestum*), when it is desired for its own sake. It is the pursuit of what is right and just. A good is called pleasurable (*delectabile*), when it is sought for pleasure and satisfaction. Finally, a good is called useful (*utile*), when it is a means to another end.

The Metaphysical Opposition of Good and Evil

Evil is not a positive being but a **privation** (*privatio*)—the lack of a good that should be present. A blind eye is evil not in itself, but because sight, its proper perfection, is missing. Blanchette explains: “As a lack or privation, however, evil is not a thing or a being of any kind. It is a privation of some good... In either case, real as the evil may be, it is still only a privation and not a being as such” (226).

This classical doctrine—central to Augustine and Aquinas—preserves the goodness of creation while accounting for disorder. It also gives **real ethical traction**: if evil were a being, it would demand respect; but as a lack, it is a call to restore the good. Aertsen emphasizes that Aquinas situates the good as **an order of being**, and evil as its **defect or corruption**. Evil does not destroy being utterly; it **parasitizes** it, existing only as a wound in what should be whole.

The Discovery of Being and the Law of Finality

The *bonum* is not merely asserted as an abstract property of being; it is **discovered** in the very structure of being as *desirable*, as that toward which appetite and action naturally tend. This discovery arises not through logical deduction, but through a metaphysical **reading of reality**—a reading that reveals purpose embedded in the ontological fabric of beings. As Maryniarczyk notes, the transcendental is ontic in nature, while its corresponding principle is epistemological: it is the mind's insight into the law inscribed in being itself (100). Krapiec elaborates this by formulating the **principle of finality**, the epistemological expression of the transcendental good, in three ways: “(1) Potency is essentially ordered to act; (2) whatever acts, acts for an end; (3) everything exists for itself as acting” (152).

Of these, it is the second formulation—*whatever acts, acts for an end*—that Krapiec affirms as the **authentic expression** of the finality proper to being (152-155). This principle is not limited to rational agents. Even non-living beings are entangled in a “web of purposefulness of being”. For example, the river flows downhill not by choice, but by nature; the eye is structured for seeing, and the seed yearns toward tree-hood. These are not subjective projections, but metaphysical indications of **intrinsic finality**—a kind of *natural teleology* embedded in the real. Moreover, in the act of discovering the good, the intellect does not posit value arbitrarily. Rather, it **recognizes that which already possesses desirability** in the structure of being. As Maryniarczyk affirms, the good is not a subjective addition to being but a recognition of its **ordination to the will** (98-99). Thus, *bonum* is not merely a label imposed on being; it is the **cause of action**, the *ratio finis*, without which nothing would act, desire, or seek.

The transcendental good is not an abstraction. It is the very pulse of existence, the longing written into all things—from stones to saints—to fulfil their nature. In human life, this longing is conscious: we seek truth because we are rational; we seek good because we are volitional. But these two

faculties are united in the movement of being toward perfection. The good, then, is **being in its fullness**, and evil is simply its negation. In the end, every desire for the good is a cry for **union with the Good Itself**, in whom all perfection is realized, and to whom every will is ultimately drawn.

Transcendental Pulchrum

In the order of metaphysical discovery, beauty (*pulchrum*) has often been overshadowed by the more widely accepted transcendentals of truth (*verum*) and goodness (*bonum*). Indeed, Thomas Aquinas does not explicitly list beauty among the transcendentals in *De Veritate* or *Sententia libri Metaphysicae*, prompting thinkers such as Etienne Gilson to refer to beauty as the “forgotten transcendental” (173). However, as Jan Aertsen notes, it is also “the most discussed among the transcendentals” (335). Beauty, though obscured by historical oversight, emerges as a real and substantive transcendental when its metaphysical structure is rightly understood.

The Transcendental Status of Beauty

The hesitation to accept beauty as a transcendental arises from the fact that Aquinas does not grant it independent treatment in his transcendental taxonomy. Some thinkers, like Elders, claim that beauty is derivative—the synthesis of truth and good (142). This synthesis model, however, seems to present difficulties regarding what beauty adds to being if it is to be regarded as a transcendental property for it fails to account for the **primordial human experience of enchantment**, wherein the intellect and will are simultaneously captivated by the being of a thing. Against such reductionism, Krąpiec and Maryniarczyk defend beauty as a **substantive transcendental**—not derivative but original (180-190, 123-128). In their view, beauty arises not as the sum of truth and goodness, but as the **simultaneity** of the intellective and volitive faculties in a unified cognitive act: “If we express a thing's relation to the intellect we call it truth, and if we express its relation to the will we call it good. If we express a simultaneous relation of the thing to the will and the intellect, we call it beauty” (Piotr,³4). This simultaneity is not synthetic but integral. Beauty occurs when being evokes a feeling of 'enchantment' of both cognitive recognition and volitional affirmation in a single act of contemplative delight.

Beauty as cognitive-intellective Unity

Unlike truth, which satisfies the intellect, or good, which draws the will, **beauty perfects both faculties in a single, harmonious act**. Aquinas, in a frequently cited passage, states: *Pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent*—“beautiful things are those which please when seen” (ST. I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1; I-II, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3). While “seen” may suggest mere visual experience, Krąpiec interprets this “*visa*” not as ocular vision but as contemplative *intellectus*—the act of “beholding” that awakens rational delight (185). This pleasure is not reducible to aesthetic taste. It is a metaphysical delight arising from the encounter with being in its **integrity, proportion, and clarity**—the classical criteria for beauty as *integritas*, *consonantia*, and *claritas* (*De Veritate. q. 1, a. 1; ST. I, q. 39, a. 8*). In other words, beauty is **being as shining forth intelligibly and desirably in unity**. The intellect is arrested by clarity, the will is moved by proportion, and the unity of the object invokes a sense of

form and fulfilment. Beauty is thus **ontological allure**: being's call to the whole person.

This explains why even the simplest beings can be beautiful. A child's laughter, the symmetry of a leaf, the moral integrity of a martyr—all possess this unity of form, proportion of being, and splendour of truth that makes them beautiful, independent of subjective sentiment. Beauty is not merely in the eye of the beholder; it is in the structure of being itself, as it relates simultaneously to intellect and will.

The Discovery of Beauty and the Law of Perfection

Beauty, like truth and goodness, is not invented; it is **discovered**. According to Maryniarczyk, this discovery takes place through a metaphysical insight into being as ordered to both knowing and loving. The discovery of beauty involves the recognition that existing things are **vehicles of perfection**—not physical or psychological flawlessness, but *substantial integrity*(134). This recognition unveils the **law of perfection** as a principle inherent in being. Aquinas distinguishes two types of perfection: the *first* as the substantial completion of a thing, and the *second* as the attainment of its final end (ST. I, q. 73, a. 1). The first pertains to the internal wholeness of the thing, and the second to its existential fulfilment. In beauty, both levels converge: the thing is perfect *in itself* and *as for another*, drawing the contemplator into a relation of delight.

Maryniarczyk notes that this law is not merely aesthetic but metaphysical: “The Absolute wants this being to exist and makes us enchanted by what we see” (134). The enchantment is not accidental but ontological; it is the reaction of the intellect and will to the intelligible-desirable wholeness of being. This is why even the act of seeing a tree in autumn, a mother's gentle care, or a symphony in tune reveals not merely a subjective experience but a **cosmic disclosure of order, purpose, and form**.

The Objective–Subjective Axis of Beauty

Beauty, perhaps more than any other transcendental, confronts us with the tension between the **objective** and the **subjective**. Aquinas's definition—*quae visa placent*—suggests that beauty pleases, but it also suggests that this pleasure is tied to the object's *visio*, its cognitive appearance. Krapiec resolves the tension by affirming that the experience of beauty is *intellective-appetitive* (184). The pleasure is not grounded in arbitrary preference, but in a cognitive participation in being's perfection. Hence, beauty **is not imposed upon being by human emotion**, but is evoked in us by the being's formal excellence. “We do not merely receive impressions,” says Krapiec, “but we express our attitude toward the cognized content” (181). The holistic inward-outward response—where being impresses itself upon our intellect and awakens our love—is what constitutes the experience of beauty. This explains why beauty is discovered rather than projected. Beauty, therefore, is not merely a property of pleasing things. It is **the expression of a being's capacity to perfect the human person by its radiance and integrity**. This is why we say not only that something is beautiful, but that **it moves us, elevates us, transforms us**. Beauty, in this

Thomistic sense, is a bridge between ontology and ethics, metaphysics and affectivity.

Beauty and the Divine Source

Finally, if all being is beautiful, and if all beings manifest their origin in the Absolute, then it follows that **God is Beauty Itself**. Just as truth and good culminate in God, so too does beauty. God, as *ipsum esse subsistens*, is the infinite fullness of being, and therefore the infinite fullness of beauty. Krapiec concludes that being is beautiful “because it is rationally and volitionally derived from pure Existence, God, who is self-subsistent Beauty” (187). This theocentric conclusion is not a pious addition but the **metaphysical consequence** of transcendental realism. In every act of wonder and contemplation, every cognitive-emotive enchantment, **the soul encounters a shadow of the divine**. Beauty is not the decorative garment of being but its radiant core. It is **being's power to simultaneously satisfy the intellect and draw the will**, to reveal order and awaken love. It is that transcendental property by which being becomes delightful, not as an aesthetic trinket, but as an **ontological presence** that fulfils and perfects the whole person. To discover beauty is to discover that being is not only intelligible (truth) and desirable (good), but also **enchanted in its very disclosure**. In beauty, truth and good are not lost but elevated in harmony. To be beautiful, in the deepest sense, is to be *a being* ordered to the intellect and will in a single, radiant act.

Evaluation of the Relative Transcendentals

The transcendental properties of being—*verum*, *bonum*, and *pulchrum*—are not accidental epiphenomena of metaphysical speculation. They are **ontologically rooted** and **experientially manifest** dimensions of reality as it relates to the soul's faculties: intellect, will, and affectivity. In their classical Thomistic expression, these are not mere anthropocentric projections onto being, but reflections of how **being is naturally ordered toward mind and desire**. Their convertibility with being (*convertuntur cum ente*) affirms that they are coextensive with all that is, yet their **distinction according to reason** (*secundum rationem*) secures their metaphysical uniqueness. What distinguishes the relative transcendentals is not that they belong to a different genus than being, but that they are **relational disclosures** of being—being *in ordine ad aliud*. The true is being in relation to the intellect, the good is being in relation to the will, and the beautiful is being as simultaneously satisfying both in a unified act of contemplative delight. Each transcendental reflects a different *intentio entis*, a different formal aspect of the same ontological act. **However, the ontological primacy of being and the relational manifestation of these transcendental should be emphasized.**

In the Thomistic framework, being (*ens*) precedes the transcendentals ontologically. This is not to suggest temporal priority, but **foundational metaphysical status**. The transcendentals are **aspects** of being's fullness—deriving not from external relations, but from **the internal structure of *ens commune***. This is why Aquinas insists that “being and truth are the same in reality but differ conceptually” (ST. I, q. 16, a. 1). This conceptual distinction does not reduce the transcendentals to

mere mental constructs. Rather, it reveals the soul's different modalities of encountering the same ontological ground. Krapiec, in strict Thomistic fidelity, explains that these relations are **ontologically grounded** in the metaphysical structure of being, and only epistemologically expressed as distinct: "The relation of being to the intellect (truth), to the will (good), and to the unity of both (beauty), are all expressions of the real properties of being, not psychological overlays" (173). Thus, to think being truly is to think it *as true*, *as good*, and *as beautiful*, not sequentially or optionally, but inherently.

Consequently, in examining **the unity and irreducibility of the transcendentals**, it is clearly **evident that** the transcendental properties are **convertible with being**—every being is, to the extent it exists, true, good, and beautiful. This unity does not collapse them into synonymy; rather, it affirms that they all share a **common ontological root** while expressing **different formalities**. Krapiec rejects the reduction of one transcendental to another, especially in the modern tendency to reduce the good to the true (as in rationalism) or the beautiful to the good (as in emotivism). He asserts: "Each transcendental expresses an autonomous relation of being; none is logically or ontologically subordinate to the other" (174).

This insight prevents both conceptual confusion and metaphysical flattening. For example, **truth** is not a species of good; it is the mode of being as conformed to intellect. **Good** is not a sub-category of truth; it is the mode of being as fulfilling appetite. And **beauty**, though often dismissed as derivative, is not reducible to either. As Krapiec insists, beauty is the **co-illumination of truth and goodness** in a singular, unified act that addresses both knowing and loving: "Beauty is not the aesthetic sum of truth and good, but the metaphysical simultaneity of their presence" (183). This simultaneity has profound implications for metaphysics. It affirms that being is not merely intelligible (truth), nor merely desirable (good), but also **delightful in its self-manifestation**, which reveals the inherent orientation of being not just to function, but to **contemplative fulfillment**.

Nonetheless, a critical metaphysical evaluation must confront modern misinterpretations of the transcendentals. In many post-Kantian frameworks, **truth is reduced to coherence or pragmatism**, **goodness to moral relativism**, and **beauty to taste**. Such reductions emerge from a **loss of metaphysical realism**, the very anchor that grounds the transcendentals in the nature of being itself. Realistic metaphysics resists this collapse. Aquinas never defines the true as mere correspondence of mental propositions, but as **a conformity rooted in the being of things themselves**, which are already true by their participation in divine truth (ST. I, q. 16, a. 1, ad 1). Likewise, goodness is not defined by utility or sentiment, but by the **perfection of being in act**, being as fulfilling its nature (Aquinas, ST. I, q. 5, a. 1). Krapiec critiques subjectivist aesthetics precisely on this point: "Beauty is not a subjective reaction to sensible stimuli, but a rational

response to the formality of being's harmony, clarity, and proportion" (185).

The metaphysical consequence is stark: if the transcendentals are not grounded in being, then human engagement with truth, goodness, and beauty becomes arbitrary, ultimately nihilistic. Humanity would plunge into subjectivist approach of determining being. Being ceases to be an open book which the intellect and will grasp reality from; it becomes an empty box waiting to be determined by the intellect and will that come into contact with it. Nature becomes artificial and dependent on the changing emotional disposition of the cognizing agent. As the title of this paper suggests, it is being that imposes its presence on us. Our faculties do not invent the transcendentals, they discover them.

Another crucial point in this discussion is **the Finality of the Transcendentals in the Divine**. In the Thomistic tradition, each transcendental finds its **absolute realization in God**. God is not just the possessor of truth, goodness, and beauty. He **is** truth itself (*veritas per essentiam*), goodness itself (*bonitas per essentiam*), and beauty itself (*pulchritudo per essentiam*). This follows from the doctrine of divine simplicity: God is not composed of properties, but **is pure act of being itself**. Maryniarczyk emphasizes this final metaphysical harmony by noting that: "The experience of beauty, truth, and goodness in the world leads man back to the Absolute, not through abstract inference, but through a metaphysical intuition of being's depth" (140). Hence, the transcendentals are not closed within the immanent world; they are **arrows of metaphysical longing**, drawing the soul toward its origin and end.

Summarily, the relative transcendentals – *verum*, *bonum*, and *pulchrum* – are not optional addenda to metaphysics. They are the **rational disclosure of being's relationality to mind, will, and affective intuition**. To encounter being truly is to encounter it as true, good, and beautiful. The Thomistic account safeguards their **ontological grounding**, their **epistemological clarity**, and their **existential relevance**. It affirms their unity without confusion, their distinction without division, and their metaphysical culmination in the absolute simplicity of God. To philosophize metaphysically, then, is not merely to classify categories, but to participate—through truth, goodness, and beauty—in **the symphony of being itself**.

Conclusion

The metaphysical journey through the relative transcendentals: truth (*verum*), goodness (*bonum*), and beauty (*pulchrum*), has revealed not only the rational architecture of being but also the dynamic openness of being to the human soul. Rooted in the fundamental convertibility with being (*ens convertitur cum vero, bono, pulchro*), each transcendental expresses a distinct dimension of how being is encountered by intellect, will. Truth reveals being as intelligible, that which can be known because it is ordered to the intellect. Goodness manifests being as desirable, that which fulfils and perfects, corresponding to the appetite of the will. Beauty discloses being as delightful, the harmonious radiance of form and perfection that engages both intellect and will in a unified act of

contemplative wonder. These are not psychological attributions but ontological realities discerned through metaphysical inquiry.

In evaluating these transcendentals, we find in Thomistic metaphysics not only conceptual precision but existential coherence. The human soul is metaphysically attuned to being because it is made in the image of Him who is Truth, Good, and Beauty. The relative transcendentals, while distinct in their formalities, are united in their origin: the real, the actual, the *ens commune*. In encountering them, we do not merely interpret reality; we participate in it, aligning the powers of intellect and will with the ultimate structure and finality of what is. Thus, the doctrine of the relative transcendentals is not a speculative abstraction. It is the metaphysical articulation of what it means to live in a world of meaning, order, and purpose to dwell in truth, to pursue the good, and to behold beauty is, in the final analysis, to return to the source from which all being flows—*ipsum esse subsistens*, who is Truth, Goodness, and Beauty by essence.

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