

Article

“Beyond the Window That Can Never Be Opened”—Roger Scruton on “Moments of Revelation” in Human Life [†]

Ferenc Hörcher 

Research Institute of Politics and Government, University of Public Service, H-1441 Budapest, Hungary; horcher.ferenc@uni-nke.hu

[†] Scruton Effing (1), p. 92.

Abstract: This study addresses Roger Scruton’s understanding of what he called “moments of revelation”. In two short essays, both entitled “Effing the ineffable”, Scruton framed his discussion of moments of revelation with reference to the medieval Christian mystical discourse. Introducing the medieval discussion of this topic, this study provides an analysis of Scruton’s approach to the theme. In tune with the traditional discourse on revelation, his general aim was to demonstrate that there are ways of revealing important truths about the supernatural, of the world “beyond the window”, that do not require words to be pronounced. He calls our experiences of such phenomena moments of revelation and identifies four different transitory sources of revelation. This study deals with them one by one, after considering whether it is right to label such a revelation transcendental. The four sources of Scruton’s moments of revelation are natural beauty, the beauty of painting, the beauty of music, and personal encounters. The first three examples are connected to his thoughts on art and beauty as a substitute of divine revelation. Perhaps the most surprising of these is the last ones, moments of intersubjective human relationships, “our knowledge of each other”. Relying on both Buber and Levinas, Scruton makes the strong claim that it is in the other that we can experience that world “beyond the window”. His phenomenological exploration of human encounters sheds light on concepts like grace, *shekhinah*, or real presence and gift. He explains the Christian understanding of the human–divine relationship as well along the lines of the nature of interpersonal human relationship, both of them being in a certain sense, he claims, transcendental. From grace, his account moves forward to self-sacrifice and finally arrives at his idiosyncratic understanding of gratefulness for life. His moments of revelation in art and interpersonal exchange turn out to be, indeed, late and secular versions of the Christian understanding of revelation. In its summary, this study claims that revelation, understood by Scruton as a form of general human experience, allows to catch a glimpse of that which is beyond the window, by the direct, sensually based experience of either the existence of another person or of the beauty of nature and art.

Keywords: Roger Scruton; effing the ineffable; moments of revelation; transcendental; gift; self-sacrifice; grace; gratefulness



Citation: Hörcher, Ferenc. 2024. “Beyond the Window That Can Never Be Opened”—Roger Scruton on “Moments of Revelation” in Human Life. *Religions* 15: 485. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040485>

Academic Editors: Hans Zollner and Balázs M. Mezei

Received: 26 February 2024

Revised: 8 April 2024

Accepted: 12 April 2024

Published: 15 April 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Although the British philosopher Roger Scruton (1944–2020) spent most of his career as a philosopher of art and political philosopher, he was very cautious to turn towards some of the ultimate questions of metaphysics.¹ Educated as an analytic philosopher in Cambridge in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and later publishing a small volume on Kant and another one on Spinoza, and an overview of modern philosophy, he found it extremely difficult to address in his philosophy the ultimate questions of human existence, including the belief in God and the possibility of an afterlife (Dooley 2009, chp. 1, passim). Towards the end of his life, however, he decided to address the trickiest questions of philosophical anthropology. Both the Gifford Lectures he delivered at the University of Saint Andrews in 2010, and published as *The Face of God* in 2014, and his Stanton lectures delivered in Cambridge, UK,

in 2011, and published in the volume *The Soul of the World* in 2014, confronted these and further existential and metaphysical issues.

Yet, if you look at his minor works, you can find questions of the late lectures already appearing there. One of these issues concerns revelation, a classical problem of Christian theology, but one that appears in other major religions as well. Revelation concerns the appearance of that which is originally hidden (Wahlberg 2020, sct. 1). Within the framework of religious belief, of course, what is most importantly hidden is God himself. The paradigm case of revelation is therefore divine revelation, the appearance of the hidden God. This is an exceptional experience, one, however, of which we often read reports, already in the Bible. While Scruton's belief is itself an open question, it is obvious that his philosophical language does not allow him direct access to supernatural or transcendental experiences (see the critical literature in Bryson 2016).

As a skeptical analytic philosopher, Scruton connected to the Hume–Kant line of enquiry in epistemology. He did not want to trespass the dividing line separating philosophy from theology. For him, therefore, there was no direct route to become acquainted with the transcendental realm. Yet, he had much say about certain types of human experiences, which seem to point beyond themselves. He called these experiences “moments of revelation”. These moments were related to the accounts of traditional Christian divine revelation, but for him, revelation was not, strictly speaking, an issue of religious belief. Rather, revelation for Scruton was a real experience that referred to something that could not be directly grasped either sensually or in philosophical terms. In other words, it was an experience of “effing the ineffable”.

Of course, ineffability or incomprehensibility is the major feature of God in the theological discourse. His kingdom is not of this world; in other words, from a human, earthly perspective, he is hidden. Divine revelation made it possible for humans, whose reason could not reach directly God, to turn the ineffable effable. Scruton's proposal is that a similar structure characterizes our experience of natural and artistic beauty, on the one hand, and of our personal exchanges, on the other. They are exceptional moments that enable humans to catch sight of something that is “beyond the window that can never be opened”. In other words, moments of revelation enable humans to see beyond the natural order, even if they will not be able to conceptually account for that experience. Scruton's effort is, however, that through a phenomenological description of the experience itself, we can also provide a somewhat vague, but philosophically true, account of what is experienced in these moments.

Let me explain what this essay aims to address. In what follows, I try to trace the thought process that led Scruton through theologico-philosophical concepts like grace, *shekhinah*, or real presence and gift to the final concepts of self-sacrifice and gratefulness for our life. By focusing on these closely linked set of concepts, I intend to show two things. First, I address the astonishing similarities between the phenomenological descriptions of the human experience at moments of revelation, and the theological account of divine revelation, as an encounter between the human being and God. And as a consequence, secondly, I would like to show that his effort in explaining and presenting the ineffable is to show that esthetic experience is indeed able to take over the role of religious experience: it can show how we can catch sight of that which is beyond the glass of our closed “window”. All in all, this analysis aims to show that for Scruton the issue is not the art critic's theoretical or the practicing artist's technical question: how to make the ineffable expressed. Rather, he wants to show our ability to pass beyond the ordinary, or, to put it differently, to witness the sacred in our lives. As Scruton is rather hesitant to directly address metaphysical issues, I hope this analysis will help readers to become closer to his original intentions and to understand what he thought about the issue of meaningfulness in human life.

When addressing this issue, I am concerned with a theme that was repeated in the collection of essays on Scruton's religious philosophy, edited by James Bryson. There, most of the authors who addressed it, among others Dooley, Cottingham, O'Hear, and Robert Grant, called it Scruton's view on the sacred. O'Hear, however, talks about the great

absence, quoting as one of his mottos R.S. Thomas, who wrote: “It is this great absence/that is like a presence, that compels/me to address it without hope/of a reply” (O’Hear 2016, p. 47). This is close enough, yet not identical to our theme in this paper: he talks about the absence of God, while our topic is how to make sense of real sensual experiences that seem to point beyond the empirical world. As Scruton saw it, O’Hear and Cottingham were rather critical of Scruton’s relevant discussion in his two late books mentioned above, claiming that his philosophy is “over-aestheticized” (Scruton 2016, p. 259). Scruton felt Dooley and Grant were the closest to his position among the authors of that collection. What follows extends in that direction, elaborating on Scruton’s own claim: “I see aesthetic representations, and the work of the imagination generally, as fundamental to the task of putting philosophy to the test” (Scruton 2016, p. 259).

Scruton’s otherwise clear and distinct philosophical style in these two essays is open to the Continental, phenomenological tradition; it is rather hesitant and at some places deliberately left vague and “sfumato”. This is why the present explications of his thoughts can be welcomed by the readers of his essays. The present interpretation starts with some definitional work, including the concepts of the ineffable and the transcendental. After that, we will take four exemplary “moments of revelation” offered by Scruton. I hope to show the variety of those moments and their aesthetic appeal. In the second part of this paper, other concepts are discussed, which, it will be claimed, when viewed together, can shed light on the way Scruton proposes to imagine the effing of the ineffable. I hope to help the reader to see Scruton’s effort to connect the different parts of this conceptual field, in order to talk about something of which you can never hope to present straightforwardly in terms of rationally argued philosophical claims. In so doing, I try to respond to Scruton’s own authorial ambition, which suggests that in this case going around the issue promises more success than a face-to-face attack.

2. The Concept of the Ineffable and the Transcendental

Why does Scruton have a fascination with the term ineffable? Let me try to hint at the causes of his interest in ineffability and his own understanding of the term. As I read him, Scruton makes an effort to refer to a medieval Christian mystical discourse. The original Latin term *Ineffabilis* was the *epitheton ornans* of God: Ineffable Creator, this is how Aquinas addresses God in his famous prayer: *Creator ineffabilis* (PIUS XI 1923). The issue remains with philosophy.² A volume on Milton and the ineffable identifies several phases of the conceptual history of the term in European intellectual history (Reisner 2009, chp. 1). It starts with the famous scene of Moses and the burning bush from the Old Testament, in which Moses wants to hear the name of the Lord, but his wish is denied (“I AM THAT I AM”). Plato and Aristotle follow the Biblical reference from the golden age of Greek philosophy, once again followed by the Christian experience, referring to Philo and Clement, Plotinus and Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and the pseudo-Dionysius. This grappling with the ineffable continues in the high Middle Ages of Maimonides and Aquinas, and then is taken up by Milton through humanism and reformation. These are all parts of that grand narrative that must have been at the back of Scruton’s mind when he addressed the issue of the ineffable in two different pieces. According to Bob Grant, Scruton dealt with the problem of the ineffable in his essay on Beckett in *Aesthetic Understanding*.³ The term also comes up in his vast volume of music theory, entitled *The Aesthetics of Music* (Scruton 1997, pp. 360–64). In that book, Scruton attempts to explain how we make sense of music and considers whether this form of art might be able to surpass cognitive knowledge, which is based on concepts. Scruton’s phenomenological type of description is quite successful, especially when he combines it with an analysis of empathy, a combination which is particularly successful.⁴ In his later works on music, he thus tried to broaden his focus, and in further writings on the problem of ineffability, he directly connected themes of music with the horizon of what we traditionally call the transcendental.

In what follows, I will analyze what Scruton calls moments of revelation in his mature theory of ineffability. He addresses the issue in two rather peripheral pieces, both with

the title “Effing the Ineffable”.⁵ In particular, I will take four examples he provides of such moments: natural beauty, the beauty of painting, the beauty of music, and personal encounters. Before that, however, a section will discuss Scruton’s distinction between the two senses of the term transcendental and consider certain attitudes that he finds crucial to properly understanding the transcendental dimension of ineffability.

According to Scruton, there is both a theological use of the term transcendental and a philosophical one. In the former usage, “God is said to transcend the world of creation and also to transcend our attempts to define or describe Him” (Scruton, *Effing 2*).⁶ In the second, “typified by Kant”, “certain objects of thought transcend the conditions laid down by the understanding, and can therefore be thought only negatively, as lying beyond thought, so to speak” (Scruton, *Effing 2*). In the work referenced in the footnote to the earlier quote, Scruton adds a third type to his distinction between the different kinds of the transcendental, which he calls “the aesthetic idea” of the transcendental, but this use of the term does not seem to play a role in his more elaborate discussions of the ineffable. This is all the more interesting, given the fact that he is genuinely interested in the ineffability of our experience of the work of art.

It is also interesting to consider that, after distinguishing between the theological and the philosophical uses of the term transcendental, he reunites these two usages. According to Scruton, neither Kantian philosophers nor theologians in search of God are ready to take seriously the norm embedded in the term transcendental, since they keep talking about something about which they claim we cannot talk, and in this way, they commit what can be labelled a performative mistake.

By drawing this distinction, he enters the discussion about the transcendental—as a Kantian philosopher, but one with a committed philosophical quest to find signs of the world beyond the window.

3. Ineffable Human Emotions

The other preparatory task it is necessary to complete is to examine the particular emotional states Scruton offers as illustrations of what he calls ineffable, and yet not transcendental human experiences. These are the examples he provides: “A nameless fear, an indefinable joy, a *je ne sais quoi*, an inexpressible longing, and so on” (Scruton, *Effing 2*). What exactly makes them ineffable? It is due to them “containing some core content that we cannot put into words, since all words fall short of it”. Unfortunately, before he can provide us with an account of why he chose these particular experiences, Scruton is captivated by a linguistic idea: he merges two of these terms, coining the expression of “nameless joy”, which, he recalls, comes from Beethoven’s opera *Fidelio*. Why does this lead to a deadlock in his argument? It is because, although Scruton calls the two protagonists of the duet, Florestan and Leonora, “visitors from the transcendental”, he argues that the music itself cannot be regarded as “effing the ineffable”. Why not? Because the opera has a libretto, which puts words in the mouth of the protagonists. Those words might not afford full credit to the real feeling of that nameless joy, and indeed words hardly ever provide a full account of our experiences. On the other hand, even with words, does Beethoven not offer us here an experience which is exceptional? Does the combination of music and the narrative not weave a rich tapestry of that world beyond the window?

And what should we make of Scruton’s reference to “*je ne sais quoi*”?⁷ Well, the term has a long prehistory, which can be traced back to antiquity, in the Latin *nescio quid*, or its often-used medieval version: *non sapio quid*. Early on, it became associated with the concepts of *gratia*, *venustas*, and *pulchritudo* (Molnár 2015, p. 44). Adopted from Descartes and the Cartesians, it later became a technical term of the discourse of taste in the early modern context. In the history of aesthetic thought, it is usually attributed to Dominique Bouhours, although a recent Oxford DPhil thesis on the prehistory and meaning of the term also suggests as major contributors to the development of the term the names of Montaigne, Pascal, and Corneille (Scholar 2002, pp. 182, 190, 257). It is useful to concentrate here on Bouhours, however, for whom *je-ne-sais-quoi* was indeed an important notion of

aesthetic thought. Indeed, his understanding of the term is explained exactly by the term ineffability. In his *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (Bouhours 1671) "(h)is interlocutors. . . compare the *je ne sais quoi* in the arts to the ineffable in the contemplation of nature or in Catholic theology" (Tsien and Morizot 2024, sct. 2). Bouhours was a Jesuit, and therefore his interpretation of the aesthetic use of the term was hardly possible without reference to the "transcending" and "the ineffable" in the context of contemplation and theology. As we shall see, Scruton's own discussion of ineffability to a large extent also concentrated on the experience of enjoying works of art.

In fact, this was for very good reasons. Beyond the connection that has been well established historically between the perception of art and the *je ne sais quoi* of religious contemplation and theology, Scruton argued for an even stronger bond. In this conception, esthetics actually takes over some of the roles of theology, which, he claims, is dead by now. He argues in favor of this thesis in a study he published in 2005 (Scruton 1989). Its argument is clear and straightforward: "It is through aesthetic contemplation that we confront that aspect of the world which was the traditional concern of theology" (Scruton 1989, p. 27). In Scruton's reading, this is the real novelty of Kant's new science of esthetics, as presented in *The Critique of Judgement* (1790). Scruton views both the sentiments of beauty and that of the sublime as windows on the transcendent or, as he terms it, "intimations of the transcendental" (Scruton 1989, p. 27). In the case of beauty, it is through a sense of the "purposiveness and intelligibility" of what surrounds us, while in the case of the sublime, we "seem to see beyond the world, to something overwhelming and inexpressible in which it is somehow grounded" (Scruton 1989, p. 27). According to Scruton's own, strongly Kantian position, we cannot know anything conceptually about the transcendent and that is why, as he flatly states: "theology is dead" (Scruton 1989, p. 27). At the same time, we can experience religious truth through our feelings of beauty: "it is in our feeling for beauty that the content, and even the truth, of religious doctrine is strangely and untranslatably intimated to us" (Scruton 1989, p. 27). It is important to recognize that this intimation is untranslatable—in other words, it is not transferable into conceptual language, the only human form to acquire knowledge in the Kantian paradigm.

It is worth recalling, however, that for Scruton himself, feeling is not something that lacks the ability to acquire knowledge. From very early on, Scruton argued against the Kantian separation of feeling or sentiment and knowledge or understanding. This is why the experience of beauty can, in fact, convey intelligibility. This leads Scruton to the striking conclusion: "*The Critique of Judgment* situates the aesthetic experience and the religious experience side by side, and tells us that it is the first, and not the second, which is the archetype of revelation" (Scruton 1989, p. 27).

4. Aquinas in the Background

Having reached that point, we can finally turn to the texts directly addressing the ineffable. The first question is this: why does Scruton start the shorter essay on the ineffable with a reference to Aquinas? St. Thomas Aquinas was the paradigm case of a theologian who hoped to approach God and the transcendental through the exercise of reason. Of course, the medieval philosopher is not Scruton's main focus. In a way, in fact, he repaints the figure of Aquinas—he presents him almost as a medieval religious mystic. He recalls that Aquinas "ended his short life. . . in a state of ecstasy, declaring that all that he had written was of no significance beside the beatific vision that he had been granted, and in the face of which words fail" (Scruton Effing 1, p. 89). Scruton's narrative identifies some of the crucial concepts of the hagiographies of the mystics, including a "state of ecstasy", the denial of his earlier writings, a "beatific vision", and the way that "words fail" when trying to describe the beatific phenomenon. Certainly, we have textual evidence of Aquinas making the statement: "all that I have written seems like straw to me" (Davies 1993, p. 9). Indeed, when reconstructing this episode of St. Thomas' life, Benedict XVI calls this event a "supernatural revelation" (Benedict XVI 2010). He also provides a hint of the object of this revelation, when he says that it is only after our death that "God's greatness and beauty . . .

will be fully revealed to us in Heaven” (Benedict XVI 2010). This revelation of the greatness and beauty of God can easily be linked to Scruton’s sublime, a concept whose the roots lead back to the Neoplatonist rhetorical tract on the Sublime, attributed to Longinus. It identifies the sublime as being characterized by a specific style of writing, both elevated and simple. It took some time for this notion to evolve to a state where it meets the requirements of the beatific vision Aquinas experienced. The most important shift is that, while Longinus talks about words that can trigger this effect, a revelation is by definition a vision, like that of the burning bush seen by Moses. The sublime is transformed, however, from a purely rhetorical device to an esthetic quality by the time of Boileau’s translation of Longinus (Doran 2015, 97ff).

5. Four “Moments of Revelation”

After these preparations, let us turn to the four moments of revelation that Scruton provides as illustrations of what he means by the term revelation. All but the last example are taken from the shorter essay. He provides them as examples “that something can be meaningful, even though its meaning eludes all attempts to put it into words” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 91). The three examples are, in fact, rather commonplace ones, sometimes even approaching kitsch. “Fauré’s F sharp Ballade is an example: so is the smile on the face of the Mona Lisa; so is the evening sunlight on the hill behind my house” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 91).

A piece of music, the best-known part of an all too famous painting, and a natural landscape scene, made somewhat sentimental by the sunset—these are Scruton’s examples of esthetic appeal leading to moments of revelation. Two of them are works of art, while one belongs to the category of what Scruton calls natural beauty in his slim book entitled *Beauty* (Scruton 2009, pp. 58–79). However, these particular examples do not seem to be especially strong, esthetically. The important question, therefore, is this: how could the experiences of these visual and audible effects be seen as moments of revelation? Scruton uses the term ineffability, the transcendental, and moments of revelation interchangeably. But what exactly does he mean by these terms?

Successful works of art, no doubt, have the power to take the onlooker’s breath away. If that is the distinguishing mark of a successful work of art, perhaps Scruton has something approaching the Aristotelian concept of *catharsis* in mind. This concept referred, in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, to the exceptionally strong artistic effect of a work of art, which can cleanse or rather purify the soul of its bad feelings in a way that the intellect cannot achieve. Does that mean that the artistic examples of the ineffable refer to *catharsis* through artistic effects that are irrational or ineffable? Or, to make a weaker claim, is he referring to an Aristotelian kind of cognition by emotions? Early in his career as a philosopher of aesthetics, Scruton put forward a theory of the emotional impact of art, where he argued that emotions can have epistemological functions, which means that they can indeed help us to understand things and even human beings, even if their epistemology is non-conceptual.⁸ It is the imagination rather than the intellect that is the motor of emotional cognition (for a useful commentary on this aspect of Scruton’s aesthetics, see Hamilton and Zangwill 2012).

In these two pieces of writing on the ineffable, he takes another route, although he refers to the distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how”, which was made famous by Ryle and Oakeshott, and which Scruton has good reason to connect to the Aristotelian distinction of theoretical and practical knowledge. As Scruton argues: “Someone who knows what to do in some difficult situation certainly has a cognitive possession that the merely bewildered lack: but it is not a possession that could be stated as a collection of truths” (Scruton, Effing 2).

But why does he not extend further in this direction, claiming that the ineffable experience is in fact a reference to the use of emotional intelligence or embodied knowledge, the sort of knowledge which helps us to ride a bicycle, cook, or ski? For Scruton, the opposite direction also looked very promising. The opposite of practical knowledge, acquired by knowing what to do, is the ability to contemplate. “Music is not an invitation

to action, but an object of contemplation” (Scruton, Effing 2). Scruton explicitly compares this aspect of instrumental music to “the Hindu and Buddhist meditation techniques, detaching our thoughts and emotions from the things of this world, and directing them to a place of tranquillity, where we encounter ‘the peace that passeth understanding’” (Scruton, Effing 2).

This quote is, of course, from the Bible. It is in Paul’s letter to the Philippians.⁹ The statement suggests that the believer can find a peace of mind that surpasses all other forms of peace to the extent that, in fact, it surpasses understanding, as it is based on the love of God, who created us and whom we are unable to fully understand. This is a state-of-mind, a certain calmness, the result of a similar psychological process as the Aristotelian notion of *catharsis*, but it seems to be connected to Christian belief. In the shorter version of Scruton’s essay, the Biblical quote is connected both to human hope, compared there both to the way “angels hope” and to John’s Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation. “We hope as angels hope: with our thoughts fixed on the moment when the things of this world fall away and we are enfolded in ‘the peace which masses understanding’” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 92). That Scruton is referring at this point to the Apocalypse is made obvious by the fact that he invokes the angels, recurring figures in the Holy Bible.

6. The Phenomenology of the Ineffable

The issue is dealt with again in the penultimate paragraph of the shorter piece, where Scruton is emboldened enough to assert that “the world beyond the window” is “real and important” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 91). It is just before that brave claim that he provides a phenomenological account of the experience of moments of revelation. “(I)t is as though, on the winding ill-lit stairway of our life, we suddenly come across a window through which we catch sight of another and brighter world—a world to which we belong but which we cannot enter” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 91). Scruton claims that those who deny the reality of this experience of the world beyond the window are lacking “an aspect of the human condition” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 91). According to Scruton, those who are unable to see that other world are, in an important sense, lacking something important. This is because humans “love each other as angels love”, and they hope, as he has already suggested “as angels hope” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 92). Evidently, love and hope belong, along with faith, to the theological virtues in Christianity, to Paul’s triad of faith, love, and hope. Importantly, Scruton does not mention faith here, yet that might be because to be silent about it seems to him to accept its ineffability. It is worth recalling in this regard how Aquinas characterized the theological virtues: “Hence it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness, even as he is directed to his connatural end, by means of his natural principles, albeit not without Divine assistance. Such like principles are called “theological virtues”” (Aquinas 1920, Prima Secundae Partis, Q. 62). They come up in the *Summa* in the context of that kind of human happiness that surpasses human nature. The theological virtues serve exactly this function, “first, because their object is God, inasmuch as they direct us aright to God: secondly, because they are infused in us by God alone: thirdly, because these virtues are not made known to us, save by Divine revelation, contained in Holy Writ” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 92).

By referring to human love and human hope as being comparable to how angels love and hope, Scruton goes as far as he can to say something about what he calls moments of revelation in human life, in other words, about the world beyond the window.

His next move is, in fact, a withdrawal from this position. In the last paragraph, he considers whether such moments of revelation can be seen as pointing to the “cause of the world”? His answer is that, when he does not directly address the issue, the answer seems to be yes, but when he tries to provide a philosophically satisfactory answer, he has to admit that “there is no path, not even this one, to the cause of the world” (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 92). At least not one that would recognizably be an exercise in philosophy. Therefore, he finishes the short essay on this note, referring this time not to Wittgenstein, whose *Tractatus* was mentioned earlier, but to Aquinas, with whom he started the very

short essay. The difference between these two authors is that, while Wittgenstein, after an interval, returned to philosophy, Aquinas finally gave up writing his *Summa* and died soon afterwards, happily approaching the moment when he entered that final peace of mind that surpasses understanding.

Yet, Scruton has a more restrained theory about our moments of revelation. This is the fourth example of such transcendental moments that he presents in the longer version of the essay: his account of intersubjective human relationships, “our knowledge of each other” (Scruton, Effing 2). When human beings meet and engage in interactions with each other, they do not simply deal with the other as physically existing bodies normally would interact with each other. I address my words and looks to you, but not simply to a visible body, but “to the thing that addresses me from your words and looks” (Scruton, Effing 2). In this sense, my words and looks “overshoot their target”, “seeking out the I in you” (Scruton, Effing 2).

This is a theme that has always interested Scruton—notably in his book on *Sexual Desire* (Scruton 1986, chp. 1, 1ff), but even more crucially in *On Human Nature* (Scruton 2017, pp. 50–70), as well as in his two books on metaphysics, *The Face of God* (Scruton 2014a, chp. 4, pp. 73–112) and *The Soul of the World* (Scruton 2014b, chp. 5, pp. 96–114). The I–you relationship is, of course, a frequently returning topic in 20th century philosophy. Scruton seems to be influenced by the phenomenology of Brentano and Husserl (Dooley 2024, p. 19) and by the rather unprecedented thought of Heidegger, but his terminology reveals that Buber’s famous analysis of the I–Thou relationship also had an impact on him. The point he wants to make is that the “I” of the other that “I” encounter in an intersubjective relationship is beyond the empirical reality that is dealt with by the natural sciences. It is “an individual centre of consciousness, located nowhere visible, but standing as though on the horizon of our shared world”. He identifies this experience of the “I” of the other as “a primary experience of the ‘transcendental’”—“which I cannot reach because to reach it I would have to be you” (Scruton, Effing 2). The meeting with this “I”, which is unattainable, is for him the real moment of revelation. As he puts it: “The encounter with the other is like a revelation. And the meaning of the revelation is expressed to action, not in thought” (Scruton 1993, p. 166).

Scruton admits, at this point, a further influence: that of the phenomenological description of the human face by Emmanuel Levinas. He refers to two major concepts used in this context by the French philosopher, who incidentally had an Eastern European Jewish background—which makes him all the more relevant for Scruton, who took a special interest in that cultural context. These concepts, quoted by him, are “visitation and transcendence”. In his Stanton lectures, he had already mentioned these two terms together, in connection with Levinas. It is, in fact, in his Gifford Lectures that he explains the terms more precisely. In the chapter on *The Face of the Person*, he takes as his starting point the recurring references in the Psalms to “the hope of a face-to-face encounter” with God, and then he turns to Levinas, and his theory of the Other. The face is ‘in and of itself visitation and transcendence’ (Levinas 2003, p. 44). According to Scruton “by this he seems to mean that the face comes into our shared world from a place beyond it, while in some way remaining beyond it, always just out of reach” (Scruton 2014a, p. 74). Scruton is aware of the fact that the language Levinas uses does not meet the “*clara et distincta*” requirements of philosophy—instead, he belongs to “the tradition of the prophets and mystics” (Scruton 2014a, p. 74).

7. Visitation and *Shekhinah*

Scruton’s aim is to “translate” that insight into the language of philosophy, based on concepts. He expresses this search in the following terms: “Seeing a face as a face means going beyond the physical features in some way, to a whole that emerges from them as a melody emerges from a sequence of pitched sounds, and which is, as Levinas aptly says, both a visitation and a transcendence” (Scruton 2014a, p. 78). The expression is apt, because the term visitation means being visited by something that is otherwise beyond oneself.

Something shines through the face that is not there. Speaking in the first-person singular, Scruton provides the following phenomenological description of the phenomenon of a face: “I lie *behind* my face, and yet I am present in it, speaking and looking through it at a world of others who are in turn both revealed and concealed like me. My face is a boundary, a threshold” (Scruton 2014a, p. 78). A face is the moment of revelation of oneself to the other, while it also conceals it, forever. In this sense, it is the window that can never be opened. In the I–you encounter, both a revelation and a concealment of the “I” is happening, when viewed from the perspective of the other—and vice-versa. In this sense, intersubjective communication is nothing less than a moment of revelation.

While the notion of visitation is connected to the Bible, Scruton takes another concept from Judaism, which is not present in the Bible, although it is alluded to in a number of places in it (Orr 1915). This is the term *shekhinah*, or real presence, meaning the presence (dwelling or settling) of God (Unterman et al. 2007, pp. 440–44). This is, apparently, the only experience that can satisfy that hunger for the transcendent, which defines the human being according to Scruton. He claims that this hunger lies at the center of the religious experience, of “the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*” referred to by Rudolf Otto in his work *The idea of the Holy*. Otto’s original interest was in the holy or the sacred (*das Heilige*), which he identified as numinous, and the term *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* was meant to describe the experience of the individual when confronting that phenomenon of a revelation of the transcendent.

8. Grace, Gift, and Love

In these essays, Scruton seems to borrow language both from Christianity (the Grace of God) and anthropology (a kind of gift). This revelation is “a kind of gift, for which we cannot ask since we lack words to summon it. Hence, in usual religious parlance, it is identified as one manifestation of the Grace of God” (Scruton, Effing 2).

There are two important loci where Scruton discusses the relationship between gift and grace in a more detailed fashion. One is *The Soul of the World*, where he largely remains within the framework devised by René Girard. He only modifies Girard’s theory to the extent that he shifts the focus from sacrificial violence to those “sacred moments”, “in which the gift idea breaks through” (Scruton 2014b, p. 182). For our purposes, however, the other elaboration of the theme is more relevant. This appears in the last chapter of the book *The Face of God*, a chapter itself entitled “The Face of God”. Scruton’s argument starts out from the perception of being as a gift. Not only in Christianity, but in all religions, this is a foundational idea. That sense of being as a gift is closely connected to the idea of grace: “all our sacred texts seem to point in the same direction, affirming that God’s relation to the world as a whole, and to each of us in particular, is one of *giving*” (Scruton 2014a, p. 169). Beside referring to the Anglican, Catholic, and the Muslim ways of expressing that thought, he also recalls a Hebrew term that, he argues, denotes “God’s concern for us” and “his abundance of gifts” (Scruton 2014a, p. 169).

The next step is to connect the idea of a gift with that of love—in the Christian tradition, of course, and in particular, in the New Testament. By this, Scruton means the Greek concept of *agapé*, which translates into Latin as *charitas*. This kind of love is “received as a gift” and is shared by humans among themselves (Scruton 2014a, p. 169). He makes reference to C. S. Lewis’s *The Four Loves*, and among them, “gift-love” in particular (Lewis 1960). In Lewis’s scheme, *agapé* as gift-love contrasts with need-love, on the one hand, and on the other hand, with *storge*, *philia*, and *eros*.¹⁰ Scruton connects Lewis with two nineteenth-century German thinkers. One of them is Goethe, who in *Faust* presents Mephistopheles as the spirit of negation; gift-love is the direct opposite of that principle, “the spirit that always affirms, by following the path of gift and sacrifice” (Scruton 2014a, p. 169). The other thinker is Hegel, from whom he takes the expression of the two moments of the religious frame of mind: “the moment of communion, and the moment of gift” (Scruton 2014a, p. 171). If being itself is a gift for a religious person, the “moment of gift” needs to play an important part in her life. To express thanks for that gift leads Scruton to draw attention to “the gathering

together of the community in the moment of thanks" (Scruton 2014a, p. 171). In other words, religious belief requires an expression of thanks for the gift of being together with others, of being with the community. In the same way, during mass, we return God's gift to us by a gift we offer to Him. He calls this the "moment of sacrifice" and characterizes it as a moment of unity, identifying "a mysterious feeling of unity that is experienced by the worshippers at this moment" (Scruton 2014a, p. 172). The moment of the sacrament leads him to the idea of "sacred moments", of which he says: "All sacred moments are moments of gift—of gift revealed as *the way things are*" (Scruton 2014a, p. 172). In other words, sacred moments are also moments of revelation—revealing the real ontological status of a gift.

To understand the nature and role of gift in human life, it is also useful to consider an important part of Scruton's analysis of Wagner's *Parsifal* (Scruton 2021, chp. 4). In the summarizing chapter of Scruton's posthumous book, he argues that Wagner shows that the greatest gift is self-sacrifice. It is, therefore, only natural that we search for opportunities to return that gift, by our own act of self-sacrifice. When we are able to understand "the supreme sacrifice that once was made on our behalf", "like Parsifal, we take up our cross" (Scruton 2021, p. 106). The figure of Parsifal illustrates that humans are also able to offer their suffering as a gift (Scruton 2021, p. 108). For humans, too, it is through love that this potential opens up, through which we can both offer ourselves to the other, and experience in ourselves consolation (Scruton 2021, p. 111). This experience involves an existential relevance: in the loving act that we perform, we are reacting to a calling, which invited us to return the love of God. Through *agapé*, we are able to experience a kind of unity with the other, as our neighbor.

However, we also experience in ourselves something that is beyond our own capacities, the "eternal in man" (Scruton 2021, p. 114).¹¹ *Agapé* leads us to cross the boundaries of our own individuality. Witnessing the "transcendent sympathy" of God, as expressed by "Christ's death on the cross", we are able to feel compassion with and for others. Listening to Wagner's *Parsifal*, a supreme work of art, we ourselves are able to enter "an emotion that is pure giving, and which asks for nothing in return" (Scruton 2021, p. 116). A work of art of this type helps us to understand the work of love, but it does so by retelling in its own way the Biblical narrative in the context of Wagner's own mythical narrative. It thus allows us to arrive at the insight that "Like the Redeemer, a human being can make a gift of his suffering, say to himself and to the other that it is *for your sake* that I suffer this" (Scruton 2021, p. 116). By overcoming one's own limitations, the individual will be able to reach out to the other, experiencing the ultimate dependence of human beings on each other, the background to the command to love your neighbor. "In this way compassion is a way of learning the deep truth about the moral world, the truth that other people are essentially connected to us, and if salvation is to come to us, it must come through them" (Scruton 2021, p. 120).

9. The Revelation of God and Self-Revelation

This is a suitable point to return to the line of argument Scruton pursues in his earlier book, *The Face of God*. He suggests that the crossing of the individual's boundary is itself a sort of revelation: "Acts of self-revelation appear in the world of objects and causes as revelations: the I that gives itself opens a window in the scheme of things through which we glimpse the light beyond" (Scruton 2014a, p. 172). On this occasion, Scruton does not hesitate to identify the source of that light beyond: "the I AM that spoke to Moses" (Scruton 2014a, p. 172).

According to Scruton, the revelation of God is comparable to the way we reveal ourselves—"by coming to the threshold of himself" (Scruton 2014a, p. 172). Yet, the reader needs some further explanation. It should be obvious by now how the human being is revealed—in the human face. But how does God reveal himself? According to Scruton, Christianity's answer to this question of revelation is incarnation. "God, in the person of Christ, is present among us" (Scruton 2014a, p. 172). The incarnated God, Jesus Christ, was able to take "the sufferings of the world on himself". God needed to take on an incarnated

form in order to be able to suffer as humans do. By adopting the ability to suffer, “God could make a gift of himself” (Scruton 2014a, p. 173). In the Christian teaching, sacrifice points towards salvation, as the Bible teaches about the exemplary life of Jesus. This teaching helps human beings to understand that in earthly life sacrifice has a meaning (Scruton 2014a, p. 173). This connection between the Christian concept of incarnation, self-sacrifice, and suffering is something that Max Scheler had advocated previously. Scruton directly refers to Scheler’s “The meaning of Suffering” in a footnote, making it evident that in this phase of his intellectual development, he himself was also approaching Catholic social thought (Scheler 1992). On the other hand, he also emphasizes that the ideas presented do not depend on one’s religious belief or lack of it.

Jesus Christ’s suffering on the cross is offered for us, humans, irrespective of our intellectual alliances or mental landscapes. God’s sharing in the human destiny leads us to the insight that suffering can be a means to express our love for each other, through the act of self-sacrifice. It is an act of love to offer one’s suffering to another, in which act the human being reveals her real self. Therefore, Jesus Christ’s self-sacrifice is “merely a special case of the real presence of the human subject” (Scruton 2014a, p. 173). However, the fundamental question (how to experience the real presence of God) has not yet been answered, only postponed. God’s immediate presence is experienced in Christ’s self-sacrifice, made possible by incarnation. Yet, the philosophical problem of incarnation remains unresolved. Incarnation viewed from the perspective of philosophy is “every bit as puzzling and mysterious as the one that it set out to explain” (Scruton 2014a, p. 173). It is again a problem of transcendence: God is essentially metaphysical. How can a metaphysical entity like God reveal itself in our physical reality? The concept of incarnation serves to mediate between the world of causality and that of revelation of that which is beyond causality.

Scruton draws upon Wagner’s mythology to explain this paradoxical mediation. The opera *Die Walküre* presents Wotan, “king of the gods and lord of the world”, as omnipotent and yet missing two crucial dimensions that human beings possess: freedom and love. The two protagonists of the opera, Siegmund and Sieglinde, portray freedom—“the freedom to make a gift of oneself” (Scruton 2014a, p. 174). This freedom is the freedom to love, expressed in the form of a self-gift. Siegmund is ready to suffer and die as a gift to his lover, Sieglinde. This element of freedom and love, freedom to love, is missing from the gods. This is, in fact, why they need incarnation. According to Scruton, Wagner returns to this problem of divine incarnation, both in the third act of his opera *Walküre*, and in later works, such as *Tristan* and *Parsifal*. Already in the *Ring*, the novel philosophical idea is clear: “the gods achieve redemption only through accepting the condition of mortality, since only this renders them capable of sacrifice and the love” (Scruton 2014a, p. 176).

It is necessary to be mortal to be able to offer one’s life as a gift, as the expression of one’s love. One must also be mortal to freely chose suffering for another. Scruton emphasizes that self-sacrifice is the lesson that can be learned from Wagner’s opera, and he adds that it is also the lesson that the believer can learn from the Bible. How, then, does all this relate to revelation?

According to Scruton, the individual is able to reveal her true inner self through this act, through what Scruton calls the moment of gift. The moment of gift thus becomes a moment of revelation. This is because the innermost self of man is completely inaccessible. To make it apparent is only possible in the act of self-giving, when suffering helps the individual to overcome his own imprisonment in his animalistic side. Moreover, this love-motivated gift of self also enables the individual to discover the suffering of other living beings, human and non-human. Suddenly, the individual is able to discover that “we encounter the presence everywhere, in all that suffers and renounces for another’s sake” (Scruton 2014a, p. 177). Moments of self-sacrifice are moments of gift, and they are also moments of revelation, in the sense that the light of transcendence appears in the world of this-worldly gloom. Scruton was, in fact, paraphrasing some lines from the Bible: “And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light

rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday".¹² Scruton names this moment of sacrifice as the moment of revelation: "This is an act in which the I appears completely. It is also a revelation" (Scruton 2014a, p. 177). It is a revelation, in the sense that something comes forth, which is not available in this world. However, this something is not only the 'I', the self, the thing within the center of a human being. In fact, "In the moment of sacrifice people come face to face with God" (Scruton 2014a, p. 177). Due to the paradoxical nature of this event, people who achieve so far will also experience a moment of sacred awe. This reminds Scruton of epiphanies. He also connects it to the human experience of works of art. He argues that we also catch a glimpse "the transcendental realm" "in the sacred space of music" (Scruton, Effing 2).

10. No Way to Move Beyond

Scruton is interested in a further philosophical question. This is the issue of what could be labelled as the "ontological status" of the moments of revelation we are examining. He asks a pertinent question: if these moments really reveal something beyond, does it also explain the cause of the world? He is ready to admit that the world is more than a system of causes, and that "the world has a meaning and that meaning is revealed" (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 92). Yet, the final statement in both of the "Effing" essays is that there is no way to extend beyond the window. In one of the pieces, he concludes: "But no, there is no path, not even this one, to the cause of the world" (Scruton, Effing 1, p. 92). The other essay reaches a similarly negative conclusion about the possibility of the mediation between the physical world and the metaphysical: "But to say that they reach beyond the empirical to the transcendental is to misrepresent their way of working" (Scruton, Effing 2). There is no way to pass through the window.

11. Gift and Gratitude

Even so, Scruton's late philosophy does not leave us without consolation. This consolation comes from his ideas of "grace and gratitude". In a 2010 article bearing that title, he outlined his theory of grace and gratitude (Scruton 2010b).¹³ The line of argument of that piece is this: Our life is due to a grace of God, expressing love (*agap e*) towards us. We receive our life as a gift from God. What we need to do is to pass on that love towards our neighbors, the others. Human gift-giving is again something that is meaningful only if we compare it to God's gift. Otherwise, it would be less than rational: a simple logic of self-interest cannot explain it. And yet we do it, as *agap e-charitas* is part of our nature. My gift defines me, or in fact, it reveals me: "When I give something I am present in the gift: it comes from me and is a symbol and an out-growth of the free self that is the moral heart of me". This is, of course, the moment of revelation. Yet, this is not the end of the story here. Scruton adds: "The proper response to a gift, even a gift of charity, is gratitude". If the moment of revelation does not offer a breakthrough, as far as the revelation of the transcendental is concerned, it at least helps to awaken a sense of gratitude in the receiver. And it is through gratitude that we are able, if not to return, then at least to acknowledge God's love towards us, and assure the other that we are aware of the gift the other offered us, or of the suffering which is in fact a sign of self-sacrifice.

To become ready to be grateful is to learn the art of life, and Scruton himself personally became a master of that art. In what was probably his last published piece in his lifetime, he reviewed what happened to him in 2019. It was a hectic year, and he had to endure many difficulties, conflicts, and humiliations. He had to face a hate campaign and direct personal attacks on him, and he had to suffer the brutal progress of his cancer. Yet, in the midst of all that, his last paragraph is an expression of gratitude for his life: "Coming close to death you begin to know what life means, and what it means is gratitude" (Scruton 2019). Gratitude is the recognition of gift or grace—and the chance for the individual to pass through the window, in spite of all the certainties that it is impossible.

12. Conclusions

Although most of his readers took him as a conservative political philosopher, by the end of his life, Roger Scruton tried himself in almost the whole spectrum of philosophical enquiry, including a characteristic philosophical anthropology and aesthetics, which led him to the ultimate questions of human existence, well beyond the practical issues of politics. By that time a practicing Anglican, Scruton, however, never ventured to formulate his own philosophy of religion. As a skeptical analytic philosopher, he never crossed the line separating philosophy and theology. On the other hand, in his discussion of effing the ineffable, Scruton had his cogent answer to some of the vexing questions of epistemology and metaphysics, summarized in the issue how to learn something about what is beyond the window that cannot be opened up by our rational enquiry.

The present study showed two things in this connection. One is that Scruton had a well-defined philosophy of revelation, usually referred to in his works with the label “moments of revelation”. This is significant, as the teaching about revelation is a crucial part of the Christian teaching, as shown in the Old Testament in the scene of Moses and the burning bush, which means that its questions still fascinated Scruton. But the second point is that Scruton’s argument in the form of a phenomenological description of such moments is not about direct divine revelation. On the contrary, what he refers to as moments of revelation are special kinds of secular human experiences, including the reception of works of art and natural landscapes, as well as of the interactions with the other human being. These two sorts of experiences allow humans to catch sight of the realm beyond what human reason can directly know, without giving in to any irrational power or simplifying sorts of myth-making.

In two comparatively short essays, both entitled “Effing the Ineffable”, Scruton built on the medieval and early modern tradition of mystic cognition, as expressed in the contemporary expression *je-ne-sais-quoi*. He described four different “moments of revelation”, moments when he thought we were able to catch sight of what is beyond the horizon of our conceptually secured cognition. Partly through intimate personal encounters, partly through powerful esthetic experiences, these moments allow us to transcend the evidential limits of ordinary reflective knowledge. His phenomenological description moves from a conceptual analysis of the experience to its implications for the meaning of human life, even in a post-Christian context. When we turn ourselves into a gift in certain forms of love or in self-sacrifice, we are able to prove that we are more than what we seem to be, a special species of animal, as he suggested. Similarly, when we recognize another person’s love towards us, we recognize that there is something beyond what the other looks like. We can directly encounter through an exchange with the other her/his real personality, the something that is beyond the face or the body. In these forms of (self-)transcendence, just as much as in the subversive experience of a work of art, we obtain a glimpse of the other’s true self, in a dynamic process that leads from I to the Other, from (self-)gift to gratitude (for the other). In the gratitude for what we can give, instead of searching for what we can obtain, we transform our finite form of life into a form that involves moments of insight, when our horizon opens up, for a moment, to that of which nothing more can be said. Scruton’s inspired descriptions of these moments show us that these experiences of personal encounter and the perception of works of art, by turning the self towards the other, have the same structure as that of the relationship of the believer and the revealed God in divine revelation. This is why in the face of the other, either painted by an artist or as glimpsed in her personal presence, we can discover the face of God.

Funding: This research was conducted in the context of my research professor’s position at the University of Public Service, without external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- 1 For an overview of the oeuvre, see [Cosmos + Taxis \(2019\)](#); [Hörcher \(2023\)](#).
- 2 For its etymology, see “Ineffable”. *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ineffable> (accessed on 8 April 2024).
- 3 Robert Grant’s kind comment, in a private message. [Scruton \(1983\)](#), pp. 222–42).
- 4 For a more critical account of Scruton’s discussion of ineffability in [Scruton \(1997\)](#), see [Gunther \(2017\)](#), pp. 24–26).
- 5 Scruton. Effing the Ineffable (1) ([Scruton 2016/2021](#)), originally published online [Scruton \(2010a\)](#); Scruton: Effing the Ineffable (2) (a part of) an article whose published version I was not able to detect. <https://www.roger-scruton.com/homepage/about/music/understanding-music/187-effing-the-ineffable> (accessed on 12 February 2024).
- 6 We find a somewhat similar description in another chapter by Scruton: ‘the theological idea, according to which God is said to transcend our attempts to define or describe him’ in [Scruton \(2015\)](#), p. 76).
- 7 I am grateful to the academic editor of this special issue of *Religions* for drawing my attention to the prehistory of the term.
- 8 See his early essay [Scruton \(1971\)](#), pp. 25–100), as well as his edited PhD dissertation, [Scruton \(1974\)](#). I learnt about this early development of his thought from a study I had the chance to review.
- 9 Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, 4:7. Paul, of course, speaks of the peace of God. Beside Paul’s letter, Scruton also refers to the Prayer Book.
- 10 Scruton also distinguishes the four kinds of love in *Parsifal*, claiming there too that divine love is *agapé*, translated as *caritas* in the *Vulgate*. pp. 110–11.
- 11 Referring to the title of [Scheler \(1919\)](#).
- 12 Isaiah 58:10, King James’s Bible translation.
- 13 The quotations below come from this article, which has no pagination.

References

- Aquinas, Thomas. 1920. I.II., q. 62, a. 1. Of the Theological Virtues. In *Summa Theologiae (ST)*, 2nd and Revised ed. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne.
- Benedict XVI. 2010. General Audience, Saint Peter’s Square, Wednesday, June 2, Saint Thomas Aquinas. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100602.html (accessed on 12 February 2012).
- Bouhours, Dominique. 1671. *Entretiens d’Ariste et Eugène*. Paris: Mabre-Cramois, Translated as *The Art of Criticism*, 1705. Reprinted Delmar: Scholar’s Facsimiles & Reprints, 1981.
- Bryson, James, ed. 2016. *The Religious Philosophy of Roger Scruton*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cosmos + Taxis. 2019. Symposium on Roger Scruton’s Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition. vol. 6. Available online: <https://cosmosandtaxi.org/ct-634/> (accessed on 12 February 2024).
- Davies, Brian. 1993. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dooley, Mark, ed. 2009. *The Roger Scruton Reader*. New York: Continuum.
- Dooley, Mark. 2024. *Roger Scruton: The Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 2nd ed. London: Bloomsbury Continuum.
- Doran, Robert. 2015. *The Theory of the Sublime. From Longinus to Kant*. Boileau: The Birth of a Concept. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chp. 4.
- Gunther, York H. 2017. The Ineffable in Art: On What Can’t Be Said. *Literature and Aesthetics* 27: 17–36.
- Hamilton, Andy, and Nick Zangwill, eds. 2012. *Scruton’s Aesthetics*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Hörcher, Ferenc. 2023. *Art and Politics in Roger Scruton’s Conservative Philosophy*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 2003. *Humanism of the Other*. Translated by Nidra Poller. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Lewis, Clive Staples. 1960. *The Four Loves*. London: Geoffrey Bles.
- Molnár, Dávid. 2015. Dávid Molnár: A ficinói furorelmélet nescio quidje (The Nescio Quid of Ficino’s Frenzy Theory). *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle* 59: 43–56. Available online: https://www.academia.edu/26406225/A_ficin%C3%B3i_furorelm%C3%A9let_nescio_quidje_In_Magyar_Filoz%C3%B3fiai_Szemle_59_3_2015_pp_43_56_ (accessed on 12 February 2024).
- O’Hear, Anthony. 2016. The Great Absence. In *The Religious Philosophy of Roger Scruton*. Edited by James Bryson. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 47–56.
- Orr, James, ed. 1915. Entry for ‘Shekinah’. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Available online: <https://www.studydrive.net/encyclopedias/eng/isb/s/shekinah.html> (accessed on 12 February 2024).

- PIUS XI. 1923. Litterae Encyclicae Studiorum Ducem. In *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. vol. XV, pp. 309–26. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/la/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19230629_studiorum-ducem.html (accessed on 12 February 2024).
- Reisner, Noam. 2009. *Milton and the Ineffable*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scheler, Max. 1919. *Vom Ewigen in Menschen*. Religiöse Erneuerung. Leipzig: Der Neue Geist Verlag, vol. I.
- Scheler, Max. 1992. The meaning of Suffering. In *On Feeling, Knowing and Valuing*. Translated by Harold J. Bershady. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Scholar, Richard. 2002. The ‘Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi’: The Word and Its Pre-History. Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.
- Scruton, Roger. 1971. Attitudes, Beliefs and Reasons. In *Morality and Moral Reasoning: Five Essays in Ethics*. Edited by John Casey. London: Routledge.
- Scruton, Roger. 1974. *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind*. Edited. London: Methuen.
- Scruton, Roger. 1983. Beckett and the Cartesian Soul. In *The Aesthetic Understanding. Essays in the Philosophy of Art and Culture*. Manchester: Carcanet Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 1986. *Sexual Desire, A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic*. New York: The Free Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 1989. Modern Philosophy and the Neglect of Aesthetics. In *The Symbolic Order*. Edited by Peter Abbs. London: Routledge, pp. 22–34.
- Scruton, Roger. 1993. *Xanthippic Dialogues*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson.
- Scruton, Roger. 1997. Ineffability and Empathy. In *The Aesthetics of Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 2009. *Beauty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 2010a. Effing the Ineffable (2). *Big Questions Online*, November 4.
- Scruton, Roger. 2010b. Grace and Gratitude. *The American Spectator*, April 1.
- Scruton, Roger. 2014a. *The Face of God*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Scruton, Roger. 2014b. *The Soul of the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 2015. Music and the Transcendental. In *Music and Transcendence*. Edited by Ferdia J. Stone-Davis. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Scruton, Roger. 2016. No Through Road. In *The Religious Philosophy of Roger Scruton*. Edited by James Bryson. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 253–66.
- Scruton, Roger. 2016/2021. Effing the Ineffable (1). In *Confessions of a Heretic*. Introduced by Douglas Murray. Mirefoot: Notting Hill Editions, pp. 89–92.
- Scruton, Roger. 2017. *On Human Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 2019. My 2019. Despite everything, I have so much to be grateful for. *Spectator (UK)*, December 21.
- Scruton, Roger. 2021. *Wagner’s Parsifal. The Music of Redemption*. London: Penguin, Random House, UK.
- Tsien, Jennifer, and Jacques Morizot. 2024. 18th Century French Aesthetics. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2024 ed. Edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Stanford: Stanford University. Available online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/aesthetics-18th-french/> (accessed on 12 February 2024).
- Unterman, Alan, Rivka G. Horwitz, Joseph Dan, and Sharon Faye Koren. 2007. Shekhinah. In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. Edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Detroit: Macmillan Reference, vol. 18, pp. 440–44.
- Wahlberg, Mats. 2020. Divine Revelation. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2020 ed. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Available online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/divine-revelation/> (accessed on 12 February 2024).

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.