

## ARGUMENT

Everyone loves to laugh, but no one lives for laughter. Rather, the human person lives to know and to love, and so he delights above all in knowing and loving the highest, most enduring things of reality, which transcend all laughing: the ultimate meaning of life, the true nature of love, the existence and inner life of God. Even the slightest knowledge of such things, St. Thomas Aquinas observes, brings us more delight than the most certain knowledge of lower things (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 1). Yet too much time in contemplation tires our body-bound minds. This prompts us to seek refreshment in the lower delights of play and recreation, which reinvigorates us to ascend anew.

Thus enters the virtue of eutrapelia, which guides man in his pursuit of playing well. At first glance, play might seem like a trivial subject matter for a virtue, let alone an entire volume of the *Dominicana* journal. Yet if the virtues are the means by which we perfect our human nature, then they really must extend to the whole of human life, even the nooks and crannies we often overlook. In fact, neglecting the virtues proper to life's levities is precisely how we invite sneaky vices to set up shop, which soon cause a once-integrated life to unravel.

Taken in its broadest sense, eutrapelia is the virtue of *recta recreatio*—right recreation—whereby the human person is ennobled to pursue bodily exercise and spiritual mirth in the right proportions. Moreover, the eutrapelic person undertakes all of this with an eye to realizing his ultimate end and highest spiritual good: knowledge and love of God. Yes, even frivolity can and should be sanctified.

No doubt, cultivating such rectified recreation stands among the central challenges of living the Christian life well today. On the one hand, we are sated by myriad sources of passive

entertainment, such as social media, film, and sports. On the other hand, we tend to overplay the importance of recreative achievements (especially youth achievements), whether in the arts or on the sports field, as if these were the domains of life in which one's ultimate identity and eternal salvation are to be realized.

*Dominicana* 65 examines the perennial and particular questions pertinent to living the virtue of eutrapelia in our age. In the opening essay, Br. Raymond introduces the virtue of eutrapelia, its role in an integrated human life, and the challenge each person faces in determining the right amount of recreation for himself. Building on that foundation, Brs. Gregory and Micah respectively consider how the liturgy and the Church's Scriptures can elevate our ordinary recreation. Complementing these pieces, Br. Christopher ponders God's playfulness and its implications for our own play, while Br. Juan Macias offers us a translation of a Lenten conference on entertainment and the Christian life by the influential twentieth-century French Dominican, Fr. Marie-Albert Janvier, O.P., given in Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral.

Sports, of course, figure prominently in contemporary recreative culture. Brother Basil traces the Anglo-Protestant origins of our modern athletic obsession, weaving together historical research with theological analysis and practical spiritual takeaways. Offering us an insight into the first-hand experience of elite athletics, Br. Thaddeus interviews Fr. Chase Hilgenbrinck, a professional soccer player-turned-diocesan priest, who offers profound and candid lessons on the glories and challenges of professional sports.

The arts, too, have a basic recreative character. In "Lives of the Brethren," Br. Bertrand interviews Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., who, as a Hillbilly Thomist and *Rector Magnificus* of the Angelicum, witnesses to the dynamic interplay between eutrapelia and study. In our art history feature, Br. Jeremiah explores some of the lively stories and moral lessons behind the peculiar marginalia that decorate medieval manuscripts, several of which line the pages of this journal.

Finally, each of our five book reviews relates to eutrapelia in some broader respect: Brother Thomas assesses a “book” of songs—the most recent Hillbilly Thomists album, *Holy Ghost Power*—while Br. Cornelius analyzes a study of love in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. Brother Luke presents our own Br. Columba Thomas’s *The Art of Dying*, a translation of the fifteenth-century *Ars moriendi*. Brother Nicodemus connects Fr. Gregory Pine’s *Prudence* to the other cardinal virtues, while Br. Pius inquires into the prudence and eutrapelia of Alex Honnold’s stunning free solo summit of El Capitan, documented in *The Impossible Climb*.

For a journal about the nature of true fun, this project was truly fun to produce. In our effort to address today’s great recreative challenges, we hope that *Dominicana* 65 might help readers to delight both in knowing more about eutrapelia and in actually becoming more virtuous. By the grace of God, such rectified recreation will yet deepen “his joy in us” and so lead us toward eternal delights, where our “joy may be complete” (John 15:11).

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