**Sacred Beauty**

**June 19, 2014**

**Val**: We can go around the room with the text, and read aloud about a paragraph each. I’ll bow out, because I have something else to read. Roger Duncan really wanted to be here – many of you know Dr. Duncan – but he is still traveling and couldn’t make it, though he plans to come. He did write something, so I will read that. And then I have – Paul Zalonski! – the Office of Readings for the memorial of St. Romuald, that I just had to print out and pass around.

**Paul** **Z**.: Well, you know, you can’t go wrong with a Benedictine.

**Val**: And it is written by a doctor of the Church, that particular reading: St. Peter Damien.

**Paul** **Z**.: Oh, of course.

**Val**: So, on to metaphysics. I know that this is well-traveled ground for a lot of you in the room. I know that there are philosophy professors among us, more than one. For those of you who don’t know, this material takes hours to unfold, but I think I will do it over two or three minutes, because I am sure Fr. Jeff has to move on. I am sure also that he is well-versed in metaphysics. Metaphysics is basically the study of being with everything else prescinded from it, being *qua* being. (If you disagree with anything, Joe, please let me know.) That comprises all being, contingent, divine, abstract, real, imagined – that is the proper object of metaphysics. The Thomistic notion of being is that it is always an act; there is something *deeply* dynamic about being; being cannot not be in act. As you get these aggregates of density of being, as you go up the scale of the hierarchy of being, things become more active, and more interior. I just love the fact that Gilson recasts art, not as a commodification, as I think we have done in our society, as product, but as doing. I don’t think that this is the final word, by any means, but it is a great place to start.

Just a note about beauty, For Thomas, there is this notion of the transcendentals of being, which basically means – this is really hours of lectures, but it is very simple, too! – the *good*, the *true*, the *one*, are all completely controvertible with being; to the extent that things are, they are good, they are true, they are one. There are others too, and the traditional list is not even necessarily exhaustive. For Thomas, *beauty* is completely co-extensive with being: to the extent that things are, they are beautiful. As I learned it - and I know, Joe, there are a lot of fine distinctions that can be made, as one extrapolates from Thomas – I’ve always learned, following a metaphysician named Gardeil, that *beauty* is *being* *taken* *according* *to* *the* *conjoint* *powers* *of* *intellect* *and* *appetition*, the response of one’s will and one’s intellect. Transcendentals are known by us, from our subjective experience of the world, because we cannot comprehend being in its fullness. Insofar as we relate to it [being] via the intellect and the will together, that is our experience of beauty. And I know that there are fine distinctions, and even controversies, that can come up.

Gilson has this idea of *calology* - that word really came in to the language through him – a deep metaphysics of beauty. It is something that I have felt called to work on for a really long time. I hope that introduction wasn’t too long. I guess we will just go straight into the reading. So do you want to start reading? We will cover just what is in the brackets, and if it is too long or too cumbersome, feel free to interrupt and we will move on to the discussion, or if you have anything to add, right away…

**Mary**: “In the *Encyclopédie française* we find this quotation by the histo­rian Lucien Febvre: "Assuredly, art is a kind of knowledge.” The present book rests upon the firm and considered conviction that art is *not* a kind of knowledge or, in other words, that it is not a manner of knowing. On the contrary, art belongs in an order other than that of knowledge, namely, in the order of mak­ing or, as they say, in that of "factivity." From beginning to end, art is bent upon making; this book says nothing else. The only question is why its author went to the trouble of writing it.

“The reason is found in the adverb used by Lucien Febvre, "assuredly," for indeed the immense majority of men considers it evident that art expresses and communicates cognitions of some sort, either concerning the world of nature or concerning the world of man. For, they feel, did it say nothing, imitate nothing and express nothing, a work of art would at least impart to us information about its author. That view is by now so widespread that it has worked its way even into classrooms. About forty years ago, in the state of Virginia, looking with admiration at the good marks given a little schoolgirl by her teachers, my eye was caught by a remark of the teacher of modeling: ‘Frances is a good child, it's a pity she cannot express herself in clay.’ Frances was eight or nine years old; she only lacked the gift so lavishly bestowed by nature upon Michelangelo and Donatello.”

**Paul** **C**: “Although, as I believe, this current interpretation of art is erroneous, I must admit that it gives satisfaction to most people. Moreover, if it is a mistake, it is a harmless one, at least in the sense that its consequences in no way affect moral life. But men­tal disorder is something bad in itself, so I felt a sort of urge to put my own ideas in order, first of all for myself, but also for the benefit of those others among my fellow men who may have an uneasy feeling on the subject.

“It would not be fair to conceal the fact that this book calls for the revision of a certain number of ideas. Even should most people concede as immediately evident the proposition that art is concerned with making, not with knowing, they would, neverthe­less, proceed to assess works of art in terms of knowledge and intellection, as though the act of making them, that is to say, of causing them to be, was irrelevant to the philosophy of art as well as to esthetics.

“Nobody is ever wholly wrong. Moreover, it is impossible to describe a general situation without running the risk of neglecting innumerable exceptions or of overlooking shades of thought which it would be only fair to take into account. Still, I do not think I am betraying the real intentions of most of those who write about art, by saying that their chief concern is to turn it into something that can be talked about. In order to succeed, they have to interpret an act of production as if it were an act of expression and of communication.”

**Amy**: “A single example will help to make this point clear. Every­body has heard of the famous portrait of Whistler's Mother. To most of those who look at it, or who see one of its so-called ‘reproductions,’ it is chiefly a representation of what the mother of Whistler looked like, at the time he painted her portrait. This is what they call knowing what a painting is *about.* Nobody con­cerned with art, however, will admit that there is nothing more to a masterpiece than a good imitation of what it represents. The first portfolio of the Seminars in Art series published by the Metro­politan Museum of Art in New York begins, therefore, by making this point quite clear. In painting that portrait, the chief concern of Whistler was not ‘to paint a likeness of his mother but to do something quite different.’ What was it? According to John Canaday: ‘Its real subject is a mood, a mood compounded of gentle­ness, dignity, reflection, and resignation,’ which the artist at­tempted to convey by a certain choice and arrangement of shapes and colors. In short, Whistler resorted to *composition* in order to convey that mood, and composition is the most important element contributing to ‘the expressive quality of a painting.’

“Now, it would no doubt be a great improvement if people would see paintings in that manner. Yet there is a still more decisive advance which they refuse to make. For indeed, when the question is asked about the correct title of that famous paint­ing, the correct answer is that Whistler himself insisted on calling it an *Arrangement in Gray and Black.* The point is, why should an arrangement in any kind of colors and values be interpreted as a composition expressing a mood? If we take Whistler's words at their face value, as indeed we should, the subject of the painting is no more a mood, or the expression of a mood, than it is a likeness or the production of a likeness. The primary subject of the painting is to be an arrangement in gray and black; now an arrangement is also an arranging, and that is what Whistler's portrait essentially is, namely, an arrangement of certain colors freely chosen by the artist and resulting from a series of acts calculated to produce it. In other words, to Whistler the painting was something he had made, and his art had been the very mak­ing of it.”

**Fr. Jeff**: “It is noteworthy that even an institution dedicated to com­municating sound art appreciation to the public should shy at what is, after all, simply a matter of fact. Our whole teaching of the fine arts, where they are taught, follows the same pattern. We confuse teaching art with teaching art appreciation, as if it were possible to form even the most confused notion of art without having at least attempted to practice one of the arts. In the order of the fine arts, knowing is making. This does not mean that the rest is unimportant—it may even be necessary—but it does mean that what is not directly relevant to the making of a work is *about* art, not art itself. Such is the justification for stressing a truth so self-evident that it may very well seem meaningless to repeat, but which needs to be restated from time to time because it is contin­ually being forgotten. Even those who hold it to be true disregard it as soon as they begin to discourse about the nature and mean­ing of art. The problems they are interested in are those of Real­ism, Expressionism, Abstraction, the Artist as a Social Critic, or as a Visionary, and many similar ones. What most men are inter­ested in is the work of the art rather than the art that wrought it.”

**Julian**: “It is hardly necessary to add that all those points of view on the fine arts are legitimate. Many others could be added, such as the psychology of artistic creation, the biography of the artist and even the history of the fine arts which represents today such a large portion of the book trade. I have not the slightest objection to them provided such disciplines do not mistake themselves for what they are not. For the philosopher, these various points of view constitute a dangerous temptation, in that they make him forget the specificity of art as a making activity and cause him to overlook its true nature. Others have a good excuse for overlook­ing the creative nature of art, since in itself art is a relation between the artist and his work, of which outsiders know very little. Having little to say about it, they fall back on that aspect of art which is an object of knowledge and provides a fitting matter for talking and writing. But the philosopher has no such excuse.

“As he deals with the principles of knowledge and of reality, the fact that he can say but little about them (since they are princi­ples) does not authorize him to overlook them or to mistake them for other notions. This is why it has seemed useful to recall the very essence of art conceived in its true nature, that is to say, the art that makes things *(ars artefaciens)* rather than the things which art makes (*ars artefacta*).”

**Val**: Then we pick up on page 14, at the bottom.

**Joe**: “The precise point that I intend to make, is that since their end is the making of beauty, the *fine arts,* that is to say the arts of the beautiful, all and always appeal to intelligence and to knowl­edge, not for their own sakes but for the sake of beauty. A paint­ing can represent any object, a poem can teach philosophy as Lucretius' *On Nature,* or agriculture as the *Georgics* of Virgil, or theology as Dante's *Divine Comedy.* The fact remains that every ingredient entering the composition of a work of art, be it even truth, is there in the relation of matter to form. In Lucretius as well as in Dante, philosophy is the handmaid of beauty: *philosophia ancilla artis.*

It is to be hoped that this will not be taken to mean that, in itself, truth is the handmaid of beauty. In itself, truth is nearer to being (which is the first principle) than beauty is, but in art— and when the artist remembers the proper end of his own activity *qua* artist—it is necessary that truth and knowledge should be­come subservient to art as matter is to form. The proportions according to which knowledge and beauty should enter the struc­ture of the work of art are the artist's business. Art history is eloquent witness to the inventiveness of men in a domain which is the proper possession of the artist.”

**Val**: Proceed down to the middle of 15, “As to…”

**Joe**: “As to the consumer of beauty, he is perfectly free to give his preference to the kind of art he likes, with this reservation, however – the more he delights in art for the sake of information, documentation, demonstration or contemplation, the less he is likely to enjoy beauty for its own sake. If there is in this world a single man knowing all that is useful to know in order fully to understand the histori­cal, philo­sophical and theological meaning of the *Divine Comedy,* that man is highly privileged indeed, but it is not impossible to imag­ine a man possessed of that thorough knowledge of the meaning of the poem and yet incapable of experiencing it as the thing of beauty it essentially is. The perfect artist is not he who puts the highest art at the service of the highest truth, but he who puts the highest truth at the service of the most perfect art. It simply fol­lows from this that art is not the highest of the activities of man. Still, it is one of them, and no other can take its place. If art is the making of beauty for beauty's own sake, there is no imaginable substitute for it.”

**Val**: Now we are at a very short passage in the middle of 19. I can tell you, for the group discussion, I really want to keep this as short as possible, so that we can just launch into the discussion, but I combed the first part of the book for anything that emphasizes this active quality of art, and this idea of factivity. That was the intention here.

**Sean**: “[A]lthough it requires knowledge and action, man's ability to make derives directly from his act of being. Man as capable of making *(homo faber)* is first a making being *(ens faber),* because his activity as a craftsman is like an outer manifestation of his act of existing. As it derives from it directly, it is inseparable from it.”

**Val**: Now, on to 22.

**Sean**: “The doctrine of the beautiful as such can be called "calology." It is to the philosophy of art what epistemology is to science considered as the knowledge of the true, and what agathology is to ethics considered as the science and practice of the good. Each of these disciplines has for its object a transcendental, which, because it is convertible with being, is included in the general object of ontology. As knowledge of one of the modes of being *qua* being, calology is part of metaphysics. The artist as such may not feel concerned with this kind of problem, but artist or not, he who philosophizes about the fine arts, if he wants to know what he is talking about, must first wonder about the nature of the beautiful, which is the very object that such arts aim to produce.”

**Val**: And then onto page 74, where things start to get interesting.

**Matt**: “The noetic approach to reality, so natural to speculative minds, blinds them to the evidence that the first moment of any art is an impulse to produce something. It is a desire, an urge, often even a need to bring into being some material object having a certain shape—a sonnet, a structure of musical sounds—and worthwhile for its own sake. The result of artistic production is always the existence of knowable objects, but bringing them into being remains the es­sential moment of the calopoietic function…. It is not being as known; it is rather the being that is and acts because it itself is act.”

**Val**: And then I think that we can skip to Page 76.

**Paul Z**: “Art, like nature abhors emptiness. Art, like nature, abhors emptiness, because nature and art both want being to be. Everyone knows what impatience fills those who, in the silence of a concert hall, wait for the music to begin. They are waiting for a certain being to be. That tense silence is not a mere natural absence of noise as happens in nature; it is the expectancy of certain sounds to come, so much so that sounds of protest will break that silence if the music is slow in coming.… Now these notions are not vague, but primary and therefore necessary, which is something different. They are not clearly seen precisely because they are what makes us see. Each one of them is "an-impossibility-of-thinking-otherwise," which gives access to a dis­tinct order of intelligibility. Principles should be accepted for the light they shed just as, in the darkness, a lamp lightens itself along with the rest.…”

**Val**: If you want to keep on going, Paul…

**Paul Z**: “In matters of art as well as in science or ethics, there is only one first principle, which is being. But instead of considering being as intelligible, as we do in metaphysics, or as good and lovable, as is done in ethics, the philosophy of art applies itself to being as a productive fecundity. It sees art as an act, that is to say an operative energy, because all that which is, naturally tends to operate; and every being is there in view of the operation in which alone it achieves its specific perfection.”

**Val**: And David. This is the theological implication of all of that…

**David**: “Being’s fecundity seen as the root of art: Theology is no exception to the rule, for there is no being more necessary than the God of the Christians, Who is immobile, immutable and eternally subsisting by Himself, though not as a cause. Yet this same God is an eternally flowing source Who generates the Son and sires the Holy Ghost as if, in Him, fecun­dity was as natural and necessary as necessity itself. Because fecundity is an essential attribute of being insofar as it is act, that is to say, insofar as it actually is, even He Who Is seems to have been unable eternally to subsist in Himself without giving in to the desire of ‘making something.’ In his own finite condition man too feels an urge to make other beings whose images he more or less confusedly conceives before imparting to them ac­tual reality.

“Is it possible to go deeper into the nature of this primary fact? Since we are here dealing with the metaphysics of being, it is from this notion alone that we may hope to receive some added light. It would seem from the preceding that being has a natural tendency to multiply itself; like the universe of certain modern cosmographies, being naturally tends to expand. Using the lan­guage of analogy, it can be said that being naturally desires being, and not only its own, as is seen from the fear of death, but also actual existence in all its forms. Beings are, they want to be and they want being itself to be. Indeed, since it is good by the very reason that it is, being as such is desirable in itself. Because it is good that things should be, every being entails the will to cause other beings. In other words, self-multiplication is of the very essence of nature. God saw His creation and found it good. Seeing the living beings He had created, God pronounced His blessing on them and said, ‘Increase and multiply.’ And, indeed, the ground for the existence of being is the same as for its goodness and for its fecundity.”

**Paul Z**: “It is with this primary property of being as act that the metaphysics of the fine arts is naturally connected. It follows immediately, therefore, that, whatever its importance, imitation cannot come first. The root of art in man is the tendency to produce objects serving no useful purpose. Those objects may well be images and their production may, in fact, be an imitation. Since man does not create but makes, in a sense he necessarily imitates because, directly or indirectly, he borrows from reality the elements of his works, but what turns even an imitation into art is that it is a production.

“It is true that imitation plays an important role in the origin of certain arts, especially painting and sculpture. Mimicking is a deep-seated instinct in man, and already observable in some fam­ilies of animals. Leaving aside the question of whether the no­tion of imitation applies to architecture and music (where its application meets with serious difficulties) we find that even in cases where its role is most obvious, imitation is neither the whole of a particular work of art, nor its essential element, nor its pri­mary motive. However, it takes an effort of analysis to make this clear.”

**Paul C**: “When imitation sets for itself a predominantly practical purpose, as is the case with most images, it belongs to the order of utility, not of beauty; it may very well be an art, but not one of the fine arts. If, on the other hand, the image-maker happens to be an artist, he will choose to imitate because nothing furthers artistic production as much as having a model to imitate or, at least, from which to draw inspiration. When it is not a substitute for invention, imitation provides a painting or a sculpture with a subject matter. The popularity of still life, landscapes, seascapes and cityscapes is partly due to the fact that those kinds of paint­ing entail a considerable amount of imitation, and since the re­semblance in such works easily reaches a sufficient degree of accuracy for the objects to be recognizable, they give at least the kind of pleasure one finds in seeing a good imitation.”

**Val**: I hope that reading wasn’t too long and cumbersome. I am planning to present Thomas for the next meeting – although I do want you to come back; I don’t know that I should have disclosed that. It will be a lot shorter, but a lot more difficult. Any comments, questions, responses?

**Sean**: Matt and I, as we were reading along the way, commented on – or at least, I was commenting initially, in opposition to Gilson, as he said everyone would oppose him at the outset. His fundamental principles are so basic, so simple, so obvious, yet are so confusedly mingled. There is so much confusion amid these clear distinctions. The further you go along, the clearer they become. What I mean especially is trying to distinguish the intelligibility of meaning from the act of production. It is impossible, ultimately.

**Val**: It is interesting because, as Dr. Duncan will point out in the little piece that he wrote, Jacques Maritain, another towering French neo-Thomist, actually favors the idea that art is fundamentally intellection, and ideas. As I said, I do not think that Gilson has the last word. I even highlighted where he says on Page 10: “It would not be fair to conceal the fact that this book calls for the revision of a certain number of ideas.” I think he recognizes that there is the need for the *development* of this type of philosophy, and I think that he is admitting, as well, that this is not the final word.

**Joe**: I have a kind of middle position, I guess, between the one you identified as Maritain’s, and his here. It struck me, the first thing that I thought of when I read the opening lines where he quotes Febrve as saying, “Assuredly, art is a kind of knowledge.” And he responds, “The present book rests upon the firm and considered conviction that art is not a kind of knowledge.” Or, in other words, that it is not a manner of knowing; he says it is in the order of making. So I wonder if that is not a little bit of a false dichotomy. I wonder if it cannot really be both. The first thing I thought of was St. Thomas’s definition of art, which is *recta ratio factibilium*, so, *right reason of things to be made.* The idea is that art is reason making something. So it is not just making, and it is not just knowing, but it is the coincidence of those two things. Much like in ethics, the virtuous act is not just doing, and not just knowing, but those two together, as Aristotle says in the *Ethics*. The virtuous man is not the one who just does the right things, but he does the right things for the right reason. So you have to join reason with the act to get virtue. And I think with art it is the same thing, you have to join knowledge *with* making, to get the art that he is talking about.

**Matt**: Does he concede that a little bit when he says that art is primarily an exercise in beauty, but as truthful or as knowledgeable as possible, right? Versus what the work of a philosopher may be, which is perhaps the inverse.

**Joe**: I think that is right, and I think you do see important distinctions like that. What I would have done at the beginning was to have, first of all, distinguished meanings of the word. You can call art the making of it. He does that, on page 13, where he says that there is the art that makes things, the *ars* *artefaciens*, the art of making art, rather than things which art makes, the art of the thing made. So, he does make that distinction between the artefact itself, the piece of art, and then the making of it.

**Sean**: I appreciated his discussion on idealism, rejecting idealism, which says that everything is in principle knowable, a reflection of the mind itself, as if it were self-contained. And then he invokes Anselm’s Ontological Argument, whether *thinking* about the Being of God is enough to cause God to be, whether thinking about art is the same as causing it to come into existence… which of course, it is not.

**David**: I think there was an interesting analogy you drew between the virtuous act, requiring both the doing of it, but also the knowing that it is good. That is, choosing it because it is good, so the whole of the good is present in that. And the act of making art, which presumably then would have the same structure: you make something, and you make it knowing that it is beautiful, or that what you are seeking is beauty, so that the way in which you make it is informed by your knowing of the beauty that you are seeking. So I think that there is something important in that whole chapter.

**Joe**: Yes. I am not sure that I am right about that exactly. Maybe it is better to distinguish three senses: art in the sense of knowledge; art in the sense of making, which would also involve knowledge; and art in the sense of the artefact. I think you can distinguish those three things that the art means.

**Sean**: I was reading about this in Heidegger the other day.

**Joe**: I don’t think there is really a difference so much; when St. Thomas defines art as *recta ratio factibilium*, of right reason of things to be made, reason is the genus there. It seems to me that, rather than just saying art is not a kind of knowledge, we could say: The word art has this meaning, *knowledge*, but it also has this other meaning, *making*.

**Val**: I figure you are spot on, Joe. I have already been thinking, there has got to be a position that synthesizes both Maritain and Gilson, because if you take beauty, as I do, to be related to the conjoint powers of intellect and appetition…

**Joe**: Which I think is right, by the way.

**Val**: Thank you. Yes. And I have still been reading the paper your friend Travis Cooper presented at the conference in California, and he, I think, would agree as well. So you need to appeal to both. I do think you are right, in short!

**Paul Chu**: I have two reservations with regard to what Joe is saying. One is that this is specifically the fine arts. If you have just art, in general, which also includes the practical arts and what not, then the *recta ratio factibilium* is more obvious, and more complete. The other is that – particularly with the fine arts, where beauty has such a focal role – I don’t think that beauty is apprehended first or primarily in that – Sean – *idealistic* way. It’s not so conceptual. I think that, a lot of the time, the beauty has to be actually experienced, perhaps even by the artist himself; I know I’ve had that experience with literary writing, that you don’t exactly know what you’re writing until you’ve already seen it. You need actually to have experienced it, to get that.

**Sean:** …the raw material… in chaos.

**Paul C**: There’s something you need to get in touch with, in the product. I’m not going to go on with this at all, but it’s amusing and interesting that Gilson uses the example of Whistler. There’s a story about Whistler and artistic creation that is hilarious and on some level distressing, which really exemplifies this issue of artistic production completely taking over and becoming a law unto itself, but that one I’ll be keeping just for anyone who cares to hear it.

**Julian**: I’ll just add that I did agree with your idea about the false dichotomy in his opening ideas. Because that’s something that struck me from the start: I think he sets up knowledge, and then talks about the process of creating art as though it is in opposition to knowledge. I would say that, in singling out the process of art, if anything, he is singling out the most objective aspect of what art is; the process of it is the one thing about which you can be objective – you can closely analyze, and use knowledge, and gain knowledge about how each brush stroke is happening, or how each note is going down. So, if anything, I think of the process as being the aspect of art that does connect the most with knowledge. But, both of those topics being totally aside from the real point of art. If anything, I might define, or throw out, maybe my definition of art: I can’t define what it is, but I am going to offer a negative definition: those aspects of art that do not touch upon process or knowledge – whatever you are left with.

**Sean**: Yes, like if you were to go to it, and study art, for instance, you would receive very detailed, rigorous analysis of all of the elements, all of the structures, the forms, the ways by which art is created, dissecting to every single detail, what the artist used. But that would still be very different from actually doing it, right? Actually making it.

**Julian**: And creating beauty. I mean, you can study something for your whole life, but it doesn’t mean that you are going to have *the* touch that will create something beautiful. Whereas, maybe, there is a three-year-old who can actually paint a more beautiful painting than you can.

**Sean**: But you can use your knowledge to enhance your production?

**Julian**: Yes.

**Mary**: Well, right. There are certain pieces, there are different types of art… for instance, look at an oil painting. There are certain right ways to do it technically; you know that the oil paint does not dry for a long time, and then you can go back in…. There is a certain skill set that one would need for each particular art, right? But then, I would go back to the heart. If your heart isn’t in it – if I have all this knowledge, and I know that I am going to build this sculpture, and I know that the hand goes here, and the hand goes here, and then the head goes here – I might be basically like a factory, putting out these sculptures, but they are all made out of “ticky-tacky” and they all look just the same; if I don’t put my creative touch into it, then there is something lacking. And I love how this all just connects back to God the Creator: I love the uniqueness, how we are all made uniquely. So my touch in this sculpture might be that the ears have a certain slant or angle to them. The Divine Creator – it is just cool to think about how he made us each so uniquely. We are made in the image of him, so we are a reflection of him, so then whatever we make is a reflection of us, but then should really point back to the glory of God.

**Matt**: We participate in God’s own being, metaphysically speaking.

**Amy**: …and we image him by making, and creating.

**Paul Z**: Yesterday, I spent an hour or so at the Knights of Columbus Museum visiting the Saint John’s Bible. Part of it is there on display. Donald Jackson, if I remember correctly, is her Majesty’s calligrapher, or one of her calligraphers. And this project of the Benedictine monks of St. John’s Abbey, was probably the first time in a good thousand years or more that a Bible has been written and illustrated. It is a rather beautiful project. You can talk about the choice of things that are there, in terms of art. But one of the things that Gilson mentions that was striking to me, was relation and interpersonalism. And the same thing was said by Donald Jackson, or someone of his group. He did not actually sit down and write all seven folios, or seven volumes; he had a small school, and one of the things that was striking was the community: He built up a community of people that would keep each other honest, in terms of doing the work of art that is there. No one person can be said to be responsible for the entire Bible, but each of them has something to contribute in saying, “Matt, I think your stroke on all the m’s is wrong; you need to follow this.” Or, “Paul, you have to do this.” It was rather a unique perspective to have on that piece of art, because I have never really seen an art piece like the Bible that they composed. And when he [Gilson] brings in the Trinity, I think that that is an important theological datum to remember. The Trinity is obviously Father, Son and Holy Spirit; we are not Unitarian, there is a community there, there is an interpersonal relation that happens, and I think the same is true for art, for sacred music, for liturgy, for cooking. As basic as that is, there is an experience that we rely on, in some way, a relationship with the farmer, with the dairyperson, the nutritionist. I think that that is most important. I think that sometimes we forget that we are part of a greater piece.

**Amy**: I am going back to the beauty and virtue connection. I would like to look into it more. I don’t have anything really insightful to say about it, but I was down in D.C., at the National Gallery, and there is this painting. [Sean], you might see it when you are down during this upcoming semester, and it is by Leonardo da Vinci, it is painted on both sides, and on the front it has this portrait of a young woman, and on the back it has, I don’t know, her family seal or whatnot. It says, “Beauty decorates virtue,” or something along those lines, in Latin. I think that, as an option, it would be interesting to look into the connection there, because there definitely is something. Even the beautiful lives of the saints. A grace-filled person, there is beauty in the virtue and the character. But that is really off topic, so I don’t want to…

**David**: A friend of mine is one of the nuns at *Regina* *Laudis* up in Bethlehem, and I told her I was coming to this group, and she sent me a note saying, “The study group on beauty sounds *wonderful*. And, did you know that Pope Benedict XVI said that in the twenty-first century, it is through beauty that people will come to know God?”

[General sense of excitement and recognition.]

**David**: You’re all over that.

**Joe**: Picking up on that point, I do think that in a certain way he could present it more clearly in the beginning, this dichotomy that he is making between knowing and making, but I do think he makes that point for the sake of another one, which I think, at the heart of it, is right. It is on page 14. “The precise point I intend to make is that, since their end is the making of beauty,” which I think is absolutely right, “the *fine arts*, that is to say the arts of the beautiful, all and always appeal to intelligence and to knowledge, not for their own sakes but for the sake of beauty.” So what he is saying there, is that the purpose of the arts is not to teach truth, and not to impart knowledge, but rather to present the beautiful. And then he says, “A painting can represent any object, a poem can teach philosophy as Lucretius’ *On Nature*, or agriculture as the *Georgics* of Virgil, or theology as Dante’s *Divine Comedy.* The fact remains that every ingredient entering the composition of a work of art, be it even truth, is there in the relation of matter to form. In Lucretius as well as Dante, philosophy is the handmaid of beauty: *philosophia ancilla artis*.” So, when Val first sent this out, I was skimming it, and I read that, and I also read her note here, down at the bottom, in the margin, where he says, “The perfect artist is not he who puts the highest art at the service of the highest truth, but he who puts the highest truth at the service of the most perfect art.” And you [Val] write, “Can we really agree with this?” Reading it out of context, I said, “No, we can’t agree with this. This is wrong.” But then, reading it in context, I changed my mind about it, because I think I saw a little bit better what he was saying. He is not saying – just as a statement, *philosophy is the handmaid of art*;I would disagree with that, because I would place philosophy above art in a hierarchy. The purpose of philosophy is truth, which is a higher end than the beautiful, whose object is the pleasant. But I do not think that that is what he is saying. What I think he is saying is, considering the object of the arts, and beauty as their object, to the degree that philosophy is involved in that at all, it serves that other end of presenting something beautiful. Because there is the view that the end of Shakespeare’s tragedies is to teach the truth, or something like that. But I do not think that that is right. I think that all of the fine arts exist primarily for the sake of presenting something beautiful to please. And I think that that is finally his main point in this essay, is that that is what fine arts are about. I mean, they are about *id quod visum placet*, you know, that which upon being seen or experienced pleases us. But, at any rate, I just wanted to add that, because I do not think that he is, in the final analysis wrong, about what he is saying. And I think he is making a very subtle point, and a very good point – just picking up that point that you were making about the experience of the beautiful.

**Val**: Well, if I can say, very quickly, Gilson later in the book will talk about how overly didactic art is just in really bad taste…

**Joe**: Right. Right.

**Val**: …You are taking art and putting it at the service of something else. So, I think that all of this is right. However, the way this sentence hit me – I mean, as a philosopher, it hits me as being completely right. You [Joe] are right. Then I read it according to a contemplative bent. And then it was, “The perfect artist is not he who puts the highest art at the service of the *highest* *truth*” – well, the highest truth is a *Person*.

**Joe**: Right.

**Val**: …And so you have this way of exploding things into interpersonal dynamic, always. And I think that that is what Paul Zalonski was on to. It is just really, really multi-layered…

**Joe**: Yes.

**Val**: …all of it is.

**Joe**: In a certain sense, then, that is not true. I agree with that. But, if I am right, I think that what he is saying there is that art is not about truth…

**Val**: Right. I think that that is the conventional reading, and that is what he meant…

**Joe**: I think that that is his point.

**Val**: …and I flipped it around.

**Joe**: Like you were saying, overly didactic art – a preachy story is neither going to instruct nor delight us.

**Sean**: Right. He references, at a certain point, Kant and the Puritans who rebelled against pleasure, the pleasurable dimension of art. And to some extent Kant was justified insofar as he was rebelling against the crudeness of the utilitarians…

**Joe**: Right.

**Sean**: …who reduced pleasure to the ultimate value, independent of meaning, independent of truth, of value, or of anything at all. But with that comes along the rebellion against virtue, the rebellion against Christianity, because it is *ugly*, *boring*, and *dull*. No one wants to participate in that, because we have in us, as Plato says in the *Symposium*... *eros*, the desire for the beautiful, the beloved. How absurd is it that we live in a world nowadays where people say, “God: How boring is that? I want nothing to do with that.” – whereas God is the infinitely desirable, the infinitely beautiful. And another point I wanted to make: with beauty, Gilson says, the artist has an urge to create something, to bring it forth out of himself into the open, in a sense. Why is that? To share it with others, that others might see it and rejoice – to enrich others. If there wasn’t that critical element of making, it could be just in himself.

**David**: That was a critical thing I felt was lacking, in the parts we read, anyway. Paul, you touched on this, I think, that there is an interpersonal character to this, and that that exists, as you said, Val, on a lot of levels. I think you’re touching on it now, Sean, because the making of a work of art, if you knew it was never going to be shared by anybody else, it would lack an essential element…

**Sean**: *Potencia.*

**David**: Right. And there is a veritable level of verification in that, as it were, union with somebody beyond, which is part of the impulse of production. I do not know how that fits into the metaphysical piece of this.

**Mary**: I was just thinking, in a sense, that all beautiful things, we want them to last… which leads us to eternity. There is something that we yearn for, *that* beauty, that eternal beauty. Even if people do not realize it, they get caught up when they look at something beautiful: “Oh, wow.” And they are drawn to it. So when you [David] cited that quotation of the Pope, saying that beauty would be the way that people would be led…

**Amy**: …And it is part of the fecundity of art, to have the experience. I think that he talks about that a little bit.

**David**: Yes.

**Paul C**: The quote from Pope Benedict brought the focus very much back, as a counterpart to what Sean is saying, about an element of puritanism or even an element of utilitarian hedonism, which has a definition of “pleasing” which is so impoverished that it doesn’t really leave all that much room for art, or for artistic appreciation, because what is pleasing has acquired this lowest common denominator level. One of the things about beauty being this path, as David quoted… I have just been reading about the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which we have here on the candles, that St. Thomas says that the fruits are not just these nine, or twelve, or however many we wind up counting, but that all virtuous acts which are done with pleasure are fruits of the Holy Spirit. It’s not merely that one is doing virtuous actions; this is, as it were, the flip side of the *recta ratio*, that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are present where the virtuous actions are done *with pleasure* – that one is not merely doing the virtuous action, but delighting in it. Just as the *recta ratio*, with Aristotle, it’s not merely that you’re doing the right action, but that you know why it’s right – here, it’s not merely that you’re doing the right action, but that you are rejoicing in it.

**Joe**: Right. Right.

**Paul Z**: What comes to mind, and Sean actually tipped me off to it, in *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict does raise the erotic to our attention, not for sinful things, or disordered affections, but to remind us that we are human beings…

**Val**: He does a lot more than that.

**Paul Z**: Right. But there is a certain happiness, a certain pleasure, in all of that. We are not Protestant.

**Val**: It is a radical document. The first eight pages of *Deus Caritas Est* are absolutely radical. It actually comes from Pseudo-Dionysius, and if you have noticed, it is the next major conversation topic here. He says that God *is*, eternally, *eros*, as much as *agape*. He actually doesn’t give it a stamp of approval, but he says that this is the eternal life of God, of this intense interpersonal love. Okay, there is a whole history of this from Plato, on to Pseudo-Dionysius…

**Paul C**: It begins with JPII calling on Plato rather than on Pseudo-Dionysius, and then Benedict completing it.

**Val**: Yes.

**Paul Z**: John Paul II in *Theology of the Body*.

**Val**: …but the way he defines it, the way JPII defines it, is as the “upward ascent towards everything good, true, and beautiful.”

**Sean**: Yes.

**Val**: So I feel one of our tasks is to develop a more purified, intensified notion of what *eros* is, and that has been a big issue in the philosophy that I have been trying to write.

**Sean**: It could be said that in human beings, since we are made in the Image of God, our desire, our *eros* is teleologically directed towards the Beatific Vision, God Himself. And concupiscence is allowing something other than that to fill the void. We are often so oblivious to this. If beauty is not present, if people do not experience it and encounter it and see it, mainly through the lives of the saints, then they will remain in the state of total darkness.

**Paul Z**: Or even seeing this *eros* as instantiated in the lives of the saints. I think of the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, \*(Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1647-52) the famous statue in Rome. That is an incredible work; the passion that she had, that she shows, is incomparable.

**Sean**: …and we live in a world in which corporeal, or carnal, eroticism is seen as the highest apotheosis of pleasure, especially in an atheistic world.

**Paul Z**: Sure, for a Christian there is something different. Catholics are so fond of picking up the tendency for Jansenism, and discounting this as a place to meet Christ.

**Sean**: John Paul II says as much.

**Mary**: Would you say that part of what you’re discussing is “becoming fully alive”?

**Paul Z**: Sure. I mean, look at what St. Irenaeus defines, *the glory of God is man fully alive* \*(*Adversus haereses*)*.* In the course of some study in the area of moral theology, someone was saying, and I am not sure who they were quoting, a person who is engaged in illicit activity really is crying out for the divine.

**Val**: Well, that goes back to St. Augustine.

**Paul C**: It is attributed to St. Augustine: the man who knocks at the door of a brothel is looking for God.

**Paul Z**: So then what I was saying is just a cheap way of saying what Augustine said. I guess he says it more elegantly. In terms of human desire, it takes a long time to reflect on that, that people are really crying out for interpersonal communion, *relationship*, either with their spouse, with God, with their brother or sister, whomever…

**Matt**: You can extend this tremendously. I am taking a course in substance abuse and addiction. And it is the same idea. They don’t get it so much, but what are these things that we are putting into our lives to fill the void? Maybe misuse of *eros* relates more to the self-fulfillment aspect of the need for self-gift. Self-gift is necessary of course, agapic self-gift, but, as JPII will extend it, there is a reciprocity there, there needs to be self-fulfillment as well.

**Paul Z**: Just as a little biographical note, someone close to me is now coming out of a period of time involving alcoholism and depression. And one of the things that I have noticed, at least that I have noticed with her, and I think that I have heard the same when I have spoken with other people… I have never studied addictive personalities and behaviors, but it does seem that a person who is addicted to anything – sex, food, power, fame, whatever, alcohol – there is something that is missing in their heart, that they have not yet recognized. And a lot of times, I think, it is relationship… an honest, loving, healthy relationship, at least with another person. But what is also ultimately lacking is those same qualities for the divine.

**Sean**: A relationship that endures, and that is faithful…

**Paul Z**: … because, in society, what is it that we say about a lot of art? We can just put it out to the garbage; it does not mean much. There is no enduring value to a lot of the stuff that you can buy that passes as *art*. There is a lot of stuff out there, from shoes to belts to housewares…

**Sean**: It is commercialized…

**Paul Z**: It is commercial.

**Sean**:…no art at all, just all machine-produced.

**Paul Z**: It goes back to all of those things of the 20th century that we face, in terms of Communism, Fascism… what is man, woman, a cog in a wheel?

**Mary**: I was just thinking about the *man fully alive*. The beauty we look for, ultimately, is God; cut to the chase. So when we see that reflection, we see love, and it reflects back to us… so we see ourselves as we truly are; we see God as he truly is; and we see how loved we are, we see that beauty that we *are*, but also that we are intended to be. And we are, really, a work in progress.

**Val**: Let me tell everyone right now, you are all welcome to stay. All night. Nothing would make me happier…

**Julian**: Oh, we plan to, Val.

**Val**: I don’t want to infringe on any of your schedules. So you let *me* know when the discussion is over.

**Paul Z**: Is that cake we have? I think there is a beautiful cake over there.

**Sean**: …and perhaps some coffee?

**Paul Z**:At the end of my email -I am not sure where Joseph Ratzinger had said this – but, after my signature, I have: “A theologian who does not love art, poetry, music and nature can be dangerous. Blindness and deafness toward the beautiful are not incidental; they necessarily are reflected in his theology.”

[General agreement throughout the room.]

**Paul Z**: A theologian is dangerous who does not attend to beauty.

**Amy**: There is a quote by Augustine, I think it is by Augustine; he said *In my deepest wound I saw your glory, and it dazzled me*. \*(Augustine, *Confessions*) Christ is strongest in our deepest wounds, so his power can really be shown forth there. When we look at our woundedness, we get to see his Face; in that way, in that most beautiful of human faces, we are healed by it. So… there is a connection there anyway.

**Mary**: Yes.

**David**: It is only interpersonally that we are healed; we cannot heal our own wounds. It is only in response…

**Matt**: John of the Cross comes in very handy here; he has some kind of saying where he says *beauty* like a hundred times…

**Val**: Yes! Yes! I *love* that and I have never been able to find it again after I read it once.

**Matt**: I read that once; I can’t even find it. It is not in the *Complete* *Works*.

**Val**: I know that it is not in the Kavanaugh-Rodriguez.

**Matt**: But how does this happen within us? It is us, it is the activity, it is the *beata nox,* the blessed night, but it is also the passivity and the darkness, in which we are transformed to the recognition of beauty, to the full.

**Mary**: There is a mystery to that too. We are drawn upward, and we will see clearly in heaven, but there is always more to know, and more beauty to see. So when we even see a piece of the whole, when we see God, and see more and more of him, we just get drawn upward. So then if other people see beauty in us, they are going to want to look to him. It is amazing… humbling.

**Matt**: It is evangelization; *you shall know then by their fruits* \*(*Matt. 7:16*)*.*

**Mary**: Yes! It is evangelization.

**Matt**: It is not a matter of knocking door-to-door.

[A tangle of over-excitement in the room, eluding all possibility of transcription.]

**Paul Z**: I can see one of the dangers here is that, if it is too oriented to heaven, than what happens to the hundredfold here?

**Mary**: Can you clarify that?

**Paul Z**: Do you know what the hundredfold is, what I am talking about? Jesus says, those who have given everything will receive the hundred-fold in *this* life, and in the next \*(See *Mk. 10:30*). Maybe it goes back to a question of happiness. It is not only the happiness of heaven, but it is the happiness of heaven made here on earth, that has been promised by God. There is a tendency in Christians, or Catholics, to say, “Hmm, I am only going to focus on the heaven part. I am going forget the being-here part.” The theological datum of our faith, really the Incarnation, is here, is contemporary to our experience.

**Mary**: Oh yes! Yes.

**Val**: I think this group is falling victim to its own success. I can’t make the discussion stop.

**Joe**: I do really want to come back to that point that he [Paul Z.] just made…

**Julian**: First thing, after intermission.

**Val**: Despite how warm it is, despite how far everyone has to travel…

**Sean**: Thank you for reminding me.

**Val:** The coffee is decaffeinated, and I have been the only one drinking it anyway, so there is no good explanation for this kind of energy; this is just amazing. I will give you the hand-out, which is St. Romuald. This is of those readings, of the lives of the saints, having this deep passion, which is why I love it, and it is written by a doctor of the Church. It comes up in the Office of Readings for today, written by St. Peter Damian. It is just insanity… it is wonderful to see your own insanity verified by the doctors of the Church... St. Romuald is on one side of the page…

**Julian**: … and St. Roger on the other side.

**✥✥✥**

**INTERMISSION**

…with Val’s white velvet *stracciatella* cake

**✥✥✥**

**Val**: So. Dr. Roger, great metaphysician, great teacher of philosophy, great creative philosophical genius, I think really one of the best living right now, really, really wanted to be here, which is quite impressive… for numerous reasons. But he is still travelling. He spent some time with our reading and wrote this. So, on his behalf…

Gilson, *The Arts of the Beautiful*

As I get in touch with Gilson’s book again after many, many years (and I think it is a very wise book and would recommend the reading of the whole work to anyone who can possibly spare the time), I am seized with a single thought, only one for now; here it is.

When we think of the beautiful, we probably think of the beauties of art, and also of nature, and we are doing this in this context because we have some sense that it connects us to the Divine. But with Gilson’s emphasis on *art as making* something new might come into view for us personally, I mean as something we can use prayerfully.

As Gilson explains, making is something God does preeminently and the rest of us, including everything in nature, participate in this mystery to some degree and in some way. Everything reproduces, or at lower levels at least puts itself out there and “makes a mark” on its environment. This is only in a way to say that everything has some effect as a cause, but it is also to point out that as we go up the scale of complexity and interiority things get more and more creative, bursting out at the level of the human, that special *imago dei,* who delights in making the useless or in uselessly adorning the useful. The human practical intellect, the aspect of us that gets into this sort of thing, is governed when it comes to pushing its products out there, not so much by the good or the true as it is by the beautiful. We want the thing to look right or sound well.

What I am suggesting is that maybe we should try to see the beautiful right there, within ourselves as creators, because God is there, luring us. So we ask ourselves *what do we make*, and we have to take “make” in a very broad and analogical sense; we are talking ultimately about any place we introduce a new level of order. We will find God wherever with gentle urging the beautiful asks for realization.

I suppose I do have a second idea, a corollary of the first. Gilson later in the book speaks of the “germ” of the work to be produced, a bit the artist gets hold of, or that gets hold of the artist, that calls out to be developed into the completed work. (This is one place incidentally where he coincides with Maritain, the other great French lay Thomist of the twentieth century, the central idea of whose *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* might be said to be antithetical to Gilson’s; Maritain considers the intellectual receptivity of the artist to being – art in a way as a form of knowing.) The germ sometimes grows for a long time, maybe finding preliminary expressions, like Goethe’s *Faust* which haunted him all his life. The germ is the beginning – it is important to nurture it, eventually to act upon it productively, and when acting, to stay with it and not get sidetracked. However that may all be, we might *ask ourselves whether there is any germinal idea cooking within us* and when for Heaven’s sake we are going to try to get it into reality. Prayer again, and the suasion of the beautiful.

[Prolonged meditative silence.]

**David**: It is kind of lovely, isn’t it? It is really so Roger too, because it is both thinking and considering and sharing, but it is also always aimed toward the growth of the person he is talking to, including himself.

**Sean**: Like Socrates.

[Silence.]

**Sean**: I am reminded again, I am reading right now, the work of a Jesuit who was one of the pivotal figures in interpreting Heidegger: William Richardson, up at Boston College. I am journeying through this immense book, and right now I am in the section on art… or one of the sections on art. He talks about Hölderlin, Rilke. One of the key things he talks about is the artist’s openness and attentiveness to being, and the term that Richardson uses is *advent* – waiting upon that which is coming, that which can come. Of course, as Catholics, this rings for us, right? Open, receptive to the possibility of art, letting it grow within us, giving birth to it, in a sense.

[Long silence.]

**David**: Joe, there was a subject you wanted to pick up again after the break.

[High spirits!]

**Joe:** It is a very long story. Yes, I would love to get your thoughts on this question. It struck me, when you [Paul Z.] were talking about living beatitude in this life, living happiness on this earth, not only happiness in heaven: Has anybody read *Come be my light*?

**Amy**: Yes! Mother Teresa, yes.

**Joe**: I want to think that that is right, and it probably is right, what you said. But what I wonder about is: Mother Teresa was a very unhappy person, if you take happiness in the natural sense, natural human happiness. She lived an intense life of darkness, in which she experienced complete separation from any sense of the presence of Christ. What I am wondering, what I have a question about, is whether we are in this life called to natural human happiness, or whether the life of a Christian can be a life of intense suffering, which is incompatible with natural human happiness. That is my question. What you said rung so true to me, when you said it, but the difficulty I have is reconciling it, in this life…

**David**: There is a psychological study that was just published in the *New York Times,* and what they did was go out and survey a whole lot of people and talk to them very deeply and intimately about whether they are happy or not. The prime finding that they reported was that people who live lives of, basically, self-interest, focused on their own comfort, their own pleasures, described themselves as happy, whereas people who take on a mission in the world, dedication to others, an outward look in charity or family or whatever those reasons are, described themselves as less happy, because they are more preoccupied with the accomplishment of those things that they care deeply about, which often are not readily accomplished. So, from the perspective of quantitative analysis, I guess…

**Joe**: Yes. There is kind of a backstory to this. I’ve struggled for years to understand: Aristotle’s *Ethics* is really about happiness, and that is where he starts out. He gives a nominal definition at the beginning; he says that happiness is the highest good for man. That is not the metaphysical definition of it, but that is the definition of the name, of what do we mean by happiness: We mean the highest good for man, whatever that is. So he ends up saying that the highest good for man is virtuous activity, that the man who acts virtuously is the happy man. But then he also says things like – and this is what has puzzled me for so long – to be happy, you need a certain amount of money, you need good-looking children, all of these kinds of things. And I said, “Whoa, this doesn’t make any sense.” You should not need a certain amount of money, or children, or anything like that necessarily, right? And then I think I saw what he is saying later, which is that what he is talking about there is *natural* happiness, as opposed to supernatural. *In this life*, to be completely fulfilled as a human being, you do need enough food to eat, and you do need a place to live; those things are a fulfillment of the natural goods of man, which is what we were talking about before, that you have the pleasant and all that kind of thing. So there is a kind of complete picture of natural human happiness that does require things in addition to living a life of virtue. To be happy *here*, you need not only virtue, but some other things besides, according to Aristotle.

**Sean:** They might not be inherent, but they’re conditions of possibility.

**Joe:** So this is my thought, and maybe I am wrong about this, which is that: God does not call us to natural human happiness, necessarily. I mean, some people are happy here. But I am tempted to say, Mother Teresa was not happy here.

**Mary**: But she had joy.

**Joe**: But she was *miserable* here! She lived a life of suffering. And if you haven’t read the book, Mary, she says that every time she smiled, she was putting that on, and that it did not indicate any kind of interior joy, because her life was a life of total darkness, total sense of separation…

**Sean:** What a saint…

**Joe:** …which I think makes her life far more meritorious than it could have been. But I would hesitate to say she was happy here, that she had natural human happiness. These thoughts are ones that are just germinating, yet somehow they do not strike me as right, because what you said does seem right. I think we are called in some sense to happiness. This is a question that I am struggling with. It does not have much to do with what we were talking about before.

**Val**: Well, I don’t know; there is much that can be said. I don’t know that we shouldn’t restrict ourselves more to the topic at hand…

**Joe**: Maybe we should… maybe we should just forget about that.

**Val**: …but…

**Mary**: Can I insert just a really quick comment?

**Joe**: You are being a good teacher, and I am getting off topic.

**Val**: It is a fascinating study, I must say. And there may yet be other venues for the study of other topics. Go ahead, Mary.

**Mary**: There is a verse is the Bible that says, *the joy of the Lord is our strength* \*(*Neh.*, *8:10*). That joy, if we look at joy versus happiness, that joy is knowing who God is, and knowing that love, and the more perfectly we know it, the more joy we have. So, that is that deep down *security*. But the happiness is little more complex, I think, because our happiness can be tied to our joy, but we can have joy and be going through the worst persecution imaginable, because we know God. That verse is a pivotal verse. But happiness is like: “Okay, I have a beautiful family, and I am well loved by the people around me, and I have food, and…” But that joy goes back, simply, to what Paul [of Tarsus] said, even though I am in chains, *the Word of God is not chained* \*(*2 Tim. 2:9*), whether I am *well fed* [or] *going hungry, living in abundance or being in need*… he was joy-filled. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* \*(*Phil* *4:12-3*) Mother Teresa could do all things through Christ. I do not claim to know completely, but I go back to that verse, *the joy of the Lord is my strength.*

**Thomas**: It is almost like you can feel the Holy Spirit in you, that feeling that you get at Adoration… or is that more happiness?

**Mary**: Well, it is knowing who God is. We are all on a journey, so we do not have the full and complete picture. God’s words are simple; he draws us personally to him. It is knowing his presence, knowing that I am going to be provided for. And my provision might not be that beautiful steak dinner I want, but if it is three peas on my plate, I have what I need. I go back to that fulfillment. I have everything that I need, no matter if my physical needs are being met. It goes down to the baseline.

**Joe**: I want to go back to what Paul [unclear] is saying. She, Mother Teresa, does say at the end, that she began to love the darkness.

**Sean**: *The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.* \*(Job, 1, 21)

**Val**: I am very invested in the theology of St. John of the Cross. And I am tempted to talk about the nuances in Aristotle’s eudaimonism as put forth in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, but I will resist all temptation.

**Joe**: Okay, later, another discussion. Yes, this first. But keep these thoughts in your minds, I would like to hear everybody’s thoughts.

**Paul Z**: Just one last thing. Even with Aristotle, what comes to mind, by what measure are we measuring happiness? To take the Old Testament, the prophet is one discerns God, and what God is saying, and then witnesses to humanity the call to conversion.

**Sean**: You cannot know happiness until you have experienced it.

**Paul Z**: I think we all have to ask ourselves a very similar question to the question of beauty: What evidence or experience of beauty do we have? What does it mean, what does it look like, what contours does it have? The same thing for happiness, I think, by what measure are we measuring happiness? If someone says, “My measure for happiness is having beautiful children,” then what happens if God were to give you a Down’s syndrome child? Are you just looking at the physical features, the intellectual abilities, the athletic capacities, or is there a measure within the person that says that there is a different type of happiness and beauty there? And I think that Jerome Lejeune has brought that to our plate. But that is obviously getting off into another topic.

**Val**: Can I rein it back in a little? The question was originally with Aristotle… and there is much that I can say about Mother Teresa too, but I won’t. When it comes to Aristotle, as I understand, especially with St. Thomas’s *Commentary on the Ethics* and so on and so forth, as I understand the Aristotelian conception of happiness, it is not a subjective, experiential happiness; it is a *flourishing*, how much you are living in accord with who you are called to be - whether or not that is an enjoyable experience – whether you fulfill your mission. And I think that we can then lead that back organically, it is not a strain at all, to lead that back to the idea of factivity, or, of what is being elicited from us, by both the intersubjective uptake that we receive, and by the interior *press*, as Roger was saying, to put something out there – by the love of both the being itself that we are bringing forth, and love of the community that we are introducing it into… which I think is, ultimately, eschatological. Anyway, I think now we have a more sold basis from which to give a *calological* analysis of this question, *if* that was all okay!

**Joe**: Yes, fine.

**Val**: And then, besides, you guys can hang out all night and talk about these other issues. Or, we can go out for coffee. I am never not up for coffee.

**Joe**: Brew up.

**Amy**: Can I, just really quickly? – Joy and peace during suffering are spiritual gifts, so you cannot expect that you are going to have them. With happiness, you make a distinction between a spiritual gift that you are receiving during a time of suffering.

**Paul Z**: But it is also a promise. Christ has promised us something. To discount it, or to explain it away, is not to have confidence, certainty, that the promise is true.

**Sean**: In the afterlife…

**Paul Z**: In this life!

**Paul C**: The hundredfold.

**Paul Z**: Go back to the hundred-fold. Christ does not mince words, at least I do not believe that he does. So, you cannot explain it away. You have to deal with it. You have to deal with the Psalms in the same way, as concrete realities.

**Sean**: Of course, yes. But what do we mean by *hundredfold*, in this life?

**Val**: Okay, I am so easily baited: Father Benedict Groeschel, CFR, spent a lot of time with Mother Teresa. He had spent time with her time with her, and they knew each other very well. They [Fr. Benedict and companions] saw her at a certain point as death was approaching – I heard this personally from Fr. Benedict Groeschel – and he said that he and some other member of the CFRs, I couldn’t tell you, looked at one another and said, “She is like a ‘shook-up’ champagne bottle with the cap newly off,” because she was overflowing and effervescent with this *incredible*,giddy joy. And they said, “We’ve lost her.” You know, “Death is close, she has gone through the gates.” And I saw this around Kelly toward the end of her life. So I think that it can be very delayed…

**Joe**: This is Fr. Benedict Groeschel, about Mother Teresa.

**Val**: …about Mother Teresa.

**Matt**: He said, “The darkness left.” Those were his exact words.

**Val**: I saw him, actually down at a bar in New Haven, for a *Theology on Tap*, and that was the testimony that he gave. It was the old Irish pub, the New Haven Playwright.

**Paul Z**: One thing, and this is also a Roger thing, with regard to this idea of a bottle shaken up, it is an interesting question about death, and what happens at a person’s death. Roger is inclined, I think, to say, “Your personal mission is not ended, it is just changed,” echoing what it says in the funeral liturgy, *life is changed but not ended.* And so death is a new door into the personal mission that we have been consecrated to through baptism.

**Paul C:** There’s a new angle that this is starting to give me on the factivity question. I was taking the factivity question, perhaps, in a way that is a little off-center – the person who I was talking about it most was David, who unfortunately just left – in terms of a *daemon*, so to speak, of artistic creation, of art for the sake of art, and what have you. But you could also take this as the sense in which being – and Gilson actually says this at one point, in the section Val marked out in the handout – this is important insofar as it is act. We ourselves are act; if the sense in which we *be* is highly active, we are up there on the hierarchy of being because the sense in which we *be* is so active and so dynamic. And the flourishing that Val talked about there, tied to Aristotle, is more about– I’m sorry, this is such weird diction – how we *be*, and that set goes with artistic creation, with service, with relationship inside community as Paul has been emphasizing; the flourishing is how we *be*. So in a lot of ways, happiness or flourishing or even being are better measured in the way that we live, in the way that we relate, in what we do, in what we create, in the fruits of our lives, than in, of all things, our own subjective evaluation of it.

It ties in with what David, again, was talking about: The thing in the *New York Times*. You can very easily correlate life and artwork; oftentimes – while artists are all different – you will get a great, perfectionistic artist who’s *never* satisfied, who keeps tinkering on things over an entire lifetime. There was a story that they analyzed one of Beethoven’s manuscript pages which was water-damaged, so they took it apart to analyze the composition process. And they found at one point that he had nine slips of paper glued on top of one another changing a note. And when they got through the nine slips of paper, they found that the one on the bottom had the same note as the one on the top. And you can be Beethoven. Or you can be Mozart and write the whole darn thing in your head and copy it all out, the night before it has to be turned in. It all still comes out in different manners of being. You don’t necessarily want to say that either one of them is better or worse as an artist, because there’s more agonizing or more ease in the process. I don’t know whether – to veer back to your question, Joe – we can even say who’s happier in this way, because of how much more happiness has to do with flourishing than it has to do with one’s self-evaluation.

Obviously, there’s also spiritual desolation, which is an entirely different matter. But there’s also a certain element of self-evaluation, as David was describing, that if you have that perfectionism and that creative and critical mind, you don’t just accept everything. A lot of what may be passing as happiness is just a ready recourse to “whatever.”

**Paul Z**: There is a tendency in all of us to define ourselves by others people’s measures, and that seems not to be of God either. There is a thing called fraternal correction, it says that if you have someone’s good in mind… but that is not the same thing as having that tape going in your mind, “I am a bad person, because he told me so; my mother hates me; I’m going to stand in the corner…” – all of these negative things… and the sin becomes, “Oh, maybe I am this way,” and I start believing it. But that is not what is revealed to us in Scripture. That is not revealed to us through sacred tradition, the liturgy, the spiritual tradition of the saints. Something else is there.

**Val**: I do not know why we are discussing this, nor why I am.

**Joe**: It is my fault.

**Val**: Not even to bring it back, but just to say…

**Paul Z**: Just end it!

**Val**: This idea of happiness is totally locked in with subjectivity; it is very monadic. I think that there are two concepts that we need. One is *glory*, perhaps more so than happiness – those moments which are disclosive of the truth, disclosive of the transfiguration which our lives are made to undergo. The other is *ecstasis*, like you [Paul Z.] were saying earlier, interpersonal outreach and interpersonal receptivity both… not being “in yourself” quite so much.

**Sean**: Trinitarian love. To go back to one of the central images in the Gospels, there is the *narrow path,* the pilgrimage, the movement towards the new heavens and the new earth. As Paul [of Tarsus] says, *creation is groaning*, until the children of God bring to completion the created universe. So in a sense, when the seed of eternal life is planted in us, we are, in a sense, groaning, like a woman giving birth, it says. There is the image: giving birth to new life, new and eternal. And to bring that forth involves immense possibly suffering, immense struggle. Once we experience the love of eternal life, the love of the Eternal God, everything else in comparison to it is finite, is limited, temporary. We are longing for where we belong.

**Paul Z**: And there has to be something about *here.* If the Trinitarian love is not contemporaneous with our human experience, then it is an abstraction, of two thousand years ago. And who cares? What I care about is now.

**Amy**: I want to add something to that. I was thinking about the *inexpressible groanings*, because somewhere in here, and I honestly do not know where, he [Gilson] talks about a room, where the people are waiting for the concert to happen, and there is…

**Mary**: …anticipation.

**Paul Z**: The silence is deafening for some.

**Amy**: I was thinking about creation. The Incarnation of Christ is the pinnacle of creation, and all of everything builds towards that one Person, God and man, his Face being the impetus behind Christian art. When the Magi come and visit, it reveals his face to the nations. The beauty of that face is kind of a mandate…

**Sean**: It is the initial Model. But we are the mystical body of Christ. The whole body of Christ does not exist without its Head, Jesus Christ.

**Joe**: Tying this back to art, I thought of this because you two, you were talking about how our lives are works of art, we order our lives to holiness, and we are God’s works. St. Thomas gives a more general definition of art than *right reason applied to things to be made*. The first thing that we think of when we think of art is that we are making something, but he gives a broader definition, which is *the attainment of a due end through determinate means.* I think that living a life of virtue fits that definition, because we are not making something, there is no product that is external to us that we could point to. But we are living this life of attaining our end, our due end.

**Thomas**: So are we the “products” of God?

**Joe**: What I mean is that there is no other thing outside of us that we can point to say that we have made, because making has to do with a product.

**Thomas**: Would the product be yourself though, if you are talking about yourself as a work of art?

**Joe**: But we do not make ourselves.

**Val**: There is a co-creative, co-determinative aspect to our lives, absolutely.

**Paul Z**: There is a co-operating with divine grace. However, what I think the Christian perspective would be is that I do not make myself.

**Val**: Whoa! I think that we need to bring out the Garrigou-Lagrange. Actually JPII, in the *Letter to Artists –* which I *love*. I have read it and read it and read it. And given it to other people. – there is a footnote in which he talks about a direct analogical link between the creation of art, and self co-determination, and virtue. It is right at the beginning.

**Paul Z**: But that is not the same as making myself. You realize as a parent, for example, that create something, but ultimately speaking, the child is a gift, not something made. Theologically, we say *Begotten, not made*.

**Val**: But there is a validity to secondary causality.

**Joe**: Yes.

**Val**: There really is.

**Joe**: What I have in mind is, say, the distinction between art and prudence. The prudence which governs the moral life has to do with actions, not making, strictly speaking: right reason applied not to making something, but to doing something. It is the things that we do, not the things that we make, which make us who we are. But I agree that there is way in which you could speak of us as somehow *producing,* but I think that that would be on an analogical level. The life of virtue is not a making, in the literal sense.

**Amy**: It is right reason in action.

**Joe**: Yes, that is right.

**Paul Z**: I think that it goes back to what Paul was saying.

**Julian**: I appreciate the other Paul’s point, that about new life. We do not take credit for it, it is a gift. We don’t take, at least, full credit for it, we really do not take credit for it at all. We facilitate it.

**Paul** **Z**: That is what we mean when we say that we are co-creating with God, to bring that gift into the world.

**Julian**: I am saying that, rather than co-creating, that God has the much larger role, and that we just have the mundane role of putting pieces in place, but the *life* is the gift from God, and that comment is yours, I just realized, touches upon why I have been uncomfortable with the entire Gilson focus on the process of creation, because, as an artist, I do not take credit – if there is art in what I create – I can only take credit for putting the building blocks into place, for putting the mundane into place, and that is the aspect of it that I can be taught, and that I can teach others, but that is nit the art. That is why I am somehow not comfortable with Gilson’s focus on the process, because I think, as I said earlier, that is not the point of art at all. The point of art is that we artists engage in a process, and put certain building blocks together, with the hope that end result will have some art to it. But we cannot take credit for it, that happens through us, but that is it.

**Thomas**: Are you saying that art is more about what you produce rather than the process?

**Julian**: Yes. I am not interested in the process, and I do not really care about the process. What matters is the art piece in the end. And, as we have discussed, you know Beethoven has one process and Mozart has another, and it doesn’t matter; they are both great.

**Joe**: I think you are right. The beauty in the art that you produce is not from you.

**Julian**: Yes, exactly.

**Joe**: It does not originate with you.

**Julian**: Exactly.

**Joe**: You do not create in the sense that things are produced from nothing, and you are the cause of it.

**Julian**: Right.

**Joe**: You are taking something that pre-exists…

**Julian**: …and I am organizing it. I cannot take credit for the…

**Joe**: God is immeasurably more the cause, than any artist is…

**Julian**: Yes.

**Paul Z**: But I would not say that that is a mundane aspect of life.

**Julian**: The technical aspect.

**Paul Z**: God uses human agency too.

**Joe**: Right.

**Paul Z**: And I think the work of our hands… in the liturgy we do extol the work of bees, we do talk about the work of human hands making the bread and the wine that we will, at some point, a few minutes later, consume as the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. But if it were not for the work of growing the wheat, cutting it down, milling it into flour, making it into bread, bringing it to bear for the Eucharist, and the same thing for the wine, I think that there is an important aspect of human life, of human labor, that cannot be just drudgery, or discounted. And I think there is an acknowledgement of that. One of the Eastern church fathers speaks about how we ae co-creators, co-redeemers, I suppose in a very extended way of proclaiming the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ tot the world. But we do co-create. We help God to have hands and legs in this world.

**Sean**: Jesus says, ***as******the******Father******has******sent******me****…*

**Paul Z**: **…*so I have sent you***. There is the *missio* in all of that.

**Joe**: Just historically, in the very opening of the *Poetics,* Aristotle says that all of the fine arts have been conceived as modes of imitation, *mimesis*. Historically, that was the way art was looked at until, really, the beginning of the nineteenth century, when creative expression began to take over as the chief definition of art most people identify with. I mean, it began with the Romantic movement, principally with Wordsworth, you know his preface to the *Lyrical Ballad,* he finds poetry the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. And from then on, expression was the chief genus of art in people’s minds. And I think that what you [Julian] are saying is that we are more presenting a likeness of things that already exist than we are producing that of ourselves. That is what I get out of what you are saying.

**Julian**: Now we are following this new definition, but the newer definition is the one that I dislike very much.

**Joe**: Right, right, and I agree with you on that. I do think that art, the *fine arts*, are mimetic…

**Julian**: …right…

**Joe**: …principally, and essentially, in that the things that you produce in art, bringing this back to the discussion, according to some pre-established design, that does not come from us. Not discounting the important role of human agency in that, in that God is using us as his agents, that we participate in that act, and that is important…

**Sean**: We provide…

**Joe**: …but that does not originate with us.

**Paul Z**: That is what I was saying earlier, that we do not create ourselves.

**Joe**: Right.

**Paul Z**: I think that what we see in Christianity – what Christ asks from us, what Christ *does* for us – is the awakening of something new in our lives…

**Mary**: Yes!

**Paul Z**: …and we recognize something – call it a mystery, not a mystery in terms of a puzzle that would need to be solved, but something that is deep within the soul, that has to be brought out, and concretized. As you said earlier, it has to be presented anew to the world. How many Madonna and Child paintings do we have to see in the world? – I mean, really? But every artist has a different way of presenting her, that is beautiful, that is true, that is good, that has unity to it. I happen to like Duccio, but someone else may like Raphael. They are still revealing something that is deep down in the soul and brought forward.

**Val**: First of all, I cannot believe that we are all still here. I saw Julian looking at his phone, wanting to make an intervention, and I thought, “We are all being cut off.” I am listening to this and I am wondering if – I am just throwing this out there – the categories we want are neither the ones of *mimesis*, nor of a pure self-expressionism, in the sense that we are free agents. I am wondering if a good word is (and I know that this is charged, in certain ways) *charismatic*. We are consecrating what we have, and there is something higher and mystical made to flow through it. I wonder if that is a category which is valid, and I am thinking…

**Paul Z**: You know, I think you are right.

**Val**: …I am thinking of the construction of the Temple narratives in, whatever it is, *Chronicles*. It uses language such as, “The metal workers were given the gift of knowing how to craft such and such, and the musicians were given skill, and so forth…”

**Paul Z**: But also, if we are talking about the same part of the biblical narratives, God does give indications of what He wants.

**Val**: Well sure.

**Paul Z**: With regard to the Temple, he says how large he wants it, the different proportions, *etc., etc.* But then he leaves it to the hands of the artisans – would it be too easy to say? – to recognize what needs to be done, in order to fulfill those divine commands.

**Julian**: …or to interpret.

**Paul Z**: …or to interpret. There is a vocation, we were talking earlier about personal mission, what we have been consecrated to do. There is a discernment of those charismatic gifts, the artist has to be able to interpret, to discern, what is – I want to say – helpful, useful.

**Sean**: This can be tied into what I was saying before. Catholic existentialism, which is not something that you normally would hear in connection with one another, but the idea the charism, one’s unique charism, one’s unique vocation, one’s unique calling, existentialism involves taking responsibility for one’s unique existence, and as a Catholic that consists partly in discerning what God is calling them to do, who God is calling them to be.

**Paul Z**: …who you really are.

**Joe**: I like the charism, but can I tell you what makes me a little bit nervous about that? It seems – this is just a thought – to border on fideism in the sense that, it seems that you can come to an understanding of art, let us say the fine arts, without Revelation, and bring the idea of a gift of the Holy Spirit, if that is what you mean by charism, into the definition of art…

**Val**: Oh, I see what you are saying!

**Joe**: …would seem to imply that you cannot understand the fine arts without some measure of Revelation.

**Val**: I don’t know that we are doing pure philosophy here. There has been all kinds of crossover. But that is a valid point, if one were doing just philosophy that definition would be excluded, but…

**Paul C**: Joe, you could even get something out of a broader sense of charism. I did this when Val was speaking, because what I had been thinking of was something prophetic, and not necessarily prophetic in the theological sense of the term. There is something which I felt like, Julian, I know your art and I have had minor experience of a poor recording of something really beautiful that you wrote, but it seems also like there is something more than the technical skill and the assembling, there is a gift which is not experienced as [unintelligible]. Socrates talks about this in the *Apology* when he is trying to deal with the issue of having had it put upon himself that he is the wisest man in Greece. He goes to the artists and he said, “What they make is magnificent, and they don’t entirely know how they did it.” There is something kind of prophetic in it…

**Joe**: Right.

**Paul C**: …which you do not have to literally call theologically charismatic.

**Paul Z**: [unintelligible] there is always a reasonableness.

**Julian**: The word I think of every day when I am working is *discernment*, I am praying for discernment. When I am in the position that Beethoven was when he had his nine solutions, I mean that is once I have discounted the other fifty for technical reasons, but you get to nine that are all technically perfectly valid, then you are leaving the realm of correct and incorrect, and you are facing the question of discernment.

**Joe**: Maybe if by charism you mean that gift or quality of discernment that allows you to produce the beautiful within that realm, once you have passed correct and incorrect, you could speak of that as gift I guess. If that is what you meant.

**Matt**: Can you pass out of that realm though? Is even that final change a matter, in some objective sense, in relation to making beauty?

**Julian**: The true touches of beauty in the end, I mean the marks of Mozart, Beethoven, Rachmaninov, those touches that make it beautiful – I would say *yes*, are beyond the realm of objectivity and technical correctness.

**Paul Z**: What is the definition of “beautiful”?

**Val**: [unintelligible exclamations of incredulity]

**Julian**: Well I will interpolate a definition from Duncan: At the end of his penultimate paragraph, “We will find God wherever with gentle urging the beautiful asks for realization.” So my definition of beauty is that, *beauty* is that which gently and urgently directs us to God.

**Paul Z**: But Beauty is also God. The transcendentals.

**Thomas**: This is interesting. I just remember, I was listening to a talk that this lady was giving about music, actually. She was taking about beauty, and she said that she had read this book on beauty, and the philosopher said – sort of like what you [Julian] said - that beauty is a thing that points to something higher than itself. So the human body, for example, is a very beautiful thing, because. Let us just take a nose, right? It breathes really well…

**Julian**: Speak for yourself.

**Thomas**: …Why does it do that? It does that so that I can get air in my lungs, and so that I have a better functioning body. It does that to help me be better as a whole. So, something that points to something higher. So, it all goes back to God, really.

**Julian**: Yes. So beauty and art direct us towards God, but they are not God. Although God does “embody” those attributes, beauty and art – I don’t know what philosophical problem I am running myself into here…

**Joe**: No, you are on the right track. Beauty in God is the same as the Divine Essence.

**Julian**: When I think of art, I think of art as having the function, and the practical function, of directing us towards God. And, in that sense, I think of art as being as mundane as a fork, in that, when you eat a feast, you don’t walk away from it – I mean, we are not going to walk from tonight, commenting to each other, “Val gave us the best forks with which I have ever eaten.” Hopefully that is not our take-away from tonight.

**Joe**: It may be true!

**Julian**: It may be true. But I do feel that that is the function of art, of the art that I am engaged with, at least.

**Mary**: And the artist is truly happy with that?

**Julian**: Yes.

**Mary**: Because, Paul says, the one who plants and the one who waters do not matter. If we are really in that position of giving, at such a selfless point…

**Sean**: The foundation of metaphysics is the insight or the experience that even in these beautiful forks, we are finding God in all things. \*(“Well, Socrates, it is like this, I think. This utensil, when well wrought, is beautiful, but absolutely considered it does not deserve to be regarded as beautiful in comparison to a mare and a maiden and all the beautiful things.” Plato, *Hippias Major*, 288e)

**Paul Z**: There is orderliness in nature and creation.

**Joe**: The difference between you and a fork is that… you are a rational agent. And a bit more dignity perhaps.

[General hilarity.]

**Val**: We talked about the *hierarchy* *of* *being* earlier, so we’re covered.

**Joe**: But, there is a much greater difference between us and God than there is between a fork and us.

**Val**: This is premature, I wasn’t meaning to get into this much material tonight, but one thing that I think it is important, in this context, to note, are the marks of the beautiful, as St. Thomas sets them forth. One of them, and the most elusive of definition, is radiance, *claritas*, which is an indefinable brilliance. I was planning to do a whole discussion on light, and the analogy of light, and brilliance, radiance. There is a tremendous little gem of an essay I found on the Internet. I couldn’t believe it, it was the best thing I ever read on this subject. It is like two pages long. Turns out, it is written by a cloistered sister from Guilford, a Dominican. And so I have a whole lecture planned, centered on that. My friend who is now ordained, Fr. Nathan of the SJCs gave me a paper that he wrote on light. So I think that that aspect puts us more in touch with the element of the mystical.

**Joe**: I think that that is the next place to go. I do think the definition of art that he [Gilson] sites is a nominal one, it is the first thing that we think of when we think of beauty, but to get to the heart of what beauty is, really, you need to get into those three aspects. That goes deeper into the matter. I think that is the next step.

**Mary**: Great discussion.

**Julian**: Well, we have now gone as long in the second half as we have in the first half. So, if there are any closing words… This is not my role, but I am just stepping into it.

**Joe**: Did you have an idea for a next reading on this topic?

**Val**: I was going to do *actual* Thomas.

**Joe**: I’d be in favor of that! I thought this was a great introduction.

**Val**: Oh good. I do have the next menu planned for next meeting.

**Julian**: Thank you very much, Val, and Paul.

**Val**: Thanks to all of you. I am just blown away.