12 Bonaventure

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We begin with an image. One of the most profound visual statements of the medieval Catholic educational ideal—namely, the integration of the disciplines of human wisdom in the light of the divine Wisdom incarnate—is portrayed in the tympanum over the right door to the main entrance of the Cathedral of Our Lady in the city of Chartres, France.

Chartres was the sight of a tremendous intellectual renaissance in the twelfth century, which witnessed not only the construction of this magnificent cathedral, but also the founding of a remarkable academic institution, the Cathedral school. This was an institution that brought together in one place for research and teaching many of the best and wisest scholars of the day, an institution which would serve as a model for the creation and development of that amazing medieval invention, the *university*.

For the great scholars and visionaries at Chartres, their challenge was to create an educational framework in which the disciplines of human wisdom might be married to the revelation of divine Wisdom in the person of Jesus Christ. This portal sculpture is an artistic expression of precisely that intellectual vision.

If you do an online search for an image of "the seven liberal arts and the western portal at Chartres," you will find several good photographs of the tympanum, some of which have the characters labeled. In the middle, you will see the famous *Sedes Sapientae*, or holy "Seat of Wisdom." Surrounding it in the archivolts are personifications of the seven liberal arts: on the bottom right, *grammar*, who is teaching two boys to write; moving then to the bottom left, we find *dialectic*, in whose right hand is a flower and in whose left hand is the head of a barking dog; proceeding around clockwise, we find *rhetoric*,

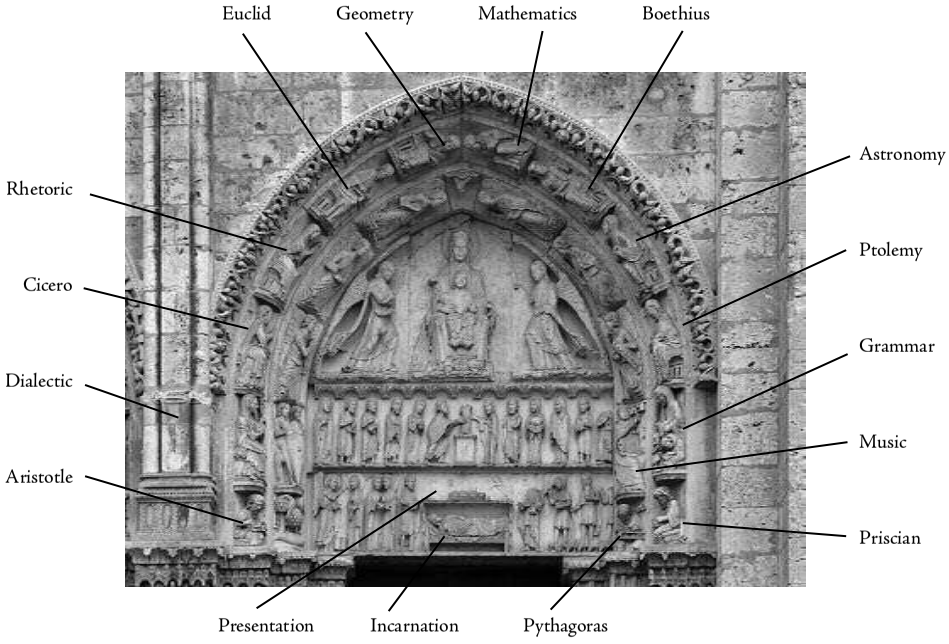

Image 12-1. Chartres-West, Right Tympanum: incarnation of Christ; the seven Liberal Arts. Source: Wikimedia Commons. Photo by Edelseider on Flickr.

who is pictured proclaiming a speech; *geometry*, who is shown writing figures on a tablet; *arithmetic*, whose attributes have been effaced over the centuries, so no one is sure what she is doing; *astronomy*, who is gazing up at the sky; and finally, moving to the inner archivolt, *music*, who is playing two instruments: the twelve-stringed harp and some bells. Underneath each of the Arts is a representation of the thinker classically associated with that discipline: Priscian for grammar, Aristotle for dialectic, Cicero for rhetoric, Euclid for geometry, Boethius for arithmetic, Ptolemy for astronomy, and most likely Pythagoras for music, about whom Cassiodorus had related the story that he had "invented the principles of this discipline from the sound of bells and the percussive extension of chords."

Here at Chartres, we see in concrete, visible form the artistic record of an attempt to integrate human wisdom, as exemplified by its instruments—namely, the seven liberal arts—with Wisdom incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. The visual movement of the image goes in both directions. The arts and disciplines of human wisdom are seen as a preparation for an increased understanding of faith: they surround and support the image of Wisdom Incarnate in the center. By the same token, the Seat of Wisdom is pictured at the center as both the source and summit of all human wisdom. Mary sits at the center of the arts as a paradigm—as the "Seat of Wisdom"—because she is a model of one who obediently responded to God's word, thus giving birth (in her case, literally) to God's Wisdom Incarnate.

This point is emphasized in the two friezes below, both of which illustrate the events of the Christ's birth. In the bottom frieze (reading from left to right), we see the Annunciation, the Visitation, and in the middle, the birth of Christ, with the angel leading the shepherds in from the right, sheep in tow. In the top frieze, we see Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus at the altar in the Temple. If you look closely, you'll see that, unfortunately, likely due to violence done to the cathedral during the French Revolution, Christ is missing his head.

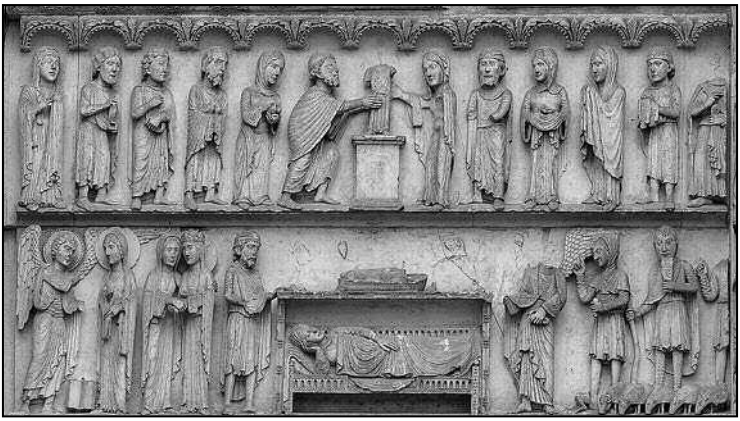

Image 12-2. Chartres-West, Right Tympanum, detail. Source: Wikimedia Commons. Photo by Edelseider on Flickr.

I am sometimes asked: "Doesn't Jesus look sort of a like a loaf of bread?" The answer is, yes, and it's not just because he's missing his head. Scholars tell us that these images were carved in response to a Eucharistic controversy raging at the time, in which certain groups were emphasizing the presence of the Risen Christ of heaven in the Eucharist, perhaps to the detriment of an understanding of the Eucharist which might include the living Christ who lived and walked the earth. Here at Chartres, we see an attempt to correct that potential misunderstanding by including within the Eucharistic imagery scenes from Christ's birth. This theological and historical context helps to explain why the artist pictures the child Jesus on top of an altar rather than in Mary's arms or in a manger.

Let me stress that such details are not merely artistic trivia. Lying behind this entire set of images is a conscious theology of incarnation and sacramentality. If God has created the world and reveals himself to us through his creation, then we have the possibility (as St. Paul tells us) of coming to know the invisible attributes

of God through the visible things of creation. As in the visible, earthly elements of the Eucharist, we are meant to see the real presence of Christ, the Word made flesh, so also, in the visible, earthly elements of creation, we are meant to see the presence of God's creative word and wisdom. It would be a similar theology of incarnation that would allow the word and wisdom of God to become incarnate in actual, human language and thus, by extension, present and embodied on a written page such as the Scriptures.

Thus, we must learn to read *both* the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture, for they are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they will ultimately illumine each other because they both have the one God as their author. Indeed, on the classical Christian understanding of the seven liberal arts, the trivium (or "threefold way"), which includes grammar, rhetoric, and logic, are precisely the disciplines that teach us how to read and understand the Book of Scripture; while the quadrivium (the "fourfold way"), the arts of geometry, mathematics, astronomy, and music, are those that guide us in our understanding of the Book of Nature. The portal image proclaims that this reading—whether of one book or the other—must be done in the light of the divine Wisdom incarnate.

We begin here, at Chartres, because it provides for us the general perspective from which we ought to view the vision of Catholic education we will find in Bonaventure. As we will see, there were important developments between the twelfth century and the thirteenth. But the underlying vision of the source and goal of an education is the same. So too, approaching Bonaventure's text from the perspective of this example of medieval sculptural imagery will, I hope, help us appreciate Bonaventure's creative use of imagery. That use of imagery can seem odd to first-time readers unused to the creative way medieval authors employed imagery. It's not the way modern theologians write books. But once we think of those odd features as "artistic" rather than merely "theological," the creativity and the beauty of Bonaventure's writing will become more apparent. But

first, we need a little background to Bonaventure and the age in which he lived.

Francis, the Franciscans, and Bonaventure

It is unlikely that Bonaventure ever met St. Francis in person, but he attributed his recovery from a near-fatal illness when he was five to Francis's intervention, shortly after the saint's death on October 3, 1226. Francis was canonized a saint two years later, when Bonaventure was seven—though he was still, at this point, Giovanni di Fidanza, a young boy living in the small town of Bagnoregio in the Tuscany region of central Italy.[1]

Despite his long veneration for Francis, Bonaventure did not join the Franciscans right away when he came of age. Instead, he enrolled in 1235 as a layman in the Arts faculty at the University of Paris when he was fourteen years old. At Paris, he encountered the Franciscans, who had themselves arrived in the city only fifteen years before.

In 1219, Brother Pacificus, with a small group of friars, had journeyed to Paris and settled originally in a modest house near the church of Saint-Denis outside the city. As late as 1224, they had to go to a neighboring parish to celebrate their Offices, having no church of their own. Sometime later, they began the construction of a larger friary in Vauvert (*Vallis Viridis*), but it fell to the ground in 1229.

But then, in 1234, the year before young Giovanni de Fidanza arrived in Paris, King Louis IX bought some land and gave it as a gift to the friars. Pope Gregory IX confirmed this donation in 1236, and on December 8, 1239, the friars were granted permission for building. Here, over the next twenty-three years, the famous Fran-

1. In what follows, I am following the carefully worked out chronology found in Jay Hammond, "Dating Bonaventure's Inception as Regent Master," *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009): 179–226. Hammond dates Bonaventure's birth at 1221. This section is a revised version of material that can be found at greater length and in greater detail in chapter 1 of *Bonaventure's Journey of the Soul into God: Context and Commentary*, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

ciscan "Convent of the Cordeliers" was built—"Cordeliers" being the name given to the friars because of the knotted cord (in Old French, *cordelle*) they wore around their waist.

And it was here, in 1236 or 1237, even before the construction of the larger convent had begun, that Alexander of Hales, the man who had introduced the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard as the basic textbook for the study of theology and who had, since his inception in 1220, been one of the most preeminent and influential regent masters at Paris, gave up all his worldly possessions and entered the Franciscan Order. When Alexander entered the order, he brought with him to the Franciscans his chair as regent master of Theology.

By 1221, the year of Giovanni's birth, Francis's early group of eleven brothers had grown to some 3000. That number would double again in the next twenty years. Clearly something dynamic was happening among the Franciscans, and men and women were being drawn to the order. By the time young Giovanni was completing his Master of Arts degree in 1243, Alexander of Hales had been a recognized Franciscan Master of Theology for seven or eight years, the bulk of the time Giovanni had been studying at Paris. And the construction of the new Convent of the Cordeliers would have been well under way. The Franciscans may have had poor beginnings in Paris, but they were clearly on their way up.

And so it was that, when Giovanni finished his Arts degree in 1243 or 1244, now roughly 23 years of age, he decided to join the Franciscans, taking "Bonaventure" as his religious name to celebrate his "good fortune" to be under the tutelage of both St. Francis and Alexander of Hales. Alexander is reported to have held the young Giovanni in the highest regard, having reportedly said of him that "in him Adam seemed not to have sinned."[2]

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2. See "Catalogus generalium ministrorum ordinis fratrum Minorum" in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 32, ed. Oswold Holder-Egger (Hannoverae: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1905–1913), 664.

The point of recounting this brief history is to show how much Bonaventure's entry into the order and subsequent development was bound up with those heady early days of the Franciscans in Paris as they grew from their simple beginnings in a small borrowed house outside the city and their faltering early projects to greater prominence, gaining the notice of even the great King Louis IX, culminating in the entry of Alexander of Hales to their ranks that secured for them a master's chair at the University and the beginning of construction on the Parisian convent that would become the home of so many great Franciscan students and masters in the coming years. Something dynamic was happening among the Franciscans, and Bonaventure wanted to be part of it. Not only would he become a valued part of it, in relatively short order, he would become a leading intellectual and spiritual light among the Franciscans, and shortly thereafter, its master general.

Bonaventure continued to write important theological texts throughout his life, even as master general of the order. The question of how the intellectual life ought to lead to the knowledge and love of God was one to which he returned several times during his life; the first time was in a lecture given as part of his inception ceremonies as Master of the Sacred Page (*magister sacra pagina*) at the University of Paris, a text we know in the modern world as *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*. He discussed the subject again, taking a different approach, in his *Journey of the Mind Into God*. And a third time, near the end of his life, he took it up again in his unfinished *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*. Each text is complex, and it would be impossible to cover adequately even one of them in a short chapter. But for our purposes, I propose to give the reader what I hope will be an interesting and informative introduction to a work now called *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*.

The Hierarchy of the Sciences and the Order of Leaning

Bonaventure was not alone in his concern to diagram the proper hierarchy and order of learning. There is abundant evidence that the question of hierarchy of the sciences and the order of learning was much on the minds of medieval masters during the thirteenth century.[3] Fr. James Weisheipl reports the three sources with the greatest influence on the development of the classification of the sciences in the thirteenth century were (1) "the Greco-Roman heritage of a liberal arts education"; (2) "the profound influence of Manlius Boethius"; and (3) the twelfth- and thirteenth-century translations from the Greek and Arabic, which helped make this schema intelligible to the Latins."[4]

The earliest Latin classification and exposition of the liberal arts seems to have been Terence Varro's *Disciplinarum libri IX* (116–27 BC). Varro's list of the arts included these nine: grammar, dialectics, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astrology, music, medicine, and architecture. As a pragmatic Roman, Varro envisioned the liberal arts as preparations for the study of the more practical arts of medicine and architecture. These more pragmatic arts were dropped from later lists, leaving the classic seven liberal arts of the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and *quadrivium* (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music).

By the time Bonaventure composed the *De reductione*, the twelfth-century theologian Hugh of St. Victor (1096–1141) had added the more pragmatic, "mechanical" arts back into the mix in his *Didascalicon*. But instead of being the goal to which the other

3. This section contains a revised version of material that can be found at greater length and in greater detail in *Aquinas, Bonaventure and the Scholastic Culture of Medieval Paris: Preaching, Prologues, and Biblical Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 251–88.

4. See James A. Weisheipl, OP, "Classification of the Sciences in Medieval Thought," *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965): 54–90, esp. 54. My discussion throughout this section is indebted to Fr. Weisheipl's article.

studies were to lead, the mechanical and pragmatic arts were now considered "lower" disciplines leading to the "higher studies" in the liberal arts: philosophy and theology.

This revaluation of values which resulted in the elevation of philosophy and theology had largely been accomplished during the Patristic period, when the classic tradition of the liberal arts was mediated through early Christian sources. The third-century Eastern Father of the Church Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) insisted, for example, that young people should study all the liberal disciplines as a foundation for the higher study of philosophy, which was itself to be a preparation for the reception of Christian wisdom.[5] So too in the Latin West, Augustine was a proponent of students studying the seven liberal arts, but he viewed them, as had Clement before him, as preparatory for the reception of Christian doctrine and as an aid to its interpretation.[6] In the Early Middle Ages in the West, the knowledge of the seven liberal arts was kept alive in works such as Donatus's *Ars grammatica* (mid-fourth century AD), Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (*On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, mid-fifth century AD), and Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* (late fifth or early sixth century AD).

The work of Boethius, the sixth-century Roman Christian, however, was to be of special significance for Christian authors, especially Christian theologians, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Boethius, like many before him, divided philosophy into two kinds: theoretical and practical. But he was distinctive in maintaining there were three subdivisions of each. In his treatise *On the Trinity*—a work on which Thomas Aquinas was later to make a famous commentary[7]—Boethius conceived of a new threefold division of

5. See, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I.5–7.

6. See, e.g., Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II.27–39.

7. Indeed, the English translation of the first part of Thomas's commentary on Boethius *De trinitate* by Armand Maurer was titled *The Divisions and Methods of the Sciences* (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986).

speculative philosophy elegant in its clarity and simplicity. The first division of speculative philosophy he called *naturalis*, or physics; the second, *mathematica*; and the third, *theologica*. The first, said Boethius, deals with forms that cannot exist or be considered apart from matter and motion. The second, *mathematica*, deals with forms that, although they can never actually exist separate from matter, can be considered apart from matter. The third, *theologica*, finally, deals with forms that exist apart from matter and motion.

According to Boethius, each branch of speculative philosophy had its own proper method. The method proper to physics and the other natural sciences (*naturalia*) he called *rationalibiliter*, by which Boethius had in mind the demonstrative process of reasoning that Aristotle had used in his works of natural science. The method proper to *mathematica* he called *disciplinaliter*, "disciplinary," a word derived from the Latin *disco, discere*, "to learn." It had long been held that mathematics was especially "teachable" because of the precision that its abstraction from matter and motion afforded it. The method needed in *theologica*, finally, Boethius described as *intellectualiter*, by which he meant that "theology" involves a contemplation and intellectual grasp not merely of "forms" but of that form that is pure *esse*.

This tradition of reflection on the liberal arts was further mediated to the Middle Ages through the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus (562 AD) and the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville (c. 600–625 AD) who, along with Boethius and Augustine, "served as the principal sources for all later discussions of the seven liberal arts and the tripartite division of philosophy."[8] Isidore divided philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic; he then subdivided each of these further, with physics subdivided according to the four arts of the quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy; ethics subdivided according to the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance; and logic subdivided into rhetoric and dialectic.

8. Weisheipl, "Classification," 64.

A host of important medieval thinkers took up the question of the order and hierarchy of the sciences in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, among them Clarenbaud of Arras (c. 1110–c. 1187), Gilbert de la Porrée (1085–1154), Thierry of Chartres (c. 1100–1150), Robert Grosseteste (c. 1175–1253), Robert Kilwardby (c. 1215–1275), Roger Bacon (c. 1220–1292), Albert the Great (1193–1280), and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).[9] The fact that all these highly regarded thinkers wrote important and widely circulated treatises on the divisions, methods, and hierarchy of the sciences indicates that the topic was of great interest and likely had generated no small amount of controversy in academic circles such as those at the University of Paris by the time Bonaventure incepted there in 1254.

The Influence of Hugh of St. Victor and the *Didascalicon*

The man with the most profound and direct influence on Bonaventure's account of the hierarchy of the sciences, however, was Hugh of St. Victor. In the *Didascalicon*, Hugh had reintroduced the mechanical arts back into the schema of the liberal arts. In place of medicine and architecture, the two arts Varro had listed, Hugh listed *seven* mechanical arts, likely to provide a nice sense of symmetry and balance with the seven liberal arts. These seven make for an interesting list: fabric making, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine, and theatrics. Bonaventure simply reproduced Hugh's list in the *De reductione* and provided a broad enough description of each of the seven to show why the list was all-inclusive. "Hunting," for example, on Bonaventure's account, was not merely about hunting for animals, but included "every conceivable way of preparing foods, drinks, and delicacies." "Armour-making" included not merely the making of armor, but also "the production

9. For more on the thought of these men, I refer the reader again to Fr. Weisheipl's excellent article, esp. 66–94.

of every instrument made of iron or of any other metal, or of stone or wood."[10]

Hugh divided philosophy into theoretical, practical, mechanical, and logical. The *theoretical* branch of philosophy he subdivided according to Boethius's threefold schema: physics or natural philosophy, mathematics, and theology. Although Hugh was a Christian author, "theology" in this context should not be mistaken for the discipline of "sacred doctrine." "Theology" here meant, as it did for Boethius and Aristotle before him, the study of forms separated from matter and motion. It is more akin to what we today would call "metaphysics." Hugh divided *practical* philosophy in a Boethian manner, distinguishing ethics, economics (or domestics), and politics. Hugh divided the *mechanical* arts into the seven we discussed above: fabric making, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine, and theatrics. And *logical* philosophy, finally, he distinguished into the classic three arts of the trivium: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. (See figure 1, next page.)

As we will see, Bonaventure reproduced nearly all the elements of Hugh's complex schema in the *De reductione*.

The Four Lights

As noted above, it appears that Bonaventure delivered an earlier version of *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology* as the second of the two addresses he was required to give during his inception as a Master of the Sacred Page at the University of Paris. Shortly after he was elected master general of the Franciscan Order, he modified it by giving it a new opening paragraph.[11] When Bonaventure orig-

10. See Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor (Columbia University Press, 1991).

11. The text that Bonaventure used at his *resumptio* was, as Joshua C. Benson has shown, an early version of a work scholars used to think came from late in Bonaventure's career: the *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam* (*On the Reduction of the*

Figure 12-1. Hugh's Fourfold Division of Knowledge

1. Theoretical (*naturalis*)
   a. Theology: deals with forms separated from matter
   b. Mathematics: deals with forms of bodies considered apart from matter
      i. Arithmetic
      ii. Music
      iii. Geometry
      iv. Astronomy
   c. Physics: deals with forms in matter
2. Practical (*moralis*)
   a. Ethics
   b. Economics
   c. Politics
3. Mechanical: fabric making, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine, theatrics
4. Logical (*sermocinales*)
   a. Grammar
   b. Dialectics
   c. Rhetoric

Arts to Theology). A quick comparison of the Latin version of the *De Reductione* in the Quaracchi edition with the critical edition of Bonaventure's *resumptio* published by Benson reveals that the sole difference is the first paragraph. See Joshua C. Benson, "Identifying the Literary Genre of the *De reductione artium ad theologiam*: Bonaventure's Inaugural Lecture at Paris," *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009): 149–78; and "Bonaventure's *De reductione artium ad theologiam* and Its Early Reception as an Inaugural Sermon," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2011): 7–24. The Quaracchi editors seem to have known of the manuscript containing this early version, but because the first paragraph was different from nearly all the other manuscripts of the *De reductione* they had identified, they assumed it was an aberrant copy. It was Prof. Benson's genius to realize that the manuscript contained Bonaventure's two inception addresses.

inally delivered the address, he introduced it with a quotation from Augustine's *Soliloquies*.

> Because all truth is sought in the light of the First Cause, according to what Augustine says in the first book of the *Soliloquies*: "Therefore," he says, "as in this visible sun we may observe three things: that it is, etc." [that it shines, that it illuminates: so in that God most far withdrawn whom you would wish to apprehend, there are these three things: that He is, that He is apprehended, and that He makes other things to be apprehended].[12]

When he later revised the text, he added a new first paragraph based on a passage from James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the God of Lights." This verse had been a favorite of Hugh of St. Victor's, and since the basic conception of the hierarchy of the sciences in the *De reductione* owes much to Hugh's influence, it may have seemed fitting.

But in either case, we should not miss Bonaventure's message. All truth is made possible by the "light of the First Cause." Or to put this another way, all truth is made possible by a light "coming down from the God of Lights." As we are able to see because of the light of the sun, so we are able to know the truth because of the illumination we receive from God our Creator. This is the light "from above," the *superior* light.

But notice, in the text from Augustine's *Soliloquies*, "the light of the First Cause" is "most far withdrawn" from us. The God we wish to apprehend enlightens us, but he is too far above for us to see him directly. So how do we apprehend him? That light from above is medi-

12. I have included the whole passage from Augustine's *Soliloquies*, even though in the original manuscript, Bonaventure provides only the first several words followed by "et cetera," suggesting he could quote the text from memory and needed only those first words to help bring to mind the text he intended to use. "Although Bonaventure may have known the entire verse by memory, most of us do not, so I have taken the liberty of supplying the missing text in brackets.

ated to us, first, through the "light" of the sacred Scriptures. But as the light of the sun not only is and shines, but also illumines visible things so they can be seen, so too, the light coming down from God not only exists, it also shines in and through the Scriptures. But it also shines in and through three lower lights. There is, first, the exterior light of the mechanical arts; next, the inferior light of the sensitive cognition, and finally, the interior light of philosophical cognition. Above these three, as we have seen, is the superior light of sacred Scripture.

This fourfold division of "light" allowed Bonaventure to creatively retrofit Hugh's fourfold hierarchy into a new schema with the sacred Scriptures more clearly at the top. In Bonaventure's new schema, the *inferior* light is the light of sense knowledge—called "inferior" because it begins with an inferior object and requires the aid of corporeal light. The *exterior* light is the knowledge of the mechanical arts, which produce things "external" to us. The *interior* light is the light of philosophical knowledge by which we inquire into inner and hidden causes through principles in the recesses of the human mind. And the *superior* light is the light of the sacred Scriptures, the light that, by revealing truths transcending human reason, leads to higher things, the light sent down from on high by "the God of lights" (cf. James 1:17).[13]

The Interior Light and Hugh's Hierarchy of the Sciences

Bonaventure places Hugh's entire hierarchy of the sciences (minus the mechanical arts) under the heading of the "interior" light. His

13. A reader interested in a modern example of this sort of "dilation" should consult Avery Cardinal Dulles's book *The Catholicity of the Church* (Clarendon Press, 1987), in which the author structures his discussion around this fourfold distinction: "Catholicity from Above," "Catholicity from Below," "Catholicity in Breadth," and "Catholicity in Length." Throughout the remainder of this chapter, the English translation and the Latin text quoted have been taken from: Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, The Works of Saint Bonaventure, vol. 1, trans. with an intro. by Zachary Hayes, OFM (The Franciscan Institute, 1996).

schema reduces Hugh's hierarchy to these three divisions: (1) "natural" philosophy (theoretical), which includes both the mathematical disciplines (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) and physics; (2) "moral" philosophy (practical), which includes ethics, economics, and politics; and (3) "rational" philosophy (logical), which includes grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. Compare the outline of Hugh's division of the sciences in Figure 1 with the outline of Bonaventure's divisions under "interior" light in Figure 2 below.[14]

Figure 12-2. Bonaventure's Division of Knowledge

1. Theoretical Knowledge (Natural Philosophy)
   a. Mathematics: deals with forms of bodies considered apart from matter
      i. Arithmetic
      ii. Music
      v. Geometry
      vi. Astronomy
   b. Physics: deals with forms in matter
2. Practical Knowledge (Moral Philosophy)
   a. Ethics
   b. Economics
   c. Politics
3. Logic (Rational Philosophy)
   a. Grammar
   b. Dialectic
   c. Rhetoric

In the first half of section 4 of the *De reductione*, Bonaventure sets forth this basic threefold division between rational, natural, and moral by describing it in three ways. The problem with his discussion is that he does not always keep the same order: in his first account, he lists "rational" philosophy first; in his second, "natural"

14. See esp. *De reductione*, 4.

philosophy comes first; and in his third, "moral." If one fails to notice this, the lists can be confusing.[15]

In his first account, he distinguishes the truth of *speech*, the truth of *things*, and the truth of *morals*. *Rational* philosophy considers the truth of *speech*; *natural* philosophy, the truth of *things*; and moral philosophy, the truth of *conduct*.

In his second account, he states that "since 'God is the cause of being, the principle of intelligibility, and the order of human life,' so we may find these in the illumination of philosophy." When the illumination of philosophy enlightens the mind to discern the causes of being, it is *physics*. When we are enlightened to know the principles of understanding, it is *logic*. And when the illumination involves the order of living, this is *moral philosophy*. Notice in this second list that the first and second categories have been reversed: he lists physics first, which would correspond to "natural" philosophy in the first list, and logic second, which would correspond to "rational" of "discursive" philosophy, the first item in the first list.

In his third account of this same threefold division, Bonaventure takes a different approach, stating that "the light of philosophical knowledge illumines the intellect itself and this enlightenment may be threefold." If it directs the *motive power*, it is *moral* philosophy, which enlightens us regarding the truth of life; if it *directs itself*, it is *natural* philosophy, which enlightens us regarding the truth of knowledge; and if it directs *the interpretive power*, it is *discursive* philosophy, which enlightens us regarding the truth of doctrine.

Since the terms can be confusing, I have attempted to diagram the lists together in one chart in Figure 12-3 below.

15. All three can be found in *De reduction*, 4.

Figure 12-3.

Category of Philosophy	Deals with:	Which explores:	Intellect directs:	Category of Truth:
Natural Philosophy a. Mathematics b. Physics	Truth of things	Causes of being	Intellect directs itself (to understand the truth of things)	Truth of knowledge
Moral Philosophy a. Ethics b. Economics c. Politics	Truth of conduct	Principles of understanding	Intellect directs the interpretive power (to interpret the truth of speech)	Truth of doctrine
Rational Philosophy a. Grammar b. Dialectic c. Rhetoric	Truth of speech	Order of living	Intellect directs the motive power (to move one to act in accord with the truth)	Truth of Life

From the Four Lights to the Light of the Six Days

The "superior" light, the light that is the "highest," is the light that illuminates respect to saving truth: this is the "light" of Sacred Scripture. This light is called "superior," says Bonaventure, for two reasons: first, because it leads to higher things by revealing truths that transcend reason, and second, because it is not acquired by human investigation but is sent down to us from "the God of Lights."

But note, these gifts *come down* from the God of Lights. What about the return? As we have seen, the "God of Lights" *illumines* us in various ways—through sense perception, the mechanical arts, the liberal arts, and sacred Scripture—but this illumination is not merely an end unto itself. We are illumined so we can achieve our ultimate end, which is union with him. So, after he has described in the first part of his text the ways in which God illumines us, it remained for Bonaventure in the second part to describe how they *lead us back to* God. This change of focus required a change of

Bonaventure's governing image: from the "four lights" in the first part to the "six days" in the second.

Rather than trying to describe this rather startling transition, it will be best simply to quote Bonaventure's text in full. After finishing his discussion of the last of the four "lights," the *superior* light of the sacred Scriptures, Bonaventure says this.

> From what has been said up to now it can be concluded that, according to our primary division, the light coming down from above is *fourfold*; nonetheless there are six differentiations of this light namely, the light of *sacred Scripture*, the light of *sense perception*, the light of the *mechanical arts*, the light of *rational philosophy*, the light of *natural philosophy*, and the light of *moral philosophy*. Therefore, in the present life there are six illuminations; and they have their evening, for all *knowledge will be destroyed*. And therefore they will be followed by a seventh day of rest, a day which knows no evening, namely, *the illumination of glory*.
>
> Therefore these six illuminations may very fittingly be traced back to the six days of formation or illumination in which the world was made, so that the knowledge of sacred Scripture would correspond to the creation of the first day, that is, to the formation of light, and so on with the rest, one after the other in proper order. And as all those lights had their origin in a single light, so too all these branches of knowledge are ordered to the knowledge of sacred Scripture; they are contained in it; they are perfected by it; and they are ordered to the eternal illumination by means of it. Therefore all our knowledge should come to rest in the knowledge of sacred Scripture, and particular in the *anagogical* understanding of Scripture, through which any illumination is traced back to God from whom it took its origin. And there the circle is completed; the pattern of six is complete, and consequently there is rest.[16]

16. *De reductione*, 6–7.

Why make this switch from the image of the four lights to the six days? First, it is not without scriptural warrant, since "light" is the first thing created on the first day—"And God said, 'Let there be light'"—and since in the Gospel of John's recapitulation of the creation story in Genesis—"In the beginning was the Word"—he declares that the Word is "the true light, which gives light to everyone" (Jn 1:9). In this way, there is light at the beginning of the Scriptures and light at the culmination in Christ.

So too, it seems likely that, having in the first section settled on an image that would let him make a suitable "division" of the sciences—one corresponding, as we have seen, with the schema set forth by Hugh of St. Victor in his *Didascalicon*—Bonaventure needed another image to communicate more clearly the idea that the sciences should culminate in a goal beyond themselves. His goal, after all, wasn't merely to *classify* the sciences, as a scientist or metaphysician might. Bonaventure set out to show how all human knowing was a reflection of the divine image meant to lead back to (*reducit*) union with God.

Using the image of the "six days" of creation let Bonaventure continue to use the image of light. But it also let him picture the movement of the days *toward* the Sabbath and to Christ—a movement of the disciplines leading mankind back to God, the source and summit of all things. The six "days" imagery let Bonaventure picture more adequately the "lights" of the sciences as *flowing forth from* God (since "light" is created on the first day) and *flowing toward* God (who is our "rest" on the seventh day). Getting the order of the arts and sciences right is the way the university sets up the proper "ladder" of ascent up the Platonic "divided line" so the students can raise their minds from the knowledge they gain in the disciplines to achieve an ever greater knowledge of, and relation to, God. Bonaventure's message to his confreres at the University of Paris was that what they were studying in their academic classrooms was meant to bear fruit in greater union with God.

The material from the four lights section gets reapportioned into the six days in the following way:

Superior Light: Light of Sacred Scripture: First Day
Inferior Light: Light of Sense Perception: Second Day
Exterior Light: Light of Mechanical Arts: Third Day
Interior Light: Light of Philosophical Science (threefold division):
Light of Rational Philosophy: Fourth Day
Light of Natural Philosophy: Fifth Day
Light of Moral Philosophy: Sixth Day
Illumination of Glory (New Culmination): Seventh Day

In the four "lights" schema, sacred Scripture was the "superior" light at the top. Here the Scriptures are the primary light which illumine all the rest. Note how the disciplines merely listed and divided in the earlier "four lights" schema are here set within a dynamic hierarchy, with sense perception at the bottom (since we come to know through sense perception) and moral philosophy, the knowledge of how to live one's life well, near the top, and with the "lights" of the various "days" leading ultimately to the seventh "day," union with God.

On this account, sacred Scripture is the first light that illumines all the rest, and it does so by keeping them directed to their primordial Source, which is also their ultimate End: the Triune God. Bonaventure's account of the three mystical senses of Scripture helps him make this transition from the "four lights" part of the treatise to the second part structured around the six days. The allegorical sense, he says, is concerned with *faith*; the moral sense with *morals*; and the anagogical sense with the ultimate goal of both, namely union with God. Therefore, claims Bonaventure, the whole of sacred Scripture teaches these three truths: the eternal generation of the Son and his incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ (the subject of the allegorical sense), the pattern of human life (the subject of the moral sense), and the union of the soul with God (the subject of the anagogical sense). Moreover, these three truths can be found

"reflected in" or "illumined by" the lights of each of the following five "days" leading to the light of eternal glory on the seventh day.

Just as all the lights of creation "had their origin in a single light"—that is, the light created on the first day—so too all the "lights" of the various branches of knowledge "are ordered to the knowledge of sacred Scripture."

> [T]hey are contained in it; they are perfected by it; and they are ordered to the eternal illumination by means of it. Therefore all our knowledge should come to rest in the knowledge of Sacred Scripture, and particularly in the *anagogical* understanding of Scripture through which any illumination is traced back to God [*refertur in Deum*] from whom it took its origin. And there the circle is completed; the pattern of six is complete, and consequently there is rest.[17]

In Figure 12-4 below, I have diagrammed how, according to Bonaventure, the three basic truths of Sacred Scripture illuminate the other sciences, which in turn "lead back to" God.

This threefold schema is consistent across all the "days." Bonaventure's challenge is to see whether he can identify "vestiges" or "echoes" of (1) the generation and incarnation of the Word, (2) the moral pattern of human life, and (3) the union of the soul with God in *all* the arts and branches of knowledge. To see how he carries out this monumental task, we would need to get into the details of the "light" of each "day." I have provided a description of these details elsewhere, but there is not space for a complete commentary of that length and depth here.[18] So let's summarize based on what we have seen thus far.

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17. *De reductione*, 7.

18. For a more complete description of Bonaventure's account of the "six days," see *Aquinas, Bonaventure*, ch. 11.

Figure 12-4.

First Day: Light of Sacred Scripture	Second Day: Light of Sense Perception	Third Day: Light of the Mechanical Arts	Fourth Day: Light of Rational Philosophy	Fifth Day: Light of Natural Philosophy	Sixth Day: Light of Moral Philosophy	Seventh Day: Illumination of Glory
Allegorical Sense: Generation and incarnation of the Word	Medium of knowledge	Production (skill of the artist)	Person speaking (mental concept)	Relation of Proportion	"Right": middle between extremes	
Moral Sense: Pattern of human life	Exercise of knowledge	Effect (quality of the effect produced)	Delivery (fittingness, truth, style)	Effect of Causality	"Right": guided by regulations of divine law	
Anagogical Sense: Union of the soul with God	Delight	Fruit of the work (usefulness of the product)	Purpose (express, instruct, persuade)	Medium of Union	"Right": when one's summit is raised upward (e.g., upright posture)	

The Summit of Human Learning

In the first book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle famously declared that "all men by nature desire to know" and to know the "highest" things. The "highest" knowledge, thought Aristotle, would be the knowledge of first principles and the causes of things, "for by reason of these, and from these, all other things come to be known."[19] Aristotle called this "highest science" by various names— "first philosophy," "first science," "wisdom," "theology"—and said that it provides knowledge of the first principles, causes, and good of all things. To pursue this knowledge, thought Aristotle, was to pursue the highest wisdom of which human beings are capable.

In the *De reductione*, Bonaventure shifted the summit of human learning upward—to God Himself. And although God is in his essence unknowable, Bonaventure accepted that he had made himself known through the revelation of Sacred Scripture. And so, he argued that all the disciplines in the Arts curriculum at the University of Paris, including the study of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, needed to be illumined by the knowledge gained by reading sacred Scripture to be "seen" fully. To read and study these texts apart from divine revelation would be like trying to see the woman you intend to marry only in the dark.[20] Without seeing her in the light, you will fail to see and appreciate her true beauty, and failing to appreciate her beauty, your heart may fail to be drawn to her as it ought and as she deserves. So too, when the objects of the other sciences are "illumined" by the light and wisdom shining forth from the sacred Scriptures, it is only then that we finally see them in their full truth and beauty, and our hearts should be drawn to the Source of all Truth, Beauty, and Goodness—the First Cause, Highest Principle, and Complete Good of all things. When studied properly, all the sciences

19. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.2 (981a 1–25).
20. This image is mine, not Bonaventure's.

should lead us back to the Creator who has revealed himself in and through the sacred Scriptures.

For in those Scriptures, we find to our amazement that the First Cause, Highest Principle, and Complete Good of all things reveals himself to be a loving Father who has sent his eternally begotten Son into the world to redeem it from sin. He further extends this loving gift of himself and his eternal Son to us by sending us his own Spirit, whose loving gifts of grace help perfect our rational powers and even our baser, "earthier" powers: our irascible and concupiscible appetites. Our *irascible nature* is perfected, claims Bonaventure, "when it strives after the highest generosity," and our *concupiscible nature* is perfected "when it clings to the good." When we are angry, when we are motivated by wrath or fear, it is a wise counsel that advises: "Turn your mind to generosity." And when we are motivated by lust or greed or the desire for power and prestige, should we not consider whether the things we desire are truly for our good?[21]

And yet, if we are tempted to think of Bonaventure's "reduction" of the arts to theology as merely a medieval version of Plato's Allegory of the Cave in book 7 of *The Republic*, we should note an important difference.[22] Instead of the visible things of creation being mere shadows and illusions at the bottom of the cave, for Bonaventure, the created realities are truly *real*. They are meant to lead us upward to their Source and ours. Instead of Plato's false lights illuminating shadows in the cave, Bonaventure thinks of created reality as if it were a series of mirrors reflecting the light that comes down from above.[23]

21. See Plato's *Gorgias*, in which one of Socrates's primary goals is to show each of his interlocutors that many of the things men desire as good are merely apparent or illusory goods and are not in fact truly good.

22. Plato, *Republic* 7 (514a-520a).

23. This image of "mirrors" reflecting the light from above is one Bonaventure also uses in the *Itinerarium mentis in deum* (*The Journey of the Mind into God*). See, for example, *Itinerarium* 1.5: "in as far as we consider God in each of the above-mentioned ways as through a mirror or as in a mirror" (*ut per speculum et ut in speculo*).

That light gets dimmer as it is reflected, and we would be misled if we mistook what we can see in the dim light for what we would be able to see in the light of the sun. But there is a definite drive upward supplied in Bonaventure's vision by Christ and the Scriptures that is missing in Plato's vision of the cave.

Zachary Hayes has suggested that Bonaventure's accomplishment in the *De reductione* consists in this, the fact that:

> he incorporates all the familiar and new forms of knowledge in the arts and sciences into an all-embracing, theological framework and integrates them into the journey of the human spirit into God. All must be situated in the context of the going-forth from and the return of creation to God. . . . He argues, in effect, that spirituality and theology do not have to by-pass or bracket the so-called secular disciplines in order to find God elsewhere; for the entire world is drenched with the presence of the divine mystery. It is a world that bears at least the vestiges (=foot-prints) of God, and at some levels even the image and similitude of God. It is the task of the human person situated in such a world to learn how to detect the symptoms of that mysterious, divine presence.[24]

To this, I would add only that, for Bonaventure, learning how to detect "the symptoms of that mysterious divine presence" in the world in its various manifestations involved mastering the methods appropriate to each discipline. This was not a mysticism of the mountaintops; it was, rather, a very Franciscan reaffirmation of the truth and holiness to be sought and achieved in everyday life, study, and work.[25]

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24. Hayes intro, *Reduction,* 11.

25. Étienne Gilson has written: "Saint Bonaventure's doctrine can be characterized as an 'itinerary of the soul toward God.' . . . It teaches 'how man goes to God through other things.' Accordingly, his outlook on man and things will be dominated by a twofold tendency: first, to conceive the sensible world as the road that leads to God; next, to conceive man as a creature naturally open to the divine light and God as revealing himself to man through the whole gamut of his illuminations." See *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Random House, 1955), 332.

At the heart of this *reductio* of the other arts to theology is not only a clarity of the mind and a perfection of the rational powers, although these are important, but also a perfection of the will through the gift of charity. For Bonaventure, what should animate all one's studies in the disciplines is the conviction that we can find God in them—a conviction borne of the faith that God, out of his love, has revealed himself to us, and that we are creatures he made capable of both knowing and loving him. So we realize the highest potential and perfection of each discipline when we see in them a revelation of the God who loved us so much he became flesh for us, sacrificed himself for us on the cross, and rose to the right hand of the Father to send his Holy Spirit that we might be brought into a fuller union, a deeper communion with him.[26]

For Bonaventure, the truths of the Scriptures help to illumine the other disciplines, while the lesser lights of the other disciplines can, in turn, help us understand the truths of sacred Scriptures more fully. "It is for this reason," says Bonaventure, "that theology makes use of illustrations and terms pertaining to every branch of knowledge" because every branch of knowledge can build up faith, hope, and love, if we see them as containing self-revelations of the God of love in whom is our ultimate faith and hope.

Bonaventure's message was that one should engage in one's studies much as a lover studies his beloved; the more love he has,

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26. Gilson, *History*, 333: "It is possible to find God by considering his creature, because the truth of things consists in their representing the primary and supreme truth. In this sense, all creatures are so many ways to God. . . . To describe it by a technical term, let us say that it is a resemblance of "expression," as a spoken word expresses its meaning. Considered from this point of view, therefore, what we call creatures, or things, constitute a sort of language, and the whole universe is only a book in which the Trinity is read on every page. And if one were to ask why God created the world on this plan, the answer would be very simply: the world has no other reason for being that to give utterance to God; it is a book which was written only that it might be read by man and be the unceasing reminder of its Author's love."

the more he notices, and the more he notices, the more it inspires the increase of his love. When one's studies are illumined by the light of the Holy Spirit and the sacred Scriptures, each discipline, each science, becomes a potential means of building up charity. Hence "the fruit of all the sciences," says Bonaventure, is:

> that in all, faith may be strengthened, God may be honored, character may be formed, and consolation may be derived from the union of the Spouse with the beloved, a union which takes place through charity: a charity in which the whole purpose of Sacred Scripture, and thus of every illumination descending from above, comes to rest—a charity without which all knowledge is vain because no one come to the Son except through the Holy Spirit who teaches us *all the truth, who is blessed forever*. Amen.[27]

27. *De reductione*, 26.