

## **Veritas et Bonitas et Pulcritudo!**

{TRUTH, GOODNESS, & BEAUTY}

What is real? What is right? What is lovely?

Human beings ask these kinds of questions because we long for at least three things: truth, goodness, and beauty.

Prominent philosophers through the centuries have called these three cosmic values “transcendentals.” A **transcendental** refers to something that exists beyond the time-space-matter world. It is a universal reality that extends beyond our everyday sensory experiences and is thus considered nonphysical, immaterial, conceptual, or even spiritual. In philosophy, the transcendental relates to and seeks to describe the nature of reality or being. Therefore, one may think of these values as timeless universals and attributes of being.

[Truth, goodness, and beauty were discussed by the philosophers of the classical world (Greco-Roman society from about 500 BC to 500 AD), and] Christian civilization accommodated them as truths of general revelation and grounded them in the nature of the triune God.

For the famous Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, the world had genuine meaning and purpose. The cosmic values of truth (that which defines reality), goodness (that which fulfills its purpose), and beauty (that which is lovely) were objective in nature and knowable by the noble seeker. Since human beings had the internal capacities of logos (reason), ethos (morality), and pathos (emotion), these internal capacities corresponded to the cosmic values and brought forth human fulfillment:

- Logos corresponds to truth
- Ethos corresponds to goodness
- Pathos corresponds to beauty

According to scholar Stephen R. Turley, “Truth, goodness, and beauty are cosmic values that communicate divine meaning to the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic capacities of the human soul, which brings a balance in the soul, which, in turn, harmonizes the human person with divine meaning and purpose of the cosmos, which was considered the prerequisite to human flourishing.”

By the fifth century AD, those involved in paganism had been largely converted to Christianity. Christian philosophers and theologians [like Thomas Aquinas in the

thirteenth century] appropriated the truth of these cosmic values as not only truths of general revelation but also grounded them in the nature of the triune God. God doesn't *have* truth, goodness, and beauty; rather, God *is* truth, goodness, and beauty. We can state it this way:

All truth is God's truth.

All goodness is God's goodness.

All beauty is God's beauty.

When God created, he imbued the cosmos with truth, goodness, and beauty. Philosopher Peter Kreeft says, "Everything that exists is in some way true, good, and beautiful." And humans via the imago Dei (image of God) are able to *know* the truth, *desire* the good, and *love* the beautiful. The fall of humankind into sin disordered man's natural capacities but through the redemption found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ humans are brought back into a right relationship with God and with these revealed values.

Humans (as creatures) have been made to know and worship the triune God. [As we are taught in the Baltimore Catechism, ***the reason for man's existence is to know, love, and serve God in this world and be happy with Him in Heaven.***] And our present longing for truth, goodness, and beauty exists because these values reflect the ultimate source, which is the maximally perfect God. When we pursue truth, goodness, and beauty in this life and in this world, we are tracking the majesty of the Lord.

Excerpted from: <https://reasons.org/explore/blogs/reflections/the-3-transcendentals-truth-goodness-beauty>