12-1-2018

The Eclipse of Elegance: Towards a Contemporary Lutheran Aesthetics of Discipleship

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THE ECLIPSE OF ELEGANCE:
TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY LUTHERAN AESTHETICS OF DISCIPLESHIP

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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December, 2018

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To Jenna, Sam, and Kate:

For all that jazz!

“What we play is life.”

Louis Armstrong

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PREFACE

This project began many years ago with a personal search to understand, and articulate the aesthetic experiences and discoveries that had taken place in the midst of my everyday life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Thus, it was born out of a desire to express aesthetically and therefore more artistically the reality of the ups and downs, highs and lows, hosannas and hallelujahs, of a life lived in faith, that this project has come to fruition.

In 2006 my wife Jenna and I had our first child—our daughter Kate. In the early stages of pregnancy, Kate was diagnosed with down-syndrome and some of the significant physical challenges that can come along with it. We knew she had a tough road ahead. So, as we had planned, just a few minutes after she was born, Kate was baptized right there in the delivery room surrounded by doctors, nurses, and grandparents. A few days later, Kate had open-heart surgery. Unfortunately, it was only a couple of days after her surgery that serious complications ensued during her recovery. A few weeks later, on a rainy Sunday morning in March, our beautiful little girl passed away in her baptismal faith as we prayed the Lord's Prayer over her. It is truly difficult to find the words to express the great impact this loss had on my wife Jenna and me—especially on our faith life. Never before had we felt the pain and brokenness of this life so deeply. And, never before had we experienced the beauty of God's life-giving grace so intimately. Our understanding, experience, and feeling of baptism, faith, and of daily discipleship was deepened and broadened. Life became both more tragic and more beautiful. We learned to cry louder, and laugh harder. We learned to sing out with all our heart, soul, and strength both the lament of our deepest hosannas as well as the joy and celebration of our highest hallelujahs.

It was during the initial time of mourning the loss of Kate that I spent many hours listening to jazz and the gospel blues of Sister Rosetta Tharpe and others. Thus, it was through music, as I

was mourning the loss of my daughter, that I was brought to the initial steps of learning how to see, hear, feel and express the juxtaposition of beauty in the brokenness—how to desperately cry out the minor notes of anger, loss, and confusion—and yet with the major notes of faith, hope, and love still echoing throughout the melody of my life. Through a deep and intimate connection with this music I began the journey of coming to a greater understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of discipleship. One that called for artistic sensibilities that would honestly and authentically express the reality of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, that went far beyond the trite platitudes of an overly intellectualized and spiritualized faith.

Discovering, and striving to find ways to articulate the aesthetic aspects of the "felt life" of faith transformed my understanding and experience of the beauty in the brokenness of this life. It created a passion in me to search for a more holistic expression of the daily life of faith as it takes place in the embodied and embedded reality of everyday life. How to see, hear, feel and articulate all of it—as a disciple of Jesus Christ—became a deep quest!

I believe that a positive, constructive, and creative way forward in this quest is to be found in/through this project. This project aims at emphasizing the mandatory role that aesthetics has in the ongoing spiritual formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ as this takes place in the midst of everyday life. Through my personal journey as well as through the journey of this project, it is my hope to inspire a more holistic fully-embodied and fully-embedded approach to and practice of everyday discipleship in Jesus Christ in the created sphere that leads to the discovery and experience of all the jazz that fills our everyday lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout this formational time in doctoral studies and research, my everyday life has been deeply embedded in three interrelated and yet unique areas that have come together over the past years to help compose the jazz of my life. They are the academic institution of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, my extended family and church, and, of course, my wife and children. There are so many who have been instrumental in shaping my life as well as contributing to the completion of this project and the journey through which it has led me. Although it is impossible to remember and include all who have been a part of it, I would like to thank those who have been most directly involved in walking and composing with me.

I want first to thank several of the professors who have been key to my formation during this time. Dr. Reed Lessing, for encouraging me to enter the doctoral program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and advising me through the application process. Dr. Leo Sanchez, for introducing me to the field of Spirit Christology, and encouraging me to further investigate the role of aesthetics in spiritual formation. (As well as for our shared love and appreciation of jazz.) Dr. Robert Kolb, for inspiring me to think creatively about the connection between aesthetics, God's Providence, and Vocation. And, to my dear friend and mentor for the past 18 years, Dr. Joel Okamoto, for instilling in me a passion for theology, academic research, and teaching. And, for introducing me to postliberal theology and the work of Susanne K. Langer. (As well as for the many hours spent together over coffee and Italian dinners—thank you, my friend).

I would like to especially thank my dissertation committee who graciously, patiently and wisely guided me through the journey of this project! Dr. Charles Arand, committee reader, for all of your insights in regard to the doctrine of creation, the Trinity, the creed and a renewed interest in the ministerial use of first article gifts. Dr. David Schmitt, committee reader, for your

poetic insights and guidance in regard to aesthetics and practical theology. Dr. Beth Hoeltke, Director of the Graduate School, for all the time and effort spent in advising me on the formatting and editing of this project. Your support, encouragement, and help did not go unnoticed. And, most especially to my Doktorvater, Dr. Joel Biermann who has, of course, contributed the most to seeing this project through to completion. The patience, encouragement, advice, time, and effort you have given me have been an incredible blessing. I would also like to thank you for introducing me to your work on re-connecting doctrine and ethics. You opened the door for me to further investigate the essential connection of aesthetics to ethics and doctrine. This along with your work on theological concepts in regard to a contemporary Lutheran framework that utilizes a full-circle creedal approach and the two realms reality are improvised upon throughout these pages.

I also wish to express my deep love and gratitude to my extended family and friends, including my brothers and sisters in Christ at A.R.T. Church who have shared in the journey, and allowed me as their pastor to bring many of the ideas in this project to bear upon our corporate life together. I would especially like to express my deep gratitude to my parents, Jim and Lynn Whaley, for the spiritual formation, love for Jesus, and deep appreciation for art and music they instilled in me from my earliest days. You have always been there for me, and have always kept me and my family in your prayers. And, I know that this entire journey and project have been an important part of your prayer life these past few years. Thank you! May this project be at least a partial return on the investment you have made in me all these years.

To my precious daughter Kate, who is already in the eternal care of her Savior King, Jesus, I look forward to seeing you and singing with you again soon my little princess. To my son, my main man Sam, you continually re-invigorate my imagination as I try to keep up with yours. I am

constantly amazed by the insightful capability of your aesthetic awareness and how your artistic sensibilities are already intuitively infused with sound Lutheran theology. I can't thank you enough buddy, for all the good (tough) questions you have caused me to wrestle with over the years; for your relentless encouragement and support; and, the special friendship you have blessed me with that only a father can experience with his beloved son. I pray that you continue to grow in your love for music and the arts, and further experience how those loves are such an essential part of your everyday life and ongoing spiritual formation. I trust that God will continue to lead you in living a jazz-filled life in the Spirit (Buddy Rich, "Birdland," live at The Hague—yeah you know) as an awesome disciple of Jesus Christ.

Finally, to my beloved Jenna—my best friend and partner in life—you have made countless sacrifices allowing me the time to study and travel over the many years involved in completing this part of our journey together. No one has so faithfully supported and encouraged me as you. You kept me going in times of doubt, and when the road looked long you allowed me to sing the blues, but never without moving me forward, and getting me into the swing of things once again. You are my best friend, my true duet partner in life's jazz. We have been through a lot together on this journey of swing, the blues, and improvisation. Your sacrifices can only be truly known by God, but it is my hope that the completion of this work may serve as a token of my deepest love for you and my humble appreciation to God for blessing me with you in my life to share in singing all the hosanna's and hallelujah's we have experienced together. Time and again, through your grace and beauty, I have come to a deeper understanding of God as the giver of good gifts. I dedicate this work to you "Kid." Without you, I would have never experienced all the jazz of this life in the beautiful way that I have, and this project would not have seen the light of day!

ABSTRACT

WHALEY, ANDREW D. "THE ECLISPE OF ELEGANCE: TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY LUTHERAN AESTHETICS OF DISCIPLESHIP." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2018. 214 pp.

It is no secret that, from the time of the Reformation Iconoclast controversy through the period of Pietism, and even into the twentieth century, aesthetics has had a troublesome existence in many, if not most, protestant denominations. This, of course, includes my own denomination, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In such cases, aesthetics has unfortunately been forgotten, ignored, or viewed with such deep suspicion that its place in theology has been outright denied. The result is that the aesthetic aspect of human life has been reduced to mere addendum. This, of course, has had a negative impact on discovering, experiencing, and expressing a holistic fully-embodied and fully-embedded Christian discipleship as it takes place in the midst of everyday life.

The aim of this project is to illustrate how aesthetics are actually essential to what it means to be fully human, and therefore to everyday discipleship. To this end, the research question is as follows: working with and within a contemporary Lutheran framework can we appropriate a non-foundational philosophy of art, such as that put forward by Susanne K. Langer, to point us toward the development of a theology of aesthetics for Christian discipleship that argues for the essential role of aesthetics in shaping lives that are more holistic, creative, and communal in the midst of a world that is increasingly fragmented, utilitarian, and individualistic?

The research question is answered through an *ad hoc correlational* approach to the interdisciplinary dialogue between a contemporary Lutheran theological frame and a non-foundational philosophy of art. By way of engaging music (more specifically jazz) as an artistic form of vital import, this project argues that this interdisciplinary dialogue reveals that aesthetics are indeed essential to everyday discipleship, and therefore, should not be dichotomized and compartmentalized out from the theological attention given to ethics, and doctrine. Thus, aesthetics is not to be treated as mere addendum to the Christian disciples' life but as essential to ongoing spiritual formation.

On this basis, it is recommended that our seminaries, universities, and local congregations, move to engaging more intentionally and creatively aesthetics (and therefore different mediums of art) as a vital part of their ongoing educational and discipleship formation. Further research could be undertaken to identify other artistic mediums (not just music) and the ways in which they are helpful in helping the disciple of Jesus Christ live each day more artistically and creatively.

CHAPTER ONE

AESTHETIC FORMATION AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Introduction

This work will give an account of the essential relationship of aesthetics to the concrete and practical realm of Christian discipleship as it takes place in the midst of everyday life. Unfortunately, aesthetics has had a difficult go of it both philosophically and theologically for quite some time now. Therefore, we should not take it for granted that the essential relationship of aesthetics to Christian discipleship as it takes place in the midst of the everyday is readily assumed or easily recognized for two reasons. The first reason is due to the modern approach to epistemology. The second reason is due to the effect that modern epistemology has had on the practice of Christian theology and discipleship.

For the past three hundred years, modernity has actively been at work dichotomizing, separating, and complicating such key relationships as mind and body, sacred and secular, subject and object, fact and value, individual and community, and content and form. This of course has had serious and lasting consequences on our understanding and practice of theology and the Christian life in regard to ongoing spiritual formation as it takes place in the world. Although this long-entrenched way of perceiving epistemology has been increasingly challenged since World War I, in many ways we continue to live, move, and have our being under its authoritative and persuasive grip.

Modernity's long-lasting and ongoing dichotomizing agenda aimed at specialization, fragmentation, and atomization presents us with a special problem that has not received enough

attention. Namely, modernity's bracketing out of aesthetics from being essential to cognition, abstraction, evaluative judgment, and creative action. In so doing modernity has effectively sidelined aesthetics to the realm of addendum, or appendix, as mere "decoration, entertainment, or self-expression."[1] Thereby relegating it to a matter of individual taste and subjective experience, rather than as integral to our understanding of what it means to be fully-embodied and fully-embedded humans in regard to our approach to everyday life in the sphere of creation. As Jeremy Begbie states,

> The notion of the artist as an essentially solitary figure with little responsibility to his community; the concept of 'art for art's sake'; the widespread belief that there are no universal criteria for assessing the worth or quality of art; the commonplace assumption that the arts, though perhaps entertaining for those who can afford to enjoy them, have little (if anything) to do with the public world of demonstrable fact—all these, I submit, are signs of an attitude which treats the experience of art as somehow profoundly discontinuous with the rest of our experience.[2]

Peter Fuller in his essay *Aesthetics After Modernism*, further states, "in contrast to a healthy society in which no neat boundary divides art from life, in the West the 'aesthetic dimension' has been gradually expunged from everyday concerns, progressively emasculated by technological and economic structures."[3] Fuller, further argues that from the time of the Renaissance onward, "men and women have been compelled to shift uneasily between emotional participation in the world, and the pose that they were outside a system they could observe objectively."[4] This specifically highlights the dichotomy of mind and body, as well as that of subject and object thereby separating the life of feeling from cognition and action, a distinction which will be of

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[1] Jeremy S. Begbie, *Sounding the Depths: Theology Through the Arts* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 1.

[2] Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (London: T&T Clark, 1991), 186.

[3] Peter Fuller, *Aesthetics After Modernism* (New York: Writers and Readers, 1983), 19.

[4] Fuller, *Aesthetics After Modernism*, 19.

special interest in this project.

This has also led in many cases to the practice of theology and the Christian life (discipleship) in which aesthetics (beauty, sense perception, and the life of feeling) are either not seriously taken into account or are actually viewed with deep suspicion.[5] Since the Enlightenment, the modern approach to Christian discipleship has had the tendency to separate and oscillate between two often opposing poles. One pole has focused primarily on the concept of discipleship in terms of what to *think*, emphasizing the intellectual side of discipleship in regard to "what we need to know" in order to be true (doctrine). It works with a pedagogical trajectory that targets the transmission of data, and points toward intellectual and spiritual assent. This operates with a primarily platonic emphasis on the transcendent (contemplative) aspects of discipleship. The other pole has focused primarily on the concept of discipleship in terms of what to *do*, emphasizing attitude and behavior modification through active participation in "what we should do" in order to be good (ethics). It works with a pedagogical trajectory that targets performance and points toward a necessary engagement in acts of service, mission, and evangelism. This pole operates with a primary emphasis on the imminent (active) aspects of discipleship. The neglect of aesthetics especially in regard to the concrete and practical field of Christian discipleship has led to an unnecessary and harmful divide between content and lived form, or style of life, that has left us with a serious deficit in regard to describing what a beautiful life, and a beautiful community look, sound, and feel like in action.[6]

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[5] This has taken place by both default and intention, thus all but ignoring the field of aesthetics more generally which includes the topics of beauty, sense-perception, and the affective life of feeling, as well as in regard to the field of art more specifically, in order to focus on truth (doctrine) and/or goodness (ethics).

[6] From the time of the Reformation Iconoclast Controversy through the Period of Pietism, and even into the twentieth century aesthetics has had a troublesome existence to say the least in many, if not most, of the Protestant Denominations, and I argue here, specifically within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Due to the dangerous dichotomies of modern epistemology and the influence it has had on the practice of theology and the practice of

Thus, modern epistemology along with the practice of modern theology have in various ways either outright denied or simply ignored the intrinsic nature of aesthetics especially in regard to the essential relationship between the content, form and trajectory (purpose) of the life of the Christian disciple in the midst of the everyday. With this in mind, I will argue that the eclipse of elegance cited in the title of this project, that has been caused by the dualism, dichotomies, and compartmentalization of modernity, has further fractured the human being and disrupted a fully-embodied and fully-embedded engagement with the everyday within the sphere of creation and therefore is truly nothing less than the eclipse of the *totus homo* the whole person redeemed, renewed, and transformed daily into the image of Christ.

Recently, Ellen T. Charry in her work, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine,* has argued "The secularization, elevation, and constriction of reason evident since the enlightenment has left us with a modern view of epistemology that focuses solely on "scientia" and has thereby undercut the sapiential, aretegenic, and participatory dimensions of doctrinal interpretation."[7] She insists instead that, "moral transformation comes from knowing God and that virtue is acquired by practice."[8] Charry helps us once again to recognize the mutually reciprocal function of virtue formation in which, "The mind must be reorganized before behavioral change can take place. But once thinking is targeted as the locus of character formation, we will also remember that moral formation engages the whole person,

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Christian life as it is lived daily, disciples of Jesus Christ have had a difficult time of (if not flat out indoctrinated into them against) appreciating art that deals with everyday life (rather than merely or overtly "Christian" or "religious" artwork) nor have they had an easy time of understanding the importance of how art specifically and aesthetics more generally form us in our daily lives; especially if it isn't obviously 'religious' or 'spiritual'.

[7] Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 237.

[8] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 4.

not just the mind, so the emotions and behavior must not be left out of account."[9] As we shall see later, Charry has not only opened space for further conversation on the intimate relationship between the true (doctrine) and the good (ethics), more so, her argument helps to make room for the much needed conversation that reconnects beauty (aesthetics), to the true and the good in Christian discipleship.

A key issue at work in this project, then, is to consider the dichotomization and compartmentalization of the aesthetic, ethicopolitical, and religious into separate fragmented and autonomous spheres of life. Therefore, I intend to address this deficit and bridge the gap between content and lived form, especially from the vantage of the three estates, by arguing that aesthetics is intrinsically related to the Christian disciple's style of life, namely how she perceives, conceptualizes, feels, makes evaluative judgments, and acts in the sphere of creation every day. In so doing, I intend to make a useful contribution by pointing towards the development of a uniquely Lutheran perspective on an aesthetics of discipleship as this essential aspect of the Christian disciple's formation is both passively received as well as actively lived out in daily life in the sphere of God's creation, and in the midst of the surrounding culture.

For quite some time now, the historic Lutheran engagement with aesthetics has been limited primarily to the realm of the liturgical arts, most specifically the context of the corporate worship setting, and with special interest in worship music. Furthermore, the primary engagement with aesthetics from the Lutheran perspective has been from a predominantly objective perspective with a specific focus on doctrine (truth), which has not paid enough attention to the subjective aspect of the life of the Christian disciple and community. This of

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[9] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 20.

course makes it challenging effectively or persuasively to describe, let alone live out, a beautiful life in the midst of a beautiful community. Although the areas of liturgical arts, the Sunday morning worship setting, and worship music remain vitally important and necessary contributions to this discussion, currently in the Lutheran academic realm there has not been enough direct intentional work done on the essential relationship between aesthetics and the concrete and practical field of discipleship, especially in regard to re-connecting beauty (sense perception and the life of feeling) to the true and the good in the midst of everyday life as it takes place in the surrounding culture outside of the Sunday worship context. Therefore, to use the terms aesthetics and discipleship in the same breath specifically in regard to everyday living is still a relatively rare occurrence in the Lutheran academic world, as well as in the practical realm of congregational discipleship.[10] This project seeks to fill this void as it exists specifically within the Lutheran realm by bridging the gap that currently exists. In so doing, I propose to answer the contemporary call extended by Gordon Lynch in his work, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, where he states, "But my hope is that even the incomplete account that I have given here may provide some encouragement for others to take up this challenge of thinking of how theological aesthetics might inform a more conscious and critical reflection on the environments, resources, and practices of everyday life."[11] I intend to take up this challenge by engaging several key scholars and advancing their research in this new direction.

Therefore, this project aims to engage the question: how is the study of aesthetics

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[10] I will argue in this project that there are (2) dangerous tendencies within the Lutheran tradition that have come down to us since the period of Pietism in regard to aesthetics: (1) the tendency to isolate the Second Article of the Creed out from the other two articles (eclipsing the First and Third Articles as addendum); (2) A heightened primary focus on the vertical realm and relationship with God (eclipsing the sphere of Creation and the horizontal realm as addendum in the daily life of the disciple).

[11] Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 193.

intrinsically related to the human creative process of conception, cognition, abstraction, evaluative judgment, and action in the life of the Christian disciple? Namely, how does aesthetics shape us, and therefore serve as an integral part of forming disciples of Jesus Christ in the midst of the everyday? The more narrowed focus of this project engages the question: does a Lutheran theological perspective on aesthetics actually affirm and argue for such an intrinsic and forming role in discipleship? In turn, this question has led to the following: within a creedal framework that engages the reality that the disciple of Jesus Christ lives in two realms simultaneously, what might a non-foundational Lutheran approach to aesthetics look like in the life of the disciple that takes place in the midst of the surrounding everyday culture? In particular, this study will consider: how we as Lutherans can utilize the postliberal critique of modern epistemology to make space for a renewed focus on the intrinsic role of aesthetics in Christian discipleship. In so doing this project will then seek to answer the question: working with and within key Lutheran frameworks can we appropriate Susanne K. Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art to point us toward the development of a theology of aesthetics for Christian discipleship that argues for the essential role of aesthetics in shaping lives that are more holistic, creative, and communal in the midst of a world that is increasingly fragmented, utilitarian, and individualistic? Therefore, I will explore whether the Lutheran non-foundational creedal framework and two realms theology can help restore these compartmentalized and autonomous spheres of life (beauty/aesthetics, goodness/ethics, and truth/doctrine) into a more holistic relationship in the life of the Christian disciple. The goal is a Lutheran theological perspective on aesthetics that restores elegance in respect to the *totus homo* through the practice of Lutheran theology and daily discipleship that reconnects beauty to goodness and truth in offering a unique description of what constitutes a beautiful life and beautiful community.

I believe that the many problems with the received modern epistemological perspective, as well as the recent rise and popularity in the areas of aesthetics and discipleship as they are set in the midst of everyday life as it takes place in the surrounding culture (especially outside The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod [LCMS]), suggests that it would be prudent and beneficial to present a Lutheran perspective on aesthetics in relationship to discipleship as it takes place in the midst of the everyday. My thesis then is this: the postliberal critique of modern epistemology opens space for a Lutheran appropriation of Susanne K. Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art that points us in a creative and constructive trajectory toward a renewed focus on the intrinsic nature of aesthetics in Christian discipleship as it takes place every day in the midst of the surrounding culture. Therefore, this project will aim to give a Lutheran account of the essential role of aesthetics in the ongoing spiritual formation of, including the evaluative judgment, creative decision-making, and poetic action that takes place in, the Christian life (discipleship) as it is set within a full-circle creedal frame that embraces the reality of living in the two realms simultaneously as it is lived out in the created sphere.

This sort of project falls under the description of the interdisciplinary study of theology and aesthetics, called theological aesthetics. This field of study is broad and includes not only a theology of beauty, but also the dialogue between theology and the arts, including dance, drama, film, literature, music, poetry, and the visual arts. As Richard Viladesau notes, theological aesthetics moves in two directions, comprising:

> both an 'aesthetic theology' that interprets the objects of theology—God, faith, and theology itself—through the methods of aesthetic studies, and a more narrowly defined 'theological aesthetics' that interprets the objects of aesthetics—sensation, the beautiful, and art—from the properly theological starting point of religious conversion and in the light of theological methods.[12]

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[12] Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (New York: Oxford

Thus, Frank Burch Brown correctly argues that, "the aesthetic pertains to all areas of theology, dogmatics, scripture, church history, pastoral theology, and ethics."[13] Therefore, the move to re-connect beauty (aesthetics) to the true (doctrine) and the good (ethics) in the life of the Christian disciple is correct, necessary, and should be carried out. I argue, then, that without a serious reflection on aesthetics in relationship to the true and the good, we ignore a significant and important aspect of formation and lose sight of the trajectory of the Christian life as it is lived in the midst of the everyday surrounding culture. When this is the case, we are unable elegantly to describe what a beautiful life or beautiful community looks like, sounds like, feels like, or acts like. Without a proper reflection on aesthetics, the church will continue to oscillate between two opposing poles: the objective pole of discipleship that focuses almost exclusively on truth, the intellect and doctrinal propositions; or the subjective pole of discipleship that focuses almost exclusively on experience, behavior, and expression. Here, all too often discipleship is reduced or limited, rather than attending to a more holistic engagement aiming at the fully-embodied and fully-embedded reality of the Christian disciple's life as it takes place simultaneously in two realms within the sphere of Creation.

Working from the perspective of theological aesthetics according to the definition provided by Viladesau above, and by engaging a postliberal non-foundational approach to this interdisciplinary field, I will argue that theology is to be normative in our understanding of the intrinsic nature of aesthetics in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. This perspective is further described by Viladesau as:

> a theological account of human knowledge on the level of feeling and imagination … This "epistemological" form of theological aesthetics explores the relations of

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University Press, 1999), 23–24.

[13] Gesa ElsbethTheissen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 6.

> symbolic and theoretical consciousness, of hermeneutics to metaphysics, of religious experience to secular reason, of feeling to logical discourse, of beauty to truth.[14]

This description of theological aesthetics not only opens the door but shines light particularly on the flattening dichotomies that have been passed down to us from modernity. In so doing, it calls for these dichotomies to be addressed through a theological framework that can properly appropriate insights from the field of aesthetics. Therefore, the specific concern of this project is aimed at discovering what a uniquely Lutheran theological framework can bring to the task of understanding the essential nature of aesthetics in the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. In so doing, I will argue that aesthetics definitely has a place within the conversation of discipleship, namely the form and trajectory of the life of the disciple as it takes place in the midst of the everyday and surrounding culture. This argument will be treated within key Lutheran theological frameworks, with a specific focus on a full-circle creedal frame and two realms theology aimed at the specific emphasis on the formation and lived life of the disciple in the created sphere.

As for methodology, the aesthetics of discipleship presented in this project will proceed in two key ways. First, in regard to defining the parameters and hermeneutical flow involved in the relationship between theology and a non-foundational philosophy of art (i.e. the field of aesthetics); as well as in defining the parameters and hermeneutic flow in regard to the relationship between the life of the disciple as she is embedded in the surrounding culture every day, this project will be tempered by and held accountable to the *ad hoc correlational* approach described by Hans Frei in his work *Types of Christian Theology*. The primary reason for engaging this type of methodology is that it provides the opportunity in this project to practice a

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[14] Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 23–24.

postliberal non-foundational approach to systematic theology that calls for and directs the engagement of interdisciplinary dialogue with an external field of philosophical research, in this case, aesthetics. Frei lists the *ad hoc correlational* approach as the fourth of five types of Christian theology, and describes it as

> a nonsystematic combination of normed Christian self-description and method founded on general theory [that] … does not propose a correlation between heterogeneous equals, but maintains the practical discipline of Christian self-description as governing and limiting the applicability of general criteria of meaning in theology, rather than vice versa.[15]

As a result, "Christian doctrinal statements are understood to have a status similar to that of grammatical rules implicit in discourse."[16] In so doing, the *ad hoc correlational* approach is able to keep the relationship between theology and other outside fields of research open in order to "constantly restate doctrinal statements in the light of cultural and conceptual change."[17] This approach will prove to be especially beneficial in connecting the historical tradition and practice of Lutheran theology to contemporary questions of aesthetics within the life of the Christian disciple today.

Here, when theology enters into a dialogue with another field, such as aesthetics, it "appropriates and transforms their insights as they are placed in the unique cultural-linguistic matrix of the Christian community."[18] Thus, "the concepts and insights of other fields," such as a non-foundational philosophy of art "is placed in the service of the distinctive task of theology:

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[15] Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 3.

[16] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 3–4.

[17] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 3–4.

[18] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 38–39.

Christian self-description and evaluation."[19] Another key reason for following the *ad hoc correlational* approach is that it is distinct from the *revised correlational approach* utilized in recent research done in the interdisciplinary field of theological aesthetics by such scholars as Gordon Lynch and William Dyrness. In the *revised correlational approach*, meaning is located primarily in the anthropological or experiential reference. My *ad hoc* emphasis will be key in articulating the aesthetics of discipleship presented in this project which maintains theology as the primary partner in the conversation with aesthetics. It will be shown that this dynamic conversation rightly and helpfully describes the life of the Christian disciple, and therefore works to bridge the subjective/objective gap at work in modern epistemology. Even as the *ad hoc correlational* approach maintains theology as the primary dialogue partner it not only allows for, but more so calls for the necessary and positive engagement with outside fields of philosophical research. As Frei states, "one not only can but must make use of technical philosophical schemes of a metaphysical sort in the process of using Christian language in its descriptive or assertive mode."[20] Therefore, this project's commitment to following the *ad hoc correlational* approach necessarily calls for an engagement with the field of aesthetics in order to develop a meaningful description of the beautiful life and the beautiful community. Through this approach, "we are able to draw on theories from different fields," such as aesthetics, "but we do not allow such theories to provide theology with a systematic set of procedures or ordering concepts."[21] As Frei further asserts, "These must be developed theologically."[22] And yet, how it is done "is a matter of

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[19] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 38–39.

[20] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 41.

[21] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 41.

[22] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 41.

seeing the application in a given context."[23] Therefore, another key reason for following this approach is that, in the case of this project, a non-foundational philosophy of art "is not excluded from theology but firmly subordinate to theology as normed Christian self-description or critical self-examination by the Church of her language concerning God, in God's presence"[24] as it takes place in the midst of everyday life within the contemporary, surrounding culture.

This approach to studying aesthetics from a theological perspective requires us to have a clear understanding of the nature of theology with which we are working. Following the postliberal approach to theology we find that theology as so described is normative, contextual, and dynamic. Theology therefore involves a process of exploring how contemporary questions about aesthetics including meaning, values, and practices can be related to our understanding of what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Based on this description of theology we can then propose that the field of aesthetics is a particular context in which theological questions in regard to everyday discipleship are to be explored. A postliberal theological study of aesthetics thus means thinking critically about issues of meaning, value, and practice in contemporary aesthetics from the perspective of particular theological beliefs, values, and concepts. This kind of study can thus be thought of in terms of a dialogue or conversation between the historic Lutheran tradition and contemporary aesthetics in regard to the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

Second, in regard to the practical flow and trajectory of this project and its progression, I will be doing an *ad hoc correlational* appropriation of the methodology presented by Richard

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[23] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 41.

[24] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 42.

Osmer in his work, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*.[25] A key reason for appropriating Osmer's methodology is that it describes several key tasks that provide an effective overarching framework within which to connect scholarly research in the field of systematic theology as well as the field of philosophical aesthetics to the practical and concrete realm of the Christian community (local congregation) and the everyday life of the Christian disciple in a specifically postliberal non-foundational manner.[26] Osmer's methodology proposes a model of practical theology with four unique tasks. The first task is the *descriptive-empirical task* of *priestly listening.*[27] This is a task that is specifically necessary and useful in field research. In light of the present project, however, which focuses on research of scholarly bibliographic materials and not field research that consists of private interviews, focus groups, and observation of live field settings, I will not be attending to this task. Although Osmer is interested in the use of field research, his method certainly can be accommodated to bibliographic research as well. I believe this is especially the case in regard to my present project and Osmer's three remaining tasks. The second task that Osmer describes is the *interpretive task* which asks, 'Why is it going on?' Here Osmer exhorts the interpretive guide to "draw on theories from the arts and sciences to help him understand the issues and respond to particular episodes, situations, and contexts."[28] Thus, a key reason for appropriating Osmer's methodology in this project is that it calls for the necessary engagement with the field of philosophical aesthetics in light of its past and recent history in order to provide wise direction for the creative and constructive task that lies ahead. Osmer refers

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[25] Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

[26] I should point out up front, however, that I am appropriating Osmer's methodology specifically for academic purposes rather than field research. Therefore, I will be working with scholarly texts from different fields, rather than engaging focus groups or attending to personal interviews.

[27] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 5.

[28] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 83.

to this as the task of *sagely wisdom*. The third task is the *normative task* which asks, 'What ought to be going on?' This task, then, seeks to answer the further question, "What are we to do and be as members of the Christian community in response to the events of our shared life and world?"[29] This task attends to discerning God's will for present realities. Osmer refers to this task as *prophetic discernment*. Osmer asserts that this task is threefold:

> First, it involves a style of theological reflection in which theological concepts are used to interpret particular episodes, situations, and contexts. Second, it involves the task of finding ethical principles, guidelines, and rules that are relevant to the situation and can guide strategies of action. Third, it involves exploring past and present practices of the Christian tradition that provide normative guidance in shaping the patterns of the Christian life.[30]

Osmer describes the prophetic office as "the discernment of God's Word to the covenant people in a particular time and place."[31] The import of such a methodology is that "while theological interpretation is informed by biblical and systematic theology, it focuses on the interpretation of *present* episodes, situations, and contexts with theological concepts."[32] Osmer argues that this implies "movement through time, the journey of God's people into new circumstances and God's faithfulness in the midst of change."[33] Osmer's methodology proves useful as it calls us to draw on theological concepts, specifically in the case of this project, the Lutheran full-circle creedal framework, the Two Realms, Two/Three Kinds of Righteousness, and the Law/Gospel Dynamic, in order to interpret, reflect on, and constructively and creatively present good practice in regard to the contemporary moment in aesthetics and its intrinsic nature in the life of the Christian

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[29] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 8.

[30] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 8.

[31] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 133.

[32] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 139.

[33] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 8.

disciple. In so doing, this task also allows for the prophetic opportunity of further illustrating the intrinsic relationship between aesthetics and theology in the everyday life of the Christian disciple by bringing a contemporary aesthetic cultural artifact and the practice of Lutheran theology into constructive and creative mutual dialogue. The fourth task is the *pragmatic or strategic task* which asks, "How might we respond in ways that are faithful and effective?"[34] Here, Osmer states that the pragmatic task "focuses on strategies and actions that are undertaken to shape events toward desired goals."[35] This engages the task of *servant leadership* that "takes risks on behalf of the congregation to help it better embody its mission as a sign and witness of God's self-giving love."[36] Therefore, a final key reason for appropriating Osmer's methodology is that it effectively moves this project in a constructive and creative trajectory that contributes to the Historic Lutheran Tradition in regard to the intrinsic relationship between contemporary aesthetics and theology in relation to the unfolding forms of spiritual formation in the everyday life of the Christian disciple. By re-connecting the field of contemporary aesthetics and Lutheran theology to the concrete and practical realm of the local Christian community and the everyday life of the Christian disciple in the midst of the surrounding culture we find a renewed connection to the ongoing and creative act of culture-making through the unique lens of the Lutheran perspective on vocation and providence.

Gordon Lynch has astutely hit the nail on the head concerning the unique dilemma that needs to be addressed when he states, "despite the emphasis our culture places on the importance of fulfillment through everyday life, we appear to have little by way of critical resources to help

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[34] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 10.

[35] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 10.

[36] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 29.

us think about what is genuinely positive or what is genuinely harmful in our day-to-day lives."[37] In order to address this dilemma, I will first provide a recent account of the essential nature of aesthetics and theology in the midst of the everyday. Therefore, Chapter 1 will conclude by detailing William Dyrness's *Poetic Theology*, which illustrates recent scholarship that has been done on the significance of the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology at work in the everyday life of the human person. This will serve as a particular point of departure for situating my work in the realm of *everyday theology* in order to present a Lutheran ecclesiological approach to the aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of the everyday.[38]

In Chapter 2, I will attend to further situating my project in the field of postliberal theology by providing an overview of the postliberal movement and a description of its theological method. I will consider the work of George Lindbeck and Hans Frei in regard to their non-foundational approach to theology that provides an important critique of modern epistemology through which I will specifically emphasize modernity's bracketing out of aesthetics from being essential to daily life and the impact this has had on the practice of Christian theology and discipleship. In so doing, I will highlight the prevailing presuppositions of modernity that continue to guide our normal sense of the obviousness of things, namely, that we still function unconsciously with such dichotomies as mind/body and subject/object at work in our assumptions of the everyday. As well as, present a thoughtful critique that undermines and deconstructs these false operating presuppositions. Here, I will also argue that the postliberal

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[37] Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 193.

[38] Here, I intend to show how my use of Lutheran frameworks to appropriate Langer's work allows me to situate the aesthetic in everyday theology differently than other writers have done, including Dyrness.

non-foundational approach opens space for a renewed focus on the intrinsic nature of aesthetics to Christian discipleship in everyday life via a ministerial use of first article gifts.

In Chapter 3, I will attend to appropriating the interpretive task of *sagely wisdom* as described by Osmer, by engaging the work of Susanne K. Langer in the field of philosophical aesthetics. Langer provides a non-foundational philosophy of art that offers a bridge to the long-standing gap between the mind/body, subject/object, art/knowledge dichotomies via her connection of sense perception and the life of feeling to mental conception, cognition, and creative action. Thus, she provides us with an effective argument for the intrinsic nature of aesthetics in human thinking, feeling, and action.

In Chapter 4, I will attend to appropriating the first two approaches of the *normative task* of *prophetic discernment* described by Osmer as theological interpretation, and ethical reflection by engaging a variety of contemporary Lutheran thinkers in order to develop a guiding theological framework for appropriating Langer's work. Here, I will specifically focus on and engage the Lutheran full-circle creedal framework that embraces the reality of life lived in the two realms simultaneously. This Lutheran framework will guide my use of Langer to exploit the space opened up by postliberal theology and so further the goal of reconnecting aesthetics and discipleship. In so doing I argue that a Lutheran appropriation of Langer's philosophy of art via a creedal framework and two realms theology provides us with a creative and constructive way forward for developing a contemporary Lutheran aesthetics of discipleship.

In Chapter 5, I will then attend to appropriating the third approach to *normative task* of *prophetic discernment* as described by Osmer, which he calls good practice. Thus, I will explore and illustrate a constructive and creative model of *good practice* in regard to the task of *prophetic discernment* by giving an account of a contemporary Lutheran appropriation of

Langer's work via theological framework in order to highlight the way that contemporary Lutheran theology is able to appropriate philosophical writings regarding art and aesthetics for practical use and to show the essential relationship that necessarily obtains between aesthetics and discipleship in the midst of the everyday. Here, my work will take up the creative and constructive challenge of developing an aesthetics of discipleship that forms, empowers, and guides our conscious and critical reflections on the environments, resources, relationships, and practices of everyday life that will lead us further into a more fully-embodied and fully-embedded discipleship.

In Chapter 6, I will then attend to appropriating the *pragmatic task* of *servant leadership* as described by Osmer by outlining some preliminary implications of this Lutheran aesthetics of discipleship in order to present the form and trajectory of an aesthetics of discipleship at work in the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of the surrounding culture. It is here that the constructive and creative task moving forward in regard to developing a Lutheran Aesthetics of discipleship is presented. The goal is to present a way forward, as Jeremy Begbie puts it, "for the journey of active discipleship in one's whole living," rather than merely "an isolated act of belief separated out from who one is and how one lives."[39]

This dissertation concludes with a summary of the main points of the project as a whole, as well as with some prospects for future theological reflection and development in regard to a Lutheran aesthetics of discipleship in the midst of the everyday. Altogether, this project will serve the development of a Lutheran theory of aesthetics in the concrete and practical realm of Christian discipleship as it argues for the necessity of a renewed focus on the intrinsic role of

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[39] Begbie, *Sounding the Depths*, 146.

aesthetics in regard to the ongoing spiritual formation of the *totus homo*, the whole person. In so doing, my work will suggest a uniquely Lutheran account of an aesthetics of discipleship. When questions of aesthetics and discipleship are explored together in this dissertation, they will reflect a particular discourse (the biblical master narrative) as it is reflected upon within a particular tradition and community (the Lutheran confessions). Therefore, this project as a whole will address the current deficit and present a unique bridge that spans the long-standing gap between the beautiful (aesthetics) the good (ethics) and the true (doctrine) in Christian discipleship.

To begin, the first step in providing such an account of the aesthetics of discipleship will engage the recent work of William Dyrness in which he seeks to re-connect aesthetics to theology in the midst of everyday life. Thus, Dyrness will serve as a point of departure for situating my work in the conversation of *everyday theology*, as well as a dialogue partner in order to present a uniquely Lutheran ecclesiological approach to the aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of the everyday.

William Dyrness's Approach to *Poetic Theology*

Long-neglected, the topic of the essential nature of the relationship between aesthetics and theology as it takes place in the midst of everyday life recently has drawn renewed attention. William Dyrness, in his work *Poetic Theology: God and the Poetics of Everyday Life,* takes up the challenging but necessary task of describing and illustrating this topic in a fresh light. In so doing, Dyrness states that his goal is "to connect a rigorous aesthetics with a strong theological framework,"[40] in order to "explore the way a broader understanding of aesthetics extends to all

[40] William A. Dyrness, *Poetic Theology: God and the Poetics of Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 124.

areas of our embodied and encultured life together."[41] This is indeed a worthy goal, and one that will be further pursued in a distinct way in my own project. Therefore, I am engaging Dyrness as a useful conversation partner with which to compare and contrast my own project.

To begin, the overarching task to which Dyrness sets to work is that of situating the role of beauty or as he terms it the desire for a beautiful life in the midst of the created order. He does this in order to call attention to and acknowledge our human 1st article created nature and thus as a way to ground the essential relationship between theology and aesthetics in everyday life. More specifically, his goal is to reveal the desire for a beautiful life as an aesthetic connection to the created order. His key question then is: To what is your love directed? And his aim is to show that the ordering of desire and the will through love properly directed inclines human persons to the good (transcendent), which ultimately leads to the love of God. To do so, Dyrness sets out on his journey by presenting and utilizing a broadened definition of poetics that includes "creative activities of many kinds," thus allowing us "to consider a wider range of activities that humans pursue as they seek to fashion lives, objects, and spaces that they feel good about."[42] With this definition in hand, Dyrness states that the starting point of his book is "the recognition that contemporary post-Romantic people are already engaged in practices that spark affection and move them toward a vision of the good life." What Dyrness means by this is, that although contemporary post-Romantic people may not see these activities as "referencing any transcendent realm," and even though they usually do not think of them "as religious," they are nevertheless "practices that offer meaning and delight, and around which they order their lives."[43]

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[41] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 124.

[42] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 11.

[43] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 211.

Furthermore, Dyrness claims that "these activities and these dimensions are more central to human identity and, whether believer or unbeliever, to one's religious life than the functional activities which fill up most of life."[44] Therefore, the argument he develops is that "the significance they derive from these activities has not only a human meaning but a possible theological reference as well." Namely, that "the drive that moves them to pursue the goods associated with their passions is a movement of the soul that, if nurtured more deeply and oriented rightly, would lead them to God."[45] Therefore, he further wants to "adequately connect this with a sufficient account of the presence and activity of God in creation, and therefore in culture." In so doing, his hope is to "restore the importance of the affections and devotion … as well as to show that there is indeed a proper direction that devotion is theologically led."[46] This, leads Dyrness to his thesis: "The affective response to the goods of creation, and to the symbolic practices humans make of these, finally has a personal reference."[47] Dyrness argues that this is significant because, "People are defined, as Augustine notes, not by what they know or achieve but by what they love. And in responding with affection, they are responding to the love that lies at the basis of the gift and giver of creation."[48]

Thus, Dyrness sets out to illustrate ways in which "aesthetic experience is fundamental to human life in the world and the substantive role that symbolism can play in human flourishing."[49] He seeks to do this by way of a retrieval and synthesis of Aristotle (philosophy of poetics) and

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[44] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 38–39.

[45] Dyrenss, *Poetic Theology*, 5.

[46] Dyrenss, *Poetic Theology*, 124.

[47] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 25.

[48] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 25.

[49] Dyrenss, *Poetic Theology*, 124.

Augustine (theology of desire and love). And he carries out his argument via a two-fold methodology. In regard to the first aspect of his methodology, Dyrness follows the *revised correlational theory* in regard to the relationship between culture and theology as developed by David Tracy and Don Browning. In this theory, culture and theology are seen as "equal partners in the conversation."[50] In regard to the second aspect of his methodology, Dyrness enlists his own Reformed tradition in regard to the recent emphasis on the doctrine of the Trinity in systematic theology as well as Calvin's doctrine of Creation in which the world is viewed as the theatre of God's glory.[51] Dyrness states that his overarching goal of engaging this two-fold methodology is "to embed the interpretive process within the larger context of everyday life."[52] Wherein, Scripture and tradition are "constantly reread in the light of the human drive to create a beautiful life."[53] Through this methodology, Dyrness desires to present "a positive contribution of Reformed reflection, which he suggests "might be called a humble aesthetic of our common life in a good creation."[54]

Thus, Dyrness seeks to present us with a unique way of thinking about aesthetics that, "takes its start from everyday life," in which the goal then is to construct an "aesthetics of the whole of life" thus proposing "a way of thinking about art-making by locating it within the larger

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[50] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 80.

[51] Here, his methodology focuses in on the recent contribution of Protestants to this discussion, which he states, "have come in two related ways. On the one side are those who continue more directly the Reformed creational focus of John Calvin, and on the other side are those who seek to understand art and aesthetics in terms of the newer appreciation of the Trinity. These are discussed together because they both work from the Reformation emphasis on the separation of God and creation, however modified by the Incarnation and the presence of the Spirit. And both, therefore, see art in its materiality as fundamentally metaphoric and illuminating of, rather than transparent to, the divine presence. Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 139.

[52] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 81.

[53] Dyrness, Poetic Theology, 292.

[54] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 144.

world of purposeful human action that engages aesthetic contemplation."[55] Therefore, he sets out to show that "aesthetic desires and the habits and objects that embody these are fundamental to our human identity."[56] He does this by arguing for four fundamental aspects by which all of human experience as it is takes place in the created order of the world is situated for both believers and non-believers, the religious and the non-religious. The first is the fundamental aspect that all human beings are embodied creatures and this embodied life takes place in the created order. As Dyrness states, "poetic theology cannot proceed without a body, because poetry, like life, relies on sense as well as thought – indeed, it calls for thought out of and through the senses. So, there is no other way to God than through and by means of the body and the senses."[57] My own project will extend this connection in a distinct direction via an engagement with Susanne K. Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art. The second fundamental aspect, is that all humans are deeply embedded in the surrounding culture in which they find themselves. This too is a line of mutual agreement that will be extended in my own project via interaction with postliberal theology in the following chapter. Dyrness further defines culture as "what we humans make of God's good creation," and as such, he argues, "culture is inherently moral and even theological."[58] This is an important argument that works toward re-connecting aesthetics to ethics and truth in the midst of everyday life, which is a key task of my own project. This is the foundation for Dyrness's argument that "Poetic theology insists that we start with the cultural artifacts, especially those symbolic practices and experiences around which

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[55] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 145.

[56] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 8.

[57] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 299.

[58] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 38.

contemporary persons orient their lives."[59] Dyrness takes this a step further and argues that,

> the fundamental way in which we humans respond to our cultural situation—and ultimately to God, who comes to us clothed in this situation—is by our doing and making—in other words, by our praxis and our poesis (Greek for "doing" and "making"). Humans make themselves and forge their identity through their doing and their making … But I want to argue that, spiritually, the category of "making" (poesis) is more important than "doing" (praxis). We define ourselves not by the ordinary processes of living but by the larger symbolic activities by which we "make something" of ourselves. I want to call this larger sphere of imaginative and affective making our "poetics."[60]

So, for Dyrness the theological connection and significance of human culture lies in its being "the arena in which God's work, especially as this is presented in Christ and through the Spirit, is recognized and embodied. God's participation in creation and creation's embrace by the Trinitarian presence of God—these together constitute theological grounds for the potential inherent in the symbolizing inclination of the poetic imagination."[61]

The third fundamental aspect is that all human beings are symbolic creatures by nature. Here, Dyrness argues that we all seek meaning and purpose in our lives through our doing and making, and that our doing and making points toward a beautiful life. This symbolic nature is key to the connection between aesthetics and theology as this takes place in the midst of everyday life, because it is through the symbolic nature that humans respond to our surrounding culture that is grounded in the created order. Thus, symbolism, in the sense that Dyrness is using the term,

> involves discovering meaning in what is given in creation, which is the theological condition for this process, ascribing significance to objects and actions, and being

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[59] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 292.

[60] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 38.

[61] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 24.

> moved to pursue these as ends in themselves. And it is the motivation to pursue—the affective attraction—that constitutes the aesthetic element.[62]

This understanding of symbolism is central to his argument, as Dyrness believes that "symbolic practices—involving both objects and ritual practices—provide structure and meaning for people; they are instruments of orientation … they are the way we "make something" of our lives. And they do this by capturing the vitality of our connections to the earth and other people (and potentially with God)." His point is "that they not only reference these relations but also give them life, and they vivify them in such a way that people are moved by them."[63] Therefore, Dyrness argues that it is in these symbolic practices that, "we have an everyday aesthetic of attraction at work."[64] Thus, built into the human character is "the impulse to move beyond praxis to poesis."[65] Dyrness thus argues that, "We inevitably shape objects of our world symbolically because we cannot live with a purely instrumentalist view of objects in the world—this is part of being created in God's image."[66] My own project will extend this argument in a unique direction that more specifically focuses on the essential connection between the non-discursive and the discursive aspects of our humanity via the creative work of symbolic transformation that is constantly ongoing within all humans.

Finally, Dyrness argues that all humans are devotional beings in that our making (poesis) "inclines toward the love that we have for the things, practices, and rituals in our lives through which we make meaning." Dyrness specifically defines this as a drive toward "a beautiful life."

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[62] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 54.

[63] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 54.

[64] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 54.

[65] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 56.

[66] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 57.

Namely, that it is in such a cultured world that "the person is called on not to think about things but to respond, to do things and make new things. Of course, one must not respond unthinkingly, but one's response to culture usually takes the form of habitual practices which embody his or her beliefs. He/she is called to construct a life that embodies Christian (or secular) assumptions."[67] And therefore, inevitably, this response has "a moral, aesthetic, and even religious dimension. That is, in the end, I will surely respond in ways that issue in praise or honor of whatever gods (or God) I serve."[68] Therefore, Dyrness argues that devotion is a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human in that "Praise and adoration of God, and in appropriate ways, of people [and we might add, of our projects] is the essence of every person's vocation, and constitutive of right relationships."[69] Therefore, Dyrness argues that all people "respond to the world symbolically and devotionally whether they recognize it or not."[70] And, following Augustine, that "the central motivating force of the process is not the intellect, but love, centered in the will."[71] "Behind this," Dyrness further argues, "lies Augustine's notion that the self is defined not by what it knows but by what it sees and loves." Therefore, he argues that "Although ignorant of its source, and confessedly non-creedal, postmodern people are radically committed to this Augustinian creed. They are living examples of the medieval adage: You become what You behold … the modern person's life is defined, often unconsciously, by what they contemplate—the vision of what they indwell in affirmation and affection."[72]

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[67] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 76.

[68] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 77.

[69] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 78.

[70] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 240.

[71] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 42.

[72] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 201.

Thus, Dyrness concludes, "aesthetic experience, broadly conceived, and the rituals and created objects that express this, are fundamental to the shaping and expressing of their human identity. That is to say, they are not optional extras, but fundamental to the growth and flourishing of persons."[73] I wholeheartedly agree with Dyrness and will extend this further in my own project. Therefore, "it follows" Dyrness argues, "that if we are to have any real knowledge of (these people) … we must take their projects seriously, not simply as expressive of their commitments but as signs of openness to whatever meaning may lie beyond this."[74] Namely, that contemporary people "have found meaning in a wide variety of affective and aesthetic practices. For them, these activities have taken on a religious character." Thus, "the language of the symbol is the language that we must learn to frame the Gospel for these friends."[75]

Thus, Dryness proposes that a poetic theology will begin with "a religious reading of … deep-seated cultural longings. For these longings, insofar as they reflect the goodness of the created order and God's loving presence there, constitute a partial vision of God—indeed, for many people they are the only grounds for hope they know."[76] The apologetic purpose and missiological trajectory here proposes that "any conversation about God should start with subjective desires."[77] Accordingly, Dyrness asserts, "pursuing conversations about God today might not in the first instance be about the truth of Christianity, but about the presence and work of God in the contemporary situation and, especially, in the passions that move people to act, build, and create. It would proceed on the assumption that God is already deeply involved in

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[73] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 6.

[74] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 131.

[75] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 238.

[76] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 286.

[77] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 285.

their lives, and is already in conversation with them."[78] In the end Dyrness states that

> an important subtext of this book is that since the Romantic movement, religious motives and influences have been culturally mediated and subjectively appropriated. Most people today, even religious believers, live their lives within a radically immanent frame. Since most educated people intuitively reject any transcendent reality, perhaps we should take this as our starting point. Rather than seeking to overturn these assumptions, I want to argue that, initially at least, we work with them. I propose that we begin not with a conversation that they cannot comprehend, but with the conversation that God has already begun with them in the way they seek a beautiful life.[79]

However, this initial religious reading which treats the aesthetic and symbolic projects of people in their everyday lives as "spiritual sites where the affections, the goods of the world, and religious longings meet and interact,"[80] takes a step further in a theological sense. Here Dyrness argues that, "symbolic practices of this kind can also be "theological" in the broad sense of the word. That is, they are places where, because of God's continuing presence in creation and God's redemptive work in Christ and by the Spirit, God is also active, nurturing, calling, and drawing persons—and indeed, all creation—toward the perfection God intends for them."[81] Therefore, Dyrness argues, "the theological grounds of creation and Trinity provide the content of all meaningful symbolism."[82]

Dyrness has sought to present us with a Reformed aesthetic in which "aesthetic values are dispersed rather than concentrated; and therefore related, broadly, to all of life and creation, not only to a separate sphere that might be called "aesthetic."[83] In so doing, he has argued for "an

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[78] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 5–6.

[79] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 289.

[80] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 6.

[81] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 6.

[82] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 60.

[83] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 257.

everyday-life aesthetic"[84] that he calls poetic theology that provides us with a more recent positive example of the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology that takes place in the midst of everyday life. He has done much to open the door to different directions of re-connecting aesthetics to ethics and doctrine. And, as he says in his conclusion he has simply offered "a preliminary drawing—notes for a poem"[85] on which others might build.

Therefore, Dyrness serves not only as an example of recent work done in the field, but more so as a useful conversation partner in regard to my own project as he utilizes recent Trinitarian theology as well as a specific focus on the doctrine of Creation in his argument. I too will be engaging Trinitarian theology and the doctrine of Creation in my own project in a distinct manner. However, by engaging Dyrness as a conversation partner, I am also able to point out key differences in his approach and argument that serve to set my own project apart as unique and distinct from his. First, is the obvious distinction that Dyrness is working from the perspective of a different theological tradition, namely, the Reformed background that utilizes the systematic theology of John Calvin in regard to such concepts as the Trinitarian theology, the doctrine of Creation, the Image of God, the common and special call, and the doctrine of vocation. Of course, there will be important nuanced distinctions in regard to all of these concepts from the perspective of the historic Lutheran tradition which I will follow in my own project. Second, Dyrness is working from a different point of departure that specifically focuses on life in the created order from a primarily pre-conversion perspective and therefore does not engage a full-circle creedal approach, as my own project will. Third, the *revised correlation theory* of David Tracy and Don Browning that Dyrness utilizes, engages a different hermeneutical flow that

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[84] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 269.

[85] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 283.

primarily takes anthropology as its point of departure and then moves to theology. Dyrness does this in order to focus purposefully on and emphasize subjective experience. Therefore, the journey that he emphasizes throughout his work is that of man to God in regard to the proper ordering and direction of the affections. This is clearly evident in the two literary cultural artifacts that he chooses to poetically illustrate his argument, namely, Dante's *Divine Comedy* from a uniquely Catholic perspective, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* from a uniquely Protestant perspective. In so doing, Dyrness expends little energy on carefully engaging the objective side of the conversation as his goal is to highlight the affective experience of the individual in her movement and journey toward the good. This movement is not only evident in his methodology but also in his purpose and aim. In particular, Dyrness states that his purpose is to present an apologetic theology in regard to the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology in the midst of everyday life. This purpose in turn directs his work toward a missiological trajectory that aims at developing a way to engage non-believers in this conversation.

My own project will move in a distinctly different direction which maintains the priority of theology in relationship to anthropology, and therefore highlights the journey of God to man and then man to neighbor in order to further understand and distinctly respond to the anthropological situation in describing the beautiful life and the beautiful community. In so doing, my project addresses Trinitarian theology and the doctrine of Creation from a post-conversion, full-creedal perspective that emphasizes the intimate connection and movement through all three articles of the creed in describing a beautiful life and a beautiful community in the midst of a broken and at times ugly world filled with sinners like me. With that in mind, I will engage Dyrness's work as an example of poetic theology that serves not only to help situate my own project in the midst of

everyday theology, but also as a point of departure to extend my project in three distinct directions: (1) from a postliberal perspective and approach; (2) within a uniquely Lutheran framework; and, (3) aimed at an ecclesiological trajectory that targets the ongoing spiritual formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ as this takes place within the Christian community as well as within the surrounding culture.[86]

Conclusion

If theology has a responsibility to give some account of the Christian life in the midst of human culture (which I believe it does), it cannot ignore the arts and aesthetics which makes up such a significant universal and communal feature of the human experience. Unfortunately, as Dyrness's *Poetic Theology* points out, we cannot not take it for granted that this essential relationship is either easily assumed nor readily recognized today, especially when it comes to Christian discipleship.

Therefore, by re-connecting the intrinsic nature and role of aesthetics in Christian discipleship to the true and the good in the midst of the everyday within a full-circle creedal frame, my work will further equip the reader to be able better to address the whole person (who is not only *simul iustus et peccator* but also a spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical, and relational creature) as she lives in the reality of two realms simultaneously. Therefore, simply put, in light of the intrinsic nature of aesthetics to the spiritual formation and daily existence of

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[86] Even though Dyrness does touch on Christian discipleship and the role that aesthetics play in the corporate worship life of the Christian community, his primary focus and purpose as he himself states is apologetic and missiological. With such a purpose and aim in mind, Dyrness has focused specifically on the 1st Article doctrine of Creation as well as the image of God at work in all human beings from a primarily pre-conversion perspective that engages the Reformed doctrine of the common call. In contrast, I will be working with a 3rd Article doctrine of Vocation as well as the renewed image of God at work in the Christian disciple from a primarily post-conversion perspective that engages a Lutheran full-circle creedal and Two Realms framework that strongly connects the 3rd article to the 1st article.

the disciple of Jesus Christ, the overarching goal of this project is the making of everyday poets. Failing that goal, is to come up short of the holistic formation of the new creation in Christ and what it means to be His fully-embodied and embedded poetic agents of creativity in the world. Thus, I will provide the reader who lives in the midst of competing narratives and constantly erupting cultural earthquakes with a deeper understanding of his creative place in God's beautiful and yet broken creation, as well as a more elegant praxis based on poesis that is in sync with the rhythm of God's created order.

To begin this journey, the first step in providing such an account of an aesthetics of discipleship begins with an overview and description of Hans Frei's and George Lindbeck's non-foundational approach to theology and their postliberal critique of modern epistemology.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POSTLIBERAL CRITIQUE OF MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

A Brief Introduction to the Postliberal Movement

In this chapter I lay the contextual groundwork that opens space for a renewed emphasis on the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology in regard to the everyday life of the Christian disciple as it takes place in the surrounding culture to be given in the following chapters. To do so I attend to the primary task of situating my project within the overarching non-foundational approach of the postliberal movement in order to present information that helps reveal important patterns and dynamics at work in the particular context of modern epistemology. I argue that postliberal theology is useful to my project as it helps us to avoid reducing discipleship to mere knowledge or mere individualistic ethical action. I will also argue that the relationship between aesthetics and theology specifically as it is situated in the midst of everyday life has had a hard time of it throughout the period of modernity. And, thus postliberal theology opens space for the renewed focus and emphasis on this essential relationship in the everyday life of the Christian disciple. In so doing, I provide a particular way of situating the relationship (or, lack thereof) in regard to aesthetics and theology in the longer narrative framework of modernity by way of *ad hoc correlational* work in the larger field of postliberal theology.

Here, I begin by introducing a brief history of the postliberal movement and its two key figures. I then show that the postliberal movement not only provides us with an important critique of modern epistemology, but more so that it effectively reveals and assesses the

problems of polar liberal and conservative extremes in theology. Therefore, I argue that the postliberal approach not only provides us with a powerful and effective critique of modern epistemology, but also recognizes and highlights the negative impact this has had on the practice of theology and Christian discipleship. In so doing, the postliberal approach not only exposes the long-standing oppositional gap between extreme subjective and extreme objective approaches to the practice of theology and spiritual formation, but argues for a creative and constructive way forward. Thus, the postliberal approach makes the case for a certain kind of theology and discipleship that effectively bridges the gap between subject and object and therefore serves as an initial point of departure for constructing an account of the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology at work in the everyday life of the disciple. This opened space then leads us to an engagement with a non-foundational approach to the philosophy of art in chapter 3 which calls us to the renewed necessity of recognizing, illustrating, and exercising the intrinsic mutual dialogue between the non-discursive and discursive aspects of our humanity that is constantly taking place in our everyday lives.

The story behind the postliberal movement and its non-foundational approach to theology began in the late 1970s and early 1980s during a time when theological scholarship was said to be "preoccupied with issues of method."[1] It was this environment that many scholars believe sparked "a strange but temporary institutional rivalry" between the divinity schools of Yale University and the University of Chicago. Within this rivalry:

> Chicago tended to accuse Yale of 'fideism' that was culturally isolated from discourse with other 'incommensurable' communities and traditions, and Yale tended to accuse Chicago of the foundationalist mistakes of an individualistic 'experiential-

[1] John Wright, ed. *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic: Conversations with George Lindbeck, David Burrell, Stanley Hauerwas* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 3.

> expressivism' that sought warrants for religion and theology that were available to any 'reasonable' person.[2]

It was in the midst of this rivalry that many scholars began to link the work of George Lindbeck with that of his Yale colleague, Hans Frei creating a so-called 'Yale School' of theology, which "supposedly provided a new theological method based on a general theory of religion—a communally enclosed, intratextual, mediating theology,"[3] Lindbeck termed "cultural-linguistic."[4] This led to the description of a 'postliberal theology,'[5] as well as a 'narrative theology'[6] that was to "transform the terms of modern theology through a heightened pitch of attention to the narratives of scripture and the practices of the church throughout history."[7]

To begin with, then, it can be argued that the postliberal approach to theology was born out of a critique and reaction to 'foundationalism.' Foundationalism is an approach to epistemology, which specifically works against traditions, searches for self-evident truths, universal experience, and solely 3rd-person objective evidence. Therefore, the working presupposition of foundationalism is that there is a sharp distinction in our knowledge; namely, a distinction between genuine knowledge, which is sure and certain, and the personal knowledge that some of us think we know and hold as important. This presupposition has led to the assumption and presupposition of the subject/object, knowledge/opinion, and fact/value, dichotomies. Such dichotomies in turn bracket out such concepts as 'revelation,' and 'morality' as subordinate

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[2] C.C. Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology: George Lindbeck, Pragmatism and Scripture* (New York, NY: T&T International, 2005), 15.

[3] Wright, *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic*, 3.

[4] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 25th Anniversary Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 4, 19.

[5] Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology*, 1.

[6] Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology*, 1.

[7] Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology*, 1.

addendum of 'opinion' and 'value' that operate under the more important realm of 'fact.' In so doing, foundationalism attempts to get past tradition and context, and instead, seeks claims that are independent of these—claims that are individual and acontextual—without reference to dogma or social structure.

Here, the postliberal critique begins by saying there is no way to get past tradition and context. In actuality, we are always making assumptions and we are always working within social constructs and agreements. Everything depends on a context. Everybody comes with preconceived notions, priorities, assumptions, prejudices, etc. Therefore, the attempt of foundationalism to get past this is ridiculous because such is simply part of being an embodied and embedded human. Therefore, reality for postliberals is always construed under a description—under some point of view. However, that doesn't mean it is not reality. With this in mind, the postliberals specifically argue that religions do specific things, and therefore, we should account for those instead of trying to explain them away.

Therefore, the overarching goal of the postliberal approach to theology is to develop an unapologetic, non-foundational, descriptive approach, which posits that the language and practices of the community are prior to both ideas and experience. Thus, when it comes to addressing questions and problems, a postliberal approach to theology begins with the understanding of Christianity as a unique cultural-linguistic system, that is formed in the life and practice of a particular community profoundly rooted in Scripture and the Christian tradition, which at the same time seeks to be deeply responsive to the genuine needs of the time, which requires the proper use of the Christian sources themselves to help identify those needs and how to address them.

The postliberal approach is thus a "cultural linguistic" approach to theology which

highlights that "meaning" is to be found within the world and idiom of the biblical text—an approach which Lindbeck terms "intrasemiotic" or "intratextual."[8] Here, we find that the postliberal approach to theology views Christianity as a unique cultural-linguistic system that calls for a regulative or normative view of Christian doctrine, which Lindbeck calls a "ruled-use theory"[9] based on the language and narrative of the Bible. The postliberal approach thus views church doctrines first of all "not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action,"[10] wherein, the story of the biblical narrative functions as idioms for constructing reality, expressing experience, and for the ordering of life. Thereby, stressing the degree to which human experience, the self and its world, is shaped, molded, and in a sense constituted by 'an external word,' a *verbum externum*,[11] which supplies the interpretive framework within which disciples of Jesus Christ seek to live their lives and understand reality.

This community reads Scripture as narratives, taking seriously the interaction of plot, character, circumstances, and events as the literal sense in regards to what the biblical story is revealing to its readers. Here, the story is the meaning, and the literal sense of the biblical narrative is the sole ground and basis that is formational to the Christian community and individual believer as practiced in real life.

Therefore, unlike solely subjective expressive symbols or solely objective propositions of truth, the postliberal approach is able to "retain an invariant meaning under changing conditions

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[8] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 100.

[9] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 4, 18, 93.

[10] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 4.

[11] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 20.

of compatibility and conflict."[12] This approach is highlighted by "an exegetical emphasis on narrative; and, a desire to renew in a post-traditional and postliberal mode the ancient practice of absorbing the universe into the biblical world."[13] Here, we find that amid the shifts of changing worldviews, the story of the passion and resurrection of Jesus, and the basic rules for its use remain the same. This approach effectively reverses the direction of the theological narrative from our world enveloping God's story "so prevalent for three hundred years of modernity"[14] to God's World enveloping ours, thus, stressing the degree that human experience, the self and its world, is shaped, molded, and in a sense constituted by 'an external word,' a *verbum externum*. The test of faithfulness, then, is "the degree to which descriptions correspond to the semiotic universe paradigmatically encoded in holy writ,"[15] which supplies the interpretive framework within which believers seek to live their lives and understand reality. This happens "quite apart from formal theories."[16] It does so by deriving "the interpretive framework that designates the theologically controlling sense from the literary structure of the text itself."[17] In this "intrasemiotic" or "intratextual" context, the emphasis on the living word "involves applying the language, concepts, and categories of Scripture to contemporary realities."[18]

Therefore, to summarize, the postliberal approach may also be understood as "initating a paradigm-shift in theology through its constructive dimensions of a 'return to scripture' that

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[12] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 18.

[13] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 103.

[14] Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 1–16.

[15] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 102.

[16] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 103.

[17] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 106.

[18] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 105.

seeks to describe a 'ruled-use' of doctrine for 'best practices' for the enduring church in a complex and pluralist world."[19] In so doing, it has set the stage for constructive theologians like myself in "their task of creative faithfulness to the tradition in the face of contemporary challenges of individualism, pluralism, and fragmentation of the church"[20] that can both "secure the continuity and 'truth' of Christian identity," and yet also "deal with contingency, change, and the reality of diverse contexts and communities."[21] All of this provides the necessary groundwork for a critical comparison and contrast between the postliberal approach to theology and the subjective extreme of an 'experiential-expressivist' approach as well as the objective extreme of a 'cognitive-propositionalist' approach and the vastly different ways in which they engage the biblical narrative, theology, and discipleship.

The Postliberal Assessment of Liberal and Conservative Extremes

Beginning with an assessment of the subjective extreme of "liberal theology," the postliberal movement utilizes the descriptive title "experiential-expressivism," coined by George Lindbeck. Here, Lindbeck argues,

> The general principle is that insofar as doctrines function as non-informative and non-discursive symbols, they are polyvalent in import and therefore subject to changes of meaning or even to a total loss of meaningfulness. They are constituted by harmony or conflict in underlying feelings, attitudes, existential orientations, or practices, rather than by what happens on the level of symbolic (including doctrinal) objectifications.[22]

With this as a descriptive foundation the postliberal approach highlights several key aspects of an

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[19] Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology*, 2.

[20] Wright, *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic*, 2.

[21] Wright, *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic*, 19.

[22] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 3.

"experiential-expressivism" approach to theology. The first of which is the primary emphasis on individual subjective experience as the key to "constituting" doctrine as well as "constructing" the reading of the text. Here, Lindbeck argues,

> …thinkers of this tradition locate ultimately significant contact with whatever is finally important to religion in the pre-reflective experiential depths of the self and regard the public features of religion as expressive and evocative objectifications (i.e. non-discursive symbols) of internal experience.[23]

Thus, making religion a highly private and individualized (i.e. solely subjective) matter. Here, Will Willimon notes, "Perhaps above all, it gives us an account of religion that is not dependent upon a religious community, a corporate embodiment of faith."[24] That is to say, experiential-expressivists focus highly on the embodied aspect of being human but give very little attention to the embedded and encultured communal aspect of being human. The next key aspect in postliberal assessment of a liberal theology is the overarching emphasis on "universal human experience" as common to all religions or religious experiences. Here, Lindbeck argues,

> the movement is from the inner to the outer, from the core, which is fundamentally the same in all human beings, to its manifestations in many different religions which are essentially diverse expressions or objectification of a common core experience that are differentiated by their historical and cultural contexts.[25]

Postliberals further understand this as bringing with it an insistence, "that all religions be evaluated on the basis of some allegedly universal criteria."

This leads the postliberal critique to assess that the liberal engagement with theology is primarily a philosophical discipline, which has the tendency to "redescribe religion in

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[23] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 7.

[24] Will Willimon, "Answering Pilate: Truth and the Postliberal Church." *Christian Century* (January 1987), 82-85.

[25] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 129.

extrascriptural frameworks."[26] In so doing, the liberal engagement with theology either fully subsumes or attempts to correlate theology as "a procedure subject to formal, universal, and transcendental criteria for valid thinking," that either "takes complete priority over Christian self-description,"[27] or treats them as equals. Here, "theology is subject to judgment and evaluation by certain basic general criteria, in which it has to be "correlated" to common human experience."[28] Therefore, postliberals argue that, for liberals, "avant garde heterodoxy is actually viewed as desirable." Whereas, whatever is perceived as orthodox is "retrograde." This leads to the further postliberal critique that the liberal effort at work in modern theology is to "conform the Christian faith to the spirit of the times." This further highlights the liberal assumption that "Christians must translate their particular language into terms intelligible to the wider culture." Here, postliberals understand the liberal claim to be that "change and pluralism in religious expression are necessary for intelligibility, applicability, and faithfulness."[29] Thus, postliberals understand liberals as assessing the faithfulness of their endeavors "by their success in communicating to the modern mind," and "making religion more widely credible."[30] Which, in turn, accounts for the liberal commitment to the foundational enterprise of uncovering universal principles or structures."[31] Unfortunately, "The tendency, when this happens, is to consign all historic doctrines indiscriminately to the junk pile of outgrown superstitions."[32]

Postliberals argue that all of this has had a profound impact on the liberal engagement with

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[26] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 110.

[27] Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 3.

[28] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 31.

[29] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 99.

[30] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 116.

[31] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 115.

[32] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 63.

the biblical narrative (and as I will argue, on the relationship between the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology in regard to everyday discipleship). Which, as Frei succinctly argues is an engagement that "does not lead to a serious consideration of the literal sense of the Scriptures at any point."[33] Here, as Frei further expounds, "the story seems to mean whatever you want, depending on what "perspective" or "modern view of man" you happen to come from as you read the story and want to find substantiated there."[34] Therefore, "Scripture ceases to function as the lens through which theologians viewed the world and instead becomes primarily an object of study whose religiously significant or literal meaning is located outside itself." This has led to "historical-critical, and expressivisty preoccupations with facticity or experience."[35] Here, the overriding goal is to remove anything that does not fit into the world of human experience, in order to reasonably seek out and find the "historic Jesus," as well as to reasonably interpret the meaning of history. The result is that "The very person under this kind of explanatory description is bound to be different from the person who, under the faith method or descriptions, is the perfect Redeemer."[36] In the end, the subjective reader determines the meaning of the text; and, the flow of the narrative works from the subjective reader to text, meaning that the world of the biblical narrative must fit into the world of the reader. This of course also has a detrimental impact on their practice of discipleship in regard to their solely subjective view of aesthetics as personal preference and self-expression.[37]

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[33] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 71.

[34] Hans Frei, "Remarks in Connection with a Theological Proposal," in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 40.

[35] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 105.

[36] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 77.

[37] Here I would point out that Dyrness with his methodology, his emphasis on the affective (desire and love) as primary in his work over and above the intellect (following Augustine), his engagement with the affective aspect of life pre-conversion in regard to the common call, as well as his apologetic purpose and missiological trajectory at

Switching gears to a postliberal assessment of "conservative theology," we find that they utilize the descriptive title of "cognitive-propositionalism," coined by Lindbeck. Here, Lindbeck argues that conservative theology "emphasizes the cognitive aspects of religion and stresses the ways in which church doctrines function as "informative unvarying propositions or discursive truth claims about [strictly] objective states of affairs."[38] Therefore, the general principle is that insofar as doctrines function as unvarying informative and discursive truth claims, "if a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false. There is no significant sense in which the meaning of a doctrine can change while remaining the same."[39] And, with their preoccupation with the cognitive and informational meaningfulness of religious utterances, the overriding goal seems to be to proclaim and defend "the *kerygmatic* Christ of faith," by way of apologetic argument. Here, the postliberal assessment of a conservative approach to theology sees the key concepts at work as, for the most part, diametrically opposed to those of "liberal" theology. This is illustrated first by way of the "cognitive-propositional" approach to the subjective reader. Namely, that for cognitive-propositionalists "meaning, truth, and falsity of propositions are independent of the subjective dispositions of those who utter them,"[40] and therefore solely objective in nature.

Next, we see that their claim concerning doctrine is that it is "true, universally valid, and supernaturally revealed,"[41] which denies any universal human experience that is common to all or that serves as a core for religious experience. Rather, when comparing religions in the

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times lends his argument toward the experiential-expressivist extreme.

[38] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 276.

[39] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 2–3.

[40] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 52.

[41] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 10.

classically cognitive-propositional approach of traditional orthodoxy the question is more specifically aimed at "to which faith makes the most significant veridical truth claims and the fewest false ones."[42]

This is most clearly evidenced in practice by way of their approach or engagement with philosophy. For "cognitive-propositionalism," Christian theology is "exclusively" a matter of Christian self-description. External descriptive categories have no bearing on or relation to it at all. Therefore, "There is no formal, context-independent or independently describable set of transcendental conditions governing that internal logic. Christian theology is strictly the grammar of faith, a procedure in self-description for which there is no external correlative."[43] The cognitive-propositionalist thus wholeheartedly objects to "any usage of philosophical inquiry or framework even as subordinate to theological inquiry and framework—insisting on the objectivity of belief assertions."[44] Here, "the rule of inside and outside talk concerning religion is absolute, and theology is strictly inside talk."[45] The unfortunate result of this is,

> when it comes to any kind of overlap with other modes of discourse that would help us both to render and make accessible a responsible re-description of biblical and traditional beliefs, both in order to understand them and to appraise them critically—we find not so much an objection as a simple dematerialization. In matters of doctrinal statement, pure self-confinement to Christian self-description means no self-description. To the extent that this situation is a product of making theology purely internal to the religion, its result is a theology of silence when one cannot simply and uncritically parrot biblical and traditional formulae.[46]

The result is that growing isolation of the religiously interested study of religion from some

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[42] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 33.

[43] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 4–5.

[44] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 26.

[45] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 48.

[46] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 55.

of the most fruitful intellectual currents of the day tends to ghettoize theology and deprives it of the vitality that comes from close association with the best in non-theological thinking, in the case of this project, the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology at work in the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

This then affects their approach to or engagement with the Spirit of the Age. Although they "desire to be both intellectually up-to-date and creedally orthodox," this is held in tension with an overwhelming fear of the new," (as well of that which lies outside of it) and therefore "a tendency toward "preliberalism" seems safer to cognitive-propositionalist than a turn or engagement with "postliberalism." Therefore, they "attempt to preserve identity by reproducing as literalistically as possible the word and actions of the past." The defect of this tactic, Lindbeck argues is "that it confuses the letter and the spirit (as Paul, Augustine, or Luther might have put it)."[47] Which then leads to the unfortunate outcome that,

> They have helped legitimate unnecessary and counterproductive rigidities in practice, because, first, propositionalism makes it difficult to understand how new doctrines can develop in the course of time, and how old ones can be forgotten or become peripheral. Second, propositionalist accounts of how old doctrines can be reinterpreted to fit new circumstances are unconvincing: they have difficulty in distinguishing between what changes and what remains the same. Third, they do not deal adequately with the specifically ecumenical problematic: how is it possible for doctrines that once contradicted each other to be reconciled and yet retain their identity? In each the underlying issues is that of constancy and change, unity and diversity."[48]

Finally, this approach obviously affects their engagement with the biblical narrative, and their full-bodied engagement with the First Article world that surrounds them. Here, Frei argues, "The *sensus literalis*" for them is "logically equivalent to sheer repetition of the same words."[49]

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[47] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 64.

[48] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 64.

[49] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 55.

This, however, reduces them in effect to "hermeneutical silence—that is, simply repeating the scriptural statements and then, claiming that "understanding" these statements is simply equivalent to acquiring the (religious) skill or capacity to use them in the appropriate manner."[50] This further leads to the unfortunate result that, "It is unable to do justice to the fact that a religions system is more like a natural language than a formally organized set of explicit statements, and that the right use of this language, unlike a mathematical one, cannot be detached from a particular way of behaving."[51] Thus, cognitive-propositionalists are effectively limited to the reductionistic role of teaching people "what to think" through data transmission and are not able to engage people in "how to think, feel, and act" through their theological identity in the midst of their surrounding culture and everyday lives. Meaning, they are not able to engage in the conversation of what a beautiful life or community looks like, sounds like, acts like.[52]

All of this sets the stage for a comparison and contrast with a "postliberal" approach to theology. The postliberal approach is described as a "cultural-linguistic" approach, which views church doctrines first of all "not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action." And, therefore, unlike propositions or expressive symbols, is able to "retain an invariant meaning under changing conditions of compatibility and conflict."[53] This approach is highlighted by an exegetical emphasis on narrative; and, a desire to renew in a posttraditional and postliberal mode the ancient practice of

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[50] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 6.

[51] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 50.

[52] Here I argue that the Lutheran tradition can all too easily fall into this extreme, especially with its suspicion of the senses and the life of feeling and their ability to lead anyone to God pre-conversion. Therefore, there is a necessity to a renewed focus and emphasis on the affective side of the Christian disciple, especially post-conversion in their movement from the Third Article to a renewed engagement with the First Article sphere of Creation.

[53] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 18.

absorbing the universe into the biblical world."[54]

In assessing the postliberal understanding of liberal and conservative approaches to theology, we do well to keep in mind that these theologians are describing the extreme cases of each type of theology in order to set up a typology for the specific purpose of comparing and contrasting liberal and conservative approaches to a postliberal approach (which they believe to be best). However, that being said, I do not believe that they have set up liberal and conservative approaches to theology simply as straw-men to be knocked down. Rather, they have thoughtfully engaged them in order positively and constructively to critique and challenge the weakness of each. They then propose an alternative approach that acknowledges and utilizes the positives that can be found in each. I also believe that for the most part, they are not only accurate with their descriptive understandings of the liberal and conservative approaches to theology, but more so that they are also able effectively to highlight the inadequacies of each of these approaches, especially in regards to the contemporary North American milieu in which we find ourselves today. Here, they show that these two approaches and their necessary outcomes are not able to address effectively the current challenges facing the church in an age of individualism, de-objectification, and de-christianization. An age that has already made the turn to the aesthetic whether the Christian church wants to accept it or not.

It is this postliberal approach that opens the way for us to respond confidently, with a non-foundational and descriptive approach to questions raised by a modern epistemology which brackets out issues of morality as merely personal value or personal preference distinct from and secondary to true knowledge and scientific fact. Here, I believe we can engage the work of Ellen T. Charry as illustrative of the non-foundational descriptive postliberal approach in actual

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[54] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 122.

response to problematic issues that arise within the modern approach to epistemology.

Ellen Charry: A Model of Good Practice

In her work, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*, Ellen T. Charry provides us with a clear illustration of the effectiveness of a postliberal non-foundational descriptive approach to addressing the modern epistemological issue of bracketing out 'morality' as merely 'value' when teaching is treated as solely *'scientia,'* namely, the informative process of relaying facts separated from and placed in opposition to virtue formation.[55] Charry is reacting to the problem that "The secularization, elevation, and constriction of reason evident since the enlightenment has left us with a modern view of epistemology that focuses solely on "scientia" and has thereby undercut the sapiential, aretegenic, and participatory dimensions of doctrinal interpretation."[56] Which she believes has, "effectively undercut the capacity of the Christian tradition to bring Christians to discover their proper dignity in God and to grow in the Christian life in the transformational terms that Paul understood it: being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8.29) 'by the renewing of your minds' (Rom. 12.2)."[57] Charry thus utilizes the postliberal approach to argue that 'morality' is not an addendum to teaching that can be bracketed out, but that teaching is itself a moral act. Teaching is virtue or character formation. And, therefore, the idea that you can "add" morality to teaching is false.

Therefore, Charry constructively proposes to provide a survey from the premodern (i.e.,

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[55] Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[56] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 237.

[57] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 236.

precritical) tradition that highlights the '*aretelogical*' nature of the classic theologians' reading of Scriptures and practice of doctrine as the pastoral task which based "the understanding of human excellence on knowing and loving God, the imitation of or assimilation to whom brings proper human dignity and flourishing."[58] Which in turn is founded on "the '*salutarity*' of the Scriptures and doctrine in the precritical tradition, which emphasizes that God calls us to a virtuous life of excellence by forming and reforming our character because it is 'good for us,' as He is 'good to us,' and therefore, life with the triune God facilitates dignity and excellence."[59] Later, I will further Charry's argument of dignity and excellence to include the elegance and delight of a full-bodied engagement with the everyday. Hers is a basic historical thesis that aims to argue that doctrine, i.e., the teaching of the faith was as much about moral formation as it was about instruction in the truth: namely, that moral formation is a matter of being shaped into something good through a process of insight and practice.

Here, Charry finds that indeed "premodern Christians valued both insight-oriented (Plato) and practice-oriented (Aristotle) aspects to virtue formation," and insists that, "moral transformation comes from knowing God and that virtue is acquired by practice."[60] She thereby recognizes the mutually reciprocal function of virtue formation in which,

> The mind must be reorganized before behavioral change can take place. But once thinking is targeted as the locus of character formation, we will also remember that moral formation engages the whole person, not just the mind, so the emotions and behavior must not be left out of account.[61]

This thought will be carried forward in my argument especially in my engagement with Langer

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[58] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 18.

[59] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 18.

[60] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 4.

[61] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 20.

and her non-foundational approach to the philosophy of art—especially her thoughts on music which connect strongly with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's.

Charry's conclusion provides the implications that these premodern (precritical) theologians could not envision a notion of truth that was not *salutary* (good for us) and *aretegenic* (virtue forming), that is, a notion of 'truth' separate from or that brackets our 'morality' or the 'good' from it.[62] Therefore, her *salutary* and *aretegenic* recommendation is to "emphasize vivification," the emphasis "that God builds us up into the dignity which He calls us to."[63] That is to say that, in teaching, God both gives grace and forms virtue (morality). Therefore, in her challenge and critique of modernity's sharp distinctions, she calls for the need to renew the emphasis on formation of the whole person (not just the intellect). Thereby she reconnects the intellectual and the pastoral task.; i.e., reconnecting the good to the true instead of treating them in such a dichotomous fashion as does the modern approach to epistemology. Charry provides a powerful illustration that connects the true and the good. However, she still has not fully engaged the connection of the beautiful to the true and the good in regard to the significance it can have for formation, namely the shaping of the true and the good in the person who is daily molded into a beautiful reflection of God's creative, grace-filled artistry.

Charry's response to the critical issues presented by the modern approach to epistemology and the way in which it brackets out morality from knowledge and goodness from truth can be carried further into a critical engagement with the realm of aesthetics. Here, I believe that we can extend the argument that the modern approach to epistemology[64] has also bracketed

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[62] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 235.

[63] Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 29.

[64] For an illustration of the effectiveness of a postliberal non-foundational ruled-use approach to addressing the modern epistemological issue of bracketing out revelation as merely personal opinion or private belief rather

out aesthetics, treating it as an unnecessary addendum or, a subordinate aspect of mere personal preference, emotive pleasure, or alienated utilitarian self-expression functioning far beneath the realm of 'true knowledge' and 'scientific fact' (if it functions at all).[65]

Conclusion

In so doing, the postliberal approach provides a powerful critique to the faulty assumptions of the Enlightenment and modernity, the dominant presuppositions of liberalism and liberal Christianity; as well as the extremes of conservativism and conservative Christianity, which both lead to the polarizing issues which continue today within the lingering modern approach to discipleship. At the same time, through its constructive dimension of a 'return to scripture' that seeks to describe 'best practices' for the church in "a complex and pluralist world,"[66] it has set the stage for constructive theologians in "their task of creative faithfulness to the tradition in the face of contemporary challenges of individualism, pluralism, and fragmentation."[67] Therefore, I argue that the postliberal non-foundational approach works to open the space for bridging the gap between Beauty (aesthetics), Goodness (ethics), and Truth (doctrine), and therefore the intrinsic nature of aesthetics in discipleship in the midst of everyday life in the surrounding

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than as true knowledge see: Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985). Here Thiemann approaches the issue from a non-foundational, linguistic and logical perspective arguing for the place of revelation as true knowledge by treating revelation as 'narrated promise'. Thus, the logic of promise implies God's unconditional prevenience, providing Thiemann with a category within which the notions of relation and priority can be held in dialectical balance.

[65] For an illustration of the effectiveness of a postliberal non-foundational ruled-use approach to addressing the doctrine of the Trinity see: William C. Placher, *The Triune God: An Essay In Postliberal Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). Here Placher argues that the meaning of God comes from within faith, not by way of an argument from neutral premises, or from an objective, outside point of view. Therefore, when it comes to reflection on the Trinity, Placher argues that we should work from the "economic Trinity," revealed in and through the biblical narrative to any talk of the "Immanent Trinity."

[66] Wright, *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic*, 2.

[67] Wright, *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic*, 2.

culture as it specifically calls for a renewed emphasis on the intrinsic relationship between the discursive and non-discursive aspects of humanity. This is especially important and useful within the Lutheran tradition in regard to the intrinsic relationship between aesthetics and theology as the Lutheran theological tradition has been deeply suspicious of the senses and the emotions in regard to the life of the Christian disciple. Therefore, the postliberal approach opens the space for a renewed emphasis and focus on the non-discursive aspect of theology and discipleship. As George Lindbeck states,

> As a result, there is also room for the expressive aspects. The aesthetic and non-discursively symbolic dimensions of a religion—for example, its poetry, music, art, and rituals—are not, as propositional cognitivism suggests, mere external decorations designed to make the hard core of explicitly stateable beliefs and precepts more appealing to the masses. Rather, it is through these that the basic patterns of religion are interiorized, exhibited, and transmitted. The proclamation of the Gospel, as a Christian would put it, may be first of all the telling of the story, but this gains power and meaning insofar as it is embodied in the total gestalt of community life and action.[68]

Therefore, the postliberal approach goes further than the critique of the opposing and oscillating modern tendencies still at work in theology today that deeply impact and affect our approach to everyday discipleship by opening space for the necessity of a renewed emphasis on engaging the essential and mutual dialogue between the discursive and the non-discursive aspects of the Christian disciple's life as it takes place every day in the midst of their surrounding culture. With this as a contextual point of departure, we are now at a place to engage the field of aesthetics in more depth. With the postliberal framework in hand we are now able to further address the key problem of the bracketing out of aesthetics and the need for a new creative and constructive way forward. I attend to this in the next chapter by turning to the interpretive task of

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[68] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p.22

sagely wisdom as described by Richard Osmer in his work *Practical Theology: An Introduction*.[69] I will attend to this task by engaging Susanne K. Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art in seeking a response to the problematic issues presented by the modern epistemological approach to the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology in everyday discipleship. Chapter 3 will serve as the philosophical basis for describing and connecting the essential dialogue between the discursive and non-discursive aspects of the Christian disciple's life as it takes place in the created sphere every day.

[69] Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

CHAPTER THREE

ENGAGING A NON-FOUNDATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ART

In this chapter I engage the philosophical fieldwork necessary for capitalizing on key theories, concepts and insights from within the scholarly study of aesthetics to be appropriated within the Lutheran theological framework presented in the next chapter. In so doing, I attend to the interpretive task of *sagely wisdom* as described by Richard Osmer. The primary goal of the interpretive task as Osmer asserts, is to "draw on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain particular episodes, situations, and contexts."[1] Therefore, the interpretive task as it is situated within this chapter begins by asking the question, "Why is this going on?"[2] as it regards modernity's bracketing out of aesthetics as non-essential to everyday life and therefore as unnecessary addendum in regard to theology and discipleship. Specifically, in this chapter, then, I am attending to the task of interpreting the contemporary aesthetic moment as it has come down to us from modernity. In following Osmer's methodology and argument I believe that the wise interpretation of this moment and the *sagely wisdom* sought within the field of aesthetics has important implications for discerning ways of moving forward in a new direction. As Osmer notes, the interpretive task of *sagely wisdom* provides us with a theoretical map that helps us not only better understand why the bracketing out of aesthetics as non-essential to our everyday lives has been going on throughout modernity, but more so to discern wise ways of moving forward in a different direction that effectively re-connects the essential importance of

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[1] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 113.

[2] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

aesthetics to theology and discipleship.[3]

The first key element of the interpretive task, Osmer helps us to understand, is located in wisely choosing "a map that is suitable for the purpose at hand as some maps are good for some purposes but not for others."[4] However, as Osmer cautions, "This is a complex intellectual activity, requiring judgments about the theories most relevant to the case and their contribution to the realization of moral ends defined theologically."[5] With this in mind, the interpretive task must be "based on an attitude of openness to the world," that depends on a "thinking faith willing to learn from the intellectual resources of contemporary culture."[6] In so doing, the church reveals that it "has something to offer the world about moral and theological ends that inform the wise use of human knowledge."[7] Therefore, this is a framework that allows for an appropriation of the knowledge of the arts and sciences, "while reminding us that such knowledge is fallible and grounded in a particular perspective," and therefore, "does not provide the fullness of wise judgment."[8] Rather, in wisely choosing a particular conversation partner appropriate to the task, it provides a useful theoretical map for the journey through a territory long-deemed outside the realm of theological inquiry and indeed a road less traveled in the historic Lutheran tradition. Therefore, the task of *sagely wisdom* as it is carried out in this project is extremely important because it helps us not only better to understand why modernity has effectively bracketed out aesthetics as unnecessary addendum, but more so how to creatively and constructively move

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[3] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 80.

[4] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 80.

[5] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 85.

[6] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 93.

[7] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 94.

[8] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 100.

forward in a new direction that effectively re-connects aesthetics to theology as essential to our everyday lives and experiences.

In that light, I now turn to the interpretive task of *sagely wisdom.* To do so, I have chosen the work of Susanne K. Langer and her non-foundational approach to the philosophy of art. I believe that Langer's work is a wise choice for a map through the territory of philosophical aesthetics specifically in connection with the aim of this project as her work not only emphasizes the vital importance of our embodied nature and embedded cultural situation but further ties this embodiedness and embeddedness more closely together to the mind and intellect. In so doing, Langer effectively addresses the essential relationship between human mentality and the life of feeling, as it takes place in the daily life of human experience through the ongoing creative act of symbolic transformation. Therefore, from a general perspective, Langer proves to be a wise choice as a theoretical guide through the field of art and aesthetics that engages the life of the whole person as it takes place within the created sphere and in the midst of a cultural environment.

More specifically, Langer's work serves as a wise choice as it provides us with a more contemporary picture of the situation that is better equipped to attend to the unique modern chasm that has existed between the objective and subjective poles at work in the field of philosophical aesthetics since the time of Immanuel Kant. In so doing, I believe that Langer is able to help us more carefully attend to the objective side of the non-discursive semantic and the life of feeling in regard to art and aesthetics than Dyrness's work has. At the same time, she offers a clarion call to those who deny or ignore the importance of the subjective and affective aspect of the life of feeling to a renewed interest, recognition, and engagement. Furthermore, as already mentioned in the paragraph above, Langer's work specifically helps us better to tie the

affective and sensuous aspect of our humanity more directly to our intellect than Dyrness has. As we have already shown, Dyrness's work remains highly focused on the subjective, affective and emotive side of the conversation in following Augustine and does not as carefully attend either to the objective nor the intellectual aspect of the field. As I will show in this chapter, Langer does an excellent job of illustrating the essential relationship between the objective and subjective as well as between the affective and the intellectual in her handling of the opposing poles of "expression" and "impression" that has been long-standing in the philosophical conversation of art and aesthetics. Finally, Langer's work provides a useful outline that takes us past the state of sheer contemplation in the field of art and aesthetics, whereas contemplation is the concluding focus to which Dyrness's work leads.

Another key reason for choosing Langer's work is that it provides us with an excellent map through the field of philosophical aesthetics to be utilized by those specifically following/utilizing a postliberal non-foundational approach to the question of the relationship between aesthetics and discipleship. This is so, because Langer reveals the significant difference between language and art and how the discursive and nondiscursive are of two very different orders of semantic symbolization that aim at and accomplish different things. Therefore, Langer emphatically and effectively argues that each requires and follows different rules for usage. Here, Langer argues for a type of ruled-use approach in regard to the proper understanding of nondiscursive semantic symbolization and its usage. Specifically, Langer highlights that a scientific causal approach to art, aesthetics, i.e. non-discursive semantic symbolization, is inappropriate to the task and therefore we need a different approach.

Finally, Langer is a wise choice for this project in particular as she provides a unique sketch of the field of philosophical aesthetics that is specifically helpful for the Lutheran

scholar/theologian seeking an external conversation partner. To begin with, Langer's argument is not for the emphasis or primary role of the nondiscursive as either replacing or having authority over the discursive, rather she specifically points out that they are each of a different order. In so doing, Langer maintains the importance and necessity of language proper. This is important in regard to choosing a conversation partner that can dialogue with the historic Lutheran tradition which maintains the proper emphasis on the necessity of the *externum verbum*, especially in its preached and written forms (i.e. language proper), in understanding the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. At the same time, Langer's emphasis on the necessity of engaging the non-discursive aspects of our human mentality and the life of feeling is especially helpful for a tradition that has not given enough attention to this aspect of theology and therefore struggles with articulating the essential role of aesthetics, symbolic transformation, and the life of feeling in regard to the experience of everyday discipleship. And finally, another key reason why Langer's work is a wise choice as a map specifically in dialogue with the historic Lutheran tradition is that she herself states that her work is not founded on nor presented to coordinate theories of art with metaphysical perspectives but to attend to ideas, concepts, and theories within the field of aesthetics in connection with human mentality and the life of feeling in human experience from the perspective of a non-reductive naturalism. This leaves her work open to extension in dialogue with Lutheran theology without any clouded or hampering metaphysical foundations, presuppositions, or assumptions concretized in her work that must first be addressed before appropriation with a Lutheran theological framework can take place. With these reasons in hand, I now turn to an engagement with the work of Susanne K. Langer.

Situating Susanne K. Langer's Aesthetics

To begin, however, I first attend to the task of situating Langer's non-foundational

approach within the larger narrative of philosophical aesthetics as it has been handed down to us through modernity. Since the time of Immanuel Kant, philosophical aesthetics has been defined and described as the branch of philosophy that deals with the appreciation of and critical reflection on art, beauty, nature, and culture. Throughout the modern period aesthetics has also been more *scientifically*[9] defined as "the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgment of sentiment and taste."[10] The origin (as well as the opposing view) of philosophical aesthetics traces back to Plato and his famous student Aristotle. Aesthetics has been part of philosophy since Plato attacked the educational value of many forms of art in the *Republic* and Aristotle briefly defended them in his fragmentary, *Poetics*. In particular, Aristotle defended the arts from Plato's charge that they are cognitively useless, trading in mere images of particulars rather than universal truths by arguing that it is precisely the arts, or at least poetry, that deliver universal truths in a readily graspable form, unlike, for example, history, which deals merely with particular facts. And if experience of the arts can reveal important moral truths, Aristotle contended, then it can also be important to the development of morality, the other pole of Plato's doubts. Variations of this response to Plato have been the core of aesthetics through much of subsequent philosophical history, and indeed continued to be central to aesthetics through much of the twentieth century.

At the beginning of the Enlightenment and the period we call Modernity, aesthetics took an extreme "rationalistic' turn to the solely objective view of philosophical aesthetics. As Jeremy

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[9] Italics are mine for emphasis as I will show later in this chapter that Langer vehemently opposes a *scientific* definition and handling of aesthetics.

[10] The term 'aesthetics' is first found in its contemporary meaning as the "science of sensory cognition" in Alexander G. Baumgarten, *Meditationes Philosphicae de Nonnullis Ad Poema Pertinentibus* (1735). Translated by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther, *Reflections on Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954) 86–7.

Begbie points out, "For the seventeenth century rationalist philosopher, to find a respectable place for art was anything but easy. Aesthetic pleasure seemed too intimately tied up with sensual pleasure, and the senses were generally regarded as unreliable for getting at the truth of things."[11]

For the empiricists of the time, much attention was focused on how aesthetic pleasure arose, especially on that special capacity to discern and enjoy beauty—the faculty of 'taste.'"[12] This led to the tendency to weaken the ties between beauty and reality external to the self, as well as the tendency to drive a wedge between aesthetic experience and true knowledge.[13] I agree with Begbie, then, when he concludes, "It comes as no surprise to find that during this period art was increasingly thought of as something that existed only to give a very unique kind of pleasure, quite apart from any claim to inform or convey truth."[14]

Although there are indeed key differences between the rationalists and the empiricists, Begbie correctly notes that at this time for both the rationalists and the empiricists alike,

> it is the active reason which affords us access to the truth. Hence the rationalists make strenuous efforts to give art Cartesian credibility in terms of rational ideas, and, we might add, the empiricists, through claiming that the 'inner sense' for beauty is non-intellectual, end up speaking about it in markedly intellectual terms. Overall a yawning gulf opens up between art and knowledge, the former relegated to second-class status.[15]

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[11] Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 187.

[12] Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 188.

[13] This is especially true of John Locke, who believed that all non-literal, figurative language should be banned when talking about the objects of knowledge. Locke reinforces the point through his famous contrast between the faculties of 'wit' and 'judgement' when he states, "wit freely combines the images of sense-perception for no special purpose other than to give us pleasure, judgment carefully separates and distinguishes them to avoid error. Only the latter is concerned with truth. Wit and judgment lead away from each other, one towards entertainment, the other towards knowledge." John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A.C. Fraser (Oxford, 1894), II, ix, 2.

[14] Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 189.

[15] Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 189.

However, with regard to philosophical aesthetics, the received modern perspective that remains influential to this day comes down to us from Immanuel Kant as specifically found in his work, *Kritik der Urteilskraft,* in which he attempts to bridge the subject/object gap, a dichotomy in aesthetics which has been with us since the time of Plato and Aristotle.[16] Immanuel Kant was well aware of the rationalistic developments in aesthetics coming down to him. Thus, by the time he engages philosophical aesthetics he had seen a need for a decided shift from an emphasis on the purely objective view of Beauty to its subjective reception and creation. Unlike the empiricists Kant distances aesthetic pleasure from sense-experience by distinguishing between 'sensation (*Empfindung*)' and 'feeling (*Gefuhl*)'. The former is an objective representation of sense, whereas feeling is inherently subjective. This led Kant to conclude that the 'judgment of taste' can be "no other than subjective."[17] With this goes Kant's strong conviction that judgments of taste must be sharply distinguished from cognitive judgment even though they might bear a formal resemblance to each other; because the beautiful evokes a satisfaction apart from concepts. Therefore, for Kant, a judgment of taste is not a claim to knowledge. Rather, a judgment of taste, according to Kant, is said to be "'disinterested'; that is, it is indifferent to the real existence or utility of the object."[18] As Richard Dien Winfield points out, "In terms of philosophical categories this meant a shift in emphasis from an objective metaphysics of Beauty to the transcendental analysis of the subjective or intersubjective process which accounts for Beauty's reception within human experience."[19] The specific import for the

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[16] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Hofenberg Sonderausgabe (Berlin: Contumax, 2016).

[17] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 2nd ed., trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1968), 37.

[18] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 38.

[19] Richard Dien Winfield, "The Dilemmas of Metaphysical and Transcendental Aesthetics," in *Systematic Aesthetics* (Gainseville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 1–58.

present project is that this leads to an account of beauty (and aesthetics) that takes place in an autonomous sphere completely separate from knowledge [truth] and moral experience [ethics].[20]

Kant was not reacting simply against the Rationalistic Turn, but more so in his "turn to the subject" he was really trying to synthesize what he saw as the unnecessary and detrimental dichotomy and opposition between the objective and the subjective in regard to philosophical aesthetics. Although Kant asks and addresses appropriate questions in regard to the subject/object gap, he does not succeed in providing a holistic solution and instead gives an account of aesthetics that is primarily subjective and irrational, and that excludes God (and therefore theology and discipleship) from the conversation.[21] Two key reasons for this are: (1) Kant's starting point is the same object/subject presupposition of his forebears; and, (2) his philosophical aesthetics revolve around the subjective philosophical system he employs. Therefore, in his turn to the subject, he ends up with an irrational, and subjective perspective that flattens aesthetics solely to the horizontal realm and inner-subjectivity of the individual. Arthur Schopenhauer in his work, *The World as Will and Representation,* criticizes Kant's subjective approach as being especially concerned with the analysis of abstract concepts, rather than with perceived objects. He effectively argues that Kant does not start from the beautiful object of perception, but from "the 'judgment' [someone's statement] concerning the beautiful."[22]

Unfortunately, the overall logic of Kant's aesthetics, the system around which it revolves is one that flattens it in such a way that it "leads towards alienation—of art from knowledge, of art

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[20] Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 190.

[21] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 120–22.

[22] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation,* Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1:530–31.

from action, of artist from the physical world, of artist from fellow artist, of artist from society."[23] It is important then, to recognize that Kant's view of philosophical aesthetics remains the normative legacy and the operative presupposition still at work today. As Begbie emphasizes, "it was Kant more than anyone else who synthesized and consolidated the thought of his time in a way which encapsulates most of the key assumptions about art which we take for granted today."[24] These assumptions notoriously led to such trite yet normative viewpoints as 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'; and, 'art for art's sake'. Kant's work on aesthetic experience encompasses a characteristic frame of mind which sums up, and to a significant extent shaped, a very large proportion of modern thinking and writing about the arts. The effect of such a shift and resultant flattened and autonomous view of aesthetics unfortunately is the disengagement and separation of beauty from the beautiful, as well as art and aesthetics from knowledge.[25]

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[23] Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 199.

[24] Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 187.

[25] In summarizing the effect and legacy of Kant's thought, Jeremy Begbie highlights (7) key points that continue to exert their influence today. Since Kant's perspective and legacy remains highly influential to this day, Begbie's seven points are extremely insightful and important for the purposes of this project specifically in regard to connecting aesthetics with a full-circle creedal framework and two realms organizing principle. Therefore, Begbie's key points are worth engaging in full: (1) Begbie argues that Kant's "speaking of aesthetic experience, gravitates away from the physical world beyond the mind towards the inner mental experience of the individual." Begbie further asserts that due to this gravitational force, "western aesthetics has the tendency to subordinate the sensuous material to the spiritual and immaterial." (2) Begbie rightly emphasizes that Kant's aesthetics "all too easily generate a divorce of art from action." Here, Begbie turns in agreement to Nicholas Wolterstorff, who, in his own work, *Art in Action*, goes so far as to assert that in the West, "No matter what the art, in each case the action that you and I tend to regard as intended is a species of … perceptual contemplation." Wolterstorff continues, "Virtually every statement concerning the purposes of the arts which comes from the hands of aestheticians, our art theorists, our critics, makes this assumption." (3) Begbie then shows how Kant's "epistemology commits him to the view that form and order are essentially created and imposed on the plurality of the world by the human mind, not discovered." Begbie further argues, "Highly prominent since his day has been the view that art triumphs by working the wonders of human mind upon the formlessness of the world, not by interacting with an order already given to hand." Here, Kant wants to show that the ability of the human imagination is to "impart beauty to objects" that "creates a restful place for man … in an otherwise hostile world." Here, the created order is not seen as 'gift' nor expressly as objectively 'given'. As this is the case, creativity is seen as 'necessity' rather than as 'opportunity'. (4) Begbie shows that the Kantian approach "isolates a work of art from the particularities of everyday life and affairs." In consequence, "Subsequent philosophy of art, although not always showing such a marked interest in the structural features of art, has largely followed suit with respect to Kant's denigration of the representing or referring capabilities of art." This has led to the persistent claim of the absolute autonomy of art known as 'art for art's sake'— "the view that art is answerable only to itself and must never be judged according to the degreed of

Ernst Cassirer was a philosopher who sought to move beyond Kantian aesthetics and present a new way forward. In so doing he succinctly summarized the modern history of philosophical aesthetics in terms of "an inherent antagonism" in which "language and art are constantly oscillating between two opposite poles, an objective and a subjective pole."[26] Cassirer's work ignited students such as Susanne K. Langer to move in the direction of bridging the gap between language and art and the objective and subjective in epistemology. It will be specifically the work of Langer I will bring into dialogue with the Lutheran creedal frame and two realms theology to propose a different way forward that does not begin with the received presupposition of an object/subject dichotomy. This different way will address the harmful

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correspondence it has to phenomenon beyond itself, such as a moral order, the artist's intentions, the circumstances of its production, and so on." (5) Begbie notes that the Kantian approach "hardens the distinction between aesthetic experience and knowledge which he inherited from his predecessors." As such, we have been "bequeathed a picture in which the natural sciences are the granters of publicly verifiable truth, while the arts are concerned with matters of private taste, with little or no bearing on the way things actually are beyond ourselves." With this goes an inclination (which I will engage in depth in this chapter through the work of Susanne K. Langer) to "divide language rigidly into two types: factual statements which are fitted to convey objective truths, and 'metaphor' or 'symbolic' language which can only express what is lodged within the human psyche." (6) Begbie asserts that the Kantian approach "makes it difficult to provide a convincing account of the universal validity of aesthetic judgements, despite his intention to avoid relativism." Here, Begbie observes that for Kant, "The universality of judgments of taste is grounded only in the universality of the subjective conditions necessary for judging objects, and it is not evident that we can ever ascertain whether the subjective conditions necessary for an authentic experience of beauty are actually operative." Begbie does grant that Kant may succeed in "demonstrating that aesthetic judgments are not direct, straightforward conceptual judgements," however, Begbie argues, Kant gives us "no substantial help in seeing how they can ever be more than simply idiosyncratic, entirely relative to the person who makes them." Therefore, if aesthetic statements have no cognitive relation to states of affairs beyond the person who utters them, "then the vortex of relativism—at least in some form—appears inescapable." Unfortunately, this is exactly what has continued to be promoted since Kant, "so much so that today it is extraordinarily difficult to retrieve any idea of taste or aesthetic judgment that is more than the expression of personal preferences." (7) Begbie concludes by correctly summarizing that "the Kantian tradition in the philosophy of art," has been "undoubtedly affected by Kant's turn towards the solitary thinking self as the locus of the plenitude of being and truth." Accordingly, Begbie contends, that in Kant's case, "Conventions and traditions are all too often regarded as something from which to wrestle free rather than as potential sources of benefit." Therefore, in the case of Kant and the legacy he has passed down to us reveals a, "novelty, a rejection of tradition, and an alienated self-centered expressionism [that] have become the standards of art today." I agree with Begbie's seven points and find them both insightful and effective in setting the stage for a postliberal critique of modern epistemology that lays the groundwork for an alternative creative and constructive approach to aesthetics that is non-foundational, operates by way of a ruled use, and is set within a community and context. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 191–97.

[26] Hazard Adams, ed., "Art" in *Critical Theory Since Plato* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1992), 326.

dichotomies that exist between language and art, and art and knowledge in modern epistemology.[27] This dialogue will reveal both a vertical reception of beauty that comes down from God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ and is received as poetic gift, as well as a constructive and creative horizontal engagement with the beautiful via the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and a restored *'imago Dei'* that provides a renewed poetic agency which takes place in the sphere of God's First Article Creation as ongoing poetic opportunity.

Susanne K. Langer: A Brief Bio

Susanne K. Langer was born in New York City on 20 December 1895 and died on 17 July 1985 in Old Lyme, Connecticut. She graduated from Radcliffe College, which at the time offered the equivalent of a Harvard degree for women, in 1920 with a B.A. in philosophy. Langer received her M.A. in philosophy from Radcliffe in 1924 and her Ph.D. in philosophy from Radcliffe in 1926. Her original interests in philosophical methodology and symbolic logic, are

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[27] Few have been more critical of Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetics than Hans-Georg Gadamer in his work *Truth and Method*. In the first part of his work, Gadamer's main concern is to question the deep-seated assumption in our culture that the appreciation of art and beauty has nothing to do with knowledge and truth. Therefore, he launches a sustained attack on what he calls 'the subjectivisation of aesthetics' since Kant, and in particular the notion of 'disinterested', 'aesthetic consciousness'. Gadamer insists that we do not react merely to the form of a work of art as opposed to its content; rather we respond to it as something which mediates meaning as unity. Moreover, the experience of art leads not simply to self-awareness but to genuine knowledge. Searching for a model to argue against the received Kantian view, Gadamer alights on the phenomenon of a game (like Wittgenstein). Like a game, the work of art is a dynamic reality which grasps and envelops us, drawing us into its life and world. The game has its own essence (*Wesen*) independent of the consciousness of those who play. We do not control the game; rather, we find ourselves caught up in it. Thus, Gadamer effectively turns on its head the Kantian stress on our imposition of form and meaning. In addition, Gadamer is committed to laying great stress on the act of enjoying and interpreting art, namely the experience of art. Here, the work of art is not a self-contained and self-enclosed object which stands in front of a spectator or listener waiting to be contemplated. Rather, there is a dynamic interaction or transaction between the work of art and the spectator. The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience changing the person who experiences it. Discovery takes place in the encounter. And, for the purposes of this project, one of the most important contributions Gadamer has made in the field of aesthetics in countering Kantianism is his plea that we appreciate the positive role of corporate tradition as an essential element in interpreting art. Therefore, art and aesthetics take place in the midst of community. Gadamer's contention that the arts can provide cognitive apprehension of the objectively real provides a wider conception of knowledge than Kant's, and supports the argument for a postliberal, non-foundational, ruled-use approach to aesthetics. In so doing he outright rejects Kantian aesthetic. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed. transl. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), 84.

presented especially in two key published works that we will engage in this chapter. The first is, *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942), in which Langer explored the philosophical implications of taking the notion of "symbolic transformation" as the "new key" in philosophy, thus opening up a new idea and standard of human rationality and meaning-making. In 1953, Langer next published *Feeling and Form*, which presented a full theory of art focusing on the central category of the "art symbol." As Robert Innis notes, "The task that Susanne Langer made the focal point of her philosophical career was to explore how human life must be thought of as a continuous process of meaning-making effected through processes of symbolic transformation of experience."[28] In so doing, Langer's ultimate goal was "to construct a model of human mentality under the rubric of the "symbolic mind" that would encompass all the major dimensions encompassed by what we call "mind" in the distinctively human sense."[29] It is to these two key works from Langer's overarching corpus that I now turn. Here, I will detail key features of her argument which reveal that aesthetics and the arts are indeed more than merely entertaining and ornamental (though they can indeed be that), and that they are more than a solely subjective means of self-expression, or personal preference (though they can be that as well). In so doing, I will argue that Langer provides us with a theoretical map that shows how aesthetics and the arts reveal, disclose, and open us to the world in which we live, and in unique ways serve as vehicles of discovery that have meaning and purpose and are meant to be created, interpreted, and performed.

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[28] Robert E. Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus: The Symbolic Mind* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 1.

[29] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 1.

Engaging *Philosophy in a New Key*

Beginning with her seminal work, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* Langer sets out to argue that "the field of semantics is wider than the field of language."[30] However, she points out, "this is blocked for us by the two fundamental tenets of current epistemology, which … go hand in hand: (1) That 'language is the only means of articulating thought,' and, (2) That 'everything which is not speakable thought, is feeling.'"[31] The consequences of such a limiting approach is that "nothing that cannot be 'projected' in discursive form is accessible to the human mind at all, and any attempt to understand anything but demonstrable fact is bootless ambition."[32] Langer wholeheartedly disagrees and sets out to argue that 'speech' as important as it is, "is the natural outcome of only one 'kind' of symbolic process." She shows that "There are transformations of experience in the human mind that have quite different overt endings. They end in acts that are neither practical nor communicative, though they may be both effective and communal."[33] She then argues that this brings to the forefront the realization that "Many issues that seemed to concern the 'sources' of knowledge, now appear to turn partly or wholly on the 'forms' of knowledge, or even the forms of expression, of symbolism."[34] Namely, that philosophy "as a distinctive discipline is fundamentally concerned with the descriptive and critical analysis of meanings and their orders and not, like the sciences, with the discovery of facts"[35] based on causal relationships. Therefore,

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[30] Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[31] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 87.

[32] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 86.

[33] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 45.

[34] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 85.

[35] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 2.

Langer sets out to show that philosophy is "more an activity than a superscience," that is to be practiced in such a way "to recognize that meanings are "embodied in forms" that have a distinctive kind of "logic", and history, both "ideal" and "real."[36] Langer sounds an early clarion call in regard to the rise of symbology and the turn to the aesthetic. She asserts that in attending to this turn "lies a new conception of "mentality," that may illumine questions of life and consciousness, instead of obscuring them as traditional "scientific methods" have done."[37]

With this as her point of departure, Langer claims that "the conditions for rationality lie deep in our … power of perceiving, in the elementary functions of our eyes and ears and fingers." Which carries the import that our "mental life begins with our mere physiological constitution."[38] This means that, "our ingrained habit of hypostatizing impressions, of seeing 'things' and not sense-data, rests on the fact that we promptly and unconsciously abstract a form from each sensory experience and use this form to 'conceive' the experience as a whole, as a 'thing.'"[39] This leads Langer to argue that *Gestaltung* (an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts) is of the very nature of perception, and therefore, the necessary way forward for breaching "the hiatus between perception and conception, sense-organ and mind-organ, chaotic stimulus and logical response."[40] Here, she points out the logical necessity that "A mind that works primarily with meanings must have organs that supply it primarily with forms."[41] Therefore, she argues "the activity of our senses is 'mental' not only when it reaches

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[36] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 2.

[37] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 25.

[38] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 89.

[39] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 90.

[40] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 90.

[41] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 90.

the brain, but in its very inception … All sensitivity bears the stamp of mentality."[42] Here, we find that Langer's philosophical project broadly conceived is her "crucial and indispensable insight that a focus on the "logic" of signs, symbols, and meanings … does not take philosophical reflection away from "experience," … but throws new light on just how experience itself is structured and accessed through semiotic tools and instruments."[43] This specifically highlights, especially for the sake of this project, the relevance of philosophical analysis and reflection to lived experience, that Langer's work definitely illustrates. Therefore, as Innis aptly points out, "Langer's work is not just abstract analysis but engagement with life's deep structures."[44]

Susanne Langer is also aware that "the laws that govern this sort of articulation are altogether different from the laws of syntax that govern language."[45] Therefore, she also logically works through the key differences between the two kinds of articulation and effectively argues "The meanings given through language are successively understood, and gathered into a whole by the process called discourse." She continues "the meanings of all other symbolic elements that compose a larger, articulate symbol are understood only through the meanings of the whole, through their relations within the total structure. Their very functioning as symbols depends on the fact that they are involved in a simultaneous, integral presentation."[46] Langer calls this, "'presentational symbolism' to characterize its essential distinction from discursive symbolism,

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[42] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 90.

[43] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 3.

[44] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 3.

[45] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 93.

[46] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 97.

or ‘language’ proper.”[47] It is this difference between the two types of articulation that Langer argues:

> invites one to tackle anew, and with entirely different expectations, the whole problem of the limits of reason, the much-disputed life of feeling, and the great controversial topics of fact and truth, knowledge and wisdom, science and art. It brings within the compass of reason much that has been traditionally relegated to ‘emotion’.[48]

Here, the difference that Langer has described further reveals that

> The general theory of symbolism here set forth, which distinguishes between two symbolic modes rather than restricting intelligence to discursive forms and relegating all other conception to some irrational realm of feeling and instinct, has the great advantage of assimilating all mental activity to reason, instead of grafting that strange product upon a fundamentally unintellectual organism. It accounts for imagination and dream, myth and ritual, as well as for practical intelligence. Discursive thought gives rise to science, and a theory of knowledge restricted to its products culminates in the critique of science;” whereas “the recognition of non-discursive thought makes it just as possible to construct a theory of ‘understanding’ that naturally culminates in a critique of art. The parent stock of both conceptual types, of verbal and non-verbal formulation, is the basic human act of symbolic transformation. The root is the same, only the flower is different.[49]

The implication of Langer’s thesis is that “the limits of language are not the last limits of experience, and things inaccessible to language may have their own forms of conception, that is to say, their own symbolic devices.”[50] Here, she specifically points out that such “nondiscursive forms, charged with logical possibilities of meaning underlie the significance of music.”[51] Specifically, Langer argues against the opposing poles of “expression” and “impression” when she asserts that,

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[47] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 97.

[48] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 97.

[49] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 97.

[50] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 222.

[51] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 222.

> if music has any significance, it is semantic, not symptomatic. Its "meaning" is evidently not that of stimulus to evoke emotions, nor that of a signal to announce them; if it has an emotional content, it "has" it in the same sense that language "has" its conceptual content—symbolically. It is not usually derived from affects nor intended for them; but we may say, with certain reservations, that it is about them. Music is not the cause of the cure of feelings, but their logical expression; though even in this capacity it has its special ways of functioning, that make it incommensurable with language, and even with presentational symbols like images, gestures, and rites.[52]

Thus, music is understood not as mere emotive self-expression, nor as simply stimulus for the sake of emotional impression, but rather as "formulation and representation" of "emotions, moods, mental tensions," and therefore, "a source of insight."[53] Thus, the "real power of music lies in the fact that it can be "true" to the life of feeling in a way that language cannot; for its significant forms have that ambivalence of content which words cannot have."[54] Music is thus "revealing, where words are obscuring, because it can have not only a content, but a transient play of contents. It can articulate feelings without becoming wedded to them."[55] Therefore, Langer argues that music is a semantic of a different order from language proper. It is a nondiscursive symbol of articulation. Because this is so, Langer asserts that "not communication but insight is the gift of music; in very naïve phrase, a knowledge of "how feelings go."[56] Or, more succinctly and powerfully put, "Music sounds the way moods feel."[57] After her engagement with music, Langer asserts that the nondiscursive vital import realized in music is open to our understanding of all the art forms,

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[52] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 218.

[53] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 222.

[54] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 243.

[55] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 243.

[56] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 244.

[57] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 245.

> Artistic expression is what these media will convey; and I strongly suspect, though I am not ready to assert it dogmatically, that the import of artistic expression is broadly the same in all arts as it is in music—the verbally ineffable, yet not inexpressible law of vital experience, the pattern of affective and sentient being. This is the "content" of what we perceive as "beautiful form"; and this formal element is the artist's "idea" which is conveyed by every great work.[58]

Langer argues "All thinking begins with 'seeing'; not necessarily through the eye, but with some basic formulations of sense perception, in the peculiar idiom of sight, hearing, or touch, normally of all these senses together. For all thinking is conceptual, and conception begins with the comprehension of Gestalt."[59] Therefore, she contends:

> A mind that is very sensitive to forms as such and is aware of them beyond the common-sense requirements for recognition, memory, and classification of things, is apt to use its images metaphorically, to exploit their possible significance for the conception of remote or intangible ideas; that is to say, if our interest in Gestalten goes beyond their common-sense meanings it is apt to run into their dynamic, mythical, or artistic meanings.[60]

As this is the case, "Our most important assets are always the symbols of our general 'orientation' in nature, on the earth, in society, and in what we are doing: the symbols of our *Weltanschauung* and *Lebenschauung*."[61] Here, Robert Innis helpfully points out that "Langer, for her part, offers, we will see, deep-grounded insights into the "semiotic body," in both its endosomatic (intra-bodily) and exosomatic (extra-bodily) forms. Meaning-systems exist both "inside" and "outside" our "natural" bodies."[62] Thus our understanding of our embodiedness and our embeddedness is of the utmost importance in overcoming the object/subject chasm as well as the opposing poles of "expression" and "impression." Thus, Langer sounds a clear and strong

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[58] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 257.

[59] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 266.

[60] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 266.

[61] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 287.

[62] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 5.

warning in regard to our human orientation,

> But the most disastrous hindrance is disorientation, the failure or destruction of life-symbols and loss or repression of votive acts. A life that does not incorporate some degree of ritual, of gesture and attitude, has no mental anchorage. It is prosaic to the point of total indifference, purely casual, devoid of that structure of intellect and feeling which we call "personality.[63]

Therefore, Langer rightly concludes "a theory of mind whose keynote is the symbolic function, whose problem is the morphology of significance … is inspired by the rational need of envisagement and understanding."[64]

Focusing in on *Feeling and Form*

In her sequel work, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in A New Key*, Langer begins by addressing another problematic issue within the modern epistemological perspective specifically related to a foundational/scientific approach to art:

> the psychologistic currents, that have tended, for the last fifty years at least, have tended to force all philosophical problems of art into the confines of behaviorism and pragmatism, where they find neither development nor solution, but are assigned to vague realms of 'value' and 'interest,' in which nothing of great value or interest has yet been done.[65]

She points out that this is caused by the problematic issue of approaching art and aesthetics scientifically through the 'genetic premise' (i.e., animal psychology) which treats art theory and the aesthetic "either as direct satisfactions, i.e., pleasures, or as instrumental values, that is to say, means to fulfillment of biological needs."[66] In this perspective, art is viewed either as "a leisure interest, like sports and hobbies," or as "valuable for getting on with the world's work—

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[63] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 290.

[64] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 293.

[65] Susan K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1953), 34–35.

[66] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 36.

strengthening morale, integrating social groups, or venting dangerous repressed feelings in a harmless emotional catharsis."[67] Thus, Langer once again points out that she is beginning from a different starting point than the way modernity has treated the problem of art and aesthetics, when she asserts,

> Philosophical questions are indeed radically different from scientific questions, because they concern the implications and other interrelations of ideas, not the order of physical events; their answers are interpretations instead of factual reports, and their function is to increase not our knowledge of nature, but our understanding of what we know. Actually, the growth of conception, which is the aim of philosophy, has a distinct bearing on our ability to observe facts; for it is systematic conception that makes some facts important and others trivial.[68]

Therefore, in direct contrast, and following the lead of Otto Baensch, Langer sets out "to prove that art, like science, is a mental activity whereby we bring certain contents of the world into the realm of objectively valid cognition; and that, furthermore, it is the particular office of art to do this with the world's emotional content."[69] According to Langer, the key import of this view is that, "the function of art is not to give the percipient any kind of pleasure, however, noble, but to acquaint him with something he has not known before."[70] Here, "Art, just like science, aims primarily to be 'understood.'"[71] With this constructive thesis as her point of departure, Langer effectively argues that "the artistic symbol, 'qua' artistic, negotiates insight, not reference; it does not rest upon convention, but motivates and dictates conventions."[72] Herein lies a key difference for Langer, namely that "symbols differ radically from signals. A signal is

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[67] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 36.

[68] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 6.

[69] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 19.

[70] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 19.

[71] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 19.

[72] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 22.

comprehended if it serves to refer us to the object or situation it bespeaks. A symbol is understood when we conceive the idea it presents."[73]

Once again, as in her previous work, *Philosophy in A New Key*, Langer utilizes a theory of music as the key illustration for her argument: "music is not stimulation of feeling, but expression of it; not the symptomatic expression of feelings … but a symbolic expression of the forms of sentience to understand them."[74] In this key, therefore, music is "a symbolic form through which we may learn as well as utter ideas of human sensibility."[75] This theory of music, Langer argues more confidently than in her previous work, can be applied to all the artistic forms. Langer next lays out once again, in summary form, the key difference between discursive and non-discursive logical forms. Here, however she adds the emphasis that "articulate but non-discursive forms have import without conventional reference, and therefore present themselves not as a symbol in the ordinary sense, but as a 'significant form.'"[76] This means, she writes "In an articulate symbol the symbolic import permeates the whole structure, because every articulation of that structure is an articulation of the idea it conveys; the meaning (or, to speak accurately of a nondiscursive symbol, the vital import) is the content of the symbolic form, given with it, as it were, to perception."[77] But the key is that the "congruence of the symbolic form and the form of some vital experience must be directly perceived by the force of 'Gestalt' alone."[78] This is true because, "The commanding form of a piece of art contains its basic rhythm, which is

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[73] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 26.

[74] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 28.

[75] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 28.

[76] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 32.

[77] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 52.

[78] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 60.

at once the source of its organic unity and its total feeling."[79] Therefore,

> the import of an art symbol cannot be built up like the meaning of a discourse, but must be seen '*in toto*' first; that is the 'understanding' of a work of art begins with an intuition of the whole presented feeling. Contemplation then gradually reveals the complexities of the piece, and of its import.[80]

Thus, she concludes that the "import is not separable from the form that expresses it."[81] And that is why, "A work of art, or anything that affects us as art does … formulates our conceptions of feeling and our conceptions of visual, factual, and audible reality together."[82] This gives us "'forms of imagination' and 'forms of feeling,' inseparably which clarify and organize intuition itself."[83] In art, "it is the impact of the whole, the immediate revelation of vital import, that acts as the psychological lure to long contemplation."[84] Following Charles Morgan, Langer avers "art has … a double function—first to still the preoccupied mind, to empty it of triviality, to make it receptive and meditative; then to impregnate it … enabling one to imagine, to perceive, even to become, what he could not of himself become or perceive or imagine."[85] This means that art "shapes our imagination of external reality according to the rhythmic forms of life and sentience, and so impregnates the world with aesthetic value."[86] Thus, Langer concludes, "more than anything else in experience, the arts mold our actual life of feeling."[87] And, as I will further argue in chapter 5 following Langer, "Art is the form, the expression that takes shape as it

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[79] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 129.

[80] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 379–80.

[81] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 392.

[82] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 397.

[83] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 397.

[84] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 397.

[85] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 398.

[86] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 399.

[87] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 401.

articulates an envisagement of realities which discursive language cannot properly express."[88]

The Vital Import of Langer's Non-Foundational Map

Here, I believe it is important to highlight and summarize seven key markers on the theoretical map that Langer has provided for the traveler journeying through the territory of philosophical aesthetics and how her non-foundational approach is different from that of modernity. First, Langer has shown that discursive and nondiscursive symbolization and articulation are both semantic, but of different orders. Second, she effectively argues that they have different functions and therefore necessarily require different rules by which they are to be understood and used. Third, as this is the case, a scientific causal approach to the nondiscursive semantic, i.e. art and aesthetics as presented by the modern view is askew, and therefore we need a different non-foundational approach to the nondiscursive. Fourth, Langer thus provides a unique approach, a "new key" that connects aesthetics and the life of feeling (specifically the emotions) to the intellect and human mentality via logical relationships rather than scientific causal relationships. This is a key difference from Kant and the modern epistemology we have received in regard to a scientific approach to art and aesthetics. Fifth, Langer argues against the modern mind/body dichotomy that separates the physical organisms of the five senses from human mentality and therefore the life of feeling from the intellect. In so doing, she re-connects the embodied and encultured aspect of our everyday reality to mentality and therefore the affective to the cognitive—the life of feeling as integral to human mentality. Sixth, Langer re-connects the objective and the subjective in regard to the life of feeling in the way in which she logically denounces the long-standing opposing poles of "artist" and "spectator," or, the extreme

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[88] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 392.

emphasis on either "expression" or "impression" within the scientific approach to the philosophy of art. This is particularly evident in her handling of music as an artistic form of vital import. Here, Langer effectively reveals that feeling and emotion both objectively inhere in the artistic object itself and call the one that comes into contact with the symbolic artifact to insight and understanding, i.e. to experience something they have not experienced before that leads to new insight and understanding in their subjective life of feeling. In so doing, Langer effectively argues for an approach to nondiscursive symbolization creatively at work in art that leads to insight, understanding, and creative action. Seventh, Langer shows us that the mental life moves by way of metaphor and therefore that the human mind is constantly and creatively at work in the process of symbolic transformation. All of these markers are vitally important in re-connecting aesthetics to theology in such a way that adequately addresses the whole human person as both creative recipient and agent in the midst of everyday experience.

The postliberal approach, then, which seeks a non-foundational, descriptive way of doing theology that led us to the work of Susanne Langer concerning a philosophy of art, especially her response to the modern epistemological issue of bracketing out aesthetics and her thoughts on music, provides fertile ground and aids us in the task of creatively and constructively developing a renewed focus on the intrinsic nature of aesthetics in the daily practice of Lutheran theology.

Conclusion

This chapter has called us to remain open to the world and learn from the knowledge it offers by way of the arts and sciences. In so doing, we have attended to the theoretical map through the field of philosophical aesthetics provided to us by the work of Susanne K. Langer. However, as Osmer asserted in the introduction to this chapter the non-foundational philosophy of art that we have engaged does not provide the fullness of wise judgement in regard to the

specific task of this project which aims at the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology for developing and aesthetics of discipleship in the midst of everyday life. For that we turn to the question, how can the outline that Langer's work has provided be appropriated within a theological framework that re-connects the essential relationship between aesthetics and theology in the everyday life of the Christian disciple? Or more expressly we might ask, how might we best utilize the concepts and insights that we have gathered from Langer's work in the field of philosophical aesthetics and place her key theories, concepts, and insights in dialogue with the normative resources of the Lutheran tradition? All that we have gained from our engagement with the philosophical sketch that Langer has provided will contribute to how we answer these questions. Yet, in moving toward the goal of this project the picture provided by Langer needs to be appropriated within the theological framework that draws on the beliefs and practices of the Lutheran tradition. This is the challenge of cross-disciplinary dialogue that, as Osmer asserts, leads us into the normative task of *prophetic discernment* through the practice of theological interpretation, ethical reflection, and offering a model of good practice that is examined and illustrated in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSTRUCTING A CONTEMPORARY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I begin to attend to the normative task[1] of *prophetic discernment* as described by Richard Osmer. Osmer begins his description of the normative task by highlighting three approaches that are open to the interpretive guide. The first approach is theological interpretation, which "uses theological concepts to interpret particular *present* episodes, situations, and contexts, informed by a theory of divine and human action."[2] The second approach is ethical reflection, which "uses ethical principles, rules, or guidelines to guide action toward moral ends."[3] The third approach is good practice, which "derives norms from good practice, by exploring models of such practice in the present and past or by engaging reflexively in transforming practice in the present."[4] In this chapter I will attend to the first two approaches to normativity; namely, theological interpretation, and ethical reflection. In so doing, I will construct a contemporary theological framework that will be utilized for reflection on, and appropriation of Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art in the chapter after this one. There I will attend to the third approach to the normative task by presenting an illustration of good practice in regard to the cross-disciplinary dialogue between Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art and contemporary Lutheran theology for developing an aesthetics of

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[1] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 130.

[2] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 161.

[3] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 161.

[4] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 161.

discipleship.[5]

In turning to the first two approaches to the normative task of *prophetic discernment* in the present chapter I will use a variety of contemporary Lutheran thinkers to help accomplish my project of constructing a framework that will appropriate Langer's philosophy of art for the task of Christian discipleship. In so doing, we find that contemporary Lutheran theology first provides us with a unique perspective on everyday life and experience that properly addresses the whole human person, the *totus homo*, as it strongly confirms both our embodiedness in the created sphere and our embeddedness in the surrounding community. Contemporary Lutheran theology thus provides us with a unique perspective on theology and discipleship that is, "unencumbered by the polarizing tendencies of any of the usual dualities,"[6] such as the mind/body, insight-oriented/practice-oriented, object/subject, private/public, experiential-expressivist/cognitive-propositionalist dualities that have hindered so much thought on everyday discipleship throughout modernity. Specifically, contemporary Lutheran theology provides us with a perspective that portrays the Christian life of everyday discipleship creatively and artistically, in both its indicative (divine initiative) and imperative (our human responsibility) sense, without separating the two or compromising the centrality of the gospel. Here, the Lutheran theological framework of creed and two realms provides,

> A norming horizon, within which a believer's life *coram deo* and *coram hominibus* can be seen together as a unity. Instead of being concerned to balance some particular tension, the believer is able to see all of his life, before God and before men, as the unfolding of God's creative design. Justification, for example, is not regarded in tension with sanctification. Instead, God's proclamation of justifying grace is recognized as the restoration that enables the believer to return to the created realm

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[5] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 132.

[6] Joel D. Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2002), 242.

> with new insight into God's will, and new support for the privileged task of living as God always intended his creatures to live.[7]

I intend, then, to argue that the Lutheran creedal framework and two realms theology provides a foundation for pointing toward an aesthetics of discipleship that engages both an objective vertical reality (Divine Poetic Gift) as well as our subjective horizontal capacity for discovering, delighting in and actively cultivating beauty from the given gift (gifted to live poetically). Therefore, the normative task of *prophetic discernment* undertaken in this chapter begins with Osmer's first approach that of theological interpretation, to show that the Lutheran theology of the two realms (and consequently as we will come to see of three kinds of righteousness) actually serve as a unique and elegant organizing principle at work within a creedal framework toward developing an aesthetics of discipleship. This presupposition is effectively argued by Edward Cranz, William Wright, Robert Kolb, Charles Arand, Erik Herrmann, and Joel Biermann.

Attending to a Contemporary Lutheran Theological Approach

Beginning with the work of Edward Cranz, and William Wright, we find that each author in his own way emphasizes the development of Luther's theology of the two realms throughout the Reformer's career. Cranz does so by way of contrast between the views of the younger and the more mature Luther, Wright by way of Luther's development within his own contextual setting, namely, a time of great skepticism that grew out of humanistic thought and the burgeoning of relativism. Both authors highlight the reality that Luther was not interested in radically separating Christianity and secularity but sought a Christian worldview (*Weltanschauung*) to give Christians guidance on how to live distinctively Christian lives in the

[7] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 242.

world.[8] This is a key theological insight in constructing a framework that is capable of interpreting the aesthetic aspect of the disciple's everyday life. Cranz argues that Luther's two realms theology actually serves as the center and 'organizing principle' of his thought and pastoral advice.[9] And as Wright adds, when it is understood as such, "it proves to be essential for clarifying all of Luther's views,"[10] including "the distinctions that he made between passive and active righteousness and law and gospel,"[11] as well as, "in treating all kinds of theological and pastoral issues, including the creation, man as the image of God, Jesus as the Christ, the necessity of grace, the sacraments, and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments."[12] This of course, is a different and distinct perspective from the oft-assumed and long-received perspective that the law/gospel dialect is the overarching organizing principle of Luther's theological insight. This unique turn to the two realms and creedal frame will prove to be extremely effective in opening space for a more in-depth Lutheran recognition of, engagement with, and practice of the essential relationship of aesthetics to ethics and truth and therefore to the everyday life of the Christian disciple.

Unfortunately, as both authors note, Luther's two realms theology was perverted over time by a mixing of the two realms.[13] This led to the subsequent and reactionary radical separation of the two realms and the spurious misrepresentation of Luther in later generations reducing the

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[8] William J. Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 15.

[9] F. Edward Cranz, *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law, and Society*, 2nd ed. (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 1998), vii.

[10] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 15.

[11] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 114.

[12] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 113.

[13] Cranz, *Development of Luther's Thought*, 66.

reformer's insights to primarily ideological and political applications, as is especially evident in protestant liberalism and Nazi fascism.[14] As Wright points out:

> The essence of this perverted doctrine was the idea that the world, human institutions, politicians, and everyday people were free from the power and the laws of God, because the world had its own rules and ethical norms, which were produced by processes internal to the world. This idea is often labeled with the term *Eigengesetzlichkeit*, but it is sometimes put under the rubric of 'dualisms' that distinguishes and divorces an inner private life and ethic from an outer public life and ethic.[15]

Thus, Robert Kolb and Charles Arand warn, "such a false distinction might tempt some to adopt either a hierarchical understanding in which the world (creation and thereby art and aesthetics) would be unimportant, or the world would be autonomous of the laws of God."[16] I have already provided a key example of this in the field of philosophical aesthetics in regard to the autonomy of Kantian aesthetics.

However, as Wright correctly argues, Luther's understanding of the two realms actually represents a way to "avoid the extremes of monastic withdrawal from the world as well as Machiavellian worldly autonomy from God's rule and law."[17] And, therefore, "Luther's idea of the two realms provided an understanding of reality that was compatible with human experience as well as the Christian Scriptures."[18] Cranz extends this thought noting, "Luther develops a theology of the world only for Christians in a Christian society; he affirms a Christian secularization and not a secularization without qualification."[19] Therefore, for Luther there can

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[14] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 15.

[15] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 20.

[16] Robert Kolb, and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for The Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 110–11.

[17] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 27.

[18] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 105.

[19] Cranz, *Development of Luther's Thought*, 177.

never be any "true secularization apart from Christianity," and "a wide gap separates him from later forms of secularism."[20] This is one of Cranz's major insights, "Luther is not trying to make Christians more worldly, but attempting to give them guidance on how to live a distinctly Christian life in the world."[21] This is a key insight for this project in particular as it provides a firm foundation for grounding the essential relationship of aesthetics to ethics and doctrine in the everyday life of the Christian disciple. Therefore, both authors challenge us to heed the call to pursue the same goal that Luther held for his approach to the two realms, namely, the right functioning of the church and the right functioning of society, which grabs us in the midst of our whole life.

If Cranz and Wright are correct, in arguing that Luther's two realms theology serves as the 'organizing principle' of all his thought, practice, and pastoral advice as it is set within a creedal frame—and I believe they are; then, as I seek to develop a Lutheran perspective on aesthetics—I also must engage the foundation of Luther's two realms theology. In so doing, I will argue that while it is true that Luther rejects the ability of human reason, experience, and therefore the senses as trustworthy for leading one to faith and the certitude of salvation pre-conversion, he gives these an important and essential place and a purpose in the life of ongoing conversion of the Christian disciple in the kingdom of the world, in which they provide imperfect but useful knowledge for daily life.

Luther's non-foundational approach proved effective in dealing with the skepticism and relativism of his day. And, I believe this approach remains especially appropriate for our contemporary context as the skepticism and relativism of Luther's day has now given way to a

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[20] Cranz, *Development of Luther's Thought*, 177.

[21] Cranz, *Development of Luther's Thought*, vii.

society (particularly North America) of irony, absurdity, individualism, celebretyism, cynicism, nihilism, ennui, and an infatuation with the macabre. In seeking a deeper understanding and insight into the surrounding culture in which we find ourselves deeply embedded, and to which this particular project is aimed, we find that we are in the midst of a surrounding culture that has made the turn to the aesthetic and the all-important realm of style. However, in making the turn to the aesthetic and style, the contemporary North American culture has done so with very little (if any at all) gravity or grounding on which to base the privatized, individualistic choices, preferences, and opinions that are constantly and immediately shared with a faceless community. In such a culture, the beauty and gift of the aesthetic is easily manipulated for ideological and propagandist purposes, in a way very similar to how Luther's two realms theology was perverted. Luther's emphasis on God's action at work in the Word, the Spirit, ongoing creation, and the sacraments are therefore not only relevant but also helpful in addressing the need for both certitude (realm of Christ) and a healthy experience and expression of life (realm of the World) in our contemporary context. A much-needed corrective insight that is especially helpful in regard to developing a fully-embodied aesthetic discipleship, is provided by Wright and Cranz. Cranz writes, "the doctrines of creation and sanctification are just as crucial to Luther's thought as the doctrine of redemption."[22] This is a key concept missing in regard to the relationship between aesthetics and spiritual formation, and one that is of specific interest for this project. As Wright further points out, for Luther "Ecclesiastes was about man's actions in the physical world, 'under the sun.' In this regard, it was a ringing endorsement of Christian civic spirit and vocation. Ecclesiastes promoted responsible fulfillment of one's office and statuses in

[22] Cranz, *Development of Luther's Thought*, vii.

life."[23]

Attending to Contemporary Lutheran Ethical Reflection

Understanding the importance of both realms for theological interpretation, I now move to the second approach to the normative task of *prophetic discernment*, that of ethical reflection. Here a brief engagement with the thought and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer on ethics is extremely helpful in furthering the connection between aesthetics and ethics. In his magnificent tome *Ethics*, Part One: Chapter V: "Christ, Reality and Good," Bonhoeffer reveals that also for him the two realms is an 'organizing principle' to his overarching theological imagination and ethical reflection. Bonhoeffer specifically engages and effectively connects three key concepts: the good, the two spheres, and the four mandates.

Bonhoeffer begins with the concept of good in order to lay the creational (Gen 1:31)[24] and Christological (Col 1:17)[25] foundation for discussing the holistic and therefore undivided nature and life of man before God and in the world. This of course, also speaks specifically to our human embodiedness and embeddedness. Therefore, I believe it is worth quoting him here, at length:

> Man is an indivisible whole, not only as an individual in his person and work but also as a member of the community of men and creatures in which he stands. This indivisible whole, this reality which is founded on God and apprehended in Him, is what the question of good has in view. With respect to its origin this indivisible whole is called 'creation.' With respect to its goal it is called the 'kingdom of God.' Both of these are equally remote from us and equally close to us, for God's creation and God's kingdom are present with us solely in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

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[23] Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, 150.

[24] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 190.

[25] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 192.

> Participation in the indivisible whole of the divine reality—this is the sense and the purpose of the Christian enquiry concerning good.[26]

Notice the full-circle creedal perspective that Bonhoeffer has, as he strongly connects the good with what is real in regard to the human creature (specifically, the Christian disciple) and his simultaneous existence *coram Deo* and *coram mundo*. Bonhoeffer rightly notes, that this simultaneous reality is the basis for the Christian enquiry concerning good. Although it is true that Bonhoeffer does not use the language regarding the ancient transcendentals of beauty, goodness, and truth explicitly, in the context of what Bonhoeffer is doing in this central chapter of his Ethics, he is actually making the claims for universal and foundational ideas (claims of truth) in a way that argues against any Platonic understanding. Namely, he strongly connects the good (ethics) to the reality of the doctrine (truth) of the two realms. Notice also, how Bonhoeffer makes the move of connecting the good and reality through the connective tissue of the doctrine (truth) of the Incarnation of Jesus. Bonhoeffer thus concludes this opening section on the good proclaiming, "The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world it is always already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God."[27] And, for the Christian disciple, "this is most certainly—true."

With this as his point of departure, Bonhoeffer engages the historical concept of the two spheres. Here, Bonhoeffer astutely points out that unfortunately the language of two spheres has been co-opted by too many different groups who have utilized it to draw static lines between man and the world.[28] The key problem for Bonhoeffer lies in, "the division of the total reality into a sacred and a profane sphere, a Christian and a secular sphere," which he correctly argues

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[26] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 191.

[27] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 193.

[28] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 194.

"creates the possibility of existence in a single one of these spheres, a spiritual existence which has no part in secular existence, and a secular existence which can claim autonomy for itself and can exercise this right of autonomy in its dealings with the spiritual sphere."[29] This, he argues was not the original intent or understanding of Luther. One can only concur with his argument in defense of Luther's original intent and understanding "as a polemical unity,"[30] that held the two in tension with one another—pointing to their unique distinctions, but never to their unilateral separation and therefore autonomous existence. Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer contends that the two spheres language lends itself to the understanding of two separate and autonomous realities at work in the life of man as he stands before God and in the world, thereby dividing him. Therefore, he argues:

> There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. Sharing in Christ we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world. The reality of Christ comprises the reality of the world within itself. The world has no reality of its own, independently of the revelation of God in Christ.[31]

This sounds a lot like the Lutheran Christian reality of *coram Deo* and *coram mundo* as one unified reality that is expressed and experienced in different ways and yet simultaneously in the life of the individual Christian. Here, as Bonhoeffer elegantly asserts, "the Christian is no longer the man of eternal conflict, but … is himself an undivided whole. His worldliness does not divide him from Christ, and his Christianity does not divide him from the world."[32] The same holds true for the institution of the Church as "the place, in other words the space in the world, at which the reign of Jesus Christ over the whole world is evidenced and proclaimed … the place where

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[29] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 194.

[30] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 197.

[31] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 195.

[32] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 198.

testimony and serious thought are given to God's reconciliation of the world with Himself in Christ."[33] Bonhoeffer concludes his discussion on the two spheres with the powerful and challenging proclamation: "God and the world are thus at one in Christ in a way which means that although the Church and the world are different from each other, yet there cannot be a static, spatial borderline between them."[34] This simultaneous reality of living in both the vertical and horizontal realms at the same time is a unique Lutheran perspective that moves us beyond the gap between the objective/subjective dichotomy of modernity and into a more fully-embodied and fully-embedded three-dimensional approach and existence. Here, there is no flattened reductionism to an autonomous solely subjective horizontal realm, nor the heightened pitch to a primarily platonic idealistic objective reality that really only engages the vertical realm.

Bonhoeffer then makes the move to connect the good and the two spheres to the concept of 'the four mandates.' He states, "This relativeness of the world to Christ assumes concrete form in certain mandates of God in the world."[35] What is noteworthy in particular is the connection Bonhoeffer makes between creation, Christology and the active Christian life that has meaning and purpose when he states, "it is not because labor, marriage, government and church *are* that they are commanded by God, but it is because they are commanded by God that they *are*."[36] Drawing from the beautiful reality of this elegant statement, we can further the argument for the purposes of this project that, it is not because there *are* certain human beings who strive to be creative and artistic that we should consider those individuals poetic beings, rather it is because

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[33] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 199.

[34] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 204.

[35] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 204.

[36] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 205. Italics original.

God created humans as poetic beings that we *are* creative and artistic. Bonhoeffer sets the stage for a meaningful, purposeful, and creative engagement with the world, which entails that "there can be no retreating from a 'secular' into a 'spiritual' sphere."[37] Labor leads us into "the created world of things and values which is designed for the glorification and service of Jesus Christ. This is not a creation out of nothing, like God's creation; it is a making of new things on the basis of the creation by God. No man can evade this mandate."[38] Marriage confronts us with "entering into the will of the Creator in sharing in the process of creation," and also of formation, "educating them [children] to be obedient to Jesus Christ."[39] The divine mandate of government cannot itself "produce life or values. It is not creative."[40] Therefore, "It preserves what has been created, maintaining it in the order which is assigned to it," and protecting it "by making law to consist in the acknowledgement of the divine mandates and by securing respect for this law by the force of the sword."[41] Finally, the mandate of the Church "impinges on all these mandates, for now it is the Christian who is at once laborer, partner in marriage, and subject of government. No division into separate spheres or spaces is permissible here. The whole man stands before the whole earthly and eternal reality, the reality which God has prepared for him in Jesus Christ."[42] Here, we find elegant reflection from Bonhoeffer on Luther's theology in which the whole person [*totus homo*] is addressed and embraced in the reality of living simultaneously in two realms: one that does not splinter, fragment, or compartmentalize the human creature. Rather,

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[37] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 204.

[38] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 206.

[39] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 207.

[40] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 207.

[41] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 207.

[42] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 208.

this is a theological interpretation and ethical reflection that reveals human existence and experience in its simplicity and wholeness. For Bonhoeffer, then, as for Luther, there is no autonomous separation or dichotomization of the two realms. In the following chapter, I will further this argument to include Bonhoeffer's engagement with aesthetics. In so doing I will argue that for Bonhoeffer, there is also no autonomous separation or dichotomization of the truth apart from goodness and beauty in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ as he lives out his poetic vocation in the created sphere. Here, I believe is the basis for a powerful endorsement not only for the essential connection between ethics and doctrine, but more so for the re-connection of aesthetics to ethics and doctrine within the Lutheran theological framework.[43]

We find this further evidenced in the collection of Luther's writings gathered together into the volumes of the American Edition named *The Christian in Society, I and II*. In these two volumes, Luther consistently emphasizes the two realms as the way in which God's Word approaches the individual in his unique circumstances in the world. As William H. Lazareth summarizes,

> As both Redeemer and Creator, God is at once Lord of both kingdoms; as both righteous and sinful, the Christian is at once a subject of both kingdoms. Hence for an evangelical theology of society, the two kingdoms must always be properly distinguished, but never separated in secularism or equated in clericalism.[44]

It is also important to understand in this unique/concrete set of circumstances that Luther does not radically separate grace and good works from one another, but rather holds them in distinguishable tension in the midst of the saint-sinner's reality in the world. Thus, Luther is able

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[43] This will be expressly revealed in the next chapter via the argument for Bonhoeffer's constitutive use of musical metaphor.

[44] Martin Luther, *The Christian in Society I*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 44, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), xiii.

to engage a First Article Christian ethic and aesthetic that flows out of the Second and Third Articles. The human creature is formed, empowered and guided by God's Word and Spirit in such a way that allows for creativity and freedom of action within an overarching unchangeable truth in the midst of constantly changing circumstances that prevents spiritual formation from being simply reduced to a static ideology or one-size-fits-all prescriptive. Addressing the topic from the Christian's point-of-view, William H. Lazareth states,

> With their salvation thus assured in the unmerited forgiveness of Christ, grateful Christians are free to redirect their reason and good works toward serving their neighbors' welfare … All men act as their brother's keeper: willingly in faith, begrudgingly in rebellion. Since the Christian is at once righteous and sinful, his enforced service aids his self-discipline while his voluntary service meets his neighbors' needs.[45]

Taking this a step further, Joel Biermann, following Robert Kolb, argues that the value of Luther's distinction is the ability of the two kinds of righteousness to serve as a frame for all human existence:

> Expressing the distinction between the righteousness of faith, and the righteousness of the law, as well as the legitimacy of both, helps to expand the theological and ethical horizon beyond solely '*coram deo*' questions to include also the concerns of living '*coram hominibus*.' In particular, the recognition of the propriety of civil righteousness within its realm provides a vantage for the consideration of life and activity in the kingdom of the left hand where Christians live and function.[46]

Once again, we find not only the space opened for, but more so a ringing endorsement of the essential place of aesthetics in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the Lutheran framework.

In light of this reality, and continuing with the specific interest of this project to engage a Lutheran perspective on an aesthetics of discipleship which functions within Luther's creedal frame and two realms theology, we can also engage his thought on the two kinds of

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[45] *LW,* 44, xiii.

[46] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 166.

righteousness. We begin by laying out a definition of two kinds of righteousness by first turning to Luther himself:

> We set forth two worlds, as it were, one of them heavenly and the other earthly. Into these we place these two kinds of righteousness, which are distinct and separated from each other. The righteousness of the law is earthly and deals with earthly things; by it we perform good works. But as the earth does not bring forth fruit unless it has first been watered and made fruitful from above—for the earth cannot judge, renew, and rule the heavens, but the heavens judge, renew, rule, and fructify the earth, so that it may do what the Lord has commanded—so also by the righteousness of the Law we do nothing even when we do much; we do not fulfill the Law even when we fulfill it. Without any merit or work of our own, we must first be justified by Christian righteousness, which has nothing to do with the righteousness of the Law or with earthly and active righteousness. But this righteousness [of the gospel] is heavenly and passive. We do not have it of ourselves; we receive it from heaven. We do not perform it; we accept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works.[47]

And yet, Luther also argues positively that once we have been bestowed this passive righteousness and become new in Christ, we do indeed have a role to play actively in the created sphere. Here Luther states,

> When I have this [passive] righteousness within me, I descend from heaven like the rain that makes the earth fertile. That is, I come forth into another kingdom and I perform good works whenever the opportunity arises. If I am a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the saddened, I administer the sacraments. If I am a father, I rule my household and family, I train my children in piety and honesty. If I am a magistrate, I perform the office which I have received by divine command. If I am a servant, I faithfully tend to my master's affairs. In short, whoever knows for sure that Christ is his righteousness … cheerfully and gladly works in his calling.[48]

Robert Kolb and Charles Arand expound on Luther's definition stating, "Luther stressed that the passive righteousness of faith does not remain in heaven; it descends to earth and contributes to the pursuit of active righteousness in the world."[49] This trajectory then holds that, "Faith

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[47] *LW,* 26, 8.

[48] *LW*, 26, 11–12.

[49] Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 106–7.

revitalizes and renews our life in this world so that others may for the first time see how God intended human beings to live for one another and in relation to the environment." Therefore, we come to the Creedal and Two Realms perspective that "Our relationship to God shapes our relationship to creation."[50] However, the connection does not stop there. In a reciprocal manner, our relationship with the sphere of creation (and therefore aesthetics) in many ways shapes our relationship with God. This relationship can of course have a positive or negative impact on our relationship with God. Kolb and Arand point out that "By analogy, human righteousness serves life in this world (according to the first article of the Apostles' Creed, on creation) so that people may be brought to Christ (the creeds second article, on redemption), who deals with sin once and for all, and may live as God's children (the creed's third article, on sanctification)."[51] And it becomes evident that "As creations reenter creation, they find that they are now in a position to properly carry out the first Great Commission, to exercise dominion over the earth by serving it and preserving it (Gen 1:26). They take up their vocations as places of service to others, where they can live as human beings according to God's design."[52] Therefore it is "Within and through their vocations," that "Christians carry out the second Great Commission of sharing the gospel."[53] This Creedal and Two Realms reality will serve as the basis for our understanding of the two kinds of righteousness in connecting Lutheran theology with the field of aesthetics, namely, that "For a Christian on earth, the active righteousness of works thus spans the whole field of reality from God's first creation to his new creation, from the first line of the Apostles'

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[50] Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 31.

[51] Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 57.

[52] Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 113.

[53] Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 113.

Creed to the last line of the creed."[54] It is here that we see the unique Lutheran perspective moving beyond the object/subject dichotomy and the limited two-dimensional nature of the polar extremes of cognitive-propositionalism and experiential-expressivism, or as Langer disavowed the opposing poles of "expression" and "impression." Here, we also make the connection that a two realms perspective properly placed within the context of a full-circle creedal frame allows us to distinguish between the two different realms without separating them, and therefore recognizing that they require different understandings of righteousness, namely a ruled-use approach. Now, we are able to make the move to a full-bodied three-dimensional perspective in which, "The passive righteousness of faith brings about a new identity and a restored humanity that God will preserve beyond the resurrection of the body, through the last judgment, and into eternity."[55]

Making the Connection to Aesthetics

Now we are prepared to make the move to a bridge that more specifically connects ethics (goodness) to doctrine (truth). For that, I turn specifically to the work of Joel Biermann and his discussion of the creedal frame for the holistic view of the Christian life. Biermann is important as he extends the work of Kolb and Arand on Two Kinds of Righteousness to a discussion of Three Kinds of Righteousness within the creedal frame specifically to open space for the much-disputed area of ethics and virtue in Lutheranism. In summarizing this unique framework Biermann writes,

> Righteousness 1 is governing righteousness, the morality of all people *coram mundo*, and finds its foundation in God's action of creation. Righteousness 2 is justifying righteousness. It is here, in the vertical dimension, *coram Deo*, that the reality of the

[54] Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 128.

[55] Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 128.

> law/gospel duality reigns alone. This vertical righteousness is declared by the creed's second article and bestowed in the third. Righteousness 3, conforming righteousness, grows out God's monergistic action of righteousness 2 and must be joined to it. The conforming righteousness is uniquely Christian and driven by truths of the second article yet led back into the created world of the first article. Here the Christian pursues a virtuous life *coram mundo*, but one that is also certainly God-pleasing. Thus, love of God and the need of neighbor are both recognized as legitimate and appropriate sources of motivation. Finally, surrounding the entire scheme is the realm of creation, or the first article. The encompassing sweep of the circle of creation around the 3 kinds of righteousness is meant to convey the truth that all of the righteousnesses are accomplished or practiced within the structure of God's created world.[56]

Thus, "Justification '*coram deo*' and the Christian's life in the world '*coram hominibus*' are not placed in polarity to one another, nor are they collapsed into a unity. Both are aspects of God's larger work of creating, redeeming, and restoring."[57] Therefore he argues, "From the perspective of contemporary Lutheranism, the appropriation of a creedal frame that highlights three kinds of righteousness points especially to a renewed appreciation for the importance of God's First Article work of creation."[58] This immediately challenges us with the reality that,

> Christian faith and life are not simply a Third-article personal appropriation of the universal redemption in Christ proclaimed in the Second Article of the Creed. Rather, the redeemed and sanctified individual who has been blessed with all the gifts of salvation is sent back again into the created realm to exercise and distribute those gifts. By virtue of the First Article, the Christian has a responsibility to care for the other members of the creation into which he has been placed.[59]

Here, Biermann reiterates and expounds on the importance of this framework stating, "The redemption accomplished in the Second Article of the Creed leads the believer back into the First Article world of creation, there to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, who carries out his Third

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[56] Joel D. Biermann, *A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 149.

[57] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 186.

[58] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 189.

[59] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 190.

Article work of restoration and fulfillment."[60] Therefore,

> Unencumbered by the polarizing tendencies of any of the usual dualities, the creedal framework provides a norming horizon, within which a believer's life *coram deo* and *coram hominibus* can be seen together as a unity. Instead of being concerned to balance some particular tension, the believer is able to see all of his life, before God and before men, as the unfolding of God's creative design. Justification, for example, is not regarded in tension with sanctification. Instead, God's proclamation of justifying grace is recognized as the restoration that enables the believer to return to the created realm with new insight into God's will, and new support for the privileged task of living as God always intended his creatures to live.[61]

As Biermann, states, "The creedal framework, including the distinction of the three kinds of righteousness … is exactly the sort of tool needed to help Lutheranism overcome its longstanding difficulties with Christian ethics and cultivating virtue. Lutheran theology is neither inherently nor by definition incapable of addressing ethical questions in vital ways."[62] I wholeheartedly agree with Biermann, and find that his argument is not only effective in re-connecting ethics to doctrine, but may also be further extended to the focus of this project and the essential relationship of aesthetics to Lutheran theology. And, therefore, the concerns of this project as they are coming to a head in regard to the tenets of Lutheran doctrine and aesthetics can be related meaningfully and powerfully in the framework here provided. In like manner, then, and in fulfilling the normative task of this chapter, the Lutheran creedal frame which highlights the three kinds of righteousness as it takes place in the two realms simultaneously is firmly established as the normative, regulatory frame, in which Langer's contribution on aesthetics is given its place in regard to developing an aesthetics of everyday discipleship. And in extending and sympathetically augmenting Biermann's argument in regard to my present interest

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[60] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 192.

[61] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 242.

[62] Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 152.

in aesthetics we can assert that "when a creedal framework is employed, it is immediately apparent that pursuing [understanding and insight into the aesthetic, affective, emotive aspects of life] and intentionally cultivating the [poetic and creative nature of our humanity] are absolutely appropriate activities for Christians."[63]

To construct a bridge that more specifically extends the work of Biermann and begins to connect aesthetics (beauty) to ethics (goodness) and doctrine (truth), within this "creedal frame,"[64] I now turn to Charles Arand and Erik Herrmann as they point out that "an aesthetic appreciation for creation is also one of the very reasons we are able to rule over the earth in a caring way as God's special creatures," and, as I will argue in the final chapter, God's poetic agents of creativity. Thus, there is in the first article a "relationship of aesthetics and ethics, as aesthetics plays an important role in ethics."[65] Specifically they argue that "Whereas the first article attracts us to creation, arouses appreciation for creation, and thus serves the cause of conservation so beauty in the second and third articles can serve to arouse and foster hope for the renewal of creation."[66] Therefore, "by uniting us with Christ's death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit makes us new creatures. He renews us in at least two ways. First, with regard to our perceptions and senses. Second, with regard to our actions."[67] Just as in the previous chapter Langer intimately connected aesthetics to truth (knowledge) so here, in like manner we see an intimate relationship between aesthetics and ethics in the life of the redeemed Christian.

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[63] Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 152.

[64] Charles P. Arand, and Erik Herrmann, "Attending to the Beauty of the Creation and the New Creation," *Concordia Journal* 38, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 313.

[65] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 313.

[66] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 320.

[67] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 323.

Therefore, "Christian faith in the eschatological promises of God (renewing the beauty of creation) prompts us to engage in acts of beauty as confession of the hope we've been given."[68] Here we can see that "beauty also carries an ethical act, but one that can only be valued as such in light of the resurrection and the hope of the new creation. Apart from this, beauty can seem absurd or even immoral."[69] However, it cannot be overstated that "in the light of the life to come beauty can act as a testimony to that hope, filling others with hope and purpose that no amount of pragmatics can accomplish."[70] This is simply because "beauty is a gift of the one from whom, through whom, and by whom it was made. And that includes beauty as an objective reality in the creation as well as our subjective capacity for enjoying that beauty."[71] But in seeking and receiving this gift, "beauty also inspires us to act." Therefore, "beauty imbues the entire life of Christian faith, hope, and love."[72] Thus, contemporary Lutheran theology shows that it can effectively and meaningfully relate aesthetics (beauty) intrinsically to ethics (goodness) and knowledge (truth) in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

As we have made the journey through theological interpretation and ethical reflection in order to situate aesthetics within the circumference of two realms theology as it takes place within a full-circle creedal frame we have not done so without a move toward a practical engagement for our contemporary cultural milieu. As Kolb and Arand, adeptly point out, "In the 21st century … dividing life into a sacred sphere and a secular sphere continues to persist … the Western world has increasingly given rise to a compartmentalization of life: faith is part of our

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[68] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 324.

[69] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 325.

[70] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 326.

[71] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 326.

[72] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 326.

spiritual life, but it has little or nothing to do with our public lives, our lives within human society."[73] This causes a dilemma of meaning and purpose in the lives of all. In connection with Langer's argument, we can extend this to assert that it causes a significant problem with the proper metaphoric functioning of human mentality. Here, the creative work of symbolic transformation can be(come) very misguided. Therefore, it serves as a special challenge for Christians who feel the confusion and disorientation of a holistic existence that is being separated piecemeal. It is especially within this atmosphere of growing meaninglessness, absurdity, and irony that we are in need of "a practical theological aesthetics" that explores "the place of imagination, beauty, and art in motivating Christian morality and action in the world."[74] And it is in this environment that we can appropriate Luther's view in the Small Catechism that teaches us to confess: "God has given me my soul … reason and all my senses."[75] As is further pointed out in the CTCR document "Together with all creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth", "Reason should not be seen here only in terms of logic (left-brain activities). Instead, it embraces the full panoply of human abilities including imagination, emotion, creativity, and intuition (right-brain activities)."[76] However, it should be noted, "these activities are stimulated by the senses that perceive God's creation."[77] We are in need now, more than ever of engaging the reality that "God created us as full-sensoried creatures in order that we might interact with every aspect of His handiwork. We are full-sensoried people so that we might embrace and grasp the breadth and

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[73] Kolb, and Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology*, 110.

[74] Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 38.

[75] *Luther's Small Catechism: With Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 105.

[76] "Together with All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth," A Report of the Commission of Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, (April 2010), 41.

[77] "Together with All Creatures," 41.

depth of creation, from its order and harmony to its beauty and grandeur."[78] Therefore, it is "Through creation He provides us with inspiration for our art, literature, and music. Through the earth he provides us with pleasure and delight."[79] It is here on earth, that God continues to invite and gift us to apprehend beauty *coram deo* in Christ, and *coram mundo* in and through Creation as disciples who are daily living under the shadow of the cross and in the light of the resurrection. Here, we are daily called creatively to connect the Second Great commission of Matt 28:18-20 to the First Great commission of Gen 1:26, 28 as we intentionally and poetically live out our redeemed identity in Christ while actively awaiting His coming. This leads to the conclusion that, "as the body of Christ, as His Church, we carry out God's commission to proclaim the Gospel (Matt 28:19-20) as we also carry out His commission to care for creation (Gen 1:28), all the while longing for the renewal of creation at Christ's return. We are called to care for our fellow creatures in order to honor the handiwork of God, as we testify to His work and lead all creation in His praise."[80] Therefore,

> God has enlisted His Church, as the new humanity, to participate in His work of preserving and renewing creation. And so, we take up two commissions or callings as found in Gen 1 and 2 and Matt 28. These two commissions are closely connected, a fact that has not always been apparent. Both deal with creation. The first mandate focuses on our work with God to bring about the renewal of creation. As God first summoned us to participate in His ongoing work in the present creation, He now also summons us to participate in the work of preaching the Gospel that renews His creation. We seek to carry out both callings. In the light of the first great commission, we care for our fellow creatures for the sake of the present creation. According to the second great commission, we seek nothing other than restoration of the first.[81]

It is within this reality that a Lutheran perspective on aesthetics set within a creedal frame that

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[78] "Together with All Creatures," 41.

[79] "Together with All Creatures," 49.

[80] "Together with All Creatures," 50.

[81] "Together with All Creatures," 54.

engages the reality of the two realms simultaneously finds its place and purpose in everyday Christian discipleship.

Conclusion

This chapter has called us to attend to the first two approaches to the normative task of *prophetic discernment*. In so doing, both a theological interpretation as well as ethical reflection have been expressly addressed in the context of a contemporary Lutheran theological framework. The great benefit revealed within this two realms, creedal framework, that has included the further distinction of the three kinds of righteousness as outlined by Biermann, has shown itself to be exactly the sort of tool necessary to help contemporary Lutheranism overcome its longstanding difficulties with aesthetics.[82] In this chapter, it has been shown that Lutheran theology is neither inherently nor by some doctrinal definition incapable of addressing questions of aesthetics in vital ways. Rather, as I have argued, contemporary Lutheran theology is quite capable of providing a meaningful connection between its theological convictions and aesthetics in the everyday life of the Christian disciple. Biermann's effective argument for the connection between ethics and doctrine has been extended to show that tenets of Lutheran doctrine and

[82] Mark C. Mattes provides the most recent addition to Lutheran thinking about aesthetics. His addition specifically illustrates a Lutheran engagement with aesthetics via a confessional and doctrinal perspective. However, Mattes spends most of his time primarily in the Second Article of the Creed and almost exclusively in the vertical realm of the relationship between God and the human creature *coram Deo.* He further specifies that his focus and goal is on illustrating the essential relationship of beauty to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone. Thus, his focus is primarily (and once again I would argue—almost exclusively) aimed at the objective [forensic] nature of beauty in Luther. Therefore, he does not delve into the horizontal realm of Christian discipleship *coram mundo*. Which also means, that he does not delve into connecting aesthetics to ethics. Mattes's focus is solely on the connection of aesthetics to doctrine (truth) and does not really engage a connection to ethics (good). Mattes rightly and effectively argues for the objective beauty received from God in Christ. And, he does this via medieval theological aesthetics as his conversation partner. In so doing, I would argue that he does not really engage the redeemed/transformed subjective reality of the Christian disciple. This gap has effectively set the stage and opened the door for what I believe is a fuller and richer conversation that is enabled by the contemporary Lutheran theological framework as it has been set forth in this chapter. Mark C. Mattes, *Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).

aesthetics can also be related meaningfully and powerfully in a paradigm provided by the creed.[83] Thus, the contemporary Lutheran framework presented in this chapter has shown that it is capable of answering two of the key questions presented in the introduction of this project. The first question asked, "Does a Lutheran theological perspective on aesthetics actually affirm and argue for an intrinsic and forming role in discipleship?" We can now confidently answer this question with a resounding, Yes. The second key question asked, "Working with and within key Lutheran frameworks can we appropriate Susanne K. Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art to point us toward the development of a theology of aesthetics for Christian disciples that argues for the intrinsic role of aesthetics in shaping lives that are more holistic, creative, and communal in the midst of a world that is increasingly fragmented, utilitarian, and individualistic?" And again, the answer we have found in this chapter is a resounding, Yes. Using the perspective provided by the two realms theology that takes place within a creedal framework, it is readily apparent that Lutheran theology and aesthetics are not mutually exclusive but are actually complementary. This Lutheran framework has shown itself to be an excellent normative tool for reflecting on and appropriating the non-foundational philosophy of art previously presented by Susanne K. Langer that can effectively handle the life of feeling and the non-discursive symbolism that is all around us. What that looks like, sounds like, and feels like is the focus of the next chapter. I now turn to attend to the third approach of the normative task of *prophetic discernment*, namely, Good Practice by describing and illustrating the cross-disciplinary dialogue between Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art in conversation with the contemporary Lutheran theological framework that has been laid out in order to develop an

[83] Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 152.

aesthetics of discipleship in the midst of the everyday that provides normative guidance in re-connecting the essential relationship of aesthetics to discipleship, and therefore beauty, to goodness, and truth.

CHAPTER FIVE

SEARCHING FOR A *CANTUS FIRMUS* FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In this chapter I attend to the third approach to the normative task of *prophetic discernment* which Richard Osmer calls Good Practice.[1] Here, I will creatively connect a unique non-discursive artistic symbol and cultural artifact with a specific discursive theological artifact for illustrating a response to the question, "What ought to be going on?" in regard to the cross-disciplinary dialogue between aesthetics and theology for the sake of developing an aesthetic approach to everyday discipleship. Osmer describes *good practice* as "deriving norms from good practice, by exploring models of such practice in the present and past or by engaging reflexively in transforming practice in the present."[2] He further elaborates that *good practice* "provides normative guidance in two ways: (1) it offers a model of good practice from the past or present with which to reform present actions; (2) it can generate new understandings of God, the Christian life, and social values beyond those provided by the received tradition."[3] This is exactly what is needed in regard to re-connecting aesthetics to ethics and doctrine in regard to everyday discipleship. I believe that attending to the approach of *good practice* as it is engaged in this chapter will achieve both ends. The goal of this chapter, then, is to create an illustration of *good practice* that helps the Lutheran tradition to re-imagine how we might address re-connecting aesthetics to ethics and doctrine differently, offers guidance in the contemporary situation, and

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[1] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 152.

[2] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 161.

[3] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 152.

thus provides "resources and guidelines with which to move"[4] in a new direction. In so doing, this chapter also illustrates the goal of finding new ways of "developing truth claims and values that will be persuasive to a skeptical postmodern world."[5] Thus, creating the illustration seeks both to discover as well as creatively construct a transforming practice that deepens the insights and values it generates. Here, Osmer notes that there are two especially important theological themes for understanding this kind of transforming practice:

> (1) transforming practice discloses God. It makes available knowledge and understandings of God that cannot be found in any other way. Indeed, transforming practice not only discloses God to the community of faith but also serves as a "medium, sign, and witness" of God's presence to the world. (2) when transforming practice embodies alterity, it serves as a model of transcendence in our postmodern world.[6]

This is exactly what the mutual dialogue between the non-discursive artistic symbol and the discursive theological artifact will bring about in offering an illustration of good practice in regard to re-connecting beauty to goodness and truth via the cross-disciplinary dialogue of Susanne K. Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art and the contemporary Lutheran full-circle creedal frame. Thus, my particular focus in this chapter is creatively and constructively to illustrate a non-foundational, as well as uniquely Lutheran, approach to the aesthetics of discipleship.

Three Examples of Twentieth-Century Theological Aesthetics

It is no secret that, from the time of the Reformation Iconoclast controversy through the period of Pietism, and even into the twentieth century, aesthetics has had a troublesome existence

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[4] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 153.

[5] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 154.

[6] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 159–160.

in many if not most protestant denominations. However, in more recent history we do have examples of a move toward *good practice* in regard to the cross-disciplinary dialogue between aesthetics and theology as found in the work of Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and William Dyrness.

Karl Barth, the Swiss Reformed Neo-Orthodox theologian, in his monumental work, *Christian Dogmatics*, created a positive place in theology for an engagement with aesthetics especially in regard to his focus on the image of Christ on the Cross.[7] Here, Barth utilizes Luther's elegant phrase that beauty hides itself under its opposite (*sub contrario*).[8] Thus, Barth emphasizes that theological aesthetic experience is wrought via a theology of the cross rather than a theology of glory. Unfortunately, Barth's engagement with aesthetics is wrought from and revolves within the theological system he has created in regard to his view of the doctrine of revelation. In so doing his aesthetics (as with all of his theological thought) begins from and operates primarily within the Second Article of the Creed.[9] Therefore, it does not operate with a proper trajectory beginning with the First Article then moving through the Second and Third Articles in order to place the believer firmly back into the First Article world of God's Creation.[10] As Gustaf Wingren correctly points out specifically in regard to Barth's system, "to adopt a particular method in theological discussion will often involve the alteration of the

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[7] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics The Doctrine of God,* part II, vol. 1, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnson, Harold Knight, and J.L.M. Hare (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957).

[8] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 665.

[9] See the following works of Karl Barth: *Church Dogmatics*, *Credo*, and *Gospel and Law* for specific examples of this misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Creed based on his doctrine of revelation.

[10] See chapter 1: "Creation and the Gospel" in Gustaf Wingren's, *Creation and Law* for an excellent handling of the deficit of Barth's theological system for a proper handling and exposition of the Creed, and the connected denigration of Creation. Gustaf Wingren, *Creation and Law*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 3–44.

theological content, either by omission or by over-emphasis. In this case what disappears is the belief in Creation."[11]

Another example of re-connecting the relationship between aesthetics and theology, one that many protestant theologians have engaged, comes from the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar in his magisterial work, *The Glory of the Lord*. Balthasar, has opened the way for renewed focus on the intrinsic nature of aesthetics in the theological endeavor in his *Theo-Aesthetics, Vol. I Seeing the Form*, in which he aims, "to develop a Christian theology in the light of the third transcendental, that is to say: to complement the vision of the true and the good with that of the beautiful (*pulchrum*)." He effectively argues that the ancient "transcendentals are inseparable, and that neglecting one can only have a devastating effect on the others."[12] Influenced by the Roman Catholic *nouvelle theologie* of Henri de Lubac and others, von Balthasar interprets beauty via the theological system of the analogy of being (*analogia entis*)[13] in the desire and search for the beatific vision.[14] Here, for von Balthasar the cross 'analogizes' the inner-Trinitarian life in which the ugliness of Christ's death is an analogy for the

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[11] Wingren, *Creation and Law*, 25.

[12] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics,* vol. 1, *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982), 9.

[13] The *analogia entis* as formulated by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) reads: "One cannot note any similarity between Creator and creature, however great, without being compelled to note an even greater dissimilarity between them."

[14] Mark Mattes insightfully and succinctly describes the *nouvelle theologie* and its use of the *analogia entis* in regard to beauty in the work of von Balthasar when he states, "Through this Christianized Neoplatonism, beauty is retrieved as a way to reclaim mystery for the world, a 'sacramental ontology,' in the face of the modern tendency to disenchant the cosmos by mapping or carving up all reality through quantification, and in the process nihilistically flatlining it, rendering it a cadaver for dissection. The appropriation of a Christianized Neoplatonism is said to provide depth and meaning in contrast to nihilism, since God is the mystery present in all reality. All particular things are in some way or another icons of God, directing us above to find our ultimate happiness in God. Hence, these theologians claim beauty as a transcendental, descriptive of and instantiated in all finite things, in opposition to modern tendencies that make beauty a private, subjective matter, latent not in reality as such but only in how the mind works." Mark C. Mattes, *Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 156–57.

eternal relationships among the triune persons.[15] This view of beauty that flows from and revolves around the theological system of the *analogia entis* interprets the cross event as the crucial moment through which the devout pilgrim can now see 'the glory of the Lord.' However, Mark Mattes rightly challenges this approach when he describes the cross event through a Lutheran lens stating, "Christ so identifies with sinners that his cross is no mere analogy that grants human access to divine glory but instead is the death of sinners, God's alien work, God consigning all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all (Rom 11:32)."[16] Therefore, an important strand of Lutheran theological thinking rightly identifies the analogy of being as a form of the "theology of glory" rather than the "theology of the cross."[17]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Model of Good Practice

Similar to Kant, both Barth and von Balthasar's aesthetics flow from and revolve around the theological systems they utilize. However, this is not the case for another twentieth century theologian. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's approach to aesthetics is indeed different. He has no magisterial work on aesthetics, nor does he have a narrowed theological system through which he views the subject. Rather, Bonhoeffer's thinking on aesthetics must be pieced together from his occasional works that have to do with responding to the realities of everyday life, as one who is in Christ, as is especially found in his collected writings *Letters and Papers from Prison*.[18] Thus, we can say that Bonhoeffer's approach to aesthetics is a non-foundational approach that

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[15] Mattes, *Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty*, 200–01.

[16] Mattes, *Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty*, 202.

[17] Mattes, *Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty*, 158.

[18] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, rev. ed., ed. Eberhard Bethge, (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

fits especially well with the argument and trajectory of this project. It is not based on a singular theological system, rather in many ways it flows from his thoughts and feelings about the role of music in the life of the Christian disciple as it takes place in the world.

Through music, Bonhoeffer seeks to find his *'cantus firmus'* in Jesus Christ for daily discipleship. Thus, it was that music, and not an overarching theological system, provided him with most of his aesthetic categories, analogies, and metaphors when engaged in theological reflection.[19] This of course, fits especially well in relationship to the work of Susanne K. Langer and her focus on music. Therefore, Bonhoeffer serves as a model of good practice in regard to a non-foundational approach that reconnects the essential relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and doctrine and that fosters a beautiful description of the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ lived in all its fullness in this world as an expressive form of vitality. We see this clear connection of musical theories, concepts, and terminology to his theological development especially during his time in prison.

Unfortunately, as Robert Smith adeptly points out, Bonhoeffer's use of musical metaphors is "most often viewed as instrumental rather than as constitutive of his theological development."[20] Smith strongly disagrees with this common misperception and the merely instrumental view many scholars have taken in regard to Bonhoeffer's usage of musical metaphor. Instead, Smith argues that a proper understanding of Bonhoeffer's use of musical metaphor will rightly adhere to and proceed with a constitutive view of his theological development and practical approach to concrete living as a disciple of Jesus Christ in this world.

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[19] This will become extremely important in making the move to a Lutheran appropriation of Langer especially in developing a Lutheran understanding of aesthetics with special reference to music (jazz) as Langer's definition of art arises from her understanding of music.

[20] Robert O. Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," *Word & World* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 196.

I am in full agreement with Smith's position. Smith rightly emphasizes the importance of aesthetics when he asserts, "it is music that makes available the metaphors for his [Bonhoeffer's] theological development."[21] Therefore, Smith describes the vital import of Bonhoeffer's usage of musical concepts by describing it in terms of the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson on metaphor: "the essence of metaphor is understanding or experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."[22] This is no mere instrumental understanding or use of metaphor, rather as will be argued in this chapter, it is a constitutive understanding and use of metaphor which in light of this project and more specifically the argument to come later in this chapter especially highlights the vital import of the mutual dialogue that take place between the non-discursive and the discursive for a deeper description, understanding, and expression of life. Therefore, I argue that through his creative use of such non-discursive [aesthetic] musical concepts as *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and polyphony, Bonhoeffer is constitutively and artistically illustrating the mutual dialogue between the non-discursive and the discursive aspects of the Christian disciple's life in this world. Bonhoeffer does this specifically to develop his this-worldly theology and practice of discipleship. So, in connection with the Lutheran appropriation of Langer we can rightfully say that Bonhoeffer opens up the way for 'a new key' in regard to a creative and constructive approach to the essential relationship that aesthetics has in spiritual formation. As John W. DeGruchy succinctly writes,

> In crucial respects Bonhoeffer's theology has strong affinities with those of both Balthasar and Barth, not least with regard to the centrality of the incarnation and the 'theology of the cross.' But just as he so often opens up new perspectives that enable us to go beyond classic theological positions, so he opens up fresh possibilities for

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[21] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 199.

[22] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphor We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5.

> reconstructing theological aesthetics and redefining the relationship between theology and the arts in a post-modern age.[23]

For Bonhoeffer, music (and by extension the aesthetic aspect of earthly human life) "was essential to the good life,"[24] or, as I call it in this project, a beautiful life. This means that for Bonhoeffer music (aesthetics) was essential to a person being a fully embodied and embedded human engaged in a life that is whole-heartedly invested in this-worldliness. Consequently, then, according to Bonhoeffer, the life of the Christian (and what he also refers to as the 'cultured' person), cannot be separated into different spheres of existence, no matter how fragmentary life itself may be. Rather the Christian's existence is a *'cantus firmus'*—a firm faith in Christ as the hope of the world which holds all things together in the midst of living an embodied and embedded earthly existence.

Bonhoeffer's engagement with music and his usage of music theory in connection with developing aesthetic metaphors for theological thinking, articulation, and living provide not only a profound depth of insight but artistic thick description as to what it means to live a beautiful life as a disciple of Jesus Christ in a world come of age. An excellent example of this is evident in Bonhoeffer's elegant description of baptism as the "*Grundton* of joy," the "key note" of this life that has a sound *cantus firmus* and is able to engage the polyphony of this life. Bonhoeffer describes this beautiful reality to his dear friend, Bethge, as he writes to him upon the upcoming occasion of Bethge's son's baptism, "Above all, I hope that the baptism will help to assure you that your own lives, as well as the dear child's, are in safe keeping, and that you can face the

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[23] John W. DeGruchy, *Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 137.

[24] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 197.

future with confidence."[25]

Bonhoeffer further emphasizes and describes this confidence when he writes, "This confidence is cultivated through faith in one's foundation [*cantus firmus*]."[26] Bonhoeffer connects this *'cantus firmus'* intimately to the reality of the Christian living in the two realms simultaneously when he writes,

> I wanted to tell you to have a good, clear *cantus firmus*; that is the only way to a full and perfect sound, when the counterpoint has a firm support and cannot come adrift or get out of tune, while remaining a distinct whole in its own right. Only a polyphony of this kind can give life a wholeness and at the same time assure us that nothing calamitous can happen as long as the *cantus firmus* is kept going.[27]

Smith further helps to describe how Bonhoeffer's metaphor of the Christian life as a polyphonic composition informed by a *cantus firmus* operates on two interrelated levels. First, in following Walter Kemp, Smith describes the *cantus firmus* as "the controlling and the cohesive force of the motet or Mass movement in which it appeared," therefore, neglecting it would bring about "a loss of direction and purpose; as polyphonic art the composition would be invalid."[28] However, at the same time, Smith adds that

> the *cantus firmus* must not be construed as an artificial limit on the resulting polyphony. Instead acting as a controlling force, the *cantus firmus* informs the composition and provides a foothold in the midst of confusion. The point in other words, is not to impose some external order on a multidimensional and polyphonic life bur rather to point a Christian to her firm foundation. The second layer of the metaphor allows the Christian to live freely within the complexities of human experience. Just as the *cantus firmus* grounds the independent strands of a polyphonic composition, Bonhoeffer, argued, our faith informs our multidimensional existence.[29]

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[25] Bonhoeffer, Letter of 9 May 1944, in *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 291.

[26] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 199.

[27] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 163.

[28] Walter Kemp, "The 'Polyphony of Life': References to Music in Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison*," in *Vita Laudanda: Essays in Memory of Ulrich S. Leupold,* ed. Erich R. W. Schultz (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfird Laurier University Press, 1976).

[29] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 201.

As Bonhoeffer, himself would note of his time in prison, "Christianity puts us into many different dimensions of life at the same time; we make room in ourselves, to some extent, for God and the whole world … Life isn't pushed back into a single dimension, but is kept multi-dimensional and polyphonous."[30] Thus, Smith argues, "Far from the self-protective homogeneity, Bonhoeffer was convinced that openness to the multifaceted nature of reality is constitutive of human existence."[31] And therefore, Bonhoeffer's "metaphorical exploration and articulation of the polyphony of life," is his "fullest expression"[32] of this multi-dimensional reality. Therefore, Smith claims, "to deny the cultivation of polyphonic existence, that is, to deny the worldliness of Christian commitment, would be to dismiss the Chalcedonian Definition in favor of a docetic discipleship and ecclesiology."[33] I could not whole-heartedly agree more.

To further express the vital import of this experience and its meaning, Smith is quick to point out, "This now famous image of the "polyphony of life" is quickly embellished with theological and technical detail by Bonhoeffer who writes: "our eternal and total love for God does not injure or weaken our earthly love" but provides a kind of *cantus firmus* to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint."[34] This is a very subtly nuanced statement that takes us beyond a progressive growth or improvement of our desires, loves, or wills toward the 'greater' or the 'greatest' Good.[35] Rather, it places Jesus Christ, his life, death, resurrection, and ascension at the center of life and all that surrounds it. Bonhoeffer goes on to clarify,

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[30] Bonhoeffer, Letter of 29 May 1944, in *Letters and Papers in Prison*, 310—311.

[31] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Muscial Metaphor," 201.

[32] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 201–202.

[33] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 202.

[34] Bonhoeffer, Letter of 20 May 1944, in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 303.

[35] As is the case in Dynress's *Poetic Theology*.

> where the *cantus firmus* is clear and plain, the counterpoint can be developed to its limit. The two are 'undivided yet distinct', in the words of the Chalcedonian Definition, like Christ in his divine and human natures. May not the attraction and importance of polyphony in music consist in its being a musical reflection of this Christological fact and therefore of our *vita christiana*?[36]

Technically speaking, the *cantus firmus* is "a pre-existent melody that is used as a basis for new polyphonic composition."[37] This indeed strikes a new non-foundational key to the theological approach to aesthetics especially in regard to the concrete life of the Christian disciple. (This also provides an intimate connection point between polyphony and the key element of improvisation in jazz, as will be described in this chapter).

Smith insightfully emphasizes that Bonhoeffer has recognized what I call an eclipse of elegance in regard to the wholeness, simultaneity, and multi-dimensional nature of the Christian disciple's earthly human existence. Therefore, he rightly argues that Bonhoeffer is utilizing musical metaphor in an attempt "to articulate as clearly as he can the most basic element of the Christian life … He is working toward the communication of something that is at once as simple and complex as a relationship with another person, something as simple and complex as human life in the world before God."[38] Bonhoeffer is essentially working toward an aesthetic description that aims at expressing the elegance of what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like to be fully human in this world through the musical metaphors of *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and polyphony. It is through these musical metaphors that he is able to articulate an artistic [aesthetic] image of the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Later in this chapter, I will extend this elegant description and artistic, that is aesthetic image that seeks a *cantus firmus* for the twenty-first

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[36] Bonhoeffer, Letter of 20 May 1944, in *Letters and Papers from Prison,* 303.

[37] Lewis Lockwood, "Cantus Firmus," in the *New Grove Dictionary*, 3:738.

[38] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 204.

century through an engagement with the three key elements of jazz: swing, the blues, and improvisation.

As DeGruchy correctly argues, the new key note in regard to the *cantus firmus* as described by Bonhoeffer is that "it makes the polyphony of life possible within the life of the Christian and the church rather than excluding such richness with a categorical iconoclastic 'NO.'"[39] Thus, for Bonhoeffer to be a Christian in the world meant "neither secularism nor aestheticism, but rather affirmation of creation and an anticipation of the 'resurrection of the body'."[40] This is indeed quite different, not only from Kantian aesthetics, but also from the aesthetics of both Barth and von Balthasar. Whereas the Kantian approach has effectively 'flattened' aesthetics to the solely subjective and horizontal realm, many of those working in the field of theological aesthetics have focused solely on the Second Article of the Creed and Christology in such a way that is has resulted in such a heightened (platonic) pitch that we end up back in a solely objective and vertical realm that is primarily transcendental, spiritual, and intellectual that eclipses the first and third articles of the creed and leaves Creation behind. For Bonhoeffer, the musical metaphors of *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and polyphony provided him an artistic or aesthetic way of articulating being Christian in the world as fully human, and truly of the earth. Thus, the employment of such a musical image through the key musical concepts of *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and polyphony was not only a matter of doctrinal truth or ethical responsibility, but implied the recovery of 'aesthetic experience'[41] and expression. All of this comes from Bonhoeffer as he sits in a prison cell recognizing both the uncertainty and the hope of his future. This further emphasizes, as

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[39] DeGruchy, *Art and Transformation*, 391.

[40] DeGruchy, *Art and Transformation*, 167.

[41] DeGruchy, *Art and Transformation*, 167.

Smith so eloquently puts it, that Bonhoeffer's employment of the musical metaphors of *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and polyphony work together, "to demonstrate how human existence, in all its difficulty and ease, pains and joy, losses and loves, can be experienced as positively multidimensional [holistically] rather than negatively fragmentary, even as Christians belong wholly to the world, *soli deo Gloria*."[42]

With all of this in mind, Smith provides us with the overarching assertion that "Bonhoeffer's concern, arrived at in his engagement with and response to the world,"[43] is to "bar the way to any escapism disguised as piety."[44] Rather, Smith argues, it should be seen that the full force and vital import of Bonhoeffer's engagement with and usage of musical metaphors "through which Bonhoeffer's theological insights took shape allowed him to articulate precisely what he meant by belonging "wholly to the world," while still knowing by faith the truth of one's rootedness in Christ."[45] Therefore, I am in full agreement with Smith when he claims, "unlike common understandings of Christianity, which often times assume a religious evacuation from the world, Bonhoeffer through his musical metaphors argued for a biblical faith that places the Christian disciple squarely within the world"[46] to "live before God as God's people on earth."[47] That is, Christians are called "to live in the developed fullness of polyphony, not only in the relative safety of the *Grundton* or the *cantus firmus*."[48]

The importance of engaging Smith and following his treatment of Bonhoeffer for this

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[42] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 204.

[43] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 205.

[44] Bonhoeffer, Letter of 30 April 1944, in *Letters and Papers in Prison*, 282.

[45] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 205.

[46] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 205.

[47] Bonhoeffer, Letter of 27 June 1944, in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 336.

[48] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 205.

project in particular is that it shows that, "Bonhoeffer's engagement with musical metaphor achieved resistance to the systematized, instrumentalized rationality of modernity while still maintaining engagement with the multidimensional world to which Christians are called to belong."[49] In so doing, it reveals Bonhoeffer as both an excellent example of good practice as well as providing a necessary call to a deeper engagement with the essential relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and doctrine that is mandatory for a fully embodied and embedded Christian discipleship. Smith sounds this mandatory call as he concludes his article on Bonhoeffer's usage of musical metaphor by noting that in reflecting on

> the multiplicity of human existence and experience canonized in Bonhoeffer's metaphors of *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and polyphony … with the richness of these theological and ethical [not to mention aesthetic] possibilities, it is surprising that one must agree with Jeremy Begbie that this line of inquiry is sadly underdeveloped.[50]

The specific purpose of the rest of this chapter is intentionally and creatively to engage this resounding call. Following Bonhoeffer, then, it is clear that such an aesthetic description of a beautiful life must be one in which the *cantus firmus* is firmly focused on Christ, and the counterpoint of a wholly this-worldly existence is regularly improvised upon and sounded in full. I intend to accomplish my task by engaging the three key elements of jazz: swing, the blues, and improvisation in intimate dialogue with the historic creed of the Christian faith.

As Smith insightfully points out, jazz was an important part of Bonhoeffer's coming to this multidimensional understanding of the Christian disciple's life. Smith emphasizes that while Bonhoeffer was in America living in Harlem "he came across jazz and was fascinated by the music," and that "there he began to learn about the improvisation of jazz, the contingency of the

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[49] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 206.

[50] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 206.

blues, and the liberation of black spirituals."[51] It was especially, "this mix of musical expression and social concern [the essential and intimate relationship between aesthetics and ethics in jazz] pervading Harlem Christianity," that "filled Bonhoeffer's heart and mind as he returned home to Berlin." And, Smith is quick to point out, "while blending with more traditional [cultural] forms," known to Bonhoeffer and his audience, "this music [jazz] would never leave him."[52] And it is here that we find a unique connection between Bonhoeffer's "polyphonic living" and, as we will see, the "improvisational living" of jazz.

William Dyrness, as we have seen, is a more recent example of *'good practice'* in the contemporary cross-disciplinary dialogue between aesthetics and theology. Dyrness, as I have shown, is important as he helps to situate this dialogue in the midst of the everyday life of the embodied and embedded human person. And, although Dyrness somewhat follows a similar medieval scholastic analogy of being as von Balthasar, in regard to his perspective on desire and love properly directed through a transformed will to the 'greater' and 'eventually 'greatest' Good, he does bring us a long way in overcoming the shortfall of Barth's approach which in the end either neglects or outright negates creation and the first article sphere of life. Toward the end of his book *Poetic Theology*, Dyrness himself points to the importance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in regard to aesthetics and the everyday as he briefly references Bonhoeffer's musical concept of *'cantus firmus'*. However, here, I would point out that Dyrness references Bonhoeffer only in passing in the concluding chapter near the very end of his book and therefore does not more carefully attend to developing Bonhoeffer's use of key musical concepts as a central metaphor or organizing concept for his own work. The key metaphor that Dyrness engages, and that he places

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[51] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 197.

[52] Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," 197.

at the center of his work and continues to use to the end especially in connection with the relationship between aesthetics and the human creature's everyday life, is specifically a literary metaphor: the metaphor of reading that involves a literary interpretation of everyday life.[53] This is most clearly evident as he seeks to utilize two literary classics (one from the catholic perspective of the pilgrim's journey in search of the beatific vision of God by way of a disciplining of the affections as found in Alighieri Dante's *Divine Comedy*[54] and the other from the Protestant Reformed perspective of the pilgrim's journey through this broken world to our heavenly home by way of the schooling of the will as found in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*[55]) to illustrate his concept of the relationship between aesthetics and the human creature's life in the midst of the everyday. Dyrness approaches these literary artifacts not only in terms of their discursive force but also in terms of their non-discursive power. He makes this clearly evident by way of his repeated use of Frank Burch Brown's definition of the aesthetic in regard to his engagement with these literary artifacts ("all those things employing a medium in such a way that its perceptible form and 'felt' qualities become essential to what is appreciable and meaningful")[56] to situate his reading of Dante and Bunyan and his emphasis on vison with Dante and the spiritual reading of signs with Bunyan. The contrast that Dyrness is out to illustrate, is between two different ways of cultivating a Christian's attending to the interaction of the aesthetic and everyday life—a hermeneutics of discernment and, a hermeneutics of suspicion. For Dyrness, then, the life of feeling is addressed through the aesthetic reading of

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[53] See "Chapter 6: Dante, Bunyan, and the Search for a Protestant Aesthetics" in Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 153–186, for his full treatment.

[54] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 158.

[55] Dyrness, *Poetic Theology*, 158.

[56] Frank Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 22.

literary objects and the passage of time is accounted for through the medieval metaphor of pilgrimage. Both of these are done within the project of attending to the everyday life of the reader of these works. In so doing, Dyrness should be applauded for offering a helpful illustration of connecting aesthetics to everyday life via the mutual dialogue between the discursive and the non-discursive by way of his engagement with these two literary classics. However, as already mentioned, I would assert that Dyrness does not as carefully attend to the rhythm and musical heartbeat of Bonhoeffer's original concept. This, of course, is not within the purview of his project. Therefore, it opens space for my project to specifically attend to Bonhoeffer and his use of musical metaphor in order to bring out the fuller potentiality of his work for the twenty-first century.

Therefore, in this chapter I attend to extending the non-foundational approach of Bonhoeffer's through his engagement and employment of the musical metaphors of *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and polyphony by paying careful attention to the rhythm and musical heartbeat of his example of *good practice* in connection with Langer's engagement with music as a unique art form for expressing the non-discursive life of feeling and the passage of time in dialogue with a specific artifact of discursive articulation. To do so, I will be utilizing the American-born musical art-form of Jazz as a non-discursive artistic cultural artifact and symbol of vital import in dialogue with the historic discursive artifact known as the *regula fidei* or 'rule of faith' of the historic Christian tradition, specifically the creed, as a discursive symbol in order to present and illustrate a *cantus firmus* for the aesthetic experience and expression of the Christian disciple in the twenty-first century. The goal is to develop a non-foundational Lutheran approach to aesthetics that operates via a ruled use of a creedal framework as the disciple of Jesus Christ lives simultaneously in the midst of the two realms. I intend to address the reciprocal relationship

between theology and aesthetics for a fully-embodied and embedded discipleship that casts the relationship in a more three-dimensional, colorful, tonal atmosphere for everyday discipleship and praxis. This will be especially evident against the flattened mono-tone approach represented by Kantian aesthetics in which everything is merely subjective (or horizontal) and there is no objective (vertical) quality to it at all. This will also argue against the heightened pitch of many theological aesthetics which focus solely on the objective (or vertical) with very little engagement in the subjective (horizontal) sphere of creation.[57] This is the specific and significant import of developing an aesthetics of discipleship in which aesthetic formation and existence in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ takes place within a creedal framework in the midst of the two realms in the sphere of creation.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theological conception of the *cantus firmus* for everyday life grew from his understanding and appreciation of the musical art-form known as the fugue. The fugue, as especially developed by Johan Sebastian Bach with his extensive use of *counterpoint*, was a historical German cultural artifact well-known to Dietrich Bonhoeffer as well as to the audience to which his letters from prison were directed. Therefore, it was an effective artistic cultural artifact for expressing the theological idea/concept of the *cantus firmus* that he was trying to get across. However, I would argue, the fugue is not the only musical form capable of expressing and articulating Bonhoeffer's theological concept of the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of the created sphere and the cultural surroundings; especially as it pertains to twenty-first century Americans. I believe that the American-born musical form of Jazz is also an

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[57] Whereas, philosophical aesthetics have for the most part limited themselves solely to the physical realm in a subjective manner, many theological aesthetics have reduced themselves to doctrines that deal solely with the Second Article of the Creed (which historically has often been the tendency within the Lutheran tradition) and therefore do not present a fully-embodied aesthetic existence that is formed by a movement through all three articles of the creed and that situates the Christian disciple in God's created sphere.

artistic symbol, a musical form, and a historical cultural artifact that works well in articulating Bonhoeffer's concept of the *cantus firmus* to a contemporary American audience. Jazz is a uniquely American cultural artifact and musical form that is a very important part of our more recent historical cultural past, and that continues to play an important role in shaping our cultural present. Therefore, I am working with Jazz as a style—a form of music that I believe works well in illustrating cross-disciplinary dialogue between aesthetics and theology, especially between the non-discursive articulation of the life of feeling and the passage of time with the discursive narrative articulation of the creed. I am not arguing that Jazz is the only form or style of music or even the best one for this purpose. Rather, I am arguing that it serves as a unique musical form that further opens up the conversation as it is especially well-suited as a cross-disciplinary dialogue partner with the creed as the discursive narrative symbol of the Christian faith. Therefore, as I will argue and illustrate—it is an especially useful artistic form for the purposes of this project.

Langer on Metaphor and Symbolic Transformation

However, before getting to the actual illustration, I first need to attend to the vital role that Langer argues for in regard to metaphor and symbolic transformation in describing how Jazz and the creed can be brought into dialogue with one another. First, I would point out that, in Langer's work, the non-discursive (art/aesthetics/the life of feeling/the mind of metaphor, i.e. ongoing symbolic transformation, etc.) and the discursive (written and spoken language/conceptual thinking/clear articulation, etc.) are presented as two key distinct and distinguishable modes/aspects of mentality that are both necessary to the mental life of the whole person. Langer argues that these two modes actually travel in a parallel path alongside one another. In this way, they are distinct and yet at the same time should not be separated or dissected from one another.

This already travels well with a contemporary Lutheran theological framework. Langer further argues that neither should they necessarily be put into a hierarchy of importance, one over the other. The only distinction of order that Langer asserts is that the non-discursive is "prior to" the discursive. Instead, she spends her energy emphasizing that they are different and do different things, side-by-side in mutual dialogue with one another. In this way, Langer is very concerned to emphasize the necessity of both without the usual reductionism that leads to the exclusion of one for the sake of the other as has been the case with the sole focus and emphasis on the discursive in modern epistemology.

Second, I must point out that in following Langer I am using music (in particular Jazz) as a non-discursive form that exemplifies, illustrates, and gives a different deep description of life, and helps us to discover a narrative discursive form anew, as it is felt and sounded large. The relationship between Jazz and the creed travel well together in this journey as both music and narrative highlight the emphasis and focus on time and the passage of life/journey. In this respect, Langer specifically highlights that music is the art form that presents us with the "semblance of time" that composes a rhythmic structure that reveals the passage of felt life as journey. In so doing music helps us to discover, understand, and even through the making of thick metaphor, articulate the Christian disciple's pattern of felt life in a different way. In connection with the Creed, the Two Realms, and the doctrine of vocation—music (and specifically Jazz) can possess us through a different sound with a vital rhythm that breaks our mood, and interrupts our monotonous discursive assumptions. It provides us with what Langer calls psychical distance as well as with poetic insight and revelation into the life of expressed/lived form. By bringing Jazz and the creed into cross-disciplinary dialogue with one another what we discover is a deeper insight and understanding that walks side-by-side with our

more familiar (assumed) discursive understanding of the creed. The relationship that I am illustrating in following Langer between Jazz and the creed in regard to discipleship then is between "figuration" and "logical insight, expressed literally." Here, jazz is the "picture" (the non-discursive perception) and the creed is the "proposition" (the discursive conception). Thus, Jazz as presentational symbol does not name but exemplifies what the felt life of the creed is like. That is why Langer argues that we can (and should) use symbols both discursively "to say" (the creed) as well as non-discursively (presentational) "to show" (Jazz). In this way, music (and in particular in this proposal, Jazz) "shows" us the life of feeling, time, and passage expressed and confessed in the creed thereby helping us to discover, understand, experience and eventually to articulate and express it in a different way. As Langer states,

> The general theory of symbolism here set forth, which distinguishes between two symbolic modes rather than restricting intelligence to discursive forms and relegating all other conception to some irrational realm of feeling and instinct, has the great advantage of assimilating all mental activity to reason, instead of grafting that strange product upon a fundamentally unintellectual organism. The parent stock of both conceptual types, of verbal and non-verbal formulation, is the basic human act of symbolic transformation. The root is the same, only the flower is different.[58]

Thus, there are two "symbolic modes," the discursive and the presentational, and both are essential to fully functioning rational mental activity. Presentational symbolism, rooted in our imaginative powers, is for Langer (and I am arguing should be for the Christian disciple) an indispensable and exceedingly powerful means of meaning-making, as it broadens and deepens not only our notion of human rationality, but our understanding, experience, and expression of our faith.

Third, it is necessary to highlight Langer's unique and specific definition and usage of the

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[58] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 143.

term “metaphor” as “symbolic transformation” through which she emphasizes that the human mind/mentality is one of continuous making and usage of metaphor. With this definition at work we are not engaging music/jazz as “mere metaphor” but rather as a symbol, an artistic image, of vital import that creates psychical distance for us in regard to the creed as discursive artifact and thus provides new poetic insight and discovery into the rhythm of “felt life” as “lived form.” Thus, Jazz serves to reveal a thick non-discursive description of the felt life (senses and emotions) and passage of time/journey of faith parallel to the discursive narrative of the creed. Jazz provides us with a way of conceiving and articulating the felt life of the creedal frame and the two realms reality as it is taking place everyday. Here, Langer argues that there exists a “more vital … principle of language (and perhaps of all symbolism): Metaphor.”[59] Thus, metaphor, in Langer’s view is “an incomparable achievement”[60] and must be seen perhaps paradoxically, within the framework of communication, which involves “the context (verbal or practical) and the novelty.”[61] In order to express the novelty, which in this project and more specifically in this chapter would be the life of feeling and the felt passage of time as it takes place in the more familiar discursive narrative form of the creed, the speaker has to find an appropriate word that may be apt, new, or ambiguous, with the role of the context being to modify and determine just what it means. That word, that musical form here being Jazz. What happens when, in a slightly more than minimally developed language system, a precise word is lacking but there is still need to find one that can be used? Langer, following Wegener, but in deepest continuity with her own “logical” position, has recourse to the “powers of logical

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[59] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 139.

[60] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 139.

[61] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 139.

analogy."[62] In this case, a word denoting something else is used as a "presentational symbol for a thing meant."[63] Something that is already named becomes a symbolic proxy for something that is nameless. In this case the "felt life" of the Creed. As Langer further states, "In a genuine metaphor, an image of the literal meaning is our symbol for the figurative meaning, the thing that has no name of its own."[64] And as Robert Innis notes, "This gives us generative or creative metaphor, novelty, emergence of sense, which then becomes sedimented in our conventional linguistic-conceptual frameworks."[65] Here, Langer is asserting that linguistic meaning is to a great extent grounded in presentational symbolism. Innes further highlights this emphasis: "A linguistic expression's meaning is defined, then, by an essential tension between the literal and the metaphorical, and between the context and the novel predication. The context must be literal since it is the literal that functions as the background to the metaphor's figure."[66] And this is the case in our usage of Jazz in connection with the creed to provide a thick description of the life of feeling and the felt passage of time. In the end, Langer sees metaphor as rooted in abstractive seeing, "the power of human minds to use presentational symbols," through which, "every new experience, or new idea about things, evokes first of all some metaphorical expression."[67] Innis further expounds on Langer's thought: "Such seeing is based on presentational symbolism, which expresses our ability to grasp, and be grasped by, an immanent significance, or originary significance, in the flux of experience."[68] It is in this early, presentational mode, that Langer

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[62] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 139.

[63] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 139.

[64] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 139.

[65] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 58.

[66] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 59.

[67] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 141.

[68] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 139.

asserts that our first adventures in conscious abstraction occurs. And as Innis further describes, these adventures are

> exemplified in the grasp of similarities, but similarities that take a figurative form and appear publicly first in the spontaneous similes of language (or in publicly accessible images). Metaphor, according to Langer, is not a conscious mechanism at the beginning but arises spontaneously out of our natural perception of a common form between separate domains of experience. One such form is hence able to be transformed into a linguistic symbol and to represent "a wide variety of conceptions."[69]

And, therefore as Langer correctly notes, "One such form is hence able to be transformed into a linguistic symbol and to represent a wide variety of conceptions."[70] Linguistic metaphor arises when there are gaps in our expression systems, when, that is, there is present a certain "poverty of language, need of emphasis, or need of circumlocution."[71] Metaphor fulfills our experiential and expressive need. Metaphor is the work of mentality that is constantly doing symbolic transformation. And this is what I am creatively attempting in the connection between Jazz and the creed. According to Langer, it is "the symbolization of life's impetus and flow makes us more aware of it,"[72] and I agree with her. Here is where I see the meaning-making purpose in the parallel connection between Jazz and the creed in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. As Langer states, "the human mind on all levels and in all degrees of awareness is obsessed with finding the appropriate symbolism for conceiving all the dimensions of its existence, the first dimension clearly being that of simply the experience of being alive."[73] This experience is, to be sure, a complicated web of intertwined desires, feelings, actions, images, and so forth. Through

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[69] Innis, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, 59.

[70] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 141.

[71] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 141.

[72] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 348.

[73] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 147.

the history and tradition of the church, the creed has been most regularly regarded as chiefly utilitarian and primarily for the use of getting on with the work of doctrine, and therefore rarely, I would argue, if even incidentally, from an aesthetic perspective in regard to the disciple's non-discursive understanding of the life of feeling and the felt passage of time. Therefore, the life of feeling and the felt passage of time of the disciple of Jesus Christ exemplified through the artistic image of Jazz in connection with the creedal narrative and the two realms is a much-needed metaphor of thick description that strongly re-connects aesthetics to ethics and doctrine.

Thus, Jazz allows us a different way to discover, understand, and experience, that is, to feel, see, hear, and sound the holistic rhythm of the disciple's life expressed in the creed. And, as I will argue and illustrate, Jazz sounding in parallel to the discursive narrative of the creed reveals to us a *cantus firmus* through which the harmonies and dissonance, conflict and resolution, and a diversity that flows from unity, namely the polyphony and the counterpoint of life may be experienced and expressed in a different way. Therefore, music (aesthetics) is essential to providing us with a thicker description of the felt rhythm, tempo, and mood of the disciple's everyday life as it is lived simultaneously in rhythm and harmony (saint) and in dissonance and disharmony (sinner) with God's creative and redemptive rhythm. Thus, music (Jazz) is quite capable of actually sounding forth truth. It can sound forth the harmony and rhythm of the cosmic dance and the way in which God has ordered creation. It can also sound forth the disharmony and dissonance, conflict, tension, and the need for and felt relief of resolution. And, it sounds forth the truth of diversity which flows from unity that empowers self-expression as it takes place within a community, and expresses the experience of freedom, joy and delight that is felt in serving others. Therefore, music (Jazz) is not a mere addendum or added extra that merely assists in highlighting the truth as it is discursively revealed. Rather it is

essential to the life of the disciple for a more fully-embodied and fully-embedded understanding, experience, and expression of discipleship. Therefore, Jazz serves as a non-discursive "thick" description or exemplification (art image) of the integration of aesthetics and discipleship. It is able to illustrate and exemplify the significance of art for communicating truth that goes well beyond "mere metaphor." Jazz is more than merely a metaphor for deeper truths, but is itself a non-discursive means actually to communicate truth about God's revelation and truth that highlights the place of aesthetics in the life of discipleship. In this light, music (Jazz) should be considered essential to discipleship formation rather than being treated as merely an enhancement or a pleasure with "meaning" connected to it. As art, music/jazz, actually conveys truth, therefore it should not be considered merely an addition or addendum to discipleship formation, but essential to its holistic elegance. And yet, at the same time, we need to be open, honest, and realistic in confessing that Jazz is actually hard to pin down since it is indeed a non-discursive form of truth. However, that does not mean that is not truthful, nor that we should not struggle to articulate its meaning and truthfulness in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. For instance, as I will argue and illustrate, in Swing it is the felt rhythm and harmony of the band members that leads one to want to dance. In the Blues, we discover the center of the *cantus firmus* to which Bonhoeffer has led us—namely, the cross of Jesus Christ. When one listens to the blues one knows that something has gone wrong in the world and we desperately need hope in the midst of misery and despair. These things are felt! And finally, with Improvisation—one knows that individuality is taking place in the midst of community and when it is done well it is felt and celebrated and when it is not done well it is felt and rejected. Although Jazz (aesthetics) does not give us everything (indeed we must always be mindful that the aesthetics that we have in this life will always be shot through with sin, and is not capable of the fullness of God's

revelation)—it does give us a lot. A lot more than we usually think, see, hear, and feel in the normal obviousness of our everyday lives. It gives us much to mourn, and much to celebrate. It gives us much to appropriate.

Finally, I must admit to the reader of this project the obvious reality: it is a written (discursive) dissertation. In this project, I am held accountable to meaning and making through the written discursive form. Therefore, the written discursive form must be used even to describe the non-discursive thick description that I engage, just as Susanne K. Langer herself has had to do, even though it may be clumsy and appear as though it is working away from the aesthetic trajectory for which I am arguing.

For a creative and constructive framework that leads the disciple of Jesus Christ on a journey through all three articles of the Creed, that finds the first article on creation as the proper point of departure, and moves through the second and third articles of the creed in order to place the redeemed and transformed Christian disciple firmly back in the created sphere to actively and creatively live a more holistic embodied and embedded existence, I will be bringing the three key elements of Jazz, namely: Swing, Blues, and Improvisation[74] into mutual dialogue with the three articles of the creed. In so doing, I argue that the contemporary Lutheran perspective on the doctrine of Spirit Christology provides a unique connection point between the three key elements of jazz and all three articles of the creed which intimately unites aesthetics, to truth, and ethics in

[74] Here, it should be noted that I am not arguing for the propriety or value of jazz as a liturgical form within the Lutheran worship setting. That is a topic for another paper. Rather, I am utilizing jazz as an artistic metaphor and conversation partner, to present the intrinsic nature of aesthetics in discipleship. Specifically, I am relying on the insights of Leopoldo Sanchez, when he states, "The challenge is to portray textually and musically (artistically/poetically) the Christian life, in its indicative (divine poetic initiative) and imperative (our poetic responsibility) sense, without compromising the centrality of the gospel". This then will be my challenge and goal. Leopoldo Sanchez, "Theology in Context: Music as a Test Case," *Concordia Journal* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 206–21.

the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of her simultaneous existence in the two realms that both forms and empowers the disciple aesthetically for daily life in God's created sphere.

Robert Gelinas and a Jazz-Shaped Faith

Robert Gelinas asserts in his book *Finding the Groove*, "Jazz challenges us to rethink not "what" we believe, but "how" we believe what we believe."[75] Gelinas is very helpful in providing entré into the dialogue between the artistic musical form of jazz and everyday discipleship. As he writes, "A jazz-shaped faith is worth pursuing because it balances freedom with boundaries, the individual with the group, and traditions with the pursuit of what might be."[76] Gelinas provides a non-foundational approach to the mutual dialogue between jazz and discipleship that aims at honestly and authentically dealing with tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes. In so doing, Gelinas should be applauded for not making any easy moves to one extreme or another, but instead he addresses life as it is found in the middle. Thus, it can be argued that Gelinas moves forward through his work with a ruled-use approach in regard to the "three basic concepts, key notes if you will" of jazz that he highlights in his work: "syncopation, improvisation, and call-and-response."[77] More specifically, for Gelinas, improvisation serves as a centralizing or organizing note for him in regard to the relationship between jazz and spiritual formation. The blues also finds an important place in his schema as it is able to handle the reality of the tensions that we face in this life. This emphasis in regard to the blues will be a key point of

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[75] Robert Gelinas, *Finding the Groove: Composing a Jazz-Shaped Faith* (Wolgemuth & Assoc., 2015), 6.

[76] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 2.

[77] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 16, 54.

agreement that I will extend in my own project, as I make the blues the centralizing or organizing musical principle of my extending of Bonhoeffer's *cantus firmus* for the twenty-first century. As Gelinas works to connect his three key notes of syncopation, improvisation, and call-and-response to the life of the disciple as well as to the community of believers called the church, he does so in a rather eclectic manner which emphasizes the strong connection he desires to make between his American cultural heritage and theology, as well as connecting aesthetics and ethics. This is especially evident in his focus on suffering, oppression, and injustice; as well as community, evangelism, and mission. However, I would also point out that as Gelinas himself admits, he is the pastor of an eclectic congregation that is "interdenominational,"[78] and therefore the stronger connection to doctrinal truth that emanates from a particular historic tradition is not as prevalent as it will be in my own project. As Gelinas himself writes,

> We need basic spiritual disciplines such as participating regularly in corporate worship and Bible reading, practicing generosity, and engaging in a life connected to the poor. A cursory reading of the Scriptures and the rudiments of Christian belief show us that. In addition to incorporating traditional spiritual disciplines into our life with Christ, we can use these jazz essentials (syncopation, improvisation, and call-and-response) to discover new vistas and venues for meeting God. A tailor-made personal spirituality, so to speak. If we are rooted in the historic faith, basic Christian doctrine, and community, then I think we are ready to experiment a little.[79]

However, Gelinas does not make the move to clearly define or describe the aspects of the traditional spiritual disciplines, or the rudiments of the historic faith he has in mind. And, he does not specifically point to any basic Christian doctrine in particular to which he is connecting his musical schema. His approach is related primarily to the concept of redemption in general. Therefore, I argue that Gelinas's connection of jazz as a cultural musical artifact is not directly

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[78] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 13.

[79] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 54.

related to any specific historic theological artifact such as the creed. And although he moves through a generalized Trinitarian engagement with jazz, it is not organized in the same fashion as my own project, which follows the proper ordering and full-circle movement through all the three articles of the creed. Thus, the order of his key notes of jazz, the organizing principle of improvisation, as well as the trajectory through which he works through them in relationship to the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ is quite different from my own. Therefore, I argue that relating Jazz to the historic creed through a Lutheran perspective on Spirit Christology calls us to this particular challenge, to a different emphases of jazz elements and their ordering in regard to the non-discursive experience and expression of our mysterious God and what life in the community into which he has called and placed us is like that moves in a full-circle creedal trajectory that begins with the first article, moves through the second article to the third, and then firmly places the Christian disciple back into the first article sphere of creation in her everyday vocation. This connection, and this ordering principle, along with utilizing the nuanced three key elements of jazz which are different from Gelinas's three key notes, I believe more directly connects aesthetics not only to ethics, but also in a stronger way to the historic traditional doctrine of the Christian church, and more specifically to the Lutheran Confessions. This way of presenting the relationship will then incorporate what I have called the essence of the three key elements of jazz into the way we understand what it means to follow Jesus in our everyday lives. This will reveal how Jazz helps the Christian disciple to discover, experience and better articulate the life of feeling and the felt passage of time as we journey through all three articles of the creed as children of God's kingdom living in the first article created sphere. Spirit Christology serves as a unique connecting bridge as it may be argued that the Holy Spirit may be described as the member of the Trinity that is most non-discursively understood, who leads calls,

gathers, and enlightens us to join the Christian community in this journey. The Father is the one who speaks, the Son is His Word that goes forth, but the Spirit is the breath of God. As Jesus says to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 verse 8, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." In this verse Jesus expressly tells Nicodemus and us that the Holy Spirit works beyond discursive understanding, and leads those who have been born by water and the Spirit into a life that goes beyond discursive experience. Therefore, it is the unique role of the Holy Spirit to lead us into a more non-discursively understood perspective of life in Christ. I agree with Robert Gelinas when he asserts,

> Jazz is a way of thinking and a way of viewing the world. It is about freedom within community. It is a culture, a set of values and norms by which we can experience life in general and faith in particular. It is about how we know things. Jazz is a knowledge born out of experience. It is a knowledge based on taking the proposition and living on it.[80]

Seen, in this holistic manner, jazz is a knowing by experiencing and expressing. This exactly captures the object and goal of my project as I seek to connect the three key elements of jazz to the creed through Spirit Christology.

Jazz: An Artistic Symbol of Vital Import

I will argue that aesthetics is intimately and essentially related to all three articles of the Creed and therefore to all three kinds of righteousness as they have been presented in the previous chapter, and therefore in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ everyday. Spirit Christology provides us with a Christian doctrine that both intimately connects Creation, Redemption, and Re-Creation together as well as leading us in the full-circle journey through all

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[80] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 157.

three articles of the Creed that not only makes intimate contact with humanity, but also moves the disciple of Jesus Christ back into the created sphere, and does not isolate us solely within the Second Article of the creed nor limit us to a solely vertical existence. For a succinct definition of Spirit Christology, we turn to the work of Leopoldo Sanchez:

> This type of pneumatology will be grounded in the identity of the incarnate Christ as the privileged locus of the Holy Spirit; as the bearer and giver of the Spirit as an incarnational pneumatology, in which the Holy Spirit works through ordinary means or signs in creation not only to deliver God's Word of forgiveness, life, and salvation to us now but also to shape our lives after Christ's own life in the Spirit.[81]

As we will discover, these integral relationships and this form of Spirit Christology hold vital meaning to a deeper and more holistic understanding of our lives, especially in regard to our aesthetic formation in discipleship.

Swing

Thus, we set out on our full-circle creedal journey that takes place in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ simultaneously in the two realms by laying the constructive and creative groundwork of the "Divine Poetic Imagination" at work in Creation as our initial point of departure. Here, the key note that is clearly sounded in regard to the relationship between the first article of the creed and the key element of swing in jazz is that the creative aspect of the aesthetics of discipleship are God-originated and God-bestowed. This sets the stage for a Trinitarian engagement between Spirit Christology and aesthetics in the initial context of the Spirit's artistic and creative role in Creation. Beginning with the doctrine of Creation as it is found in the First Article of the Creed we turn to Early Church Father's such as Irenaeus to see the connection between the Creed and the Trinity in regard to the Person of the Holy Spirit at

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[81] Leopoldo Sanchez, "Life in the Spirit of Christ: Models of Sanctification as Sacramental Pneumatology," *LOGIA*: *A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 22, no. 3 (2013): 7.

work in the Divine Poetic act of Creation. Irenaeus in Book IV of his *Against the Heresies* identifies God's Word with the Son, and Wisdom with the Spirit, and says that they were both with the Father before Creation, and that God made all things by the Word and adorned them by Wisdom (iv. 20. 1–3). For our purposes of developing an aesthetics of discipleship that moves through all three articles of the Creed, Patrick Sherry points out, "this is part of Irenaeus' polemic against the Gnostics: in response to them he insists on the goodness of matter and the knowability of God, who reveals Himself through His two 'hands', the Son and the Spirit, and who made the world through them."[82] In another work, the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus quotes Ps. 33:6: "By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made, their whole array by the breath of his mouth." Here, Sherry highlights the non-discursive and artistic role of the Spirit to form: "the Word establishes the reality of being and the Spirit gives order and form to the diversity of powers."[83] Here, in connection with the Spirit's role in the first article of the creed we also find the intimate connection between aesthetics [order and form] to the first kind of righteousness, that is 'governing righteousness' [the diversity of powers] which originates from and is bestowed by God. Sherry then further expounds on this creative and artistic role of the Spirit by pointing to St. Basil, in his *Hexaemeron,* who "also provides an example of this view when he compares God to an artist, whose workshop, the earth, shows forth His wondrous works; and he assigns the Holy Spirit a role in creation."[84]

Jurgen Moltmann provides us with a more contemporary view of such a Poetic Trinitarian metaphor or word picture which he describes as "Utterer—Word—Breath to help us understand

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[82] Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2002), 4.

[83] Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 4.

[84] Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 7.

the cooperative, unified relationship, as well as the Personalistic character in regards to God's Poetic Imagination at work in Creation, Redemption, and Re-Creation."[85] There is both unity and personality at work. An interesting and important point that Moltmann makes is that there can be no word spoken without breath. The Word and the Breath journey together as they are spoken. Therefore, Creation is nothing less than God's poetic imagination declared through the Word of His Son that moves by the breath of His Holy Spirit. It is indeed nothing less than the Divine Word of poetic creativity. And, as Kilian McDonnell correctly argues, "If one loses sight of the relation of the Spirit to creation and to the whole cosmic dimension, then there is no recourse to the Spirit to explain the character and quality of created reality. It becomes difficult to relate the Spirit to "nature, to moral, cultural, and political life. Spirit becomes too sacralized, too tied to holy objects and events."[86] This in turn jeopardizes the reality that the Spirit of Christ is indeed intimately related to "resurrection and cosmic redemption,"[87] thus, effectively eclipsing the Spirit not only from Beauty but also from the Good and the True. Of interest to this project it should be noted that this also effectively eclipses the Spirit from the aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ. This in turn relegates the daily aesthetic existence of the disciple of Jesus Christ either solely to the horizontal, secular realm or solely to the vertical realm within the Second Article. Therefore, I am in hearty agreement with William Placher who argues, "when it comes to life-long discipleship, the Spirit's cognitive work is inseparable from its affective work."[88] With this unique perspective of Spirit Christology as the point of departure I contend that the

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[85] Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 307.

[86] Kilian McDonnell, "The Determinative Doctrine of The Holy Spirit," *Theology Today* 39 (1982): 150.

[87] McDonnell, "The Determinative Doctrine," 151.

[88] William C. Placher, *The Triune God: An Essay in Postliberal Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 99.

Holy Spirit is indeed at work with the Father and the Son in Creation, Redemption, and Re-Creation. Here, the Person and work of the Holy Spirit is the point of contact that draws us into the cosmic dance by way of His journey with Christ to the Cross and by welcoming us through our baptism. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is intimately involved in the aesthetic formation and daily aesthetic existence in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

In this first section we have engaged the relationship between aesthetics and the Divine Poetic Imagination at work in Creation from the aspect of Spirit Christology. Here, I believe the first key element of Jazz known as 'Swing' provides us with an artistic image of vital import giving us a thicker description of both the Trinitarian cohesion in creative action as well as the Holy Spirit's creative role that breaks out to make contact with humanity through Christ, the Cross, and baptism, thereby drawing human creatures back into the cosmic dance of the Creator's music. In jazz, the element of Swing describes the sense of *propulsive* rhythmic 'feel' or 'groove' created by the musical interaction between the band members and their different instruments. If band members are playing exceedingly well together, the band is said to be 'really swinging,' suggesting that the whole ensemble is playing with a special degree of rhythmic coherence and 'feel,' as they are fully 'tuned in' to one another's sound. Yet, swing still allows for the freedom of a particular band member to step out as a soloist, while the rest of the band continues to keep the rhythm and groove behind him. Swing music is thus a movement outward from the band that creates a visceral response in the listener, such as foot-tapping, head-nodding, and most notably the desire to dance. Swing has the power to sound the hearer into action. Therefore, Swing is the form of jazz that is particularly meant for dancing—with a partner. As we will see, relationships are vitally important in jazz. And, in regard to the element of Swing, we are called to dance, but not by ourselves. And, as we will see, the Holy Spirit

convicts, teaches, and empowers us to Swing, to move in step with the Divine Cosmic Rhythm as we are called to dance with God, others, and creation.

Thus, we begin with the key element of Swing and the Beauty of the Divine Poetic Imagination at work in Creation. Beauty first burst forth from the divine Godhead and made a beginning of all things, when the Father first spoke His Word (the Son) and breathed forth His breath (the Holy Spirit) and sang, "Let there be light," and "there was" and "it was good" (Gen 1:1–2), originating, bestowing, and sounding forth the rhythm of the divine poetic imagination for all of creation to swing and dance. As Robert Gelinas reminds us, "In the Chronicles of Narnia, C.S. Lewis envisioned in his allegorized version of creation that God sang the world into existence. Think about it: God called and creation responded; he spoke and *nothing* obeyed."[89] I would take Gelinas's observation one step further and say that C.S. Lewis was not merely allegorizing, but more so, was presenting a non-discursive poetic articulation of the event of creation in order to provide an opening for the human senses imaginatively to engage the beauty and feeling of the sound of God's song birthing the universe to life.

Here, we pause for a moment to listen to and watch the YouTube Video of The Buddy Rich Big Band performing the song "Birdland" live at the Hague in Holland from 1978.[90] The song begins with Buddy on the hi-hat all by himself. Listen closely and you can hear the fluttering of the wings of the dove [the Holy Spirit] as it hovers over the waters putting time into motion and setting the tempo and rhythm by which all of creation swings. Next, the bass and the piano come in booming sweet and low reverberating the depth and power of God's Word as it spreads light

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[89] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 30. This example is taken from C.S. Lewis' *The Magician's Nephew*.

[90] Buddy Rich, "Birdland Performed by the Buddy Rich Big Band," filmed July 1978, YouTube Video, 7:53. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcEKAWZ1Nbk.

across the dark void like ripples across water calling us to sense and feel the musical juggernaut of God's Creative Song as it echoes through time and space. Then comes the horn section and the tempo begins to really swing inviting the big band of creation as it unfolds into the creative act. You can hear and feel the beauty and the excitement of each day of creation as God adds each aspect of his artistry through His song, sun, moon, and stars, trees, and plants, birds of the air, animals of the land, and fishes of the sea—and all of it is swinging with God's song and it is "Good." Then, comes a brief drum solo setting the stage for the building moment of the saxophone solo with the rhythm section backing him up in full swing, expressing the depth and breadth of the beauty of creation, as the great soloist continues his work as the community of creation swings along. And then the horns come back in full force to announce that all of creation is swinging together to God's song of creation. And it is all "Good." As the big band has been swinging together through each day of creation, we suddenly come back to the hi-hat, bass and piano, the trio slows the tempo for just a moment to remind all of creation who started this song—who is in the charge of this big band. All of creation listens in anticipation—what could possibly be next? Then another creative explosion filled with excitement—God creates man out of the very dirt he had already laid down. And once again, the hi-hat sounds the fluttering of the wings of the Holy Spirit as God breathes the breath of His Spirit into man and man is instantly filled with the tempo and rhythm of the Holy Spirit. The sound of life is filled with joy and delight—dizzying in its celebratory praise. And, it is all "very good." And, then God rested. Immediately applause erupts in joyous delight as all of creation sounds praise to God's swing. This performance by The Buddy Rich Big Band of "Birdland" provides us with a different perspective than we normally assume when imagining creation. It brings the sound of swing to our normal visual imagining, and therefore offers a thicker aesthetic description of the moment

of creation that provides a renewed elegance, beauty, joy and delight to our understanding of God's creative work and His governing righteousness.

We were created to dance, play, sing, work, and worship to this rhythm, this divine poetic imagination, by way of meaningful relationships with God, by caring for creation, and cultivating culture with other human beings. Unfortunately, it did not take long before we desired to discern good and bad music for ourselves, and therefore chose ourselves as better composers of our dancing music than that by which and to which God had created us. Unfortunately, instead of dancing to the rhythm of God's created order [governing righteousness] and cultivating and improvising more beautiful music from it, we introduced clanging dissonance into the cosmos and disrupted the perfect harmony of God's rhythm.

Although there was, from that point on, to be disharmony between God and man, man and creation, man and his neighbor, and even man's own relationship within himself—God promised that His ongoing creative rhythm would not cease to hold all things together [governing righteousness], and in His divine poetic imagination he promised a creative Word to redeem and restore all that was in disharmony by sending his Son, and his Holy Spirit to us (Gen 3:15) [justifying righteousness], as the Apostle Paul sings to the Colossians in his "Hymn of the Cosmic Christ" (Col 1:15–20). This then leads us into an understanding of the thick description of the Spirit's artistic and creative role in Redemption in connection with the key element of Jazz knowns as the Blues.

The Blues

Thus, we make the move from the First Article to the Second Article of the Creed as we speak of God's relationship to humanity by way of His salvific poetic imagination reaching out to us through the joint mission of the Son and the Spirit [justifying righteousness]. Here, the key

note that is clearly sounded in regard to the relationship between the second article of the creed and the key element of the blues in jazz is that the redemptive aspect of the aesthetics of discipleship are Christ-centered and cross-patterned. Here, 'Spirit Christology' helps us to discover that, "The Spirit is never separated from him [Christ]. And, one could add, Christ is never separated from the Spirit."[91] This is "the *perichoretic* character" of the joint mission of the Son and the Spirit "the one present and active at the interior of the other."[92] This leads us to an understanding of soteriology as God's salvific poetic imagination moving outward towards fallen creation, in which He opens Himself up and engages us through His Son—that is, in the Christ event—via a sacramental trajectory. Sanchez rightly states, "Because the Holy Spirit is inseparably united to the Word made flesh and his words, and therefore to his Scripture, his absolution, his baptism, and his supper, we can posit the materiality and incarnational character of the Spirit and thus a sacramental view of life in the Spirit of Christ."[93] And in reciprocal fashion, "If Christ is the privileged locus of the Spirit, the definitive bearer and giver of the Spirit, then Christians must look to Christ to know what life in the Spirit looks like."[94] This relationship is highlighted from the moment of the Spirit's descent and resting on Jesus at His baptism in the Jordan. This is important as it not only sets the foundation for the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus, buts sets the stage for the relationship between the Holy Spirit and us. As, Sanchez writes:

> In a prominent patristic reading of the Jordan event, Christ's receiving of the Spirit for us in baptism paves the way in the Father's plan of salvation for Christ's giving the Spirit to us in our baptism. There is a chain of salvation, a pneumatological link,

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[91] Kilian McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God: The Holy Spirit as the Universal Touch and Goal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 88.

[92] McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 90.

[93] Sanchez, "Life in the Spirit of Christ," 11.

[94] Sanchez, "Life in the Spirit of Christ," 11.

> between Christology and ecclesiology. We see that a sacramental pneumatology is finally grounded in a pneumatological Christology. In Lutheran theology, Luther's affirmation of the Holy Spirit's work through the external word is not merely a polemic move against enthusiasts but is an approach to pneumatology that assumes the Spirit's inseparable connection to Christ and his words and life.[95]

Therefore, the Spirit rests on and journeys with Christ throughout His entire Messianic mission including His suffering, death, and resurrection, actively participating in the Christ-event, and in like manner drawing us into participation with Jesus Himself. Through which we discover he restores in us the rhythm of God's song through our own baptism. As Sanchez proposes,

> The blood and the water flowing from Jesus' pierced side (John 19:34) may also point to this indissoluble link between Jesus' death and his dispensing of the Spirit to the church. In 1 John 5:6–8, the Spirit of truth not only testifies to the baptism and death of Jesus "who came by water and blood," but also makes possible the church's participation in such mysteries through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper … The Spirit incorporates us into Jesus' own death (1 Cor 10:16; 11:26).[96]

Thus, restoring the Spirit and God's Rhythm to fallen human creatures. And, as Kilian McDonnell notes, "The purpose of the crucifixion is the imparting of the Spirit in faith (Gal 3:13–14). The Spirit as creator of the new life of faith has its origin in the death on the cross."[97] Thus it is that, "Where the crucified Christ is present in the Spirit there is no escaping the cross. If the Spirit is power (Rom 15:13; 1 Cor 2:4), so is the cross (1 Cor 1:17). The Spirit turns us away from the allure of resting in the exaltation and turns us back to the cross as the place of salvation, the source of the gospel's power. The cross identifies and defines God."[98] Unfortunately, in many theological conversations and proclamations about what is True and Good, it is often precisely at the Cross that the Spirit and Beauty are no longer regarded as

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[95] Sanchez, "Life in the Spirit of Christ," 7.

[96] Leopoldo Sanchez, "God Against Us and for Us: Preaching Jesus in the Spirit," *Word & World* 23, no. 2 (2003): 143.

[97] McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 166.

[98] McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 167.

journeying together with the Son.

However, there is powerful evidence that even in this dark moment of suffering and death, the Spirit plays an integral role in regard to both our reception and understanding of the Beauty of Jesus on the Cross. The Spirit illuminates our understanding to receive and view this as the decisive moment of *peripeteia* or *eucatastrophe*—the key turning point in the drama, the ultimate surprise of the Divine Salvific Poetic Imagination at work—that brings about a dramatic reversal of fortune. Here, we discover that God chose Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world as a happy exchange in which the ugliness of sin, death, and the power of the devil are exchanged for the beauty of forgiveness, life, and victory in Christ; as well as the return of the Holy Spirit and God's rhythm of life to the human creature. But this redemptive beauty is hidden under its opposite, as Luther says *sub contrario* and in so doing we find that this redemptive beauty hidden under its opposite is indeed a divine display of God's creative poetic imagination at work in the midst of all the world's ugliness. Here, we can make an appeal to Isaiah 53:2–3, where we are brought to the understanding that if the beauty of Christ is sought in a glorious Christ who is not crucified, the search will always be in vain. There would be no *peripeteia*, no *eucatastrophe*.

Thus, a Christian reception and understanding of beauty in its intrinsic relationship to goodness and truth must include even the Cross and things which a worldly aesthetics discards as ugly and unbearable.[99] Here we can draw on the words of St. Augustine, who says in one of his

[99] Here, there is a wonderful connection to Richard Bauckham's book on "second temple" Christology, *God Crucified: Monotheism & Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). In this work, Bauckham argues precisely that on the cross we actually see the full and true identity of God himself whose beauty is self-giving.

sermons, "He hung therefore on the cross deformed, but his deformity is our beauty."[100] Here many theologians also speak of the wounds of Christ in relationship to the Spirit and as the Beauty of Christ's sacrifice that reaches out for us. Specifically, the wound in Jesus' side is viewed as both the point of departure from which the Spirit is sent, and as the point of entry through which the Spirit welcomes and draws humanity up into Christ. As Kilian McDonnell points out, "More than any other evangelist, John ties the giving of the Spirit to Jesus' death. It is from the side of Jesus that the Spirit flows (7:38–39)."[101] And, as Eugene Rogers notes, "The Spirit comes to rest on human beings as it rests on the body of the Son because they are said to enter into the Trinity through the womb of his side."[102] Here Rogers pays special attention and gives much time to the twelfth-century Cistercian Guerric of Igny who "portrays the Son as receiving human beings through an opening in his body, where they in turn receive safe haven from sin and experience comfort and gifts of the Spirit."[103] Rogers continues, "Geurric insists that this entering into Christ is not merely a clinging 'to' him. It is important to him [Geurric] that Christ has an accessible interior: 'For the wound in the side of Christ, what is it if not an entrance [*ostium*] into the ark of salvation in the face of the flood? (Sermon 2:212).'"[104] Therefore, those of us who have been baptized into Christ by the Spirit of life, and have been brought into participation with his death and resurrection according to Rom 6:1–11 have been incorporated into the good image of the cross and the wounds of Christ by way of the mutual indwelling of the

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[100] Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Pastrologia Latina* (Paris, 1844-1855), 38:181.

[101] McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 65–66.

[102] Rogers, Eugene F. Jr., *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 121.

[103] Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 123.

[104] Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 123.

Holy Spirit, transforming the tomb of death to the womb of new life.[105] The Spirit likewise gives us new lenses with which to look upon the Cross and wounds of Christ giving us the new perspective honestly and authentically to speak of them as ugly and beautiful simultaneously. Therefore, when we look upon the Cross, when we meditate on Christ's wounds, we witness both death and life, suffering and comfort, emptiness and hope. The Spirit has welcomed us into His pain, suffering, and death—His wounds, and in like manner the Spirit welcomes Christ into ours. We have been drawn up into the cosmic story that centers on Christ and that is shaped by the pattern of his cross. We have been welcomed into the life of the blues.

The aesthetic [and more specifically beauty] in its intimate and intrinsic relationship to the good and the true, is especially significant in regard to how Christ and the Holy Spirit call out to us to deal with sin, suffering, and death in a broken world honestly and authentically without losing hope. Here, the aesthetic serves as a point of contact for our understanding of how the cross of Jesus Christ is indeed a symbol of beauty seeking an infinite good in the midst of evil and darkness. This allows an aesthetic engagement with such concepts as *peripeteia* and *eucatastrophe* giving us a thicker description of life at the most intimate level in its most difficult moments. It is here, in the midst of suffering and death yet without losing hope that the key element of jazz called the Blues serves powerfully as an artistic image of vital import. The sound of the Blues helps to connect us in a different way to the divine salvific poetic imagination at work in the incarnation, the messianic journey, the cross & the resurrection. Here, the Holy Spirit is the point of contact that draws us back into the rhythm of the cosmic dance of God's good

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[105] This indeed puts a new tactile and aesthetic key on Jesus' command to Thomas (to thrust his hand into Jesus' side). And, therefore, a renewed tactile and aesthetic emphasis on the experience of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper today when we take hold of, eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus in, with, and under the bread and the wine.

creation welcoming us through the wounds of Christ and our baptism and leading us into the exciting adventure of discovery and cultivating culture and creating community.

Born out of the Southern spiritual style of call and response practiced by African slaves working in the fields, Blues is the form of jazz that engages life as journey and struggle. It sings of the individual but at the same time draws in the community both to respond to and share in the experience. In the midst of crying out in their bondage and suffering underneath the heavy load of their trials, the slaves in the field would share their experience with one another through song. Yet, at the same time, they also sang with hearts filled with the expectation and hope of coming freedom. We all face the reality of the sinful struggle in this life. We too sing must learn to sing of the despair and heartache of the bondage and oppression that sin, death, and the power of the evil master (the devil) cause us as they continue to attempt to drain life from us under the burdens of our heavy load. The struggle is real. The song is true. The blues honestly sound out our human weakness and frailty. And yet, at the same time they help us to express the experience of a hope not only on its way, but present in the midst of life's pain and suffering today. The blues sound forth a thick description of what it means to live in two realms simultaneously, and what it means to experience life in the tension of being both saint and sinner simultaneously. Here, the blues honestly and authentically sound out the brokenness of this life, and yet at the same time is honest about that brokenness in hope. Here, we find that the key element of the blues is wrought in the midst of the experience of tension. Thus, a non-discursive understanding of our faith is able to live authentically and hopefully in the midst of this tension.

In the next chapter, I will more fully engage Luther's frame of *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio*. In Luther's well-known threefold aspect of Christian experience, we will definitely find a home for jazz in the daily life of the disciple of Jesus Christ as it is non-discursively witnessed

to and articulated through the key element of the blues. *Tentatio* calls us to face the harsh realities of our own sinfulness in the midst of a broken creation groaning for redemption. Here, the true beauty of the blues is that it prevents us from any over-sentimentalized pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by gospel reductionism. Instead the blues engages us in the gritty, ugly aspects of life, providing us with a syncopated rhythm that calls us to engage the tension head-on with honesty and authenticity even as we cry out in hope for relief and resolution. This then is the heart of *feeling* the blues. The blues helps us to discover and understand, to honesty feel, experience, and express life lived in the tension of freedom and imprisonment, a life lived simultaneously as saint and sinner. Here, the true man of the blues, Jesus, hanging on the cross for the sin of the world, is the *cantus firmus* for the twenty-first century. Here, we find that the aesthetics of discipleship are Christ-centered and cross-patterned. Thus, the blues is a cross-shaped music that sounds the center of the disciple's life, around which all the other polyphony of life is sounded against. Tension in hope, death and life, ugliness and beauty are at the center of the blues in all its honesty and authenticity and this is nowhere greater seen, heard, and felt than at the cross of Calvary on Good Friday. As Gelinas eloquently states, "Jazz without the blues is like celebrating Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday without recognizing that he was crucified for the sin of the world on Good Friday."[106]

In light of the struggle, God in and through his divine salvific poetic imagination sent his Son and his Holy Spirit to engage the reality of the struggle—to bring light in the midst of darkness, hope in the midst of despair. The two hands of God creatively burst out from the divine imagination by way of the Incarnation, and journey together throughout the entire Messianic

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[106] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove,* 130.

mission, including Jesus' suffering, and death on the cross. In this dark moment of suffering and death the Spirit plays an integral role in regards to illuminating our understanding of the beauty of the good image of Jesus on the cross, by deepening our experience and opening us to not only see but also to hear and feel this as the decisive moment of *peripeteia* or *eucatastrophe*—the key turning point in the cosmic drama, the ultimate surprise of the divine salvific poetic imagination at work that brings about a dramatic reversal of fortune. Therefore, when we look upon the Cross, and meditate on Christ's wounds, we witness both death and life, suffering and comfort, despair and hope. And, through the power of the Spirit, we are opened to hearing and feeling the aesthetic cross-event in a new way. We witness through sound the journey of the Blues, and come to a renewed experience of the ultimate Man of the Blues. Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, sang the blues on the cross for all creation to hear. In the midst of excruciating pain and suffering and in the face of a death that he did not deserve, Jesus sang an ancient song written by one his human ancestors from long ago, King David, who likewise knew something about the blues. In this key moment when the entire cosmic drama centers on the Christ hanging on the cross, Jesus sang out with a blues-filled voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani*"—which means, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?'" No greater cry of dereliction has ever been heard; no greater song of the blues has ever been sounded on behalf of all creation, from a truly innocent man.

Here, we briefly pause to listen to and reflect on the Gospel Blues of Blind Willie Johnson in his song "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground".[107] This particular recording offers us an incredible example of the power of the non-discursive at work in bringing us to a renewed discovery and understanding, and therefore a deeper experience of the iconic event of Jesus

[107] Blind Willie Johnson, "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground," recorded December 1927. YouTube Video, 3:19. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71Ti_TdpJHE.

Christ on the cross through thick musical description that sounds the story of sorrow and pain that is deeply invested with cries for hope. Listen as Blind Willie Johnson unfolds the story of Christ's redemptive work on the cross through his "wordless monody of moans accompanied by a restless, singing slide [guitar]."[108] The musical imagery is both rich and textured as it illustrates the solitary man of sorrow all alone with his guitar. Notice that the orchestra—that big band of creation—that sounded forth so powerfully and joyfully as it was brought to life through God's swing in the first article is here brought to complete and utter silence. The music of the world is stripped bare in order to listen to the haunting simplicity of this solitary man's musical groans accompanied by the sliding cry of the single wooden instrument upon which he plays his song of suffering and redemption. We are called to pause at this moment with all of creation as we too are brought to silence to listen to this song of redemption—the song of the blues—the song of "Good Friday that cries out for Resurrection Sunday."[109] This is an experience that takes us deeper than words on paper are able to fully express. In the blues we are called to hear the sound of suffering in the moans and groans of this suffering singer as it is syncopated against the cry for hope coming through the guitar. Once again, through the blues of jazz we are provided with a different perspective than we normally assume, especially in regard to this iconic moment in God's grand story of Creation, Redemption, and Restoration. As we listen to this thick musical description of the moment of redemption as it takes place in the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross on Good Friday, pointing us in hope to Easter Sunday, a greater depth of emotion and feeling is brought to our aesthetic experience of redemption and justifying righteousness. As

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[108] Stephen J. Nichols, *Getting the Blues: What Blues Music Teaches Us About Suffering & Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 107.

[109] Nichols, *Getting the Blues*, 107.

Gelinas further notes,

> Existentially speaking, the blues are a way of dealing with suffering …The blues are a narrative wrought out of the deep feelings that accompany life in a world that isn't as it should be. To sing the blues is to latch on to a tragedy in such a way that we embrace it for all it's worth. It is to become intimately familiar with the details of human suffering. This is the most difficult part of composing a jazz-shaped faith. It requires that we become intimately familiar with our pain and the pain of the world.[110]

Rooted in the stuff of real life, the blues helps us to find meaning in the sorrow. The blues sound forth about the things in the world which have gone wrong and will continue to sound it forth until hope appears. As Gelinas says, "Through its repetition, it seeks to work out the pain until the pain gives way to hope and peace."[111] Here, the wound in Jesus' side not only sounds the pain and suffering Christ experienced, but also seeks to sound forth a new way forward, through this flesh-torn opening of hope and peace. It opens for us as the point of departure from which the Spirit is sent, and as the point of entry through which the Spirit welcomes and draws humanity up into the song of Christ, and the rhythm of his cross. Those who have been baptized into Christ by the Spirit of life, have been brought into participation with his death and resurrection according to Rom 6:1–13, and are now incorporated into the Man of Sorrows, the Man of the Blues, Jesus on the Cross. We are brought into the suffering through the wounds of Christ by way of the mutual indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who transforms the tomb of death to the womb of new life. This Spirit now dwells within us, singing out, and teaching us to sing with the assurance and hope of our coming freedom. Therefore, the baptized make up a beautiful honest and authentic community of the Blues that is now able to respond to the call of the Son and the Spirit, singing *to us* out of their journey and struggle—singing *with us* and *into us* in the

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[110] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 133.

[111] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 133.

midst of ours. As Gelinas observes, "If our gospel doesn't include the blues in it and if it is not applicable to blues people, then it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ."[112] But as we cry out in our suffering we do so in hope, facing the hard realities of life after the Fall while not losing the impress of the Spirit and the renewal of Beauty even in the midst of suffering and death. In so doing, the Blues provides a beautiful honest rhythm to life that touches upon the deepest emotions of heartache and hope, teaching us to sing out the ebb and flow of our hosannas and our hallelujah's.

Improvisation

Once the Spirit draws us up into the experience of the Blues through the cross-patterned wounds, placing us into the cosmic story of redemption centered on Christ in and through our baptism [justifying righteousness]—nothing can remain the same. Life becomes a renewed journey of ongoing transformation through the indwelling of the Spirit—learning anew to dance to the cosmic rhythm of the divine poetic imagination in relationship to God, creation, others in the midst of the everyday.

Here, the key note that is clearly sounded in regard to the relationship between the third article of the creed and the key element of improvisation in jazz is that the sancitfying aspect of the aesthetics of discipleship are Spirit-formed and Spirit-empowered. As Frank Macchia argues, the reality of justification is "pneumatic existence under the shadow of the cross."[113] In other words, life in the Spirit has a cruciform shape and trajectory. Therefore, as we are led by the Spirit through a full-circle creedal journey, we speak now of the human relationship to the other,

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[112] Gelinas, *Finding the Groove*, 141.

[113] Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 257.

where the sacramental trajectory moves through the baptized community turning us toward our neighbor, and creation. This sets the stage for an engagement between Spirit Christology and aesthetics concerning the Spirit's artistic and creative role in the ongoing life of the Christian disciple in the sphere of creation [conforming righteousness]. Here we speak of the beauty that "The Spirit whom Christ receives and bears in the flesh for our sake is the same Spirit whom Christ gives to his saints in order to shape or conform their lives after his own."[114] With this line of thought, Sanchez draws our attention to the fact that "the notion of indwelling is particularly important … for it implies that the Spirit has given the incarnate Son and us not only his external gifts but also himself. In other words, indwelling is a personal reality."[115] And as Kilian McDonnell points out, "It is the Spirit who realizes in us the Christ-Presence."[116] Sanchez points once again to the connection of Jesus' baptism with our own as significant for understanding the life of the disciple who is indwelt by the Spirit of Christ: "At the Jordan, Jesus is anointed to be our Suffering Servant, a datum of the faith that has both soteriological and ethical significance. Jesus teaches his disciples what a disciple looks like, one that, like his Lord, does not come to be served, but to serve and give his life for others (Mark 10:45)."[117] Therefore, "Just as Christ's entire cruciform life in the Spirit may be seen as a living sacrifice and pleasing worship to the Lord for the sake of the world, so also Christians are shaped by the Spirit to be living sacrifices unto the Lord for the sake of the neighbor (Rom 12)."[118] Kilian McDonnell points to Bernard of

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[114] Sanchez, "Life in the Spirit of Christ," 11.

[115] Leopoldo Sanchez, "Praying to God the Father in the Spirit: Reclaiming the Church's Participation in the Son's Prayer Life," *Concordia Journal* 32, no. 3 (2006): 289–90.

[116] McDonnell, "The Determinative Doctrine," 154.

[117] Sanchez, "Life in the Spirit of Christ," 13.

[118] Sanchez, "Life in the Spirit of Christ," 13.

Clairvaux as especially helpful here as his writings show the Spirit acting in a twofold direction…

> by the infusion (*infusio*) of the graces necessary for spiritual growth, and the effusion (*effusio*) of these very graces from the recipient on to the neighbor … so that the infusion of the Spirit becomes effusion in forming Christ in others. Bernard's most striking expression concerns friendship in relation to the Spirit. No privatized inwardness here, but the effusion of the Spirit to others.[119]

Leading us to the relational impetus of our justification as Macchia aptly points out "We are empowered from within by the indwelling Spirit and by being changed and shaped into the image of Christ, able to form and cultivate graced relationships with others in the image of God as a God of self-giving love."[120]

Here we can embrace the reality that the beauty of the good image of God is being renewed in the baptized and that the indwelling of the Spirit empowers and restores us to the relational role of imaging truth. John Douglas Hall is especially helpful as he points out that "the doctrinal symbol *imago Dei* ... explains the essence of human being and human vocation,"[121] which emphasizes "the relational, responsive, and the representative connotations of the *imago Dei*."[122] Hall goes on to help us further connect the good image of the Christ event to the imaging of truth in the life of the baptized by the indwelling of the Spirit:

> The explicitly Christian references (NT) to the image symbol can be summarized succinctly in two interrelated ideas. First, they affirm that Jesus Christ is himself the image of God; Second, they affirm that those who through hearing, baptism, and the work of the Holy Spirit are being incorporated into the life of the Christ—that is,

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[119] McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 185.

[120] Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 275.

[121] John Douglas Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 19.

[122] Hall, *Imaging God*, 74.

> believers—are being conformed to the image as revealed and embodied in Christ, and thus renewed according to the original intention of the Creator.[123]

For this mode of theological reflection, the restoration of the lost image is "nothing more or less than the restoration of our human relationship with God, broken through sin."[124] The key then, is found in the fact that now in this renewed relationship, "the human creature *images* (used as verb) its Creator," because by the power of the indwelling Spirit it is "turned toward God," who in turn "turns us toward our neighbor, and creation." Therefore, "To be *imago Dei* does not mean to have something but to be and do something: *to image God*."[125] Here, the key import specific to this proposal is that the imaging of God thus "contains a decisive ethical [and aesthetical—remember God-originated and God-bestowed] thrust and there is no cause for complacency."[126]

Patrick Sherry elaborates on the importance of this understanding of the image of God noting that, "it is an identity into which we are beckoned."[127] Sherry further argues that our ethics and our identity do not have to exist without or apart from Beauty [aesthetics]. Sherry writes, "The Spirit is both beautiful and, in virtue of his role, beautifier: beautiful as reflecting the Father's glory, and co-mission with the Son, and beautifier because of his role in Creation, Redemption, and re-creation and because of his gift of himself to us."[128] And if part of the mission is to be the beautifier, and beautifying involves giving form, then he might be said to be the "Spirit of formation,"[129] at work in beautifying our identity, and restoring beauty to our

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[123] Hall, *Imaging God*, 76.

[124] Hall, *Imaging God*, 81.

[125] Hall, *Imaging God*, 98.

[126] Hall, *Imaging God*, 82.

[127] Hall, *Imaging God*, 82.

[128] Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 84.

[129] Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 96.

vocational role in the world. Here, we can turn to Cyril of Alexandria in connection with our current conversation concerning the *imago Dei* in his *Commentary on John*. Cyril is worth quoting at length in this regard:

> However, it was necessary that the Son be seen to cooperate with the Father in the giving of the Spirit. And it was necessary that those who believe in him understand that he is the power of the Father, which created all things and brought humanity from nonexistence into existence. God the Father, through his own Word, took the original dirt from the ground, as it is written, and fashioned a living creature (I mean the man), endowed him with a soul according to his own will and enlightened him by participation in his Spirit. "For he breathed into his face the breath of life," as it is written. And when it happened that he fell from obedience into death and humanity fell from that original honor, God the Father re-created it and brought it back to newness of life through the Son, just as in the beginning. How did the Son bring it back? By the death of his holy flesh he killed death and carried the human race back to incorruption. After all, Christ was raised for us. In order that we may learn that form the beginning he was the creator of our nature and that he was the one who sealed us with the Holy Spirit, the Savior once again grants us the Spirit as the first fruits of our renewed nature by distinctly breathing on the disciples … Therefore, just as humanity was formed and came into being in the beginning, so also it is renewed. And just as then it was formed into the image of its creator, so also now it is refashioned by participation in the Spirit to the likeness of its maker. How can there be any doubt that the Spirit forms the image of Christ in the souls of those who receive him.[130]

Thus it is that, "the Spirit makes us partakers in the divine nature [a participation of grace] and engraves in us the divine image, imprinting the transcendent beauty in us, like a seal."[131] Sherry further connects the relational and verbal aspect of the *imago Dei* as imaging God to the idea of the 'inspiration' of the Spirit at work in us in our identity and our vocation as "the way in which God through His Spirit lets us share in His creativity: for instance, He helps us to imitate His own creation of beauty, and indeed furthers that creation, by acting in and through our creative

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[130] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Gerald L. Bray, trans. David R. Maxwell and Joel C. Elowsky (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2105), 2:369.

[131] Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 7.

capacities."[132] This is key to both our aesthetic formation and existence. However, we should also immediately note, as Anthony Thiselton rightly points out, the Spirit always gives his gifts, and gives himself as gift to individuals to 'inspire' artistic creativity for the benefit of the community, never solely for the private benefit of the individual.[133] And yet, the Spirit remains free to give his gifts to each in his own way. Helping us to understand that being incorporated into Christ by the indwelling of the Spirit does not mean the loss of the individual, or personality, rather the fulfillment of the individual as each is connected to the community in service and celebration of the unique gifts of the Spirit. The result is that of unity in diversity, in which all bear the same Spirit, but all do so in unique ways.[134]

This brings us into an engagement with our final key element of Jazz, Improvisation, as an artistic image of vital import connecting the Spirit's relationship with humanity in both forming the individual disciple as well as empowering the creativity of cultivating community in God's created sphere. Not enough attention has been given to the Third Article of the Creed with its focus on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, nor on the role of the community (i.e. the church/local congregation) in regards to the aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ.[135] I contend that too much emphasis has been placed on isolated attention on the Second Article of the Creed that has a tendency to emphasize personal salvation which in turn typically focuses

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[132] Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 103.

[133] Here, Thiselton connects the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament in Ex 31 in regard to the gifting of the artists to create and adorn the Tabernacle for the benefit of the whole community with 1 Cor 12 in which the Holy Spirit adorns the people of the body of Christ for the benefit of the church. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 9, 21, 71, 84, 90.

[134] See Eph 4:4–7; and, 1 Cor 12:4–7.

[135] For an exception and further illustration of rightly moving in a better direction see James K.A. Smith's scholarly trilogy: *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); and, *Awaiting the Kingdom: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017); as well as his more popular work *You are What You Love: The Power of Spiritual Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016).

solely on the individual and her vertical relationship with God in regard to discipleship and the dialogue between aesthetics and theology (namely, the true/doctrine) and limiting the essential and necessary engagement with both community and the good (ethics). Not enough attention has been given to a holistic full-circle creedal framework that emphasizes the place and role of the community in the aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ who lives simultaneously in the two realms. This incorrect emphasis on the individual often leads to a reductionism in regard to aesthetics and discipleship that inevitably treats aesthetics as personal preference and too easily accommodates the modern view that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. What is eclipsed is the reality that aesthetics, doctrine, and ethics are all gifted by God and are to be formed within His community. Furthermore, when it comes to the indwelling of the Spirit, it is also necessary to emphasize that we are not only welcomed into a unique community through Christ on the cross, but that the Spirit then turns us outward toward our neighbor and creation in order to image or reflect God's beauty, goodness and truth in our everyday lives. The key element of Improvisation is especially helpful as an artistic symbol of vital import that provides a "thick description" in connecting the Spirit's relationship with humanity as one who indwells believers and gathers them into community to restore and empower the truth-filled imaging of God to the neighbor in a constructive and creative way. Improvisation is the element in jazz that most directly handles the balance between the self-expression of the individual artist as well as service to the community of musician's together on stage, providing a beautiful artistic image of vital import that sounds forth the truth of the intimate and essential relationship between aesthetics and ethics.

Improvisation has several specific qualities that help us better to understand, experience, and express what it means to image God in our communities. First, it is important to remember

that Improvisation always begins with a single unifying song that allows the band to begin on the same note, and therefore a relational and communal point of departure. Second, Improvisation calls for the ability to be patient and listen to others. This key element of jazz takes its time and allows for the different interpretations of the communal song to unfold as the members of the band keep rhythm with one another allowing an individual to step out from the band and give her own form of self-expression of the song *within* the community. However, in order to do so and not lose the rhythm and groove—the swing—of the *cantus firmus*, each band member must listen closely to what the other band members are doing with their opportunities for self-expression, so that when each artist's turn comes, the individual self-expression does not destroy or take away from the overarching sound and rhythm of the community. Improvisation only works if each member is humble and patient, and takes time to respectfully listen to what the other band member is playing, before taking a turn and putting his own unique style of self-expression into the song. Finally, toward the close of a beautiful session of Improvisation, the entire community of musicians comes back together to the original unifying piece of music and plays it out together.

Here, we intentionally take time to pause, to listen to, and reflect on the incredible improvisational interpretation of the classic hymn "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" performed by the Neal Smith Quintet.[136] This song was recorded live at the famous little jazz club, Smalls, in Greenwich Village, New York City. Listen closely and you can hear the real life beauty of this live recording as in the background you hear the noise of people talking, glasses and tableware

[136] Neal Smith, "What A Friend We Have in Jesus," recorded August 2009. YouTube Video, 14:58. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQDidGErPvs.

tinging and clanging, people are eating and drinking, waiters and waitresses are taking orders, life is happening. None of it is edited out—allowing us to hear the reality of how the music sounds as it takes place in the real world surrounded by the polyphony of life. This improvisational rendition and performance begins as the piano player first lays out the melody in the traditional style of this well-known and beloved hymn. As the piano prologue played in the traditional style comes to an end, we once again hear the fluttering of the Holy Spirit's wings as the drummer begins to gently play the brushes on the snare, quietly keeping the rhythm and the tempo in the background as each band member joins in. As we listen we are reminded of the Holy Spirit's wings fluttering over the waters of creation, or over the head of Jesus at His baptism, as well as over the waters of our own baptism. Listen to the gentle sound of the rhythm and tempo of the Spirit of Life which has been returned to the hearts of men—to you and to me—calling, conforming, empowering, and leading us out into the world to join in once again with God's swing of creation. As we listen, we hear the piano step out front first to improvise on this traditional hymn, and in so doing draws the entire band into the improvisational swing. Listen closely and notice how each different band member is playing their own instrument in the background behind the piano—each one is improvising in his own way and yet at the same time based on the lead of the piano. As the piano gets louder and more interpretive in its improvisation notice how the drummer moves from the gentle brushes on the snare to a more intense sound on the hi-hat. Next, the piano player hands the improvisation off to the guitar player to improvise on the swing that the band has got going. The guitar player rings in a different power, intensity and quickness to the swing. And, each band member begins to improvise in the background in a slightly different way than they had when backing up the piano solo. Each member with his own interpretation of what the guitar player is doing, and yet—once

again—following the lead of the guitar player as he riffs on the song. Notice that no one instrument is trying to play over the others, rather as each band member respects the soloist and continues to play in the background, each band member is still able to bring his own improvisation to the swing of the band which provides a larger, fuller sound to the whole group. A musical representation of a community of filled with the sound of mutual love and respect for each other's gifts and thereby serving one another. As we draw near to the end of this improvisation notice how the whole band comes back together—the song is brought back down to the drummer gently paying the brushes on the snare and the piano player returning to that traditional melody bringing the whole band back to where they began—that one song. One thing we clearer discover in the 14 minutes and 58 seconds in which this particular session plays out is that improvisation takes time, patience, and listening skills. All these skills are extremely important in joyfully celebrating the polyphony of life with others in community. In all, this recording of some amazing improvisation creatively brought to a traditional hymn provides us once again with a different perspective than we normally assume. Specifically, it provides us with a thicker description of the everyday life of the Christian disciple as it is sounded in community in the midst of God's created sphere. In so doing, we come to a deeper discovery and recognition of the beauty of the breadth of freedom and individual expression that takes place within a community that provides us with an aesthetic practice of conforming righteousness.

Here, through the key element of Improvisation we begin to see the development of a cultural aesthetic with a ruled use that has a unique past and tradition that is yet open to our contemporary milieu and future for the benefit not only of the individual disciple but one that takes place within and for the Christian Community writ large. This sets the stage in our conversation for a full-circle return to the Beauty of the divine poetic imagination at work in our

song as we see that the Second Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) to make disciples does not eclipse the first great commission we were given in the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, to care for creation and cultivate culture with others; but instead, it redeems, restores, and empowers our first poetic calling through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here, I believe it is possible to present the Apostle Paul as an Improvisational jazz artist, providing us with an example of an aesthetics of discipleship that he deploys for the benefit of different communities. In his first letter to the Corinthians we can see an outline of Paul's life in ministry that points to this key element of jazz. In 1 Cor 2:2, Paul says that he lives by one *cantus firmus*, "Jesus Christ and him crucified." Paul dances to the rhythm of the Divine Salvific Poetic Imagination as it has been revealed to him in Jesus Christ.[137] However, in chapter nine of the same letter, he relates that he has also learned to be patient and listen to the different audiences and the different cultural contexts in which he has found himself playing this one song. Within each unique setting, Paul has learned to improvise how he plays the *cantus firmus* of Christ crucified so that it can find its way into the rhythm of life in each community and in turn invite and teach them to dance to the divine poetic imagination at work in Jesus Christ. In chapter eleven of the same letter, he encourages his readers to be about the daily vocation of imaging truth by imitating Jesus in all they say and do. Finally, in chapter twelve, Paul points to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the power and creativity that allows him to do all these things: "No one can say that Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit." The Apostle Paul then connects this creative work that takes place through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 2:10, this way: "For we are God's [artwork], created in Christ Jesus to do good works,

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[137] See also Paul's hymns written to the Colossians in 1:15–20; as well as the hymn written to the Ephesians in 2:5–11.

which God prepared in advance that we should walk in them." Here, [artwork] is translated from the Greek word *poiemma*. This is the word from which we get our English word poem. And, as we have previously argued in this chapter, Christ's redemptive work was, in part, intended to restore the image of God in us and if creativity is central to all three persons of the Trinity as we have highlighted, then creativity should become more and more a redeemed part of who we are becoming daily in Christ under the creative and inspirational influence of the Holy Spirit, empowering all of God's human poems for the purpose of vitality and creativity in their local community of fellow believers as well as in the surrounding culture. Once again, in pointing to a more recent example of another Christian disciple who lived out this connection between jazz and theology, Stephen J. Nichols points to Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, *Getting the Blues*,

> The blues is community. Perhaps no one spoke of community better than Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It was Bonhoeffer who, while studying in America in 1930, pulled an ad for a Sunday school teacher off a bulletin board by a church in Harlem. At the storefront church in Harlem, Bonhoeffer heard music that he had never before. He left America with an armload of spirituals [and jazz albums], and he would play those records for his students in Germany. He would listen to them as he confronted one of the most horrific powers ever to tread upon the earth. It was Bonhoeffer who spoke so clearly of the church as community, not as microcosms of disconnected individuals making a way for themselves, but as a macrocosm, a body, unified and symbiotic.[138]

And, as was noted at the beginning of this chapter, and is highlighted once again here, this experience in Harlem with the spirituals, and jazz took place in Bonhoeffer's life before he wrote of the *cantus firmus* in his *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

This sets the stage for a full-circle return to the First Article of the Creed and God's ongoing divine poetic imagination at work in our song. As Kilian McDonnell states, "Because we believe as we are baptized, we glorify as we believe. The profession of faith, which arises out

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[138] Stephen J. Nichols, *Getting the Blues: What Blues Music Teaches Us About Suffering & Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 178.

of our baptism, is therefore, "the origin and mother of doxology."[139] Still, one must remember:

> Doxology is, however, more than words and prostrations; it is that whole realm of thought, feeling, action—including feeding the hungry and clothing the naked—gathered in the hymn sung to God, opening the community to the living reality of God. No less than this is gathered up in the Spirit, who is glory, to bring all through Christ to the Father.[140]

Thus, aesthetics (beauty), doctrine (truth), and ethics (good) must be seen as intimately and essentially related to one another for the sake of a thick(er) description and more elegant practice of discipleship. In so doing, one must not eclipse the Spirit or beauty from the overarching conversation. Instead, we powerfully contend that beauty is evident in goodness and truth as Christians witness the Spirit at work with the Father, and the Son in the Swing, Blues, and Improvisational elements of jazz in their everyday discipleship.

In the incarnation, the Beauty of God's Kingdom, his creativity and imagination, has been revealed to us in the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.[141] Through His cross and empty tomb, and by baptism, we have been brought into participation and engagement with His Goodness.[142] And, by the Gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us we are formed and empowered to embody his Truth in our daily vocations by creative service to our neighbors as we live in community.[143]

Consequently, our overarching goal is regularly to appropriate Luther's two realms within a creedal framework in a creative and imaginative way that places the justified and renewed sinner in the midst of a new community (the church) with a new subjective perspective on life in the midst of God's First Article Creation that connects the Second Great Commission of Matt

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[139] McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 25.

[140] McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 30.

[141] Col 1:15–20.

[142] Matt 16:21; Rom 6:1–13

[143] Matt 28:18–20; Eph 2:10

28:18–20 to the First Great Commission of Gen 1:26, 28. In so doing, we thereby span "the whole field of reality from God's first creation to his new creation, from the first line of the Apostles' Creed to the last line of the creed."[144] This provides, then, a holistic view of the Christian life, that challenges us with the reality that, "the redeemed and sanctified individual who has been blessed with all the gifts of salvation is sent back again into the created realm to exercise and distribute those gifts."[145] So it is that "God's proclamation of justifying grace is recognized as the restoration that enables the believer to return to the created realm with new insight into God's will, and new support for the privileged task of living as God always intended his creatures to live."[146] As Arand and Herrmann put it "Christian faith in the eschatological promises of God (renewing the beauty of creation) prompts us to engage in acts of beauty as confession of the hope we've been given."[147] Here, we can see that "beauty also carries an ethical act, but one that can only be valued as such in light of the resurrection and the hope of the new creation."[148] It cannot be overstated, then, that "In the light of the life to come beauty can act as a testimony to that hope, filling others with hope and purpose that no amount of pragmatics can accomplish."[149] In seeking and receiving this gift, "beauty also inspires us to act … imbuing the entire life of Christian faith, hope, and love."[150]

It is especially within our climate of consumerism, individualism, nihilism, cynicism, absurdity, irony, and a growing affinity with the macabre, that we are in need of such "a practical

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[144] Kolb, and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 128.

[145] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 190.

[146] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 242.

[147] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 324.

[148] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 325.

[149] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 326.

[150] Arand and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 326.

theological aesthetics of discipleship" that explores the place of imagination, beauty, and art in motivating Christian ethics and aesthetics to action in the world, one that is founded upon the *cantus firmus* of the means of grace set within a full-circle creedal frame that embraces "the full panoply of human abilities including imagination, emotion, creativity, and intuition."[151] It is within this reality that the relationship between aesthetics and Luther's theology of the two realms and two kinds of righteousness set within a creedal frame, connects all three articles of the Creed in a uniquely aesthetic way in the everyday life of the Christian manifest in a renewed purpose and participation in God's providential care for creation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attended to the third approach to the normative task of *prophetic discernment* that Richard Osmer calls *good practice* in regard to answering the question, "What ought to be done?" specifically as this pertains to re-connecting aesthetics to ethics and doctrine. I have attempted this by illustrating the cross-disciplinary dialogue between Susanne K. Langer's non-foundational philosophy of art with a contemporary Lutheran theological framework. Specifically, I have attended to the task of good practice by illustrating the mutual dialogue that takes places between a non-discursive cultural artistic artifact of American-born jazz with the discursive symbol of the creed, the *"regula fidei,"* or, "rule of faith" of the Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition. I have illustrated three key elements of jazz in connection with the three articles of the historic creed in order to illustrate the life of feeling and passage of time as it actually takes place and is felt in the everyday life of the Christian disciple. Jazz certainly is not the solution to all the problems and issues confronted when trying to address the aesthetic

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[151] "Together with All Creatures," 41.

formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of everyday life. Rather, it is a way for the Christian disciple to experience and express the full-circle creedal journey in a different way that provides us with a thicker description of discipleship. In so doing, I have presented an illustration of *good practice* that exposes the necessary mutual dialogue between the discursive and non-discursive aspects of the Christian disciple in the midst of everyday life, one that provides us with renewed insight into and understanding of the life of feeling and the passage of time as journey as essential in understanding the holistic spiritual formation of the Christian disciple. Once the disciple of Jesus Christ has been introduced and becomes familiar with the three key elements of Jazz and their intimate connection with her full-circle journey through the creed, she will begin to see, hear, and feel jazz everywhere she goes and in the midst of everything she does. She will better recognize experiences in the journey when the dance is in step and the music is in tune. She will better recognize experiences when life is hard, things have gone wrong and the clanging dissonance is overwhelming and the hope-filled filled wordless prayer for relief is groaned through the Spirit. She will better recognize experiences in her own life that have become so familiar and practiced that she is able to riff on the truths of the law/gospel dynamic and improvise in the moment for the sake of another seeing, hearing, and feeling its truth. In all she will begin to see, hear, and feel the rhythm of hosannas and hallelujah's as they are experienced in her own life, and she will grow in her ability to better articulate and express this felt life of faith she has discovered and come to understand with others. Thus, the work of this chapter has prepared us to make the turn to the final task of practical theology, as described by Richard Osmer, namely, the pragmatic task of *servant leadership* which attends to the question,

"How might we respond?"[152] In the context of my project, I will seek to accomplish this by offering a tangible description of the form and trajectory of the Christian disciple's life grounded in the community of the church as well as the wider surrounding culture, that is both non-discursively and discursively articulated and felt.

[152] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POETICS OF PROVIDENCE

Introduction

Now, I am at the point in this project where I will make the move toward the pragmatic engagement of the aesthetics of discipleship in the concrete realm of the disciple's everyday life. Here, the disciple of Jesus Christ is firmly placed within the exciting adventure of the simultaneous life that we have been called to live in all its fullness as it takes place vertically in the presence of God as well as in the midst of all the horizontal this-worldliness in the presence of others within the midst of God's creation, as His poetic human creatures. This leads us to a more intimate understanding of the connection between the objective giftedness and given-ness of the world's aesthetic form and content and the essential relationship it has with the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of our subjective humanity as life is lived toward the objective reality of the other, namely our neighbor and the surrounding community. More specifically, in light of the last chapter, this calls on the Christian disciple to an artistic and creative use of the swing, blues, and improvisation of jazz for everyday existence in the midst of life's constantly changing circumstances. This application reveals a new perspective on faith and everyday discipleship that leads the disciple of Jesus Christ beyond the forms and formulas normally considered, to a deeper discovery, experience, expression, and articulation of what it means to be a fully embodied and embedded human creature, namely what it means to be fully human. As Joel Biermann rightly asserts,

> The creed takes into account humanity's purpose from a divine as well as a human perspective. To be fully human, the creed teaches, is to be righteous before God and

> before humanity; that is, to be fully human is to be rightly related to God and to humanity, to Creator and to creation. Reinhard Hutter expresses the idea perfectly with his simple, yet powerful, definition of "genuine humanity" as "truthful enactment of created existence."[1] This enactment takes place as people become all that God intends them to be in their creaturely relationships *coram Deo* and *coram mundo*, which, of course, is precisely what it means to be fully human. Thus, righteousness may be understood correctly as a synonym for genuine humanity or being fully human. When one becomes all that God intends, either *coram Deo* or *coram mundo*, then one has righteousness in that particular sphere.[2]

Following Biermann, the purpose of this project has been to argue that when this creedal frame and two realms organizing principle are employed, "it is immediately apparent that pursuing [the essential relationship of aesthetics to ethics and doctrine] and intentionally cultivating [an aesthetics of discipleship] are absolutely appropriate activities for Christians."[3] And when this is employed in appropriating Langer's aesthetic of human mentality, which is constantly at work in the creative process of symbolic transformation, as well as with Bonhoeffer's aesthetic concepts of *Grundton*, *cantus firmus*, and *polyphony* I have argued that there is indeed an essential relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and doctrine. Furthermore, this means that aesthetics plays an essential role in the spiritual formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of the everyday. In sum, aesthetics has been shown to be a key aspect of what it means to be a fully embodied and embedded human creature living in the midst of God's created sphere. In making this case, I have extended the argument of Ellen Charry, mentioned in the introduction to this project, as an illustration of the postliberal theology that I explored in chapter two. Remember that Charry's objective was to reconnect goodness and truth, doctrine and practice by establishing the essential connections between a mind that is transformed and a corresponding

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[1] Reinhard Hutter, "(Re-)forming Freedom: Reflections 'After *Veritatis Splendor*' on Freedom's Fate in Modernity and Protestantism's Antinomian Captivity," *Modern Theology* 17, no. 2 (April 2001): 119.

[2] Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 155.

[3] Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 154.

body and behaviors (practices) that are transformed. We can now extend this argument in regard to Langer's aesthetic of symbolic transformation as it has been appropriated within the Lutheran creedal frame and two realms organizing principle for essentially reconnecting aesthetics to ethics and doctrine. Here, according to Rom 12:2, "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds," not only is the intellect and the body transformed, but the very process of human mentality, i.e. symbolic transformation, which includes and connects the affective (emotional) aspect of our humanity—what Langer terms the metaphoric mind and its engagement with the aesthetic given-ness of the created order—is being renewed and transformed in the Christian disciple through the work of the Holy Spirit and God's Word. Thus, aesthetic existence, experience, and the expression of being a fully embodied and embedded human being is taking on a renewed and redemptive seeing, hearing, and feeling. Sight is being redemptively renewed, hearing is being redemptively renewed, and our feelings and emotions are being redemptively renewed. In the midst of the ongoing life of redemptive transformation, we are aware that our sin-stained nature remains with us and battles against the new man daily being brought to life within the disciple of Jesus Christ. However, as we will see, it is the reality of that ongoing battle that gives a thick(er) description to seeing, hearing, feeling and articulating the swing, blues, and improvisation of life in Christ that is not only at work in our own lives but now also further recognized as we listen to and attend to the relationships of those around us. In so doing, the renewed symbolic transformation of experience and expression of the reality of these three key elements of the jazz of everyday life opens us to discovering in a deeper way what Dietrich Bonhoeffer considered to be 'polyphonic living', or as Robert Gelinas calls it 'improvisational living'. For both, this is an aesthetic description of life that is firmly grounded in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as in our baptismal state, that is fully engaged in the this-

worldliness of human life as we live it before God and with others.

This brings us to the moment of defining what a beautiful life and what a beautiful community look like, sound like, feel like, and act like. As I have shown, Langer's most succinct description of beauty is narrowed to two key terms: "expressive form and vital import." Thus, in appropriating Langer's terminology we can define or describe a beautiful life and a beautiful community as artistic form that expresses life and is life-giving. And when appropriated within the Lutheran creedal frame and two realms reality, and the three key elements of jazz, it is a beautiful life and community that has a two-fold trajectory that receives beauty vertically coming down from God (swing), and is renewed and transformed in relationship with God in such a way (the blues) that it is drawn into active participation with God's providence and aimed horizontally in beautiful vocational service to the neighbor and to creation (improvisation). It is nothing less than a beautiful life in its giftedness and given-ness *coram Deo*, that, in its ongoing creatively receptive relationship with God is continuously being transformed to be creatively active with our fellow neighbors *coram mundo*. Therefore, this life is both receptive and active in regard to beauty and the aesthetic aspects of discipleship, which in both cases, as was argued in the last chapter, is wrapped up in the expressive and vital form of the daily and ongoing formation of servanthood, shaped by the cross of Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter, then, I attend to the pragmatic task of servant leadership, which asks the key question, "How might we respond?"[4] Richard Osmer once again is helpful in his description of this as "the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that

[4] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

are desirable."[5] Osmer further asserts that is it here that practical theology,

> Often provides help by offering models of practice and rules of art. Models of practice offer leaders a general picture of the field in which they are enacting and ways they might shape this field toward desired goals. Rules of art are more specific guidelines about how to carry out particular actions and practices.[6]

This chapter will describe daily discipleship as God's ongoing creative work to form servants who embody the self-giving, suffering love of Jesus Christ in the world to others. In this dynamic context, being formed in Jesus Christ by the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit means that

> The Christian disciple and the community of believers in which she is planted takes the form of a servant and represents an alternative to the way of the world. It opens up a new set of possibilities that may have a catalytic effect, evoking social transformation. However, these alternative possibilities are unlikely to even arise unless the disciple first gives them visible expression in their own lives and their relations with their neighbors. As a contrast society, they serve as a sign and witness to God's royal rule in the form of a servant. As a catalyst of social transformation, they serve as a sign and witness to the possibilities of new creation, which anticipates provisionally the consummation of God's royal rule.[7]

Following Osmer, we can describe Servant Leadership as leadership that is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who is at work forming the individual disciple as well as the local community of believers into a cruciform expression of vital (life-receiving and life-giving) import to live with those around us in ways that "more fully embody the servanthood of Christ."[8] We can further extend this concept and intimately connect it to Biermann's definition of "conforming righteousness" or the "third kind of righteousness" as discussed and developed earlier in chapter 4 of this project. Remember, Biermann, defines the "third kind of righteousness" as "conforming righteousness" that is "uniquely Christian and driven by truths of the second article [justifying righteousness]

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[5] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 176.

[6] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 176.

[7] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 191–192.

[8] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 192.

yet led back into the created world of the first article [governing righteousness]. Here, the Christian pursues a virtuous life *coram mundo*, but one that is also certainly God-pleasing."[9]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Aesthetics and Servant Leadership

Robert Smith, in his article "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," notes that David Ford has studied and utilized Bonhoeffer's engagement with musical metaphor and mined the "rich possibilities provided by [his] art appreciation and aesthetics for [further] theological reflection,"[10] especially in the area of the Christian's life in the world everyday. Therefore, David Ford in his work, *Self And Salvation: Being Transformed*, provides not only a good model of servant leadership, but in Biermann's terminology a good model of "conforming righteousness" that reconnects the essential relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and doctrine that leads to a powerful and beautiful expression of vitality by extending Bonhoeffer's concept of "the polyphony of life" (or, as Ford terms it "polyphonic living") for engaging a "world come of age" in which "only the suffering God can help."[11] Here, we find an excellent example of "conforming righteousness" in which "Justification '*coram Deo*' and the Christian's life in the world '*coram hominbus*' are not placed in polarity to one another, nor are they collapsed into a unity. Both are aspects of God's larger work of creating, redeeming, and restoring."[12] Through Ford's engagement with Bonhoeffer's use of musical metaphor in connection with his theological and ethical reflection, I believe we have an excellent example of the connection between aesthetics to

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[9] Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 149.

[10] Robert O. Smith, "Bonhoeffer and Musical Metaphor," in *Word & World*, vol.26, no. 2 (Spring, 2006): 206.

[11] Bonhoeffer, Letter of 16 July 1944, in *Letters & Papers from Prison*, enlarged ed., ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 360, 361.

[12] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 186.

ethics, and doctrine for developing the connection between aesthetics and 'conforming righteous' in which, "the believer is able to see all of his life, before God and before men, as the unfolding of God's creative [aesthetic] design."[13] In this work, Ford specifically explores "the dynamics of Christian life" as it takes place "through the worship of God and the transformation of the self before God,"[14] which in Lutheran terminology we have described as life *coram Deo*. However, Ford's exploration does not stop with the vertical relationship with God, but makes the necessary move to the disciple's horizontal life *coram mundo* where he finds that, "the most illuminating interpretations of Christian identity are found in particular lives marked by joy and sacrificial responsibility."[15] In Ford we find once again a wonderfully descriptive image of a beautiful life. Ford concludes his study with an engagement of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a unique illustration of 'functional sainthood' specifically in connection with Bonhoeffer's concept of "polyphonic living" which Ford argues, "offers an insightful elaboration of the notion of holiness (sanctified living) explicit in Bonhoeffer's reflections from prison, particularly the idea that our love for God is a "kind of *cantus firmus* to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint." Bonhoeffer is crucial to Ford's argument as he identifies Bonhoeffer as "a saint through whose 'worldly holiness of faith' we may fruitfully engage the theological issues of justification, sanctification, and vocation."[16] And, in extension, the connection of aesthetics throughout the whole of the Christian's life in which, "the redeemed and sanctified individual who has been blessed with all the gifts of salvation is sent back again into the created realm to exercise and

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[13] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 242.

[14] David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

[15] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 2.

[16] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, Back cover of the book jacket.

distribute those gifts."[17]

Developing the concept of a worshipping self (another way of saying Christian disciple), Ford explores the dimensions of salvation through the lens of Scripture, worship practices, and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, "to show how the self, flourishes through engagement with God, and other people, which includes the responsibilities and joys of ordinary living." The result is a fully-embodied and embedded "theology of salvation which is immersed in Christian faith, thought and practice while also being deeply involved with modern life in a pluralist world."[18]

Ford begins his engagement with Bonhoeffer by describing Bonhoeffer's upbringing as "disciplined but he always relished eating, drinking, smoking, and entertainments and literature that would have been seen as irredeemably worldly"[19] in the eyes of others. Ford goes on to argue that, it is because of this "disciplined openness" in his spiritual formation that Bonhoeffer "felt no tension between serving God and getting married,"[20] which serves as an explicit example of Bonhoeffer's openness to engaging the fullness of the human creature's this-worldliness. Because of this, Ford contends that Bonhoeffer was "largely oriented towards friends, family and fellow prisoners, to prayer and study, and to issues of theology, church, culture and the future beyond the Second World War."[21] Therefore, Ford believes, one can clearly see that Bonhoeffer was concerned with "the relation of Christian faith to 'the natural', all the ordinary elements of human existence (material, social, cultural, economic, moral and so on [including the aesthetic!])

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[17] Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and Character Formation," 190.

[18] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, Back cover of the book jacket.

[19] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 242.

[20] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 242.

[21] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 242.

which are not about ultimate matters but which make up a great deal of daily life."[22]

As Ford notes, and in connection with certain concerns raised in this project, "Bonhoeffer was especially concerned that a tendency had developed in Lutheranism to emphasize the 'ultimate' of justification to such an extent that the 'penultimate' of ordinary goodness [and beauty, the aesthetic aspects of life] was played down."[23] Therefore, Ford correctly notes,

> One key element in Luther that Bonhoeffer in prison takes further than before is the interweaving of a theology of the cross with involvement in full life in the world. He recapitulates in very different circumstances Luther's immersion of doctrine in ordinary life. It is seen from below, and so not only is 'life' a recurrent theme, but so also are death, dying, suffering and the cross. The *cantus firmus* is, in line with the development of the Lutheran *simul* as found in Bonhoeffer's Ethics, "the man for others,' the incarnate, crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Once this is 'clear and plain' the counterpoint 'can be developed to its limits.'[24]

Therefore, Ford effectively argues that for Bonhoeffer "worship is the fundamental imperative, corresponding to loving God with the whole heart, and inseparable from a life of responsibility in the world."[25] Ford looks to Bonhoeffer's letter of May 1944 in regard to 'Thoughts on the Day of Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rudiger Bethge' as Bonhoeffer's most succinct summary of this simultaneous existence when he quotes Bonhoeffer as writing, "Our earlier words are therefore bound to lose their force and cease, and our being Christians today will be limited to two things: prayer and righteous action among men."[26] Thus, as Ford emphasizes, for Bonhoeffer, "All Christian thinking speaking, and organizing must be born anew out of this prayer and action."[27]

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[22] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 246.

[23] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 246.

[24] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 255.

[25] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 255.

[26] Ford notes here, that the German is '*im Beten und im Tun des Gerechten unter den Menschen'*, and the latter phrase could also be translated as 'action for justice among people'. Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 258.

[27] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 300.

Therefore, the *pragmatic task* of *servant leadership* that Ford discovers in Bonhoeffer—and that essentially connects Bonhoeffer's aesthetics, to ethics, and doctrine—is sounded by the keynote of prayer and action.

And, as Ford further points out, "The whole of this address is oriented to the future of the baby being baptized in the middle of a terrible war, [not to mention Bonhoeffer writing this letter from prison], and the note of joy sounds persistently though it."[28] Ford can rightly hear Bonhoeffer sounding the reality of the blues in all of its pain, and yet with the hint of hope that brings real joy in the midst of suffering life's brokenness. Thus, Ford rightly quotes Bonhoeffer when he writes to the infant about to be baptized of his life in the reality of this world, "Music, as your parents understand and practice it, will help to dissolve your perplexities and purify your character and sensibility, and in times of care and sorrow will keep a ground-bass of joy alive in you."[29] Here, Ford notes that joy is seen, heard, and felt as a key aspect of the *cantus firmus* as he has discovered that the prison writings "are shot through with joy and its analogues, sounding in the most diverse contexts."[30]

This is an incredibly practical model and insightful description of what a beautiful life is like as it is lived amidst the broken reality of this world. Ford further highlights the discovery in Bonhoeffer that the reality of pain and joy are often found together in the polyphony of life. For Ford, this is especially evident in Bonhoeffer's letter to Bethge in which Bonhoeffer returns to the topic of polyphony again: "The image of polyphony is still pursuing me. When I was rather distressed at not being with you, I couldn't help thinking that pain and joy are also a part of life's

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[28] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 258.

[29] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 295.

[30] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 258.

polyphony, and that they can exist independently side by side."[31] Thus, Ford finds that the reality of pain and joy "are together like this both in the *cantus firmus* and also in various contrapuntal themes of the prison writings, and have their most intensive development in the context of worship, above all in the Psalms."[32]

So, what does all this mean for the essential relationship of aesthetics to ethics and doctrine in regard to the Christian disciple fully-embodied and embedded in a this-worldly existence? Ford points to Bonhoeffer's letter of 21 July 1944, on the eve of the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler as the keynote, in which Bonhoeffer writes to Bethge about Christian sanctity, expressing his growing appreciation of Christian life as "profound this-worldliness." Bonhoeffer writes,

> I discovered later, and I'm still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in the world that one learns to have faith … By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world—watching with Christ in Gethsemane.[33]

As Ford, insightfully points out, "Translated into polyphony, that passage's *cantus firmus* is our being thrown 'completely into the arms [*ganz in die Arme*] of God', as expressed in a faith characterized by 'discipline and the constant knowledge of death and resurrection'. But that faith is only learnt 'by living completely in the world [*in der vollen Diesseitigkeit des Lebens*]' with multiple responsibilities. Polyphony is a good [aesthetic] image for this version of Luther's *simul*: completely in the arms of God and completely in the world."[34] It is a life completely

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[31] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 305.

[32] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 259.

[33] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 369.

[34] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 260. Here, Ford also notes quite interestingly that "The imagery of sound allows much more clearly and without inappropriate paradox for a simultaneity in which one them can be more 'constant' while yet being in essential reciprocity with others."

oriented towards God and other people. It is a self, "*coram deo* and *coram aliis*. Most radically it is a self which sees life 'from below', 'taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but the sufferings of God in the world'."[35] Ford rightly points out that here Bonhoeffer "does not deny" our own selfhood and suffering, rather what he has discovered in Bonhoeffer is that we have "simply been freed from concern or anxiety about any formation or transformation of self apart from what happens in the course of worship and responsible living in the world (or 'prayer and righteous action')."[36] This is in line with Bonhoeffer's "rejection of religion as '*inwardness*', and it presses towards a conception of self that might do justice to the simultaneous double orientation to God and others."[37]

As Ford further expounds, "It is a selfhood that cannot be aimed at and therefore cannot be imagined in advance. It is the surprising outcome of faithfulness to God in the world … Its selfhood is therefore something like the overall impression of a polyphonic piece in which there has been continual *improvisation*[38] in the counterpoints."[39] This becomes the beauty of a life sounded forth in loving God and one's neighbor in the midst of life's changing circumstances. This model of extending Bonhoeffer's aesthetic toward ethical responsibility and improvisational freedom in the world to others thus sets the stage for certain preliminary rules for the art of an aesthetics of discipleship. In this model of practice, two key rules are sounded: (1) a rule of the art of aesthetics of discipleship in which life as a disciple of Jesus Christ is complete receptivity

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[35] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 260.

[36] For another insightful contemporary model of extending Bonhoeffer's aesthetic toward ethics and the pragmatic task of servant leadership see John W. deGruchy, *Christianity, Art, and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[37] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 260.

[38] Italics mine to highlight the connection between Bonhoeffer's use of *polyphony* with the *improvisation* of jazz.

[39] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 260–261.

and passivity of God's divine creative gifts; as well as, the simultaneous (2) joyful freedom and courage in and through God's ongoing creative work in forming us daily that inspires and empowers our own responsibility, creativity, and action of loving service in the world toward others.

Unfortunately, it is just at this point that a common misconception based on similar assumptions of modern dualism and the polarities it promotes that we have already encountered might attempt to derail such a beautiful servant leadership that necessarily entails a simultaneous nature. Such a misconception might question the concept of simultaneous activity in regard to the divine/human relationship at work in the world and might argue along the dualistic lines of determinism versus free will as being necessarily mutually exclusive. Here is a brief and simple example of how such a dualistic argument would go: (1) in the case of determinism, if God is more active, then humans must be more passive, and in this case, human freedom is reduced or taken away; and/or, (2) in the case of free will, if humans are more active then, God must be more passive, and in this case, God's will is capable/susceptible to/of being frustrated by the freedom of human action. The Lutheran creedal frame and two realms organizing principle vehemently denies any such false dualistic polarity and instead argues for a fully-embodied and embedded human existence in the midst of the created sphere that is at once simultaneously receptive and active; that shows: (1) God is always at work in creative action; and, (2) his people are continuously being set free and drawn into responsible participation and creative agency with Him in service toward others and creation.[40]

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[40] For an excellent and more complete treatment of this Lutheran perspective especially in regard to Luther's own work on the subject, *Bondage of the Will*, see Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 15–19.

A Ruled-Use Approach to a Contemporary Lutheran Aesthetics of Discipleship

For the sake of developing and describing the rules of art for this kind of servant leadership, we are thus challenged to develop a twofold approach that essentially connects prayer and righteous action. The rules for this art of servant leadership then will involve rules for a life of receptivity: a *vita passiva* of the disciple of Jesus Christ *coram Deo*; as well as, simultaneously connecting it to a rule of servant leadership that involves rules for a life of action: a *vita activa* of the disciple of Jesus Christ *coram mundo*.

The Beauty of the *Vita Passiva: Oratio, Meditation, Tentatio*

However, it must be pointed out that there is a necessary logical order to the development and usage of these two rules. In regard to a Lutheran perspective on the aesthetics of discipleship, the first rule that must necessarily be addressed is that for the life of receptivity, the *vita passiva*. This is best described for us through Luther's threefold rule of: *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* as found in his preface to the first volume of the Wittenberg Edition of his German writings published in 1539.[41] There he mentions, "three rules," which he expressly refers to in regard to his study of Psalm 119.[42] As Oswald Bayer insightfully points out in his work *Theology the Lutheran Way*,

> In Luther's opinion, the Psalter contains the whole Bible in a nutshell and can therefore be called "a mini Bible." He lets it stipulate the "manner" (*modus*) and "practice" (*usus*) of his relationship to God, the world, and himself, not only in general but also in particular, as in the development of his concepts of *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio*. It is no accident that Psalm 119, the very psalm that teaches Luther the true practice of the three rules, and its true understanding, is also the psalm that teaches him (as he says in his preface of 1539) how to understand theology as a whole.[43]

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[41] *LW*, 34, 283–288.

[42] *LW*, 34, 285.

[43] Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand

John Kleinig also helpfully points out that "Luther does not, as we would expect, propose a theological curriculum, or even a method for the study of academic theology. Rather, he describes the one practice of spirituality that he himself had learned from singing, saying, and praying the Psalter."[44] Thus, as Kleinig argues, "he [Luther] does not advocate a particular method of meditation, but outlines the actual dynamics of spiritual formation for students of theology. This involved the interplay between three powers, the Holy Spirit, God's word, and Satan (LW 34, 285)."[45] Therefore, in light of this project and its emphasis on a postliberal approach to the aesthetics of discipleship that is non-foundational, this is a very insightful and useful rule, manner, and practice for the initial move toward Lutheran pragmatics for the aesthetics of discipleship.

Bayer goes on to argue that Luther through this particular engagement with Psalm 119 and his threefold rule of *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* reveals that "theologians (and remember he includes all Christians here) are not self-made but are made by God." And, more specifically, "that God makes theologians of us through prayer, through listening to his word, and through the cross and suffering."[46] In this way, therefore, we can equate Luther's three-fold rule for the right study of theology and for the making of theologians to the pragmatic task of the aesthetics of discipleship with these rules for the receptive life (*vita passiva*), which is the Lutheran way of saying that when we come into God's presence (*coram Deo*) we come as beggars with hands outstretched to simply receive his gifts in faith. Or, as John Kleinig puts it in more contemporary

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 52.

[44] John W. Kleinig, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio What Makes A Theologian?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2002): 256–57.

[45] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian? 256–57.

[46] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, xi.

terminology, "In theology as in life we have nothing we have not received and continue to receive (1 Cor 4:7)."[47] This is the keynote of the first rule of an aesthetics of discipleship which simultaneously connects to the second rule of the active life.

Therefore, I agree with Bayer that the key to understanding the receptive life as expressed through Luther's threefold rule is "to recognize the centrality of *pathos* in the Christian life and the role of the affects (which include the emotions, the senses, the imagination, and the desires)."[48] As Bayer highlights in his Author's Preface, one of the distinguishing marks of Luther's understanding of the receptive life is "the recognition of the centrality of the affects and the foundational nature of pathos. The element of pathos in theology emphasizes that, in the presence of God (*coram Deo*), it is God himself who is active and that we are the passive recipients who "suffer" God's work, in the sense that we passively undergo it."[49] Thus, Bayer summarizes this pathos as follows:

> The passive/receptive life (*vita passiva*) is not something we could produce or think up ourselves. It encounters us; we can only "suffer" it, undergo it, and in this sense experience it. Only from outside ourselves and apart from all our abilities can we expect to find it, just as we "see that David always asks in the above-mentioned psalm: "Teach me, Lord (Psalm 119:12, 26, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135], instruct me [vv. 27, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169], lead me, show me [v.33]' and many more words.[50]

Bayer goes on to convincingly argue, that in this way, "due attention is given to the working of the triune God in time and space [the created order of the First Article world] which we passively "suffer," undergo, as God molds and shapes us for his purposes."[51] This is indeed an aesthetic

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[47] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 255–67.

[48] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, xvi.

[49] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, xxiv.

[50] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 48.

[51] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, xv.

description of the formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ by God who is the artist who created all things out of nothing. Therefore, this pathos, "emphasizes the priority of God's action and the basic passivity and receptivity of human beings in his presence."[52] However, as we engage this threefold rule for the *vita passiva*, Bayer helpfully notes that is important to remember that

> these rules are not meant to be considered in isolation and only later reconnected. Rather, from the start they set out one single way of suffering and life, of listening and speaking, of thinking and writing. We are dealing with a single rule—a single dynamic movement, or a process that is by no means linear, in which we can distinguish three main factors, all of which are interconnected.[53]

This fits quite well with the full-circle emphasis we have already encountered in regard to the ruled use of the creedal frame and the three key elements of jazz. And, in that manner the threefold rule of *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* may be seen as much more about the enactment of ritual in spiritual formation as we will see.

Therefore, Luther begins his instruction by advising the disciple to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit as his instructor for life. This is the beginning of an aesthetics of discipleship: prayer for the Holy Spirit, the most non-discursively understood member of the Trinity as we saw in the last chapter. In his preface, Luther exhorts, "kneel down in your room and pray to God with true humility and earnestness, that through his dear Son, he would give you his Holy Spirit, to enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding."[54] Subsequently then, as Kleinig points out, "As beggars who kneel before our great benefactor we are drawn into the Triune God and share in his work here on earth."[55] The aesthetics of discipleship, then, is primarily based on the prayer for the gift of God's ongoing bestowal and the disciple's ongoing reception of the Holy Spirit

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[52] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, xvi.

[53] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 42.

[54] *LW*, 34, 285.

[55] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 258.

through Jesus. This is immediately and intimately connected to the second aspect of the dynamic which is *meditatio*. Here, Kleinig emphasizes Luther's consistent functional theological presupposition that "God the Father grants his life-giving, enlightening Holy Spirit through his word."[56]

Therefore, the second dynamic of the threefold rule moves the disciple of Jesus Christ "to pray for the enlightenment, guidance, and understanding that the Holy Spirit alone can give through the Scriptures. Here, the disciple of Jesus Christ prays [daily] that the Holy Spirit will use the scriptures to interpret him and his experience so that he sees himself and others as God does."[57] Thus, Luther claims that in the study of theology, prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit needs to be accompanied by continual meditation on the Scriptures. The reason for this linkage is that "God will not give you his Spirit without the external word."[58] And this ongoing connection between prayer for the Holy Spirit and meditation on the word of God will have profound impact on our symbolic transformation with the aesthetic content and forms in the created order and at work in our surrounding culture. As Kleinig notes, "The Scriptures are the God-breathed, inspirited word of God. The same God who inspired them with his life-giving Spirit uses the word to inspire and energize us with his Spirit."[59] This inspiration and energy is at work in us transforming the way we see, hear, feel, express, and articulate what a beautiful life looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Therefore, the word of God is the means of grace, by which God the Father grants his Holy Spirit through his dear Son. And therefore, in a reciprocal manner, "The

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[56] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 258.

[57] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 258.

[58] *LW*, 34, 286.

[59] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 259.

Holy Spirit is therefore received through meditation on the word."[60] However, as Kleinig reminds us, it is important to specify that "Luther advocates meditation on 'the external word'." Especially as it is "the embodied word, spoken from human lips, written with human hands, and heard with human ears."[61] It is indeed a deep meaningful aesthetic word meant for human creatures created with a deep essential aesthetic aspect to their humanity able to receive it aesthetically.

This leads to the final dynamic of the threefold rule, *tentatio*. Here, an important connection point once again for this project is Luther's emphasis that "the right study of theology culminates in experience."[62] However, as Kleinig rightly emphasizes in his description of experience, Luther differed radically from the monastic tradition into which he had been trained. Whereas, "The monastic tradition of meditation held that the proper practice of meditation led to the experience of contemplation, the experience of union with the glorified Lord Jesus."[63] In direct contrast to them, Kleinig argues that "Luther taught that the receptive study of the Scripture in prayer and meditation led to the experience of God's word, the experience of its sufficiency, its creativity, and its productivity. Strangely, the power of God's word, the power of the Holy Spirit at work in and through the word, is discovered and experienced most clearly in temptation."[64] Thus, Luther states in his preface:

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[60] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 259.

[61] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 259.

[62] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 261.

[63] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 261.

[64] See Andrew Pfeiffer, "The Place of *Tentatio* in the Formation of Church Servants," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 30 no. 3 (1996): 111–119, and Steven A. Hein, "Tentatio," *Lutheran Theological Review* 10 (1997–98): 29–47.

> Thirdly, there is temptation, 'Anfechtung'. This is the touchstone that teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right and true, how sweet and lovely, how powerful and comforting God's word is, wisdom above all wisdom.[65]

Thus, the kind of experience that Luther describes in *tentatio* differs quite radically from what we would normally regard as a spiritual experience. As Kleinig highlights, "It is the experience of the impact of God's word on us and its effect in us. We experience the word of God."[66] And key for its connection with this project in regard to a ruled-use approach to the practice of an aesthetics of discipleship, Kleinig further helps us by noting that "While this experience begins with the conscience, it touches all parts of us and integrates the whole person, mentally, emotionally, and physically. The Spirit-filled word attunes us to God the Father by conforming us to his dear son."[67] Thus,

> In temptation the student of theology [that is the everyday disciple] experiences for himself the righteousness and truth of God's word with his whole being, rather than just with the intellect; he experiences the sweetness and loveliness of God's word with his whole being, rather than just with the emotions; he experiences the power and strength of God's word with his whole being, rather than just with the body.[68]

However, as Kleinig argues, "these attacks are counter-productive … as the attack of the devil on the student of theology serves to strengthen his faith because it drives him back to God's word as the only basis for his assurance and certainty in the world."[69]

It is important to recognize the perspective on aesthetics that this project is highlighting and utilizing in contrast to that of a Roman Catholic theologian such as von Balthasar or even a contemporary protestant Reformed theologian such as Dyrness. Oswald Bayer gets at this very

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[65] *LW*, 34, 287.

[66] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 261.

[67] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 261.

[68] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 261.

[69] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 261.

well: "Despite some points of contact, this [Lutheran] formula (*oratio, meditatio, tentatio*) represents a clear alternative to the program of 'faith seeking understanding' (*fides quaerens intellectum*) that has dominated theology from Augustine through Anselm to Hegel."[70] In contrast to "the program of 'faith seeking understanding', Luther's formula takes into account the historical nature of theological existence, and gives due recognition to the fundamental importance of temptation (*tentatio*)."[71] Thus, "Luther's approach does not arbitrarily impose a general, *a priori* condition that makes possible the understanding of the gospel. Rather, it teaches us how meditation, and the use of the inexhaustible treasures of the Bible, can be a source of new experiences."[72] This should be seen as a key difference from the traditional type of *lectio divina* that Dyrness has engaged and argued for in his work. Bayer further contrasts Luther's formula as "a clear alternative to the view taken by Thomas Aquinas and Wolfhart Pannenberg, who see theology as a universal science "from the point of view of its relation to God" (*sub ratione dei*). According to this view, theology is contemplation. Reference to a specific context (*Sitz im Leben*) is not essential to its propositions."[73] And as John Kleinig emphasizes,

> Luther distinguished his own practice of spirituality from the tradition of spiritual foundation that he experienced as a monk … Its goal was 'contemplation', the experience of ecstasy, bliss, rapture, and illumination through union with the glorified Lord Jesus. To reach this goal, a monk ascended in three stages, as on a ladder, the ladder of devotion, from earth to heaven, from the humanity of Jesus to his divinity. The ascent began with reading out aloud to himself of a passage from the Scriptures to quicken the affections; it proceeded to heartfelt prayer, and culminated in mental meditation on heavenly things, as one waited for the experience of contemplation, the infusion of heavenly graces, the bestowal of spiritual illumination. Four terms were

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[70] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 34.

[71] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 34.

[72] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 34.

[73] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 34.

> used to describe this practice of spirituality: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.[74]

The ancient method of *lectio divina* appears to be the formula and practice on which William Dyrness bases and expresses his work in *Poetic Theology*. In direct contrast to the ideas dominant in Luther's day, and also to set apart the practice of aesthetics of discipleship argued for in this project, Kleinig follows Luther and provides an excellent way forward, proposing:

> An evangelical pattern of spirituality as reception rather than self-promotion. This involved three things: prayer (*oratio*), meditation (*meditatio*), and temptation (*tentatio*). All three revolved around ongoing, faithful attention to God's word. The order of the list is significant, for unlike the traditional pattern of devotion, the study of theology begins and ends here on earth. These three terms describe the life of faith as a cycle that begins with prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, concentrates on the reception of the Holy Spirit through meditation on God's word, and results in spiritual attack. This in turn leads a person back to further prayer and intensified meditation. Luther, therefore did not envisage the spiritual life in active terms as a process of self-development but in passive terms as a process of reception from the Triune God. In it self-sufficient individuals became beggars before God.[75]

Thus, the aesthetics of discipleship, is pragmatically speaking first and foremost a way of life that is formed by prayer for the continual bestowal of the Holy Spirit, attentive listening to and speaking of God's Word, and the experience of faithful dependence and trust in God in the midst of spiritual attack. Following Bayer, then, we can sum in brief that the proper point of departure in regard to the pragmatics of an aesthetics of discipleship begins with "a person who is [indwelled and inspired by the Holy Spirit] interpreted by Holy Scripture, who lets himself or herself be interpreted by it and who, having been interpreted by it, interprets it for other troubled and afflicted people."[76] As Bayer further points out, for Luther, "*oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* are about more than domestic and political life. They are about the course of God's word in the

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[74] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 257.

[75] Kleinig, "What Makes A Theologian?" 257.

[76] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 36.

church and the world. This occurs in the midst of "tumult," in the midst of a universal, violent, and immense battle, that rages from the beginning to the end of the world."[77]

The aesthetics of discipleship argued for in this project therefore that begins with the way of prayer "is neither contemplation nor action, but from first to last it is all about waiting solely on God's work, which we can only "suffer" in the sense of "passively receive." This is the initial character of a Lutheran aesthetics of discipleship as the "receptive life" (*vita passiva*). Therefore, in simplest terms, the first rule of art for the pragmatic task of servant leadership in a Lutheran perspective on the aesthetics of discipleship that takes place in the constantly changing and challenging circumstances of everyday life is the rule of the *vita passiva*, the life of complete receptivity which is experienced, practiced, expressed, and articulated through the Lutheran threefold dynamic: (1) Prayer for the Holy Spirit; (2) Meditation on God's external and creative [aesthetic] word; and, (3) the experience of spiritual attacks in the life of faith that thrusts us back into the arms of God in complete dependence and trust. In such a manner, the disciple of Jesus Christ is aesthetically formed via the theology of the cross. She does not experience the glory of union with her heavenly Lord, but knows the pain of union with Christ crucified. She bears the cross together with her Lord, suffering with him in the world and in his church. This once again drives at the essential relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and doctrine.

Thus, the Lutheran approach to the aesthetics of discipleship begins with the *vita passiva*, the receptive life. In it we do not make or create something beautiful of ourselves; rather God the artist fashions and develops us into something beautiful through His Son, Jesus Christ. He creates his disciples aesthetically by calling and forming them through the gift of the Holy Spirit,

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[77] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 41.

the power of his word, and the opposition of the devil. This free life of receptivity, the *vita passiva*, properly sets the stage for the Christian disciple's simultaneous existence of creative agency and action in the world. Indeed, I agree with Oswald Bayer when he asserts, "True, our agency presupposes freedom, but freedom is not something that we possess for ourselves; we can only receive it as a gift."[78] However, once it is received as gift, it is also simultaneously true that God draws his disciples into an active participation with Him to work in creative action through the ongoing creative work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Christian disciple in the world and in service to others. Here, we come to the second rule of art for the pragmatic task of servant leadership in developing an aesthetics of discipleship, namely the rule of creative poetic agency, which is the rule of the *vita activa* of the disciple of Jesus Christ *coram hominibus*, as it is developed via a ruled-use approach of the doctrines of Divine Providence, *imago Dei*, and vocation.

The Beauty of the *Vita Activa*: God's Providence and Creative Poetic Vocation

As stated in the introduction, it is unfortunately, a common modern assumption that art and aesthetics are merely an addition to life, a nice accessory to the truly important aspects of our everyday existence. I have argued to the contrary that art and aesthetics are actually vitally essential to human understanding, meaning, and purpose. Art and aesthetics serve as wonderful windows that challenge not only the way we see things, but how and why we think about things, as well as the way in which we do things. This argument is especially important in the context of the church which in many ways has not only eclipsed but in many ways forsaken the aesthetic aspect of living as God's poetic creatures set within His sphere of Creation and instead relegated

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[78] Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, xv.

the vital import of art and aesthetics to mere addendum. This is particularly true in regard to the Christian understanding of vocation. Vocation is intrinsically poetic and therefore artistic and creative, because it is a responsibility given to human creatures to care for one another and the creation itself that comes from the Great Creator and Artist Himself, through which God continues to carry out his artistic and creative work—no matter how mundane and ordinary the tasks of everyday life may seem to those outside this ongoing creative understanding. As Gustaf Wingren rightly asserts, "in this realm man is to perform works, as it is filled with office and vocations and constant labor, and here man's freedom is active, thereby being an instrument in the hand of God [the artist] who carries on his creative work."[79] This is beautifully expressed by the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, when he speaks of the intrinsic poetic, creative, and artistic nature of the disciple's vocation in the midst of everyday life when he proclaims, "For we are his craftsmanship [artwork], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance, that we should walk in them."[80] In this way the disciple's life, her vocation, is described as beautiful in accordance with the definition of beautiful that we have already described in this project which consists of expressive form and vital import. Under this description vocation is indeed beautiful in the life of the disciples of Jesus Christ as they express the form of the cross and freely give life in service to others. Here, there is no such thing as a task so mundane that it cannot be seen as beautiful, because it is precisely in the mundane everyday tasks of our various vocations that the Great Artist continues His creative work through His beautiful new creations.[81] Thus, the connection between the ongoing creative work of God

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[79] Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 16.

[80] Ephesians 2:10.

[81] See 2 Corinthians 5:17.

and the vocation of the disciple is essential and intimate. Therefore, the idea that we can or must add creativity and imagination to vocation is false. Rather, we are called to confess the ways in which we have separated, isolated, and compartmentalized God-originated and bestowed creativity and imagination apart from the *imago Dei* and human vocation. As I previously argued in chapter 4, it is not because there are certain human beings who show aptitude for or strive to be creative and artistic that we should consider certain people to be poetic beings, rather it is because God (the Great Artist Himself) created His human creatures in His image as poetic beings, that we are creative and artistic.

Therefore, the aesthetics of discipleship being developed in this project works against the reductionist tendencies of both a flattened Kantian approach as well as a heightened platonic approach. Instead, as this project has argued the aesthetics of discipleship calls us in our everyday life to return to the cultivation of imagination, creativity, and community. This essential aesthetic aspect of our discipleship is daily being renewed and restored to the disciple by way of the holistic redemptive rhythm from God that is creatively and artistically at work taking the fragmented and compartmentalized pieces of life and forming them back into a simple and holistic approach to wellness and joy and delight in life that takes place through His Holy Spirit, His Poetic Word, and the everyday struggles of this life. As we have seen, elegance at its core is about simplicity and wholeness. In this chapter I hope to inspire disciples of Jesus Christ to cultivate a life of creativity as poetic agents of God's providence—to see themselves as God's poetic creatures, and therefore their daily lives and vocations as living expressed art form—performative pieces that reflect the beauty, goodness, and truth of their artistic Creator and his creative and life-giving Word poetically at work in and through them.[82] I argue here for the

[82] John W. DeGruchy hits this point nicely when he states, "The fact is that artistic creativity is a response to

second rule of an aesthetics of discipleship, namely the rule of the *vita active* in which we find that God creatively works through his created means including his poetic creatures calling and forming us to be creative and to engage a poetic approach to life in service to others. In so doing, the human creature stands both before God and his neighbor, completely receiving, as we have already seen, and yet now, at the same time whole-heartedly and actively serving.

Unfortunately, as Dorothy Sayers points out, one of the key barriers preventing Christians from thinking and living in these creative terms and through such an aesthetic lens has been that theologians have been inclined to use the "Father symbol" to illustrate the likeness and familiarity between God and his children. Meanwhile, the "Creator symbol" Sayers complains, is used, if at all, only "to illustrate the deep gulf between God and his creatures."[83] The developing conclusion of this project's overarching proposal is that a non-foundational approach to aesthetics set within the Lutheran creedal frame that engages the reality of the disciple living simultaneously in the two realms is a unique and effective approach that moves us past the received presupposition of the object/subject dichotomy and instead reveals to us the human creature [*totus homo*] who lives at the simultaneous nexus of the vertical and horizontal axis of relationship with Creator and creation in the created sphere. Here, a unique relationship obtains between God [Creator] and his human creature, as well as between the human creature and all of

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God's free gift that cannot avoid seeking to represent the heart of that gift. The Word not only became deed, but also became image in Jesus Christ, and it is this image which grasps hold of us, inspiring wonder and artistic response. From this perspective, the true artist (and theologian) is not someone who seeks to compete with God as creator and redeemer, but someone whose creativity is a joyful and painful reflection of and a response to that which is given and discerned in creation and redemption. Genuine artistic creation is then understood as a gift, a Spirit-inspired construction which breaks open that which is hidden so that it may manifest itself, even if only for a brief moment. If genuine theology must be beautiful because revelation itself is beautiful, how can we not seek to express that beauty in image as well as in word?" John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120.

[83] Dorothy Sayers, *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 277.

creation that emphasizes the relationship to the neighbor, that takes place within the created sphere. This can specifically be brought to light via the doctrine of the *imago Dei* set within the circumference of the doctrine of Divine Providence as especially focused on the *causae secundae*. This unique approach provides us with a practical entry point for a Lutheran aesthetics of discipleship aimed at knowing, experiencing, and expressing God's providential care for His creation as Creator in everyday life. Further, it provides us with a practical lens through which we can view our various/unique vocations, relationships, communities, and life situations in a more holistic, constructive and poetic light. This calls us to view ourselves as God's living artwork, his poetic creatures called to cultivate community by reflecting the creativity of our poetic Creator as His '*larvae Dei*' or 'agents' of providence as expressed in Eph 2:8–10:

> For by grace you have been saved, through faith. And this is not from your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's [poetry][84], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Here, we are challenged to explore the place of the disciple's creativity and poetic imagination as an 'agent' of God's providence, an activity that is firmly based on God's ongoing creative initiative.

With the key ground-work we have laid in regard to a Lutheran framework for an aesthetic discipleship as our point of departure, we engage two key concepts of divine providence. First, that "God, who created the world," out of his poetic imagination "by the power of His Word," continues creatively and intimately to uphold it in the same manner (Col 1:15–20).[85] Second, that through the creative *participation* of his creatures, as expressed in the concept of *causae*

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[84] My own interpretation of the Greek word 'poiesis'.

[85] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 1:483–84.

secundae, namely as "the means through which divine providence operates,"[86] God works through His people. Here, the key is that it is "an intimate relationship in which the *causae secundae* are not the result of an action *Dei praevia* (a preceding action of God), but the result of a *continuus Dei in creaturas influxus* (of an uninterrupted operation of God on the creatures and through the creatures)."[87] Here, we not only receive God's poetic providential care as gift, we now become as Luther says, 'God's masks' (*larvae Dei*) through whom He carries out his poetic providential will here on earth. This in turn calls us to handle life as a poetic opportunity, because God's poetic providence not only impacts who we are, but also what we do, and how we go about doing it as his poetic creatures. Here, there is no dichotomy between content, lived form, and vocational purpose. Rather, we are called into a life-form of creativity and humility in service to the other: to our spouses, children, neighbors, co-workers, and the wider community in which we live. Thus, we need a poetic, qualitative, and evaluative approach for handling the situations of everyday life, in order to absorb, reflect and creatively express God's beauty and providential care, especially in the midst of the ugliness of sin, evil, suffering, and death.

In her essay, *The Image of God*, Dorothy Sayers highlights one of the key issues preventing many from obtaining such creative and purposeful relationships in everyday life:

> If all this is true, then it is to the creative artists that we should naturally turn for an opinion of what is meant by those creedal formulas that deal with the nature of the creative mind. Actually, we seldom seem to consult them in the matter. Poets have, indeed, often communicated in their own mode of expression, truths identical with theologians' truths; but just because of the difference in the modes of expression, we often fail to see the identity of the statements. The artist does not recognize that the phrases of the creed purport to be observations of fact about the creative mind as such, including his own; while the theologian, limiting the application of the phrases

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[86] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics,* 1:487.

[87] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics,* 1:488.

> to the divine Maker, neglects to inquire of the artists what light he can throw upon them from his own immediate apprehension of truth.[88]

By bringing Charles Arand's working thesis, "We are a Creedal people living in a 1st Article World,"[89] that is, "God's Beauty and creativity is active in all three articles and takes place in Creation," into creative dialogue with Dorothy Sayers's perspective on the reality and practicality of the creative mind set within a creedal frame, we can begin to argue human creativity and artistic imagination as key aspects of the *imago Dei* and thereby aesthetics as not only essential but mandatory in our role as agents of God's poetic providence in our everyday discipleship.

Beginning with the first article, Arand emphasizes both the *creatio ex nihilo,* God's originating act of creation 'out of nothing' as well as the *creatio continua or creatio continuens*, God's 'continuing creative activity.' Sayers builds on this in her essay, "What Do We Believe?"

> I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, is the thundering assertion with which we start; that the great fundamental quality that makes God, and us with him, what we are is creative activity … And, by implication, man is most god-like and most himself when he is occupied in creation.[90]

This opens us to a creative engagement with the second article, which Arand argues, provides us with the *creatio liberans*, namely, 'freeing creation' in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here, Christ's person and work can be seen as the Creator at work in Redemption—restoring, renewing, life and relationships. Sayers asserts, "The creative will presses on to its end, regardless of what it may suffer by the way. It does not choose suffering, but it will not avoid it, and must expect it." Moreover, "defeat cannot hold the creative will; it can pass through the

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[88] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 225.

[89] "The Five Types of Creation" are taken from my personal notes on a lecture Dr. Charles Arand gave at Concordia Seminary, 2015.

[90] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 53–54.

grave and rise again. If it cannot go by the path of cooperation, it will go by the path of death and victory."[91] This opens the space in the third article for Arand to engage both the *creatio renovans* (sanctification as the on-going activity of God's creative work) making us new creatures capable of the creative task in the Spirit, along with, the *creatio nova*—the new creation, of the new heavens and the new earth. Here, Sayers makes the connection that, "the Christian affirms that the life in him proceeds from the eternal creativeness; and that therefore so far as he is moved by that creativeness, and so far only, he is truly alive—the right kind of life, the creative and god-like life."[92] She continues, "Looking at what happened to that life (Jesus), we will expect to be saved, not from danger and suffering, but in danger and suffering." In light of this she adds "the resurrection of the body means more, I think, than we are accustomed to suppose." Which means of course, that "whatever happens, there can be no end to the manifestation of creative life."[93]

In all three articles, God is continuously creating and giving life—even in the midst of sin, death, and decay, a life in which he enlists his creatures to participate with him in the making/creating of new things. This approach not only connects creation, redemption, and sanctification, but also provides a unique connection between creation and providence that directly connects God's initial creative work, through the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to his ongoing creative work through his people. Here, an intimate relationship obtains between Creator and creature in the unifying field of ongoing creation through the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. As Arand and Herrmann put it, "By uniting us with Christ's death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit makes us new creatures. Renewing us in at least two ways. First,

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[91] Sayers. *Christian Letters*, 55–56.

[92] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 56–57.

[93] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 56–57.

with regard to our perceptions and senses [aesthetics]. Second, with regard to our actions [ethics]."[94] In the Incarnation, God's creativity and imagination have been revealed to us in the image of his Son, Jesus Christ. Through his cross and empty tomb, and by baptism, we have been brought into participation and engagement with his image. And, by the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us we are renewed and empowered to the creative role of imaging-forth his beauty, goodness, and truth.[95]

The key is that, now in this renewed relationship, as previously mentioned "the human creature *images* (used as verb) its Creator and His creativity," because by the power of the indwelling Spirit we are "turned toward" God," who in turn "turns us toward our neighbor, and creation."[96] Therefore, "To be *imago Dei* does not mean only to possess something but more so to be and to do something: *to image God*."[97] This emphasis restores creativity and an artistic imagination to our vocational role in the world. This connection between the relational and verbal aspect of the *imago Dei* as *imaging God* is the way in which "God through His Spirit lets us share in His creativity: for instance, He helps us to imitate his own creation of beauty, and indeed furthers that creation, by acting in and through our creative capacities."[98] In this sense, then "to be new people, to be a Christian," means "one has humanity, the freedom to work in God's creation and to use the talents God has given to each of us, to his glory and to the benefit

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[94] Arand, and Herrmann, "Beauty of the Creation," 323.

[95] It is especially key to emphasize all three in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ as most Lutherans would accede readily the concept of truth and some would even be prepared to add goodness (sanctification is a hot topic after all), but the idea of beauty as intrinsic and essential both to God's work of creation, redemption, and re-creation, as well as intrinsic and essential to the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ is the new key that is being emphasized here.

[96] Hall, *Imaging God*, 76.

[97] Hall, *Imaging God*, 98.

[98] Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 103.

of our neighbors."[99]

As Sayers adeptly points out, "We are very well aware that man cannot create in the absolute sense in which we understand the word when we apply it to God."[100] However, it is also true that "everybody is a maker in the simplest meaning of the term," since we "spend our lives putting matter together in new patterns and so creating forms that were not there before."[101] In connection with this concept then 'a poet' is simply a human person who "not only suffers the impact of external events but also experiences them. He puts the experience into words in his own mind, and in so doing recognizes the experience for what it is." And, to the extent that we all do that, "we are all poets!"[102] This leads us to the understanding that the act of creation is threefold, "a trinity—experience, expression, and recognition: the unknowable reality in experience; the image of that reality known in its expression; and power in the recognition; the whole making up the single and indivisible act of a creative mind."[103] As Sayers argues,

> I should like to submit to you that this is in fact the way in which all creative minds work—That is, that within our experience, creation proceeds by the discovery of new conceptual relations between things so as to form them into systems having a consistent wholeness corresponding to an image in the mind, and, consequently, possessing real existence.[104]

The real question boils down to "what is meant by asking the common man to deal with life creatively?"[105] Here, Sayers begins by pointing out that "to the average man, life presents itself … as a series of "problems" of extreme difficulty, which he has to "solve" by "mastering

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[99] Hans Rookmaker, *Art Needs No Justification* (Vancouver, BC: Regent, 1978), 24.

[100] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 219.

[101] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 221.

[102] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 159.

[103] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 159–60.

[104] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 185.

[105] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 227.

the means at his disposal."[106] Therefore, perhaps the first thing that the common man can learn from the artist is "that the only way of mastering one's material is to abandon the whole conception of mastery and to cooperate with it in love."[107] The second is, that "the words 'problem' and 'solution,' as commonly used, belong to the analytic approach to phenomena and not to the creative."[108] Here, the working presupposition or assumption is "that all human situations are problems capable of a single, necessary, and categorical solution, which must be wholly right, while all others are wholly wrong."[109] The artist or poet however, does not see life as a problem to be solved, but "as a medium for creation."[110] Therefore Sayers asserts the poet's artistic response to the common man is, "that when a situation in life says, 'Here is a mess, a crying evil, a need! What can you do about it?' We are asked not to say 'Yes' or 'No' or 'I will' or 'I will not.' Instead we are called to be 'gracious.'"[111] In other words, we are called, "to be inventive, to create, to discover and use life to make something new."[112] Because of this gracious creative approach, "the pains and sorrows of this troublesome world can never, for him, be wholly meaningless and useless, as they are to the man who dumbly endures them and can (as he complains with only too much truth) make nothing of them."[113] In light of this, I fully agree with the wise poetic words of John DeGruchy: "In other words, rather than the cross being the destruction of culture, it provides a way of discerning within culture that which anticipates and

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[106] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 234.

[107] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 235.

[108] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 235–36.

[109] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 243.

[110] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 238.

[111] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 244–45.

[112] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 244–45.

[113] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 244–45.

reflects God's way of redemption."[114] It stands as the *cantus firmus* for true cultural creativity. This means that "Grace is not a synonym for being right—or the solution to a problem solved," Sayers continues, "it is instead a creative and imaginative act that comes about in many and various forms and ways [improvisation] through the working of the Holy Spirit and the Word."[115] This, then, is the vocation of the creative mind in man. Simply put, the directing goal of this project as it asserts the essential nature of aesthetics in the spiritual formation and daily existence of the disciple of Jesus Christ is the making of poets.[116] Failing that goal would be to fall short of the new creation in Christ and what it means to be His fully-embodied and embedded human poetic agents expressive of God's life-giving creativity in the world.[117]

Conclusion

Martin Luther could never have imagined a creaturely existence separate from music, art, good food and drink, family, and friends. And, as we have seen, neither could Dietrich

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[114] DeGruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 124.

[115] Sayers, *Christian Letters*, 247.

[116] Following the argument of Hans Rookmaaker, *Art Needs No Justification* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1978), 31–38 in regard to connection between the Christian artist and his creative approach to his work we can posit some practical aesthetic applications for the disciple for creatively handling life situations: (1) We begin by taking the time to 'weep,' concerning the present situation. (2) Which in turn calls us to 'pray.' (3) To think critically through what Christianity is and means, and its relationship to cultural issues. (4) This critical thinking should then lead us into 'action': "to work and do something with perseverance, within society and in that way taking our share in making life livable, rich in a spiritual sense, deep and exciting" (32). The overarching goal is to "create the forms that can both express what has been gained in insight, wisdom and direction, and pass them on to others in a positive and incisive way" (31).

[117] Here we may also appropriate four qualities Rookmaaker points to that determine the practical scope and importance of the artist in relationship to the way in which we creatively and aesthetically approach the situations in our everyday lives: (1) Our understanding of 'talent' (59). (2) Our use of 'intelligence,' to handle life situations with 'decorum,' understanding what ought to be done at a certain place and time (59). (3) How we should embody 'character.' Namely, that whatever one does, it has to have quality, and should reflect consistency (59). (4) How we should practice the on-going lesson of 'application' which teaches us that even improvisation and so-called spontaneous achievements are the result of practiced discipline day in and day out (62). Therefore, we can conclude along with Rookmaaker: "in a way art plays a large role in the liturgy of life ... the set forms in which we have molded our way of performing life" (45). Rookmaaker, *Art Needs No Justification*, 59–63.

Bonhoeffer. And neither of them could imagine a theology of truth (doctrine) that was devoid of goodness (ethics) and beauty (aesthetics). For both Luther and Bonhoeffer the simplicity and wholeness of life, that is to say, the elegance of a creaturely existence lived by the *totus homo* simultaneously in two realms while planted firmly in the sphere of God's first article creation was not to be the exception but the rule and norm for the disciple of Jesus Christ.

The problem I have raised and addressed in this proposal is that in this twenty-first century milieu in which we find ourselves, such an elegant approach to a fully-embodied and embedded discipleship has been effectively eclipsed by the fragmentation, isolation, and compartmentalization of modernity. The unfortunate consequence is that such an elegant style of theology and life (discipleship) as described and lived by Luther, and Bonhoeffer has become the exception and is no longer the rule and norm for life. Therefore, through the contemporary Lutheran appropriation of Susanne K. Langer's philosophy of art as expressed in this project, I have argued for the need for a renewed focus on the essential relationship between aesthetics and everyday discipleship through the lens of a postliberal approach to theology as well as a non-foundational approach to the philosophy of art. This has led to a renewed focus on the essential nature of aesthetics to everyday discipleship—one that aims at the whole person who lives in the first article world of God's created sphere that reveals to us that we have been poetically created and continuously gifted by God to live poetically and improvisationally in this place.

This elegant style of theology and discipleship does not begin with the usual presupposition of an object/subject dichotomy that needs to be overcome or bridged. Nor does it begin with a theological reductionism which isolates the second article from the creed treating the first and the third articles as addendum. And, it does not begin with a theological compartmentalization which effectively separates or conflates the two realms either into a flattened materialistic reductionism

nor a heightened platonic flight away from the first article sphere of creation.

Instead, in developing a non-foundational Lutheran approach to the aesthetics of discipleship we begin with the simultaneous vertical and horizontal existence of the human creature as found in Luther's two realms theology as it is held within a full-circle creedal frame that places the disciple of Jesus Christ firmly standing both *coram Deo* and *coram mundo*. Here, the disciple of Jesus Christ is called and empowered to live simultaneously in two realms as an undivided whole person [*totus homo*]. This is the elegance of Lutheran theology and spiritual formation that has unique vital [life-receiving and life-giving] import in the development of an aesthetics of discipleship that calls and empowers us to an interpretative, evaluative, and creative reflection of life; as well as, expressive action of it in the created sphere.

Thus, a Lutheran perspective on an aesthetics of discipleship that is non-foundational and operates via a ruled use of Luther's creedal framework and two realms theology reveals to us an elegant style of theology and discipleship in which aesthetics are essential to spiritual formation of the whole life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. I have argued for an aesthetics of discipleship that flows through all three articles of the creed through an artistic illustration of the three key elements of Jazz—swing, the blues, and improvisation—in order to illustrate how they are creatively sounded in intimate relationship to one another in the disciple's everyday life. It is within this full-circle creedal frame and through the three key elements of Jazz that I have argued that the disciple of Jesus Christ is called to engage the creative tension of living in two realms simultaneously. This simultaneously reality consists of both receiving beauty, goodness, and truth from God (vertically as ongoing poetic gift), while at the same time being called to a renewed vocation of creatively experiencing and actively expressing God's beauty (aesthetics), goodness (ethics), and truth (doctrine) in the world with others (horizontally as poetic agents).

Thus, the directing goal of this project as it argues for the essential nature of aesthetics in the spiritual formation and daily existence and expression of the disciple of Jesus Christ is the making of poets. Therefore, we can no longer continue to ignore or forsake this goal, as it would entail consciously/knowingly falling short of the new creation in Christ and what it means to be His fully-embodied and embedded human poetic agents of creativity in the world.

Here, the question as to preliminary criteria in regard to the making of poets through such a creative and constructive framework needs to be addressed. To begin with, a Lutheran aesthetics of discipleship done in a practical way in the manner in which this project has argued for must engage the non-discursive symbolization of the disciple's life. This means, in light of the aesthetics that this project has argued for, that it must begin by re-connecting the affective to the cognitive and the behavioral aspects of everyday discipleship. It must engage a holistic/Gestalt approach to the human creature and to the disciple's fully-embodied and fully–embedded (*totus homo*) existence. This entails taking in life and the human creature as a continuous whole rather than in the fragmented, compartmentalized, atomistic, and episodical view (absurd, nihilistic) that modernity has produced. When this is the case, a key criteria for a Lutheran perspective on the aesthetics of discipleship is that it must be both theological and anthropological, both vertical and horizontal, both *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*, which then means both receptive and active simultaneously.

Therefore, it should be an aesthetic form of discipleship that moves to the rhythm of swing [governing righteousness], the blues [justifying righteousness], and improvisation [conforming righteousness]. When this is the case, then the aesthetics of discipleship reveals the disciple's life is as a unique and beautiful expressive form of God's originating and ongoing creative artwork that is vital, in other words, both Spirit-filled and self-giving. This understanding of discipleship

has been described in this chapter in relationship to the Lutheran perspective on the doctrine of vocation as lived art-form, which is nothing less than cruciform existence in which the disciple of Jesus Christ is daily formed into the image of God's Son, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Here, the sign of the cross, the symbol of the creed, and the sound of the blues illustrate, illuminate, and sound the *cantus firmus* of the aesthetics of discipleship, restoring to the disciple the solid foundation of God's creative swing, as well as to creatively engaging the counterpoint against which all of the polyphony and improvisation of this-worldliness may be sounded in full. This serves as the point of departure for the daily discovery, experience, symbolic transformation, and articulation of the ongoing non-discursive formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ. When this is the case, a Lutheran perspective on the aesthetics of discipleship will be honest, authentic, and humble in its approach. It will be able to see, hear, feel, and articulate the reality of the *simul iustus et peccator* and therefore more creatively and poetically discern the law/gospel dynamic at work in everyday life in order to see, hear, feel and articulate the beauty of the Gospel in the midst of the brokenness of this life. Consequently, it will be able to improvise in the midst of daily life with a deeper recognition, and articulation of the reality of the ugliness of sin, death, and the tyranny of the devil as it is witnessed through renewed eyes, ears, and emotions. And therefore, it will also be able to improvise on the proclamation of the beauty, vitality, and freedom of the Gospel. Therefore, a final criteria of the aesthetics of discipleship is that it should be both comforting and challenging, assuring and disrupting, bringing peace and disturbing. In this way, it will be able to engage and articulate the tension of this life in such a way that it seeks honestly to express the painful groans of our deepest hosanna's as well as our most joyful hallelujah's.

Given the concluding practical and concrete focus of this project, I will consider and

propose (4) areas of practical application in the concrete world of everyday life toward which this project can be implemented. As noted at the outset, the initial and building interest of this project has been to consider the possible applicability of aesthetics within Christian discipleship. Accordingly, the insights and truths of aesthetics were situated within a creedal framework and two realms organizing principle in mutual dialog with the three key elements of jazz. The argument of this project has been made for the sake of the actual implementation of these ideas in the midst of the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

With that goal in mind, I would begin by pointing to the necessity for re-connecting and emphasizing aesthetics as a more intentional focus within the process by which pastors are educated and formed. This would entail engaging art, aesthetics, and the mutual non-discursive dialog that takes place in each area of pastoral formation, including: exegetical, historical, systematics, and the practical. This would have a profound effect on the student's creative process of symbolic transform in regard to theological formation. Here, seminary students would be further prepared to provide the kind of holistic training and teaching that people in their future parishes need if they are to grow in their understanding of what it means to be God's fully-embodied and embedded creatures. This, then, would include teaching and training in the essential place that aesthetics should hold in the work of forming disciples in their daily lives. Forming pastors, and eventually their people, with this awareness would require the engagement of aesthetics in a way that would obviously include the corporate worship setting including the aesthetics of liturgy and hymnody, but would make the move beyond the worship setting into the aesthetics of everyday life and discipleship outside the corporate worship setting, the aesthetics that takes place in the earthly realm of the everyday in the surrounding culture and community. Concretely, this work should begin by intentionally alerting and attuning people better to see,

hear, and feel the aesthetics in their everyday lives. This kind of practical implementation would need to be a significant part of pastoral formation with a focus on the seminary students' personal understanding of the essential role of aesthetics at work in their own formation as disciples of Jesus Christ as it takes place in everyday life.

There is also, then, an obvious need for re-connecting aesthetics to the role of spiritual formation in our catechesis at the local community (congregational) level that involves especially our youth but also adult confirmands. Here, the aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ would be regarded as an essential aspect of our congregational catechesis. This would help the local congregation not only better to address the whole disciple in her formation, but would also provide a broader and more encompassing avenue for confronting and addressing competing narratives, images, songs, and feelings that are at work in the local cultural surroundings through a host of artistic mediums. Our people are being formed aesthetically—whether we know it or not, acknowledge it or not, intentionally address it or not. The aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ is taking place, all the time, sometimes in a Christian manner; however, more often than not, in a worldly way, as the sights, sounds, and emotions of our culture's mass media is constant. And, as Langer has argued, symbolic transformation is taking place non-stop with the given-ness of the world and culture by which the disciple is surrounded. While aesthetic formation is taking place all the time, it is too often taking place without any intentionality from the church. Therefore, a focus on aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ should be a mandatory (essential) aspect of our catechesis. Congregations and their pastors need to understand the critical role they can play in a godly aesthetic formation of their youth and adult confirmands. This would entail developing aspects of the curriculum that are deliberately attuned to the realm of aesthetics to help them see, hear, feel, experience, and articulate the aesthetic

truth as it has been conveyed in this project. This does not necessarily entail teaching jazz appreciation as part of the course—though that might not be an entirely bad idea! However, curriculum development could indeed at least begin with further developing the truths of swing, the blues, and improvisation into different mediums and aspects of everyday life in mutual dialog with the six chief parts.

This then leads to the necessity of the ongoing focus and intentionality of aesthetic formation as it takes place inside the corporate worship setting of the local congregational community. Careful and conscious attention to the ongoing aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ as it is taking place in the corporate worship setting is not something the church has focused on or paid enough attention to outside the common arenas of liturgical studies and hymnody. This great need for a renewed connection of aesthetics to the corporate worship life of the local community (congregation) could be greatly aided by teaching believers to see, hear, and feel the corporate worship setting as the art studio in which aesthetic formation takes place in the life of the Christian community. An understanding of the corporate worship setting in terms of the artistic form of triptych might be especially insightful and helping. Utilizing the artistic concept of triptych in the corporate worship setting would find expression in a greater creative focus and intentionality to the vital and intimate relationship that exists in worship between three key elements: story-driven, image-rich, and ritual rhythms. This kind of attunement and re-visioning of the corporate worship setting could greatly serve to help pastors and congregations be more intentional about the aesthetic formation of the disciples of Jesus Christ in the midst of the corporate setting each Sunday. This in turn would then set the aesthetic groundwork for the disciples as they move out from worship and into the rest of their week, with their symbolic transformation renewed to take in and see, hear, and feel the aesthetics of their surroundings in a

new way.

This then leads to the necessity of the ongoing focus, development, and intentionality of aesthetic formation in the everyday life of the disciple of Jesus Christ as it takes place outside the corporate worship setting, and outside the congregational community, and in the world and culture as it surrounds them in their daily vocational living. Careful and conscious attention to the ongoing aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ is not something the church has focused on or paid enough attention to especially in the age of mass media. Emphasizing the need for ongoing focus, development, and intentionality of the aesthetic aspect of the disciple's everyday life leads people to recognize, understand, and live life more holistically. Understood in this way, aesthetic formation of the disciple of Jesus Christ becomes an essential aspect of their holistic life lived in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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