Philosophy of Religion and Art

Edited by
Gregory E. Trickett and John R. Gilhooly

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To Ben and Meg.

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Preface

What, exactly, are we doing when we consider the philosophy of religion and art? How do these concepts relate to one another, and what happens when we put them into dialogue with each other? To help us have a full grasp of the project at hand, and not merely a superficial idea of it, let us make a short excursion into the etymology of these three words.

The word 'philosophy' comes to us from ancient Greek; its etymological history is relatively straightforward – even if the subject is not. Its components *philo* and *sophia* give us the root meaning "the love of wisdom."

'Religion' comes from the Latin *religionem*, referring to reverence and worship of the gods, with its deeper source in the word *religāre*: to bind up, to tie something together. Religion can thus, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, be "taken as 'that which ties believers to God.'"[1]

'Art' has barely changed its shape over the centuries, coming from Latin *ars*, and before that, from the Indo-European base **ar-*. Yet this short word carries the weight of many levels of meaning. We think of 'art' today as primarily meaning creative art, and usually visual in form, but the Oxford English Dictionary observes that "Although this is the most usual modern sense of *art* when used without any qualification, it has not been found in English dictionaries until the 19th century."[2] The older and more extensive use of the word 'art' is to mean "skill," tracing in turn back to meanings of "craftsmanship" and "knowledge."

We might then gather up these threads and say that in this volume, the contributors are aiming to practice the love of wisdom, by exploring how the practice of our faith binds us closer to God, and tracing the ways in which our knowledge finds expression in artistry, the crafting of things. This 'crafting' is theologically and philosophically significant. As J.R.R. Tolkien says in his seminal essay "On Fairy-stories," "we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker."[3] He was referring specifically to the

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[1]"Religion, n.," etymology. *Oxford English Dictionary*, oed.com.
[2]"Art, n.," definition 8a. *Oxford English Dictionary*, oed.com.
[3]J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tolkien On Fairy-stories*, ed. Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson (London: HarperCollins, 2014), 66.

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making of fantasy literature, but the observation is true on a larger scale as well. To *make* is a fundamentally and profoundly human act. The things that humans make include creative expressions like stories, paintings, music, films, and games, but also everything from architecture, gardening, carpentry, and cookery, to . . . philosophy. Recognizing that philosophers, just as much as writers and artists, are engaged in sub-creation, in making things in the image of our Maker, can help us engage in a mutually enriching collaboration among disciplines.

One of the greatest strengths of the imaginative arts is the availability of narrative and imagery to convey meaning. As I have written at some length elsewhere,[4] one of the fundamental problems of Christian apologetics (and catechesis, and discipleship) in the modern era is the *meaning gap*: when we try to communicate about the faith, we find that many key concepts are essentially a blank to our interlocutors, or are understood in shallow or distorted forms. The same problem exists for philosophers. What does it mean to talk about the soul, or the good life, or virtue and vice, or suffering and redemption, or even truth, goodness, or beauty, when these words have little or no substance attached to them? Literature and the arts – by which I mean a very broad spectrum of forms, including relatively recent forms such as graphic novels and video games – have the potential to draw people into an experience that offers something different from a propositional statement. The imaginative approach can help draw in someone who would otherwise never seriously consider doctrine or philosophy, and it can 'incarnate' abstract ideas so that a person can more deeply and fully engage with them. When imaginative expression provides meaning for a philosophical concept, that concept becomes significant: it then becomes worthwhile to ask the question "Is it true?"

Conversely, the thoughtful and sustained exploration of ideas and their implications, undertaken under the aegis of philosophy, helps to ensure that these imaginative expressions are grounded in truth. The goal of 'leading with beauty' is not simply to engage in aesthetic appreciation, but rather, as Bishop Robert Barron points out, is to enter into a movement "from the beautiful to the good to the true."[5] This is not to say that art must be explicitly didactic. Far from it. Rather, it is to suggest that good art and good philosophy are both in dialogue with reality – as it is, and as it could

[4]*Apologetics and the Christian Imagination: An Integrated Approach to Defending the Faith* (Emmaus Road, 2017).
[5]Robert Barron, "Evangelizing the Nones," in *Renewing Our Hope: Essays for the New Evangelization* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press: 2020), 24

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or should be – and therefore both are ultimately concerned with beauty, goodness, and truth.

Propositional statements about doctrine or philosophy by themselves will do little or nothing if people do not find them meaningful, and if they are not embodied in some way, in life or art. But equally, imaginative approaches need the bones and ligaments of specific ideas, doctrines, and philosophical claims, if they are to help people move toward the truth. By itself, an experience is simply an experience. To make sense of it, we must have an interpretive frame to understand the experience – what it means, and how it relates to or conflicts with what we believe. The lively interplay of imagination and reason, art and philosophy, helps to provide material and scaffolding for the building-up of ideas.

But as we were reminded by our earlier etymological exploration, we also have reason to be cautious. The OED points out that one thread of meaning for the word ‘art’ is “deceit,” “guile,” “artifice.” The making of things is a reflection of the *imago Dei* in human beings – but the ability to make things that are false, deceitful, even treacherous or toxic, is a reflection of the damage done to human nature by the Fall. Anything can become an idol – the creations of the intellect as much as the inventions of the imagination. As Tolkien notes:

> Fantasy can, of course, be carried to excess. It can be ill done. It can be put to evil uses. It may even delude the minds out of which it came. But of what human thing in this fallen world is that not true? Men have conceived not only of elves, but they have imagined gods, and worshipped them, even worshipped those most deformed by their authors’ own evil. But they have made false gods out of other materials: their notions, their banners, their monies; even their sciences and their social and economic theories have demanded human sacrifice.[6]

An intellect grounded in truth helps to guard against the excesses of the imagination, and a healthy and well-nourished imagination helps to guard the intellect from turning inward and becoming sterile, losing its connection to what is good.

This winding etymological path takes us to the heart of the endeavor in this volume. If we wish rightly to practice philosophy – *philo sophia*, the love of wisdom – then we should have our eyes open to the various ways and means by which wisdom can be discerned, and we should seek to love that toward which wisdom points. It is a fundamentally *integrated* endeavor, not limited to the intellect but engaging our emotions, our wills, and our actions.

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[6]Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories*, 66-67.

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Such an endeavor is by no means easy, for dis-integration is much more characteristic of our modern era. Reason and imagination are often viewed as incommensurable; philosophy is assumed to be the territory of the cold intellect, while art is treated as a pleasant extra at best, and religion is assumed to be merely one's personal preference. It is hard work to push back against these false assumptions, to reclaim a more integrated view of the human person, in which reason and imagination are both necessary human faculties, and to reclaim an understanding of religion as fundamentally being about truth. Hard work, yes, but necessary. We need to recover a more integrated view for the sake of the discipline of philosophy – and also because in doing so, we are also contributing to a more coherent, healthy, humane experience of life.

—Holly Ordway

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INTRODUCTION: PHILOSOPHY, ART, AND COVID

From television and movies to modern and classical galleries, art has had a definitive influence on culture. Likewise, religion has had its influence on art, from Dante's *Inferno* to Beethoven's *Fifth* and from *Jesus Christ Superstar* to Kevin Smith's *Dogma*. In our first year, with help from an SCP small department grant, we were able to host the first Weatherford College philosophy of religion conference on the theme "Open-mindedness in Philosophy of Religion." In the Spring of 2019, in its sesquicentennial celebration, and as a legacy of the first year's grant, Weatherford College was pleased to host a second annual philosophy of religion conference on the theme "Philosophy of Religion and Art." The conference was a resounding success. We had twenty-four presenters from all over the nation and over fifty enthusiastic attendees. This volume offers a selection of presentations from the conference as well as works in keeping with the conference theme and a preface by our esteemed plenary speaker.

As with the first conference, my co-editor, John R. Gilhooly, and I are excited to publish the proceedings of the event. While we prepared to put together this volume, we also made plans to organize the third annual conference in the Spring of 2020 on the theme "Philosophy of Religion and Science." Future conference themes were also penciled into our plans.[1] Things were going smoothly. We had a great line-up of papers for the 2020 conference and we were excited at the prospect of continuing with conference proceedings publications. Then 2020 actually happened. In a year that has become little more than a punchline, our modest (though well attended and received) conference was not spared. Schools shutdown their campuses and moved online in mid-March, just a couple of weeks before the conference was to be held. Of course, WC responsibly did the same and events like our Philosophy of Religion conference were casualties of the circumstances around a growing pandemic and what would turn into a year-long (plus) nightmare for the world. In the midst of these disappointments, to honor the hard work of our presenters who were ready to present their

[1] The plan was to host a Philosophy of Religion and Humor in 2021 and Philosophy of Religion and Politics in 2022, just in time for mid-term elections. As I write this, we are re-evaluating those plans.

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research at our conference, we held and online workshop. But that was the extent of the third annual Philosophy of Religion conference. I'm not sure what the future holds for the WC philosophy of religion conference. I have no doubt that the WC administration will be supportive of starting up the conference again once attending conferences becomes a viable option. In the meantime, we have to make due with online events and gatherings. For our part, while I support and encourage online conference events, I have made the difficult decision to postpone the 2021 conference until an in-person event can be held. We hope and pray that will be soon. We also hope that at that time we will be able to resume the publication of the conference proceedings. In the meantime, we are pleased to be able to offer the proceedings of the Philosophy of Religion and Art Conference.

In addition to the pandemic, 2020 continued to live up to its reputation when, in early November, one of the WC Philosophy of Religion conference's most avid supporters and one of our personally close and dear friends, Ben Arbour, perished in a car accident along with his wife, Meg, on their way home from a date. Though Ben did not contribute to the present volume, he was a presenter (to both the first and second conference), and was a rich source of advice and encouragement. Ben and Meg leave behind four children ages 10-16. It is to Ben and his wife, Meg, that we dedicate this volume.

My thanks to the Weatherford College administration for recognizing the potential an academic event such as this holds for our community of educators and students, and agreeing to fully fund this year's conference. I also appreciate the support and encouragement of the greater Weatherford College community including her faculty, staff, and students. Of particular note are Mike Endy, Vice President of Instruction and Student Services; our facilities manager, Loretta Huddleston; administrative assistants, Dana Orban, Debbie Alexander, and Susie Brooks; my colleagues in the Humanities Department and in my office bay, especially Scott Tarnowieckyi; Chelsea Cochran from the graphics department, and all of the other support staff from the Business office to Public Relations to Graphic Design . . . you all have my deepest, heartfelt thanks. My hope with this conference, and future conferences, remains the same as it was the previous year; to be able to host a respectable conference on a timely topic that would showcase the often-overlooked role of academics at a two-year institution. Once again, Weatherford College has been given the opportunity to show that not only are such academic endeavors possible at an institution such as ours, but also that they can provide the means for a community college to add its diverse voice to a conversation taking place in the broader academic community. I hope you enjoy this volume and participating in that conversation.

—Gregory E. Trickett

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SECTION 1:

TEXT AND CULTURE

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CHAPTER 1

VIDEO GAMES AS SERIOUS CULTURAL TEXTS: *THAT DRAGON, CANCER* AS A CASE STUDY

CHED SPELLMAN

Can you beat death? If so, what would it take? If not, what could possibly console you in this defeat? In the face of terminal illness, how would you respond and what might bring you hope or despair in these moments? Works of art have the ability to prompt dialogue and reflection about this type of experience and these forms of response. It might be surprising, then, if a video game was capable of engaging these themes with care and creativity. Rather than being only an avenue of "escape," some video games can also force a player to "enter into" consideration of emotional and reflective responses to weighty matters. Though often considered juvenile, trivial, or violent, certain video games harness their medium in an artful way. In this essay, my basic contention is that certain video games are serious cultural texts that merit theological reflection. To illustrate this basic claim, I will consider the form and message of the video game *That Dragon, Cancer* on its own terms and in light of its theological content.

§1. Video Games as Serious Cultural Texts

What is a Cultural Text?

A cultural text is any physical or conceptual object in a culture that communicates meaning and is capable of analysis. Literary texts of course fit this description, but the concept of a cultural text envisions works in other mediums with the basic characterizations of a literary work, namely, coherence as an entity and the ability to consider its meaning and message. For example, a film, song, painting, or cultural practice might be explored as a distinct network of signs that generate meaningful effects in particular

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situations. A cultural text in this sense is self-contained (it actually communicates a message) but is also embedded in the social and relational aspects of the culture in which it is produced and received.

Along these lines, Kevin Vanhoozer argues that a cultural text is "a *work* of meaning because someone or some group has produced it," and also "a *world* of meaning because its work is precisely to provide form and shape to our world." Accordingly, cultural texts are "communicative acts that achieve diverse aims through a variety of means" and are a form of "cultural discourse."[1] The cultural artifacts in view here, then, are those that are intended by a person or group to communicate some sort of message (e.g., a story or theme) and function in a discernible way (e.g., as education or entertainment) for an envisioned audience.[2]

What is a Video Game?

The study of video games, the stories they tell, and the experiences they invoke shares a family resemblance to the study of movies, television, and other similar cultural texts.[3] However, there are also genuinely unique

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[1]See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 44. Moreover, Vanhoozer directly defines a cultural text as "any human work that, precisely because it is something done purposefully and not by reflex, bears meaning and calls for interpretation" (248).

[2]This understanding of cultural texts as communicative events does not deny the range of effects produced by different individuals who receive a given cultural artifact (sign systems with unlimited possibilities of meaning) but is simply specifying the type of cultural text in view here. For a discussion of cultural texts in relation to unlimited meaning potentials (highlighting reader-oriented forms of intertextuality) and the broader field of semiotics, see Leonard Orr, "Intertextuality and the Cultural Text in Recent Semiotics," *College English* 48.8 (Dec 1986): 811-23; Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3-87; and Jonathan Silverman and Dean Rader, *The World is a Text: Writing about Visual and Popular Culture* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2018), 9-32. Silverman and Radner assert along these lines "that texts, including those that are non-traditional, such as public spaces, songs, and advertisements, have meaning that can be uncovered through the exploration of their elements" (12).

[3]For an introduction to the academic study of videogames, see Tom Bissell, *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter* (New York: Random House, 2010); Simon Egenfeldt-Nielson, et al, *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 229-54; and Ian Bogost, *How To Do Things With Videogames* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 1-17. While the study (and playing!) of videogames was once seen as a trivial pursuit (due in large

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aspects of games in general and video games in particular that must be taken into account. The nature of player involvement and participation is at the center of these considerations. In fact, the primary question in whether or not a video game is capable of serious theological analysis is, *What* is a video game?

Perhaps surprisingly to some, there is a longstanding debate about the answer to this question. This definitional discussion aims to identify the characteristic feature of a video game: story or play? How does a game's narrative flow relate to its gameplay mechanics?[4] This particular question helps challenge the easy identification and characterization of video games. The fact that *Tetris* (featuring drop-down puzzles), *Call of Duty* (featuring first person shooting), and *The Last of Us* (featuring extended storytelling) each qualify as a video game shows both the complexity of the issue and also the basic coherence of the concept (these examples are diverse but are nevertheless widely received as "games"). The video games in view in this essay are those that contain a robust narrative and also require significant player input.[5] These two features are at the core of the contention here that certain video games are significant cultural texts worthy of general and theological analysis.

In this type of game, the quality of narrative, depth of subject matter, and engaging nature of gameplay require extended reflection in order to comprehend and assess. Because of this quality and depth, moreover, the discipline of theology also offers several resources that can assist in the

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part to the perception that videogames are inherently childish), many scholars now recognize the staying power of the medium. As Bogost comments, "Videogames are not a subcultural form meant for adolescents but just another medium woven into everyday life" (7).

[4]In games studies, this distinction is between narratology (the nature of the story) and ludology (the nature of the gameplay). Though sometimes seen as a "debate," most designers and theorists note the complex interrelationship of narratology and ludology in most videogames (while emphasizing one or the other in specific instances). For an overview of this discussion, see Jesper Juul, *Half-Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); and Espen Aarseth, "A Narrative Theory of Games," *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games* (May 2012): 129-33.

[5]Cf. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 71-83. They define a game as "a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome" (81). In *Games & God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2013), Kevin Schut unpacks this definition and reflects on the unique way that video games "communicate" meaning (see 17-26).

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analysis and reception of these games. As Matthew Millsap argues, “Video games are a narrative medium deserving of theological engagement.” He explains, “Because video games have progressed from electronic playthings to cultural texts capable of vibrant storytelling, they should be thoroughly examined and critiqued theologically, thus creating a beneficial dialogue between theology and video games on par with what already exists between theology and other artistic, narrative media such as literature and film.”[6] Moreover, in cases where theological content is implicitly or explicitly found in the game itself, this mode of analysis is actually required in order to reflect on the game’s basic message.

Why so Serious?

What makes a cultural text or a video game “serious” in some way or another? One way of studying video games is to apply developed tools of analysis to a game that is trivial or not intended to convey a coherent message (e.g., *Flappy Bird* or *Solitaire*). However, in the case of more sophisticated video games that include narrative as a central component of the game and are designed to directly engage the player with puzzles to solve but also meaning to consider, a different mode of analysis is possible. Here serious tools of analysis are utilized because the game itself is serious.

Along these lines, “serious” here does not necessarily mean somber in tone but rather substantial and capable of sustained and careful analysis. With this definition, a serious game would not be limited to ones that have solely educational ends (this is how the label “serious games” is often understood in games studies).[7] A game that sought to entertain or tell

[6]See Matthew C. Millsap, *Playing with God: A Theoludological Framework for Dialogue with Video Games* (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 5. He also clarifies: “By ‘dialogue,’ I mean a conversation between theology and video games which allows for input from both sides, yet still allows for theological primacy” (5n12). See also Millsap’s extended argument for viewing video games as “cultural texts” alongside artistic works such as film and literature (58-89). Similarly, note Schut’s discussion of these issues in *Games & God*, 1-49; and Frank G. Bosman, *Gaming and the Divine: A New Systematic Theology of Video Games* (London: Routledge, 2019), 1-56.

[7]On this type of “serious game,” see Fedwa Laamarti, et al, “An Overview of Serious Games,” *International Journal of Computer Games Technology* (2014): 1-15; and Kathy Sanford and Lisa J. Starr, “Serious Games: Video Games for Good?” *E-Learning and Digital Media* 12.1 (2015): 90-106. There is also a well-established expansion of the category “serious games” to include video games not explicitly designed for therapeutic reasons. See Michelle Colder Carras, et al, “Commercial

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a story as an end in itself would also qualify for this characterization and be capable of this level of interaction. Serious study of games like this would seek to make the tools of analysis match the object of study. As mentioned above, the nature of the video games under consideration here include a substantial narrative and integral player involvement. The serious study of a serious video game, then, would home in on these elements.

While this preliminary discussion might be expanded in several directions, these working definitions show some of the ways that certain video games can be rightly understood as serious cultural texts that are worth examining from a variety of angles

§2. Slaying that dragon, cancer – playing *That Dragon, Cancer*

As mentioned above, my contention is that the video game *That Dragon*, *Cancer* is a serious cultural text and merits general and theological reflection. In what follows, I consider the form and message of the game itself and then reflect on this message from a theological perspective. The game meets the qualifications for a serious cultural text and the theological reflection prompted by a close reading of the game demonstrates this basic thesis.

That Dragon, Cancer is a first-person, point-and-click interactive video game that follows the story of a young child's diagnosis and death from cancer.[8] In the game, the approach of a single character's death and its immediacy within the context of a family is what prompts the internal contemplation for the characters in the story and also the player as the game progresses. Most of the gameplay includes the dialogue and internal thought processes of the father and mother of Joel, their young son who is diagnosed with cancer at the beginning of the game. The mother and father are Christians, and their in-game discussions consistently examine the relationship between their faith in a good God and the horror of childhood cancer.

Adding another layer of complexity, the game is also autobiographical. Ryan and Amy Green are the basis for the father and mother in the game. Together with a small team of designers, the Greens developed this game in the midst of their real-life journey with their son Joel Green's cancer diagnosis as a one-year old and eventual death as a five-year-old.[9] Most of

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Video Games as Therapy: A New Research Agenda to Unlock the Potential of a Global Pastime," *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 8 (January 2018): 1-7.

[8]*That Dragon, Cancer* (Numinous Games, 2016).

[9]For an introduction to the Green family and an account of the development process, see *Thank You for Playing*, directed by David Osit and Malika Zouhali-Worrall

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the voices and dialogue you hear in the game were recorded by members of the Green family.

In terms of reception, for an independently produced work, the game has been widely played and favorably reviewed in both Christian and non-Christian contexts.[10] Obviously, this game's subject matter is emotionally charged and so understandably has impacted players.[11] However, the overtly Christian themes and its autobiographical features create a further dynamic to consider for those who choose to play. While there are many facets to explore with this game, I will focus on a few aspects that illustrate that the game is a serious cultural text worth contemplating: genre, point of view, imagery, and gameplay mechanics.

The Reflective Genre of First-Person Interactives

Serious cultural texts have the ability to communicate both complex meaning and engage a range of human emotions. One of the reasons

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(FilmBuff, 2016). This documentary was produced and distributed as part of the game's launch.

[10]The awards the game has won include "Best Emotional Indie Game" (2016), "Most Innovative" at the Games for Change Awards (2016), "Games for Impact" at The Game Awards (2016), "Cultural Innovation Award" at SXSW Gaming Awards (2017), and "Game Innovation" at BAFTA (2017). The depth of the game's message and design has been noted from a variety of viewpoints. For example, see Chris Casberg, "'That Dragon, Cancer': A Video Game on Death, Grief, and Our Living Hope" (https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/that-dragon-cancer); Keith Stuart, "That Dragon, Cancer and the Weird Complexities of Grief," *The Guardian* (January 14, 2016); and John W. Auxier, "*That Dragon, Cancer* Goes to Seminary: Using a Serious Video Game in Pastoral Training," *Christian Education Journal* 15.1 (2018): 105-17.

[11]For example, the framing of many reviews of the game (from both Christian and non-Christian viewpoints) highlight this emotional response: Chris Suellentrop, "This Video Game Will Break Your Heart," *The New York Times* (February 5, 2016); Richard Clark, "Playing with Empathy: How Video Games with a Christian Twist are making their way into the Industry," *Christianity Today* 59.4 (May 2015): 62-63; and Tom Hoggin, "That Dragon, Cancer review: A remarkable piece of work that challenges everything I thought I knew about grief, hope and faith," *The Telegraph* (January 15, 2016). Further illustrating this function are the studies that suggest this game can be used to teach professionals in the medical field to consider the strategic importance of empathy. For example, see the research and argument to this effect in Andrew Chen, et al, "Teaching Empathy: The Implementation of a Video Game into a Psychiatry Clerkship Curriculum," *Academic Psychiatry* 42.3 (June 2018): 362-65; and Sean F. Timpane, "New Media: That Dragon, Cancer—An Interactive Video Game," *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 20.3 (2017): 308.

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That Dragon, Cancer is able to communicate its strong collection of themes and sub-themes is due to its genre. The game is a first-person interactive game, sometimes called a "walking simulator." There are various kinds of first-person interactives, and this game involves pointing and clicking on prompts that allow the player to progress through the story.

Part of what this type of game does is intentionally subvert the power fantasy that is at work in some other types of games. Consequently, this genre is uniquely suited to conveying coherent messages capable of genuine theological reflection. In large scale action games like the recent *Spiderman* (2018) or *God of War* (2018), first person shooters like *Call of Duty*, *Halo* or even *Fortnite*, the game is designed to enable the player to fly or be a God-like figure or conquer a field of fierce and challenging foes, constantly leveling up to higher levels of power, and gaining the feeling of being larger than life while playing. This is certainly not the only feature of these games, and titles like *Spiderman* (2018) and *God of War* (2018) combine action packed sequences with compelling narratives. However, the "power fantasy" is typically a component of both large-scale action/adventure games and first-person shooters.

First person interactives, by contrast, force the player to walk, to investigate mysteries, to find hidden objectives, to listen to voiced narration, and read text displayed in various places on the screen. In direct contrast to the *power* fantasy, the player in these games voluntarily chooses to imagine themselves *weak*, slow, even vulnerable to outside forces. The end game in this genre is often *discovery* rather than *domination*; *exploration* rather than *exploitation*. To "win," in other words, is often *to wander* and then *to wonder*.

There are several instances in *That Dragon, Cancer* where this feature of the genre serves an important purpose. Just before one of the most important sequences in the story (where the family receives Joel's diagnosis), the player must walk through the halls of the hospital. On the walls and strung across the ceiling are cards from the families of patients at varying stages of treatment. The player can choose to walk directly to the door at the end of the hall (which transitions to the next part of the game) or read some or all of the cards. Reading all of the cards and looking at all of the artwork in this section requires a time commitment and affects the flow of the game. Similarly, in the next major section of the game, the player can move from point to point on a body of water where the mother is in a boat and the father is sinking below. Bottles with messages in them are strewn across certain areas on the lake. A series of these move the story along but others are technically optional. The guided path around the lake, though, encourages the player to examine each of these notes containing snippets of letters, responses, or reflections of people dealing with terminal illnesses.

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Some of *That Dragon Cancer*'s main themes are death, grief, memory, and the role of suffering in relation to the meaning of life and the nature of Christian faith.[12] The intensity of these themes, the density of the gameplay itself, and the relatively short length of the game has the dynamic feature of both forcing you to gradually and progressively explore each of these themes but also abruptly conclude the exploration. This jolting dynamic, too, is part of the design of the genre. The story concludes in a way that naturally invites further reflection. Does the player accept the way the game has both surfaced and juxtaposed its themes?

If games are a communicative medium, this genre has a potential impact that far outweighs its relative size or length (which is generally short). The typical playtime of *That Dragon, Cancer* is around two hours. In this brief time-span, a host of theological questions are prompted and addressed in the context of this single family's experience. The required participation by the player and the optional elements of exploration are also designed to encourage players to identify with the perspectives being presented by the various bits of dialogue and reflection embedded in the course of the game. This feature of the game's genre enables and enhances the centerpiece of the story and the gameplay: the multi-layered point of view.

The Skillful Use of Perspective Shifts

One of the unique features of *That Dragon, Cancer* is the way the game utilizes shifts in the player's perspective at strategic points in the game's story. The player is forced to consider the same event and the same scenario from multiple viewpoints. For example, the game opens in a park where the family is feeding ducks pieces of bread in a small pond. At first, the player controls the duck who must fetch the pieces of bread thrown in by the family. In the next sequence, you return to this scene but from the perspective of the father sitting on the bench watching his sons play. From both of these vantage points, you overhear dialogue that orients you to the situation the family is facing and also the way the game will center on the

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[12]On the game's treatment of death as an embodied theme, see Schott Gareth, "That Dragon, Cancer: Contemplating Life and Death in a Medium that has Frequently Trivialized Both," *Proceedings of the 2017 DIGRA International Conference* 14.1 (2017): 1-10. For a discussion of these themes in the games *What Remains of Edith Finch* and *That Dragon, Cancer* in dialogue with the biblical genre of lament, see Ched Spellman, "What Remains of Our Lament? Exploring the Relationship between Death, Memory, and Grief in the Christian Life and in Recent Cultural Texts," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 69.1 (Fall 2019): 33-55.

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response and reflection of the mother and father as they grapple with this tragedy.

During this opening scene in the park, for instance, the player hears the father and mother in the background talking about whether or not the other children in the family understand what is going on with Joel and how they will respond to his illness. The father also reflects to himself as he plays with Joel, “What am I to him?” After recounting the limited amount of words that his son knows, the father asks, “What is pain without words for it? What is hope without words for it?” These bits of overheard dialogue prepare the player for the heaviness and reflectiveness of the scenes that follow.

Drowning in a Diagnosis

The showcase example of this technique in the game is when the family receives Joel’s final diagnosis (“I’m Sorry Guys, It’s Not Good”). The setting for this scene is a small room and the diagnosis conversation can be repeated several times from different vantage points: the perspective of the child himself, and then from each of the doctors, then from the father, and then from the mother. Beginning as Joel in the waiting room, you must choose an animal from a See ‘n Say style toy he is holding. At the top of the toy, there is a horizon that a sun traverses. With each pull of the lever, the sun progresses from dusk to dawn. Interacting with this toy teaches you as a player the technique that will be required for the multi-perspectival conversation that follows.

When the conversation begins after the doctors arrive in the room, the toy replaces the images of the animals with pictures of the people in the room (two doctors, the father, and the mother). You now choose a person, pull the lever, and hear the same conversation from a new person’s vantage point.

The doctor speaks to the family but the player also hears his internal monologue. He begins the conversation by saying, “I’m sorry guys, it’s not good.” When the mom asks how long Joel has to live, the first doctor thinks, “Prediction time again. No matter what I say, they’ll wish it was longer. But sometimes longer is worse.”[13] He later explains that “any recurrence means that the chemotherapy has failed. This is a tragedy.” The second doctor adds, “We’re very good at end of life care. We’re very good at managing the pain and masking symptoms at the end of life.” Later in the

[13]He also notes to himself that “parents always ask, ‘how big?’ Wrong question. They should ask where it is, location is everything. Slow death or quick? Symptoms and losses all come down to where.”

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conversation she reflects, "There it is. They get it now. Sometimes I wish we could just leave them waiting a few more minutes. Because once they get this news, their life never goes back to how it was before. Those were their last normal minutes . . . and they didn't even know it."[14]

The father processes the nature of his questions in this moment. He comments, "If I ask enough questions . . . maybe I could get my brains around this cancer . . . and I can choke it to death."[15] After reflecting on how science is straightforward but can do nothing in this moment, he thinks, "but now all we have is a miracle, and miracles are . . . fickle. They don't always come and we don't always know why. What if Joel's miracle doesn't come?" His final thoughts are that if this were a movie, "I'd be kicking things and throwing chairs through the windows. Amy would be sobbing, back against the wall, slowly falling to the ground." He then thinks, "I should be yelling. Why am I not yelling?"

When the doctor begins to speak, the mother thinks, "Oh wow, this is *that* conversation. I can't imagine we're having that conversation." After hearing the prognosis time frame, the mother says to herself, "Four months? What is that, February?" She further reflects, "and ugh . . . we still haven't told anyone I'm pregnant. Too scared they'd think it was irresponsible. And now this? They'll think it's a replacement baby." Her last desperate words are, "Oh God, I do not want a replacement baby. If that was your plan, I am *not* onboard . . . Oh God, Joel has to live or I will not love this baby."

The conversation draws to a close when the doctor explains that radiation or further treatments will not help, that they will make Joel as comfortable as possible, and the family will need to come in the following week for an appointment. He says, "We're so sorry." At this point, the water that began to fill the room is up to their necks and the sounds of a storm begin to overtake the voices in the conversation.

Whoever the player has chosen last finishes his or her thoughts and then the perspective shifts to Joel, who is in a small boat navigating the storm. The adults in the room appear as giants almost submerged in the

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[14]She also comments on the other doctor ("I'm glad he's so good at this. He takes the losses so personally") and further reflects on Joel's condition ("Joel's looking good. He's been making progress. His weight is up, but it's just hard to believe that we only made it halfway through chemotherapy. It was rough at first but I really started to think that he was gonna make it").

[15]The father's mind also drifts to the inexplicable nature of Joel's disease. When the doctor speaks, the father thinks, "I'll nod my head. Whenever I ask a science-y question, I nod my head. Digesting every Latin word, hoping it will stick to my ribs, become part of me . . . I love asking good questions. It impresses them. They'll be impressed with the way we handle all this; such good thoughtful parents that ask such good questions."

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stormy sea as the thunder is garbled with distant snippets of the previous dialogue. The clear symbolism is that the family is beginning to drown in the wake of this diagnosis. The water imagery never goes away throughout the rest of the game. In this scene, the same event is quickly seen and heard from five different perspectives. Even in this single moment, the doctors, the mother, and the father articulate a range of responses to this tragic news. This technique makes this scene the most complex and densely structured moment in the game. The multi-layered conversation along with the water imagery create a dynamic that is explored throughout the duration of the narrative.

Drifting Together and Apart

Gripping moments like this in the game's storyline provide a framework within which the player hears and must consider multiple ways of understanding the way Christian hope relates to an acknowledgement of human suffering. As Joel's death approaches, you experience life events of the father and mother but also hear their thoughts and listen to their explanations and their exasperated frustrations. They speak to one another, and they also speak to God. You see flashes of the mother floating in a boat on the surface of the water (she believes it is God's will that Joel will be healed). You also see flashes of the father sinking deep beneath the surface of the water (he does not believe Joel will be healed). The game progresses in creative ways and there is emotional development for both the mother and the father.

In a pivotal scene, the father surfaces next to the boat the mother and Joel are floating in ("Drowning"). The mother beckons him to get into the boat with her. He refuses, not able to accept or entertain the notion that good will come from this situation. She responds, "You have to, you'll drown." "We're already drowning," the father replies, "How can you sit there like that?" When she says, "Despair doesn't help anything," he continues, "Neither does false hope." The striking image of the father treading water beside the mother and the boat stands in for their relational tension and differing emotional perspectives. She screams, "How can you say 'false hope,' You're DROWNING!" He again counters, "Well you're missing your oars, and you don't even know where you're going . . . and yet you're so sure you're going to get there." At this point, the mother insists, "There's nothing deep about drowning! Just get in the boat!" This provokes the father to exclaim, "You have to let me feel this . . . someone has to!" She then says, "That's not fair, I love him as much as you do. I just really

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believe he's going to be okay." With these words, the father takes a breath and sinks below the surface again.

The game centers on this juxtaposition of the father and mother's perspectives and responses within their family unit. One note from the mother speaks about praying for small miracles even as they see Joel's condition worsen. Her perspective is not naïve about the reality they are facing, but she strains to articulate a clear expectation that healing will come. After one of these notes, the scene shifts to the father deep under the water as he grapples with the mother's sometimes "maddening expectation." He recounts a comment she made before Joel's first surgery: "I seriously feel like a kid on Christmas Eve." He reflects, "I'm pleading for God to spare his life and I'm tempted to despair because self-reflection leads me to conclude that I shouldn't expect much of anything . . . and yet my wife is expecting a surprise party from the Lord, replete with presents and supernatural miracles." He sighs, "I envy her." The mother and father must endure the slow loss of their son but also the relational tension that flows from differing ways of relating their suffering to their faith.

Alone Among a Sea of Voices

This development in the game exemplifies another reality that attends enduring long journeys with cancer: they are not the only ones going through a trial such as this. Just as the father and mother articulate their care for their son and their response to suffering in different ways, so too do the other people around them. Two moments in the game in particular illustrate this feature. Before Joel's diagnosis, the player can read cards around the hospital (as noted above). Some of these notes include general encouragement and sentimental expressions ("You're stronger than you know. Love will keep you strong"). Others articulate the same type of faith that the Greens have ("Have faith like children, and love like Christ"). Several of the notes also express a range of human emotions ("For Scott and the worlds we never built"). This slow walk with these reflective prompts prepares the player for the multi-layered diagnosis conversation.

Additionally, as the mother floats on the surface of the water, there are messages in bottles that float in clusters around the lake. There are journal entries from the mother expressing her hope that Joel will be cured and her certainty in God's purposes. Alongside these entries are notes that express compatible perspectives and also differing views. For example, one entry includes a poem about the purpose of life and the beauty of persevering in suffering. Another series of notes expresses anger, frustration, and disgust at the death of a family member.

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These features of the game provide a dynamic that prompts players not only to respond to the mother and father's voices but also to this spectrum of responses. This reflects the reality of real-life struggles but also serves an important narratological function. The fullness of this perspectival spectrum is made possible by the genre (first-person interactive), the subject matter (an approaching death), and also by the rhythm of the game (shifting from the mother to the father's vantage point). This feature is the emotional and artistic heartbeat of *That Dragon*, *Cancer* and perhaps its most meaningful achievement.

The Atmosphere of Poetic Imagery

Another way the game communicates its message and conveys these perspectives is through its imagery and settings. For instance, the space of the hospital has low ceilings, horizontal lines, and muted tones. This is where the family descends into a hellish darkness. This setting contrasts directly with the final scenes in the chapel sanctuary. Here there are high ceilings, vertical lines, and vibrant colors. This is where the family lifts prayers toward heavenly light. The dynamic of the player's experience is generated by the actions being taken in these spaces.[16]

In this manner, the imagery of the game complements the features mentioned above about differing perspectives. The vibrant colors of the opening park scene includes an ominous black tree of thorns. This same color and design scheme are used to represent the cancer cells within Joel's body in other parts of the game. This technique allows the player to see and feel the disconnect that often exists in these situations. Just as the lush greenery of the forest is interrupted by the dead, thorny tree, so too playtime at the park is darkened by the immanent news about a treatment failure. As Timothy Haase notes, the "game's dazzling symbolic imagery" is a "combination of fantasy and menace."[17] Along these lines, Gavin Craig notes that the game is oriented around "the spaces in which we encounter the holy."[18] Accordingly, there is often "a tension between space and story in *That Dragon, Cancer* because there is a tension between the story the Greens want to be able to tell themselves and the experience they are forced to inhabit."[19]

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[16]For these insights into the structural design of these spaces, see Gavin Craig, "Terrible Fascination | That Dragon, Cancer," *Heterotopias* (November 2017).
[17]See Timothy Haase, "That Dragon, Cancer and the Limits of Catharsis," *Eidolon* (June 2016).
[18]Craig, "Terrible Fascination."
[19]Craig, "Terrible Fascination."

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Throughout the game, the imagery of these settings and spaces functions poetically. One of the functions of imagery within a poetic work is that it forces a reader to slow down and consider both the meaning of the image itself and also the way that this meaning relates to the message of the poem as a whole. In a similar way, the graphical elements of the game signal which type of emotion and disposition each scene is seeking to communicate. The water imagery, the soaring trees, the vaulted sanctuary ceilings, the darkened hospital corridors, the encroachment of the dead trees/cancer cells into otherwise pleasant contexts all meaningfully contribute to the scenes in which they occur. The central metaphorical image of cancer as "that dragon" also hovers over the game from beginning to end. These poetic images cohere with the flow of the narrative as integral features of both the story and gameplay.

The Communicative Force of Gameplay Mechanics

A central feature of the gameplay in *That Dragon, Cancer* is designed to subvert expectations about the game itself and also the subject matter. Players are accustomed to being able to master game mechanics in order to overcome obstacles in a gameplay scenario. But, can do you beat death? In an interesting manner, the game presents the player with strategic moments where there is no possible path to a favorable outcome. The "fail state" is actually required in order for the game to progress.[20]

You can see this dynamic in the times when there is a game within the game. During one of Joel's treatments at the hospital, the wagon Joel is being pulled in turns into a race kart. You must steer Joel around obstacles as you make laps around the hospital wing. In this section, there are several "power ups" of different shapes and colors. As you obtain these power up items, your score increases, and when you finish the last lap in first place your score is calculated. On the results screen, though, you discover that the power ups actually represent items related to his chemotherapy and hospital treatments such as Lumbar punctures, MRI scans, and blood transfusions.[21]

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[20]Cf. Simon Parkin's interaction with the game's depiction of death in *Death by Video Game: Danger, Pleasure, and Obsession on the Virtual Frontline* (Mellville House, 2016), 215-36. Parkin observes that "many video games are power fantasies" while this game is a "puzzle without a solution" and in many ways a "disempowerment fantasy" (215). Several reviews of the game have the phrase "a game you can't win" in the title, referring both to some of the designed "fail states" but also the game's focus on a terminal disease.

[21]The other items include radiation treatments and the names of various drugs involved in chemotherapy (i.e., vincristine, cisplatin, doxorubicin, cyclophosphamide,

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Even in this small-scale sequence, the emotional dynamic of the broader game is present: This is not the kind of game you want to "play" or "win." In this case, finishing treatment is an accomplishment, but this often does not guarantee that the "game over" is thereby averted.

Later in the story, the parents discuss Joel's situation with their other children at bedtime. In this discussion, they imagine Joel as a brave knight fighting against a dragon named cancer. While the mother and father tell this unfolding story, the player then is presented with a simple scrolling platformer style game that must be played in order for the story to continue. As the parents narrate, Joel has armor, spears, and a sword. He also has grace, "the best superpower" that helps him overcome obstacles he is not able to conquer. They note that other "knights" are fighting the dragon and that Joel himself has been fighting this fight for a long time. In the story/game, Joel finds a quiet cave where he can rest (perhaps representing "remission"). He thought the dragon couldn't find him, but at just that moment, the dragon finds him in the cave for a final showdown.[22] One of the children exclaim, "Well, the dragon's going to kill Joel. Joel is going to lose." The mother responds, "You're right, a baby can't kill a dragon, but that's the best part of this story." She explains, "God fights for Joel, so he fights that dragon, cancer right with Joel. And we know that God can win even if Joel can't: that's grace."

Two features of this sequence then problematize this particular explanation: a counter-example and also the narrative context of the mini-game. First, one of the children ask, "Well, what about Tim from church, mom? He died from cancer. Wasn't God fighting for him? Didn't he have grace?" The mother's response is straightforward: "Of course God fought for Tim too. Tim fought so well and he was so brave and so strong that God let him rest." She continues, "It may have seemed like the dragon won because Tim died, but we know that Tim's in heaven and that he's with God and God is so proud of him." Her reasoning is that "maybe for Tim getting to be done fighting was grace." At this point, the player sees Tim die and get lifted out of the scene by a beam of light.

The mini-game ends here, but the narrative context of the game further complexifies the mother's explanations. As soon as the encounter ends, the image of the father drowning returns. When the player returns to the surface, the father briefly comes up for air and articulates an emotional

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etoposide, dactinomycin, temozoimide, dexrazoxane, methotrexate, cytrabine, hybrocortisone, imidazole).

[22]In the mini-game, when the player goes into the cave, the field of view broadens to make the cave seem large and expansive. The player now faces a much larger version of the dragon as he moves vertically from platform to platform.

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response to the interpretation of Joel's struggle that the player has just received (see discussion of this scene above). The dynamic of the gameplay in the final moments of the mini-game also generate the tension that fuels the game's story. As the player navigates the platforms and avoids the fire blasts from the dragon, there is a "health bar" for the dragon that depletes when you are able to hit him with one of your arrows. However, you are only able to eliminate 9.5 of 10 hearts on the health meter. If you are a skilled player, you will be able to avoid the dragon's blasts for a while, but you will eventually get hit and fall to the floor. The dragon in this mini-game cannot be beaten. There is thus a tension between the confident telling of the story by the mother and the inevitable failure of the player in the mini-game. In order to claim "victory" in response to the child's objection, the meaning of the terms "win," "fight," and "grace" shift and are applied to a different scenario (i.e., "winning" the present fight against cancer vs. experiencing a future "victory" in the afterlife).

This game metaphor is extended as the mini-game sequence begins when the father under the water sinks toward an arcade game. Later, we see the same game system in the hospital room, where it is broken and unplayable. This sequence is a good example of the way the imagery tells part of the story. The game console is broken, the game that is played on it cannot be beaten, and the story of Joel's approaching death cannot be altered. The scene in which you see the broken arcade machine is also the one where you try to comfort a crying Joel but cannot. As a player, you can try to walk around the room or rock the baby, but you will not be able to "achieve" the objective of pacifying the cries. The player must simply endure this uncomfortable section of the game in order to progress to the next sequence. The experience and feeling of helpless desperation that the father faces is amplified for the gamer who cannot find the way to stop the crying.

The technique of subverting player expectations returns in a dramatic way at the climax of the game's story. As Joel returns to the hospital just before his death, a scene called "the temple of God" opens up as the player ascends toward a towering sanctuary. As you enter into the corridors of this temple, there is a large stained glass window in front of the room with an altar, an organ, and a group of candles. The player approaches and is prompted to light the candles and push a key. As you do this, you hear the desperate prayers of the mother and the father to save Joel's life. At the beginning of this sequence, it appears that you need to light the candles in a certain way or keep them lit (they go out after a few seconds). It also appears that you might need to play the keys in a specific pattern. In the flow of the game, the possibility is presented that if you are successful

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in these actions your prayer might reach heaven or you might be able to save Joel in this moment. However, no combination of lit candles or sequence of played keys is able to save Joel or even progress the game. In order to continue, you actually have to stop attempting these actions. After a few seconds of inactivity, the game continues. You are not able to do anything to affect the outcome of Joel's death. Here the gameplay mechanics serve to subvert a player expectation and convey the intended effect of the scene: a feeling of powerlessness in the face of this loss.

The final boss in this game, then, is death itself. No amount of player skill or ingenuity can prevent this outcome. This feature reflects the reality of terminal illness in a way that only a video game can. The game's narrative tells this story but so do these elements of the gameplay mechanics. For the player to "win" *That Dragon, Cancer* Joel has to lose his battle with that dragon, cancer.

Toward the end of Joel's journey toward death, there is a scene where the mother and father find themselves on the same bench (on the lighthouse you have been floating toward). In some ways, this setting implies that the mother and father are now "on the same page." However, even while they sit close to one another, the father says, "he hopes," but he does not "know" that Joel will be healed (a contrast with the mother's continued insistence that Joel *will* be healed).

The sequence leading up to this scene enhances this dynamic ("Peace, Be Still"). The father finally emerges from the depths of the sea and begins swimming toward the lighthouse. As he does, he recounts the biblical story of Jesus stilling the storm after waking up in the boat with his disciples. The father recounts that Jesus then asks his disciples "why they are so scared and if they have any faith at all, like he was frustrated with them; because even though Jesus said 'Let's go to the other side of the lake,' his disciples thought he was going to just let them die." As you ascend the steps of the lighthouse, the father picks up a guitar and we hear the family sing, "Yes, Jesus loves [Joel], the Bible tells me so." The father reflectively continues, "But more than that, if he does die, will Jesus even care? Will he weep for him as he did for Lazarus? Will he weep for me?" He then summarizes his perspective: "I think greater than my fear of death is that of insignificance; rather, my default assumption is that my thoughts, and passions, and loves and the stuff of my being . . . are insignificant. How could the creator of all that is and ever was love my son as he did Lazarus? And could my soul stranded on this blue raft awash in a sea of stars, ice, and dust matter enough to him to turn his hand in mercy?"

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The game's ultimate message affirms several Christian truths about the reality of God's existence and the certainty of life after death.[23] However, the game also forces the player to consider the relationship that *future* hope has to *present* suffering in the life of a believer. All of the explicitly stated language about the meaning of life, death, and God's role in both is spoken by figures in the game. The effect of this dynamic within the scope of the gameplay is that the player is now forced to consider the relationship between these truth claims and also between these complementary and sometimes competing perspectives on life, death, and the role of grief in the Christian community. There are instances of easy answers in the game, but the story of the game taken as a whole provides a multi-layered and multi-dimensional commentary on suffering and faith. This particular feature of the game's design has enhanced its impact in both Christian and non-Christian contexts.[24]

§3. Conclusion

The first-person interactive genre, the complex point of view found in the game's dialogue, the carefully chosen imagery, and the interplay between gameplay mechanics and story elements are some of characteristic features of *That Dragon, Cancer*. Part of what makes this game an engaging cultural text is both the presence and *combination* of these elements. These themes are developed within the parameters of the game and also designed to prompt further reflection by the player.

One mark of engaging "art" is its lingering effect for those who view or experience it. Good music, films, literature, photography, or any artistic creation have a way of "staying" with you. You think about it, reflect upon it, and "sit with" it for an extended period of time after your experience.[25]

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[23]In this regard, after the father articulates his searing questions of doubt in relation to the story of Lazarus, he ends by mentioning that Jesus then raised Lazarus from the dead. The game also ends with the player travelling to an island that looks and feels like the park where the game began. Joel is having a picnic, eating pancakes, and marveling at bubbles the player can blow for him. Within the flow of the game, these scenes are symbolic and abstract (i.e., envisioning "heaven" as a place where a person's earthly joys are realized), but strongly point to a firm belief in the hope of resurrection and the reality of the afterlife.

[24]For a secular perspective that rejects the confessional stance of the game's message but nevertheless notes the clear effect of the story's narrative progression, see Emily Short, "Wanting to Believe: Faith in That Dragon, Cancer," *Gamasutra* (February 2, 2016).

[25]As director Paul Schrader has said, "A good movie starts when you walk out of the theater." See Ethan Hawke's paraphrase of Schrader's comment in his interview

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Good video games also generate this effect. Especially because of the required player participation in experiencing the artistic moment, video games such as *That Dragon, Cancer* are uniquely suited to accomplish this achievement. Indeed, playing this game will likely stir your emotions and also prompt you to reflect upon your own unique experiences.[26] Playing this game might make you sad, hopeful, angry, encouraged, or disgusted (depending on how you relate to the game's presuppositions and message), but it is likely to provoke a reaction somewhere along this spectrum.[27] As developed above, this effect is not an accident but a result of the game's skillful and artistic design.

That Dragon, Cancer, then, is worth engaging on its own terms and also from a theological perspective. Because of the quality of its design and overall message, players will unavoidably encounter the theological themes of the reality of death, the nature of suffering, the character of God, and the fabric of faith. The game itself asks the player to experience the story but also to consider the interplay of these theological questions and reflect upon them further. This dynamic, too, illustrates the basic thesis that certain video games are serious cultural texts that merit careful study on their own terms and in dialogue with the theological disciplines.

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about the film *First Reformed* (available at https://www.cbsnews.com/news/actor-ethan-hawke-first-reformed-paul-schrader/). On the "lingering effect" of gameplay experiences, see also Spellman, "What Remains of Our Lament?," 44-47.

[26]Ryan Green has said that "most of the time reaction to our game has been an exchange of stories" (see the Ask Me Anything thread on Reddit, https://www.reddit.com/r/movies/comments/4bddrn/im_ryan_green_one_of_the_creators_of_the_video/). He also acknowledges the criticism the game has faced for its heavy and demanding subject matter, saying "I think those who see the film or experience the game realize we're about sharing our hearts and we find others share their heart in return. Both by experiencing losing my son and through talking to others I realize what we've done isn't for everyone. It may even open some wounds that we didn't have permission to open. We want people to know that we acknowledge that and understand if it provokes anger or sadness. Our intention is not to drag people through the mud with our story. We hope that people who experience what we've done feel that we've added to their life in some way, through the beauty we tried to find in the midst of our suffering."

[27]This range of reactions holds for those who play, but also for those who will not or cannot finish the game. For example, a user review on the Steam platform states that he stopped playing when he encountered an overt Christian viewpoint (which angered him). Another commenter on Ryan Green's Reddit thread (see note above) briefly shared a story of personal loss and commented in response to the message of the game (which he/she appreciated), "I can never play it . . . but I'm glad it exists."

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CHAPTER 2

LITERARY HEROES, MORAL EXEMPLARS, AND THE FORMATION OF VIRTUE

NATHAN MONTGOMERY

Humans are narrative creatures. "Our hearts traffic in stories. Not only are we lovers; we are storytellers—and story-listeners… We are narrative animals whose very orientation to the world is fundamentally shaped by stories." [1] Or as Alasdair MacIntyre states, "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal."[2] We cannot help but live and breathe stories. They are a vital part of our human experience. Our human identity is intimately linked with us being storied creatures[3]. This raises the question, why do we tell and listen to stories? Now I think there is more than one good reason why stories have such a powerful hold on our lives. In fact I believe there is a combination of factors that together explain this narrative bent of humankind. However, one area that in the past has often been ignored, or at the very least regulated to a secondary or tertiary issue by both contemporary philosophers and theologians is the place of stories in the development of our ethical systems.

Karen Swallow Prior in her recent book, *On Reading Well: Finding the Good Life through Great Books*, provocatively claims, "Literature embodies virtue." She elaborates this with two further claims. First, she gives what I call the epistemic claim, "literature provides images of virtue in action."[4] Secondly, she gives what I call the praxis claim: literature offers "the reader vicarious practice in the exercising of virtue."[5]

Both of these claims are compelling, but do we have an ethical theory that supports the weight of these claims and places premium on the

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[1]James K. A. Smith, Imagining the Kingdom, 108.
[2]Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, 216.
[3]Ibid 216.
[4]Karen Swallow Prior, On Reading Well, 15
[5]Ibid., 15

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value of narrative in its account? Prior does an admirable job explaining and defending these claims from a literary critic perspective, and provides vital clues to developing a philosophical defense, but I believe further philosophical exploration is warranted in order to develop a more robust philosophical framework that undergirds these claims. I believe Zagzebski's recent development of the exemplarist moral theory provides the necessary tools to help account for these dual claims. I will examine Prior's epistemic and praxis claims and interact with the salient features of an exemplarism account in order to demonstrate the plausibility of Prior's claims and to demonstrate the benefits of an exemplarist theory.

§1. Exemplarist Moral Theory

Before giving a sketch of how exemplarism accounts for literature's formative power, it will be beneficial to summarize exemplarist moral theory as developed by Linda Zagzebski. I will also consider Dallas Willard's work in his final book, *The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge*. Due to his unfortunate passing Willard was not able to develop his view more fully or consider his view in light of Zagzebski's work. However, his three former graduate students who edited his last book, acknowledge a similarity between his view and Zagzebski's. In a review of *The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge* Adam Pesler also highlighted some striking similarities between the two accounts.[6] Therefore, it will be fruitful to take Willard's and Zagzebski's accounts together.

Both Zagzebsk and Willard begin with the premise that moral exemplars "serve as the deepest foundation of practical reason, and should be the center of our ethical reflection."[7] They do not begin with an abstract *a priori* concept of the good, but instead ground the good in particular persons through direct reference. They do not start with the characteristics of good persons, but start with the persons themselves. Zagzebski defines a moral exemplars as "supremely admirable persons who show us the upper reaches of human capability, and in doing so, inspire us to expect more from ourselves."[8] Willard defines a moral exemplar "as one who is admired and imitated just for what he or she is, and without any essential reference to

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[6]Adam Pesler, "The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge," *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, March 29, 2019, https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-disappearance-of-moral-knowledge/.
[7]Patrick M. Clark, "The Case for an Exemplarist Approach to Virtue in Catholic Moral Theology", *Journal of Moral Theology* 3, No. 1 (2014), 54-82.
[8]Zagzebski, Exemplarists Moral Theory, 1.

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specific relationships, talents, skills, or useful traits they may have."[9] Willard further states a morally good person will clarify all other moral concepts, and therefore serve as the foundation of a theory of ethics.[10]

In both Zagzebski's and Willard's theories, you begin with paradigmatically good moral exemplars that you are able to identify by admiration. Virtue is not constituted by "empirical states of affairs nor by any abstract correspondence to universal norms, but rather by the motives"[11] of exemplars. Zagzebski specifically recognizes three types of exemplars: heroes, sages, and saints. Willard references both heroes and saints in his own work.

§2. Literary Heroes

While there is meaningful work to be done in all three of Zagzebski's categories, I am focusing specifically on heroes. I do this because literary heroes are easily recognized and well known stories. Secondly, heroes are mentioned in multiple exemplarism theories. Briefly, I will explain what I mean by "literary" and "hero." By literary, I am referencing written stories of characters whether historical or fictional in literature. One cannot cover all the things they would hope to cover in a paper, so this seems the best place to begin. However, much of what is written here about literary heroes and the formation of virtue, can be transferred over to other forms of narrative, both audio and visual. Secondly, I focus on the written form because I agree with Tolkien that literature is particularly suited to engaging the human imagination. In *On Fairy-Stories* he writes,

> the radical distinction between all art…that offers a visible presentation and true literature is that it imposes one visible form. Literature works mind to mind and is thus more progenitive. It is at once more universal and more poignantly particular. If it speaks of bread or wine or stone or tree, it appeals to the whole of these things, to their ideas; yet each hearer will give to them a peculiar personal embodiment in his imagination.[12]

The ability of literature to use a universal term such as tree, but to invoke a particular experience of that term has a powerful effect on the

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[9]Dallas Willard, *The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge*, eds. Steven L. Porter, Aaron Preston, and Gregg A. Ten Elshof, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 359.
[10]Ibid., 360.
[11]Clark, "The Case for an Exemplarist Approach to Virtue in Catholic Moral Theology", 56.
[12]Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, p82.

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imagination. This capacity to utilize both the universal and the particular in literature will be helpful in the later discussion.

Zagzebski describes heroes as persons "who take great risk to achieve a moral end, often the end of helping others in distress. Heroes have dramatic moral accomplishments in character and in action, but they might not be praiseworthy in every respect."[13] Heroes are the type of people we want and ought to be. In other words heroes are moral exemplars. There are some markers that generally help guide us in the identification of heroes. First, heroes are often, though not always the protagonists of the narrative. Secondly, heroes in stories, usually follow a certain trajectory. They have a particular goal or *telos* they are trying to achieve. In order to arrive at this *telos* they usually go on a hero's journey. Their stories typically follow a similar arc: the hero must overcome a series of obstacles in order to achieve their final goal. Whether you agree or disagree with the totality of Joseph Campbell's analysis in *A Hero With a Thousand Faces*, it is difficult to deny that there is some sort of hero and hero story arc that is common to most if not all times and cultures of the world. This hero story can be easily recognized even by the very young. Campbell correctly identifies that there is a universal aspect to the stories we tell, that go beyond an individual's experience or telling of a story. While the particulars of a given story might be different, there are traits of stories that seem to be universal.

However, it does not seem to be the case that simply following the "hero's arc" is enough to classify one as a hero. Take this example from film. In the 2018 film, Avengers: Infinity War, the main antagonist of the story, Thanos, takes the typical hero's journey. This is something that has been acknowledged by both script writers and directors. They intentional wanted the villain to go on the hero's journey. However, most children watching the film would have recognized that Thanos is still not the hero of the story. Even children know intuitively that heroes are more than someone who goes on a particular type of journey. We recognize that heroes also have a certain type of character. They are an agent that contain at least one or more traits or virtues that are admirable and worthy of emulation.

§3. The Epistemic Claim

Prior seems to believe that literature can be involved in the moral education of persons. She is not alone in this belief. Since Plato there have been those who have believed this intuition that stories can have at the very least a negative and corrupting effect on the moral development of people

[13] Zagzebski, Exemplarist Moral Theory,

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by forming them toward vice. However, if it is the case that stories have the power to form one toward vice it seems to me that the reverse must also be true that stories have the power to form one toward virtue. Wayne Booth remarks, "not even the most ardent opponents of censorship or ethical criticism deny that many stories actually harm at least some of those who "take it in" And even the most ardent attackers on immoral art works imply by their every gesture that certain works, in contrast, are not just morally defensible, not just beneficial, but essential to any full human life."[14] Prior's dual claims support this basic intuition. We will examine each in turn to see how this is the case.

The Epistemic Claim is stated as, "literature offers images of virtue in action." Prior's first claim as I understand it is a knowledge claim. Literature aids us in knowing virtue. We are able to learn what the virtues and vices are, what a virtuous person is like, and what a virtuous person would chose to do in different situations.

Zagzebski and Willard both argue that we discover the virtues by looking at moral exemplars and examining their lives, choices, actions, and motivations in stories. Before we can examine exemplars we have to first know how to identify them. To explain how one can identify moral exemplars Zagzebski, incorporating the work of Putnam and Kripke, invokes the use of direct reference to help explain how we are able to pick out moral exemplars. Exemplars in her view are like natural kind terms. The basic idea is that a natural kind term such as "water" or "gold" or "human" refers to whatever is the same kind of thing or stuff as some indexically identified instance. For example gold is, roughly, whatever is the same element as that, where in each case the demonstrative term "that" refers directly—in the simplest case, by pointing. This use of direct reference adds several beneficial features to Zagzebski's argument.

These exemplars are identified directly through the emotion of admiration. One does not need to be able to provide a conceptual account of what makes an exemplar an exemplar. Instead in the same way one can say *that* is water, without knowing the chemical makeup of water is H_2O, good persons are persons like *that* without defining the concepts. Willard is also careful to argue one is capable of providing true descriptions of a good person, without providing a definition of a good person. His description of a good person is "developed from the examination of clear cases,"[15] but he does not view it as the definition of the person. Willard seems to be following similar lines of thought as Zagzebski, by arguing one is able to pick out morally good persons through admiration, describe them by

[14]Wayne Booth, "Why Ethical Systems can never be Simple," 353.
[15]*Ibid.,* 359.

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examining instances of morally good people in action, without having to be able to define a good person.

By employing a Kripkean account of natural kinds, Zagzebski is able say that in the same way empirical investigation can reveal the natures of things, so to can narratives and descriptions of that person be morally revealing. She states,

> Since narratives are a form of detailed observation of persons, Exemplarism gives narrative an important place within the theory analogous to scientific investigation in the theory of natural kinds. Narratives might even reveal necessary features of value by uncovering the deep properties of a good person. If so, there would be necessary *a posteriori* truths in ethics that can be discovered in a way that parallels the discovery of the nature of water… the theory, therefore, has a place for both stories and empirical research within its abstract structure.[16]

Exemplarism accounts for exactly what Prior claims, that literature provides images of virtues in action. Literary heroes can serve as a type of moral exemplar. Narratives provide a type of evidence that can be discovered in order to learn about virtues. Literature provides more information than only a catalogue of virtues. It also provides examples of how one might attain these virtues. Hero narratives rarely start with the end of the story, and a fully virtuous hero. Rather they usually begin much earlier as the character must learn or grow in virtue in order to accomplish their final task. Stories describe the process of how the hero becomes morally excellent, and they show us a variety of different heroes, attaining a variety of virtues, in a variety of situations. "It is important to have many stories of exemplars because they follow so many different paths, and different persons need different models" So according to Zagzebski exemplars also provide models for how we can attain virtues.

Willard relied on direct awareness of one's moral obligations to another instead of direct awareness of the goodness of moral exemplars. However, I think we can take Willard's idea of direct awareness and move it from awareness of moral obligation (though this might exist also) to direct awareness of the moral goodness of exemplars. Willard is skittish of the incorporation of emotion into his account, though he does use the word admiration to explain how we identify exemplars. He refers to "attitudes" which indicate positive or negative "natural" responses to persons. These "attitudes" seem to be functioning as emotions for Zagzebski. Willard holds we can identify moral exemplars by an intuition (though he is hesitant to us this term). However, if we recognize this "intuition" not as a mysterious

[16]Zagzebski, Exemplarist Moral Theory, 18.

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faculty, but instead as the emotion of admiration[17], we can argue for a direct awareness of an exemplar of moral goodness, on basis of our emotion of admiration for the exemplar. When we read literature we are able to have a type of direct awareness.

Both Zagzebski and Willard argue that we identify moral exemplars through admiration. As Willard states, a "morally good person is…to be thought of as one who is admired and imitated just for what he or she is." Zagzebski develops admiration as a generally trustworthy emotion, that can lead us to true belief states that certain individuals are worthy of imitation. Zagzebski defines emotions as "a state that has both cognitive and affective aspects that are not separable states."[18]. By affective state she means "a state whose primary instance is a state of conscious feeling."[19] Affective states have intentional objects they are directed toward. In the agent's consciousness she has a representation of the intentional object of emotion. Zagzebski understands emotions not as a response to value, but instead as a "type of value perception that feels a characteristic way."[20]

In the same manner a belief is true if it corresponds to reality (fits), an emotion is good if it fits the intentional object. True beliefs are valuable because they reveal reality. Emotions function in a similar manner revealing reality. A good emotion correctly fits what it is about. Emotions express something that is true. "Emotions are another kind of representation and they also can be a kind of knowing."[21] This is important to Zagzebski's project, because in order for emotions to be motivating they need to be an affective attitude directed toward a particular intentional object. This means that emotions are not brute affective responses that cannot be evaluated. Emotions can be good or bad depending upon whether the appropriately fit the intentional object they are directed toward.

For Zagzebski the emotion explains why one would have the motive to emulate a moral exemplar. She defines a motive as, "an emotion that initiates and directs action."[22] She clarifies that motives are different from aims. "Motives are essentially pushing states, not pulling states, and they push the agent to perform a variety of different acts in different

[17]This idea was prompted from reading Pesler's review of Willard's book. Pesler, "The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge" *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, March 29, 2019, https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-disappearance-of-moral-knowledge/.
[18]Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Divine Motivation Theory,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 59.
[19]Ibid., 59.
[20]Ibid., 69.
[21]Ibid., 79.
[22]Ibid., 1

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circumstances and to adopt a variety of different ends."[23] Therefore, one motive can have multiple aims or ends, and multiple motives can have the same aim or end. This allows for a great degree of flexibility when encountering difficult moral quandaries. Different virtuous people, might have the same motive of courage, but they might go about acting courageously in very different ways. A virtuous person is one who has good motives. Their emotions fix properly with the object they are directed toward. A moral exemplar is then someone who has good motives, and because they have good motives they are admirable and worthy of imitation.

Moral Exemplars are "those persons who are most imitable, and they are most imitable because they are most admirable, we identify admirable person by the emotion of admiration, and that emotion is itself subject to education through the example of the emotional reactions of other persons. From this we find another way in which literature embodies virtue. Literature points us to examples of what is admirable. When we have the emotion of admiration, we are then motivated to imitate the literary heroes serving as moral exemplars. We want to be like our heroes in stories.

§4. The Praxis Claim

Next we will examine the Praxis Claim which is stated as, "literature offers the reader vicarious practice in the exercising of virtue." On this second point Prior clarifies that this practice is "not the same as actual practice… but is nonetheless a practice by which habits of mind, ways of thinking and perceiving, accrue." [24]

Prior argues literature can train our "affect or emotions"[25] which builds a habit of having the appropriate emotions and intentions toward moral development. Prior references Thomas Jefferson who wrote,

> Everything is useful which contributes to fix in the principle and practices of virtue. When any original act of charity or of gratitude, or of instance is presented either to our sight or imagination, we are deeply impressed… and feel a strong desire in ourselves of doing charitable and grateful acts also… Now every emotion of this kind is an exercise of our virtuous dispositions, and dispositions of the mind, like limbs of the body acquire strength by exercise. But exercise produces habit, and in the instance

[23]Ibid., 23.
[24]Prior, On Reading Well, 15.
[25]Thomas Jefferson, "To Robert Skip with a List of Books," August 3, 1771, Yale Law School: Avalon Project, The Letters of Thomas Jefferson, accessed March 28, 2019, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/let4.asp.

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> which we speak the exercise being of the moral feelings produces a habit of thinking and acting virtuously.[26]

Prior sees Jefferson here arguing that through our imaginations are emotions can be used to help develop habits of desiring to do virtuous actions. Zagzebski believes this explains how emotions especially the emotion of admiration, provide us with the necessary motivation to emulate the literary heroes. We feel admiration when we see acts that strongly display virtue in stories. This leads to a physical feeling, which in turn gives rise to a "specific motivation or action tendency; emulation, or the desire to perform the same kind of acts oneself."[27] She argues that we are able to identify moral exemplars through this feeling of admiration and this feeling of admiration provides us the motivation to emulate the literary hero. For Zagzebski the "primary components of virtue—a virtuous behavior disposition and a virtuous motive disposition, can be acquired through emulation."[28] If it is possible to have good or bad emotional responses, it seems to be the case that we should be able to train ourselves toward having the appropriate emotional responses just in the way Prior anticipates when describing literature's formative power. However, one might ask how does literature train our dispositions and emotions?

Prior identifies imagination as the means through which readers are able to identify with a character and have a vicarious experience.[29] Imagination here can be broadly construed as a *sui genius* mental faculty that has a content bearing representational state, or as Tolkien calls it, "the mental power of image-making."[30] Jefferson also specifically recognizes that when we use our imagination literature can produce genuine emotional responses to the literary characters and their actions. When we encounter a story through our imagination we are able to see along with the character in the story. In the process of reading we make moral judgments along with the literary hero as they make decisions and take actions. We begin to emulate the emotional responses of the heroes in the story. We rejoice when they rejoice, we mourn when they mourn, we admire what they admire, and we detest what they detest.

Zagzebski's Exemplarism proposes something similar. When we admire a moral exemplar this leads us to an "imaginative ideal of oneself, which in turn produces emulation of the exemplar's motives….With

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[26]Ibid., 19
[27]Zagzebski, Exemparist Moral Theory, 41.
[28]Zagzebski, Exemplarist Moral Theory,
[29]Prior, On Reading Well, 21.
[30]Tolkien, On Fairy-Stories, 59.

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practice, the agent becomes disposed"[31] to do virtuous act from virtuous motives. Zagzebski uses method actors as an example. When a method actor imagines long enough that they are the character they are portraying, the actors begin to take on the actual dispositions and emotions of the characters they are acting as.

If Tolkien above is correct about the potency of the literature to engage the imagination, then it seems that literature could have a potentially powerful effect to help one train their emotions. We begin to imagine not only the hero performing the virtuous actions, we often begin to imagine ourselves as performing the virtuous actions along with the heroes. In emulating the emotions and motives of the moral exemplars we are actually building a disposition towards having the appropriate motivations and emotional responses in given situations. Furthermore, the admiration we feel toward the literary heroes motivates us to emulate them. It produces in us a desire to be like the exemplar. This desire can then lead us to not only practice vicariously through reading, but to practice in actuality.

There is more that needs to be explored to have a full account of the formative power of literature, however, I believe Exemplarism provides a strong philosophical framework for explaining how the Epistemic and Praxis claims could be true. Literary heroes serves as moral exemplars which can be identified by direct reference. The narratives of the heroes can serve as a type of empirical research wherein we can gain valuable knowledge of the virtues in action. Literature can generate a desire to emulate the heroes in the stories, but through our imagination we are able to emulate the emotions, motives, and dispositions of the literary heroes, which can train our emotions, motives, and dispositions to be like those of the heroes in the story. In reading literature we can both learn and practice virtues through the stories of the literary heroes we love.

[31]Zagzebski, Exemplarist Moral Theory, 138.

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CHAPTER 3

UNDOING PILATE'S ERROR: HOW THE CHURCH WASHED ITS HAND OF CULTURE

PHIL KALLBERG

Mark A. Noll has accurately observed that "when faced with a crisis situation, we evangelicals usually do one of two things. We either mount a public crusade, or we retreat into an inner pious sanctum."[1] This is uncomfortably close to the philosophy Pontius Pilate took when he condemned Christ. "When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" (Matt 27:24 *NIV*)

The crisis this essay will explore is how the American Church followed Pilate's example by washing its hands of American Culture and denying and resisting responsibility for the same. This move was theologically unsound and it has severely damaged the Church's cultural impact. As, historically and sociologically speaking, the Church and religion has served as a moralizing and stabilizing influence in society this problem should concern non-Christians and non-religious people as well. A stable and virtuous culture is a good thing for everyone, and so the fact that the Church has basically ceased influencing culture has been a bad thing for everyone. Now the Church either ignores popular culture or it mounts superficial "pious" crusades against it. As a result, the American Church now finds that "many of our own children, even the pious ones, are more influenced by the culture . . . than by the Church or the Christian Tradition," and the Church

[1] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 141.

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in general has little influence in American culture.[2] Typical non-Christian, non-church attending Americans don't care what the Church has to say about anything as the Church is absent from the cultural forces that inform them and shape their opinions. For example, Chuck Beaver, Story Producer of the video game series Dead Space, was asked about the process of creating a fake religion for the game series and explained his thoughts on religion in general:

> If religion had ever been based on human rights and the elimination of suffering and actually been a force for the removal of poverty, war and torture from society then it might have stood a chance in the test of time. Instead, it is an unbroken series of imagined whisperings of invisible tempestuous petty magic people, and a lot of blood about that . . . Thinking about religion is pretty much like water [to] the Wicked Witch of the West. Religion is not built to withstand scrutiny, it is built as a vessel to hold your fealty, and that's about it. It unravels almost instantly if you poke at it.[3]

Beaver's ideas actually influence a lot of people as the video game industry is now twice the size of the movie industry and as Beaver demonstrates it is usually quite hostile to religion, spirituality, and Christianity.[4] The crisis the American Church faces is that people like Beaver who are hostile or apathetic to Christianity are now the dominate culture makers in America. And this happened because the Church washed its hands of the things that make culture. This essay will explore how this happened, explain why it was a mistake, and offer some suggestions for corrective actions.

Before continuing it is important to note that many of the concepts and distinctions at work here suffer from some degree of vagueness.

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[2]Donald T. Williams, lecture on *Discerning the Times: Why We lost the Culture War* (10th Annual International Society of Christian Apologetics Conference, recorded 11 April 2015). This lecture can be viewed online. ISCA Apologetics. "ISCA 2015 –Donald T Williams, Discerning the Times: Why We Lost The Culture War [April 2010]. YouTube video, Posted [August 2015].
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tb_1UY8bGFU

[3]Mitch Dyer, "How to Create an Entire Religion," at Imagine Games Network (20 January 2012), at www.ign.com.

[4]In 2015 the movie industry had 11 billion in revenues in North America where the video game industry had 23.5 billion in revenue for just the U.S. Pamela McClintock, "Global 2015 Box Office: Revenue hits Record $38 Billion-Plus," at The Hollywood Reporter (3 January 2016), at www.hollywoodreporter.com. Chris Morris, "Level Up! Video Game Industry Revenues Soar in 2015," at Fortune (16 February 2016), at forune.com.

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Changes in cultures and societies are usually vague in the sense that it is difficult or impossible to pinpoint an exact time when they occurred or an exact cause. For example, while American culture in 2017 is quite different from American culture in 1957, it is difficult (if not impossible) to narrow down a single event, cause, or date that caused the aforementioned change. Social and cultural changes are big, complicated affairs so while these changes do occur and we can point to factors that are significant, we probably cannot capture all the reasons for these changes. "It would be false to say that there is a totally uniform culture. This is not so. And yet as we study the art and literature of the past and those things which help us to understand a culture, we find that there tends to be a drift towards a monolithic and uniform whole."[5] For example, not all aspects of the American Church followed Pilate's example. In fact, there were some elements of the Church that actively resisted retreating from the culture. However, it is still possible and reasonable to argue that there was a general trend or sense in which the Church moved, and that this trend was wrong and caused problems. While it is possible to find some counter examples to each of these points, they are still true in this general sense that allows for some vagueness.

At some point in the recent past, the American Church, and evangelicals especially, began to view themselves as a separate and distinct entity from the rest of American culture and retreated from the same. While there is some discrepancy about exactly when and why this happened, it has been well documented by many authors and researchers. Mark Noll explores the retreat in detail in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. He argues that it began in the Universities and Seminaries between 1865 and 1900.[6] During this period, the priorities of higher education changed as it became less dominated by clergy. Noll notes that prior to this "it could simply be assumed that the American way was the Christian way," and "that assumption is not necessarily baseless."[7] He argues that this produced an "evolution of American society away from what had previously been the dominate Protestant (and usually evangelical) public ethos of the United States."[8] While he does not give a precise date for this evolution, Noll indicates that it occurred sometime around the 1920s. He explains that it was in response to this evolution of society that the American Church developed several new (at the time) theological approaches like

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[5]Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who is There* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 31-32.
[6]Noll, Scandal of the Evangelical, 110.
[7]Ibid., 71.
[8]Ibid., 109.

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Dispensationalism, Holiness, and Pentecostalism. "Together these movements shared a stress on the dangers of the world, the comforts of separated piety, the centrality of evangelism, and an expectation of the End."[9] The three "were responses to real crises. They are systems of theology that deserve commendation from anyone who believes that Christianity is a supernatural religion."[10] Noll argues that these theologies probably held the line on things like the importance of Scripture and the reality of the supernatural, but they also encouraged Christians to give up on changing culture and form their own sub-culture. As he explains, "the problem came not with the goal(s), but with the assumption that, in order to be spiritual, one must no longer pay attention to the world."[11] It's quite easy to make the connection from regarding the world as unclean, unimportant, or sinful to evangelicals retreating and forming their own sub-culture. If the things of the world are unclean, unimportant and sinful, why engage with them?

While he admits the dates are rather arbitrary, Francis Schaeffer calls this retreat a change and dates it as occurring between 1913 and 1940. "During these relatively few years the whole way of thinking underwent a revolution . . . before these dates everyone would have been working on much the same presuppositions, which in practice seemed to accord with the Christian's own presuppositions."[12] He isn't as concerned as Noll with tracing the change back into history, but he is far more detailed than Noll in exploring the philosophical and theological consequences of the change. Schaeffer's detailed and nuanced outlook is that prior to 1913 nearly everyone (and here he means everyone in the West) held roughly the same views on matters of epistemology, moral ontology, and truth. Most people held to a type of naïve realist epistemology, believed in at least some moral absolutes, and believed that the truth could be found and known. Now people are not realists, seriously doubt moral absolutes, and according to the press we live in a "post-truth era."[13] Schaeffer lays blame for this change at the feet of the Church:

> The floodwaters of secular thought and liberal theology overwhelmed the church because the leaders did not understand the importance of combating a false set of presuppositions. They largely fought the battle on the wrong ground and so, instead of being ahead in both defense and

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[9]Ibid., 120.
[10]Ibid., 145.
[11]Ibid., 123.
[12]Schaeffer, The God Who is There, 26.
[13]Sean Coughlan, "What does post-truth mean for a philosopher?," at BBC NEWS (12 January 2017), at www.bbc.com.

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> communication, they lagged woefully behind. This was a real weakness which it is hard, even today, to rectify among evangelicals.[14]

According to Schaeffer, society fell under, "the line of despair. Above this line we find men living with their romantic notions of absolutes (though with no significant logical basis). This side of the line, all has changed. Man thinks differently concerning truth."[15] Schaeffer then spends a great deal of effort providing what he thinks is a significant logical bases for absolutes.

Conversely, Donald T. Williams gives a significantly later date for this change when he argues that it was caused by the death of authorial intention and the introduction of a hermeneutic of suspicion in the 1950s as, "that's when we lost."[16] Williams argues that, "we failed in our attempts to preserve the Christian influence we used to have in American Society," because "you cannot win the battles for theology and philosophy and ethics if you lose the battle for philology, literature, and reading."[17] He thinks we failed to notice the importance of contradictory notions like the death of authorial intention because it started in English and Literature studies and "who cares what a bunch of effete, aesthetic, snubs do with incomprehensible texts that don't matter anyway?"[18] But it did matter "what a bunch of effete, aesthetic, snubs" did with their texts as soon thereafter the death of the author worked its way into theology, philosophy, politics, and other studies that have immediate practical effects. So now we have a problem. If authors no longer have authority over the texts that they write, then what texts mean is up for grabs. And since theologians, philosophers, and politicians need to use texts, then there is no longer a shared authority that two disagreeing parties must submit to. For example, if I argue that the intention of US tax laws is to increase government power and encourage socialism, many people will argue against me because that is a really poor way to interpret those laws. However, if authorial intention is dead then there is no authority to appeal to in order to show that my interpretation is wrong, and those who reject my interpretation have no more ground to stand on then I do. The law's intentions are up for grabs. This "is the way your secular friends and neighbors actually think. They don't know the jargon, but they have absorbed the assumptions. If you try to apply the old method to search for

[14]Schaeffer, The God Who is There, 27.
[15]Ibid., 28.
[16]Williams, lecture (11 April 2015).
[17]Ibid.
[18]Ibid.

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the author's meaning . . . people stare blankly at you as if you are speaking a foreign language."[19]

William's analysis of the problem is quite similar to Schaeffer's in that both men think the Church failed to recognize when societies' presuppositions changed and failed to counter those new presuppositions. However, Williams, Schaeffer, and Noll all agree that the problem was that the Church failed to engage with the culture as the culture was changing. Noll gives an excellent illustration of this with a famous evangelical song from 1922.

> Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
> Look full in his wonderful face,
> And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
> In the light of His glory and grace.
>
> While the essentially Christian motivation of this song is clear, its ironic meaning can be understood better now than when it was written – under the influence of fundamentalism, evangelicals turned their eyes to Jesus, and the world grew very dim indeed.[20]

There is an important distinction to make here. These three scholars are speaking of what I will label "high culture" as opposed to "low culture." By this distinction, I mean that there is a significant difference between things like "universities, the arts, and other realms of "high" culture"[21] and reality TV or a Transformers movie. While all these things are in some sense cultural expressions and do shape culture, I define philosophical writing as high culture and a Transformers movie as low culture. Naturally there is some vagueness about where the line between high and low culture is. There are many cases where it is difficult to see if a film or other work of art is an example of high or low culture, but I maintain that enough clear examples of both high and low culture exist to make this a distinction that is both appropriate and useful.

While the preceding seems to paint a dire picture, the American Church has recognized the error of its retreat from high culture and taken steps to correct it. The existence of professional Christian academic organizations like the Society for Pentecostal Studies, the Society of Christian Philosophers, and the Evangelical Philosophical Society is evidence of this. The work of scholars like Noll, Schaeffer, Williams, and numerous others is also evidence of this. It is plain that these scholars are seeking to

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[19]Ibid.
[20]Noll, Scandal of the Evangelical, 144.
[21]Ibid., 3.

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understand and correct this error. While much damage was done by the retreat, the Church is making serious efforts to engage with and influence high culture again. This is a good thing. If Schaeffer and Williams are right and if the Church had been engaging with high culture from 1900-1950, American society would probably be very different. But the Church remains almost entirely absent from low culture. And this is a big problem as low culture shapes the views, ideas, and worldviews of more people than high culture does.

It has been well documented that media or "low culture" has a significant impact upon the attitudes, thoughts, and views of society. Here are four relatively uncontroversial examples. In 2013, a paper was published that argued that media images of male and female bodies are having a negative impact on adolescent's images of their own bodies. The researchers concluded, "The negative attributions that emerged in these studies suggest that the participants were negatively influenced by the stereotypical portrayal by the media of thin women and lean muscular males, which is a body unattainable by most of the population, including adolescents."[22] Two professors have published results that established that, "online displays of alcohol behavior have been correlated with offline alcohol behavior and risky drinking."[23] Another study showed, "that individuals consider infectious diseases that receive frequent media exposure to be more serious, more representative of a disease, and less likely to pose population risk than comparable low media frequency diseases."[24] And three researchers even studied the correlation between the dog breeds that appear in films and the breeds that Americans register as pets. They concluded, "Our results confirm quantitatively the common belief that movies can have a lasting impact on popular culture. In the case of dog breed popularity, the impact of movies has been large."[25] The continuous conclusion is that low or popular culture influences what people think.

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[22]Shelley Spurr, Lois Berry, and Keith Walker, "Exploring Adolescent Views of Body Image: The Influence of Media," *Issues In Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing* 36, no. 1/2 (March 2013), 30.
[23]Megan A. Moreno, and Jennifer M. Whitehill, "Influence of Social Media on Alcohol Use in Adolescents and Young Adults," *Alcohol Research: Current Reviews* 36.1 (January 2014), 91.
[24]Young, Meredith E., Nicholas King, Sam Harper, and Karin R. Humphreys, "The influence of popular media on perceptions of personal and population risk in possible disease outbreaks," *Health, Risk & Society* 15. 1 (February 2013), 110.
[25]Stefano Ghirlanda, Alberto Acerbi, and Harold Herzog, "Dog Movie Stars and Dog Breed Popularity: A Case Study in Media Influence on Choice," *Plos ONE* 9.9 (September 2014), 4.

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The problem I want to call attention to is that when the Church went with Pilate and washed its hands of American culture it abandoned both high and low culture. While the Church is working its way back into high culture, it is still almost entirely absent from low culture. It is typically not a factor in the movies, shows, and other media most people consume, and when the Church, religion, or Christianity is featured in low culture it is usually in negative and unfair ways that reflect the ideas of people like Chuck Beaver.

While showing that films influence the selection of dog breeds is interesting, it isn't an important issue. However, the same dynamic does exist with important issues. For example, "the topic of homosexuality and especially same-sex marriage has quickly emerged as one of the most volatile social issues of our day."[26] And it has been established that the appearance of homosexual individuals and characters in media does influence the people's thoughts and opinions on homosexuality and related issues.[27] Jerel P. Calzo and L. Monique Ward conducted a study of the media consumption of 1,761 college students and their accepting attitudes toward homosexuality (AATH). While Calzo and Ward note there were different results for men and women and that prior preconceptions (like religious beliefs) also influenced the students, they concluded that:

> Overall, greater media consumption among men and those who are highly religious was associated with greater AATH, whereas the reverse was true among women and those who are less religious. Although the associations were modest, the results support evidence of a mainstreaming effect, whereby increased media exposure may draw groups with disparate attitudes towards a more similar viewpoint on homosexuality.[28]

More recently Bradley J. Bond and Benjamin L. Compton conducted a similar study and concluded that:

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[26]Michael Gurney, "Same Sex Marriage and the Church: The Public Relevance of Theistic Morality," *Philosophia Christi* 16.2 (2014), 395.

[27]I choose this issue for two reasons. There is already research on the relation between media and acceptance of homosexuality, and as the issue is controversial and provocative readers are more likely to pay attention and care about it; most people will certainly care more about it than they will about media influence on the selection of pets.

[28]Jerel P Calzo and L. Monique Ward, "Media Exposure and Viewers' Attitudes Toward Homosexuality: Evidence for Mainstreaming or Resonance?," *Journal Of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 53.2 (April 2009), 280.

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> A positive relationship existed between viewing gay characters on television and endorsement of gay equality even when controlling for variables known to influence attitudes toward gay men and women (i.e., sex, age, race, religiosity, and interpersonal relationships with gay individuals). Overall television exposure was not related to endorsement of gay equality; only exposure to programs inclusive of gay characters was significantly correlated with endorsement of gay equality. Exposure to gay characters on television remained a significant contributor to endorsement of gay equality even when controlling for motivation to seek out gay inclusive television, measured in an attempt to control for selective exposure.[29]

The point here is that stories, shows, and films influence what people think, and in many cases, they have more influence than rational, sensible, and reasonable philosophical and theological arguments. For example, in 1995 Thomas E. Schmidt argued in *Straight & Narrow?* that homosexuality is far more medically dangerous than smoking. Using only the most recent (for that time period), "research from scientific sources, whose authors are without exception either neutral or positive in their assessment of homosexual behavior, and . . . the . . . lower numbers where statistics differ,"[30] he argued that homosexual people suffer from serious medical issues with a much higher frequency than non-homosexual people do. Regardless of whether Schmidt was right, his book represents a serious and sincere effort to use medical data, logic, and reason to speak to an important issue. Further his book is probably representative of the best efforts of conservatives and evangelical Christians to argue against the normalization of homosexuality. But since 1995 culture went the opposite direction that Schmidt and other evangelicals argued it should. Now homosexuality is not just tolerated, in many parts of American Society it is openly celebrated. A recent episode of *South Park* poked fun at just how far this celebration has gone by showing two kids, who are incorrectly thought to be gay, being given money from adults for no other reason than being gay.[31] It is quite likely that part of the reason arguments like the one Schmidt gave made little to no difference is that the tone and direction of society was

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[29]Bradley J Bond and Benjamin L. Compton, "Gay On-Screen: The Relationship Between Exposure to Gay Characters on Television and Heterosexual Audiences' Endorsement of Gay Equality," *Journal Of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 59.4 (December 2015), 727-728.
[30]Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow?: Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 127.
[31]"Tweak X Craig," *South Park,* written by Matt Stone and Trey Parker, directed by Trey Parker (Culver City, CA: South Park Digital Studios, 2015).

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being more heavily influenced by mass media or low culture. As William Lane Craig has noted, "the gospel is never heard in isolation. It is always heard against the background of the cultural milieu in which one lives."[32] The same thing applies to political and social issues. They are never considered in isolation but with the backdrop of the larger culture. The cultural milieu was stacked against Schmidt's arguments so they made little difference. For, "if it is true that philosophy . . . touched only a few people, art . . . influenced very many more."[33]

Now at the start, "twentieth-century evangelicals were in the lead (of) exploiting both radio and television for religious purposes."[34] However because of their dim view of the world, evangelicals created their own sub-brands and sub-cultures of this media. Evangelicals did not get into producing television, they created and founded their own TV stations. They did not get into the radio industry, they created Christian radio stations. This amounted to little more than preaching to the choir and so evangelical and Christian media usually only has influence on other Christians. But where the Church really missed the mark was in failing to anticipate the influence of the film industry.

In his book, *Reel Spirituality*, Robert K. Johnston gives a brief history of the early relationship between the film industry and the Church. In the beginning, the Church held some power over Hollywood by threatening boycotts and condemning certain films. But as the Church's influence in society declined, so did its power over Hollywood, and many in the Church responded by condemning all film.

> Writing in the forties in an introduction to Herbert Miles' *Morals and Movies*, Hyman Appelman labeled movies to be "next to liquor, the outstanding menace to America and to the world." Miles, if anything, was even stronger in his condemnation. "They [movies] are an organ of the devil, the idol of sinners, the sink of infamy, the stumbling block to human progress, the moral cancer of civilization, the Number One Enemy of Jesus Christ.[35]

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[32]William Lane Craig, "Faith, Reason and the Necessity of Apologetics," in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, eds. Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 22.

[33]Schaeffer, The God Who is There 46.

[34]Noll, Scandal of the Evangelical, 155.

[35]Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 57.

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The common problem between Miles' and Appelman's condemnation of films and the early Church's efforts to boycott certain films is the theological outlook of separation from the world. evangelicals regarded themselves as superior to world and thought of engagement with the world as an unclean thing to be avoided.

While these early 19th century theologies (Dispensationalism, Holiness, Pentecostalism, etc) did have some positive influences, they encouraged this dynamic of an "unclean" world and a "clean" Church, and this runs contrary to the clear teachings of Christ.[36] Rather this idea is more in line with the teaching of the Pharisees and Scribes who Christ criticized. "At the time of Jesus and Paul, purity rules were fundamental identity markers."[37] And Christ reversed the idea of how these identity markers worked. The dynamic is that there are "two main groups, Israel and the Gentiles . . . this matches the law's understanding of sacred space. Outside the camp is the abode of Gentiles and unclean Israelites. Ordinary Israelites dwell inside the camp, but only priests may approach the alter or enter the tabernacle tent."[38] From this the idea arises that if the unclean comes into contact with the clean it makes the clean unclean. The Pharisees took this a step further and acted/believed as though coming into contact with sinful or "unclean" people would make them sinful. This is evidenced by how Christ was criticized for being "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." (Luke 7:34) Now where the Pharisees seemed to think that contact with a sinful person would make them sinful or unclean by extension, in his teaching and behavior we see Christ declaring that this is not so. He regularly associates with the sinners going as far as to say that, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners," (Mark 2:17) and that "nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean."(Mark 7:15) As Jerome Neyrey explains:

> In Mark, Jesus appears to be out of place most of the time, dealing with people he should avoid, doing unconventional things and not observing customs about places and times. While Mark presents Jesus challenging the Jewish purity system, he also describes him as reforming it in favor of other core values. He is "the Holy One of God" and agent of God's reform:

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[36]See Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical,* 109-145, for a more detailed exploration of the pros and cons of these theological movements. Despite my criticisms here they are far from being all bad and many of them did some good.
[37]Mara Rescio and Luigi Walt. "'There is nothing unclean': Jesus and Paul against the politics of purity?." *Annali Di Storia Dell'esegesi* 29.2 (July 2012): 59.
[38]G. J. Wenham, "Clean and Unclean," in New Bible Dictionary, ed. D. R. W. Wood (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996): 211.

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> he is authorized to cross lines and to blur classifications as a strategy for a reformed covenant community which is more inclusive than the sectarian synagogue. As God's agent of holiness, Jesus makes sinners holy and the sick whole.[39]

Essentially Christ says, "No, contact with the unclean and sinful people does not make me unclean and sinful by extension; rather by extension I make the unclean clean and the sinful holy." Paul also reflects this teaching in Romans 14:14.

Proponents of these more Pharisaical types of theologies will no doubt reject my comparison. For example, they may claim that their theology does not arise from Jewish clean and unclean practices, but from the writings in the New Testament. However, such a claim misses the point I am driving at. Whatever its theological justification or the pious intentions of its proponents, any theology or theological system that encourages Christians to "no longer pay attention to the world" in practice ends up looking a lot like the Pharisees of Christ's day. As the Pharisees are quite clearly antagonistic to Christ this should make any follower of Christ apprehensive about such theology or theological systems.

Now it is immediately obvious that the idea that "one must no longer pay attention to the world" has more in common with the Pharisaical understanding of clean and unclean than it does with Christ's behavior and teaching. So, despite the good intentions of its champions and some positive influences, dispensationalism encouraged the Church to be more Pharisaical and less like Christ. A practical example of this was that the Church separated itself from the rest of American culture to maintain its "cleanliness." Now while the error of this retreat has been recognized and is being corrected in high culture such as philosophy, theology, and other academics, it has not been corrected for in low culture like movies and television.

The immediate and obvious solution is for the Church to start engaging with low culture in a way that is not superficial or foolish. While it may not have been obvious in the 1940s that rejecting all movies was a foolish overreaction, it is now. Likewise, it is a foolish overreaction to refuse to engage with films, television shows, and other low culture simply because they have a certain level of violence, profanity, sexuality, or other unsavory content.[40] The culture is going to see it and engage with it. It will

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[39]Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity in Mark's Gospel," *Semeia* 35 (1986): 91.

[40]It is not unreasonable to argue that a film is immoral because it has too much violence, profanity, or sexuality. I would probably disagree, but reasonable arguments can be made that a certain level is too much.

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influence the culture, and if the Church refuses to engage with the media in question then the Church has missed an opportunity to influence the culture and has allowed other world views and philosophies uncontested influence on the culture.

An easy way to do this is find and praise quality media that promotes (either intentionally or inadvertently) values consistent with Christ's teachings, virtues, and other good things. By quality media here I mean content that excels within the constraints and conventions of its particular genre. A quality film will not necessarily have the same constraints and conventions as a quality book, a quality video game, and so on. So in that vein, here are two relatively recent examples of quality media that I argue the Christians and the Church have good cause to praise and support.

God of War is a popular and well received PlayStation game from 2018. It sold well and pleased critics and fans alike.[41] It's also an incredibly graphic and brutally violent game. While the violence has been toned down from previous installments in the series, the combat is frequent, intense, and contains things like decapitations and dismemberment. It's an easy example of the type of video game my mother would have been horrified to see me play as a kid.

However, the story, set in a dark version of Norse mythology, is of a stern, hard, and world-weary Kratos trying to teach his son Atreus how to mature, survive, and ultimately become a better man (god) than he is.[42] The struggles and violence father and son go through bind them together and mature both of them. By the end of the game, Atreus has inspired his father to be a better man, and Kratos has sacrificed much to help his son avoid making the same mistakes he did. Their relationship is contrasted to that of Freya and her son, Baulder. Where Kratos is hard on his son (too hard at times), Freya protects Baulder to such an extreme that it drives him to hate and attempt to murder her.[43] The story is contrasting the archetypes of the tyrannical father and the overbearing mother, but also showing how they

[41]Adam Bankhurst, "God of War Sales Have Passed 10 Million," at Imagine Games Network (21 May 2019), at www.ign.com. On Metacritic, a website that compiles the opinions of audiences and critics, *God of War* has universal acclaim from both critics and users with a 94 averaged rating from critics and a 9.1 averaged score from users. "God of War PlayStation 4," at metacritic (2019), at www.metacritic.com.

[42]In the lore of the game both Kratos and Atreus are gods in a whole pantheon of deities.

[43]Late in the game the player learns that it was prophesied that Baulder would die, so in attempt to protect him, Freya used her magic to make him invulnerable. The side effect is that Baulder can no longer feel any type of sensation or get any pleasure from food and drink. This is what causes Baulder to hate Freya.

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can overcome their flaws and be better parents. The climax of the story occurs just after Kratos kills Baulder to stop him from murdering Freya. Freya weeps over the body of her son and says to Kratos;

> "You are just an animal! Passing on your cruelty and rage. You will never change."
> Kratos says to her, "Then you do not know me."
> Freya taunts him saying, "I know enough . . . Does he?"
> Kratos responds by talking to Atreus. "Boy. Listen close. I am from a land called Sparta. I made a deal with a god that cost me my soul. I killed many who were deserving . . . and many who were not . . . I killed my father.
> Atreus is distressed by this revelation and exclaims, "That was your father in Hel . . . is this what it is to be a god? Is this how it always ends? Sons killing their mothers . . . their fathers?"
> Kratos embraces his son and responds, "No. We will be the gods we choose to be . . . not those who have been. Who I was is not who you will be. We must be better."[44]

While *God of War* is exceptionally violent, it actually presents a father trying to teach his son to end the violence by struggling to not pass his sins on to his son. And while Freya and her son's relationship ends in disaster due to her overprotecting him, Kratos and Atreus have built a solid relationship of love and respect. This seems to have come in part from Kratos guiding his son through the struggles (the violence) of the game rather than attempting to shield him from all violence like Freya did to Baulder. The game also touches on many other things like balancing power and responsibility, the emptiness of vengeance, and the need to end cycles of violence.

Is *God of War* a game that a 12-year-old should play? No. But there is a lot to praise here as, among other things, the story is instructive on the consequences of good and bad parenting, and it depicts a father attempting to better himself for his son.

Another example is *Mad Max: Fury Road*.[45] While on the surface this is seems to be nothing more than a well-crafted film about a car chase through the apocalypse, dig a little deeper and you find a story about how the relationship between the sexes has been corrupted and how it can be corrected. The two leads, Max and Furiosa are both extremely competent warriors, but neither would live through the story without the other as they

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[44]*God of War*, directed by Cory Barlog (2018; Los Angeles: Santa Monica Studio), PlayStation 4.

[45]*Mad Max: Fury Road*, directed by George Miller (2015; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2015), BLU-RAY.

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both come to depend on and need each other. That is, men and women need each other, and to deny this is foolishness and death. The film reinforces this message many times. Furiosa begins the story's conflict by liberating the "wives" held by Immortan Joe at the Citadel, a fortress Joe rules over as a tyrant. She intends to escape with them to the Green Place which is also called the Land of Many Mothers. As Joe's army pursues them, Furiosa and the "wives" run into Max.[46] At this point Max needs them to literally cut him free of chains that have bound him. At first Max attempts to steal Furiosa's truck and leave her and the "wives" behind, but after she defuses the situation Furiosa tells Max that she needs him. In an apocalyptic world everyone needs help, but there is much more going on here. At the start of the film Max is alone and seemingly without purpose. After the lead woman in the film tells Max that she needs him things begin to change. They key scene of their new balanced relationship comes about half-way through the movie.

Their vehicle is stuck in the mud and Joe's men are closing in. While everyone else is desperately trying to free the vehicle, Max takes a rifle and shoots at the searchlight of the approaching enemies. One of the wives informs him that the rifle has two bullets left, and Max misses his next shot as well. In most action movies this would be the point of tension where Max, being the hero, steels himself and hits the target with the last shot. Instead, knowing Furiosa is a better shot than him, Max hands the rifle back to her. She uses his shoulder as a rest to steady the rifle and tells him, "Don't breathe." Furiosa fires the last bullet and hits the searchlight of the pursuing vehicle buying them a little more time.

Max recognized that he was unable to do what was needed and so was willing to hand the rifle back to Furiosa who could. Furiosa recognized that she needed a stable rest in order to make the difficult shot, and Max was able to provide that for her. Neither of them could have accomplished alone what had to be done. They needed each other.

Max and Furiosa's relationship is contrasted to that of both the Citadel and the Green Place. The Citadel is a feudal, authoritarian society run by one male tyrant who literally rapes to create more soldiers for his army. The "Green Place" is the land of mothers to which Furiosa is trying to escape with the women she has liberated. However, when they finally get there, we find that there is nothing green or growing about it. It is inhabited only by women and nearly all of them are old. The Green Place is dying. Essentially *Mad Max: Fury Road* is saying that both an extreme patriarchy and an extreme matriarchy are dysfunctional and bring death.

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[46]There are many more details in the film about how Max and Furiosa meet, but they are unimportant for the points I'm attempting to make here.

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The film shows us the solution to these extremes in how Max and Furiosa bring the Green Place and the Citadel together. Max suggests to Furiosa that she, the "wives" and the women of the Green Place stop running and return to the Citadel to liberate it and all the other people there. As Immortan Joe has called out all his men and allies to pursue them, the Citadel will be unprotected and easy to liberate if they can get around Immortan Joe's pursuing forces. Since this is an action film, they don't get around Immortan Joe and end up needing to fight their way through his men. During this battle Furiosa is critically injured while killing Immortan Joe. After the battle she is dying, but Max saves her by giving her his name and his blood, which is a fairly blatant illusion to marriage.

Again this is not a film a 12-year-old should watch. But *Mad Max: Fury Road* has a far saner and more Biblical understanding of gender than many other films that 12-year-olds will watch.

A further template of how to do this engagement is the book, *Faith, Film and Philosophy: Big Ideas on the Big Screen.*[47] In this book fourteen Christian thinkers engage with various films by attempting to look at the philosophy and theology . . . the "big ideas" those films promote and explore. By engaging with the big ideas or worldviews of these films, the thinkers push beyond superficial and foolish engagement. Some results are predictable such as Ronald K. Tacelli arguing that *Hannibal* is a failure as a story and a horror film because, "It wants us to identify with a man who is 'beyond good and evil,' even though good and evil are the prerequisites for the horror it seeks to evoke."[48] Conversely Caroline J. Simon praises a movie that evangelicals of the 1940s would have boycotted saying that; "films like *Mystic River* provide elegantly crafted narratives that push us to ask perennial philosophical questions. They enrich our humanity . . . by pointing beyond themselves to our need for wisdom. For Christians, such films point us to God."[49]

Sometimes Christians will disagree about the value of a film. Robert Johnston finds much to praise in *American Beauty*. He argues that the film "is anything but sensational,"[50] compares it to the book of

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[47]R D. Geivett and James S. Spiegel (eds), *Faith, Film and Philosophy: Big Ideas on the Big Screen* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).
[48]Ronald K. Tacelli, "Moral Monsters," in *Faith, Film and Philosophy: Big Ideas on the Big Screen*, eds. R D. Geivett and James S. Spiegel (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 199.
[49]Caroline J. Simon, "Vengeance, Forgiveness and Redemption in *Mystic River*," in *Faith, Film and Philosophy: Big Ideas on the Big Screen*, eds. R D. Geivett and James S. Spiegel (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 188-189.
[50]Johnston, Reel Spirituality, 101.

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Ecclesiastes, and concludes that "There is a hard-won serenity that Lester [the main character of the film] discovers at life's core. Lester is therefore able, even in death, to embrace life. And through him, so do we. Ultimately, sadness does not have the last word, but compassion and joy."[51] Conversely Dallas Willard thinks that, "the lush beauty of the American Beauty [*sic*] rose is a bitter illusion."[52] He argues *American Beauty*'s moral vison is that, "it is sex – illicit sex, of course – and sexual desire and imagination that start the emotional thaw or breakthrough to a 'better life' . . . and [that] its repression by rules and a framework of propriety is wrong, even deadly."[53] Contrary to Johnston, Willard argues that the film elevates sensation above all else as after seeing *American Beauty* a viewer, "will find the vison of liberated feelings as the basis of whatever goodness is achievable in life, even if life as a whole is admittedly tragic."[54] But even though there will be disagreement about specific films, shows, and other "low" culture, engagement like this is a step away from the earlier Pharisaical approach to culture and more in line with the pattern of Christ.

Ultimately the best way to correct Pilate's error will be for the Church to become an active participant in low culture as "writers and directors have a large impact upon mass media, and so the force of the monolithic worldview of our age presses in on every side."[55] If the Church had not been so Pharisaical in its early approach to media it is likely the worldview of our age would not be quite so monolithic. Correcting this problem and moving Christian influence into media will be a long task that may take a generation or two. But there is already an established roadmap for how this can be done.

According to several different sources, Christian philosophy is currently experiencing a renaissance. In 2001, the atheist philosopher Quentin Smith wrote that;

> Naturalists passively watched as realist versions of theism, most influenced by Plantinga's writings, began to sweep through the philosophical community, until today perhaps one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists, with most being orthodox Christians . . . there are now over five philosophy journals devoted to theism or the philosophy of religion, such as *Faith and Philosophy*, *Religious Studies*, *International*

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[51]Ibid., 102.

[52]Dallas Willard, "Liberation through Sensuality," in *Faith, Film and Philosophy: Big Ideas on the Big Screen*, eds. R D. Geivett and James S. Spiegel (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 148. The grammar is original to the quoted text.

[53]Ibid., 147.

[54]Ibid., 154.

[55]Schaeffer, The God Who is There, 61.

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> *Journal of the Philosophy of Religion*, *Sophia*, *Philosophia Christi*, etc. *Philosophia Christi* began in the late 1990s and already is overflowing with submissions from leading philosophers . . . Of course, some professors in these other, non-philosophical, fields are theists . . . However, theists in other fields tend to compartmentalize their theistic beliefs from their scholarly work; they rarely assume and never argue for theism in their scholarly work . . . But in philosophy, it became, almost overnight, "academically respectable" to argue for theism, making philosophy a favored field of entry for the most intelligent and talented theists entering academia today. A count would show that in Oxford University Press' 2000–2001 catalogue, there are 96 recently published books on the philosophy of religion (94 advancing theism and 2 presenting "both sides"). By contrast, there are 28 books in this catalogue on the philosophy of language, 23 on epistemology (including religious epistemology, such as Plantinga's Warranted Christian Belief), 14 on metaphysics, 61 books on the philosophy of mind, and 51 books on the philosophy of science.[56]

Smith was not arguing this renaissance was a good thing. Rather his purpose was to rouse his fellow atheist and naturalist philosophers to combat the rise of Christian philosophy. Writing in 2009 J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig agreed with Smith:

> Accompanying this resurgence [of metaphysics] has come something new and altogether unanticipated: a renaissance in Christian philosophy. The face of Anglo-American philosophy has been transformed as a result. Theism is on the rise; atheism is on the decline. Atheism, although perhaps still the dominant viewpoint at the American university, is a philosophy in retreat.[57]

And as recently as April of 2016, Linda Zagzebski gave a lecture at the Pacific Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association where she talked about the revolution in Christian philosophy and praised Plantinga, "and other Reformed epistemologists like Nicholas Wolterstoff and George Mavrodes for their courage and success in showing the

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[56]Quentin Smith, "The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism," *Philo: A Journal of Philosophy* 4.2 (2001): at
http://holtz.org/Library/Philosophy/Metaphilosophy%20of%20Naturalism%20-%20Smith%202001.htm.
[57]Moreland, J. P. and William Lane Craig. *Introduction to The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): ix.

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flimsiness of the project of evidentialism that had put religious believers on the defensive."[58]

Christian philosophy used to be in a similar position to where Christian media is now. It was not taken seriously and lagged behind other philosophy. But now Christian philosophy is on the rise and seems to be overtaking rival viewpoints. How did the change happen? Smith offers his own explanation:

> The secularization of mainstream academia began to quickly unravel upon the publication of Plantinga's influential book on realist theism, *God and Other Minds*, in 1967. It became apparent to the philosophical profession that this book displayed that realist theists were not outmatched by naturalists in terms of the most valued standards of analytic philosophy: conceptual precision, rigor of argumentation, technical erudition, and an in-depth defense of an original world-view. This book, followed seven years later by Plantinga's even more impressive book, *The Nature of Necessity*, made it manifest that a realist theist was writing at the highest qualitative level of analytic philosophy, on the same playing field as Carnap, Russell, Moore, Grünbaum, and other naturalists. Realist theists, whom hitherto had segregated their academic lives from their private lives, increasingly came to believe (and came to be increasingly accepted or respected for believing) that arguing for realist theism in scholarly publications could no longer be justifiably regarded as engaging in an "academically unrespectable" scholarly pursuit.[59]

Smith thinks that Christian philosophy started its renaissance when Christian philosophers started doing good philosophy and stopped being afraid of arguing for their convictions. And so, the advice that follows for Christian writers, directors, actors, filmmakers, and other artists is to produce quality work that is on par with what writers and directors of other viewpoints make. In addition, they shouldn't be afraid of letting their convictions show through in their work. It's plain that almost no one else producing low culture hides or apologizes for their convictions.

Zagzebski alludes to another subtler way forward. Part of what made the work of people like Plantinga and Wolterstoff appealing is that they were pointing out the errors and problems with things like evidentialism and naturalism. They weren't just advancing their own theories, they were also knocking down and undoing the dominate theories of their time. This is remarkably similar to a technique that Francis Schaeffer calls "taking the roof off."

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[58]Linda Zagzebski, "The Joys and Sorrows of a Philosophical Life," *Proceedings & Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 90 (November 2016): 117.
[59]Smith, "The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism."

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> At the point of tension the person is not in a place of consistency in his system, and the roof is built *as a protection against the blows of the real world*, both internal and external . . . The Christian, lovingly, must remove the shelter and allow the truth of the external world and of what man is to beat upon him.[60]

Christians should be making quality films and shows that demonstrate the weakness and inconsistencies of the dominate social theories of our time. For example, how is a government that is comprised of people capable of being the ultimate answer to problems created by those same people? Or how is it that a press which mocks people for believing in absolutes can mourn that we are now in a "Post-Truth" society? If we really do believe that Christianity is true, then it follows that there are problems and inconsistencies with every other religion and philosophy. If they are made with this standard, a secular non-Christian should not be able to watch a film or show made by Christians without feeling some doubt and being forced to question his beliefs. I argue that any Christian low culture which doesn't do this is nothing more than choir preaching. The Kingdom of God is better off without it.

In summary, in the early twentieth century the American Church, instead of following the example of Christ, followed Pilate by washing its hands of American culture. Despite the good intentions of this movement, it ran contrary to teachings and behavior of Christ. The retreat included both high and low culture. A generation or two ago, the Church recognized and attempted to correct the retreat from high culture. This is in part what has caused the explosive renaissance of Christian Philosophy. However, the Church has not successfully reengaged with low culture, and this mistake needs to be corrected because it is low culture that sets the cultural milieu. As long as the cultural milieu stands against the Church and against Christianity, the best arguments we can give will continue to fall on deaf ears.

Donald Williams described the current cultural milieu like this;

> You watch the opposite [of Christianity] portrayed all week and then you get an argument that says, 'Oh don't do that. You should do this.' And then you say, 'whatever,' because the thing we're asking them to do is not even conceivable. They can't imagine it. They've never seen it, either in life or in art.[61]

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[60]Schaeffer, *The God Who is There,* 158-159.
[61]Williams, lecture (11 April 2015).

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This problem can be fixed. Imagine what it would be like if a AAA film studio announced that in the next year, they would release 273 movies and 94 of those movies would be explicitly and unapologetically attempting to advance Christianity. It sounds crazy, but these are the numbers of publications from Oxford press that Smith described above. And if a bunch of analytic philosophers can pull off a renaissance then surely some creative artists should be able to as well. This would dramatically influence the cultural milieu, and perhaps then people could actually conceive of what the Church asks of them.

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CHAPTER 4

DOES TRUE BEAUTY SUFFER? IMPLICATIONS FOR THEODICY

TIMOTHY YODER

A baby boy was born over 100 years ago. Sensitive and thoughtful, he was raised in a strict, religious family. As he wrestled with his purpose in life, he didn't get a lot of loving support from his family regarding what shape his life would take. As a teenager, he began to work at a prominent art gallery, which looked like a great start on what could be a promising career in the world of art and museums. He was, however, haunted by the plight of poor mining families in the neighboring country. He began to wonder if God was calling him to a ministry of evangelism among these poor families. He had trouble finding financial support for such an endeavor, until one organization agreed to sponsor him. With very little in the way of training, but with a great deal of zeal, he moved to one of the mining towns to begin his ministry. Not knowing exactly how to proceed, he attempted to forge an identity with them. They were desperately poor, so he gave away nearly all of his meager funds to them. They were terribly dirty from their mining work, so he never washed either. While the miners responded to his sacrificial efforts and preaching, his sponsoring organization did not approve of his methods. Eventually, his financial support was pulled, and he returned home, a failed missionary.

Still convinced that God had a purpose for his life, he returned to the world of art. Studying the latest techniques and approaches to painting, he began to paint, slowly at first and then prodigiously. Only a few of his paintings sold, and he was not encouraged in his efforts by many people. Once again, however, his enthusiasm was strong, and he began to experiment with unusual colors and bold texture. He painted biblical themes, landscapes, still lives and also portraits. His paintings were quirky and unusual, and he did not always win the respect of his fellow artists and art patrons. Only his brother believed in him. On top of all these challenges, he was plagued by delusional feelings and depression. His mental instability

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even led to self-injury - he deliberately cut himself in a rather dramatic way. This episode landed him in a mental institution for several months. Alone and unencouraged, save by his brother, he underwent treatment at the hospital and eventually he believed himself to be cured. Re-entering society, he continued to paint at a frantic pace, but sales did not improve. One afternoon, while he was out in a field, he shot himself in the chest. He died a few days later. He was 37 years old. His name was Vincent van Gogh.[1]

The tragic life of van Gogh brings immediately to mind many of the issues that are associated with the problem of evil. Why did a thoughtful and talented man not get more support and encouragement? Why was his mental illness not treated better? Why is there mental illness in the first place? Why didn't God allow him to have more friends, or a more supportive family? And, lastly, to twist things around just a bit, how can such beautiful pictures come from such a tortured soul? It is this last question that I want to pursue in this paper, which examines the nature of beauty in the context of theodicy.

§1. Beauty as Symmetry

In the history of various attempts to understand the nature of the beautiful, one significant voice is that of the medieval thinker and bishop, Augustine of Hippo (354-430), most well-known as the author of both *Confessions* and *City of God*. Augustine was also very curious about the nature of beauty. Before becoming a Christian, he read deeply in the philosophical traditions of Plato and his followers, with the result that his Christian belief system was impacted by neo-Platonic thought. Thus, he adopted the position that certain qualities transcend this world and are, in fact, found in the nature of God. These qualities, however, are not God's alone, for he imparts them to his creation. Thus, they are found among the communicable attributes of God, since he "communicates" them unto what has been made. Of course, some of God's attributes (like eternality, aseity, omnipotence) are God's alone, and are thus "incommunicable".[2] The communicable attributes include certain transcendent features, which, as Peter Kreeft asserts, will never die.[3] They are those things by which we

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[1]The best book that I know of on the life of van Gogh is by Kathleen Powers Erickson, *At Eternity's Gate: The Spiritual Vision of Vincent van Gogh* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). My summary is drawn from it.
[2]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994): 156.
[3]Peter Kreeft, "Lewis's Philosophy of Truth, Goodness and Beauty" in *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness and Beauty,* edited by David Baggett, Gary Habermas and Jerry Walls (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008): 23.

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know, judge and order our lives. Kreeft boldly asserts, "For these are the only three things that we never get bored with, and never will, for all of eternity, because they are three attributes of God, and therefore of all God's creation: three transcendental or absolutely universal properties of all reality."[4] These *transcendentals* are truth, goodness and beauty. Beauty, Augustine asserts, in keeping with a Christianized Platonic tradition, is found in the mind of God, and as he created the universe, he did so in a beautiful fashion. Beauty is an inherent feature of the natural world, as is goodness. All that God has made is good, as is unequivocally stated seven times in Genesis 1. Thus, beauty is connected with that which is new, pristine, flawless, and as Augustine came to conclude, symmetrical. As one leading historian of aesthetics puts it, "The key concepts in Augustine's theory of beauty are unity, number, equality, proportion, and order."[5]

My goal here is not to offer a thorough and complete explication of Augustine's theory of beauty, nor even necessarily to defend this interpretation against all objection. Rather, I want to highlight this one rather intuitive way to consider beauty, and then to use it as a foil to consider another way. Augustine judges something to be beautiful when its parts form a whole that is categorized by the proportionality and equality associated with geometrical shapes. I believe this thought is captured by the notion of symmetry. Augustine supplies this example. "If I ask a workman, why, after constructing one arch, he builds another like it over against it, he will reply, I dare say, that in a building like parts must correspond to like. If I go further and ask why he thinks so, he will say that it is fitting, or beautiful, or that it gives pleasure to those who behold it." At this point, Augustine engages in a bit of Socratic-style dialectic to conclude that the building is beautiful "because its parts correspond and are so joined together as to form one harmonious whole."[6]

Although there is more to Augustine's aesthetics than this simple summary, I want to employ his belief that beauty is a matter of symmetry - the matching columns of a building, identical lines of trees in a garden, the sleek lines of a sports car - as a foil for different aesthetic considerations. It is clear that there is something right about Augustine's perspective. It is pleasing (and thus beautiful) to observe this kind of fittedness. The repetition of the matching styles is often a hallmark of impressive beauty, and a sign of successful design. Of course, there is also something wrong about it. Simple symmetry is not sufficient. A perfectly formed or drawn

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Beardsley, Monroe, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1966): 93.

[6]Augustine, *Of True Religion* 32.59. Cited by Beardsley, 95.

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cube is nice enough, but beauty exists in much more complex ways. Piano scales may be symmetrical, but not necessarily beautiful. So, something more than simple symmetry is necessary for beauty.[7]

Simply by the use of examples, we see that beauty demands more than stark symmetry. There is the beauty mark on the other-wise flawlessly symmetrical face of a model, which does not detract, but enhances her attractiveness. Dissonance in music makes the melody more complex and interesting, and, ultimately, more beautiful. Consider the Love sculpture by Robert Indiana which is on display in Philadelphia. It may or may not be a great work of art (but it is on a postage stamp!). If it is a beautiful work of art, however, it is so because the O is cocked a bit. This simple piece of asymmetry is the defining mark of the object. These examples suggest that there is more to beauty than simple, stark symmetry. I take this notion to be uncontroversial, but I would like to consider a more controversial move that is far removed from Augustine's beauty as symmetry.

§2. True Beauty Suffers

A further step is taken in Japanese aesthetics which explores the notion that inherent in the idea of beauty is some kind of suffering, that the truest and best examples of the beautiful are not flawless, but in fact, marred or scarred or characterized in some way by a kind of suffering. Japanese-American painter Makoto Fujimura often paints by employing pulverized minerals, because breaking them in this way reveals colors and textures not discovered otherwise. He wrote these reflections on the nature of art a few months before the terror attacks of September 11th. "Every beauty also suffers. Death spreads all over our lives and therefore faith must be given to see through the darkness, to see the beauty of 'the valley of the shadow of death'. Prayers are given, too, in the layers of broken, pulverized pigments. Beauty is in that brokenness, not in what we can conceive as the perfections, not in the 'finished' images but in the incomplete gestures."[8] The Japanese aesthetics tradition is rich, deep, old, and difficult, and there is no doubt that a non-Japanese speaker cannot grasp all the subtleties of their thoughts on beauty. The good news is that for the purpose of this paper, I simply need sufficient evidence for the idea that true beauty suffers emerges from Japanese aesthetics, and, indeed, this principle is quite well-established.

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[7]Augustine probably believed this point as well. I do not want to construct a straw man of Augustine's aesthetics. However, I do think that Augustine's account tends to be a bit over-simple.

[8]Makoto Fujimura, *Refractions: A Journey of Faith, Art and Culture* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009): 12.

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I will first consider the idea of *wabi-sabi*, which, according to Leonard Koren, is "the most conspicuous and characteristic feature of what we think of as traditional Japanese beauty."[9] It is actually the marriage of two ideas. *Wabi* referred to an ascetic way of life, the misery of solitary living, away from society, while *sabi* was applied to material things that were "lean" or "withered". However, for hundreds of years, the two concepts have been joined together into an aesthetic concept that is rustic, earthy, and definitely flawed. It is not representative or symbolic, but rather primitive or even natural art that is decidedly not modern, shiny or polished.[10] Influenced by both Buddhism and Taoism, *wabi-sabi* is built on the convictions that all things are impermanent, imperfect and incomplete. Thus, it does not prize the peak moment of bloom for spring flowers, but instead the fading in which the glory of the flower is still evident, only now it is tinged by evidences of its demise. "Beauty can be coaxed out of ugliness" argues Koren, but only as a "dynamic event that occurs between you and something else."[11] Wabi-Sabi is often associated with Sen no Rikyu, a very famous tea-master and arbiter of taste and aesthetics (1522-1591), who served under the ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Rikyu instituted sweeping changes to the tea ceremony by placing "crude, anonymous, indigenous Japanese and Korean folkcraft - things *wabi-sabi* - on the same artistic level, or even higher than, slick, perfect, Chinese treasures."[12] The story is told that upon hearing of the magnificent beauty of Rikyu's garden of morning glories, Hideyoshi (a bit miffed that he had not been invited to see it) demanded a tour. When he got there, he discovered that all the flowers had been scythed and removed. All except one, however, that was presented in a modest arrangement in the tea house. It is said that the warlord paused to reflect and then nodded in his understanding of the *wabi-sabi* display.[13]

Another essential concept of Japanese aesthetics is *aware*, which is an acquired perspective of the "ephemeral beauty of a world in which change is the only constant. [One's] reaction may be a resigned melancholy or an awe, or even a measured and accepting pleasure. There have been various valiant attempts to translate the term *aware* into English, a language

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[9]Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers.* (Point Reyes, CA: Imperfect Publishing, 1994).
[10]See Koren, *Wabi-Sabi* pages 21-23 for these descriptions. See also pages 25-29 for a comparison to modernism.
[11]Koren, *Wabi-Sabi* pages 46-51.
[12]Koren, *Wabi-Sabi* page 33.
[13]Donald Richie, *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2007): 33.

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that has no way of doing so."[14] Onishi Yoshinori, a prominent Japanese professor of aesthetics in the 20th century, describes a very complex process (impossible to summarize briefly) of *aware* which begins in sorrow and ends in aesthetic contemplation.[15] Other attempts to capture the essence of *aware* include the following interpretations. Earl Miner holds that it is an anguish that takes on beauty, or a sensitivity to the finest - the saddest - beauties. Both the condition and the appreciative sensibility are implied. Ueda Makoto offers this paraphrase, "A deep, empathetic appreciation of the ephemeral beauty manifest in nature and human life, and therefore usually tinged with a hint of sadness."[16] A modest restatement of *aware* holds that that the aesthetically sensitive individual realizes that beauty is not just found in the wow of a shiny new sports car or even in an exquisitely shaped flower. A deeper and more thoughtful beauty is also found in the ephemeral aspects of life, accessed by a wide range of emotions and feelings. The experience of suffering provides a mode of access to this beauty. One can say that the Japanese conception of the beautiful is committed to the notion that a true aesthetic experience must consider the perishability, the incompleteness, and even the sadness which adheres in objects or instances of true beauty.

Perhaps the simplest and most effective way to display this mentality that true beauty suffers is through the Japanese artistic practice of *kintsugi*. The story most frequently told is that a prominent shogun from the 15th century accidently broke a favorite and treasured tea cup. A bit distraught over the mishap, he sent the shards off to Chinese artisans to fix. However, when it was returned, he found the repair to be of poor quality. Not willing to give up on his favorite cup, the shogun sent it to Japanese craftsmen to see what they could do it to repair the break and maintain its beauty. In response to this challenge, they developed the approach which utilizes a slow-drying, but very strong, tree sap to reassemble the pieces of ceramic. To finish the repair, they painted the cracks with liquid gold, which is both beautiful and safe for food. The shogun - not to mention centuries worth of other people - was impressed with the process, declaring it more beautiful than the original. One of the things that makes a ceramic item repaired by *kintsugi* so interesting from a perspective of aesthetics is that the flaws actually become part of the beauty. What would count as a

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[14]Richie, A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics, 52.
[15]See the excerpt entitled "Aware" in *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader* edited by Michele Marra (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999). The sixth chapter is on Onishi, and the excerpt is found on pages 122-140. See especially pages 135-137.
[16]Cited by Richie, *A Tractate of Japanese Aesthetics*, 55.

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negative in terms of the quality of the beauty emerges as a positive. Other flaws (like the broken nose of an Egyptian statue, an armless Greek statue, a dent in a new sports car) detract from the beauty. But with *kintsugi* the flaws (the suffering, the scars, if I may be permitted a bit of allegorizing) enhance the beauty.

Here are a few more reasons why *kintsugi* is noteworthy from an aesthetics perspective. First, it is a one-of-a-kind piece, and not able to be mass-produced. There is an interesting debate in the art world about whether "ready-mades" can be truly works of art, and I am not necessarily taking the position that mass-produced items (like ceramics) can't be considered art or truly beautiful. But the objections that can be lodged against a mass-produced ceramic mug in pristine condition cannot be lodged against the same mug repaired with *kintsugi*. The second reason probes this reason a bit further. A ceramic cup will crack in random ways. Perhaps just a bit off one side will break, or maybe the handle will chip, or maybe the whole thing will shatter. Perhaps it will break into a few large pieces, or perhaps there will be so many small pieces that it is difficult or impossible to fit it all back together. The randomness of the break is what ensures that the *kintsugi*-repaired item cannot be a ready-made, even if it was originally mass-produced. Thus, there must be individual artistry resulting in unique items. The lack of individuality is one of the key aesthetic points made against ready-mades. A *kintsugi* item is unique, and it does demand individual craftsmanship.

A third noteworthy aesthetic point about *kintsugi* items is that the repairs themselves are a source of the beauty. Not the only source of beauty, certainly, but a source. This point is very important, because what was a flaw and a detriment to the beauty is now a source of beauty. Taking this point further, the enhanced beauty is only possible because there was a flaw. It is, of course, impossible to quantify beauty, but let's say for the sake of the argument that the tea cup has x units of beauty. Let's call them *picassos.* Then, it was damaged but repaired expertly by *kintsugi*. I propose to engage in a thought experiment to explore what it might look like to quantity the beauty of the original tea cup, a *kintsugi*-repaired cup, and a non-*kintsugi*-repaired cup. The original tea cup has x picassos, but it was broken into several pieces. So, it is diminished aesthetically because of the damage done to it (d) and the resultant flaw (f). The difference between d and f is apparent if one assumes that the tea cup has been glued in an unartistic way similar to the work done to the shogun's cup by the Chinese artisans. It works, so the damage (d) has been reversed, but the flaw (f) is still apparent in the now-ugly tea cup. So, the ugly cup is x - f picassos.

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The *kintsugi* repair, however, addresses both d and f. The damage is reversed by *kintsugi* (k), but it in a beautiful, artistic way such that k is always greater than d. The gold in the *kintsugi* repair represents a dimension or character of beauty that simply was not present in the original. So the damage is repaired with a net gain, since it is always true that $k > d$. However, the *kintsugi* repair also addressed the issue of the flaw. The flaw which tarnished the original cannot be reversed. The flaw is forever present, but given the Japanese commitments to *wabi-sabi* and *aware*, the flaw takes on a whole new perspective after *kintsugi*. The old flaw f was overwhelmingly negative, but now the cracks in the tea cup after *kintsugi* are part of the charm and the attractiveness. They are beauty marks and indicators of character or depth. They are *wabi-sabi*, and they display *aware*. Thus, the *kintsugi* flaws (f') are a beauty enhancer, while regular f is a beauty detractor. In this way, f always represents a negative quantity of picassos, while f' is a positive amount. Recapping the calculations, the following implications are apparent.

When the original tea cup is damaged, the condition is $x - (d + f)$, which equals y, and y is always less than x. When the tea cup becomes a *kintsugi* tea cup, the formula becomes $x - (d + f) + (k + f') = z$. Since $k > d$, and $f' > f$, then it cannot fail that $z > y$, and also that $z > x$. Thus, the beauty is increased, even over the original tea cup.[17]

In summary, Japanese aesthetics pursues a very different approach to beauty. Instead of the broadly symmetrical perspective associated with Augustine which prizes the pristine and flawless, the Japanese approach embraces suffering and flaws and displays a commitment to the idea of a hidden or deeper beauty. It seems that there are two ways that the Japanese approach can be understood. Sometimes the imperfections are the beauty, and sometimes they are a pathway to the beauty. In the practice of *kintsugi*, the flaws themselves are necessary for the enhancement of the beauty, and in fact, they are an aspect of the beauty, in keeping with *wabi-sabi*. They offer a necessary contribution. *Aware*, however, is connected to the second option, which is that the suffering reveals the deeper or hidden beauties. The

[17]For those who would like to see real numbers applied to the formulas, here is how it would go. Let’s assume the original tea cup (x) is 20 picassos. Damage (d) is 10 and the flaw (f) is 5. The *kintsugi* repair (k) of the damage must be higher than d, so let it be 12 picassos. The *kintsugi*-repaired flaw (f') must also exceed f, so make it 7 picassos. The results are as follows. The damaged original tea cup is $20 - (10 + 5) = 5$. The Chinese-repaired tea cup is $20 - (10 + 5) + 10 = 15$. The *kintsugi* tea cup is $20 - (10 + 5) + (12 + 7) = 24$. The *kintsugi* tea cup, thus, exceeds the picassos even of the original tea cup.

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suffering and impermanence serves as a pathway towards more profound reflection on the beauty in the object.

§3. Aesthetics and Theodicy

In reflection on the problem of evil, one observes that in numerous instances, what was experienced as an instance of pain and suffering turns out to be a necessary avenue to some future good. Examples abound. A layoff from a good job results in employment in a brand-new field for which the individual is eminently more suited, much to their surprise and delight. A broken leg means the end of baseball for the summer, but the inactivity leads to the discovery of a love of reading and study, which produces a scholarship and an academic career. A person who suffers trauma in her life uses that experience to become a particularly empathetic and insightful counselor. In the Bible, the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) provides a paradigm example, including a key articulation of the principle. Joseph told his brothers who had sold him into slavery, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20, NIV). Stated more philosophically, the greater good principle holds that some evils are necessary for some goods. A virtue like patience, which is definitely an admirable quality trait and one prized in self and others, can only emerge out of the context of some difficulties. If one were to live the whole of one's life in a paradise without any suffering or difficulties, it is hard to see how patience could emerge. Philosophers sometimes call this kind of explanation for the evil in the world an "only-way" theodicy. The only way God could achieve his purposes of human beings who love, obey, worship, and believe in him is to allow them genuine free will, so that it is possible that they might choose the opposite. The only way certain goods like patience and grace are manifested is if the world is characterized by evil and suffering. The only way that certain beauties obtain is if they suffer, in some sense.

Here we have reached the crux of the dilemma that I wish to examine. If this idea that at least some true beauties suffer is carried over and applied to God, the source of all beauty, we see at once a puzzle. God, in traditional theological thought, is conceived of as perfect, holy and without sin or flaw. He has aseity - he needs nothing from anyone (Acts 17:24-25), and he has perfect character - he suffers no flaws (Exodus 15:11, Isaiah 40:28). In the famous words of Anselm, God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived. He possesses all the perfections, all the great-making attributes, and therefore, no deficiencies can be attributed to him. Thus, the beauty of God fits best with the pristine conception of beauty

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that was earlier associated with Augustine. The beauty of God is the radiance of all these perfections found in a single being. Wayne Grudem defines it in this way, "God's beauty is that attribute of God whereby he is the sum of all desirable qualities."[18] This same Augustinian tradition sees evil as a privation. Not a created entity, but a parasitic corruption which does not exist on its own, and is instead an accidental feature of things subject to evil. Given this view of God, suffering can never enhance the beauty of God, as he has no deficiencies. It cannot add to his beauty, since he lacks nothing. So, it is either not the case that true beauty suffers or else beauty doesn't apply to God.

It is the case, however, that suffering does apply to the Godhead, particularly to Jesus. Obviously, the God-man died on the cross, enduring the agony of crucifixion. All four gospels recount the trauma of his passion - beaten, nailed to the cross, pierced through and ultimately dying. His physical death is only part of the story. Jesus didn't die accidentally or in some giant meaningless tragedy. He died, the Bible tells us, for our sin (Romans 5:18). Our salvation is secured because Jesus bore our sin on the cross and sacrificed his life in our place. Thus, the suffering of Jesus, although it was a great evil, accomplished something wonderful, namely, the redemption of all who believe on his name. It is for this reason that Christians celebrate the day he died as Good Friday. The tremendous good of our salvation is made possible by the horrible evil of his unjust death.

Can a similar train of thought help us to see some kind of divine beauty emerging out of the suffering of the passion? Once again, it would be inappropriate to say that the evil of the cross enhances the beauty of Jesus. Even as the incarnate God-man, we still hold Jesus to be fully and completely God. So, he still possesses aseity and perfection and infinitude. Thus, we cannot say that suffering enhances his beauty or adds to his majesty. It seems though that there is a way to see how Jesus' suffering produces beauty, even if it doesn't add to his own. In some cases of beauty suffering, the suffering of the object leads to the object becoming more beautiful (like a *kintsugi*-repaired mug). The flaw is the beauty In other cases, the suffering is a pathway to reveal hidden beauty, more like the concept of *aware*. It seems to me that this is the case with van Gogh and also the case with Jesus.

Vincent suffered distress from his mental illnesses, and he also suffered from being misunderstood, unappreciated and dismissed. The deep processes of the human psyche in dealing with these kinds of trials is mysterious, but it seems at least plausible that the swirl of emotions and circumstances played a role in van Gogh becoming the artist that he was.

[18]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 219.

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Perhaps the difficulties enabled him to tap into his talents, his inner artistry in a heightened way that would not have been possible if his life had not been so difficult. Would Dostoevsky have written so powerfully if he had not been subject to a mock execution? Could Kierkegaard have penetrated the human condition with the same degree of perception if he himself had not suffered depression? It seems at least plausible that the difficult circumstances of these lives played a role in enabling them to deploy the skills and abilities that they had as artists and writers in a deeper way. The suffering doesn't cause the beauty, so much as it unlocks it from within their being.[19]

I believe that this pattern applies to the beauty of Jesus. His death doesn't enhance his beauty or add to his magnificent nature, even though Philippians 2 tells us that every voice in heaven, earth and under the earth will sing his praises for all eternity. What the evil does is it reveals deep aspects of his beauty that were to this point in time hidden. In Romans 5:20, Paul develops a strange point that when sin increases, so does grace. He immediately adds, in the beginning of the next chapter, that we shouldn't understand this principle to suggest that we should sin all the more, so that grace might abound (6:1). Nevertheless, the increase of sin brings about an increase of grace, since the atonement of Jesus is sufficient for any and all sin.

Just as sin is matched and exceeded by even richer resources of grace, so the suffering of Jesus reveals a deeper reservoir of divine beauty and love hitherto unexperienced. It is not a matter of ontology (the suffering causes or brings about the beauty), but of epistemology. We learn the unknown depths of the beauty of Christ through his sufferings. The suffering does not produce or cause the beauty in Jesus' case, but rather it reveals it. The pain is the context out of which the extent of the beauty and majesty of Christ is perceived. The only way to learn the depths of Christ's beauty is to see him nailed to the cross.[20]

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[19]It is important to add two qualifications to this discussion of van Gogh. First, I am making no attempt to justify the evils he suffered on the basis of the beauty of his artwork. Such a project seems odious, but even if it were worthwhile, no one (not even van Gogh himself) is really in a position to make such a determination, except God, since it would require comprehensive knowledge of all the factors, causes and consequences. Secondly, I am not making the case that the evil is good because beauty emerged from the process. The evil is still evil. We live in a fallen world. I don't celebrate the death of Christ. I celebrate the salvation that is possible because of the sacrificial death of the Messiah.

[20]I am in debt to a former student, Danielle Redden, who introduced me to Japanese aesthetics and who also first suggested its applicability to theodicy. I am also grateful to the editors of this volume for their suggestions on an earlier draft of this essay.

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CHAPTER 5

LIVING IN THE MOMENT: LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, AND EUDAIMONISM IN SOREN KIERKEGAARD'S *EITHER/OR*

TWIGZ MCGUIRE

> "The moment" is a figurative expression, and therefore it is not easy to deal with.[1]

§1. Introduction

To some, Kierkegaard's significance seems as obscure, obtuse, and obsolete as his writing. Even Kierkegaard scholars sometimes censure him for his difficulty. For example, Clare Carlisle confesses feeling at times "bored and frustrated."[2] Despite this, we should not dismiss Kierkegaard; his style has a purpose that complements his philosophical point. Along these lines, Mooney praises Kierkegaard for being a visionary Socratic-poet who, akin to the ancient "gadfly," stings his reader awake.[3] Others claim Kierkegaard's literary style combined with his philosophical task present a much-needed kind of Christian philosophy—one which combines faith and art for the whole person. As Marcia Robinson writes, "faith addresses itself to the whole person--head, heart, and soul, not just the head; therefore the communication of faith must do likewise. For Kierkegaard, this means that

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[1]Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 151.

[2]Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 40.

[3]Edward Mooney, "Kierkegaard's Disruptions of Literature and Philosophy: Freedom, Anxiety, and Existential Contributions," in *Kierkegaard, Literature, and the Arts*, ed. Eric Ziolkowski (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 55.

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faith requires artistry, not just prose."[4] In a stunning claim, Nathan A. Scott Jr. writes, "'Certainly Western philosophy . . . has only very rarely permitted itself to be fructified by the poetic imagination."[5] Scott cites Søren Kierkegaard and John Henry Newman as the sole exceptions to his claim.[6] In short, then, Kierkegaard presents us with a rare style that combines literature, philosophy, and faith which is worth examining further.

Kierkegaard's first major work *Either/Or (E/O)* is no exception in that it too combines faith, philosophy, and art. These elements are so woven together that *E/O* confounds classifiers to this day: Is it philosophy or literature? Saint Louis University's library solves the problem with an either/or approach. Using the Library of Congress's classification, some English translations of *E/O* can be found labeled under "P" (literature and language), while other translations are relegated to "B" (philosophy, psychology, and religion). In comparison, Penguin Classics takes a both/and approach. Its 2004 printing of *E/O* bears on its back cover a hesitant the label: "Literature/Philosophy."[7] In contrast to its stance on *E/O*, Penguin Classics is more certain about other works: it labels Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* simply "philosophy,"[8] while *Sickness Unto Death* is assuredly "literature."[9] Princeton University Press takes another approach altogether. Publishing *E/O* as two separate volumes, Princeton University Press categorizes each volume as "Philosophy/Religion."[10] What emerges from this is that for Kierkegaard literature, philosophy, and faith are importantly tied together in *E/O*.

A number of scholars have noted the importance of the connection between faith, philosophy, and literature for Kierkegaard. This connection

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[4]Marcia Robinson, "Kierkegaard's Existential Play: Storytelling and the Development of the Religious Imagination in the Authorship," in *Kierkegaard, Literature, and the Arts*, ed. Eric Ziolkowski (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 71.

[5]Citation from Eric Ziolkowski, "Introduction," in *Kierkegaard, Literature, and the Arts*, ed. Eric Ziolkowski (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 3.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, ed. Victor Eremita, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin Classics, 1992; reprinted 2004).

[8]Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986; Reprinted 2003).

[9]Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition of Edification & Awakening by Anti-Climacus*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Penguin Classics, 1989).

[10]Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987) 1 and 2.

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is especially true of Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms and indirect communication.[11] Failing to understand Kierkegaard's literary use of these risks failing to understand Kierkegaard's philosophy project. While much attention has been devoted to Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms and indirect communication, little attention has been given to Kierkegaard's literary use of the phrase "the moment" in *E/O* and its connection to his ethics. I believe that understanding Kierkegaard's use of the phrase "the moment" points towards the conclusion that Kierkegaard holds a kind of Christian eudaimonism (that is, a kind of Christian virtue ethics where one achieves the state of eudaimonia--happiness, well-being, or—perhaps best—flourishing, when one has become fully actualized and embodies the virtues in a personal relationship with God). In particular, I argue that understanding Kierkegaard's obfuscation through the use of the "moment" in *E/O* is central to his quest to awaken, invite, and inspire us to a richly Christian eudaimonism. To put it another way, Kierkegaard's true task is not only to help us to live in the moment, but more so, to live in The Moment (i.e., Christ). This can happen by attentively reading Kierkegaard's *E/O* as both literature and philosophy. Thus, understanding Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms and indirect communication is essential to understanding his literary obfuscation and its connection to his philosophical task.

Before considering indirect communication and Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, it is important to note that not every Kierkegaard scholar would agree that Kierkegaard held a eudaimonistic ethic.[12] Two well-known Kierkegaard scholars, C. Stephen Evans and Robert C. Roberts have argued that Kierkegaard holds a kind of divine deontology (a form of duty ethics where obligations are grounded in God).[13] Evans defends such a view in other places as well, going further to argue that on the whole "Kierkegaard seems resolutely anti-eudaimonistic."[14] Interestingly, in their entry on ethics in the *Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, Evans and Roberts critique

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[11]I say more on indirect communication and Kierkegaard's pseudonyms below.

[12]For an example of a paper sympathetic to a Christian eudaimonistic reading of Kierkegaard, see Gregory R. Beabout and Brad Frazier, "A Challenge to the 'Solitary Self' Interpretation of Kierkegaard," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (2000): 80.

[13]C. Stephen Evans and Robert C. Roberts, "Ethics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, ed. John Lippitt and George Pattison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 215–19.

[14]C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's Ethic of Love: Divine Commands and Moral Obligations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140. In this work, Evans further claims that Kierkegaard's ethics are "consistent with Socrates and Kant in a decidedly moral manner," (page 87) and differs from "[Aristotle] in several respects." (page 87).

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Alasdair Macintyre—a leading figure in the revival of virtue ethics—precisely for presenting a misreading *E/O* in his groundbreaking book *After Virtue.* Evans and Roberts argue that MacIntyre's misreading of E/O in turn led MacIntyre to misunderstand Kierkegaard's ethics.[15] As a palliative to MacIntyre's misreading, Evans and Roberts suggest that "to understand why Kierkegaard might have created these pseudonymous authors and their views one must read what Kierkegaard says in his own voice."[16] In their entry, Evans and Roberts go on to draw on both a number of pseudonymous works and authors as well as works Kierkegaard published in his own name. What Evans and Roberts do not do in their entry is provide a close reading of *E/O* and how its contents (including Kierkegaard's use of the moment) bear on Kierkegaard's overall ethical view. My goal is not to quarrel with others' readings of Kierkegaard. Rather, my goal is to follow the advice of other scholars by noting the importance of literary elements for understanding Kierkegaard's philosophy. Doing so, I believe reveals that in *E/O* and throughout his other work, Kierkegaard presents a kind of Christian eudaimonism. If my reading challenges other views of Kierkegaard, it does so not by showing where others misread Kierkegaard but instead by presenting the best possible case for an alternative reading.

Admittedly, this paper alone is insufficient for the task of demonstrating beyond dispute that Kierkegaard presents a Christian eudaimonism. It is only meant to trace one element (i.e., Kierkegaard's literary use of the phrase "the moment" in *E/O*) in relation to the other literary techniques used and works produced by Kierkegaard. My paper is an attempt to understand and do justice to Kierkegaard's literary and philosophical works. While I believe looking at the use of "the moment" points towards the conclusion that Kierkegaard holds a Christian eudaimonism, a full explication and defense of Kierkegaard's Christian eudaimonism would require a much more in-depth study.

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[15]See Evans and Roberts, "Ethics," 212. Here Evans and Roberts write, "First, MacIntyre's reading ignores the pseudonymous character of Either/Or. Even if the reading were in some sense correct, it would not necessarily tell us what Kierkegaard himself thought about the ethical life, but only the views of the aesthete "A,: Judge [Wilhelm] and other pseudonymous authors whose writings appear in the book . . . Second, it is by no means obvious that MacIntyre's reading gets even the pseudonymous authors right."

[16]Ibid.

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§2. Pseudonyms and Indirect Communication

Arguing that Kierkegaard's literary obfuscation is central to his philosophical task requires understanding Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms and indirect communication. Throughout his authorship, Kierkegaard published a number of works under various pseudonyms. Additionally, he published works under his own name. Scholars generally agree that Kierkegaard views these pseudonyms as characters who represent positions that are not necessarily Kierkegaard's.[17] As Kierkegaard himself writes: "If it should occur to anyone to want to quote a particular passage from the books [including *E/O*], it is my wish, my prayer, that he will do me the kindness of citing the respective pseudonymous author's name, not mine—that is, of separating us."[18] That is, Kierkegaard does not necessarily identify with his pseudonyms. When a pseudonym speaks, it may not represent Kierkegaard's own position.

Further, Kierkegaard is known for his use of indirect communication. Indirect communication for Kierkegaard involves communicating a truth that changes a person "subjectively."[19] The aim is "self-knowledge."[20] According to Carlisle, "The reader must go through a process of 'double reflection:' she first understands the text at an intellectual level, then relates this understanding to her own existence."[21] Nathan's confrontation of David is one example of indirect communication pointed out both by Kierkegaard himself and cited by a number of scholars.[22] After King David has committed adultery and killed Uriah to cover it up, Nathan the prophet tells David a story. The story is of a rich man who kills a poor shepherd and takes his sheep. David is furious calling for the man to be punished and killed. Nathan then tells David, "you are the man." David has judged himself. Nathan could not have achieved the same impact had he used direct communication and simply accused David. With literary techniques of indirect communication and Kierkgaard's use of pseudonyms in hand, we are ready to investigate how Kierkegaard's philosophical task is essentially connected to his literary style in *E/O*.

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[17]For one example, see footnote 15 above.
[18]Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 627.
[19]Carlisle, *Guide*, 27.
[20]Ibid.
[21]Ibid.
[22]For example, see Carlisle, *Guide,* 31. The story comes from 2 Samuel chapter 12.

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The Preface

Appearing in the preface, both pseudonyms and indirect communication are present from the very start of *E/O*. Kierkegaard published *E/O* as a book edited and including a preface by "Victor Eremita." While today we have the whole of Kierkegaard's corpus to help us understand his work, the original audience of *E/O* did not have Kierkegaard's public statement about his relationship to his pseudonymous works (included above). Thus, the play on words in Eremita's name (victorious hermit) might have been lost. Nonetheless, Eremita's preface should raise suspicions to all but the sleeping reader. This is part of Kierkegaard's literary tactic of obfuscation and key to his indirect communication.

Eremita starts the preface by recounting how he found the contents of *E/O*. The story goes that Eremita fell in love with a desk he saw in a second-hand shop. He did not buy it at first; however, his desire for it grew. After deliberating and with "heart pound[ing]," Eremita returned and bought it.[23] Much later, Eremita accidently unlocked a secret compartment. Inside were two sets of documents belonging to two different authors. One author, an aesthete, is never named. However, Eremita calls him "A." The other author is a civil judge named Vilhelm. Eremita refers to the judge as "B." Despite great effort, there is no trace of these authors and no trackable evidence.[24] At this point, we (the readers) may be merely amused at such an anecdote; however, further oddities pique our interest and call for further reflection.

One poetic oddity is that the authors' characters are reflected in the state their papers are found. Eremita comments that: "A's papers contain a variety of attempts at an aesthetic view of life . . . B's papers contain an ethical life-view."[25] Like A's "wild" life, A's papers consists of disarrayed fragments and "scraps of paper [lying] loose in the hiding place."[26] In contrast, the judge's papers are neat, tidy, and easily arranged just like his ordered, lawful life.[27] Even to the reader who did not know Kierkegaard's game of indirect communication, this poetic irony is suspect. Something is amiss.

What should jolt us awake is Eremita's comment regarding one of the pieces found in A's collection titled "The Seducer's Diary." Eremita

[23]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 29.
[24]Ibid., 31.
[25]Ibid., 36.
[26]Ibid., 31.
[27]Ibid., 30–31.

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writes that the work presents "new difficulties, since A does not acknowledge himself as its author, only its editor." Eremita declares: "This is an old short-story writer's trick to which I should not object further did it not [complicate] my own position."[28] In what way might it complicate the position of Eremita the editor? Eremita says it is difficult to know who to attribute the diary to since it is edited and includes a preface by A; however, Eremita admits that the diary could be written by A. That is, in Eremita's words, "It presents the one author as lying inside the other, as in a Chinese-box puzzle."[29] The puzzle-boxes referred to here are complicated and intricately designed which need to be solved to be open. Having puzzles brought to mind, the reader may ask, is *E/O* such a puzzle box? There seems to be building evidence for this conclusion, especially since A's relationship to the diary mirrors Eremita's relationship to *E/O*. This mirrored relationship creates a "double effect" that reflects Kierkegaard's indirect communication. Such a literary device should awaken us to the task of untangling *E/O*. If not, the editor gives one more disquieting clue that awakens the reader to Kierkegaard's obfuscation.

In the preface, Eremita reluctantly mentions another idea he was "unable to give up."[30] He says, "It dawned on me that [*E/O* could be] regarded as the work of one man."[31] Here Kierkegaard almost gives away the game, but Eremita quickly qualifies. Eremita admits that it is "unhistorical, improbably, preposterous that one person should be author of both parts."[32] Nonetheless, Eremita says: "the reader could easily be tempted by the pun that when one has said A, one must also say B." The tempting pun gives us a further clue.[33] Saying "A" implies that there is another thing coming— a "B." If so, are these connected? Are they necessarily connected? Are A and B the same? If yes, then is *E/O* written by one person?

At this point, we are alerted that something is up. But what? Eremita suggests that perhaps "there was a person who in his lifetime experienced both moments or has reflected upon both moments."[34] Eremita invites us to imagine that *E/O* was written by one person. Under such an

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[28]Ibid., 32.
[29]Ibid.
[30]Ibid., 36.
[31]Ibid.
[32]Ibid.
[33]Ibid.; 36. See also page 13.
[34]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1987, 13. I have taken the liberty to modify Hong's translation to include moment where they translated movement. As following paragraphs argue, this is a permissible translation.

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interpretation, Eremita says, *E/O* “might take on a new aspect.”[35] Thus, the preface leaves us with a mystery to solve, as well as a task. The task is to discover each of these “moments” in order to untangle Eremita’s puzzle. Giving us this task, Kierkegaard engages us with indirect communication. Using Kierkegaard’s clues, we must decide for ourselves what to make of *E/O*. Thus, Kierkegaard allows us to confront for ourselves questions of ultimate significance, and thereby perhaps, to make a truth become a “truth for [us.]”[36]

***Øieblik* and *Moment* as The Moment**

Given that *Either/Or* (*Enten/Eller)* was written in Danish, a note regarding language is necessary. Throughout *E/O*, Kierkegaard uses the idea of the moment; however, he does so using two different Danish words. Depending on the copy of the original Danish manuscript of *E/O* one of the words for moment may be spelled *Øieblik*. *Øieblik* is derived from *Øie* “eye” and *blik* “glance, glint, or twinkle.”[37] Alternatively, it might be considered as “a blink of the eye.”[38] The other word Kierkegaard uses for the moment is the Danish *Moment*. Do these two words correspond to the same concept?

In his article on Kierkegaard’s concept of the moment, William McDonald notes, the Danish *Moment* is derived:

> via the French *moment*, from the Latin *movere*—to move. Among its Danish meanings are something with the power to move (cf. momentum); a relationship or circumstance of great importance (cf. momentous); a turning point in a development, which is decisive importance; and a brief period of time, which is of decisive importance.[39]

While McDonald discusses the Danish word *Moment,* he states that he focuses on the use of *Øieblik*. Nonetheless, he writes, “‘the connotations *Moment* has of decisive importance and power to move are incorporated

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[35]Ibid.

[36]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 609. More will be said towards the end of this essay on “true for you.”

[37]William McDonald, “Moment,” in *Kierkegaard’s Concepts: Tome IV: Individual to Novel*, ed. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald, and Jon Stewart (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2013), 173.

[38]I want to thank a lively discussion at the Washington University’s Kierkegaard Reading Group for this point: especially, Claude Evans and Gregory Beabout.

[39]McDonald, “Moment,” 173.

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into Kierkegaard's ethical and religious applications of *Øieblik*."[40] Thus, there is reason to think these words signify the same concept for Kierkegaard.

Just as Kierkegaard's concept of the moment is captured by both *Øieblik* and *Moment* throughout Kierkegaard's authorship, both A and Judge Vilhelm seem to use these words interchangeably in *E/O*. To see this consider A's use in a section of *E/O* entitled "The Musical Erotic." Here A writes that Don Giovanni waits for the "moment" (*Moment*).[41] Here the *Moment* is an instant in contrast to eternity. Nonetheless, the seducer in "The Seducer's Diary" waits for the moment (*Øieblik*) as the crucial, momentous instant. In "The Unhappiest One," A writes, "he is not present to himself in the moment (*Øieblik*), not present to himself in the future, for the future has been experienced, and not in the past, because the past has still not arrived."[42] Thus, A uses *Øieblik* to signify both a passing instant and a significant moment. Further, A uses *Moment* to signify a passing instant. This points to the conclusion that these concepts are interchangeable or at least, bear similar connotations for A.

Does the judge also use these terms to signify something similar? A passage of *E/O* supports that conclusion for Judge Vilhelm. The judge writes that the "faithful romantic can wait, say, fifteen years, then comes the instant (*Øieblik*) of his reward. Here, very rightly poetry says fifteen years lend themselves superbly to concentration, then it hastens to the moment (*Moment*)."[43] It is interesting to note that Howard and Edna Hong translate this passage using the English "moment" for both the Danish *Øieblik* and *Moment*. This points to the conclusion that the judge also uses these words interchangeably to signify the same concept: that of a momentous instant. With this, we can turn to the task of unraveling Kierkegaard's puzzle in *E/O* by tracing his use of the moment. The first step is to understand what living in "the moment" means for A.

The Aesthetic Moment

A's quest is to live poetically. In his writings, A attempts to understand how to undertake this task. This is in part by discovering what the highest form of art is, how to live an interesting life, and how to do so reflectively. In his first complete essay, "the Immediate Erotic Stages of the Musical Erotic," A considers the question: Which form of art is the highest?

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 101.
[42] Ibid., 217.
[43] Ibid., 462.

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[44] Understanding A's theory of art allows us to understand what he takes to be the highest form of aesthetic life (and thereby to understand what it means to live in the moment aesthetically).

To A, opera is the highest form of art. This is so because only in opera can form and content perfectly complement each other. Opera is music. The essence of music—according to A—is the immediate and the sensual. Music as the sensual "is an energy, a storm, impatience, passion . . . existing not in a single moment, but in a succession of moments, for if it existed in a single moment it could be portrayed or painted . . . [Rather,] it moves constantly in an immediacy."[45] Thus, in the form of an opera—the music—we first encounter the aesthetic moment. It is the fleeting, rapturous, exciting moment of falling in love.

While the form of opera reflects the highest kind of art, and thereby represents the aesthetic moment, the aesthete argues that the content of opera does this just as well. The aesthete thinks this is especially true of the opera Don Giovanni. Don Giovanni is about the infamous seducer of the same name. To quote the aesthete, "His love is not of the soul but [is] sensual, and sensual love is not according to its own lights faithful but absolutely faithless."[46] Thus, the plot and main character of this opera present a man tossed from love to love, from moment to moment, without thought but with complete, overpowering passion. This complements the form of music since music is also "immediate," "sensual," "rapturous," "momentary."[47] Therefore, in both the form and content, Don Giovanni reflects the unreflective nature of the aesthetic moment.

However, this kind of life—just like music—requires repetition to sustain since the moment is vanishing (gone in the blink of an eye). The need for repetition is seen in the problem of Don Giovanni. Don Giovanni not only can go on forever, but he "needs *must*."[48] If he stopped, his existence would cease in the same way music ceases to exist as soon as the note ends. This is a problem for the aesthetic moment as a whole. Making the rapturous, sensual, or interesting one's goal opens one up to disappointment as the instant of pleasure is as ephemeral as music—existing only in the moment.

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[44]Ibid., 59.
[45]Ibid., 69–70.
[46]Ibid., 100.
[47]Ibid., 70, 95, 97, and 100. The music of the opera Don Giovanni is an unreflective art based on the immediacy of contact with the ear, rather than on the reflective reception of the eye through image or word; the plot of the opera points to the heights of an unreflective life of love-making.
[48]Ibid., 102.

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This problem is addressed by the aesthete in another piece bundled in his papers titled, "Crop Rotation." In this essay, A presents the cure to boredom, "the root of all evil." The cure is to "constantly vary oneself," in the "unlimited infinity of change."[49] That is, the only hope of sustaining the aesthetic moment is to be found in a repetition of constant change in the pursuit of the interesting. This results in a number of moments of interest that eventually circles back upon itself. The hope for the aesthete is that by varying one's circumstances one can also have the interesting. Here, it must be noted that A has now taken a new approach. Don Giovanni's immediate moment is unreflective, unsustainable, and unattainable for the reflective A. Is there another kind of aesthetic moment? Is it a reflective one? Can it provide a way for A to live?

In "The Seducer's Diary" we see another moment; however, this moment does not provide the satisfaction A is looking for. The Seducer's Diary consists of the observation, letters, and documents of Johannes regarding his seduction of a girl named Cordelia. In his preface to "The Seducer's Diary," A critiques Johannes saying that Johannes "was constantly running around [reality] . . . [but] did not belong to it."[50] Johannes "soon [found] himself going round in a circle from which he cannot escape."[51] What was this circle?

Johannes finds pleasure in seducing others to fall in love with him; however, his interest is not in the act of love itself, but the chase. For him "reality was drowned in the poetic" in a life of "ambiguity."[52] Running around reality begets in Johannes an inward-directedness.[53] Thus, Johannes becomes interested in possibility more than actuality. To see this, consider McDonald's words on Johannes's seduction: "the moment of seduction, which should be the culmination of Johannes the Seducer's painstaking preparations, is so momentary it is elided by the reader's glance between Johannes' diary entries of September 24 and September 25."[54] The moment of seduction is so brief, so inconsequential for Johannes it is passed over altogether. This is significant because the seducer is in some sense not really after the moment at all but is rather after the pursuit itself. This presents another difficulty—a contradiction—for the aesthete. In living aesthetically, one pursues the interesting but does not pursue anything itself.

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[49]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 227, 232, and 239.
[50]Ibid., 250.
[51]Ibid., 252.
[52]Ibid., 249.
[53]Ibid., 251.
[54]McDonald, "Moment," 175.

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The aesthetic moment, then, comes to be represented by two moments of two characters: Don Giovanni and Johannes. Don Giovanni lives in the immediacy of rapture but is blind, stunted, and devoted only to the moment of love. Don Giovanni's counterpart, Johannes the seducer, lives in reflection rather than in immediacy. However, Johannes' pursuit of the moment is merely a pursuit of the pursuit. This pursuit is empty, hollow, meaningless, and eventually "bor[ing]."[55] Johannes says, "I have loved [Cordelia], but from now on she can no longer engage my soul."[56] That is, Cordelia is no longer interesting. However, A argues that Johannes' evil is not a direct act of evil for living in the aesthetic moment puts Johannes "beyond" the moral. Nonetheless, living in the aesthetic moment results in the evil of the loss of life, existence, and reality. That is, living for the aesthetic moment makes one miss out on the full, flourishing life we are called to.[57]

The aesthetic moment is then the immediacy of sensual love for Don Giovanni and the abstract, reflective pursuit of the interesting for Johannes. For Don Giovanni this is not an ethical evil for those categories do not exist before or without language.[58] Nonetheless, Don Giovanni's aesthetic moment is not available to A, for A is a poet who has a command of language. Language still has the quality of immediacy in its medium. (That is, it strikes the ear first and is not reflected in the eye. Further, language, like music, has its medium in time.)[59] Nonetheless, language brings in the possibility of (self-) "reflective" knowledge and "consciousness."[60] In this is brought in "sin."[61] As A says of Johannes, "in this [his consciousness of his activity] evil in him lay."[62] So, on the one hand, the seducer of the

[55]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 442.
[56]Ibid., 376.
[57]Along these lines, the judge writes two letters to A critiquing the aesthetic moment for forgetting the ethical.
[58]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 104.
[59]Ibid., 77–79. See also Eremita's preface where he comments that "Little by little hearing became my favourite sense; for just as it is the voice that reveals inwardness which is incommensurable with the outer, so the ear is instrument whereby that inwardness is grasped, hearing the sense by which it is appropriated . . . A father-confessor is separated from the penitent by a grille; he does not see, he only hears. Gradually, as he listens, he forms a corresponding exterior. Consequently, he avoids contradiction, It is otherwise, however, when you see and hear at the same time, yet perceive a grille between yourself and the speaker" (page 27).
[60]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 97 and 104.
[61]Ibid.
[62]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1987, 306. I slightly changed Hong's translation to make it readable.

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diaries is then in sin due to his reflective awareness of his seduction, even if it is only the activity of seducing rather than its final moment which the aesthetic seducer is after. On the other hand, Don Giovanni may not be unethical, but is non-ethical. His love is "sensual" not "spiritual," and in this he falls short.

The aesthete then is caught in a "contradiction."[63] To pursue the interesting requires knowing that one is so doing. In this reflective knowledge, one is now required to consider whether what one is pursuing is right, true, or good. To live purely as an aesthete requires foregoing the ethical to become non-ethical or amoral (as opposed to unethical). Nonetheless, both the immediate and the reflective aesthetic moments miss the higher call of life: to live an ethical life. Further, living in the aesthetic moment presents a contradiction. As Eremita writes, "a unified aesthetic life-view is scarcely possible."[64]

The Ethical Moment

To see the ethical moment, consider the judge's half of *E/O* which includes two long letters to A. The first letter is titled: "The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage." Here the judge defends marriage as more beautiful than both "first love" (e.g., the immediate, sensual love of Don Giovanni) as well as more beautiful than the reflective love of the aesthete (e.g., Johannes the seducer). The concept of the moment is central in the judge's argument. The judge argues that marriage takes the first moment of falling in love and makes it an eternal moment through the vow. This vow takes place in a moment and in a moment changes the nature of the love forever. The marriage vow is both a public vow (a civil act) and a religious act (made in a church under God).[65] Thus, it is both ethical and religious in nature. Throughout his letter, the judge discusses both the religious and ethical components of marriage and its love. However, it is unclear what the judge's position is on the importance or difference of the religious sphere. What is clear is that the judge thinks that the marriage vow makes loving a duty. In being a duty, the love of marriage is brought into the "sphere" of the ethical.[66]

In his second letter, the "Aesthetic Validity of Marriage," the judge seeks to convince the aesthete that marital love has a "higher unity" than

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[63]See Eremita's preface: Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 28.
[64]Ibid., 36.
[65]Ibid., 431–38 and 394.
[66]Ibid., 413. See also *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* page 501.

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first love and that it "contains, beside the 'more,' also what lay in the first."[67] That is, marriage provides both a richer, deeper love than even the purest form of first love (i.e., romantic love). Further, marital love contains within it all that was in romantic love. To put it another way, marital love captures the beauty of the ephemeral, aesthetic moment but "extend[s]," "rejuvenate[s]," and bring[s] it "higher," by "chang[ing] its nature."[68] This change of first love into something higher takes place in the ethical moment of choosing (i.e., the marriage vow). The change results from taking on the duty to love. In this, the judge thinks that the aesthetic moment is transformed into a more "energetic," "vital," stable, and beautiful moment.[69] Nonetheless, along with Eremita, we might ask: Does this work? Did "B win the day?"[70] Can the aesthetic moment be preserved in the ethical? The judge's second letter makes an answer to these questions less than clear.

In contrast to his first letter, the judge's second letter, "The Equilibrium Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical," no longer makes an aesthetic argument alone. Rather, he focuses on the ethical moment: "the hour of decision," "the moment of choice."[71] This is another kind of either/or.[72] It is an either/or ("the aut/aut") of choosing something over not choosing at all.[73] It is the choosing to become something. This is the "to be" of Hamlet's soliloquy as well as the "to become" of actualization. To choose to be something is better than either living in the infinite emptiness of possibility alone (in the seducer's moment) or living in unreflective passive immediacy (Don Giovanni's moment). As the judge puts it, to choose is "to win yourself" which "is the main thing in life."[74] And this choice happens in the moment. It's not merely an "instant of deliberation" but a "decisive" choice.[75] If one does not live in the moment of choice, if one does not choose, then "the moment eventually comes when there is no longer any question of either/or . . . because [one] has refrained from choice."[76] In the second letter, then, the judge's view of the ethical moment is unveiled more fully. It is a moment of choice, of taking on duty, of becoming something and doing so reflectively, deliberately, and consciously.

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[67]Ibid., 399.
[68]Ibid., 394, 399, 410, and 466.
[69]Ibid.
[70]Ibid., 36.
[71]Ibid., 477 and 483.
[72]Ibid.
[73]Ibid., 477.
[74]Ibid., 482.
[75]Ibid.
[76]Ibid., 483.

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The question is whether the judge is able to live up to his own task. As Eremita puts it: does B "have the strength to stick to his view or not?"[77] McDonald gives us reason to doubt that B does have the strength, for the ethical moment is "overwhelming."[78] "It is," McDonald argues, "an impossibly heavy burden to have one's eternal salvation depend on striving in every moment to be good."[79] It seems then that the ethical is impossible. Where then are we to turn? What are we to make of this conclusion of *E/O*?

A Third Moment?

Is there a third moment? Later writings confirm this. Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* traces the path to conversion through "the moment."[80] This is "a new decision: the moment."[81] As *Fragments'* pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus tells us, "In *the moment* (Kierkegaards's emphasis), a person becomes aware of the rebirth, for his previous state was indeed one of 'not to be.'"[82] This moment of significance—"the fullness of time"—is the moment of conversion to a new way of life.[83]

In Kierkegaard's follow up work, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus lays out two stages (Religiousness A and B) that clarify his moment of conversion in *Fragments*. As the first moment, Religiousness A is an "inward deepening" where after a Socratic encounter one is challenged and awoken to new truths.[84] Of these Socratic encounters, Climacus says, "Here the upbuilding is quite properly distinguishable by the negative, by the self-annihilation that finds the relationship with God within itself."[85] In this moment, one encounters the divine and thereby achieves a greater degree of existence, that is, expands one soul. "Only momentarily can a particular individual, existing, be in a unity of the infinite and the finite that transcends existing.

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[77]Ibid., 36.
[78]McDonald, "Moment," 176.
[79]Ibid.
[80]Cited in Søren Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 122–23.
[81]Ibid., 125.
[82]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 125. It should be noted that Johannes Climacus can be rendered John the Climber. Consider also the connection the Saint John Climacus (or John of the latter) who developed a latter like way for people to grow closer to God.
[83]Ibid., 123.
[84]Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 238. As McDonald allows "moment" for "movement." See also *Fragments* pages 117 and 119 in *Essential Kierkegaard*.
[85]Ibid., 239–40.

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This instant is the moment of passion."[86] However, this greatening of the soul is not the Christian conversion for "Religiousness A can be present in paganism."[87] Like so many of Kierkegaard's conclusions, there is a paradoxical nature to Religiousness A: it makes one greater while making one lesser. However, Religiousness A only goes so far. It does not provide full redemption. Rather, "The totality of guilt-consciousness is the most upbuilding element in Religiousness A."[88] All of this, then, points to a "higher" moment.[89]

This higher moment is Religiousness B. In Religiousness B, one "does not . . . find the relationship with God within himself but relates himself to something outside himself."[90] Here is the moment of Christian conversion, and it passes through the "The Moment," which is Christ. Kierkegaard speaks of Christ as the moment in *The Concept of Anxiety*: "If, on the contrary, time and eternity touch each other, then it must be in time, and now we have come to the moment."[91] This is The Moment as Christ. It is the Paschal Mystery of Christ's incarnation.[92] As McDonald writes, "This is the *objective* moment of intersection of eternity and time."[93] This is the true fullness of time that enters time at a moment. In Christ's moment, we find the possibility for a way to the moment of Religiousness. Thus, there is indeed a third moment: the religious moment. Nonetheless, we must ask: Is the religious moment found in *E/O*?

The Religious Moment in *Either/Or*

While later works give us a clearer account of the religious moment, the intended audience of *E/O* did not have the benefit of these works. To see the religious moment in *E/O*, consider the structure of *E/O* again. To most readers, *E/O* appears on the surface to consist of the views of two characters living two moments: A and B. However, we cannot forget

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[86]Ibid., 204.
[87]Ibid., 239.
[88]Ibid.
[89]Ibid., 240.
[90]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 240.
[91]Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 87. Here Kierkegaard uses the pseudonym "Vigilius Haufniensis" which might be rendered the watchman of Copenhagen. This may be one of the pseudonyms found to be most closely aligned to Kierekgaard's own voice.
[92]McDonald, "Moment," 178. See also *Concept of Anxiety* pages 82-93.
[93]Ibid.

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the editor, Eremita. Nor can we forget that if A did not write "The Diary of the Seducer," then Johannes is another author. Thus, there are at least three characters in *E/O*—not merely two. Likewise, *E/O* is then really to be divided into at least three parts: 1) the preface, 2) A's writing, and 3) B's writings. However, A's part could be divided into A's writings, A's preface, and A's edited work: "The Diary of the Seducer." Can something similar be done with B's part?

In addition to his two longer letters, B includes one short, final note and a document. B's short letter is very much like a preface. In it, the judge says he is going to include a sermon for A. The sermon is by a pastor who has "grasped what I was saying to you and what I would have liked to say."[94] Thus, we have a new character and another section of *E/O*. This section contains both a preface and a work by a new author (e.g., a sermon from a pastor). In this way, B's part mirrors A's part; further, both A and B's parts mirror the whole structure of *E/O*. Does this new work present a new moment that will resolve the tension of *E/O*?

The sermon is titled: "The Edifying in the Thought that Against God We Are Always in the Wrong."[95] It begins, much like Augustine's *Confessions*, with a prayer to God:

> Father in heaven! Teach us to properly pray, that our hearts may open to you in prayer and supplication, and may hide no secret wish that we know is not well-pleasing to you, but neither any secret fear that you may deny us anything that is truly to our advantage, in that the laboring thoughts, the restless mind, the anxious heart may find rest in that which, and through that by which, it alone can be found, always rejoicing and thanking you as we gladly confess that before you we are always in the wrong.[96]

What are we to make of this prayer? The pastor has begun his sermon with a speech to God that is a cry for help, that includes a neither/nor, and that desires both release from anxiety as well as possession of joy and all that is to one's advantage. The neither/nor is to avoid on the one hand hiding secret desires that are not pleasing and on the other hand hiding fears that cause one to labor restlessly. This is a negation of both the aesthetic moment and the ethical moment. The seducers secret desires are negated as well as the judge's secret human strivings mixed with his misgivings.

After the prayer comes the reading from Luke 19:

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[94]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 594.
[95]Ibid., 595.
[96]Ibid., 597. "Take it, then, read it" (page 594, *Either/Or*) should also remind us of Augustine.

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> And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.[97]

Here Kierkegaard is again giving a clue by calling us to think about what was "hid from thine eyes." If we knew what was hidden, we would know the momentous things happening in their historical moment. Here Kierkegaard calls us to look for what is hidden. That is, he calls us to his project of obfuscation in *E/O*.

Consider then how the sermon addresses the worries raised for both the aesthetic moment and the ethical. That is, consider how the sermon addresses the neither/nor of *E/O.* As the prayer made clear, the aesthete lives in secret desire that—this is the reflective desire of the aesthetic moment that is only possibility; the ethicist lives in the anxiety of toil. To these worries, the pastor declares:

> We then only have the choice between being nothing before God and the eternal torment of constantly beginning over again yet without being able to begin. For we are to decide definitely whether we are in the right at the present instant [moment] this question must be decided definitely concerning the previous instant [moment], and so on, further and further back. Doubt is again afoot . . . let us . . .set it at rest by considering: the edifying in the thought that against God we are always in the wrong."[98]

What is edifying in this thought? The pastor tells us that when someone accuses someone they love, the accuser wishes they were in the wrong.[99] The same is true with our relationship to God. When we accuse God of something he has done wrong, we wish we were wrong. The edifying thought, then, is that, when we accuse God, we are right to think we are in the wrong. This thought "alleviat[es] anxiety . . . [and] incit[es] action."[100] Further, it gives us "comfort," "joy," and "a proof that [one's] love is happy."[101] These thoughts then lead us to see that *E/O* is a neither/nor. Further, we see that there is something beyond the aesthetic moment and the ethical moment.

The sermon brings the reader to face the moment of conversion. Kierkegaard gives the pastor the last words of *E/O* which concludes with:

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[97]Translation cited from *Either/Or*. Page 597.
[98]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 601.
[99]Ibid., 602–3.
[100]Ibid., 606.
[101]Ibid.

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> Ask yourself, and keep asking until you find the answer, for one can recognize a thing many times . . . one can want a thing many times and attempt it, yet only the deep inner movement, only the indescribable motions of the heart, only these can convince you that what you have recognized "belong unto you," that no power can take it from you; for only the truth that edifies is truth for you.[102]

Here the pastor exhorts us to take on this truth and make it our own. In this, Kierkegaard has completed his task. If we have untangled *E/O*, we will see that the book is not merely a piece of fiction; it is a puzzling fiction with a purpose. Its purpose is to allow us to journey with the characters on their journey and with them to face the question of what will truly lead to a good life.

To some it may seem that Kierkegaard's words "truth for you" imply a kind of subjectivist or relativist truth. This seems unlikely given that the only truth that we are left with that edifies is the truth that against God one is always in the wrong. Thus, through the pastor, Kierkegaard gives his reader the only way to happiness. One must "keep asking until [she] find[s] the answer" until one sees that the riddle of *E/O* is that it is a neither/nor. Neither living in the aesthetic moment, nor living in the ethical moment will lead to true happiness. Only the religious moment can truly satisfy. Further, one must make this truth their own by realizing it both in thought and deed. This is a distinctively Christian eudaimonism: in becoming fully actualized through our relationship of love with God, we achieve both happiness and embody the virtues through action. What does this look like? To see, consider a further aspect of the religious moment which several Kierkegaard scholars have drawn out of Kierkegaard's writings.

§3. Religiousness C: Living in the Religious Moment

Later writings of Kierkegaard point towards the conclusion that what is lovely in the aesthetic and what is noble in the ethical can be incorporated into the religious moment in such a way that one can live in and live out the religious moment in daily life. To see this, consider that Merold Westphal has hypothesized a complementary stage to Religiousness A and B called *Religiousness C*. Westphal writes, "In Religiousness B, Christ, the God-man in time, is the Paradox to be believed. In Religiousness C, Christ is the Pattern, the Prototype, the Paradigm to be imitated."[103] Thus,

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[102]Ibid., 608–9.

[103]Merold Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Religiousness C: A Defense," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2004): 535.

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Religiousness C is the life of the Christian lived out in external acts of love. It is by entering into The Moment as Christ and imitating Christ's pattern that we perform outward or external acts of love—Religiousness C. This is fullest manifestation of the religious moment. As McDonald puts it, "the moment of incarnation presents a possible task for human beings: imitation of Christ in performing works of love."[104] This task is possible and called for at "every moment."[105]

Given that McDonald calls the imitation of Christ "a task or resolution," one might think that Kierkegaard's ethics is a duty-based or deontological view.[106] This is not the picture Kierkegaard seem to present to us in *E/O*. In the words of the pastor only in "an infinite relationship to God could the doubt be allayed."[107] "Your bliss [is] that you could never love as you were loved."[108] This infinite love from God is your "bliss," "a proof that your love is happy," "your rapture, your song of praise, your worship."[109] Here we see that it is in our relationship with God that we find freedom from doubt, renew loving, and happiness. Further, this relationship changes us: we move beyond the possibility of aesthetic moment and the ethical moment to an "infinite relationship with God." Now changed in love and filled with "the joy in which you triumph over yourself," you wish to act.[110] That is, this love and new kind of being incites us "to action"—to a higher task or quest.[111] To the task of becoming what God made us to be. In this way, the pastor calls us to a higher state of being, a fuller flourishing, that results in action. The pastor's sermon gives a truth that edifies "for you" or "subjectively" in changing the nature of our existence.[112] One must go

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[104]McDonald, "Moment," 178.
[105]Ibid.
[106]Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1992, 178.
[107]Ibid., 606.
[108]Ibid.
[109]Ibid.
[110]Ibid.
[111]Ibid.
[112]Ibid., 609. See also *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* on Subjectivity and Truth: "Subjective reflection turns inward toward subjectivity and in this inward deepening will be of the truth, and in such a way that, just as in the preceding, when objectivity was advanced, subjectivity vanished, here subjectivity as such becomes the final factor and objectivity vanishing. Here it is not forgotten, even for a single moment, that the subject is existing, and that existing is a becoming, and that truth as the identity of thought and being in therefore a chimera of abstraction and truly only a longing of creation, not because truth is not an identity, but because the knower is an existing person, and thus truth cannot be an identity for him as long as he exists . . . Only momentarily can a particular individual, existing, be a unity of the infinite

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through this change to find joy. As Kierkegaard puts it later: "If the situation is to be different, then, the moment in time must have such decisive significance that for no moment will I be able to forget it, neither in time nor in eternity, because the eternal, previously nonexistent, came into existence in that moment."[113] That is, entering the moment of conversion in The Moment (i.e. Christ) we are changed forever becoming something new. In a new moment, we have a new deeper love than either the aesthetic or ethical moment.

Randy Colton explicates how new being and new love is not a virtue in the standard sense.[114] Rather it is an aspect of our character which changes our entire perception of ourselves and the world.[115] For example, only through Christian love can one transform the giving of a simple "meal" for the poor into the "banquet" we are commanded to serve each other.[116] To live fully in the moment, then, is not simply to acquire certain dispositions and habits that are effective or ethical, but to have an inner-subjective transformation that colors one's understanding of one's self and the world. This transformation must include participation in God's love. Without participation in The Moment of Christ (i.e., God's love), one may achieve a lesser moment (living aesthetically or ethically), but that person's ends will be various and in conflict with each other producing incoherence in one's life as well as frustrating one from ever truly achieving her task, her goals, and her end. Thus, as one engages in the internal moment of faith, one is able to participate in a fuller, richer moment in the external moment of faith: works of love. This is a moment that transcends but includes the beauty, rapture, and immediacy of the aesthetic moment. Further, the works of love flowing from *Religiousness C* results in the civic and social virtues, as well as the personal, self-development which the ethical demands.

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and the finite that transcends existing. This instant is the moment of passion (Citation from E*ssential Kierkegaard*, page 204).

[113]Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 119.

[114]Randall Colton, *Repetition and The Fullness of Time.* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2013).

[115]Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 117–18.

[116]Ibid., 123.

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SECTION 2:

IMAGINATION AND LEWIS

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CHAPTER 6

ART AND IDOLATRY

JOHN R. GILHOOLY

Art and religion have often been thought of as co-belligerents against the ascendency of capital 's' science.[1] But, this conclusion underplays the extent to which art and religion are, in fact, rivals for human emotional and spiritual capital. In this paper, I argue that art destroys religion ultimately because it is idolatrous, but also because it refuses to be constrained to an adjunctive role. As an example of the first point, I explore the concept of 'sub-creation' in literary theory and show that far from celebrating in imitation of God's creative act, sub-creation is fundamentally subversive and idolatrous. With respect to art's insistence on its own autonomy, I show that instrumental usages of art undercut aesthetic integrity and manifest a mistaken conception of the art on behalf of the 'worshipper.' I conclude that art and religion stand in opposition.

§1. What Do You Mean By Art?

Of course, to say that art is idolatrous is to suppose a conceptual range for both "art" and "idolatry." Scope limitation dictates that even with the range of entities that might land in either conceptual range that I focus attention on a sub-range. With respect of "art," whatever else it is, literature is certainly a (oft overlooked) component. Why restrict ourselves to just visual arts? If one doesn't know what constitutes literature, then an academic paper is a bad place to be. Idolatry is variously defined, but the basic sense among the so-called Abrahamic religions derives from the Decalogue: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," therefore, etc (Ex. 20:4). If idolatry ranged only over rocks and pieces of wood with faces carved into them, then certainly literature could not be idolatrous.

[1]See the discussion in Gordon Graham, *Philosophy, Art, and Religion: Understanding Faith and Creativity*. Cambridge Studies in Religion, Philosophy, and Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 1-8.

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However, the paradigmatic instance of the rock or wooden god comes to represent the most wooden sense in which some object that is not God stands in his position. In other words, idol for the religious mind comes to refer to not only statues, but also to any *x* that contests with God for the reverence, attention, or affection that could only be due to the Creator. At first glance, it seems strange to think that anyone would be worshipping a work of literature, until one remembers that the self-revelation of God in all Abrahamic religions makes it so that God is discovered primarily in a book. They refer to this phenomenon as "special" or "direct" revelation. Their God is known textually as vehicle of self-expression that provides a ready-made *interpretans* to relate the sign (Word, for Christians) and signifier (the Creator). Hence, an alternate text that claims to provide insight into the true nature of reality in a way that promotes "refreshment," "healing," "awe," "wonder," or other such religious or quasi-religious attitudes or symptoms is a text that implicitly claims to tell the truth in a way more perfect or appropriate than the books of God's self-disclosure, which the religious man claims to give ultimate credence and pride of place.

In fact, in the realm of "Christian" literature, Christian creatives undermine their own confession of the supremacy of their "Grand Narrative," precisely because their sub-created worlds provide a different account of God than that narrative. Furthermore, the arresting affection for these works of fiction belies the sense in which these works could be said to be directed toward that "Grand Narrative." Hence, I conclude that, if anything is idolatrous in literature, sub-creation is. If 'sub-created worlds' are in fact illative, rather than independent works of literary belief, then they fail to be art. Religion won't brook a rival, and art won't stand for merely being instrumental. Hence, this tension must be resolved, either by admitting that such works are not art or by admitting that they compete for the role that religion plays in the cultivation of "refreshment," "healing, "hope, "escape," "awe," or whatever else religion is supposed to do for people.

§2. The Doctrine of Sub-Creation

Sub-creation is concept attributed to J.R.R. Tolkien from his essay *On Fairy Stories*. In that work, he describes a process of writing whose purpose is to create an internally consistent "world" – self-consistent and thorough enough to engender what he called "Secondary Belief."

He writes:

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> Children are capable, of course, of *literary belief*, when the story-maker's art is good enough to produce it. That state of mind has been called 'willing suspension of disbelief.' But this does not seem to me a good description of what happens. What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator.' He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world.[2]

The idea of 'sub-creation,' then, is the production of a fantastic, imaginative world that is consistent enough to engender transport and wonder. These essential qualities are likewise qualities of art. Hence, Tolkien can say that "if written with art, the prime value of fairy-stories will simply be that value which, as literature, they share with other literary forms."[3] Now, Tolkien freely admits that the capacity for creativity and artistic expression allows for the development of idolatry and irreligious content. But, he does not see this threat as necessary or as a source of moral worry about fantasy (and all art by extension). Regarding excess of expression, he writes:

> Fantasy can, of course, be carried to excess. It can be ill done. It can be put to evil use. It may even delude the minds out of which it came. But of what human thing in this fallen world is that not true? Men have conceived not only of elves, but they have imagined gods, and worshipped them, even worshipped those most deformed by their authors' own evil. But they have made false gods out of other materials: their notions, their banners, their monies; even their sciences and their social and economic theories have demanded human sacrifice. *Absus non tollit usum*. Fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a maker.[4]

The argument here seems to be that artistic expression is no more idolatrous or potential for idolatry than other human endeavors, and, hence, is not more worthy of moral censure. But, of course, the nature of the creative activity is such that it is peculiarly at odds with religious goals and ambitions. The reason is that fantasy and art present a world to inhabit – an alternative to the real world. In fact, Tolkien's attempt to relocate creativity (and fantasy in particular) as a peculiarly *religious* activity shows this to be the case. He says that the joy of a 'fairy-story' "looks forward (or backward:

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[2]J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007): 36.
[3]Ibid., 44.
[4]Ibid., 51-52.

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the direction in this regard is unimportant) to the Great Eucatastrophe."[5] In other words, fantasy anticipates or reflects the Christian story of Incarnation and Resurrection.

The trouble with this regarding of creative activity is that it presupposes that one can be anonymously religious. And, in fact, this is a typical flaw of religious creatives. They suppose that because they choose to imbue a story with the didactic insights of their religion that those insights are participatory in their religious story and culture. But, that cannot be true if art has its own set of peculiar values (as Tolkien earlier intimated). In other words, art cannot have its prime value *qua* art and also be an inchoate reflection of a central religious story that comprises its own set of values. They also intimate that everyone steals their capital so that any insight putatively produced from their religion must be sourced there – even if the author does not know it. Furthermore, even if this move made sense, we would have "hidden" or "sub-textual" presentations of the worldview, each which fall short of pedagogy since they require some fuller explanation to be realized for what they are supposed to be. But, Christian presentations are not Christian if they are hidden – because faith comes by hearing.

The trouble is a semiotic one. Given that the art is now understood in Christian vein, its activity is now expressly theological – and this without intention of the author perhaps. Hence, the work can be (should be, on those lights) read as a revealing of the theology of the writer. But, this masks the intentions of the author who may have had no inclination that they were writing a work of narrative theology. So, we have to conclude that the heathen always produce their art *sensus plenior*, which undermines one's ability to produce a consistent and verifiable hermeneutic for art and literature. And, of course, many people write their stories without the characteristics of fantasy, precisely because they find them too unreal.

Furthermore, we now also have to read the art of religious artists as a conscious exposition of their view of the world and, hence, as intentionally theological objects. But, that means that how Lewis handles some incidental detail of his *Chronicles of Narnia* now is a source of understanding for his view of Christian salvation or something else. It can no longer be that his choices were merely for "aesthetic value."[6] This would be a consequence of his intending his fantasy world to be some proxy for the Christian story.[7] But, either the derivative mode is defective, precisely

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[5]Ibid., 65.

[6]See §2.

[7]Supposing that he did (e.g., "I thought I saw how [fairy tales] could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed so much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or

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because it is derivative and the real thing is available; or else, it is not derivative but a superior iteration, in which case it tells the story better. And, it seems clear that for a 'sub-creator' like Lewis (perhaps others), his story *is* better – at least judged from the number of young Christian people who have read Narnia compared to the number who have missed bedtime reading Habakkuk. One can't escape the supplanting of the ostensibly 'true myth,' by suggesting in media outside one's fantasy world that you really mean to point to the true myth after all. If that is the case, then Lewis (or Tolkien or whoever) has painted too beautiful a sign – so beautiful, in fact, that one never gets beyond it to the target of its illative ostension. Anyhow, the iconoclast should say: even if one did need a narrative to illustrate some theological principles, "after all, doesn't the history of the Christian church and the limitations of its saints make the gospel much more intelligible to saints who sin than the widely enjoyed science-fiction narratives and talking animals of C. S. Lewis's fiction?"[8] The Primary World is a better source of such narratives than the Secondary World, and our own history requires its own imagination.

If the point of these stories were to draw one to the *true* story, as some demur, then they would have to provide a hermeneutic that made such a connection possible for the unenlightened reader. Of course, they do not do so. Hence, one can enjoy Middle Earth or Narnia at the box office or library without a dramatic increase in the likelihood that one attends a religious service the next weekend. In fact, such writings are worse than merely visual art because of the extent to which they are interpreted in religious communities to be didactic and, hence, to provide religious instruction. If there is any religious objection to visual art, then it will be all the more against quasi-religious literature. And, religious arguments against visual art abound. In Islam, representational art has always been forbidden (unless political pressures impinged on the faithful). And, iconoclasm has been a consistent theme of the Christian church. Bishop Ridley says, "it is evident that millions of souls have been cast into eternal damnation by the

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about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation can freeze feelings. And reverences itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their potency? Could one not thus steal past watchful dragons? I thought one could. C. S. Lewis, *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature* (London: Harvest, 1982): 47.) Some Lewis scholars dispute just in what way the stories present themselves as Christian. Either way, they are idolatrous.

[8]D.G. Hart. "The Divine and Human in the Seminary Curriculum," Westminster Theological Journal 65 (2003): 44.

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occasion of images used in place of religion and no history can record that every any one soul was won to Christ by having of images."[9] Gregory of Caesarea says, "the foul name of images, falsely so-called, cannot be justified by the tradition of Christ, nor can it be justified by the tradition of the Apostles and the Fathers."[10]

But, let that pass. The draw of Escape into the realm of the Secondary World is not consciously an attempt to understand the world better for the reader – even if it may have that effect – ("although *how* precisely does it do this?"). The draw of Escape is because the world presented by the author's Fantasy is preferable to the Primary World, and, hence, their artistic (i.e., religious) vistas are idolatrous. Some demur that stories that are set in the so-called real world may, in fact, offer their own unreality. Of course, that just extends the critique to those books as well.

On Christianity, the Primary World remains the creation of God in spite of the fallen condition lamented by Tolkien above, and the vision of the Great Escape is the eschatological hope of the prophetic writers. Lewis (or Tolkien or whoever) suggest themselves as prophets in their own right by offering an independent set of myths, equally fantastic and ephemeral, that do not participate in the horizon of the Primary Future. They undermine the pungency of the real world, which is correctly interpreted in the religious texts that they claim to revere. Even if the worlds were intended as illustrations, the illustrations will have become the narrative, and that inclination is already present in the eschatological hope of the best of their exponents. They succeed over against religion for "awe," "refreshment," etc., and so on. For example, speaking of the value of stories like Kenneth Grahame's, C.S. Lewis notes that escapism is intended and, salutary:

> To that extent the book is a specimen of the most scandalous escapism: it paints a happiness under incompatible conditions--the sort of freedom we can have only in childhood and the sort we can have only in maturity--and conceals the contradiction by the further pretence that the characters are not human beings at all. The one absurdity helps to hide the other. It might be expected that such a book would unfit us for the harshness of reality and send us back to our daily lives unsettled and discontented. I do not find that it does so. The happiness which it presents to us is in fact full of the simplest and most attainable things--food, sleep, exercise, friendship, the face of nature, even (in a sense) religion. That 'simple but sustaining

[9]Nicholas Ridley, *The Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1841): 94. See the discussion in Clifford Davidson, "The Anti-Visual Prejudice," in *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama*, eds. Clifford Davidson and Ann Eljenholm Nichols (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University, 1989): 33-46.
[10]Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, col. 267.

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> meal' of 'bacon and broad beans and a macaroni pudding' which Rat gave to his friends has, I doubt not, helped down many a real nursery dinner. And in the same way the whole story, paradoxically enough, strengthens our relish for real life. This excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure to the actual.[11]

Of course, some argue that Tolkien and Lewis did not intend the works to be taken as wooden allegories – they simply liked their stories. Richard Purtill writes:

> This statement is somewhat surprising. Surely both Tolkien and Lewis illustrate all kinds of religious values – and even, in Tolkien, Catholic values. But we must distinguish between the intent of the authors and its effect on their readers. Neither Tolkien nor Lewis set out to write books that were Christian or Catholic "propaganda." They wrote the kind of stories that they enjoyed reading.[12]

If the stories contain Christian values or can be easily read as promoting Christian theological ideas, it is, per Purtill, because the authors were Christians. But, this means that they are not illative of the Great Eucatastrophe. They are celebrations of creativity – which, because God has made men creative – is an exercise of creatureliness. Hence, Tolkien says, "So great is the bounty with which [man] has been treated that he may now, perhaps, fairly dare to guess that in Fantasy he may actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation."[13] If this effoliation produces an object of its own direction and integrity, then it will be idolatrous with respect to some religion. But, if this effoliation is to adorn another story – the "true" story - this "art" is merely instrumental. To produce *art* with an explicitly religious story – i.e., a report of the Great Eucatastrophe – is to disguise a sermon as art. Everyone seems to agree that this makes for bad movies and books, but – of course – art and religious instruction have cross purposes. If the writers resist the attempts of their religious readers to reduce their work to allegory, then this heightens the sense in which their works are idolatrous. But, if they admit that their works are a narrative apologetic – a thinly disguised propaganda – then they must also say that the work is not art but bad preaching.

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[11]C. S. Lewis, *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature* (London: Harvest, 1982): 45.
[12]Richard Purtill. *Lord of the Elves and Eldils: Fantasy and Philosophy in C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006): 7.
[13]Ibid.

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§3. Art and Autonomy

If the stories are not instrumentally used – if they are not a kind of propaganda – then because they must assert their own autonomy, they are likewise worth the ire of the iconoclast. Kant famously says that art is "a kind of representation that is purposive in itself, and though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication."[14] Gordon Graham elaborates on this Kantian aesthetic by saying:

> In this way, a work of art may be contrasted with beautiful things that are simply the outcome of natural processes – glorious sunsets or stones beautifully polished by tumbling streams, for instance. It is in this sense that works of art have *purposefulness*. Yet, though they are indeed purposefully ordered and arranged, they may also be contrasted with machines. Like works of art, machines are intentionally created, but the ordering of their parts is not merely purposeful; it is intended to serve a specific *purpose*. A machine may be very ingenious, but if it does not serve the purpose for which it was made, or serves it very badly, it is a failure. A work of art, by contrast, cannot fail in this way. That is because, though it have *purposefulness*, it has no *purpose*. The significance of art is to be found in its form, not its function.[15]

This understanding of art is widely supported among aestheticians.[16]

To say that art has a didactic purpose is to undermine the sense in which it *has no end*. If one wants to dispute that art can be purposive (i.e., can have a didactic purpose), then one can no longer judge the material on artistic grounds, since it will have failed *altogether* just in case it fails to achieve some measure of its didactic purpose.

One can say that perhaps someone like C.S. Lewis would like his literature to be both artistic and didactic (although he doesn't say as much). In other words, perhaps he wants some passage from *The Chronicles of Narnia* to be both good literature (on some measure) and to stir one's affections for what Tolkien called the Great Eucatastrophe. But, if those two ends are divergent, then the desire for artistic success is idolatrous since it would stand over against the religious intention of the piece. At the same

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[14]Immanuel Kant. *Critique of the Power of Judgment* §44-46.

[15]Graham. *Philosophy,* 21. He cites the idea of "significant form" with reference to Clive Bell from *Art* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1914).

[16]"The most evident characteristic of a *work of* art may be termed *uselessness*." Paul Valery. *Aesthetics*, trans. R. Manheim, in *The Collected Works of Paul Valery*, ed. Mathews (London: 1964), 71.

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time, if the real goal is for the didactic purpose, then the artistic success is a means to an end – and, hence, the piece fails as art.

Now, Christian writers have (perhaps rightly) contested the idea that contemplation is the hard limit of aesthetic satisfaction or purpose.[17] For example, Nicholas Wolterstorff suggests that:

> Often the satisfaction that we experience in contemplating works of art is grounded in our apprehension of the work's truth to actuality, or in its being an expression of the personality of the artists, or in its fine craftsmanship.[18]

He goes one to suggest a different means of determining what a work's *aesthetic qualities* are, I quote at length:

> When someone contemplates a work of art on some occasion, let me say the work then presents itself to him. Beethoven's String Quartet, Opus 132, presents itself to me when I listen to it. And secondly, when someone possess the qualifications appropriate for contemplating a work in the way intended, and when in addition he contemplates it under the circumstances appropriate to that work, let me say that the work then *presents* itself to him *canonically* . . . If a work cannot present itself to someone canonically without looking or sounding so-and-so, which we will designate with the symbol φ, then φ-*ness* is one of its aesthetic qualities.[19]

Let's apply this mechanism to the literature suggested above. What is required for a canonical presentation of *The Chronicles of Narnia*? Is it required that one already have substantial familiarity with Protestant Christian theology in order to receive the work canonically? That can hardly have been an intention of the author since the work was prepared for a broad general audience without a "clue" to the allegorical nature of the work – and, what's more, the work is not intended to be allegorical. Insofar as it is a fairy-story, it belongs to a genre with its own canons of purpose and motif. If that were not the case, the Tolkien couldn't refer to them as a distinct class of literature. One might be able to say that *The Chronicles of Narnia* will evoke longing. That might be one of its aesthetic qualities. Gilbert Meilaender suggests that Lewis' "characteristic theme is 'romantic

[17]See (e.g.) Nicholas Wolterstorff. *Art in Action.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).
[18]Ibid., 39.
[19]Ibid., 42

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longing,' or Sehnsucht."[20] He suggests that this is Lewis' take on Augustine's conception of a restless heart. But, that requires an inference with grounding far beyond the borders of Narnia. If his rationale for writing stories is that narrative best presents the *aesthetic* of theology, then again one has (for his religion anyway) the biblical narrative to do that. The myth that is asymptotic to fact is unnecessary for those who putatively possess the true myth. To insist on its place as 'effoliation' is vain. Furthermore, if the goal of the work is (again) didactic, then it ceases to be a fantasy for one to be caught up in. Hence, it fails the stated purpose of a writer like Lewis or Tolkien. In any case, *promotes Christian sentiments in me* cannot be an aesthetic quality of a work since that property requires the work to be interpreted in light of something outside itself (i.e., Christian theology). So, given that the work of art itself cannot produce such a sentiment – since it is only something like an echo or a memory when read in the most charitable lights against the intentions of the authors – it must assert itself as something independent. If the author intends otherwise, his distributor certainly does not. And, if the book (in this case) needs to be married to some other mechanism in order to achieve its ends, then it fails as art. The fact that it so fails is itself evidence that artistic integrity does share the field. But, that makes it a rival to religion: either an equal or an idol.

Because art seeks to supplant religion, either by "sub-creating" a better world or by promoting itself with increasingly muted reference to the putative object of its ostension, art and artistic activity are corrosive of religion, not buttress of support for it. The contemplative nature of aesthetic success makes it corrosive not corollary of theological contemplation.

This to you, I submit,
Your Affectionate Uncle,
Screwtape[21]

[20]Gilbert Meilaender. "C.S. Lewis and the Narrative Quality of Experience," in *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis: Language and Narrative in Theory and Practice*, eds. Peter J. Schakel & Charles A Huttar. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007): 148.
[21]Someone somewhere suggested such a frame.

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CHAPTER 7

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: LESSONS FROM C.S. LEWIS

EMILY L. MCCARTY

Philosophy of religion should make use of a specifically Lewisian strategy in order to make philosophy of religion accessible to a layman's audience.[1] When writing *The Chronicles of Narnia* and his space trilogy, Lewis made use of what has come to be called "smuggled theology." To utilize smuggled theology, one interweaves theological themes such as atonement, sin, and redemption into a fantasy story in a manner so subtle that the reader doesn't realize he is encountering these themes.[2] Lewis

[1]I am indebted to lectures by Dr. Edward Martin at Liberty University, and to conversations with Jonathan Jacobs, Twigz McGuire, Lauren Higgins, Daniel Portnoy and Rachel Ferguson for the shape of this work. I am also grateful for the comments of my reviewers for aiding in the structure and clarity of this work.

[2]I was helped in my definition of smuggled theology by lectures by Dr. Edward Martin and by the works of David C. Downing and Bruce Edwards, David C. Downing, "Sub-Creation or Smuggled Theology: Tolkien contra Lewis on Christian Fantasy." Tolkien Contra, C. S. Lewis Institute. Accessed March 2019. http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/node/1207; and Bruce Edwards, "Smuggling Theology: Lewis' Cosmic Trilogy." C. S. Lewis: The Official Site of C. S. Lewis, Harper Collins Publishers. Posted April 4, 2012. Accessed March 2019. https://cslewiscom.kinsta.cloud/smuggling-theology-c-s-lewiss-cosmic-trilogy/. David C. Downing, "Rehabilitating H. G. Wells: C. S. Lewis' *Out of the Silent Planet.*" In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy*, Volume 2: *C. S. Lewis: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet,* edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 13-34. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007. EBSCOHost eBook. Bruce L. Edwards. "'Patches of Godlight': C. S. Lewis as Imaginative Writer." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy*, Volume 2: *C. S. Lewis: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet,* edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 1-12. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007. EBSCOHost eBook. Their works and ideas also influenced which texts I chose to use in this paper.

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recognized that there can be intellectual and emotional resistance to theological ideas that a fantasy story with subtly interwoven theological themes could easily evade or overcome. This subtlety allows the author to introduce the content of theology to the reader without all of the theological jargon and technicality. Lewis' hope was that this first encounter with theological ideas through literature, particularly fantasy, would produce in his readers a kind of recognition of those same ideas when presented as theology proper. The hope was that this recognition would lead to a greater receptivity towards those ideas in the fantasy reader. The advantage of this method is that it prevents the raising of the defenses of the reader against these ideas, so that the reader can actually engage the theological ideas without having to deal with all the theological baggage that leads to an intellectual wall of resistance. The author can then play out the theological ideas before the reader without the resistance that can arise from direct identification and confrontation with the ideas.

Like Lewis made use of smuggled theology to introduce readers to theological themes, philosophers of religion can use smuggled philosophy to interweave philosophical ideas into a work of fiction, particularly fantasy, so as to introduce important themes from philosophy of religion. In so using this methodology, one introduces the concepts and ideas of philosophy of religion while avoiding the resistance that comes with talking about philosophical ideas and ideas from philosophy of religion. Currently, philosophers of religion use stories to illustrate and illuminate philosophical ideas. They give the story and then interpret it for the reader, pointing out the similarities. Some philosophers of religion employ narrative alongside of analytic argument. Or, for some philosophers, the stories that they present are branded *as philosophical stories.* What I am proposing is that philosophers of religion need to write or collaborate in writing stories that are not obviously about philosophical themes. In other words, the ways that philosophical stories are branded need to be subtler, need to become smuggled in the Lewisian way, in order to attract a wider audience for these important ideas. Questions surrounding the existence of God and the problem of evil itself are, needless to say, an important topic with consequences for how we live our lives. Yet people are more resistant to a typical philosophical argument than to a story, and smuggled philosophy is a way around this resistance. In this paper, I will argue that philosophy should make use of this Lewisian strategy. First, I will show that there is a call within analytic philosophy to do philosophy through narrative, as well as show that there are distinct benefits to using narrative that analytic argument lacks. Next, I will show how Lewis's methodology of smuggled theology makes use of these benefits, and so this methodology can be

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applied to philosophy. After I show that smuggled philosophy is a viable way to do philosophy, I will motivate the need for Christian philosophers of religion to utilize smuggled philosophy in order to engage the church and culture at large.

§1. The Need for Analytic Philosophy to Utilize Narrative

Several philosophers have issued the call for narrative to be utilized as part of philosophical inquiry.[3] Eleonore Stump argues in *Wandering in Darkness* that narrative provides a knowledge of persons that is not available through reading an analytic argument or though coming to believe a proposition. Not only is narrative useful for providing knowledge of persons but also knowledge by acquaintance of other non-person things in existence as well.[4] She explains the weakness of analytic philosophy this way:

> These practices of Anglo-American philosophy, characterized by an attention to analytic detail and a predilection for precision, can be conveniently thought of as mediated by left-brain skills (to use amateur but accurate neurobiological concepts). Such practices and skills are certainly important to any careful thinking in general and to philosophy in particular…. But there is also no reason to suppose that left-brain skills alone will reveal to us all that is philosophically interesting about the world. The narrowness for which Anglo-American philosophy is reproached is thus a concomitant of the analytic strengths that characterize it. Breadth of focus is a right-brain skill. So are many abilities useful in interpersonal relations…. It is therefore misleadingly imprecise, I think, to diagnose the weakness of analytic philosophy as its narrowness. Its cognitive *hemianopia* is its problem. Its intellectual vision is occluded or obscured for the right half of the cognitive field, [citation omitted] especially for the part of reality that includes the complex, nuanced thought, behavior, and relations of persons.[5]

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[3]I am indebted to a reviewer for pointing out the need to include a section outlining a call for analytic philosophy to include narrative, and for showing how C. S. Lewis's work has a unique place within that call for narrative in analytic philosophy.
[4]Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23-63. See also Joshua Cockayne and David Efird, "Common Worship," *Faith and Philosophy* 35, no. 3 (2018), 301-303. The inclusion of the sections from *Wandering in Darkness* was shaped by the reading of an early unpublished manuscript of Eleonore Stump.
[5]Eleonore Stump, Wandering in Darkness, 24-25.

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Stump proposes that analytic philosophy should be wed to the investigation of literature and narrative in order to repair its poor vision. Narrative, Stump maintains, can provide insight into truths about human persons that analytic argumentation struggles to capture or cannot capture at all.[6] Furthermore, Stump argues is that we cannot simply include a narrative in a philosophical argument as a kind of commentary on the analytic argument, for that is to lose the richness of a story. Narrative, Stump thinks, has something unique to add to philosophical investigation, and so has to be examined in its own right to gain philosophical insight from the content of the narrative.[7] Stump's methodology in *Wandering in Darkness* is to investigate narrative and philosophical argument alongside one another in order to gain insight into the problem of suffering. Stump's methodology

> is an attempt to combine the techniques of philosophy and literary criticism in order to achieve something neither set of techniques would accomplish on its own. Its purpose is thus to give us access to a side of reality that can be captured better in narratives than in non-narrative prose but to give us access to it as philosophers. As such, it is different from simply asking philosophical questions of narratives.[8]

But the point generalizes: narrative has something unique to contribute to philosophical inquiry that arguments alone struggle to provide: insight into persons.[9]

My purpose in overviewing Stump's methodology in *Wandering in Darkness* is not to defend it, but to show that there is a recognition by analytic philosophers of a shortcoming within analytic philosophy and the recognition that narrative and story is the remedy for this shortcoming. There are others who demonstrate not only a call for analytic philosophy to make use of narrative, but also underscore the mechanism by which narrative conveys philosophical ideas.

While arguing for the use of "speculative fiction" (genres such as sci-fi) as a methodology for performing philosophical inquiry, Helen de Cruz and Johan de Smedt argue that "analytic philosophy (especially philosophical thought experiments) and speculative fiction (such as science fiction and fantasy) rely on similar cognitive mechanisms."[10] Such cognitive

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[6]Ibid., 26.
[7]Ibid., 26-27.
[8]Ibid., 29.
[9]Ibid., 26-27.
[10]Johan de Smedt and Helen de Cruz. "The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 39, no. 1 (2015): 59. https://doi.org/10.1111/misp.12035.

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mechanisms are involved with "counterfactual reasoning" as well as reasoning about "future possibilities." But speculative fiction has a unique feature that analytic thought experiments lack:

> speculative fiction, unlike analytic philosophy, elicits transportation by drawing readers emotionally into a story and reduces the need for cognitive closure.[11] As a result, speculative fiction allows for a richer exploration of philosophical positions than is possible through ordinary philosophical thought experiments.[12]

According to de Cruz and de Smedt's survey of various philosophical and psychological work on narrative, both "philosophical thought experiments" and speculative fiction make use of our capacity to reason about the future.[13] Because both philosophical thought experiments and speculative fiction also typically include "radical departures from reality," both make possible "a detailed examination of states of affairs very different from our own."[14] However, although philosophical thought experiments and speculative fiction provide a place to think outside the realm of the everyday, speculative fiction provides an advantage to our reasoning about such future scenarios that philosophical thought experiments lacks. De Cruz and de Smedt write,

> *Transportation* is a metaphor coined by Richard Gerrig (1993) to describe the phenomenon of the reader being fully immersed and drawn into a fictional world…. The reader (or listener, or watcher) is not only absorbed, but feels like they are part of the action, and experiences a reduced focus on the self. Through transportation, fiction can elicit emotions and invite the reader to think along with the fictional characters' mental states.[15]

Fiction elicits these emotions and enables reasoning about them because it provides a safe space to have these emotions. De Smedt and De Cruz write that "Some cognitive scientists (e.g., Goldstein 2009) have suggested that fiction can elicit emotions by providing a safe, risk-free

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[11]By cognitive closure, de Cruz and de Smedt are referring to something like the need to come quickly to a hard and fast conclusion or position on a topic. In the process of getting quickly to that conclusion or position, other new, relevant information is typically ignored. de Smedt and de Cruz, 65.
[12]de Cruz and de Smedt, "The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction," 59.
[13]Ibid., 60.
[14]Ibid., 61-62.
[15]de Smedt and de Cruz, 62. See also Richard J. Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993.

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environment, where readers can experience emotions without these having a significant impact on their actual lives."[16] It is this emotional impact of speculative fiction that makes it valuable for exploring ideas in ways that analytic thought experiments tend to fall short.[17] And it is the context that speculative fiction provides that helps to elicit these emotions. De Smedt and De Cruz argue that fictional stories, rather than analytic philosophical thought experiments, provide the context necessary to see the full consequences of an idea, and context may very well contribute a significant factor in the philosophical conclusions at which we arrive. They write,

> Cognition is situated, and comprises embedded, embodied, enacted, and extended forms of thinking…It arises through interactions between humans and their environment—for example, by taking advantage of objects in the external world to help perform cognitive tasks. Philosophical thought experiments already go some way toward this by fleshing out concrete scenarios to test abstract philosophical ideas, but their brevity limits how involved one can become in them. Rather than trying to excise low-level, seemingly irrelevant details of thought experiments, we should introduce them and see what the difference is between the bald scenarios and the elaborate fictional cases. Narratives can achieve this in a way that thought experiments cannot, because they are packed with rich details that offer a contextual backdrop that allows one to realistically embed philosophical ideas in a make-believe world. They enable transportation and allow readers to emotionally engage with the characters, situations, and concepts.[18]

In other words, seeing philosophical ideas play out in a story provides a context in which to see how these philosophical ideas actually work and to determine our reactions to such ideas. Indeed, it is narrative's ability to engage human emotion that can also help us see more clearly the consequences of philosophical ideas. Like Stump, De Smedt and De Cruz note the limitations of analytic argument in seeing the consequences of philosophical positions. De Smedt and De Cruz note that "Philosophical thought experiments are austere and focused on a particular philosophical problem, which may explain their lack of emotional engagement."[19] This lack of emotional engagement is a product of a lack of context. Shaun Nichols notes that when using a philosophical thought experiment without context to think about a philosophical idea that, "We want primarily to solve

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[16]de Smedt and de Cruz, 62. See Thalia R. Goldstein, "The Pleasure Of Unadulterated Sadness: Experiencing Sorrow in Fiction, Nonfiction, and 'in Person'." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 3, no. 4 (2009): 232–37.
[17]De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction," 63.
[18]Ibid., 64-65.
[19]Ibid., 66.

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the hypothetical problem and accordingly focus on the minimal conditions. In those cases, then, the disturbing inferences are not drawn out and hence they do not reach the affective system.[20] And when the disturbing inferences do not get to our emotions, we do not get the full consequences of an idea. De Smedt and De Cruz write,

> Given that fiction can increase empathy when readers feel transported, speculative fiction can help us assess the consequences of philosophical positions in which empathy matters. Discussing atrocious situations in a dispassionate manner, such as the permissibility of torture in political philosophy, or the soul-building qualities of evil in the philosophy of religion, are not conducive to empathizing with the victims of torture or evil.[21]

Thus, the context provided by a narrative or story help us to see the consequences of philosophical positions. Like Stump, De Smedt and De Cruz identify the narrowness of analytical philosophical thought experiments as part of their limitedness in our analysis of philosophical ideas. The narrowness of analytical thought experiments that use narrowly focused considerations that eschew detail results in not seeing the full consequences of an idea. Speculative fiction engages the emotional part of human persons in a way that makes possible seeing the consequences of philosophical ideas that would not otherwise be possible.

De Cruz and De Smedt also motivate the need for speculative fiction in analytic philosophy by pointing out that the use of fiction permits broader exploration of solutions to philosophical problems. The presentation of analytic arguments requires cognitive closure. In cognitive closure, one has "the need to reach a quick conclusion in decision-making and an aversion to ambiguity and confusion."[22] In this aversion to ambiguity, one becomes quickly selects what they think is the answer to the puzzle and ignores any new evidence or "information" pertinent to the argument.[23] In short, cognitive closure prevents exploration of all the possible solutions to a philosophical puzzle. De Smedt and De Cruz write that cognitive closure "impedes creative thinking and open-mindedness, because it encourages

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[20]Shaun Nichols. "Just the Imagination: Why Imagining Doesn't Behave Like Believing." *Mind and Language* 21, no. 4 (2006): 472.
[21]De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction, 66.
[22]Ibid., 65.
[23]De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction," 65. See also Maja Djikic, Keith Oatley, and Mihnea C. Moldoveanu. "Reading Other Minds: Effects of Literature on Empathy." *Scientific Study of Literature* 3, no. 1 (2013): 28–47.

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reasoners to disregard positions that people formulate later on in a debate."[24] Speculative fiction gets around cognitive closure by relieving the pressure that analytic arguments create to get to some conclusion and by inviting the reader to be more receptive other positions through empathy with the character in a story. De Smedt and De Cruz write:

> fiction has this effect by not requiring immediate resolution or action on the part of the reader, and by encouraging empathy for the characters, which may open one's mind to the viewpoints they represent….While philosophical thought experiments are also narrative in format, they lack empathetic engagement and transportation. As a result, they do not elicit creative open-ended thinking to the same extent as speculative fiction.[25]

Speculative fiction enables us to retain an open-mindedness to philosophical solutions that we might not have otherwise considered. Such open-mindedness can prevent hasty evaluation of arguments and enable deeper thinking about solutions to philosophical problems.[26]

De Smedt and De Cruz interviewed philosophers on their work and on the unique usefulness of fiction to do philosophy. I include portions of their interviews with two philosophers here. Eric Schwitzgebel, who works as "professor of philosophy at the University of California, Riverside,"[27] notes how speculative fiction has a unique usefulness when it comes to thinking about ethical issues:

> Emotion seems especially valuable in thinking through moral issues. It's one thing to think about the propriety of killing one person to save five others, if one does so in an emotionally disengaged way in the context of a three sentence scenario involving a runaway boxcar. But one might have very different thoughts about the case if one was confronted with it in a full-length movie, with the protagonist on the tracks! I don't think we should base our philosophy wholly on our reactions in such emotionally engaged cases. Sometimes, you need to set aside such emotions and be colder in one's evaluations. But only sometimes, I think! At other times, emotional engagement with philosophical issues is probably exactly what you want.[28]

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[24]De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction," 65.
[25]Ibid., 66.
[26]Ibid., 72-74.
[27]Ibid., 72-73.
[28]Quoted in De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction," 74.

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David John Baker has this to say about how speculative fiction can reveal the consequences of metaphysical arguments:

> What's special about fiction is that it puts you inside the thought experiment. Parfit's human fission examples are shocking when you first read them, but you don't necessarily put yourself inside them and ask what it means for your life that you're the sort of being who could in principle be split into multiple people. But in John Varley's *The Ophiuchi Hotline,* we follow a character whose very humanity is threatened by being duplicated over and over, who feels guilty for the crimes of her duplicates. There's a philosophical point you take away from hypotheticals like this—the propositional knowledge you gain from them, I suppose. But in fiction there's a personal moral you take away. When it works, it works because the people in the fiction feel the way real humans might feel when confronted with the hypothetical situation. In a philosophy paper, the characters in the thought experiments aren't usually of much importance.[29]

These analytic philosophers recognize a unique role for speculative fiction in analytic philosophy. Speculative fiction aids one in seeing the consequences of philosophical ideas in such a way that typical analytic arguments struggle to reveal. Stump, de Smedt, de Cruz, Baker and Schwitzgebel all indicate that speculative fiction can provide a way of investigating philosophical ideas that mere analytic arguments alone struggle to convey.

But notice that there are at least two distinct methodologies among the different philosophers. Stump notes that narrative can provide insight into philosophical ideas, especially knowledge of persons, that analytic argument alone cannot provide. Her methodology is to *use narrative alongside of analytic argument* in order to gain insight into a philosophical idea. De Cruz and De Smedt note that *speculative fiction itself* can be used in order to examine a philosophical idea. De Cruz and De Smedt refer to an episode of *Battlestar Galactica* as an example of a philosophical exploration of utilitarianism.[30] Schwitzgebel has this to say about how he investigates philosophy through fiction:

> One issue that really interests me—and which I think still has much more potential to be explored in science fiction—are the moral relations between beings in simulated worlds ("sims") and the beings who run those sims, who have god-like power over the beings inside the simulated worlds…. These issues connect with issues in theology (if we consider the sim-managers to be gods—as I think we should, taking the perspective of

[29]Quoted in De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Value of Speculative Fiction," 74.
[30]De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Value of Speculative Fiction," 63.

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the sims), in animal rights and human enhancement, in the nature and value of personhood, and also in connection with the fundamental ethical question of what kind of world we aspire to live in.[31]

Baker, says of his own work that:

> Most of the stories I write (more than half, anyway) take place in a future history that I consider pretty utopian. The humans in this setting are pretty far beyond *Homo sapiens* biologically. They've eradicated scarcity, cured senescence and live pretty peacefully in general. It seems to me that at this stage of development, if we ever reach it, the problem of nihilism and the meaning of life will loom large in people's minds. They'll start to wonder, what do we mean when we say that we've accomplished something good in building this civilization? How do we know there's any such thing as goodness? I often find myself writing about characters who live in paradise and wrestle with this sort of doubt.[32]

All four of these philosophers point to fiction as a direct way to do philosophy. To employ this methodology, one writes a philosophical story that itself is an examination of philosophical ideas. It is also interesting to note that these philosophical stories are somewhat obviously explorations of some idea or moral theme. One can easily tell that some idea is being investigated in these novels, even if this idea is not apparently philosophical. I would like to propose another methodology for using narrative in philosophy. This methodology, employed originally by C. S. Lewis to investigate theological claims, is called "smuggled theology." In this methodology, one imbeds the claims of theology (and, for our case, philosophy) into a story through themes or characters rather than obviously exploring the consequences of some idea. This methodology will be advantageous to philosophy because of its subtlety. Many readers might not want to read a novel that explores political philosophy or its consequences, but they might want to read a novel that simply tells a good story. What I will call 'smuggled philosophy' will incorporate philosophical ideas in a symbolic way or as a subtle undercurrent without that symbol or undercurrent becoming the theme of the story. The philosophical ideas are part of but do not constitute the whole story. In this way, one can introduce philosophical ideas to a wider audience who may not otherwise engage such ideas.

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[31]Quoted in De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Value of Speculative Fiction," 72-73.
[32]Quoted in De Smedt and De Cruz, "The Value of Speculative Fiction," 73.

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§2. C. S. Lewis and Smuggled Theology as a Methodology

To understand how Lewis's methodology can contribute to philosophical investigation, it will be helpful, as we have done above, to examine how the practitioner of smuggled theology thought about his own practice of it. The Lewisian practice of smuggled theology is present in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series as well as his Space Trilogy. In "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," Lewis explains how smuggled theology bore itself out in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis identifies two set of motivations for the writer: the Author's reasons and the Man's reasons. These reasons interact with one another to drive the writer's work. The Author's reasons are those of telling a good tale as an art form. At the beginning of the writing process, the Author is impressed with a "bubbling" idea, an image that he wants to turn into a tale.[33] This bubbling idea motivates him until he finds a satisfactory form into which the idea can be put But then the Man's reasons come to the fore. The Man's reasons reflect the values of the writer as a whole person. The Man critiques the value of the project: why the project is being undertaken, whether it is a good project, and so forth. The job of the Man is to critique the initial desire of the Author in light of this instructing role: Will the writing of this tale uplift those who read it? How does the writing of this story fit in with the goals and values of the whole person? Will this project enable the Author as person to be all that he or she should be? Thus, the role of the writer, according to Lewis, is one of an instructor as well as an artist. Lewis compares this process to falling in love: One is swept up in the desire for the beloved, but then one starts asking, is this the right person for me to marry? Is it wise for me to marry this person? Likewise, it is the job of the Man to ask the Author, after he is swept away by an idea, whether this story is the right sort of writing project for the person to undertake and what kind of value the work communicates.[34]

As Lewis describes things, this process worked itself out in *The Chronicles of Narnia* in the following way. As the writer-as-Author, Lewis says that the initial idea for the books came from images: "a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion."[35] These images bubbled in Lewis until he decided to write the fantasy story that we know

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[33]C. S. Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said." In On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature, edited by Walter Hooper, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982) 45-46.
[34]Lewis, Sometimes Fairy Stories, 45.
[35]Ibid., 46.

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as *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. But then the writer-as-Man in Lewis came along and critiqued the project. Lewis says:

> Then of course the Man in me began to have his turn. I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told that one ought to. An obligation can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of all their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could not one steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.[36]

And here we have the outworking of smuggled theology. Lewis was concerned about the resistance that children in particular have to religion, and he thought fantasy could get around that resistance—"those watchful dragons." By using an imaginary world, Lewis thought that he could introduce important theological themes and ideas in a way that brought them to life for children and so evade those dragons. Lewis finds fantasy stories especially useful for stealing past the watchful dragons because they "give us experiences we have never had and thus, instead of 'commenting on life', can add to it."[37] Thus, the power of fantasy stories in which theological themes are smuggled are that they provide living adventure in theology—of living out the truths of theology[38]—that children would not otherwise experience. By interweaving theological concepts in the *Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* children are able to have an experience of the atonement by seeing Aslan's love for Edmund in dying for him. The concept of atonement is present in Lewis, but not the names or technicality that cause confusion in the minds of children. Lewis maintains that fantasy not only gets around these reservations in children, but it can have the same effect in adults.[39] By giving both children and adults a living adventure in theology, Lewis hoped that these themes would enter the minds of the readers in such a way as to get around their reservations and hesitations about theology.

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[36]Ibid., 47.
[37]Ibid., 48.
[38]I am indebted to a reviewer for pointing out the need to clarify what it means to experience theology.
[39]Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories," 48.

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Lewis' goal was to give readers a lived-in experience of theology by letting them, through the eyes of and along with the characters see how these ideas played out. Part of my thesis is to show that Lewis' smuggled theology provides a useful methodology for philosophers of religion to put forth their own ideas for a more popular audience. Thus, it will be instructive to examine *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* to discover how Lewis actually carried out smuggled theology as a device.

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* the four Pevensie children—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—are sent to the home of an old professor in the English countryside during World War II. While there, they discover the world of Narnia. During a game of hide and seek, Lucy hides in an old wardrobe in the house, and also discovers Narnia. While there she meets Mr. Tumnus the fawn, who nearly turns her over to the White Witch, the evil Queen of Narnia. He repents of this and helps Lucy escape back through the wardrobe. When she tries to tell her siblings about her adventure, they do not believe her. On her second visit, Edmund follows her and also discovers Narnia. But instead of a kind-hearted Narnian, Edmund discovers the White Witch. The White Witch is concerned that Edmund's siblings will find their way to Aslan, that good Lion and true Emperor of Narnia, and fulfill the prophesy of Cair Paravel, that four children should rule Narnia. When these children rule, the White Witch will rule no more. For some Turkish delight, and the promise to surpass Peter as the Queen's crown prince, Edmund promises to bring his siblings to the Queen, who designs to kill the children in order to hinder the fulfillment of the prophesy. One day, all four siblings end up in the wardrobe in an effort to avoid the wrath of the housekeeper, and Peter and Susan discover Narnia also. Along the way, the children discover talking beavers, centaurs, and Santa Claus! These characters expend their effort getting the children to Aslan in order to keep the children safe and to get them to Cair Paravel to fulfill the prophesy. Edmund, however, is unsuccessful at getting his siblings to the White Witch, and when the White Witch learns his failure, Edmund becomes her captive. The White Witch means to kill Edmund, but Edmund is rescued by the forces of Aslan. But the White Witch reminds Aslan of the Deeper Magic which gives her claim to Edmund's life. Edmund is a traitor and so deserves to die. After a long negotiation for Edmund's life with Aslan, the Queen relinquishes her right to Edmund. But this relinquishing is not without cost. Aslan trades his life for Edmund's, and dies on the Stone Table (a place of magic) in his place. After a humiliating death, Aslan comes back to life and defeats the White Witch alongside the four children. And

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the four children do indeed fulfill the prophesy and rule Narnia together from Cair Paravel.[40]

The story of Edmund's deliverance from the White Witch is rich with the Christian idea of atonement. Aslan dies in Edmund's place to rescue him from the power of the White Witch, much like Christian theology claims that Christ died for the sake of those who believe in him to rescue them from the power of sin, death and Satan. One place the reader can see this purpose in Aslan's actions is, surprisingly, in the Witch's last words to Aslan:

> "And now, who has won? Fool, did you think that by all this you would save the human traitor? Now I will kill you instead of him as our pact was and so the Deeper Magic will be appeased. But when you are dead what will prevent me from killing him as well? And who will take him out of my hand *then*? Understand that you have given me Narnia forever, you have lost your own life, and you have not saved his. In this knowledge, despair and die."[41]

In telling this story of children who are destined to rule a fantasy land that is full of mythical and magical creatures, Lewis has imbedded the theological theme of redemption and atonement. But that is not the only theme present.

Christ's resurrection also shows up in the story. At the dawn of the next day, Aslan comes back to life and frolics with Susan and Lucy, who are the first to see him alive. Christ rose on the third day after his crucifixion, and first appeared to the women who came to the grave. Lucy and Susan, after wandering a bit from Aslan's body, hear a loud crack and become frightened that Aslan's killers have come back to do more violence to Aslan's body. Lewis describes the scene this way:

> The rising of the sun had made everything look so different—all colors and shadows
> were changed—that for a moment they didn't see the important thing. Then they did.
> The Stone Table was broken into two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end
> to end; and there was no Aslan.
> Oh, oh, oh! cried the two girls, rushing back to the Table.

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[40]C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. New York: HarperCollins, 1978. For more on The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, see also Michael Ward, Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 43-77.

[41]Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia,* 170, emphasis author's

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> Oh, it's too bad, sobbed Lucy; they might have left the body alone.
> Who's done it! cried Susan. What does it mean? Is it more magic?
> Yes! said a great voice behind their backs. It is more magic. The looked round.
> There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane
> (for it had apparently grown again) stood Aslan himself.
> Oh, Aslan! cried both the children, staring up at him, almost as much frightened
> as they were glad.[42]

Compare this with the Gospel narratives, which claim that some of the women who followed Jesus were the first to see him. The women found the tomb empty, and were in wonderment about what happened to him. Furthermore, in those accounts, the women experienced fear upon first learning Jesus was alive but also were glad at this news. Again, within this larger story about children who become kings and queens in a fantasy land, Lewis embedded themes of resurrection and new life.[43]

Part of the force of this methodology is to turn the readers towards new ideas through a new kind of experience through fantasy story. Lewis writes of science fiction fantasy that such novels "are actual additions to life; they give, like rare dreams, sensations we never had before, and enlarge our conception of the possible range of experience."[44] Fantasy's ability to give us new experiences makes this an especially powerful medium of art, and the power that this art has, also makes it a powerful vehicle for the communication of ideas. Lewis considers his own works to be mythopoeic, that is, works that incorporate "supernatural" or "marvelous" themes.[45] Lewis suspects that what he calls "the mythopoeic is rather, for good or ill, a mode of imagination which does something to us at a deep level."[46] Peter Schakel explains why the mythopoeic is so attractive to many readers. He writes:

> Myths are imaginative stories—that is, they are nonrational, nonintellectual (not irrational or anti-intellectual); they are explorations of matters beyond

[42]Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia, 177-178.

[43]For another perspective on the interpretation of some of the symbolism in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* see Michael Ward's "Jupiter" in Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis,* 43-77.

[44]C. S. Lewis, "On Science Fiction," in *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature,* ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982) 66.

[45]Peter Schakel, Imagination and the Arts in C. S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 62.

[46]Lewis, "On Science Fiction", 66.

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> and above everyday life, concerning origins, endings, aspirations, purpose, and meaning. They open huge vistas, plumb depths of the emotions and the spirit, in ways realistic fiction cannot; but they are couched in simple stories children can enjoy and respond to. The sheer imaginativeness of myth, like that of poetry, adds to life, creates sensations we never had before, and enlarges our conception of possible experience.[47]

Whatever deep level the mythopoeic is supposed to have affected, Lewis' recognition of the force that such stories might have prompted him to use such art forms as a way to communicate theology and other important ideas to the deepest part of the person. The power of the mythopoeic to give us new experiences and open new possibilities to the imagination, rather than to reinvent the familiar ones, makes it a powerful art form for exploring new ideas, including philosophical ones.

But the mythopoeic can do more than provide the reader with new experiences. The mythopoeic can provide a way for both adults and children to ask questions, or to satisfy longings that they never were aware that they had. Schakel argues that the mythopoeic can function as a guide for children toward answers to what may be confused questions. When a child asks, "Why are there elephants?", adults typically give a scientific answer where a child may be tracking a philosophical question—"Why are there elephants *at all*?" Science fiction and fantasy provide a scaffold for children to ask questions that they could not formulate on their own. Fantasy provides a way of seeing a question or a problem in such a way that the child can then ask their question. Schakel writes, "In the Chronicles, as myths, children find not answers to the questions they ask, but responses to the questions they did not know how to ask."[48] Schakel notes that the mythopoeic does something similar for adults by turning their attention to the supernatural.[49] When speaking of the popularity of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, Schakel remarks

> Lewis, like the ancient writers, recognizes that the deepest questions are dealt with through story. Lewis's story supplies the broader perspective that children—and adults are seeking. It invites readers to look at the world not as a thing composed of analyzable substances and organisms, but as a being, to which we are intimately, inextricably related. Myth shows that science does not have all the questions, let alone all the answers, and not the most important ones.[50]

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[47]Schakel, Imagination and the Arts, 62.
[48]Ibid., 62.
[49]Ibid., 62.
[50]Ibid., 63.

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A Lewisian conception of fantasy is one that provides a scaffold for intellectual inquiry, a search that can be initially muddled on the intellectual level but can be given clarity through fantasy. This clarity is provided by what de Smedt and de Cruz have identified as context and transportation that speculative fiction—one example of which is fantasy—provides. That context allows for the exploration of ideas that one cannot as adequately explore in an analytic argument.

Lewis himself also provides another way of seeing how speculative fiction can be a methodology for doing philosophy. It is a good methodology for doing philosophy because of its ability to give us a kind of knowledge by experience. This knowledge by experience comes through fantasy's ability to give us new experiences. These new experiences broaden the aspects of the world that come under someone's consideration. When theology or philosophy is utilized in the methodology of "smuggled theology," it provides the reader with experiences they may not otherwise have had, in some senses. In "Meditation in a Toolshed," Lewis argues that there are two modes of gaining knowledge: "looking at" versus "looking along."[51] Lewis illustrates these modes by describing a shaft of light that came through the doorframe of his toolshed. At first, he "looked at" the shaft from the outside. He describes the shaft as a simple beam of light coming through a dark room. But then he moved to "look along" the beam of light, from the inside. Inside the beam he saw leaves playing in the wind and the sun outside the toolshed. Lewis gained two different perspectives from one beam of light. He argues that there are two ways to gain knowledge of something. The first way is by looking 'at' something. When we are looking 'at' a phenomenon, we are describing the experience from the outside. We are attempting to analyze the phenomenon. When we look 'along' the beam, we are having the inside experience, the 'what it is like' experience. Ward explains that Lewis thought of the difference between these kinds of experiences as "Contemplation" versus "Enjoyment."[52] "Contemplation" is the 'looking at' experience. It is "abstract, external, impersonal, uninvolved knowledge."[53] "Enjoyment" is the 'looking along' experience: it is "participant, inhabited, personal, committed knowledge"[54]

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[51]C. S. Lewis, "Meditation in a Toolshed." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1970), 212.
[52]Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 17-18.
[53]Ibid., 18.
[54]Ibid., 18.

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For different objects of knowledge, Lewis argues, one kind of 'looking' may get at the way that object is better than the other.[55] If Lewis is right that there are multiple routes of coming to know some object, knowledge of certain truths can have multiple entry points, and perhaps to get someone to get to the analysis of a truth, they need to start with an inside experience. Thus, since fantasy is a kind of inside experience then fantasy can be the entry point for the critical analysis of certain truths. Fantasy gives the reader a new and expanded conception of reality by providing new sensations, and sensations are a kind of inside experience.[56] If fantasy broadens the kinds of inside experiences we have, we can at the same time broaden those things that can come under critical analysis for a person.

Rather than write a story that explicitly explores these theological themes, Lewis chose to embed these ideas into stories where these themes appeared but were not the main point of the work. One example of smuggled philosophy might look something like the following. In the *Dr. Who* episode "Vincent and the Doctor," Dr. Who and his companion Amy find an alien in one of Van Gogh's paintings. They travel through time to find Van Gogh, and the three of them together defeat the alien. One sad undercurrent throughout the episode is Van Gogh's suicide. The episode takes place in the last year of Van Gogh's life, and the Doctor and Amy are painfully aware that Van Gogh's death is near. Van Gogh struggles with loneliness because his fellow villagers ostracize him, and he feels their rejection of him and his work very deeply. After the defeat of the alien, the Doctor takes Van Gogh into the future to see his own gallery in the museum in an attempt to ward off the impending suicide. While there, the Doctor asks a museum curator his opinion of van Gogh. The curator says that he thinks Van Gogh is the one of the best painters and one of the best men to have ever lived because of his ability to produce beauty from his pain. Upon hearing this, Van Gogh is in tears. Amy and the Doctor take Van Gogh back to his own time and say goodbye. Amy then rushes back to the museum in the future to see how many more paintings there are in the museum. But there are no additional paintings. Amy is crushed to have not been able to make a real

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[55]Lewis, "Meditation in a Toolshed," 214-215.

[56]The thought is that the subjectivity of our qualia—particularly our sensations—indicate that they are inside experiences. Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia." Philosophical Quarterly 32 (April 1, 1982): 127–36. Robert Van Gulick, "Consciousness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2018, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/consciousness/. See also Steven B. Cowan and James S. Spiegel, *The Love of Wisdom: A Christian Introduction to Philosophy*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2009), 200-214.

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change in Van Gogh's life and prevent Van Gogh's suicide. The Doctor comforts her with these words:

> The way I see it, every life is a pile of good things and bad things. The good things don't always soften the bad things, but vice versa, the bad things don't necessarily spoil the good things or make them unimportant. And we definitely added to his pile of good things.

Here is an attempt to provide a solution to a problem of evil. Amy is trying to make sense of evil in her world. Could Van Gogh's life be good even though there is this great suffering in his life? This question is another way of asking whether, in cases of intense suffering, the life of the suffer is a benefit to the one who is suffering.[57] The Doctor's response to Amy is an attempt to provide an answer to that question.

Notice that this question is an undercurrent in this episode of *Dr. Who,* not the main theme. The episode is about defeating an alien, an Krafayis, who was abandoned on planet Earth. The exploration of the problem of evil in this episode, while still a theme in the plot, is not the main problem in the storyline. Thus, there is an integration of philosophical ideas in a fiction plot while telling a broader story, as in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* This example shows not only how the methodology of smuggled philosophy works, but also that this methodology can be used to convey philosophical ideas.

It is my contention that philosophers of religion should employ smuggled philosophy in order to reach a wider audience. One who is not inclined to philosophy will not pick up a text where narrative and philosophical argument are used to explore the problem of evil. Many people will not be inclined to pick up a novel that explores a novel idea from political philosophy (even though that novel might not label the ideas as a philosophical idea). But people might be more inclined to pick up a book that just seems to be a good adventure story. And, for the philosopher of religion, it might do well to utilize this additional methodology, smuggled philosophy, for thinking through philosophical ideas. Smuggled philosophy utilizes transportation because it takes advantage of a fantasy world. It provides the context to assess philosophical arguments by simply telling a story and allowing one to see how an idea works. Think about the *Dr. Who* episode referenced above. The audience is transported into this twist on the life of Vincent Van Gogh in order to see how these questions about the

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[57]Here I am drawing on ideas from Stump's work, *Wandering in Darkness*. Eleonore Stump. *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering.* Oxford: Oxford, 2010.

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problem of evil bear themselves out in a life. In other words, smuggled philosophy engages those cognitive mechanisms that are important for seeing the consequences of philosophical ideas. And in this way, smuggled philosophy is an effective mechanism for doing philosophy.

§3. Philosophy of Religion, Smuggled Philosopher, and a Wider Audience

If Lewis is correct about how fantasy broadens experiences, and that such broadened experiences expand the truths available to the audience for critical analysis, then philosophers of religion can use art as an intellectual tool, and particularly a tool to engage a broader audience. This style of art can get around the watchful dragons of the mind to convey important philosophical ideas. In this section, I examine how Christian philosophers of religion can employ smuggled philosophy to engage a wider audience. What I say here is more suggestive than prescriptive, for I wish to leave open how a Christian philosopher of religion would actually implement the methodology as an art form.

Lewis thought that smuggled theology got around the watchful dragons of the mind when it came to theology, but if philosophers of religion are to use this methodology, they must recognize what the watchful dragons of the mind are when it comes to philosophy of religion. In what ways does philosophy of religion encounter intellectual or emotional resistance? Resistance comes through the thought that philosophy is too hard or is impossible for the average person to engage with. Like the aversion to 'boring' religious practice that Lewis described, there can be a tendency to think of philosophy as 'too hard,' 'beyond me,' and 'heady.' As a result, individuals with these conceptions of philosophy will shy away from philosophy or disengage when anything philosophical comes up. Any survey of Introduction to Philosophy students will reveal the prevalence of this kind of attitude when it comes to philosophy. This resistance is characteristic of philosophy in general and extends to philosophy of religion as well. This resistance includes resistance to thinking about questions about God's being or existence as if the question is not worth any further argument. There can also be resistance from those in religious circles to thinking about God in an intellectual fashion. This resistance results in individuals missing important information about the way the world is. The arguments and ideas with which philosophers of religion engage contain answers to questions those in our culture and our churches are asking. Consider the question of the problem of evil. Eleonore Stump notes that

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what is so troublesome about evil is that it produces suffering for us, not just that evil exists. Evil affects us.[58] It is not an abstract problem.

Philosophers of religion have some significant things to say about this very existential question. If the problem of evil is so pervasive, so existential, and if philosophy of religion claims to have solutions to this problem, philosophers of religion need to make these responses more accessible to a layman's audience. An essential part of living the good life is carrying out intellectual inquiry. Furthermore, if philosophy is ultimately about living the good life, then our intellectual endeavors as philosophers are aimed at helping our neighbor, and not just philosophers, to live the good life. Philosophers of religion should use the methodologies at their disposal that will help them to love their neighbor as themselves. Smuggled philosophy is a methodology that, because of its subtlety, can aid philosophers of religion in exposing a wider audience to these philosophical ideas that have implications for those of us who are aiming to live the good life.

For Lewis, art was just the entry point into the conversation about theological issues or themes. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* prompted correspondence and debate with those who disagreed with him.[59] The inside experience should get us to the intellectual analysis. Because we have such an entertainment-saturated culture, fantasy seems to be a very effective tool for conveying philosophy in a non-intimidating manner—to get around the watchful dragons. Similarly, smuggled philosophy is just the bridge into a deeper philosophical conversation.

For instance, since Lewisian fantasy helps the audience to realize or clarify a question they have been trying to answer, philosophers also have an opportunity to engage those questions that might come up after enjoying a fantasy. In other words, these kinds of stories may prompt intellectual questions along the way. The philosopher is the one who can further explain and clarify these ideas and present the arguments the fantasy was based on once they have been presented through art. The philosopher must stay engaged in order to address questions that will arise. This is true for the philosopher's engagement with both the culture and with the church, as these fantasy stories would prompt dialogue from both groups of individuals. So the advantage of smuggled philosophy for engaging the culture is that it can prompt questions about theism or about Christianity.

This possibility for dialogue, for answering questions, also points to other areas where fantasy can be used more intentionally to start

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[58]Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 3-22.

[59]I have in mind here is Lewis' "Letter to Professor Haldane." C. S. Lewis "A Reply to Professor Haldane." In On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature, edited by Walter Hooper, 69-79. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982.

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philosophical conversation. Fantasy can be a way for the philosopher to equip the church to dialogue with its own church culture and its congregation. First, fantasy can be used to get around the initial resistance to philosophy as looking at God in an analytic fashion. Fantasy, we've seen, is not looking at but an experiencing, and the inside experience through fantasy of how philosophy of religion can provide answers that strengthen faith can get around this resistance. Furthermore, fantasy can be used to equip the church to answer questions within their own congregations. Specifically, the use of fantasy can be a way around those watchful dragons of resistance to thinking about God in order to provide answers to those believers struggling with their faith.[60] Recall Lewis' own feeling of drudgery at religious practice. Fantasy stories can be used to spark and answer philosophical questions about God's nature or the problem of evil.

This kind of philosophical fantasy, and its ability to get past the watchful dragons, also creates a bridge for believers to begin engaging unbelieving friends. Many of the applications for the church apply here as well. Once believers have been equipped with both these philosophical fantasies and have wrestled with the relevant philosophy behind them, they will be able to engage their unbelieving friends. The believer will function almost as the philosopher does in his engagement with the larger culture: the believer will be able to engage the friend over the themes encountered in the fantasy in order to further discuss what philosophy was encountered therein. The advantage of smuggled philosophy for the church is that it aids those within the church who themselves may be looking for intellectual answers and it enables those within the church to engage unbelieving friends and the culture. One of the advantages of the Christian philosopher of religion's use of smuggled philosophy is that they enable those in the church

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[60]A fantasy story is easier to swallow for a non-philosopher than a full-fledged analytical argument. Gregory Bassham, "Lewis and Tolkien on the Power of Imagination," in *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty*, eds. David Baggett, Gary R. Habermas, and Jerry Walls, 245-260. Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2008. Tolkien thought that fantasy was a way of reimagining familiar themes. This assertion is not Lewis', but I do think that Lewis' smuggled theology can be adapted for this same purpose. See also C. S. Lewis, "The Dethronement of Power," in *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings,* ed. Niel D. Isaacs and Rose Lombardo (Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 15. I discovered that "The Dethronement of Power" was a review of the Lord of the Rings at "C. S. Lewis' Response to Critics of the Lord of the Rings: The Dethronement of Power" *Earth and Oak,* Blog, Posted January 6, 2018. https://earthandoak.wordpress.com/2018/01/06/cs-lewis-response-to-critics-of-the-lord-of-the-rings-the-dethronement-of-power/.

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and some of those outside of it to live the good life by encouraging the intellectual inquiry that is an essential part of it.

I want to address one important objection. Isn't smuggling philosophy or theology deceptive? And if smuggled theology is dishonest, then should Christian philosophers of religion be using it to do philosophy? In one of his letters to a friend about how he used smuggled theology in *Out of the Silent Planet*, another of his fiction series, Lewis claims surprise that no one recognized his use of the character of the Bent One as a Satan character in that story:

> You will be both grieved and amused to learn that out of about sixty reviews, only two showed any knowledge that my idea of the fall of the Bent One was anything but a private invention of my own! But if only there were someone with a richer talent and more leisure, I believe this great ignorance might be a help to the evangelization of England: any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it.[61]

Lewis' remarks seem to indicate that his intention was not to deceive his audience, but he does recognize the power of subtlety. But we can say more to answer this objection by way of an analogy. Imagine the case of one person trying to woo another. One of them tries to create situations in that, based on what they know of the other person, will make the other person more open to relationship with them. Let's imagine that Michael likes Anne. He knows that Anne enjoys long walks in the park, and in order to encourage relationship with her, Michael invites Anne for walks in the park. Now Michael is intentionally creating a circumstance in which he hopes Anne will become more open to a relationship with him. I believe this properly describes Lewis' hopes for smuggled theology. Given Lewis' emphasis on getting around the watchful dragons of the mind, about overcoming that resistance in order to present an alternative way of thinking about something, I believe that this picture of a kind of wooing is representative of what Lewis was up to in his methodology.

In this paper, I have shown how there is a call for narrative to be utilized in analytic philosophy, and I've shown that Lewis' methodology of smuggled theology can provide a unique way of doing philosophy through narrative. This adaptation can appeal to a wider audience than current methodologies that employ narrative in the service of philosophy. This

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[61]C. S. Lewis, 'To Sister Penelope,' 9 July [August] 1939, in C. S. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis,* ed W. H. Lewis and Walter Hooper. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993) 412.

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Lewisian methodology can be utilized by Christian philosophers of religion to help those in the church and the wider culture to live the good life.[62]

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[62]I am indebted to two reviewers for their comments on this paper. Their insights improved this paper.

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CHAPTER 8

C.S. LEWIS: IMAGINATION AND THE ART OF GOSPEL WITNESS

DAN DEWITT

The late Christian author, Francis Schaeffer, once said the lives of Christians were their final apologetic.[1] If this is true, as I suspect it is, it certainly suits the beloved Christian author C.S. Lewis, whom friends called Jack. Lewis's legacy has impacted far more than the British professor would have imagined possible during his lifetime. With millions of copies of his books sold in over thirty different languages, his writings have taken on a life of their own.

C.S. Lewis was born in Ireland before the turn of the nineteenth century. His parents were illustrative of polar extremes between which Jack would vacillate throughout both his journey to faith and his later articulation of the faith. His mother Florence, who died when Lewis was only a boy, was calm and rational. Conversely, Lewis's father was a man of passion. Lewis's apologetics would traverse this spectrum between logic and longing in marked ways. But first he would have to learn how the two fit together.

Lewis's own conversion to faith in God resulted from the converging influences of philosophy and medieval literature, culminating with a conversation with J.R.R. Tolkien about the nature of myth and reality. It should be no surprise to see how these influences not only pointed him to faith, but in time became conduits for his sharing of his faith. Thus, this article will survey Lewis's approach to apologetics with a focus on the theme of his later writings which primarily functioned in abstract and artist ways, pointing readers beyond the material universe not exclusively through rational arguments, and often not through techniques of reason at all. I will

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[1]Schaeffer, Francis. *The Mark of a Christian* (IVP Books, 2006), 29.

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explore the biographical and historical influences that shaped Lewis's philosophy of religion and his public presentation of the Christian worldview.

Though Lewis cannot be forced into one category or another, often his writings can be, particularly the contrast between his early and later writings. Additionally, while there is no need for more accounts of Lewis's life as it is hard to imagine a stone left unturned in Lewis scholarship, there is no way to detach Lewis's apologetic approach from his biography. To understand Lewis's varying apologetic techniques, it is necessary to consider the big questions he asked as a skeptic and how Christianity made sense of things for him. After all, one's life is indeed one's final apologetic.

§1. Jack's Journey to Faith

C.S. Lewis became an atheist as a teenager while studying under William T. Kirkpatrick. From his scrupulous tutor, Lewis learned to never share an unqualified thought. This intellectual bootcamp awakened and equipped a skilled logician who would become quite gifted at debate. It also marked Lewis's departure from his childhood faith, a faith tested by the death of his mother and the subsequent emotional neglect of his father. Lewis's education now suited his predisposition for the logical approach to life and perhaps encouraged the facade of an aversion of the affections.

Though most think of Lewis's academic career in medieval literature, he began his profession as a tutor of philosophy at the University of Oxford. Yet, it was also during this time Lewis published a narrative poem "Dymer," he had worked on since a teenager. To whatever degree one can attempt to interpret such a poem, what Lewis scholar Walter Hooper describes as convoluted,[2] it seems to speak to his loss of faith and a rejection of seeing truth as wish fulfilment.

Lewis's attempt at a rational atheism, however, failed for several reasons. Could it be Lewis's belief that God did not exist was itself wishful thinking? Lewis kept bumping up against the necessity of God as the very key to making sense of the world and unlocking the mystery of the human experience. His cool intellectualism could not protect him from the inadequacies of his atheism. Something had to change.

A simple survey of Lewis's description of his journey to faith reveals a few major topics for which atheism could not give an account. Lewis progressively understood justice, joy, and reason as realities requiring an explanation refusing to be dismissed as simple illusions. For Lewis, purely scientific answers fell short.

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[2]Como, James. *C.S. Lewis: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2019): 27.

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Making sense of humanity is a problem in our day as well. Neuroscientists often reduce humans to brains, leaving no room for personhood. Philosophers regularly deny the will, eroding the foundation for true moral accountability. Scientists routinely discount immaterial human values discarding them as illusions. No wonder the humanities are in decline.

But can the hard sciences explain the human experience? C.S. Lewis thought so. At first. But then he changed his mind.

Lewis would make a regress, turning from his atheism to a faith long left behind. As Lewis said in one talk, "Almost our whole education has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent, inner voice, almost all our philosophies have been devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found on this earth."[3] This small inner voice grew louder and louder.

We are still asking the same questions and making the same mistakes today. Consider Alex Rosenberg, professor of philosophy at Duke University. In his book *The Atheist Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life Without Illusions*, he argues that only science can explain humanity, a view he calls "scientism." In the end, since science cannot explain them, he dismisses human values like moral distinctions, free will, personhood, and meaning (among other things).

The prolific philosopher Bertrand Russell promoted a similar creed. He famously said, "What science cannot discover, mankind cannot know."[4] One must wonder if Russell discovered this truth through a telescope or studied it beneath a microscope. This much is clear: science did not teach it to him. This is a philosophical value.

Lewis certainly saw great value in science, but was well aware of its limitations. What science could not explain, were all the immaterial aspects that make the human experience so beautiful. Perhaps that is why Lewis said, "If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were educated. But a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered."[5] Good philosophy helped Lewis ask the right questions and look in the right direct.

I am reminded of G.K. Chesterton's talk, "The Superstitions of the Skeptic." Chesterton begins by poking fun at his good friend, an atheist, George Bernard Shaw, "I'd like to begin my rambling talk by taking

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[3]Mills, David. *The Pilgrim's Guide: C.S. Lewis and the Art of Witness* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998): 170.
[4]Russell, Bertrand. *Religion and Science* (Oxford University Press, 1997): 243.
[5]C.S. Lewis, "Learning in War-Time," *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001): 58

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whatever Mr. Bernard Shaw, and say the opposite."[6] Lewis began his academic career as an atheist like Shaw, and then embraced, in part due to the influence of Chesterton, the opposite worldview.

Like Chesterton, the late philosopher Roger Scruton is skeptical of science's ability to explain us. In a recent talk at Princeton University, Scruton said, "Wait a minute: science is not the only way to pursue knowledge. There is moral knowledge too, which is the province of practical reason; there is emotional knowledge, which is the province of art, literature, and music. And just possibly there is transcendental knowledge, which is the province of religion. Why privilege science, just because it sets out to explain the world? Why not give weight to the disciplines that interpret the world and so help us be at home in it?"[7]

Maybe there is hope for the humanities after all.

Edgar Andrews, Emeritus Professor of Materials at the University of London, makes a similar point. "A scientist's dream is to develop a 'theory of everything' – a scientific theory that will encompass all the workings of the physical universe in a single self-consistent formulation. Fair enough, but there is more to the universe than matter, energy, space and time . . . Most of us believe in the real existence of non-material entities such as friendship, love, beauty, poetry, truth, faith, justice and so on – the things that make life worth living. A true 'theory of everything', therefore, must embrace both the material and non-material aspects of the universe and my contention is we already possess such a theory, namely, the hypothesis of God."[8]

Like Andrews, C.S. Lewis was in search of a total system, a way of seeing the world that was big enough, not just for the world, but for Lewis himself, and his fellow humans. After all, what good is a worldview that is too small for humanity?

Lewis followed the direction the signposts were pointing, beyond the world for an explanation of all that is in the world. Perhaps that is why Lewis loved using fantasy to explain fact, taking us into an imaginary world in order to teach us something about our own. Lewis's early writing explained why there was so much pain in the world, offering philosophical answers for the problem of evil. But Lewis's later writing introduced children and adults alike to a lion whom they were told they could come to know in real ways in their own world.

For Lewis, Christianity simply made sense of things. As he said in a line at the end of his essay "Is Theology Poetry," "I believe in Christianity

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[6]Chesterton, G.K. *Superstitions of the Skeptic* (W. Heffer and Sons, 1925).
[7]Scruton, Roger. *On Human Nature* (Princeton University Press, 2017): 12.
[8]Andrews, Edgar. *Who Made God?* (Evangelical Press, 2012): 10.

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as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." Robert Holyer describes Lewis's approach of explaining reality from a Christian view of the world this way:

On their most common construction his arguments are all attempts to show that the theistic explanation of a certain human phenomenon makes better sense of it than do non-theistic rivals. It is the general argument that Lewis prosecutes in the specific cases of romantic longing, morality, and human reason.[9]

§2. Christianity and Reason

In his spiritual memoir Lewis writes, "A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful in his reading." This reminds me of the lines from the seventeenth century philosopher Francis Bacon. "I had rather believe all the Fables in the Legend . . . then that this universal Frame, is without a Mind . . It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity. ."[10]

This is not just a concern for philosophers. Even the great scientist Charles Darwin shared this concern. He once said, "The impossibility of conceiving that this grand and wondrous universe with our conscious selves, arose through change, seems to me the chief argument for the existence of God." This is a problem with which the renowned scientist Charles Darwin struggle.

In a letter in 1881 to William Graham, regarding Graham's book *The Creed of Science*, Darwin elaborates on this concern, "Nevertheless you have expressed my inward conviction, though far more vividly and clearly than I could have done, that the Universe is not the result of chance. But then with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions in a man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animal, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?"[11]

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[9]See Robert Hoyler's article "C.S. Lewis on the Epistemic Significance of the Imagination" in *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Vol. 74.1 (1991): 215-241

[10]Whately, Richard. *Francis Bacon's Essays on Religion* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, Lee & Co: 1861): 155

[11]Letter from Charles Darwin to William Graham in 1881:
https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-13230.xml

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This is an argument that still garners attention from public intellectuals today. Thomas Nagel, philosophy professor at NYU, responded to this challenge in his book *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Neodarwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False*. Nagel, an atheist, concedes the problem, though not adopting a religious solution. "Evolutionary naturalism implies that we shouldn't take any of our convictions seriously," he writes, "including the scientific world picture on which evolutionary naturalism itself depends."[12]

Lewis references this argument in numerous essays and books. He gives a lengthy treatment of it in his book *Miracles*, which he also debated at "The Socratic Club" at Oxford University. There's a bit of a controversy as to how the debate went, as some felt Lewis lost. However, two points should be considered, first, his debate partner, G.E.M. Anscombe, was a Christian. She didn't disagree with Lewis's conclusions, rather, she felt his language needed to be refined. Second, in a later edition of *Miracles*, Lewis did incorporate changes that reflected their interaction. This much is clear: Lewis was refining his argument not retreating from it.

In *Miracles* Lewis writes, "Thus a strict materialism refutes itself for the one reason given long ago by Professor Haldane, 'If my mental processes are determined wholly by motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms."[13] For Lewis, an intelligence, a design, a M, behind the Cosmos, made sense of his rational pursuits.

§3. Christianity and Justice

Lewis was a man of conviction. But how could he make sense of his moral intuitions? He was a careful student of the human experience which meant his eyes were wide open to suffering, his own and that of others. Having lost his mother as a child and served in World War I as a young man, he was no stranger to the ugliness of life. That is what led him to eventually reject God.

But for someone like Lewis who did not seem to possess an unevaluated experience or an unqualified opinion, would a secular view of life make sense of his moral reasons for rejecting God? Consider a few skeptics of our day who admit, that on atheism, there is no objective standard for good and evil:

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[12]Nagel, Thomas. *Mind and Cosmos: Why the New-Darwinian View of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford University Press, 2012): 28.

[13]Lewis, C.S. *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (Harper One, 2002): 314

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Richard Dawkins in his book *A River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* makes the following bold assertion often quoted by Christian apologists, "In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."[14]

The accomplished secular ethicist, Kai Nielson, made the same point in a journal article, "We have not been able to show that reason requires the moral point of view, or that all really rational persons should not be individual egoists or classical amoralists. Reason doesn't decide here. The picture I have painted for you is not a pleasant one. Reflection on it depresses me . . . Pure practical reason, even with a good knowledge of the facts, will not take you to morality."

Michael Ruse, an atheistic philosopher and popular author, puts it plainly saying, "ethics is illusory." Alex Rosenberg says that moral distinctions, the act of calling one thing good and another evil, is an illusion.

To illustrate, imagine seeing a boy scout walk an elderly woman across the street. When on the other side, the scout punches her in the nose and steals her purse. The idea of a moral distinction between these events is an illusion, according to Rosenberg. Yet, most make moral distinctions all the time. We regularly call things unjust, evil, or good and beautiful. Where do these moral intuitions come from? For Lewis, such questions pushed him to reconsider God.

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis describes how evil made him reject God but how it eventually pointed him back to God, "But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be a part of the show, find myself in such a violent reaction against it?"

Lewis faced the predicament: he didn't believe in God but he did believe in justice. To make sense out of justice, however, Lewis found he needed to return to God. Christianity made sense of his moral intuitions about the universe.

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[14]Dawkins, Richard. *A River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (Basic Books, 1996): 133.

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§4. Christianity and Joy

The pain of longing afflicted C.S. Lewis throughout his life. He described it as a sort of nostalgia that does not look back, but rather forward, not to the familiar, but to something other, offering a deeper meaning to all the things we can verify through the senses. Lewis described it as "the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, the news from a country we have never visited."

Lewis would later conclude, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."[15] Christianity made sense out of this religious impulse. If his longing for transcendence was like other longings, like hunger or sex, there must be something real on the other side of the desire.

Though theologian Allister McGrath says Lewis did not mean to put forward a formal argument from desire, Lewis's description has been helpful for many trying to make sense of the world. Peter Kreeft, philosopher professor at Boston College, outlines his argument as follows:[16]

1. Every natural, innate desire in us corresponds to some real object that can satisfy that desire.
2. But there exists in us a desire which nothing, nothing on earth, no creature can satisfy.
3. Therefore, there must exist something more than time, earth and creatures, which an satisfy this desire.

It was after a long walk with none other than J.R.R. Tolkien, and others, Lewis bowed his head in his office at Oxford and admitted that God was God. Sometime later he would go even further up and further in, and not only embrace Theism, but the thing itself, Christianity. Lewis saw the truth of Christianity and through it, was able to see everything else. This total view was able to account for his moral intuitions and his desire for joy.

Shortly after C.S. Lewis became a Christian he spent a holiday with his best friend from childhood, Arthur Greeves. In the two weeks he was there he wrote a book giving an allegorical account of his conversion to Christianity. Lewis used John Bunyan's motif from Pilgrim's Progress. However, in Lewis's work, the goal was not to relieve a burden but to find fulfillment. It was not about going forward, but about returning to the faith of his youth.

[15]Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity.* (HarperOne, 2015): 135-137.
[16]Accessed online: https://www.peterkreeft.com/topics/desire.htm

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Though many familiar with the Lewis literary corpus when thinking of Lewis's conversion might turn to his autobiographical work, *Surprised by Joy*, it is in *The Pilgrim's Regress* that we get a real panoramic of Lewis's spiritual journey. Lewis scholar Lauren Spohn describes it this way in her essay "Further Up and Further In: Roads, Pilgrim's Regress, and Sehnsucht on Earth and in Heaven":

> "Lewis suggests that *Sehnsucht* is itself more desirable than any longing satisfied. Paradoxically, the hope available to the Christian, unavailable to the soul in Limbo, is the knowledge that this desire will not be satisfied but will continue unfulfilled into eternity, for it is through this dissatisfaction that the Christian is drawn ever closer to God while remaining ever distinct enough to adore Him. This glorious approach, not arrival, which guarantees a loving, worshiping relationship with God, would be silenced with the satisfaction of Sweet Desire. . . Thus, for Lewis, the crucially unquenchable desire that sets this upward spiral into motion, the pilgrim comes to realize, is itself, 'more precious' than any fulfillment that would bring that desire to an end."[17]

In Lewis's account of his conversion, he had to fight through several philosophies and resist the "Spirit of the Age" in his quest to find the fulfilment of his desire. His journey brought him back to the land of his youth. For Lewis, the pilgrim's regress meant a return to the faith of his childhood.

C.S. Lewis understood that the longing to know God could not be satisfied merely through human efforts. We see this in his often-used example of Hamlet and Shakespeare. If Hamlet were ever to know Shakespeare, Shakespeare would have to write himself into his story. This is the claim at the heart of Christianity, that life has entered the human theater and written himself into the plot.

For Lewis, the Incarnation of Jesus, what Christians celebrate as Christmas, made sense of his religious longing. His desire pointed to something real, something he could never reach on his own. Nothing on earth could satisfy it. That is why Lewis descried the Incarnation as a crucial part of a novel that has been missing. Once found, it begins to make sense of the rest of the story. For Lewis, he could see the truth of Christianity. And through it he could make sense of everything else.

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[17]Spohn, Lauren in "Further Up and Further In" in *Sehnsucht: the C.S. Lewis Journal* 13 (2019): 91-93.

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§5. In Search of a Form

These themes appear in nearly all of Lewis's writings. He described them in clear ways for linear thinkers in books like *The Problem of Pain*, *Miracles*, and *Mere Christianity*. But he also often projected them through metaphors. These topics of desire, joy, and longing prove the most pervasive in Lewis's description of his own journey to and articulation of the faith.

Though an argument from desire can be given a formal outline, Lewis knew it was more powerfully felt than intellectually considered. In her essay, Lauren Spohn describes Lewis's use of longing as an apologetic:

> The question then arises to what extent Lewis imagined the engaging allegory of *Regress* and imaginative fantasy of *The Chronicles*, *The Great Divorce* and *Till We Have Faces* as sources of the Sweet Desire these stories explain – and, thus, forms of Imaginative gospels drawing readers into Christ by stirring the Joy that first led Lewis to God. Such a strategy meditates upon Lewis's larger belief in the spiritual power of the imagination, which he elsewhere called 'the organ of meaning' behind religious truth. In the case of *Regress*, Lewis mobilizes the imaginative organ to illuminate, through engaging allegory, the nature of Sehnsucht after death. Far more than a signpost, this unquenchable desire leads us both to and up the Landlord's mountain – both along the road to Jerusalem and deeper into the city – ever closer to God and ever lovingly displaced as we ceaselessly venture 'further up and further in.'[18]

Christian apologists are increasingly using the term "cultural apologetics" to describe the methodology of Lewis, et al. In his book *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World*, Paul M. Gould defines cultural apologetics as, "the work of establishing the Christian voice, conscience and imagination within a culture so that Christianity is seen as true and satisfying." To do so, the apologist works to show that the gospel "offers plausible answers to universal human longings."

In this way the cultural apologist argues *up* from lived experience even while arguing *down* from divine revelation, showing how the two come together to make sense of what it means to be human. Gould writes:

> Cultural apologetics acknowledges all of these approaches and integrates them into a vision of what it means to be an embodied human that shapes and is shaped by culture, offering what I think is a more realistic and

[18]Ibid.

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> compassionate approach to apologetics. The cultural apologist affirms man's rational nature, but situates it within a more comprehensive account of what it means to be human.[19]

Gould uses Paul's famous sermon in Athens found in Acts 17, as a framework for cultural apologetics. Gould's approach is helpful and can be found throughout Scripture. That is because the Bible is not a set of free-floating doctrines, but a way of seeing reality embodied in the lives of the biblical authors and characters. As Dorothy Sayers reminded us: *the doctrine is the drama*. The Bible is a narrative told through the experiences, hopes, struggles, and faith of real people.

The style many find so endearing from Lewis's apologetic writing is a methodology inherent in the biblical literature. Consider the Psalms. These spiritual songs cover the entire landscape of the human experience. From doubt to anger, to faith and praise, these poems provide an embodied witness of faith in God. It should not be surprising that Lewis, the man most referenced for modeling cultural apologetics, only wrote one book about the Bible. Lewis wrote a book about the Psalms. Lewis, the man who aspired to be a poet, in many ways echoed the Psalms in his use of human longings to point to God.

Among the many intellectual challenges for those of us who want to share the gospel with our neighbors, is the pronounced problem that not everyone is looking for intellectual answers. Today, many young people leave the church, not due to intellectual concerns, but for personal and emotional reasons.[20] If we are honest, we all must admit our intellect is not always the main force in a lot of decisions we make. If it were, we would eat a whole lot less fast food. You likely did not use analytic philosophy the last time you ordered something from your car window through a scratchy audio system at your local McDonalds.

Yet, in our apologetics sometimes we focus entirely on the intellect. Often our apologetic methods are too narrow. Observers might think the primary target for our evangelistic engagement is Spock, the character from Star Trek, who is a middle-aged, highly educated, white male who operates purely according to reason and lives in outer space.

There are Spock-like people out there, but they are not normal and they are certainly not the majority.[21] (If you are like that—no offense!) How

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[19]Gould, Paul. *Cultural Apologetics* (Zondervan Academic, 2019)

[20] See Larry Taunton's article "Listening to Young Atheists: Lessons for a Stronger Christianity": https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/listening-to-young-atheists-lessons-for-a-stronger-christianity/276584/

[21]If you are reading this journal article, you are not the norm. Most Americans never read an academic journal, let alone a philosophy journal. My goal in this article is to

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can a Christian talk about faith with normal people? How can a person present a biblical philosophy of religion in such a messed-up world? Can a Christian see the gospel message as a guide for understanding the real world?

The philosopher Plato thought of the human soul as consisting of three parts: head, chest, and belly. He understood humanity to be a mixed bag of intellect (head), affections (chest), and desires (belly). In other words, humans are messy. That is why a public philosophy of religion will be messy as well.

Contemporary generations of Christian apologists have sought to find a way forward through making important course corrections, responding to things like anti-intellectualism and cultural isolationism. The danger of any correction, however, is overcorrection. By focusing so much on the head, many have neglected the role of the affections and desires. In other words, some may have reached Spock, but have failed to reach the rest of the crew.

Plato believed the chest, the affections, to be the main arbiter between the head and the belly—the seat of desires. Plato understood the three, head, chest, and belly, as constituting the whole person. As such, humanity cannot be reduced to any single part. And neither should our apologetics.

All of this is to say, this is tough stuff. This requires the cultivation of the imagination. Many conservative Christians, however, fear this represents an abdication of biblical authority. But it really is not a binary choice. Christians must do both simultaneously—and some are likely more gifted at one or the other.

In the Gospels, Jesus gave the Great Commission to the Church at large and not just to individual Christians. Still, every generation faces the full weight of evangelistic challenges unique to one's times. And while the Bible never changes, Christians' methods often must. Thus, cultural apologetics is a way of responding to gospel barriers in our day that are more than intellectual in nature. Cultural apologetics is a way of talking about faith that connects not only with the head but also with the heart.

§6. An Alogical Approach

C.S. Lewis spoke to this in his book *The Abolition of Man*. He explains that the intellect, affections, and desires are inseparable. In other words, one cannot even fully affect the intellect if without learning to

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discuss ways in which C.S. Lewis tried to reach people who are not like us (philosophy journal article kind of people).

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capture the affections. As Lewis said, "The heart never takes the place of the head: but it can, and should, obey it."[22]

To help his readers obey it (the head), Lewis seeks to help them to train their emotions (the chest). It is doubtful that one can train their emotions purely by rational endeavors, since they are, as Lewis described them, *alogical*. In short, a vision for cultivating a better moral imagination and public witness is needed within the Christian community. This end result should not be something less than a rational presentation of Christianity, but something far more.

This emphasis in demonstrable in the writings of C.S. Lewis whose focus towards the end of his life shifted to "smuggling theology behind enemy lines" through the power of "fiction and symbol." Lewis's essay "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said" introduces this vision for cultivating an imaginative witness:

> "I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which paralyzed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God … I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation can freeze feelings . . . [23]

Lewis believed an imaginative witness, a beautiful portrayal of a compelling worldview, could get around a person's biases. Lewis, who knew how to give a reasoned argument better than most, also understood that reason, what he described as watchful dragons, could be an excuse not to consider the truth claims of Christianity. "Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons?," Lewis once asked. He clearly believed the answer was *yes*.

Roger Lloyd, in his book *The Borderland: An Exploration of Theology in English Literature,* outlines the challenge for sharing propositional truth in fresh ways. He uses the works of Dorothy Sayers, Charles Williams, G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Victorian hymn writers, and Elizabethan poets, to illustrate the opportunity to translate theology and capture the attention of a popular audience.

Lloyd explains that theology must be interpreted for normal people before the theological task is complete. Lewis agreed. Lewis went so far as to suggest that before pastors were ordained they should be required to translate an ancient Christian writing for a popular audience.

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[22]Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943): 19.
[23]Lewis, C.S. *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (Harvest Books, 2002): 58

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This requires a sort of theological artist, Lloyd explains. The cultural apologist is one who lives in the what Lloyd describes as the *Borderland*, serving as a mediator of truth for the masses, a popularizer, if you will, for the people. This is a writer who is "bound to truth," Lloyd explains, but also "bound to delight, to the need to win a hearing."[24] Lewis once asked, "Do you think I am trying to weave a spell?" to which he answered, "Perhaps I am, but remember fairy tales. Spells are for breaking enchantments as well as for introducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness."[25] When his country was at war, Lewis clearly presented Mere Christianity. But in times of peace, when many were distracted by leisure, Lewis found creative ways to get around the dragons.

All this provides some color and context for why Lewis told Carl F.H. Henry "No," when he was asked to write articles for the inaugural edition of Christianity Today. Lewis told Henry he had given up on straightforward attempts to argue for theological truths. Lewis said he wished the project well, but his creative talent and thought now flowed in "different, though I trust not less Christian, channels."

In addition to the converging themes leading to Lewis's conversion, this change can be correlated with other developments in Lewis's Christian life and ministry.[26] First, Lewis encountered the limitations of language in formal debate when the philosopher G.E.M. Anscombe was thought to have bested him at Oxford University's Socratic Club. Whomever won the debate, which is debated, Lewis revised the language in his book *Miracles*, which was the topic of their exchange. Later printings of the book reveal Lewis's careful refinement of his argument.

Second, Lewis's main use of propositional and linear argumentation was used during a time of war. His most lasting writing of this nature is arguably *Mere Christianity*, taken from Lewis's radio talks given during War World II. Lewis published a number of books and essays that present his defense of Christianity in the sort of straightforward ways modern believers expect from apologists like William Lane Craig, et al.

Finally, Lewis was hung up on project about prayer. He could not find a way around or through it. Lewis referenced this problem in his letter to Henry regarding the Christianity Today articles. He also told D. Marten

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[24]Lloyd, Roger. *The Borderland: An Exploration of Theology in English Literature* (Macmillan, 1960).
[25]Lewis, C.S. *The Weight of Glory & Other Addresses* (HarperOne, 2001): 31.
[26]I have written about this in different places, most notably for Christianity Today: https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/december-web-only/why-cs-lewis-didnt-write-for-christianity-today.html

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Lloyd Jones on one occasion that he would not write another book like *Mere Christianity* until he understood the meaning of prayer.[27] His seeming inability to give a lucid description of prayer affected the way he talked about his faith.

Lewis did finally get a book out about prayer, but it was far different from what he seemed to expect earlier on. It took the form of a fictional conversation between Lewis and a make-believe friend. It was published as *Letters to Malcom: Chiefly on Prayer* and was published at the end of his life. Some would consider Lewis's witness to have blossomed into a fuller, more expansive, and perhaps more effective form, in his later years.

§7. Lewis, the Complex Apologist with an Eclectic Style

Though Lewis regularly used metaphors in all of his writing, a clear change in apologetic approach can be traced to the years following the publication of *Miracles*. And it was late in life when Lewis introduced the world to the magical wardrobe of Narnia and his sci-fi trilogy. These fantasy worlds have moved many and given countless readers a way to make sense of the world and their place in it.

Not everyone appreciated the religious implications of C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* stories though. Laura Miller, co-founder of Salon.com, loved the Chronicles when she was young. But as an adult, the religious breadcrumbs in the Wardrobe angered her. She reflects on this in her work *The Magician's Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia*, "Life, unlike stories, has not theme, no formal unity, and (to unbelievers, at least) no readily apparent meaning . . . The Chronicles . . . spoke to me across a spectrum of yearning."[28]

For Lewis, it was Christianity that gave context and meaning to the spectrum of human longing. But to help readers consider this reality, he had to connect with a common experience, flip it on its head, and get them to really think about things. Consider Lewis's essay, "Talking About Bicycles." In it he describes how we think little of bicycles until we experience the enchantment when we first shove off on two wheels. We later grow bored, or disenchanted, with our bikes as we age. But if we hop back on a bike as an adult, we might re-learn the excitement we left behind.

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[27]Lloyd-Jones, D. Martin. *The Fight of Faith 1931-1981* (Banner of Truth, 1990): 52.
[28]Miller, Laura. *The Magicians Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia* (Little, Brown and Company, 2002).

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To lead readers toward re-enchantment, Lewis invited them to look *along* religious belief and not merely *at* it. A person would not find re-enchantment with riding a bicycle merely by looking at one. Lewis contrasted these two ways of seeing a thing, looking *at* or *along*, in his essay "Meditations from a Toolshed."

Lewis felt that far too many people dismissed things by standing detached and never really understanding the thing itself, by simply looking *at* them. To understand a thing, Lewis encouraged them to look *along* it, not only at it. Lewis writes:

> We must, on pain of idiocy, deny from the very outset the idea that looking at is, by its own nature, intrinsically truer or better than looking along. One must look both along and at everything. In particular cases we shall find reason for regarding the one or the other vision as inferior. Thus the inside vision of rational thinking must be truer than the outside vision which sees only movements of the grey matter; for if the outside vision were the correct one all thought (including this thought itself) would be valueless, and this is self-contradictory. You cannot have a proof that no proofs matter.[29]

This passage provides a helpful blend of Lewis the "propositional apologist" and Lewis the "cultural apologist." You can see both his reasoned argument, questioning the presuppositions of one's total worldview, but also his appeal to the imagination. *What if your view from the outside is incomplete*, Lewis is asking. Lewis is inviting readers to see *along* the Christian perspective, to consider if it makes sense of reason itself.

That reminds me of a passage in G.K. Chesterton. Chesterton once said the best place to consider Christianity's claims is to be inside of it.[30] The next best thing is to be a million miles away from it. Chesterton's point was that many are too close to objectively consider the message of Jesus. Something must change before they can see and consider it more clearly.

C.S. Lewis certainly experienced this. You can see it when he as a Christian wrote a foreword to the new edition of his poem *Dymer*, published when he was an atheist many years before. In it he quotes the poet Donne, "The heresies that men leave are hated most."[31] Later, Lewis explains in *Surprised by Joy*, "I assert most vigorously are those I resisted long and accepted late."[32] What opened Lewis's eyes to the truth of the gospel

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[29]Lewis, C.S. *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970): 212

[30]See G.K. Chesterton's delightful book *The Everlasting Man*.

[31]Lewis, C.S. *Dymer* (JM Dent & Sons, 1950): 5.

[32]Lewis, C.S. *Surprised by Joy* (Collins, 2012): 248

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message, was a e-enchantment with an offer of joy found exclusively in the life of Jesus. He resisted long, but thankfully, he accepted it late.

Lewis used a variety of methods for how we would describe his faith and invite others to join him. Perhaps a line from C.S. Lewis's first apologetic work is helpful to make sense of his journey as an apologist, "Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world."[33] *Mere Christianity* was born in a time of war when the ugliness of life captured the world's attention. *Narnia* was created in a season of post-war prosperity and spiritual apathy. Lewis adapted his apologetics for both war and peace. But though Lewis's approach changed in his later years, it could mean only one thing: Aslan was on the move.

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[33]Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain* (1940; repr., San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001): 91.

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APPENDIX

FAITH AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

ZAC BENSON

My religious faith means everything to me. There is not a day that goes by, even an hour that passes, that I do not, in some way, think and act on my faith. It guides me in everything I do, say, think and feel. Naturally, it influences my professional life. I am an active professional artist. Sometimes it is very hard to be both a Christian and an artist. I personally find it hard just living out my faith, regardless of if I was a philosopher or an artist. Being a believer means that I do not live for myself. I live for Someone else. That is hard. I constantly want to be in charge, live how I want to live and do what I want to do. Oftentimes, when I do, I find myself feeling regretful, ashamed and wanting to draw closer to my faith so to be more like the person who I want to be on my throne. That person is Jesus Christ and my work, in a way, is about Him. If you just glance at my work, you won't get it. You won't understand it. You might even think it is not meaningful. But, if you patiently look at it, give it time, read the title and think, you might understand it. You might discover something. You might understand me more. In the end, I just want to share my heart, my passions and my trials with you so that we can both be better humans in a very difficult world

In her book *Saving Leonardo* Nancy Pearcey (2010) quotes the Catholic philosopher Louis Duprè, "Faith cannot simply remain one discrete part of life. It must 'integrate all other aspects of existence' (44). Anything less is neither beautiful nor compelling enough to ignite our passion or transform our character." This idea explains the intensities of my faith and life so well. Within this appendix, I will describe my sincere desire to share my passion of God, life and art.

Francis Schaeffer (1973) starts his book *Art and the Bible* with the question, *"*What is the place of art in the Christian life*"(13)?* As a young professional artist, I have struggled with my answer for years. I never wanted to make Christian art just to make Christian art, but I also did not

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want to throw out my Christianity and just make art (whatever that means). Where is the sweet spot? How can I make strong, aggressive, professional work all the while conveying what is so deeply personal to me?

Art rarely leaves my thoughts in much the same way that Christ rarely does. I know this will sound unusual, but part of my Christian testimony is that the Lord has, and continues to, draw me closer to Himself and His cares through the making process. Ever since my second year of my graduate program at the University of Maryland, my work has navigated the intensity and severity of contemporary social issues. In not only our country, but our world, things are happening at an ever-increasing pace that we cannot grasp. My work, in effect, slows the world down and speaks to contemporary social issues of our day and presents them to the viewer so they too can grapple with them. This transition of making work about how my spiritual life and how it allows me to navigate societies ebbs and flows has not been an easy transition. It has come with threats, hardships and cancelled opportunities. But, I will say this, I would not make any other kind of work because I truly believe, this is my calling and when you know that you are walking in higher ways, threats, hardships or cancelled opportunities pale in comparison to the richness of the journey.

All artists are different in how they go about making or starting a new piece of artwork. Some artists sit down and start creating a piece almost on a whim. Some have to get in a groove and then start. The only way I can possibly start a piece is by being inspired, moved or convicted. Some things affect my studio practice more than others. I have to be fully attentive to my studio and to my practice or I will never make a piece of art. My work comes when there is calm in life, when the stress and trials have faded and I can be fully attentive to my surroundings, to the pains of others, to life's grandeurs or to my innermost being. My most recent pieces have come while I have been sitting in a church pew on a Sunday morning. Who would have thought? I believe it is because I am at peace in the pew, I am with my family and I am home. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to walk you through some of my pieces; how I was inspired, why I made what I made and the concepts behind each one.

At first glance of my work, one might think the artist is trying to get a reaction; trying to be on the cutting edge, trying to ruffle feathers. If you know me at all, that could not be further from the truth. The works I make are made for one purpose: to make me a better human being, and far more importantly, to make me a better follower and advocate for Christ and His concerns. The greatest compliment I can receive regrading my work is that it spoke to you and made you a better person (and believer if that relates). Nancy Pearcey (2010) states "The truth is that artists interact deeply

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with the thought of their day, translating worldviews into stories and images" (76). I could not agree more. I produce works of art that help me navigate my Christian Worldview and therefore draws me into a richer relationship with Christ.

I was never one to disagree with the government. I had an elementary trust that they knew best and would do best. That started to change as I began finding myself caring about what was happening around me more, what was happening in the news not only nationally but also internationally. I began doing research into what the United States, and our allies, have done in Iraq for eight years. Through that research, I found that President Obama announced in October of 2011 that the last combat soldier would leave Iraq by the end of that year, drawing that eight-year war to a close. I was shocked that less than three years later on September 10, 2014, he told a national television audience that he would send 475 military advisers back to Iraq to help in the battle against the Islamic State. By April 2016, more than 5,000 American troops were in Iraq. Through my research, I started to become aware of the wages of war. Before this, I was apathetic to war; disengaged. So, I took my research and started to develop a piece that consists of 4,497 images of the men and women who died while serving in the Iraq War from 2003-2011 and 535 Congressmen and women that were sitting and voted to go to this war. To explain how the piece works, I would take an image of one of the congressmen and overlay that image with 9 of the service men or women who died. This then created a ghost-like image. Through the course of making this piece, looking at thousands of photos and researching most of their stories, the Lord allowed me to become aware and grieve for every loss of life. Each of those lives were precious to Him and therefore became precious to me. In a way, this piece became more than just a memorial, it became a place where I spent remembering these individuals and mourning their death. This is one of many pieces that have caused me to weep and I pray that the Lord continues to bring me to that state when I make work.

Most of the concepts from my pieces come by way of news articles, stories and personal experiences. One day as I was casually scrolling through the news as is sometimes my habit, I saw a devastating image of a building that was completely demolished. It was not in the middle of suburbia, downtown or near any other buildings. That is what caught my attention. It was in the middle of nowhere. After researching further, I found out that it was the remains of Saint Elijah's Monastery, which was the oldest Christian monastery in Iraq; founded in the late 6th century. It was demolished by ISIS between August and September of 2014. It has stood for over 1,700 years and was now demolished in less than a month. Though

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the monastery had been unoccupied for several decades, my heart hurt that someone would do this. Why? Why demolish an abandoned monastery for no apparent reason? So, I decided to show that harsh act. I took a laser cutter and practically burned this devastating image of the monastery into 15 Bibles that were translated into Arabic. The bibles here represent the monastery. I wanted to show the harshness of the action. While the surface of the bible is defaced, the substance of it remains. This is how my faith comes out in my work. I never want it to be so obvious that it turns the viewer away before they even have a chance to understand the overall concept. I want to captivate them by the material, scale, creativity or the aesthetics. If I can do that, and do it with subtly, I can have a conversation with them about anything. That is what I want, I want to have conversations with my viewers about topics that are sometimes hard.

Another aspect of my life that has changed during the making of this body of work is my concern and passion for global issues, such as the global church and the global refugee crisis. Because of this, my wife and I are actively participating and giving towards faith-based organizations helping these situations. Similar to the last piece, an image I saw in January of 2015 caught my attention. The image was of Sanjiang Church being demolished by the Chinese government. This caught my attention and is what made me start the research for my next piece. After researching, I discovered that in 2013, the Chinese government implemented a three-year campaign called 'Three revise and one demolition'. This campaign allows the government to use building code restrictions, namely the height of a building, as a pretense to demolish a building. The complexities of this situation gripped me as I began to research Sanjiang Church and found that it was built in 2014 and was demolished due to height restrictions enacted by the governmental campaign. I learned of more and more churches that had been affected by this situation and I kept feeling a need to do more. I found that this devastation was actually part of this government campaign that has been going on for several years. Amid this campaign, over 2,000 crosses have been removed from atop religions buildings and several churches have been demolished in one of the provinces in China. Some observers suspect the campaign has the backing of the Chinese president and could be a pilot project before a nationwide crackdown. I wanted to in some way show the number of times this has happened. Each one is significant in its own way and I wanted the viewer to be able to respond to each one, not just a large number. I began handmake 2,000 ceramic crosses, one for each church that was affected. I then placed them in glass vials filled with water. Over time, these individual crosses started to decompose, however, the most important aspect of the piece is that the substance still

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remains. Behind each vial, on the acrylic glass, are engraved the names of the churches that have been affected. Most of which are not known due to the withholding of information in the country. I marked those churches with an asterisk.

There are few times where a piece and my research on the concept of that piece do not make me change. The above piece unfortunately did not make me change. I was the same person before I made the piece as I was afterwards. I wanted to be changed. I wanted those 2,000 churches, and however many thousands of people effected, to change me. You see, my art changes me. I will be the first admit, I have to be willing to change in order for my work to move me. This is exactly how it is with the viewer. If the viewer comes into the gallery or museum where a piece of artwork is installed, and if their mind is in another place, in a rush or not in the right mindset to invest, the artwork will not be motivational, inventive, creative or aesthetic to the viewer. When one comes into a gallery or a museum, one must prepare themselves. Prepare to be convicted, inspired or changed. If the viewer is not willing to do so, don't go in. So, as I was saying before, the previous piece did not change me and that caused me concern. This next piece dealt with my lack of accountability to the situation.

I previously thought that by making a piece of art on the situation, I had done enough, and yet I did not change anything about who I am or what I do. I wanted to make a piece that would hold me accountable. This piece came about when I started looking at all the things I had and many of them were made in China. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with that, in context of this piece and this situation, I began to feel convicted. The Chinese government imposes anywhere from a 10-25% tariff on goods that the US imports from them. If you follow that out, by purchasing these goods, I am essentially contributing to the persecution of the church. That was incredibly alarming to me. I wanted to show, through this piece, what I am doing to the church.

I started to research trade, specifically between the United States and China. It was overwhelming as you can image. Massive cargo ships going to and from, billions of dollars being passed between the two countries and the many people effected by the cargo aboard. I then started to research the cargo ships and found the largest Chinese container ship- the CSCL Globe. I then made an exact replica of this ship with Chinese rice paper. I then handmade 2,000 wooden crosses and painted each of them bright red. Each one of these crosses represent a church that has been affected by the strong arm of the Chinese government. I hung each one of the crosses from the ceiling in the shape of an 'M' and suspended the cargo ship from them. This piece is a literal representation of my situation. Each

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of these crosses are being pulled down in order to elevate the container ship. In essence, I am lifting up materials things at the expense of the church. This piece has begun to change me.

I have struggled with voting ever since I came of age. This climaxed during the 2016 election. I always felt every candidate and every party used my faith, my morals, as a pawn. I'll be honest, at first, much of what they said was appealing and I started to get swayed based solely on the fact of their attentiveness to my faith convictions. After feeling this way for a whole and trying to navigate the tumultuous election, I decided to make a piece about it all. I knew I wanted to share my experiences with the viewer but I also wanted to maintain a sense of neutrality as I did not want my work to come across as explaining to the viewer which way to vote; as I honestly did not even know myself. I also knew I did not want this piece to be overtly political. I wanted the viewer to see the piece from afar, be intrigued enough to come up to it and explore the material, design, craftsmanship, colors and forms.

So, I decided to incorporate technology into this piece as I feel like technology brings innovation to the work and therefore causes intrigue by the viewer. If you have not noticed yet, I think a lot about the viewer and how they will perceive my work. That is because my work is not solely for me. If it was, I would make the work, look at it for a bit, and then put it in my basement. That does not interest me at all; I make work that draws me closer to my faith convictions and therefore I want to share that with others. I began fabricating parts of the piece using a 3-D printer. The donkeys inside the cross on the left and the elephants inside the cross on the right are all 3-D printed plastic. These are purposely made using cheap and off colored material. Contained in the central cross, the sheep among the wolves per say, are all handmade sheep using Plaster of Paris and holy water. Again, I made this piece to describe how I feel when trying to navigate the political spectrum when voting. I feel as if all parties are, again, using my faith as a pawn. When in essence, I need to care about one thing, loving my neighbor and seeking out the Truth. My spiritual walk and faith convictions are not owned by politics. What I have learned is that I need to vote for issues, not for parties.

Between 2003 and 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) had brutally murdered over 1,100 Christians. One of the hundreds of occurrences during these times happened on Feb. 15, 2015. ISIS released a video which showed 21 Coptic Christians being beheaded one by one on a sandy beach. I never watched the video as I could not bear to watch that type of destruction and malice. This story stopped me in my tracks. I knew I wanted to make a piece to commemorate these martyrs of the faith. Like

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all my pieces, I do a great amount of research. While doing research on this travesty, I found out that all of them were migrant workers abducted from Libya, but only 20 of the 21 in fact were Christians. The terrorist would tell each Christian to reject Christ but each one declared Christ as Savior and God and suffered a brutal death because of it. When they finally got to the non-believer, they expected him to declare allegiance to Islam. Instead, he replied, 'Their God is my God.' and they proceeded to behead him. I cannot tell you how many times I have thought about this story and want the viewer to participate in both the commemoration of these martyrs as well as seeing the harshness of the act.

This piece, titled *Their Cause is my Cause*, is for the 1100 believers that are no longer with us. The piece consists of seven spire-like ladder structures, resembling both spires of ancient European Catholic cathedrals and steeples atop Protestant churches. In the midst of each of the spires are highly polished, charred, wooden vessels. Each of these vessels are carrying delicate gold beads, symbolizing the passage of the 1100 martyrs from the harshness of this life into the grandeur of the next. After making this piece, I wanted to declare to all that their God is my God.

You see, my art is far more than just an aesthetic something that sits on a wall or in a gallery to be looked at for a couple of seconds and never thought of again. I make purposeful work. I want you to grasp it, I want, as Mark Rothko stated in regard to his own work, you to weep. I do not want to go through life living as if I am the only thing that matters and I want to encourage others to do the same. As Rick Warren stated in the first line of his book, 'It's not about you.". There are far greater things that matter, and I want to have that conversation with you, the viewer, as you look at my work.

In the end though, as a Christ-follower, I want my work to serve a greater purpose, even greater than a dialogue about societal issues and struggles. I want my work to share my faith in a way the viewer has not seen often, through art. How do I do this? I do this by sharing first-hand how Christ is molding me through my work. My work navigates current happenings, personal beliefs, and anthropological perspectives, while allowing myself to concentrate and make about the ones that grip my attention. I toil over aspects of life and society that are concerning, meaningful, or just overwhelming. I allow the viewer to understand what I believe, see my faults and share my concerns. I want the viewer to have the opportunity to wrestle with these ideas as well. My work is the conduit through which I raise awareness and evoke empathy towards people and happenings. As an artist, I want to be the one that speaks, and ultimately, I want my art to declare that I stand for something, that I stood up for

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someone, and that I allowed their voices to be heard. This is in direct correlation to the poem written by the German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller (1892–1984) (Gerlach, 2000). My wife and I were visiting the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. a couple of years back and this poem revolutionized the reason why I make. The poem goes,

> First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a socialist.
> Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a trade unionist.
> Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Jew.
> Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

My work has forever changed since I read that poem. I want my work to speak for the individuals, the communities, the groups of people who need to be lifted up. If you would have told me seven years ago that my faith would grow stronger through my work, I would have never believed you. I would have been dumbfounded on how that could even happen. Nevertheless, after seven years of making this body of work, the Lord is drawing me closer to Him through the making of these works. It has been the most incredible, passionate and intense time, but I would never change it.

Being a Christian in the mainstream artworld is not for the faint hearted. With that said, I firmly believe that being an artist is a calling from the Lord and I have been called to not make Christian (kitsch) art, but to make real, passionate, sensitive and engaging art that transforms me every time I make. The hope is that it will also transform others. Francis Schaeffer (1973) advocates for this position that being an artist is a calling and comes under the Lordship of Christ when he states, "But there is another side to the lordship of Christ, and this involves the total culture-including the area of creativity. Again, evangelical or biblical Christianity has been weak at this point. About all that we have produced is a very romantic Sunday school art. We do not seem to understand that the arts too are supposed to be under the lordship of Christ" (17). For me, there is no greater calling than being an artist and following in the creative passion of our Creator God who has made from the beginning of time. Therefore, we should take art seriously as He obviously did, has and will continue to do. I will be honest, a goal of this appendix is not just to provide you with an observation of what I believe, but as a plea to the church and to His people, to believe and establish art as a gift from the Lord and to see it as a viable part of humanity.

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In his book *Art Needs No Justification,* Hans R. Rookmaaker (1978) summarizes this by stating, “Therefore to be a Christian means that one has humanity, the freedom to work in God’s creation, and to use the talents that God has given to each of us, to His glory and to the benefit of our neighbors. So, if we have artistic talents, they should be used” (24) As a Christian artist, I firmly believe that my passion and talent for art is to be used solely for God’s glory. I will be the first one to acknowledge that does not mean to make work with blatant, aggressive, faith statements or judgements. Going back to when I was a young professional artist, I thought that if I was going to make ‘Christian Art’, that was what you had to make. Then, at I kept making in my studio, this body of work exemplifying who I am started to come to fruition. When looking at my work, one might not quite know if I am a liberal or conservative, atheist or believer, for or against something, but the more you study the work, the more you invest in it, you will come to an understanding that I am being changed by my work. I have had thoughts and have acted one way, then, through the making of my work, I have changed my views, thoughts and even actions toward something or someone based solely on the fact that I had to think and ponder on the subject in order to make my artwork. In order to do this, one must be willing to be changed. I will say again, it is not easy being a believer. To be a believer means you have to sell out for your faith, you do not matter, He does. As John states in his Gospel, “He must become greater, I must become less” (New International Version, John 3:30).

In Hans R. Rookmaaker’s (1978) book, *Art Needs No Justification*, the Publisher’s Preface pleads to artists saying, “It is a prophetic call to Christian artists, craftsmen and musicians to ‘weep, pray, think and work’, before it is too late” (7). We as artists, we as the church, and we as a society should take the Fine Arts seriously as the Lord has taken them seriously. We can no longer pretend that art is only a painting or a bronze sculpture; art is creative, inventive and vibrant and can come in forms of wood, metal, cloth, clay and can speak to numerous issues like spiritually, life and death, good and evil as well as the hard topics in society such as the refugee crisis, war, U.S. politics, the LGBTQ+ community or abortion. If we as Christian artists do not speak about these issues in the Arts, they will only be talked about by the non-believing artists and that is all the art we will see. Thus, Christians will have forfeited their voice in the arts. Therefore, let us remember to “‘weep, pray, think and work,’ before it is too late” (7).

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