

in Jensen's opinion, what in the end makes the human being into a whole human person. Not a self-created purpose, but a purpose received from God, which leads to the human purpose to know God. All these steps, as said, are not so easy to follow for both the common reader and the non-philosophically trained academic.

Personally (is that the same as: 'as a human person'?) I may agree with most of what Jensen puts forward in his book. But at the same time, as his purpose was to write an *Introduction*, I think it is a pity that he did not try to bridge the gap between modern psychology and Aquinas's philosophical 'psychology', with first-year psychology students in mind. Because, as Socrates has taught us, one should motivate the youth to desire to know themselves, and so to study the human soul – that is the whole human person.

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UNEARTHLY BEAUTY: THE AESTHETICS OF ST JOHN HENRY NEWMAN
by Guy Nicholls Cong. Orat., *Gracewing*, Leominster, 2019, pp. xxiv + 352,
£25.00, hbk

In the opening 'Comment' to the first issue of *New Blackfriars* this year, John O'Connor OP, referring to Saint John Henry Newman, observes that 'it is the sign of a profound thinker that their insights applied to one situation can shed light on many more' (2020, pp. 3-4). There can be few more striking illustrations of this truth than Newman's understanding of beauty and its role in the Christian life, as Guy Nicholls's milestone work, *Unearthly Beauty*, shows. Yet despite its richness and importance, this area of Newman's thought has until now remained underexplored in Newman scholarship. Nicholls lays down the indispensable foundation of future scholarship by bringing together in one comprehensive study Newman's views on music, architecture, the visual arts, literature, and poetry. He traces Newman's account of what contributes to the attainment of beauty in each of these areas, and of beauty's significance in liturgical, devotional, and theological contexts. It is a project of tremendous scope and ambition, engagingly written and thoughtfully constructed to bring out the continuity across the different areas of Newman's aesthetics and their relationship to other areas of his thought and life.

The title refers to one of the ways in which Newman describes his idea of beauty. This idea, Nicholls suggests, 'is rooted in the idea of God Himself' (p. 273). Just as theology is not 'merely words', but a way in which God may be known, so too, Newman believes, in the experience of beauty we are granted an intimation of the heavenly harmony that is beyond the reach of the 'unaided intellect' (p. 170). Understood in this way, beauty

is a perceptible sign of the reality and nature of 'human fulfilment in the glory and beauty of God's eternal perfection'(p. 179). Nicholls persuasively shows how this understanding guides Newman's interpretation and evaluation of the beauty he encounters in people, nature, and art. He covers an impressive range of examples from Newman's life and ministry, ranging from his family life, his relationship with his youngest sister Mary, his personal and professional interest in music, architecture, and literature, his involvement in the Oxford Movement, and his subsequent conversion to Catholicism.

Each of the first three chapter headings: 'In search of Eden', 'Shadows and Images', 'Echoes from our Home', refers to a way in which Newman expressed his idea of beauty in connection with one of the kinds of beauty that are discussed. Newman never gives a single definition of beauty, but all the ways in which he attempts to capture its essence share a conviction that it is a link that we have been granted in this life to the beatific vision to which we are drawn in the next. The penultimate chapter, 'To cultivate the beautiful with frugality', discusses Newman's views on architecture, the fascinating debate with Pugin (pp. 248-254), and liturgical music. Here Nicholls introduces an important caveat in Newman's thought: beauty that draws our attention primarily to the visible world is to be treated with caution. Newman believes that artistic forms that are 'too beautiful' in themselves threaten to draw our attention away rather than towards the ultimate end of human striving, which is God. Consequently Newman advises that artistic means should always be assessed in light of the ends which they serve. The last chapter expands this theme, bringing together Newman's idea of beauty within his theology with a discussion of his prose works. What 'unearthly beauty' ultimately is able to convey, Newman tells us, is God's simple unity through the 'plurality of attributes' in which it is manifest (p. 280).

The depth of Nicholls's scholarship, and the wealth of fascinating detail about Newman's life and thought, make for tremendously rewarding reading. There is, however, one area on which more discussion would have been welcome. That is the place of Newman's account of beauty in nineteenth-century aesthetics more generally, both in terms of whom he was influenced by and responding to, and in terms of how his view relates to those of his counterparts. Only two reference points of Newman's aesthetics, St Philip Neri and the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, are mentioned, and then only in passing. And yet the century before Newman wrote had been perhaps the most fascinating and decisive in the history of philosophical aesthetics. It would have been interesting to see a discussion of the relation of Newman's views to those of David Hume, Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schiller, and G.W.F. Hegel, which pervasively shaped European aesthetics during Newman's lifetime. It is also surprising that there is no mention at all of Plato

or the Platonic account of beauty, to which Newman's bears a striking similarity.

Although exploring these contexts would have certainly enriched *Unearthly Beauty*, it is understandable that Nicholls chose to limit the book's already expansive scope. If the reader is left with a pronounced appetite for more, it is a healthy appetite. The almost exclusive focus on Newman himself is not only justified but gives clear direction for future study of his aesthetics while providing it with a solid grounding. A study such as Nicholls's has been long overdue and will doubtless serve as an invaluable resource for students and researchers alike. In the conclusion, Nicholls brings Newman's descriptions of beauty together, arguing that, for Newman, beauty is essentially teleological in nature. The theological and philosophical coda to the book is perhaps best expressed in Nicholls's own words, when he says that for Newman 'since beauty originates in God and proceeds from him, all that participates in beauty draws it from God, while manifesting it in various ways' (p. 330).

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