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LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL: THE THEOLOGICAL AESTHETIC ARGUMENT FOR LIFE

MATTHEW LEWIS SUTTON, PH.D.*

I. INTRODUCTION

When I lived on the East Side in Milwaukee, I joined my church's pro-life group for Saturday morning protests at the nearby abortion clinic. One Saturday, I brought my one-year-old daughter. While I was holding her and we were praying, a pregnant woman was being escorted into the clinic. She focused her eyes completely on getting herself as quickly as possible into the clinic without looking at us; however, she stole a look. She glanced at me holding my young child who was sweetly sleeping in my arms. At that moment, the woman began to sob, but she still went into the clinic. I do not know if she decided to abort her child, yet somehow seeing a father holding his sleeping child—the beauty of this image—seemed to overwhelm her. Ever since that episode, I keep asking myself, why did she cry? What was it about the beauty of this image that made her question the goodness and truth of her actions? It certainly was not through reasoned discourse, catchy protest chants, or even an academic paper that started to persuade her that she was doing something wrong and denying something true.

This paper will offer my answer as to why I believe she cried. I am convinced that it was the glory of God manifesting itself through created beauty. God as Beauty Itself was trying to convert her toward an understanding of the goodness and truth of human life. I realized what the twentieth-century Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, wrote about beauty in his work *Love Alone is Credible* when he said that, "In the experiences of extraordinary beauty—whether in nature or in art—we are able to grasp a phenomenon in its distinctiveness that otherwise remains veiled. What we encounter in such an experience is as overwhelming as a miracle, something we will never get over."¹ This passage elucidates the

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1. HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *LOVE ALONE IS CREDIBLE* 52-53 (David C. Schindler trans., Ignatius Press 2004).

ability of beauty to overwhelm. The miracle of beauty can overcome obstacles in a person. Beauty can overwhelm a pregnant woman about to abort her baby with the weight of what the goodness, truth, and, we must add, the beauty of the life she is about to end. With its own evidential power, beauty itself is an argument for life.

Most arguments for the pro-life position are arguments from the transcendental of Truth—it is true that we must uphold the inherent dignity of human life—and the transcendental of goodness—it is good always and everywhere to will the good of human life by all involved.² The question is then, what about the third transcendental of beauty? Is there an argument for life from the transcendental of beauty?

The theological aesthetics of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, who flourished during the last half of the second century, will provide the connection for this paper. Irenaeus' most common work, *Against the Heresies*, argues against several forms of the Gnostic heresy present in early Christianity, but at the same time he tries to offer as complete as possible a presentation of Christian revelation in its internal obviousness, irrefutability, and irresistibility. Irenaeus's theology has at its center the idea of recapitulation. Already present in Paul's Letters to the Ephesians and Romans, the theology of recapitulation presents Jesus Christ as the fulfiller or recapitulator of what humanity, as well as the cosmos, was meant to be at its origin. Jesus Christ in his being and his work brings the human person, Adam, to its perfection in him as the new Adam.

At the "stilled center" of Irenaeus's theology of recapitulation, according to von Balthasar, is the notion that the human person is capable of receiving the weight of the glory of God.³ It is summed up in probably Irenaeus's most often invoked idea that, "the glory of God is the living man, and the life of man is the vision of God."⁴ I would like to focus on the first part of this idea: that man fully alive is the glory of God. For Irenaeus, human life ultimately leads to the glory of God.⁵

How are we able to start with Irenaeus from the life of man and end at the glory of God? For von Balthasar and inasmuch as Irenaeus has a theological aesthetic, the connection between the life of man and the glory

2. Though it has a complicated history, the idea of the transcendentals comes from Ancient Greek philosophy. With the Christian use of this philosophy in the early and medieval ages, the transcendentals were understood as a created thing's beauty, goodness, and truth participating in the beauty, goodness, and truth of God; thus, created things, inasmuch as they are beautiful, good, and true, transcend themselves as they participate in God.

3. HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *THE GLORY OF THE LORD: A THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS*, VOL. 2: *STUDIES IN THEOLOGICAL STYLE: CLERICAL STYLES 74-75* (Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil trans., Ignatius Press 1984) [hereinafter GL II]. See also AIDAN NICHOLS, *THE WORD HAS BEEN ABROAD: A GUIDE THROUGH BALTHASAR'S AESTHETICS* 70 (1998).

4. IRENAEUS, *THE SCANDAL OF THE INCARNATION: IRENAEUS AGAINST THE HERESIES IV*, 20, 7 (Hans Urs von Balthasar ed., John Saward trans., Ignatius Press, 1990).

5. *Id.*

of God is traversed by the transcendental of beauty.⁶ Life leads to beauty and beauty leads to the glory of God. These two moves—from life to beauty and beauty to God’s glory—make up the two parts of this paper and present an argument for life from the transcendental of beauty.

II. LIFE LEADS TO BEAUTY

Let us continue with Irenaeus for a moment to pick up his understanding of life leading to beauty. For Irenaeus, the living human person is the glory of God because he is God’s artwork.⁷ The artwork of a master sculptor gives glory not only to the subject of the sculpture but also to the artist. The living man is the Creator’s central artwork and thereby man glorifies the Creator as the master artist. Man full of life radiates the beauty and glory of the Creator. Living man is inherently beautiful, according to Irenaeus, because he is the created artwork of the Creator and he glories the Creator by being fully alive.⁸

Irenaeus makes this connection between the life of man and the glory of God through his understanding of living man as a beautiful artwork. One way to see that this is theologically true is to offer the converse: the death of man means ugliness.

On April 18, 2008, a Yale University art student, Aliza Shvarts, reported in the *Yale Daily News* that for her senior art project she had inseminated herself artificially as many times as possible over a nine-month period and then “performed self-induced miscarriages” using abortifacients.⁹ After taking these abortifacients, she would then “experience cramps and heavy bleeding.”¹⁰ She collected this bleeding and intended to display it as her senior art project with video recordings of the forced miscarriages as well as the cups of blood from the miscarriages. While one would think this is a hoax, a truly terrible morbid prank (which at first Yale University officials did), Shvarts produced evidence that she did this project and wanted it accepted as her senior art project. Far from being a practical joker, or even a deranged lunatic, she turned out to be an intelligent and articulate young woman. Shvarts explained that this project is indeed art in all of its intentional ambiguity, claiming that:

the most poignant aspect of this representation . . . is the impossibility of accurately identifying the resulting blood. Because the miscarriages coincide with the expected date of menstruation

6. *Id.*

7. BALTHASAR, GL II, *supra* note 3, at 74.

8. *Id.*

9. Aliza Shvarts, *Shvarts Explains Her ‘Repeated Self-Induced Miscarriages,’* YALE DAILY NEWS, Apr. 18, 2008, available at <http://www.yaledailynews.com/articles/view/24559> (last visited June 14, 2009).

10. *Id.*

(the 28th day of my cycle), it remains ambiguous whether there was ever a fertilized ovum or not. The reality of the pregnancy, both for myself and for the audience, is a matter of reading. This ambivalence makes obvious how the act of identification or naming . . . is at its heart an ideological act, an act that literally has the power to construct bodies.¹¹

In a more enigmatic, and therefore supposedly profound, way she explained that “it is the intention of this piece to destabilize the locus of that authorial act, and in doing so, reclaim it from the heteronormative structures that seek to naturalize it.”¹² She said in an interview with the *Yale Daily News*, “I believe strongly that art should be a medium for politics and ideologies, not just a commodity. . . . I think I’m creating a project that lives up to the standard of what art should be.”¹³ While her project was derided by the University and many of her fellow students, she had the support of her senior project advisor. It is not known whether she produced the project since conclusive evidence was never provided. Her project has not been displayed and the faculty members involved have not publicly confirmed or denied the project, although they were disciplined by university officials. Nevertheless, Shvarts continues to claim she completed this project and that it was real art.

There was mostly disgust at what Shvarts claimed she had done, but the critique was not based on the morality of the issue. It was on taste. According to the Yale Women’s Center, while it was in bad taste, she should be defended because her art project was “an appropriate exercise of her right to free expression.”¹⁴

In reality, Shvarts created what can be called anti-beauty art. Ignoring her manufactured diatribe, Shvarts produced a forced meditation on death and ugliness. This Yale student’s artwork points to the perversity of the—and we should be so bold to say the sometimes demonic—anti-life position. If the embryo is not a human it can certainly be discarded, but it can also be used to further a political ideology. If there is no “real presence” of a human person in the miscarriage bleeding, then it is organic material that can be used to fabricate a work of “art.”

The main fault, of course, rests with the artist. She should have known better and been expelled from the institution, but the fault is not hers alone.

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.*

13. Martine Powers, *For Senior, Abortion a Medium for Art, Political Discourse*, YALE DAILY NEWS, Apr. 17, 2008, available at <http://www.yaledailynews.com/articles/view/24513> (last visited June 14, 2009).

14. Samantha Broussard-Wilson, *Reaction to Shvarts: Outrage, Shock, Disgust*, YALE DAILY NEWS, Apr. 18, 2008, available at <http://www.yaledailynews.com/articles/view/24532> (last visited June 14, 2009). For an insightful critique of Yale student reactions see Ian Marcus Corbin: On the Banality of Abortion as Art, <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2008/04/on-the-banality-of-abortion-as> (last visited June 14, 2009).

Like all youth, she takes to an extreme what she has learned from her teachers. Youth tend to seize an idea and run with it—hard, fast, fearlessly—until their youthful body hits its thirties or forties and then, apparently, tempered realism sets in. This young artist seized the idea of art as “intentional ambiguity,” which is really a deconstruction of heteronormative identification of the body, taught to her by her art professors who later defended her artwork. The blame must also fall on them, but we should not stop there. The fault is also our culture of death. Her artwork is an artwork manifesting the core principle of the culture of death.

Abortion and other anti-life positions are anti-beauty. At the pro-life protests of abortion clinics, there is usually someone holding a picture of an aborted baby with severed limbs. The subtext of that image is that this is ugly and therefore abortion is wrong. It connects for the viewer ugliness with immorality. No beauty; therefore, no goodness. This common type of argument is made in Holocaust films, images, and writings. The image is often an emaciated and barely living human being in a grim concentration camp who has been made ugly by National Socialism’s anti-life ideology. The subtext in Holocaust art is that National Socialism is wrong because it is ugly.

The great portrayal of the “anti-life because not-beautiful position” and its converse, “pro-life because beautiful,” was made in the film *La vita e bella* (1997) and its English release *Life is Beautiful* (1998) from which this paper takes its title. In the film, the contrast is made between the beautiful relationship of the main character (Guido Orefice) with his son (Joshua) and his wife (Dora) against the backdrop of the ugliness of the Nazis who are ceaselessly inflicting death.¹⁵ What is stunning about this film—it received the grand prize at Cannes Film Festival and three Academy Awards,¹⁶ including Best Foreign Language Film—is that the more death, evil, and ugliness of the Nazi death machine entered the world, all the more did the goodness, truth, and beauty of human life and relationships triumph. The subtext of the argument is that Nazism is wrong because it is ugly, but life is good because it is beautiful.

The climactic scene in the film makes the point clearly. The main character, Guido, is being chased by the SS troops, but in the midst of this tragedy, he is playing a simple hide and seek game with his son, Joshua. The goodness and beauty of this simple father and son game is perceived as even more beautiful and life-affirming because it is being played against the backdrop of death, evil, and ugliness represented by the SS troops who murder Guido while Joshua is hiding. We are made to realize how

15. LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL (Miramax Films 1998) – Movie Overview, <http://movies.yahoo.com/movie/1800088651/info> (last visited June 14, 2009).

16. *Id.* then follow “Awards & Nominations” hyperlink.

beautiful this father-son game is through its setting in the context of death and ugliness. Here, comedy is mixed with tragedy to show that life and beauty ultimately triumph. White is always perceived more distinctly when placed against a backdrop of black.

The pro-life movement must continue to show the anti-life movement as truly embracing the ugliness of death—the severed limbs of the unborn child just like the mass graves of Jews and Christians killed in concentration camps. In addition, the pro-life movement must also set before people the images of beauty embraced by the pro-life position.¹⁷ This idea means that alongside the billboards of smiling chubby babies and the brochures of a happy couple holding their recently delivered child, the pro-life movement must share the even more profoundly beautiful image of the heroic choice for life in the midst of our culture of death. There are a number of images the pro-life movement should be presenting to the world: a boyfriend saying to his pregnant girlfriend that he wants to have this child; the image of parents saying to their pregnant daughter that they will help her raise this child; or the image of a community helping a struggling new mother keep her child while still going to school.

The point is to show the tragedy and difficulty of the unexpected and, in many cases, burdensome pregnancy (in a sense, a new human life should be burdensome), but also showing the heroic act, the above-and-beyond beauty of making the right choice. We should not only portray the saccharine images of chubby, happy babies, but we should also present the profoundly beautiful image of a baby accepted against the backdrop of the tragedy of an unexpected and irresponsible pregnancy. Life is full of tragedy, pain, suffering, and unexpected pregnancies. The pro-life movement needs to say that in the midst of this culture of death, we must still choose what is beautiful, what is right, and what is true. We must still play hide and seek even when the SS troop death march approaches.

III. BEAUTY LEADS TO THE GLORY OF GOD

This paper advocates for more than a kind of chiaroscuro—light in the midst of darkness—advertisement campaign for the pro-life movement. Rather, it argues that life leads to beauty. We should stand for life because it is beautiful. In this next part, I would like to argue theologically that life is beautiful because it radiates the glory of God (remember that all of this is to help us answer why the woman on her way to abort her child cried when

17. A culture of life must generate artwork that communicates the beauty of life. Pope Benedict XVI has made this his prayer intention for May 2008: “That Christians may use literature, art, and mass media to create a culture which defends and promotes the values of the human person.” Apostleship of Prayer, <http://www.apostleshipofprayer.org/english2008.html> (last visited June 14, 2009). We need to use the gift of human culture to manifest the dignity of being human and thereby the glory of God revealed in human culture.

she saw the image of a father holding his dear sleeping child). I will now use Hans Urs von Balthasar to explain the connection between beauty and the glory of God in order to answer this question.

Hans Urs von Balthasar was a major Catholic and Jesuit theologian of the twentieth century. He was born in Lucerne, Switzerland in 1905 and died in Basel, Switzerland in 1988. He wrote eighty-five books and over five-hundred articles, translated almost a hundred works, and edited over sixty volumes of the works of Adrienne von Speyr with whom he co-founded the secular institute, *Johannesgemeinschaft* (Community of St. John). Henri de Lubac, his teacher and a major theologian in his own right, called von Balthasar “the most cultivated man of his time.”¹⁸ Pope John Paul II called him “an outstanding man of theology and of the arts, who deserves a special place of honor in contemporary ecclesiastical and cultural life.”¹⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, who worked with von Balthasar on several projects, said “I think that his theological reflection maintains intact, to this day, a profound timeliness and leads many to penetrate ever more in the profundity of the mystery of faith.”²⁰

I would like to invoke von Balthasar’s *Trilogy* (comprised of sixteen volumes) that he wrote from 1961 to 1987. The three transcendentals, Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, serve as the framework for his trilogy. With this masterwork, he recovers the essential relationship between the transcendentals and the analogy of being. Von Balthasar’s interpretation of the analogy of being, which he received from the Jesuit philosopher Erich Przywara, is that God as Being itself is related to all created being not only because he created it, but also because he predestined created being to have its definitive end (*telos*) in Being Itself. For von Balthasar, the analogy of being must relate closely with the Christian doctrine of participation. Created being is not just a static analogy of Being Itself. Rather, it is interiorly directed toward an intimate sharing in divine life.²¹

With his interpretation of the analogy of being as participation in the life of God, von Balthasar now joins with it the Christian theological idea of the transcendentals. Since God is Being Itself, He is also Beauty, Goodness, and Truth Itself.²² Anything that is created inasmuch as it possess beauty, goodness, and truth necessarily participates in the intimate divine life because God is the source of all being as well as beauty,

18. Henri de Lubac, *A Witness of Christ in the Church: Hans Urs von Balthasar*, in HANS URS VON BALTHASAR: HIS LIFE AND WORK 272 (David L. Schindler ed., Ignatius Press 1991).

19. Pope John Paul II, *Telegram from Pope John Paul II*, in HANS URS VON BALTHASAR: HIS LIFE AND WORK, *supra* note 19, at 289.

20. Pope Benedict XVI, Papal Message for Centenary of von Balthasar’s Birth, *available at* <http://www.zenit.org/article-14225?l=english> (last visited June 14, 2009).

21. 2 *Peter* 1:4.

22. See Ed Bloch, Jr., *Introduction to GLORY, GRACE, AND CULTURE: THE WORK OF HANS URS VON BALTHASAR* 8 (Ed Bloch, Jr. ed, Paulist Press 2005) (“Part of Balthasar’s theological project is a reinterpretation of Being, via the three transcendentals and the analogy of being.”).

goodness, and truth. Thus, created beauty, goodness, and truth transcend to find a definitive end in God. God has given the created (beauty, goodness, and truth) an interior missionary character toward himself as Beauty, Goodness, and Truth.

With their definitive end in God, all the transcendentals necessarily relate to each other. Any time there is beauty, there is also goodness and truth. Any time there is goodness, there is also truth and beauty. Any time there is truth, there is also goodness and beauty. The three transcendentals are intimately connected because they have their origin and goal in God who is the source and *telos* of all created beauty, truth, and goodness.

The first part of Von Balthasar's trilogy, *The Glory of the Lord*, presents theological aesthetics, which relate the transcendental of beauty to the analogy of being. It is an argument that attempts to recover beauty as an entryway for the human person's encounter with God. The first word of his fifteen volume masterwork is beauty: "Beauty is the word that shall be our first."²³ Reflecting on the first part of his trilogy on beauty, von Balthasar said that he called it *The Glory of the Lord* because:

it is concerned, first, with learning to see God's revelation and because God can be known only in his Lordliness and sublimity [or better translated 'glorious-ness'] (*Herr-heit* and *Hehr-heit*), in what Israel called *Kabod* and the New Testament *Gloria*, something that can be recognized under all the incognitos of human nature and the Cross. This means that God does not come primarily as a teacher for us ("true"), as a useful "redeemer" for us ("good"), but to display and to radiate himself, the splendor of his eternal triune love in that 'disinterestedness' that true love has in common with true beauty.²⁴

In other words, the human encounter with the revelation of God is known through His radiating beauty, or what the biblical witness called glory. God came not just to teach or to redeem, but primarily to reveal His glorious beauty because this revealing is what teaches and redeems. For example, it was the glory of the Lord manifested in the cloud of smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night that convinced Israel to leave Egypt and journey to the promised land.²⁵ It was the glory of the Lord that dwelled on Mount Sinai manifesting the potent, fiery presence of the Lord who gave the Law to Israel.²⁶ It was the glory of the Lord that descended on the first temple built by Solomon to reveal God's kingly dwelling in the Holy of

23. HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *THE GLORY OF THE LORD: A THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS*, VOL. 1: SEEING THE FORM 18 (Erasmio Leiva-Merikakis trans., Ignatius Press 1982) [hereinafter GL I].

24. HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *MY WORK: IN RETROSPECT* 80 (Kenneth Batinovich and Brian McNeil trans., Ignatius Press, 1993).

25. *Exodus* 13:17-22.

26. *Exodus* 19:16-20.

Holies in Jerusalem.²⁷ It was the glory of the Lord that overshadowed Mary in whom the Son of God became incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ It was the glory of the Lord represented by tongues of fire that rushed down on the Apostles during the feast of Pentecost manifesting God's dwelling presence with His Church.²⁹ For von Balthasar, in the Old and New Testaments, it is the glory (beauty) of the Lord that manifests the Father's potent presence in the world through the Son and Holy Spirit and reveals the goodness and truth about His love for the world. The Son of God did not just come to teach or to be useful, he came to reveal God's love.

According to von Balthasar, any engagement with beauty necessitates a theory of vision, that is, a theory about the perception of beauty.³⁰ Beauty results from the intersection of *species* and *lumen*, that is, form and splendor. At this intersection, beauty, so to speak, happens and there is a moment in which the viewer is enraptured.³¹ It is truly an outpouring of the glory of the Lord through the Holy Spirit. To be enraptured by beauty, the form needs to be perceived. By perceiving, I mean to say in the sense of the German word *Wahr-nehmen*, "to take to be true." When beauty is perceived, goodness and truth are equally present. Beauty is not a competitor to reason or the ethical, rather it is a coordinated relationship manifested in God as Being Itself. When a person sees goodness or truth, beauty manifests itself to the beholder. The intersection of form and splendor in an event or object, and particularly human life, is where beauty happens and essentially manifests goodness and truth.

If a person wishes to see the whole of beauty, goodness, and truth, he must open himself to the revelation of the divinity of Christ.³² The first examination of beauty begins with the Incarnation because it is, according to von Balthasar, "the very apex and archetype of beauty in the world, whether men see it or not."³³ The hypostatic union of the personhood of the divine Son with the fullness of human nature is the greatest possible concreteness of an individual form and the greatest possible universality of the epiphany of Being itself.³⁴ Jesus Christ is the most beautiful form and splendor because as God, he is Beauty Itself. The two polarities of form

27. 1 Kings 8:1-11.

28. Luke 1:26-38.

29. Acts 2:1-13.

30. BALTHASAR, GL I, *supra* note 23, at 125.

31. See *id.* at 118 ("The form as it appears to us is beautiful only because the delight that it arouses in us is found upon the fact that in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed, and this manifestation and bestowal reveal themselves to us as being something infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating.").

32. See *id.* at 135 ("Here the circumincession of *pistis* and *gnosis* becomes fully manifest, because it is only through faith in Christ's divinity that one can gain access to this sphere of truth within the Godhead, in which one learns to see and understand the very essence of truth.").

33. *Id.* at 69.

34. *Id.* at 234.

and splendor indissolubly intersect and give the definitive evidence that He is the most beautiful. By the act of faith given through grace, the Christian perceives the perfect beauty of the Incarnation and it will enrapture him. Faith-filled eyes, trained by viewing the perfect form, see that the beauty of life manifests the beautiful glory of God.

With his theological aesthetics, von Balthasar concludes that when you behold beauty in the created order, you are actually beholding the glory of God and His glory is enrapturing you through its own evidential power of goodness and truth. When you perceive anything that is beautiful, you also perceive the perfection of beauty that is being manifested. The perfection of beauty and the full manifestation of the glory of the Lord is the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Von Balthasar reminds us that Jesus, as the perfect form and splendor of beauty, is also the one who experiences the sheer ugliness of death on the cross. The Incarnate One is also the Crucified One. Perfect Beauty was made sin for us. He was made ugly by us. In the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, Beauty Itself was completely given away, nothing was held back, all was surrendered. Von Balthasar, influenced by Adrienne von Speyr on this point, believed that since Jesus as the Son of God has surrendered all, he revealed everything about himself and his Trinitarian relationship with the Father and Holy Spirit.³⁵ In other words, the paschal mystery of Christ's death on the cross is the highest revelation of who God is. The beautiful thing about the cross for Christians is that they see in it perfect beauty and the glory of the Lord lovingly given away against the severe backdrop of the ugliness of death. There is beautiful juxtapositioning here! Indeed, most Orthodox crucifixes possess the title, "The Glory of the Lord." For them, the crucifixion is the manifestation of the glory of the Lord. The Son's complete gift of life is the perfect self-surrender on the cross and manifests the fullness of beauty as the glory of the Lord.

According to the theological aesthetics of Irenaeus and von Balthasar, we can conclude that life and the glory of God are connected through the transcendental of beauty. We have seen that theologically, life leads to beauty and beauty leads to the glory of God. In short, the theological aesthetic argument for life would say that we should be for life because life manifests the glory of God through the transcendental of beauty.

Now recall the pregnant woman who was on her way into the abortion clinic. I asked, why did she cry when she saw the image of a father holding his sweetly sleeping child? After examining the theological aesthetics of Irenaeus and von Balthasar, I believe she cried because she saw that the life of a child is beautiful and that the living child's beauty reveals the glory of

35. For the full discussion of this point see Matthew Lewis Sutton, *The Gate of Heaven Opens to the Trinity: The Trinitarian Mysticism of Adrienne von Speyr* (2007) (unpublished doctoral dissertation, on file with Marquette University).

God. In this image, the glory of God overwhelmed her because of its own evidential power. The created beauty of the living child revealed the glory of God who is Beauty, Goodness, and Truth Itself. After that pivotal moment, I believe the transcendental of beauty created an entryway for her encounter with God. Though I am desperately aware that I am an inadequate, imperfect father, somehow God used my life and my child's life to create an encounter with Himself as Beauty Itself.

From the evidence of this episode and the theological aesthetics of Irenaeus and von Balthasar, we should argue for life from the transcendental of beauty because that is how God the Father seeks to convert us through his Son and the Holy Spirit. He attracts us through the beauty of the perfect form, of the perfect human being, giving Himself completely away on the cross in order to draw us through the Holy Spirit into the Father's love.