Aesthetics in Grief and Mourning: Philosophical Reflections on Coping with Loss by Kathleen Marie Higgins (review)

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The Review of Metaphysics, Volume 78, Number 2 (Issue No. 310), December 2024, pp. 354-356 (Review)

Published by The Philosophy Education Society, Inc.
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/rvm.2024.a947057*

immaterial and immortal. To prove the immortality of the person, the Thomist must respond to the Latin Averroists. Further, it could seem to the casual reader of Thomas that a particular that is not individuated by matter is its own species, like the angels. Yet, if individual humans each constituted their own species, then theological issues with redemption would quickly arise. Feser could greatly strengthen his defense of the Thomistic system by discussing Aquinas's conception of principles of individuation.

Moving to one of the final aspects of part four, it seems that Feser's treatment of the *post mortem* fixity of the will raises more questions than it answers (chapter 10). For one thing, disembodied human souls cannot acquire new information and, therefore, cannot change the orientation of their will. But for those souls in purgatory, it seems that they must change some aspect of their will (their proximate end), albeit not their ultimate end. It is not clear how the distinction between the proximate end and ultimate end of their will is to be teased out, as one must be changeable and the other must not. Yet, if the disembodied souls can change their proximate end while disembodied, why not also their ultimate end?

Second, it is not obvious how the resurrected bodies of the glorified and the damned no longer permit the will's end to be changed. Prior to death, the body is the condition that allows the will to change its ultimate end, and it would seem that once the resurrected body is acquired, the will can again change its end. To combat this, Feser claims that the body works for the soul, and that at death this process is complete, entailing that even with the resurrected body, the will can no longer change. There are two issues here. It does not follow from the observation that the body is ordered to work for the soul that the process of willing is completed after death and cannot change. Second, Feser's use of the term "body" refers to two different things: the body that we have now, and the *sôma pneumatikón* of Paul's eschatology. Even if the body we have now works for the soul, Feser's argument seems to rely on an equivocation because it also generalizes to the *sôma pneumatikón*, which is radically unlike the body we have now.

Doubtless, Feser's new book is a competent addition to the growing interest in scholastic philosophy of mind and situates Aquinas's views in the contemporary literature.—Jack Boczar, *Detroit*

HIGGINS, Kathleen Marie. *Aesthetics in Grief and Mourning: Philosophical Reflections on Coping with Loss*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2024. 248 pp. Cloth, $45.00—As embodied beings, we reconnect to the world and others in the process of mourning mainly by aesthetic means, by touching, hearing, seeing, smelling, moving around, and being corporeally affected by things, instead of merely contemplating loss in our

solitary minds. Higgins's book makes a great contribution to the philosophical literature on grief by meticulously exploring this aesthetic mode of human situationality as it is embodied in loss and grief.

Kathleen Marie Higgins's book has the twofold goal of describing the multifarious aesthetic aspects of a wide array of culturally varying personal and social practices surrounding the death of another person, on the one hand (chapters 1–2), and showing the numerous healing potentialities that these aesthetic practices may have in the process of mourning, on the other (chapters 4–7). Higgins understands the term "aesthetic" in a broad way and with reference to its original sense, that is, that which relates to the senses, instead of limiting it to specific aesthetic experiences that affect us with pleasure and that stem from our encounters with artworks. Her approach to aesthetics also foregrounds the "functional role" of artworks and aesthetic activity in ways that aesthetic practices serve a social or everyday practical function. This broad and functional approach to aesthetics enables her to capture the "aesthetic gestures" involved in many ordinary habits and cultural activities that exist around death, such as culturally varying rituals of the care of the dead, eulogies, obituaries, storytelling, building tombs and shrines, creating public arts and commemorative t-shirts, and so on.

In addition to demarcating these aesthetic aspects of dealing with the dead, another goal of Higgins's book, which constitutes more than half of the book (chapters 4–7), is to show the healing potentiality of these aesthetic practices, broadly understood as involvements with artworks and artistic practices as well as the above-mentioned more habitual aesthetic activities. However, before undertaking this task, Higgins first gives her account of what grief is and what it is like to be grieving (chapter 3). Her phenomenology of grief foregrounds the following phenomenal features: the disbelief and disorientation ("the inability to believe that the person is dead"), spatial confusion (frequent impression of the dead as spatially present because of the abundance of the affordances pointing to the lost person in one's familiar environment), temporal disturbances (the feeling of atemporality or stopping of time, and jumbling of past, present and future), disrupted motivation, altered self-impression, self-accusation and guilt feelings, and social alienation. Following her summary of different ontological and phenomenological characteristics of grief, Higgins dedicates the rest of the book to arguing that one's engagements with artistic activities and works provide various cognitive and affective sources for aesthetic modes of reassurance (chapter 4), reconnecting (chapter 5), communication (chapter 6), and transforming (chapter 7).

According to Higgins, aesthetic practices and artworks can be resources for reassurance at least in two different ways (chapter 4). First, given that the bereaved experiences the environing world of others and things as radically uncanny and unfamiliar, basic aesthetic and sensorial involvements with things can be a source of empowering feelings of material connectedness, support, and reassurance that the bereaved lacks. Simple appreciation and the feeling of touching, hearing, seeing,

and letting oneself be affected by the sensory objects may enable the bereaved to reconnect with the material world and cultivate trust in it. In the radical absence one experiences in the face of a loss, "[o]ne might attend to physical things with new eyes and ears and hands, regarding them now as fellow survivors in this strange new world." In addition to this more basic form of aesthetic activity of attending to the sensory objects, artistic activities and engagement with artworks can provide reassurance to the bereaved in various ways. According to Higgins, our previous engagements with artworks can be sources of reassurance insofar as they prepare us for unfamiliar scenarios and atypical experiences of temporality and teach us how to navigate tensions. Note this potentiality stems from the very act of being exposed to an artwork, which is a practice of engaging with an unfamiliar world, atypical temporality, and tension.

In addition to being sources of reassurance, artworks can be strong sources of reconnection as they facilitate connecting with others, with oneself, and with the deceased in a unique way. Higgins extensively expounds how music can be a source of reconnection with the world that is shaken by the loss. According to her, "[m]usic gets inside us and makes our experience seem profoundly personal, but we also experience it as shared (at least in principle)." Music generates an awareness of one's continued connection with the social world and disrupts the sense of temporal alienation from others. Hence, the participatory aesthetic activities, music being only one form, constitute "cumulative aesthetic practices" which can provide the bereaved with a strong feeling of being supported.

Artworks can also empower us by providing communicative sources to express or make sense of one's unutterable and aberrant feelings, by offering their readers with the tool to understand and communicate their feelings (chapter 6). Artworks can be "companions" in one's solitary feelings by enabling them to see that they are not alone in their feelings and by providing them with "resources for describing their experience in terms that others may understand."

Lastly, aesthetic practices can play significant roles in renewing one's relationship with the deceased (chapter 7). Artworks and aesthetic practices can be a source of meaningful ways of reconnecting with the dead by transforming our perception of our experience, by enabling us to make sense of an aspect of loss that was previously unable to make sense. Overall, these reconnections enable "bereaved individuals to experience themselves as agents, not merely passive victims of circumstances."

Higgins's book can be read as a counterargument to theories that try to understand emotions and human existence purely by mental concepts, neglecting the essential corporeality and affective situationality of human existence. Additionally, Higgins's book can be regarded as an argument for the significance of one's involvement with the inanimate object in the process of dealing with the loss in addition to the role of one's engagements with others and oneself.—Ahmet Aktas, *Purdue University*