THE UNIVERSITY
CONCOURSE
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The "role" of rock:
Beauty and truth in the not so fine arts

by Mark Fischer

"Young people know that rock has the beat of sexual intercourse."[1]—Allan Bloom

"The beat says 'do what you want to do.'"[2]—William Kirk Kilpatrick

"Rock music is the language of alienation, the means of self-stimulation emotionally and sexually, and an avenue of escape."[3]—Andrew Minto

Modern music does not have many supporters among social conservatives. It is blamed for a plethora of social ills, ranging from drug use and promiscuity to the demise of American education. And some of the criticism is well-deserved.

While outrageous rap and heavy metal "artists" grab headlines for songs about random violence and deviant sexuality, much damage is also visited upon the average teen by more "mainstream" artists, selling their gospel of self-indulgence, irresponsibility and new age unity through the medium of rock music. In the typical modern lyric, the world would be a better place if we all just followed our feelings.

These criticisms are all reflected in various books and articles of the above-quoted writers, all three of whom were concerned enough about modern music to focus their capable minds on attacking the subject. For these writers, however, it is not enough to criticize the particular lyrics, music or worldviews of certain artists; they take aim at the genre itself. For them, no good can come of rock music. The music itself is about uninhibited sexuality and selfism. To wed any other theme to rock music is to be untrue to its essence, or so the argument goes—an argument, interestingly enough, which is shared by the editors of *Rolling Stone* and other rock "purists."

Not only do I believe this argument is false; I believe it exposes a regrettable degree of musical ignorance.

I write as one who likes rock music. I have played in rock bands and have composed rock songs. But to present a fuller picture, I should say that I also love Mozart's Mass in C Major, Billie Holiday's version of "Dancing Cheek to Cheek" and Gershwin's "American in Paris."

That I list all of the above among

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Wherefore fine arts?

by Joanna K. M. Bratten

We are fortunate enough to belong to a university which, in accordance with the ideal of Christian humanism, strives to foster the development of the "whole person." There is the development of our minds through classes, lectures and discussions; there is religious formation through Mass, Eucharistic adoration and the spiritual support of the friars; there is the strengthening of our bodies through athletics. But what of our aesthetic and cultural formation—the fostering of our appreciation for beauty? This, I believe, is the role of the fine arts in human life. And, in my opinion, this aspect of the person's overall development is sadly neglected at FUS.

I do not mean to imply that the campus is bereft of any appreciation of art, but it seems that few realize the importance of the arts in our spiritual and intellectual formation. There is a tendency (especially among students) to regard them as just another form of amusement to be indulged in from time to time. Many still surround themselves with the

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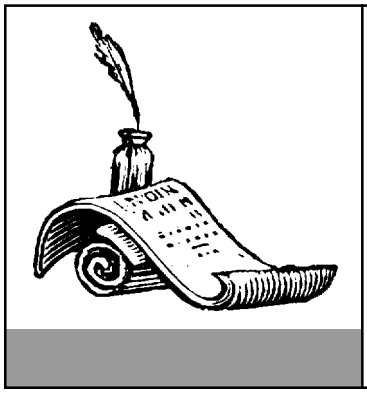
INSIDE:



EDITOR'S PAGE

What is a "real" Catholic education?

As an alumna, I find Dr. Crosby's argument for establishing a core curriculum at FUS extremely persuasive. I regret intensely the lack of it in my own education. In graduate school, I keenly felt my general ignorance in comparison with students from other Catholic liberal arts colleges—almost to the point of being embarrassed to propose myself as a candidate for an MA degree. I am therefore (in company with many friends and fellow alumni) all in favor of the changes proposed by Dr. Crosby.

However, that said, I also want to say that in the lively, campus-wide discussion generated by his article, I have heard two notions frequently voiced (or at least implied) by those on "my side" of the debate, which I think need criticizing: 1) the idea that education consists primarily in the transmission of a given body of knowledge, and 2) the claim that unless students are conversant with the "Great Books" of Western Civilization they have not received *any* real education, Catholic or otherwise.

These two points are obviously related—both betraying a tendency to conceive of the human mind as a mere receptacle of knowledge, rather than as a living, acting *agent*, needing to be first of all, not supplied with correct information, but *disciplined* and *trained* according to key principles. The aim of a university education, then, is not so much to make us familiar with Great Books, but rather, in Newman's words, to develop in us "the force, the steadiness, the comprehensiveness and the versatility of intellect, the command over our own powers, the instinctive just estimate of things as they pass before us,"* which are the fruit of rigorous training and noble influences. I grant gladly that this goal is usually achieved *through* studying Great Books, but only in part, and then not necessarily.

What is wanted, above all, for real education, is a mind open to Truth and a heart which *loves* Truth. From this it seems to follow that the most essential mission of a university is to cultivate *these* in her students. And in this respect, I am happy to say, my education at FUS was *superior by far* to that of my friends at "big name" schools. They might have come away from their four years with more knowledge, but they came away with less interest—with skepticism almost, and a jaded impression that intellectual cultivation was an exercise in irrelevance. If they have gone on in their studies, it has been strictly with an eye to professional training—medicine or law or what have you.

I, on the other hand, who entered FUS without a shadow of academic ambition, came away from her with a heart in love with Truth, a mind inflamed with longing to know more, and a will determined to fill the (huge) gaps remaining in my understanding. This invaluable gift, for which I never can give enough thanks, I attribute primarily to two things (besides some outstanding teachers and classes): 1) the vibrant, joyous religious atmosphere here, in which my faith flowered and flourished; and 2) encounters with great Catholic intellectual personalities, like Alice von Hildebrand and Tom Howard, who frequently visit the campus here.

And because of the singularly great importance of religious faith for the intellectual life, I will even be so bold as to proclaim my opinion that FUS has in some respects a distinct educational advantage over such admirable institutions as Christendom and St. Thomas Aquinas. Not (certainly) that I question for a moment either their genuine Catholicness or their academic excellence; rather, I say that the special openness and exuberance of the spirituality here, which comes to us through the charismatic renewal, is particularly conducive to the glad, energetic quest for Truth, and moreover, serves (somehow) to protect us from the intellectual snobbishness to which great academic institutions are sometimes prone.

In short, though crippled by serious deficiencies, which we do well to address and repair, I still say Franciscan gives her students in lavish abundance the "one thing necessary" for a Catholic university, namely, an intimate acquaintance with Truth, in the Person of Our Lord, without which all the academics in the world are mere dry bones.

Kathleen van Schaijik

* From the preface of *The Idea of a University (*p. xvi *standard edition)*

THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE
An Independent Journal of Opinion

Editorial Policy

The University Concourse is a bi-monthly, independent journal of opinion, put together by alumni and students of Franciscan University of Steubenville, and designed to encourage fruitful discourse among members of the University community. The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, nor those of the Franciscan TORs or other University officials.

We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends of the University, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of the University and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words. Articles must be in no later than Tuesday noon, one week prior to publication.

Contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" disk, either to the faculty office of Jules van Schaijik in Egan Hall, or to the van Schaijik home at 915 Belleview Blvd.; Steubenville, OH; 43952, or sent to e-mail address "TheConcourse@eworld.com".

Please include your full name, phone-number, and relation to the University.

We will consider printing submissions anonymously or under a pen-name, however, in general we wish to encourage open, "face to face" discussion. In either case, the editors require the full name and phone-number of the author of each opinion.

A perennially valid and Christian philosophy

Why the Church gives St. Thomas primacy of place in Catholic education

by Edy Morel de la Prada

IN PHILOSOPHY SYSTEMS COME AND SYSTEMS GO—MANY, MANY SYSTEMS. SO WHAT HAS MADE THE CHURCH, FROM AMONG ALL OF THEM, GIVE PREFERENCE TO THE METHOD AND DOCTRINE OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS? FOR, AS St. Thomas rightly says, "the goal of philosophy is not to know what philosophers have said but to know things as they really are."[1] Could it be that the Church has seen in St. Thomas' work the best realization of his own principle?

My attempt in this article is modest, but I think it essential to the discussion initiated by Rebecca Bratten in the February 13th issue of the *Concourse*; that is, to consider, in the first place and as the indispensable point of reference, what the Church has said on the principles and method (these rather than "system" are the terms the Church uses) of St. Thomas, and why. For to deal with philosophy in a Catholic university is to deal with philosophy in the mind of the Church. What is it? Is there a better or even best philosophy that can serve as a basis for the evaluation and assimilation of valid elements in other philosophies? Truth can be found in every system. What is essential is a sound perspective from which not merely to refute fallacies, but, very importantly, to assimilate what is valid in any system. Does St. Thomas provide a good—even the best—basis for this task?

It is important to keep in mind that the Church is not speaking primarily about St. Thomas as an authority, but rather about the way in which he does philosophy. Yet, to further clarify: my stance in this matter is not born of blind assent to Church statements, but of critical reflection, which has led me to see the great wisdom of the Church in promoting the principles and method of St. Thomas, along with a basic trust in her accumulated wisdom in speaking with respect to the acquisition of fundamental natural truths. For if the Church is truly, as John Paul II puts it, "the expert on man," then she must be an expert on the principles by which man can know truth.

In taking such a "Magisterial survey," one is faced truly with an "embarrassment of riches" in statements of praise and promotion, which, as we have pointed out, focus not on the man, but on the way he does philosophy. I have of course made a selection which I am sure is far from the best that could be made.

We could begin our reflection by considering an allocution of John Paul II, in which he considers *Aeterni Patris*, the Encyclical of Leo XIII subtitled, "On the restoration of Christian philosophy according to the method of St. Thomas Aquinas." Leo maintained in continuity with tradition the validity, and moreover the excellence, of a Christian philosophy. He held that Revelation in no way violated philosophical principles, but was rather the "friendly star" of philosophy. John Paul makes Leo's words his own, saying: "The recommendation of Leo is still valid: 'those who to the study of philosophy unite obedience to the Christian faith are philosophers indeed; for the splendor of the divine truth, received into the mind, helps the understanding and not only detracts in no wise from its dignity, but adds greatly to its nobility, keenness, and stability.'"[2]

Elsewhere, also referring to Leo, John Paul declares: "The immortal Pontiff recalled that the method, the principles and the teaching of Aquinas had, down the centuries, been specially favored not only by learned men but by the supreme teaching authority of the Church... If today also, he insisted, philosophical and theological reflection is not to rest on an 'unstable foundation' which would make it 'wavering and superficial'... it will have to draw inspiration from the 'golden wisdom' of St. Thomas... Now that a hundred years of the history of thought have passed we are able to appreciate how balanced and wise were these appraisals. With good reason, therefore, the Supreme Pontiffs who succeeded Leo XIII, and the Code of Canon Law itself ...have repeated them and made them their own."[3]

In the same paragraph, the Pope goes on to tie this reflection to the

objectives of the Second Vatican Council, saying, "The words of the Council are clear: the Fathers saw that it is fundamental for the adequate formation of the clergy and of Christian youth that it preserve a close link with the cultural heritage of the past, and in particular with the thought of St. Thomas; and that this in the long run, is a necessary condition for the longed-for renewal of the Church."

That's interesting: to say that for the renewal of the Church it is a necessary condition that the youth "preserve a close link ... particularly with the thought of St. Thomas." Yet in this the Pope would seem to be merely echoing John XXIII, who in the midst of the preparations for the Council he convened said, "but if all the things we desire so ardently are to come about the first thing necessary is to study the work of St. Thomas Aquinas carefully."[4] And while this may seem obvious, when popes, generation after generation, put something on the category of primacy or first thing, we should leave it there. The general crisis we currently experience in the Church can largely be traced to the unwillingness to do this.

John Paul II continues, "the reason why the philosophy of St. Thomas is pre-eminent is to be found in its realism and its objectivity: it is a philosophy of what is, not of what appears. What makes the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor so wonderfully apt to be the handmaid of faith is that it has gained possession of truths of the natural order, which have their origin in God the Creator, just as truths of the divine order, which have their source in God as revealing. This does not lessen the value of philosophy or unduly restrict its field of research; on the contrary, it allows it to develop in ways that human reason alone could not have discovered. Hence the Supreme Pontiff Pius XI... did not hesitate to declare: 'In honoring St. Thomas something greater is involved than the reputation of St. Thomas, and that is the authority of the teaching Church'..."[5]

Thomism... is never, in the mind of Thomas or of the Church, a closed system, but an open set of principles which allow one to approach and understand any aspect of reality

Lest it remain unclear to what kind of "honoring" he referred, two years later Pius XI directed that Pontifical universities impart to their students "the full and coherent synthesis of philosophy according to the method and the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas; in the light of his teaching, furthermore, the different systems of the other philosophers are to be examined and judged."[6] The Second Vatican Council continues this emphasis, directing that all priestly candidates (the future leaders of the Church) be trained on the patrimony of perennially valid philosophy.[7] For the definition of perennially valid philosophy the Council refers the reader to the Encyclical *Humani Generis*, where Pius XII substantially identifies it with—no surprise at this point—"the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor," saying that his philosophy is "singularly pre-eminent" in teaching students and in safeguarding "the genuine validity of human knowledge, the unshakable metaphysical principles of sufficient reason, causality, and finality, and finally the mind's ability to attain certain and unchangeable truth." [8]

Regarding what constitute the essential aspects of St. Thomas' thought, the Church allows much freedom to scholars, yet she has not remained silent on the matter. In 1914, with the Pope's blessing, she released a set of 24 theses, which while by no means exhaustive, "plainly contain the principles and major propositions of the Sacred Doctor,"[9] and are therefore a precious guide in evaluating the true Thomistic quality of different authors or works.

Let us finish where we started, with John Paul II, as he recalls that most essential characteristic of true Thomism, which is never, in the mind of Thomas or of the Church, a closed system, but an open set of principles which allow one to approach and understand any aspect of reality: *"The philosophy of St. Thomas deserves to be attentively studied and accepted with conviction by the youth of our day by reason of its spirit of openness and of universalism, characteristics which are hard to find in many trends of contemporary thought.* What is meant is an openness to the whole of reality in all its parts and dimensions, without either reducing reality or confining thought to particular forms or aspects (and without turning singular aspects into absolutes)...*The basis and source of this openness lie in the fact that the philosophy of St. Thomas is a philosophy of* being*, that is, of the "act of existing" whose transcendental value paves the most direct way to rise to the knowledge of subsisting Being and pure Act, namely to God.* On account of this we can even call this philosophy: the philosophy of the proclamation of being, a chant in praise of what exists...St. Thomas puts philosophy moving along lines set by this intuition, showing at the same time that only in this way does the intellect feel at ease (as it were "at home") and that, therefore, it can never abandon this way without abandoning itself."[10] In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II categorically asserts that St. Thomas, "continues, in fact, to be the *master of philosophical and theological universalism.*"[11] (All emphases in the originals).

In light of this unique standing, the Pope observes, "Is it to be feared that by favoring the philosophy of St. Thomas one will undermine the right to exist that is enjoyed by different cultures or hinder the progress of human thought? Such a fear would clearly be

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CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS

Commendations

I was very glad to receive the first issue of *the University Concourse*. A delightful publication and a much needed forum for discussion. As usual, Dr. Crosby has hit a line drive right over the center field fence. Also, I can tell by the other articles, especially van Schaijik's article on NFP and Bratten's reflection "To systematize or not to systematize" that this journal does not lack for courage to address the difficult questions.

I look forward to future issues.

Dr. Charles Fischer
Associate Professor of Psychology

Congratulations on your maiden issue! It looks as if you've launched a wise and worthy endeavor. Long may it prosper!

I particularly want to commend you for your statement of purpose, set out most ably on the Editor's Page; the invitation to honest and intelligent debate, conducted with charity, is a worthwhile pursuit. And in that irenic spirit might I take issue with a sentence you wrote? "Even the doctrines of our Faith, though given to the Church once and for all, were not given in finished form, but rather as 'seeds', so that our understanding of them has been emerging only gradually across centuries of Christian experience..." I think I understand what you mean here and I've no quarrel with it. But an implication survives its intended meaning, fed by an ambiguity you doubtless had not intended, which strikes me as unfortunate.

In the first place, what was given to the Church two millennia ago were not doctrines to be unpacked over time, but a Person to be encountered in time and at any time. Christ is not therefore any sort of *seed* whose growth we may chart gradually over the course of centuries, those of us privileged to live at the end of the 2nd millennium somehow better situated to interpret His message. Rather He is the Word whose enfleshment took place at a particular time and thus all time is intersected, all history suffused, with his Gracious Presence.

And, point two, to the extent His coming has vouchsafed certain doctrines which the Church holds in her memory, these are not understood in a better or richer or deeper way simply in virtue of one's having lived at a later date; to think that is to fall prey to that "chronological snobbery" C.S. Lewis warns against. St. Iranaeus, for example, who is rightly regarded as the Father of Western Theology, advanced an understanding of the Incarnation back in the 2nd century (see his stunning polemic against the Gnostics who contested the Event), which I don't think modern thought is likely to supersede any time soon. The same might be said of Augustine's psychology of conversion (see Book VIII of his *Confessions*). There are of course other examples I might cite. But the point of them all is to remind us, in humility, of numberless "dead Masters" whose accumulated wisdom provides the patrimony on which we, their grateful heirs, draw.

Once again, congratulations on what you've done and may the forum you've created flourish amid the University community.

Dr. Regis Martin
Associate Professor of Theology

The editors reply:

We are grateful for Dr. Martin's kind remarks, and for his notice of an ambiguity we had overlooked in the introductory editorial of our maiden issue.

We certainly did not mean to imply that the Divine Mysteries themselves *have been developing over time, nor that believers today are in a superior position regarding the possibility of communion with the Holy Trinity. Nevertheless, we defend our statement in so far as it referred to the* doctrines *of the Church. Here we claim the authority of Cardinal Newman's theory of the development of doctrine. Consider the following famous passage from his* Oxford University Sermons, *regarding the "history of the formation of any Catholic dogma:"*

"What a remarkable sight it is...to see how the great idea takes hold of a thousand minds by its living force...and grows in them, and at length is born through them, perhaps in a long course of years, and even successive generations; so that the doctrine may rather be said to use the minds of Christians, than to be used by them. Wonderful it is to see with what effort, hesitation, suspense, interruption,—with how many swayings to the right and to the left—with how many reverses, yet with what certainty of advance, with what precision in its march, and with what ultimate completeness, it has been evolved; till the whole truth 'self-balanced on its centre hung,' part answering to part, one, absolute, integral, indissoluble, while the world lasts! Wonderful, to see how heresy has but thrown that idea into fresh forms, and drawn out from it farther developments, with an exuberance which exceeded all questioning, and a harmony which baffled all criticism...And this world of thought is the expansion of a few words, uttered, as if casually, by the fishermen of Galilee."[*]

Not (of course) that any one of us, subjectively speaking, is more capable of religiously grasping *the truths of the Faith than were the early Christians, but that as a whole the Church's understanding of the "idea" of Christianity has been developing over time. In at least one sense, then, today's believers* are *in a privileged position (and required to bear its attendant responsibilities) precisely* because *we are the heirs of 20 centuries of accumulated Christian wisdom.*

[*] p.317 of the standard edition

Core Curriculum

Regarding Dr. John Crosby's article: "Shouldn't we have a real core curriculum at Franciscan University?" published in the first issue of the *Concourse*:

Dr. Crosby's listing of specific courses or numbers of courses without categorizing within the areas of knowledge of our Core Program Requirements serves to mislead the reader. The vast majority of our courses have been classified, with faculty approval, as Communications, Humanities, Natural Science, Social Science, or Theology core.

A sequence of courses in an academic discipline is based upon published pre-requisites for different courses. The need for course pre-requisites is an academic decision which has been made by the faculty of each academic department. Hopefully, the faculty of an academic department are cognizant of the syllabi for courses which are offered by that department and do not have to rely on the contents of specific books.

In our *Philosophy of the Curriculum*, our Professors are charged to "lead their students in developing a sense of the unity of knowledge" and to be examples of those "who practice just and balanced judgment in all their teaching, writing, and professional practice." Teachers can bring their life experiences to the classroom to show the way for the students. Yet, should we not expect students to assume some of the responsibility for, and ownership of, their learning?

In the "Knowledge Its Own End" chapter of *The Idea of a University*, Cardinal Newman writes: "It is a great point then to enlarge the range of studies which a University professes, even for the sake of students; and, though they cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle." This, I suppose, tells us that classes in a specific subject are but a part of a liberal education. The interactions among students, faculty, and advisors are an important part of this education.

The comparison of the feelings or thoughts of a professional, with fifteen years of life experience, with those who have just completed a course of study can lead to false conclusions. I too had a "bunch of courses," although very specific, as part of my general degree requirements. Not until I was relieved of the concern to pass certain courses did I begin to see the relationships among the branches of knowledge. Forty years later, I still stumble across these relationships as I live my life and practice my profession.

Changes in our Core Program Requirements were not, as Dr. Crosby assumes, "strongly conditioned by the trends" of 1974. The changes were adopted by the faculty after some experimentation and much debate. Since then, the requirements have been modified in an effort to correct problems. The hope (fulfilled or not) was to have the students become exposed to different areas of knowledge. They then could pursue areas of interest outside their major concentration, through electives.

Perhaps we should not hastily deduce that the common denominator of our students and alumni is a lack of coherence in the general education at Franciscan University. Is it not the University's Mission Statement that identifies us as being Franciscan and Catholic? Do we not want our students to remember their entire University experience rather than an emphasis on a "grateful recognition that the program of general education as a whole has been a decisive learning experience?"

Dr. R.J. Convery
Professor of Chemistry
(with contributions from
Dr. M.A. Sunyoger
Assistant Professor of English)

I just read with great delight Dr. Crosby's diagnosis of our current general education (in the February 13 issue of the *Concourse*) and want to reply forthwith.

It is inconceivable to me that a university can be a community of scholars without some common body of literature to discuss. An overly intellectually disparate group of people has too little in common to be called an intellectual community. Absent some common core of education, how can an intellectual environment be created outside the classroom, where one subject enlightens another, so that, to paraphrase John Paul II, our students might make sense to each other?

Most of our more recent alumni certainly do not point to some core of knowledge, or Catholic intellectual culture, that has left an indelible print upon their minds or has sharpened their critical thinking on morals and ethics, or on any other issue for that matter. (Notable exceptions are Humanities and Catholic Culture grads.) Noteworthy, too, is that I have heard from alumni who graduated before the curriculum change about how their liberal arts education formed their minds, gave them a competitive edge in their professions, prepared them to grapple with the myriad of challenges they faced in the modern world, and paved the way for a life-long education. Many of them are deeply grateful for the liberal arts education they received at Franciscan University.

I attended an experimental liberal arts school in the University of Oklahoma system, where a rigorous core of interdisciplinary studies was required of *every* student, who thus received an education in certain fundamentals of science, math, literature, history, philosophy, physical education, the fine arts, and so forth. While impoverished by its secular nature, every year I am more appreciative of that education.

Catholic education ought to be more than learning a profession. It ought to develop a life of the mind that asks questions such as, "Why is there something and not nothing? Who is man? What is he for? And, what is his end?" It ought to help him see what is true and beautiful in life, teach his soul to soar when it encounters such beauty, and impel him to give to humanity more of what is beautiful, true, and eternal. A

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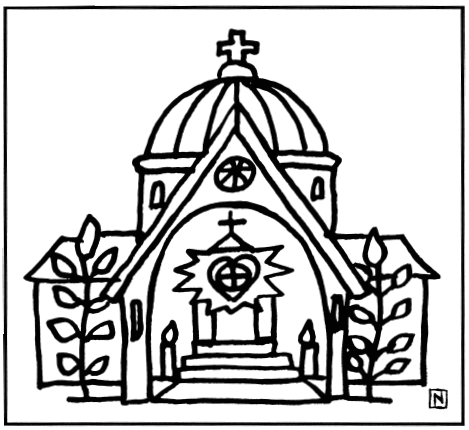
The aesthetics of architecture

by Mary McElwee

IN SEEKING RESPITE FROM THE PRACTICAL CONCERNS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN MODERN AMERICA, WE OFTEN TURN TO BEAUTIFUL MUSIC OR GOOD LITERATURE; WE MAY GO FOR A BRIEF DRIVE IN THE COUNTRY, REALIZING PERHAPS UNCONsciously that beauty refreshes the soul. Reflection on our normal surroundings, however, causes us to realize that much of what surrounds us today is frighteningly lacking in beauty—more now, in fact, than in any previous age.

Probably the most obvious of these defects in aesthetic quality manifests itself in modern architecture. Although we may not realize how much we are affected by it, I think few would disagree that something vital has been lost since the days when, in spite of its essentially practical nature, architecture (along with the other arts) was a way for man to exercise his participation in the Divine Nature, through the creation of beautiful things. Today we live with the legacy of a cultural period devoted to utilitarian concerns, which reduced architecture to its purely practical functions. The unfortunate result of this movement is all too plainly exemplified in the omnipresent hulking blocks of concrete, almost unworthy of being called "architecture," to which we in America have become accustomed.

The main argument offered on behalf of modern architecture is (not surprisingly) a utilitarian one. Modernists argue that a church, for example, built in modern style serves the same purpose as one built in the Gothic or Baroque style, in addition to being built more simply and cheaply, from easily obtainable materials and according to modern safety standards. And certainly it is in some ways true that the two serve the same purpose. But architecture should not be exclusively about function; it should also take into account *meaning* and *beauty*. The architects of old seemed



Artwork by Daniel Nichols

to have a much better sense of this; their churches "functioned" perfectly, and at the same time pleased the senses and reflected the structures of the Faith. For example, the oldest churches are built on what is called the "Latin cross plan:" the sanctuary forms the head of the cross, the long center aisle the foot, and the cross-section which until recently held the communion rail formed the two arms. In addition, the oldest churches were built in such a way that the altar always faced east, the direction from which was anticipated the second coming of the Son of God.

Churches are not the only instances of architecture in which the appearance of a building should conform to high aesthetic standards; anything which man builds should give credit not only to his rational nature but also to his aesthetic sensibility. Today we see not only ugly churches, but ugly apartment buildings and stores, places of business and social interaction. Many times these are disturbingly reminiscent of the bleak, monstrous constructions of the communist governments in Eastern Europe.

If such things were to be found only in the poorest of communities, we might find economic excuse for their appearance, but architecture designed strictly for utilitarian purposes without regard to beauty has become the norm for modern society at every level.

Here at the University, we are in the unfortunate predicament of having been left with many buildings which were built in just the utilitarian period of which I previously spoke. Attempts at simplicity, not only in the structures of the dormitories but also of the J. C. Williams Center, the classroom buildings, and the chapel, resulted in simplicity only insofar as these buildings are sadly lacking in style and beauty. Our task, however, is not to criticize the mistakes of a previous age, especially when nothing can be done now to remedy those mistakes. Rather, we must try to ensure that the same mistakes are not made again; we must do all we can to promote architecture that will give glory to God by manifesting the abilities of man to attain to beauty.

Already there is cause for hope in the fact that newer buildings are great improvements over the old—note, for instance, the John Paul II Library and the Finnegan Fieldhouse; and certainly the Portiuncula chapel is one of the most charming aspects of the campus. Also, good landscaping has made our surroundings much more pleasant.

These improvements are a good sign, despite the unfortuate fact that the more pleasing developments in modern architecture are clearly originating in secular society rather than in the efforts of any religious organizations. We see skyscrapers which, while perhaps unpleasant in other respects, at least are

not ugly. Shopping centers with a quaint, pleasant appearance arise amid seas of concrete. Yet the construction of churches, those buildings which should be the most beautiful, lags far behind.

One question we moderns need to ask ourselves is this: Does beauty really cost so much?

Perhaps the answer lies in the past. After all, for thousands of years up until the last century, men were building structures which not only served man's needs but also pleased the eye, while they refreshed the soul. As members of the Church and people who can see and appreciate things not of this world, it is our task not only to bring God to our fellow-men but also to raise ourselves and others to higher levels of awareness and spirituality. Should we not therefore do all that we can to bring to the world all that is good, including beauty?

Mary McElwee is a senior majoring in Classics

Rock

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my musical tastes is not to say that I ascribe to the school of aesthetic equivalence. Certain readers will no doubt breathe easier when I say that I believe the music of Mozart, Beethoven and Bach exhibits a level of beauty and a sophistication of composition far above any music bearing the tag "modern." But to acknowledge this does not end the discussion; it begins it.

Rock music is admittedly a youthful genre. It is often energetic. It can be driving and emotional. But it can also be fun, joyful, sad or thoughtful. It is certainly not as emotionally limited as many of its critics contend.

One of these critics, Allan Bloom, bluntly asserts that the beat of rock is sex. If this is true, I must confess to having often utterly missed the message. Bloom insists that youth know this to be true. I insist that youth know this to be false. Such statements are easily made in the abstract, as a way of winning debating points, but they are difficult to sustain when actual music is examined.

Surely, if Bloom pleased, he could have restricted his condemnation to the likes of the Rolling Stones, Madonna and 2 Live Crew. Clearly rock and sex are inextricably linked by such artists. But consider the following sample: Chicago's "Saturday in the Park," with its happy melody, light groove and supporting brass section; U2's "Pride," a driving, guitar-dominated song about Martin Luther King; Kansas' "The Wall," a haunting rock anthem about spiritual searching; and Billy Joel's "Piano Man," a realist piano ballad about an assortment of individuals holding onto life in a bar. These writers all used the rock genre to paint a picture, to evoke an emotion, and to express an idea. That is to say, they are artists. And as artists, the more appropriate their musical backdrop is to their ideas, the more they succeed. I believe they all succeeded, and that countless others have as well. Anyone who listens to such songs and hears only "sex" might ask himself whether he judges honestly, or rather prejudicially—allowing a general theory to overwhelm his experience of the music.

William Kilpatrick rejects Bloom's Freudian reductionism as too simplistic. In an attempt to be nuanced, Kilpatrick distinguishes among various classifications of modern music. Ro*ck* music (which he condemns), he says, can be recognized by its heavy, overbearing beat. Thus, for Kilpatrick, harmless "popular music" seems to become dangerous "rock music" when the decibel level of the bass and snare drums reach a certain level.

In any case, rock music can do no good for Kilpatrick, who claims that anyone who thinks it can be used to express a variety of healthy ideas simply misunderstands its nature. As he sees it, the music is its own message, and that message is self-gratification. So much for nuance. With this McLuhan-like statement (i.e. the medium *is* the message), Kilpatrick concludes that the genre cannot be made respectable. But Kilpatrick reaches this conclusion by limiting his analysis to artists I would classify as vulgar and dehumanizing—such as N.W.A., Van Halen, W.A.S.P., Mötley Crüe and Prince—as if such artists represent all that rock has to offer.

I suppose that for those who are justifiably angered by the rock culture in general, it is easier to "blame the beat" than to take up difficult musical and philosophical questions.

I suppose that for those who are justifiably angered by the rock culture in general, it is easier to "blame the beat" than to take up difficult musical and philosophical questions. The beat is sex and the beat is narcissism are the answers Bloom and Kilpatrick give. How do they know this? It is self-evident. No discussion.

To his credit, Professor Minto parts company with Bloom and Kilpatrick in offering some genuine musical analysis for his readers. He rightly identifies the Negro spiritual as an early antecedent of rock music. Minto, however, views the Negro spiritual as a variation of the work song, where "the tempo and beat no longer expressed the joy of fruitful labor but the misery and alienation of slavery."[4] According to Minto, the Negro spiritual eventually gave way to the Blues, which focused on despair, and advanced the trend of marginalization and alienation. The succession continued through Jazz, Swing, Rock 'n Roll, and Rock, with

themes of alienation and self-gratification passed along at each stage, presumably in greater doses.

While Minto made a laudable attempt at making sense out of his distaste for modern musical trends (indeed, much of his *cultural* criticism is valid), his analysis still leaves much to be desired. Modern American music *is* essentially black music. Its rich rhythmic flavor flows from the source Minto tried to identify. But to marginalize its emotional range by limiting it to themes of alienation and self-gratification drastically underrates black culture.

The Negro spiritual, in a Psalm-like fashion, offered hope amidst terrible oppression. This music was honest; it refused to sugar-coat the realities of human existence—there was hope, but there was also pain for the time being. This musical honesty was transferred to the Blues. The themes explored by the Blues greats—brokenness, loves lost, oppression—do often depict despair and alienation. Yet unlike much of today's literary, musical and popular culture, the Blues did not celebrate decadence and faithlessness. It lamented them. The traditional blues artist recognized that the world can be better; that bad choices have been made, and that better choices can be made. Within temporary despair, is permanent hope. This is not escapism; it is exactly the opposite.

Modern music, at its best, borrows the musical honesty of these genres, and thereby serves a valuable cultural purpose. But if we accept Minto's argument, we are forced to reject the great American tradition of gospel music, the richness and variety of American jazz and swing, and even, dare I say, the emotional power of rock, which when joined to appropriate themes, portrays them with particular power and convincingness.

Amy Grant's "Lead Me On" project is an example of an artistic and positive use of the rock genre. I am not a big fan of Grant, whose latest work consists of mediocre dance pop music, lacking in substance. "Lead Me On," however, probes questions of young faith, sexual temptation, spiritual pride, marital love, and courage under oppression—in a manner that takes these questions seriously and provokes reflection. The project is musically diverse, including delicate ballads, traditional rock, and hints of the blues and country. The musical backdrop accentuates the questions raised in Grant's lyrics, so that the music and lyrics work as a unified whole. Nothing in the project suggests Dionysian sexual indulgence or self-gratification; instead it suggests a thoughtful artist's treatment of challenging issues.

As an aside, I note that many critics of "Christian Rock," including Minto, argue that one cannot justify "using" such a inherently perverse genre to "evangelize" non-Christians (Minto compares the notion of using "Christian Rock" in evangelizing adolescents to the hypothetical use of "Christian Pornography" to evangelize those in the pornography industry). Putting aside the assumption that rock is somehow inherently destructive, I reject the notion that I, as an artist, am merely using a musical genre as a tool or prop in winning converts. When an artist has this viewpoint, as a multitude of contemporary Christian artists undoubtedly do, their art becomes unduly self-conscious and contrived. It ceases to be art and becomes a sort of gospel-tract set to an awkward and often inappropriate musical background. Thus, I believe such critics miss "the point" of music. I justify my musical writing not by its evangelical usefulness, but by its merit as an authentic artistic expression.

All of this is not to say that the modern genres cannot be abused. They can and they are. More than at any time in history, music which can only be described as ugly and degrading has obtained a large measure of popularity. Rhythm tracks that overwhelm all melodic structure; throbbing electric guitars that rob all nuance from composition; and vulgar lyrics joined to shrill and screaming voices—this is becoming standard fare in mainstream culture. But none of this reflects on the *idiom* of rock music—as if something in the structure of the idiom itself makes perversion inevitable. These are artistic problems; bad art; art created only to shock and disturb. Nor is this problem confined to the musical realm. Modern pictorial art, movies, literature and television are all infected with this decadence—a decadence with philosophical roots which are beyond the scope of this article.

That a musical idiom can be abused is not to say that the idiom itself is abusive. I find much of modern music, from Jazz and Blues through Rock, quite refreshing. When done well, they provide a unique medium for exploring a multitude of themes—themes which involve life in all its fullness, and which could not (perhaps) be adequately expressed in other genres. While modern music may not give expression to the aspirations of sacred music or the exquisiteness of classical, it has a way of expressing life in its everyday manifestations. The sturdiness of friendship; the pain of separation and loneliness; the elation of young love; even the undulations of one's spiritual search—these are the raw materials of modern music at its best. Critics such as Bloom, Kilpatrick and Minto are surely misguided in their attacks on those who faithfully and artistically explore such themes through the idiom of rock music.

Mark Fischer is an alumnus of the class of '89 and Contributing Editor of the Concourse.

[1] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 1987, p. 73.

[2] William Kirk Kilpatrick, *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*, 1983 ed., p.182.

[3] Andrew Minto, "Rock Music: An Ethical Evaluation" (*Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, April 1990).

[4] Andrew Minto, "Is 'Christian Rock a Contradiction?'" (Ibid) .

Fine Arts

Continued from page 1

"art" of modern pop-culture. Rather than allowing themselves to be formed and inspired by the great music, drama, poetry and artwork of the past several centuries, they choose to wallow in the mediocrity of the music, TV programs, and movies with which society has bombarded us for the past fifty or sixty years. These forms of "art" contribute little to, and often detract from, the overall formation of the person; they offer no real inspiration, solace, or even pure aesthetic pleasure; much less do they bring us closer to what we, as humans made in the image and likeness of God, are intended to be.

Again, I do not claim there is *no* appreciation of fine arts on our campus. The large majority of the students here are quite aware that the music of Mozart or Brahms is indescribably beautiful, that the poetry or drama of Browning and Shakespeare is noble beyond description, that Rembrandt's works infinitely surpass those of Andy Warhol or other such artists. However, it seems that most do not allow what they know to become for them an "artistic creed," so to speak; they do not surround themselves with what they readily acknowledge to be superior to the "art" of pop culture.

Where does the fault lie? Do the students not develop as full an appreciation of the arts as they might because the University does not provide enough opportunity for them to experience the arts? Perhaps. It could also be that the students do not make an effort to support the arts on campus so that, in consequence, artistic events are made less available. This seems to be a rather vicious cycle, and who can say where it begins?

A particularly telling instance of the underdevelopment of the arts here is the fact that the majority of new students each year are not aware that the University has a theater, a chamber orchestra, or even an Art Department. When artistic events are held—whether a concert, lecture, poetry reading or theatrical production—attendance is sadly low, and generally comprised mainly of faculty, staff and their families.

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Still more discouraging is the tendency among many students to inappropriately moralize their experience of the arts. For example, a number of individuals found Anathan Theater's production of Dürrenmatt's *The Visit of the Old Lady* last year to be offensive and inappropriate for a Christian university, because it contained some indecorous language and made reference to a case of premarital sex. Although the overall message of the play was highly moral (an indictment of materialism and greed), the immoral elements—artistically placed in juxtaposition with other elements, in order to highlight the truth being presented—were commented upon more than was the overall message.

In a more recent instance, I heard of students complaining about posters promoting an art lecture, because they featured a photograph of a nude sculpture, i.e. Donatello's *David*. Some went so far as to tear the posters down, calling them offensive. Such incidents are discouraging, and I dislike dwelling upon them, since they are not, I am thankful to say, the norm. Nevertheless they are prevalent enough that some correction of understanding might be well placed.

How should a Christian approach the arts, with what expectations?

First of all, we cannot expect art to always explicitly represent Christian morality, much less the doctrines of the Church. We must take the work of art as simply that—a work of art—not a profession of faith. A work of art is to be judged primarily according to its aesthetic value, and be permitted to speak for itself. With this in mind we must not too quickly dismiss a given work because it may somehow portray an idea or way of life which is less moral or less lovely than the Christian ideal.

True art presents a unity; it brings some kind of order where there was hitherto chaos. In order to do this, the artist sometimes finds it necessary to portray disorder, perhaps downright evil. We would not ask Milton to extract Lucifer from *Paradise Lost*, nor would we want to see *Richard III* without Richard. If a work of art "succeeds" as such, it is because that which is true and beautiful in it overcomes that which is hideous. If a play ends "badly"—if that which is "good" seems overcome by that which is "evil"—this is not necessarily an attempt on the artist's part to prove something contrary to our Faith. Rather, it may be something like an opportunity for us to deepen our awareness of the tragedy of the human condition. "Bad endings" happen in real life all the time. If we cannot deal with them in fiction, how will we ever learn to deal with them in fact?

The Christian, then, should allow authentic art to provide him with a clearer vision of that Source of all beauty and all truth, namely, our Creator. Of all man's works, perhaps it is art which best provides a glimpse—however slight and fleeting—into the beatific vision. The beauty and order of Bach's *Magnificat*, the sublime exuberance of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, even the power of the opening movements of Orff's *Carmina Burana* are all echoes of a much higher beauty, more perfect joy and an infinitely

greater power. The great art of the past centuries, and even that which is still created today, can provide us with a motivation, desire and enthusiasm to forge onward through the trials of temporal life, and can give us a hope of the infinite beauty in the world to come.

So, what then is the role of art for us, as students at a Catholic university who are constantly striving to better ourselves? We should make a concerted effort to support artistic events sponsored by the University, and immerse ourselves in all art which is truly good and beautiful, and which speaks to us of our eternal and transcendent home.

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Conversations

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Catholic education should give *every* student a lifelong appreciation for history, philosophy, music, art, literature, theology, science, business indeed that whole host of human endeavors. A grounding in "the fundamentals" is so valuable because the fundamentals are eternal. Unlike this or that technique which comes and goes, fundamental truth increases in value because it forms a unified foundation for a full and happy life in Him who is Truth, Jesus Christ.

Jim Fox
Executive Director
of University Relations

The views the author here expresses are his own, and are not necessarily shared by the University.

NFP

It seems the *Concourse* will be a journal truly brave and honest when we note that in the first issue the editor tackled one of the hottest topics not only in the Church, but the world itself: birth control and married chastity.

I, too, had read the interview referred to by Mrs. van Schaijik, wherein a Catholic OB/GYN physician indirectly promoted a "providentialist" approach to family life—meaning the absence of all forms of planning, including Natural Family Planning. Mrs. van Schaijik's dissection of this physician's erroneous insinuation (that "providentialism" should be normative for Catholics) was intellectually satisfying and yet emotionally sobering, as one realized that God's beautiful gift of a legitimate, natural and scientifically sound family planning method is being denigrated because one man looks at another and assesses him to be less holy, thus concluding that what the Holy Catholic Church has blessed and promoted (NFP), is not up to producing the true saint. Mrs. van Schaijik was astute in warning us all against a spirit of judgment.

In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, on the question of regulating births and married love, John Paul II writes: "responsible parenthood is the necessary condition for human love, and it is also the necessary condition for authentic conjugal love, because love cannot be irresponsible. Its beauty is the fruit of responsibility. When love is truly responsible, it is also truly free." The Pope, along with his predecessor, Paul VI, applauds the advances in science that have revealed to mankind a more precise indication of a woman's fertility. I make the supposition that when lived as taught by our Mother Church (difficult, yet very fruitful) NFP assists the married couple in developing a conjugal love that is responsible and chaste, and allows us to hold ourselves in dominion over creative urges, seeking God's will, making adult decisions and answering to Him alone for those decisions. (Please note: seeking His will, in a spirit of generosity, whether it is to have three children or to have ten.)

I hope that young married couples, and those planning to wed, will be taught the true teachings of the Church. Likewise it would be my wish that priests, when sought advice by an older couple truly weighed down physically and emotionally by their living offspring, fearing another pregnancy, would possess the courage and love to voice not the easy avenue of artificial contraception, but the only morally acceptable and effective means of birth regulation, Natural Family Planning. Thank you, dear Heavenly Father, for this gift at this time in the Church!

My expressed thanks to Mrs. van Schaijik and the *Concourse* for initiating this discussion.

Susan Fischer
Class of '84

Susan (Creel) Fischer and and her husband John (class of '83) live in Steubenville with their four children.

I just received a copy of *the University Concourse* in my box at work and read Kathleen van Schaijik's outstanding article: "NFP, by it itself, does not compromise the married vocation." She addressed an attitude I have been aware of for some time, although I am single and thus not involved with NFP.

I think NFP is a God-sent method for many families, and while I too admire those who throw caution to the wind and abandon themselves to Divine Providence, I also believe that life is a *cooperative* process between God and us, and that this is an area where we do indeed "work out our salvation in fear and trembling."

Carole Brown
MA Theology program

Thomism

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groundless because the methodological principle invoked above implies that whatever is real has its source in the "act of existing;" and because the perennial philosophy, by reason of that principle, can claim in advance, so to speak, all that is true in regard to reality."[12]

Some voices today (among whom perhaps Miss Bratten finds herself), in the name of moderation, would make the philosophy the Church has given pre-eminence to, at most, one among equals. One advocating primacy for St. Thomas is made to be an "extreme conservative," and thus the Church, who confirms and promotes this primacy, is, oddly, made to appear as an intruder in the philosophical discussion. But to make something the Church has made primary merely one among equals, is not moderation.

And as to whether there is a Christian Philosophy: the Church's mind—and the minds of many Catholic philosophers (see for ex., *La Filosofia Cristiana*, by Luigi Bogliolo, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995)—appears quite clear, in spite of the current controversy,[13] and so I do not think it is legitimate to close the debate on the contrary side.

The Church does not promote what She does not love, and She does not love as "pre-eminent" what She does not know very well. I trust the Church's love for St. Thomas. Franciscan University should not fear to give his principles and method the preference the Church gives them. If FUS is to live up to its reputation of being the best Catholic University anywhere,[14] she ought to give her students what John Paul II explicitly calls "the best philosophy,"[15] which "can and should be followed and updated without betraying its spirit and fundamental principles."[16] FUS should not fear to follow he whom Paul VI called "the Master of thinking well."

In short, what should FUS give St. Thomas? What the Church gives him: preference which is not exclusivism, for were it so, it would be the very negation of Thomism.

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[1] *De caelo et mundo*, I, 22
[2] John Paul II, allocution *The Method and Doctrine of St. Thomas in Dialogue with Modern Culture*, *LOR*, Oct. 20, 1980, pp.9-11, no.4
[3] John Paul II, *allocution Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our Times*, *LOR*, Dec. 17, 1979, pp.6-8, no.5
[4] Allocution, September 18, 1960
[5] *Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas...*, no.8 (cf., Encyclical *Studiorum Ducem*, June 29, 1923)
[6] *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, May 24, 1931
[7] *Optatam Totius*, no.15
[8] Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, esp. nos. 48-50
[9] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1914, pp.383-386
[10] *Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas...*, no. 6
[11] p.31
[12] *Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas...*, no.7
[13] For an overview of this widespread controversy, see Ronda Chervin and Eugene Kavana's *Love of Wisdom*, (Ignatius Press, 1988) esp.335-337 and 359-367
[14] Cf. John Cardinal Connor's address at the Baccalaureate Mass in May, 1993 at Franciscan University
[15] Oct. 20, 1980, pp.9-11, no.4
[16] Ibid., no.6

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