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A Third Way: Christian Philosophy of Music

Eric S. Gardner
University of South Carolina - Columbia

Director of Thesis: Dr. Michael Dickson
Second Reader: Dr. Christopher Tollefsen

Abstract

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Introduction

Several years ago, I was speaking with a choir director who asked me whether I played any musical instruments. I responded, “yes, as a matter of fact, I play the bagpipes.” He replied, “you’ve misunderstood—I asked whether you played any *musical* instruments.”

The choir director's jest unintentionally brought up a philosophical question about music: what, if any, sounds can be considered musical? And if certain sounds are musical, how do we distinguish them from the non-musical sounds? Philosophical tension undergirds many of our ideas about music and musical practices, and few musicians take the time to address these subjects. My goal in this thesis is to do just that—I will address some of philosophical questions about music. I will work from a Christian perspective and show that a Christian worldview can answer these questions in a way that is intellectually satisfying.

Biblical Third Way Methodology

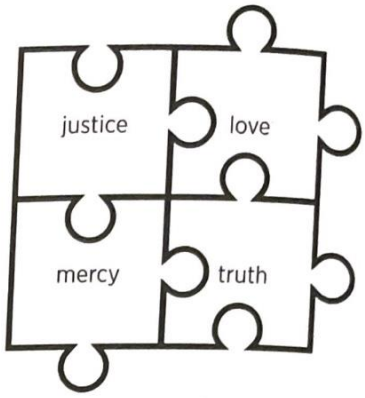
In the first part of this thesis, I want to show that Christianity is a "third way" to approaching ideological dichotomies. I borrow this idea principally from Christopher Watkin and Herman Bavinck. Despite their different terminology, they shared many fundamental convictions about how to handle philosophical conundrums. There are other Christians who have sought to create similar third way methodologies that I do not address. Therefore, my thesis should be read as a particular reflection on Bavinck and Watkin. Nonetheless, many of the ideas I discuss are not unique to them. In this section, I will explain what I mean by "third way methodology" and give some examples.

Third way methodology posits that the Bible offers a "third way" to address ideological issues. In other words, Christianity can answer complex questions without falling into either side of a dichotomy. It claims that many controversies boil down to a dispute over how to handle two seemingly contradictory values. However, Christianity shows us how to think about the problem

without sacrificing one value to the other. In other words, Christian thinking shows a third way that does not neglect either value.

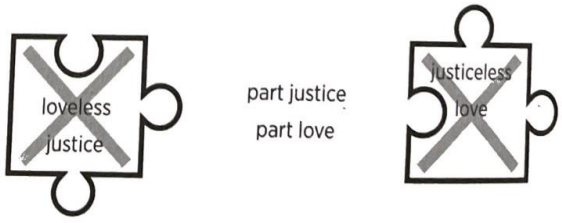
Christopher Watkin (2022) calls this type of thinking "diagonalization." He says:

1. It begins with a complex of interrelated biblical truths. For example, that God is both just and loving, both merciful and truthful.

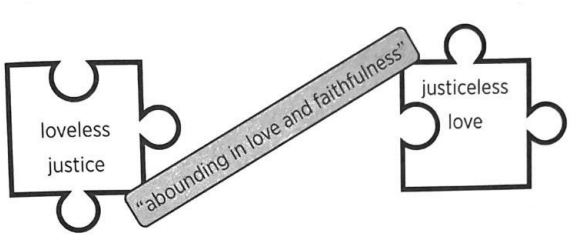


2a. It then shows how a cultural dichotomy splinters this rich biblical reality and offers it in fragmented form as a series of mutually exclusive choices…

2b…or as an unsatisfying compromise



3. Drawing on the complex truth of (1), diagonalization presents a biblical picture in which the best aspirations of both options are fulfilled, but not in a way that the proponents of those options would see coming.



Variations on way of thinking have a long history in Christian thought. The paradigmatic example is in 1 Corinthians 1, in which Paul shows how the Greeks love of wisdom and the Jews' desire for powerful signs can find their ultimate fulfilment only in the "foolish" and "weak" cross of Christ, which is "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Watkin goes on to give several examples, one of which address the Bible's "wisdom" literature: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Watkin argues that these three books present a coherent system of understanding the world, but each one approaches the problem from a different angle. Proverbs, for example, contains short, "if-then" statements. For example: "The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin" (Prov. 10:8). The book of Proverbs presents the world as predictable, ordered, and just. The wise and righteous will be blessed, but the evil will be cursed.

The book of Ecclesiastes, however, describes a world that is chaotic, unpredictable, and vain. Whereas Proverbs emphasizes the justice and order in the world, Ecclesiastes emphasizes the injustice and disorder:

> Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this is also vanity. For of the wise as of the fool, there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. (Ecc. 2:15-17).

Watkin (2001) summarizes the difference between Ecclesiastes and Proverbs well:

> After all, Proverbs gives the impression that if we make wise decisions, things will go well for us, and if we make foolish decisions, things will go badly. Simple enough. Ecclesiastes, by contrast, suggests that it does not really matter whether we make wise or foolish decisions because the wicked prosper and the wise suffer, and we are all growing old and will die soon…

In other words, it would be easy to pit Proverbs and Ecclesiastes against one another. One could argue for the Proverbial view of life at the expense of the Ecclesiastical, or *vice-versa*. However, the Bible presents both books side-by-side, making us wonder how to reconcile the order with the disorder, the justice with the injustice.

Thankfully, we have the book of Job to explain how these two views of life fit together. Job was a wealthy, God-fearing man. Per the book of Proverbs, he should have been blessed and live well. However, Job suffers immensely. His children die, and his great riches are destroyed in an instant. Throughout the book, he cries out to God, asking "why." Watkin (2001) explains the

four ways in which book of Job navigates the Proverbs-Ecclesiastes tension, showing how both books are needed for a complete understanding of Job's suffering:

> First, we learn from the prologue between God and Satan (chapter 1) that there is a reason behind Job's suffering of which he is unaware, and we assume we are in Proverbs territory, with a rational explanation for everything that happens. Second, in God's quick-fire litany of sixty-six questions to Job (chapters 38-42), the book refuses to justify or even explain Job's calamity, and we find ourselves in Ecclesiastes country. Third, lest we settle into thinking that anarchy reigns after all… the final chapter of the book presents a spectacular restoration of order and blessing in Job's life, and we might think that the reality of Proverbs has won the day. Fourth, the more we think about the final chapter, the more we realize it does not provide a neat ending at all: Job's children are still dead, he has still suffered terribly, and his meteoric restoration raises more questions than it answers. The end of Job leaves both Hegel and Kierkegaard scratching their heads.

In other words, neither Proverbs nor Ecclesiastes is sufficient to fully understand Job's suffering. Without Proverbs, Job's suffering and restoration are meaningless. Without Ecclesiastes, Job's unanswered questions make God look unjust or even cruel. The book of Job shows us how both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are needed to make sense of suffering and justice. The problem is not that Proverbs or Ecclesiastes are individually wrong, and that we need to compromise between the two perspectives. Rather, both books present two different, but equally true, aspects of the life. If we exclude one at the expense of the other, we will lose the richness of the multi-perspectival approach that Job gives us.

The concept of a multi-perspectival approach is key to Christian third way methodology. The goal is not to muddy the waters and create a lukewarm, unsatisfying compromise. Rather, the goal is to hold both perspectives together, demonstrating that the Christian worldview shows us how to value both ideals without sacrificing one to the other. Charles Simeon puts it like this: "The truth is not in the middle, and not at one extreme, but in both extremes" (quoted in Stott 2014).

Other philosophers have sought to create third ways to address a philosophical dichotomy. Hegel and his dialectic come to mind. However, the Christian third way is most relevant to my project and the one I find most intellectually satisfying. For my purposes, I will not address other propose third ways.

A Christian third way is important because not every problem requires a third way. For example, let's says that a group of human rights activists and Nazis are arguing about whether Jews deserve rights. The human rights activists claim that that Jews deserve equal rights, whereas the Nazis disagree. An incorrect third way would be to balance human rights with antisemitism. The advantage of a Christian third way is that it is tied to Christian morality and the broader Christian worldview, therefore making it (I believe) a satisfying way of thinking.

In many ways, Herman Bavinck is an exemplar of third way methodology. Therefore, I will examining what Bavinck says about his epistemological model. Herman Bavinck (2019) outlines his approach to tackling philosophical issues:

> The problems that confront the human mind always return to these: What is the relation between thinking and being, between being and becoming, and between becoming and acting? What am I? What is the world, and what is my place and task within this world? Autonomous thinking finds no satisfactory answer to these questions—it oscillates

> between materialism and spiritualism, between atomism and dynamism, between nomism and antinomianism. But Christianity preserves the harmony [between them] and reveals to us a wisdom that reconciles the human being with God and, through this, with itself, with the world, and with life.

Here, Bavinck makes three claims: philosophers keep asking the same questions, autonomous (i.e., non-Christian) thought fails to answer them, and one can answer these questions with the Christian worldview.

Among these three claims, the first one is the least controversial. I suspect that most philosophers would acknowledge that we continue to ask many of the same questions as the ancient Greeks. However, Bavinck also claims that these problems always boil down to one of three pairs of concepts: thinking and being, being and becoming, or becoming and acting. In the way Bavinck uses these terms, they roughly mean "epistemology," "metaphysics," and "ethics and free will." One could interpret Bavinck's claim that "the problems that confront the human mind always return to these…" as a claim that there are no other philosophical issues in play. However, in light of Bavinck's large corpus wherein he addresses other topics, such as aesthetics, this interpretation seems incorrect. Rather, he thinks that these three claims are fundamental to the rest of philosophy. Therefore, if one can agree with Bavinck on these three points, then the rest of philosophy should fall into place.

This idea plays a key role in third way methodology. If the Christian worldview can answer a few fundamental questions, then it can easily tackle the other issues. Due to its conviction that a few key problems undergird the rest of philosophy, Christian third way methodology creates a unified system of thought. It does not aim to create a system of unrelated

ideas—rather, it aims at creating philosophical system that has a logical structure. This pattern of internal coherence is common goal of system of Christian third way thought.

Second, Bavinck claims that autonomous (i.e., non-Christian) thought fails to answer these questions because it falls into dichotomies. When secular thinkers address complex issues, they tend to emphasize one value over the other. Bavinck gives three specific examples: materialism and spiritualism; atomism and dynamism; and nomism and antinomianism. I suspect that some readers would object to this point. "How can he claim that all non-Christian thought falls into an 'either-or' scenario? Isn't philosophy more complicated than that?" Yes and no. Bavinck (2019) acknowledges many philosophers from many schools of thought; he realizes that philosophy is not a two-party system. Bavinck's goal is not to deny philosophical diversity—rather, he wants to show that when presented with two seemingly opposed ideas, the Christian worldview to make sense of paradoxes, showing us how the competing values fit together.

Third, Bavinck claims that the Christian worldview can answer the questions. Instead of emphasizing one value or idea, Christian thought emphasizes both. Only the Bible can show us how to think through difficult problems without sacrificing one value to the other. Again, I suspect that there may be some opposition to this point. For the sake of brevity, I am not going to defend this claim.

An important disclaimer: not all Christians hold a "Christian worldview" as Bavinck defines it. Leibniz, for example, was a Christian, yet Bavinck is convinced that rationalism is incompatible with Christianity. Furthermore, anyone purporting to have a "Christian worldview" would have to explain what they mean by "Christian." The number of denominations and sects is staggering. Due to these issues, Christopher Watkin prefers the term "biblical worldview." By using the term "biblical," he can argue that his opponents are either (a) thinking independently of

the Bible or (b) thinking incorrectly about its implications. Therefore, the disagreement is no longer a matter of whether someone is a Christian, but whether they have correctly understood the scriptures. For this reason, I prefer the term "biblical worldview." Nonetheless, I am not opposed to using the term "Christian worldview" so long as we are careful to stipulate that not every worldview held by a Christian counts as a "Christian worldview."

To summarize: biblical (or Christian) third way methodology claims that the Bible offers us ways to think about complex problems without falling into a dichotomy. When presented with two seemingly contradictory values, it shows us how to affirm them both. We take the "third way" when we answer a question without giving in to the temptation to emphasize one value over the other. Christianity can reliably show us the third way wherein we harmonize seemingly opposed ideas. In this thesis, I want to use biblical third way methodology to answers questions about the philosophy of music.

Musical Metaphysics

In this section, I want to apply Christian third-way methodology to some metaphysical considerations about music. Specifically, I want to address two topics. First, I want to define "music." Second, I want to discuss the conditions for something to be considered an instance of a piece of music. Although these questions are related, they have enough differences that I am going to handle them separately. I will show why each question is difficult to answer, and then show how the Christian or biblical worldview is able to offer a satisfying solution.

1. What is Music?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2022) defines music as "vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony." This definition has some holes. For example, using Merriam-Webster's definition, the noise of my ceiling fan counts as music. It is rhythmic, and it is mechanical. Therefore, it is music. Furthermore, a traffic jam would also count as music. Several cars honking at different pitches simultaneously creates harmony, so it could be considered music. And if you are willing to consider a dog howl melodic, then it would count as music, too.

These examples contradict musical practice. If you turned on the radio and heard cars honking, you would probably wonder why they stopped playing the "real music." Likewise, if movie subtitles say "background music" when a dog barks, there would probably be confusion. Of course, it is possible that radio and movie audiences are uncultured and need to get with the times. Maybe a dog barking actually is music, and we need to learn to appreciate the dog's years of practice. However, common musical practice does not dog howls as musical. Therefore, we should see whether there is a definition of music that better encapsulates standard musical practice.

One way to resolve the ceiling fan example is to argue that music requires a musician who intends to make music. For something to be music, then, someone must have intended for it to be music. Therefore, because the ceiling fan was not intended to be music, it is not music. However, this reasoning risks circularity. Arguing that music requires someone who intends to make music implies that he already knows what music is. Therefore, to define music, we must already know what music is. This argumentation is circular.

Furthermore, let's imagine that a group of space aliens arrive on Earth and ask us what music is. If we say, "Music is whatever we intend to be music," then the space aliens could bring

us a plate of chocolate chip cookies and (rightly) argue that they have met our conditions for "music." If the only requirement for something to be considered music is intent, then anything can be music. Therefore, we need something deeper than "intent" for our definition of music.

Another way to address the ceiling fan example is to alter our conditions for music. For example, we could require that music be rhythmic, melodic, *and* harmonic. This new definition would eliminate ceiling fans, which are neither harmonic nor melodic. However, this definition would seem to make Steve Reich's "Clapping Music," which consists solely of people clapping, unmusical. Additionally, monotonic chants or electronic beats, which lack harmony, would also be excluded from "music." Standard musical practice considers "Clapping Music" and monotonic chants to be musical, whereas it considers ceilings fans to be unmusical. Somehow, there is something musical about "Clapping Music" and monotonic chant, even though they lack harmony.

Before answering this question from a Christian worldview, I am going to lay out a few metaphysical principles. After having laid out those principles, I will use them to define music.

2. Some Metaphysical Principles

Defining terms like "music" requires one to think about universals. This question cannot be addressed without considering some fundamental questions about the nature of universals: do they exist, can they change, and how do we identify them, to name a few.

The Christian or biblical worldview presupposes the existence of universals. From the beginning of Genesis, the Bible distinguishes between Creator and creature. The Creator makes the creature, and the creature's existence depends on the Creator. The Creator and creature are not the same. Another fundamental biblical category is truth and falsity. Jesus refers to himself as

"the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6) and Satan is called the "father of lies" (John 8:44). Other distinctions in scripture include life and death, morality and immorality, wisdom and folly, and past and future, to name a few.

While there are Christian nominalists who claim that universals do not objectively exist, I believe that this viewpoint is incorrect. As I have alluded to, I think that the biblical perspective is realism: universals exist and are (to a certain extent) knowable. I am convinced that without universals, the Christian faith does not make sense. However, my goal here is not to disprove nominalism. Let it suffice to say that I will take realism to be most consistent with a Christian worldview.

To continue: the Bible does more than imply the existence of universals—it claims that they are created. In the opening chapter of the Bible, we see a world that is "formless and void." In other words, God had not organized the world yet. Regarding Genesis 1:2, Christopher Watkin (2022) says that,

> The earth was formless (*tohu*) and empty (*bohu*), and the deep was dark (*chosek*). In other words, there is no definition, either in the spatial or in the linguistic sense. Nothing stands out from the rest; no figure separates itself from a background…There is nothing big or small, left or right, before or after, good or bad, light or heavy, far or near, warm or cold, minimal or complex, serious or funny, bright or dim. Just a formless and empty earth and a dark deep. Bible scholars often refer to the phrase "formless and empty" in its original Hebrew because the sound of the words so evocatively mirrors the void they describe: *tohu wabohu*.

As things currently stand, the Heavens and the Earth exist, but they do not have internal distinctions. Not even light and dark have been separated. The distinctions to which we are accustomed have not yet been created. We now arrive at my first point: from the biblical worldview, categories do not exist independently of God. They are not self-sufficient, and they do not exist necessarily. God could have just as well left light and dark unseparated. Categories are created, just like the stuff that they organize.

In Genesis 1:3, we finally see God create a distinction. It says that "God created light and separated it from darkness. He called the light Day and the dark Night." Before, there was *tohu wabohu*. Now, there is form. In the subsequent verses, God goes on to create distinctions between land and sea, different seasons, and several others. These categories exist because God spoke them into existence. In the same way that he spoke the earth into existence, he speaks universals into existence. And in the same way that the Earth exists independently of human perception (humans had not yet been created!), so, too, do categories exist independently of human perception.

However, on Day 6 of creation, God did something different. He makes man in his own image, giving him dominion over the Earth (Gen 1.26-27):

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
>
> So God created man in his own image,
>
> in the image of God he created him;
>
> male and female he created them.

Previously, God had been calling all the shots. But now, he gives authority to another. While God does not yield his authority, he does create humans to have dominion in a similar way that he does. We see this dominion when he gives Adam a mission: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28b). God has told Adam to rule over the Earth and to organize, shape, and form it. This language implies that there is something unruly about the current state of the Earth. The world needs to be further shaped and organized. What God made was good, but there is still *tohu wabohu.* Part of Adam's job is to join God in limiting the *tohu wabohu*.

In other words, God tells Adam to keep expanding the form. God has given Adam the responsibility and authority over the rest of creation to organize, shape, and create so that the *tohu wabohu* would continue to recede. While creation up until now has been good (as God himself has continually repeated), it is incomplete. There are other distinctions to be made and more things to be done. Adam is now a co-creator with God. As Greg Gilbert says, Adam is now God's "vice-regent."

In Genesis 2:19, God brings all of the animals before Adam: "Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name." As Christopher Watkin (2001) points out, "A Christian philosophy of meaning could do worse than to begin with a meditation on Adam's naming of the animals." In bringing the animals before Adam, God let him make categories! God created the living beings, but now Adam gets to make sub-categories. Watkin says this:

> It would have been easy to write "God called each by their name," but it appears that he left that task to his designated sub-creator.
>
> It is important to note that Adam's task here finds its place between utterly unconstrained creativity and utterly passive rule following. Adam does not create the animals from nothing, but neither does he simply transcribe names dictated to him by God…The world is neither signed, sealed, and delivered with everything already named nor a meaningless flux…
>
> Adam's delegated naming is far more than a labelling exercise. Throughout the Bible—and still today—one of the social meanings of naming something is to have authority over it, to own it, or to have invented it…
>
> To name something is to call it out from the flux of the world as a figure, not just a background: it is to recognize in it the dignity of identity. This is the task and the privilege that God sets before Adam.

Adam is the one who distinguishes the penguin from the parrot. While Adam creates differently from God—Adam does not create *ex nihilo*—his newly defined species are legitimate universals. As an image-bearer of God who was commissioned to have dominion over the Earth, Adam's distinctions are just as valid as God's. And because God made Adam and told him to name the animals, there is still a sense in which "parrot" is God's category. He was the one who brought the animals before Adam, and he was the one who gave Adam the capacity to name them. Similarly, we say that President Eisenhower built the interstate highways, even though he wasn't involved in the hands-on construction. It was Eisenhower's will that the interstate highways

should be built, so we give him credit for it. In other words, President Eisenhower was the ultimate cause of the interstate system. Local construction workers and engineers, however, are the proximate causes physical creation of the highways and the placement of exit ramps. Likewise, God is the ultimate cause the universal of "parrot," even though Adam was the proximate cause.

Given the way in which God and Adam make distinctions, we see that categories do not exist only in the things themselves, nor do they exist solely in the mind. When God and Adam make distinctions, they do so objectively. Adam's separation between penguin and parrot is no more a linguistic aid than God's separation between Light and Dark.

However, these categories do not exist solely in the things in themselves. When humans make distinctions, we do more than just recognize what is already there. First, Adam had to recognize the categories that God had made—otherwise, he would have been naming trees instead of animals. But once he had learned the category "animal," then he got to create sub-categories. As Watkin (2001) puts it, "…language both expresses and forms a world." Distinctions must first exist in the mind of God or man, who then speaks the category into existence. While human categories do not change God's categories any more than we can unmake the universe, our categories do expand on what God has already made. It's like a coloring book—God draws the outline, and we color in the gaps. God created the category "animal," and Adam fills it in by separating parrots from penguins. And as he co-creates with God, the *tohu wabohu* recedes.

Moving on: Adam is currently in a good spot. He has his work cut out for him, but God has placed him in a garden where all his needs are provided. The world is Adam's oyster. He and

Eve can make plays, write poetry, compose clarinet concerti, and make a stand-up comedy routine. The possibilities are endless.

However, his situation quickly degrades. In Genesis 3, Adam sins against God by eating the forbidden fruit. In other words, Adam chose to rebel against God. Despite the limitless potential for creation, he chose to act on his own accord. In a certain way, his eating the forbidden fruit is a failure to respect categories. Whereas he should have kept the God-given distinction between good fruit and bad fruit, he combined the two into one category. Adam failed to distinguish between the forbidden fruit and the others, thereby seeking to erase God's category.

As a result of Adam's sin, God places a curse on all creation. From beast to butterfly, from fish to flower, the whole universe now feels the effects of the fall. As Paul says in Romans 8:20-22,

> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

In other words, Adam's sin does not impact only him. The effects of the curse are widespread. Food is now scarce, and formerly simple tasks are now laborious. While Adam is still an image-bearer, and he can still co-create with God, the results of his sin have seriously hampered his abilities. Formerly, Adam could clearly understand God's categories (such as "animal) and

precisely make his own (such as “parrot”). But things have changed. Adam will now struggle to understand God’s categories, and he will struggle to create his own.

We, the children of Adam, share Adam’s damaged, but not destroyed, image of God. We can still create categories and fight against *toho wabohu*, but we do so imperfectly. Our struggle to define basic concepts like “truth” and “beauty” is evidence of this incapacity. We have an intuition of truth and beauty, but we never seem to find the right words to describe the phenomenon. Once we think we have found the solution, someone proposes a counterexample, and we return to the drawing board. Even with human inventions, like a computer, we struggle to make categories. Is a calculator a computer? What about an abacus? Is a broken car still a car, even if it can no longer drive? To use the coloring book analogy from earlier, we used to see the outline clearly. Now, our vision is blurry, and we aren’t sure whether we’re using the right color in the right place.

To make matters worse: the curse has also affected our languages. Anyone who has learned a foreign language has stumbled across expressions in their new language that don’t quite translate into their native language, or vice versa. This linguistic messiness adds insult to injury: not only are the categories blurry, but our medium for discussing the categories is also broken. Even though I have the Bible to illuminate philosophically murky waters, I think with a broken brain, and I write with a broken language.

At this point, the reader might be ready to give up. “If what you say is true, then your thesis is a fool’s errand. You will never arrive at a complete definition, so you shouldn’t waste your time.” For such a reader, let me encourage you: we do not need to resort to nihilism. As I mentioned earlier, the image of God is broken, but not destroyed. While we cannot perfectly understand the categories “music” and “beauty,” we can use biblical thinking to significantly

advance our knowledge. We can't fix our broken eyeglasses, but we can certainly wipe the dust off.

To summarize: God is the ultimate creator of categories. He separated Light and Dark (and many others), pushing back the *tohu wabohu.* God makes Adam in his image and gives him dominion over the Earth. While creation is not bad, it is incomplete. There is still *tohu wabohu*, and God makes Adam a co-creator who can create form out of formlessness. Though Adam does not create out of complete formlessness as God did, he still creates out of a sort of partial formlessness. Stuff exists, and there are forms. Adam, however, has the job to expand and cultivate the form. We see this co-creational capacity at work when Adam names the animals. Just as God speaks objective metaphysical categories into existence, Adam also speaks legitimate categories (such as parrot and penguin) into existence. These distinctions are more than linguistic aides, and they are more than "things in themselves." Like a coloring book, God makes outlines, and Adam is supposed to fill in the gaps. Because Adam sinned, the world is now cursed, and we now do philosophy with broken brains and faulty languages. However, the image of God has not been fully destroyed, so there remains hope to improve our understanding of difficult inquiries (such as those raised in this thesis).

Before proceeding, let me emphasize that I am unable to fully answer all philosophical questions about music. There will always be more counterexamples lurking in the shadows. However, biblical third-way methodology does give us a chance to improve our understanding of these topics. While the noetic effects of the fall will not go away until Christ brings the New Heavens and the New Earth, we can still expand our knowledge. Philosophy is under a curse, but it is not futile.

3. Defining Music

In this section, I want to offer a definition for "music" that fits the Christian worldview and show how it is superior to some of its alternatives. There are two ways to approach this definition: first, we can try to discern the pre-existing category of "music." Second, we can create new distinctions to help us better understand the pre-existing categories. Since Adam both discerns and creates in the Garden of Eden, we can be sure that both are biblically sound approaches.

Since music has existed for millennia, I believe that the first approach (i.e., discerning pre-existing categories) will be the most helpful. While it may be necessary to draw some distinctions to help us better understand the problem, the goal should be discerning the category "music," not to fundamentally alter it. Our goal is not so much to separate parrot from penguin, but to explain the separation to someone.

Ideally, the definition will fit with musical practices. Across different cultures and various musical styles, there seems to be general understanding of what is and isn't musical. Otherwise, we would struggle to define any practice as "musical." However, we seem to have a common understanding of the word "music" such that most people would agree that a ceiling fan's noise is not music, but Beethoven's 4th Symphony is. It seems that we, as image bearers, have an intuitive sense of the categories around us, but due to the fall, we struggle to describe them. But as I said, philosophy is not futile. Therefore, I hope that the definition I offer will prove to be intuitively satisfying.

Without any further ado, I would like to define music as beautiful sound that is intended to be so. In other words, music is an attempt at beautiful sound that achieves some degree of success. However, beautiful sound, as created by humans, is in certain ways tied to practices. Therefore, what qualifies as 'beautiful sound intended to be such' itself is tied to certain

practices. Furthermore, I define "playing a piece of music" as intending to create beautiful sound that is recognized as music by musical practices. This definition captures a third way between claiming that music is a universal concept that transcends culture versus claiming that the definition of "music" is culturally determined. Music is beautiful sound (universal) whose criteria for beauty are tied to certain practices (cultural). Before expanding on this definition, let me emphasize a few points.

First, this definition is not circular. Had I said, "music is whatever we intend to be music," then I would have fallen into a logical fallacy. While my definition does include intent, it deals with an intent for beautiful sound, not music. For example: a birdsong might be beautiful, but since the bird does not intend to create beauty, it does not count as music. Likewise, the sound of a firetruck—though arguably rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic—is not music because it is not intended to be beautiful. The song of an ice cream truck, however, is music, because even though the music is played for utilitarian purposes—that is, to sell ice cream—the musician who made the recording intended to create beauty. Furthermore, the ice cream truck uses the beauty to attract customers. The truck uses beauty to the end of selling ice cream. Beauty does not need to be an end in itself. Even if beauty is pursued instrumentally, the sound can still be considered music because the intent for beauty is present.

Second, this definition excludes beautiful things that are not sounds. For example, a painting is not music because its beauty is visual, not auditory. This means that John Cage's 4'33" is not music. Additionally, sheet music is not, properly speaking, music. It may visually document a piece of music and reading it may give one an idea of what the music sounds like, but it is not music. Nonetheless, we should still feel free to call it "music" as long as we recognize that it is shorthand for "sheet music." In the same way that the recipe for cookies is not

itself a cookie, the sheet music gives the instructions for music without itself being the music. No one wants to be handed a recipe card when they ask for a cookie, and no one wants to be handed a score when they say, “Let’s have some music.”

Third, the sounds must achieve a degree of success to be considered “music.” Simply wanting something to be beautiful is insufficient. For example, someone might intend to create sonic beauty by blowing on a pebble. As hard as they try, their pebble will not create a beautiful sound. Therefore, blowing on a pebble is not music.

My definition of music relies heavily on the concept of beauty. One could reasonably argue that this definition is not complete without an accompanying definition of beauty, and I completely agree. In my next section, I will examine the idea of beauty and seek to define it from a Christian perspective. For now, suffice it to say that beauty is that which pleases when perceived by virtue of its perfection, consonance, and brilliance. I will say more about the nature of beauty and our relation to it later. For now, I will defend my definition of music as “beautiful sound that is intended to be so” from some potential objections.

This definition fits the Christian worldview in several ways. First, it takes into consideration other categories. Just as Adam had to discern God’s categories before he could make his own, this definition relies on the concepts of sound, beauty, and intent. Second, it captures a common intuition about music: good music is beautiful, and bad music is ugly. Somehow, we do not need to be told that the music created by a 6th-grade band is less good than the New York Philharmonic performing Tchaikovsky’s 6th Symphony. We seem to intuitively desire that music be beautiful. As I will discuss in a later section, our desire for beauty fits with what the Bible says about our identity as image bearers. Third, this definition understands that we, as image bearers, can discern and create beauty. Just as we can discern the category of

"house" and build more houses, we can discern "beauty" and make more instances that fit that category.

Let's imagine that a cat is walking along an upright piano in someone's living room. However, it accidentally pushes the keys used in Debussy's Clair de Lune. The cat even touches each note at the right time, so that people in the kitchen think that a pianist is playing Debussy. Without intending to make a beautiful sound, the cat seems to have played a musical masterpiece. One could object that since the cat seems to have created music, then my definition needs to be altered to include the sounds made by the cat. If the sounds made by the cat are music, then music does not need to be intentional. Therefore, we would also expect other beautiful (though not intended to be so) sounds, like birds chirping, to be music.

The cat example primarily addresses the question of what it means to make music. Since the cat is not imposing order on chaos with the intention of creating beauty, the cat is not playing music. Humans can create music because God has given us the ability to create structure and to organize sounds with intentionality. When Debussy performed Claire de Lune, he made musical choices that were not random—he would have controlled phrasing and dynamics in a way that would augment the beauty of the performance. The cat, however, cannot do this. The cat is not capable of making artistic decisions or evaluating whether a certain choice would increase or decrease the beauty of the performance. Cats cannot willfully bring order from chaos to make beauty. The cat, therefore, is not making music.

Another potential objection is that some music is not beautiful. For example, a middle school orchestra playing Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings will be a painful experience. The intonation will be rough, and the tone will be less than ideal. Someone might claim that since this music seems to lack beauty, then not all music is beautiful. The best way to handle this scenario

is by recognizing some sub-categories. Let's define "good music" as that which is more beautiful, and "bad music" as that which is less beautiful. Since the middle school performance of Adagio in Strings contains some degree of beauty, it counts as bad music. Nonetheless, it is still music. Similarly, some people jokingly remark that Chipotle is not Mexican. To call it non-Mexican food puts it in the same category as gyros, spaghetti, and kibinai. The better way to describe Chipotle is "inauthentic, non-traditional Mexican food." They still trace their roots to Mexican cuisine, so to deny these culinary roots is misleading. Likewise, putting a 6th-grade orchestra in the same category as a jackhammer or a ceiling fan is misleading. While saying, "That's not music," might serve a rhetorical purpose, the 6th-grade orchestra is still making music.

Here is another issue with placing the music of the 6th-grade orchestra on the same footing as the New York Philharmonic: since the kids in the 6th-grade orchestra have likely been educated on some of the basic standards of musical excellence—intonation, balance, expression—then we can say that the kids are aiming at the standards of excellence as they understand them, but with full realization that they fall short. If they listen to a professional recording of Barber's Adagio for Strings, then they will realize that they are not capable of producing an equally beautiful performance. Therefore, they cannot intend to be as excellent as a professional orchestra, in much the same way that anyone with a basic understanding of physics cannot *intend* to jump to the moon. The 6th-graders can, however, intend to play music with as much beauty as possible, in the same way that someone can intend to jump as high as they can, knowing that other people can jump higher.

There are alternative ways philosophers have sought to define music and beauty. Andrew Kania (2011) lists three characteristics by which philosophers have sought to distinguish musical

sounds from non-musical ones: intrinsic, subjective, and intentional. I will consider each of these characteristics, one after another, and argue that my definition better captures the understanding of music common in musical practice.

First, definitions of music based off intrinsic qualities claim that musical sounds are those that have one or more musical features, such as pitch, melody, or rhythm. Per this definition, sounds that are merely rhythmic—a ceiling fan—or just pitch—a car horn—would be musical. However, since our musical practices do not consider ceiling fans or car horns to be musical, this definition is not ideal.

Second, subjective definitions of music claim that music is whatever sounds the listener perceives as musical. This definition is dangerously close to falling into the circularity, since claiming that music is whatever we perceive to be musical assumes that we already have mental categories for distinguishing between musical and non-musical sounds. Furthermore, as Kania points out on page 6, the sounds emitted by radio playing with no one to listen would cease being musical.

Third, intentional definitions of music claim that music is whatever sounds are rooted in music-making intentions. By itself, an intentional definition of music is circular since it refers to "music." However, this circularity can be avoided if some other feature is added to the mix, such as beauty, which is what I have done.

To conclude: music is beautiful sound that is intended to be so. Non-sound, non-beauty, and non-intentional sounds do not count. This definition fits the Christian worldview since it considers other categories, has a Christian conception of beauty, and takes into account our desire and capacity to create it. Since the *tohu wabohu* occurs naturally, music requires intentionality and intelligence. The cat falling on a piano does not count as music. Furthermore,

bad music may severely lack beauty, but as long as some semblance of beauty is present, it counts as music.

4. Instances of a Piece of Music

Imagine that a kid approaches you with a kazoo and says, “I’m going to play a song! Guess what I’m playing.” Then, he grabs his kazoo and plays “da da da dum, da da da dum.” Without hesitation, you respond, “That’s the opening to Beethoven’s 5th Symphony!” The kid tells you that you are right, and you both walk away.

That evening, you go to a local orchestra concert. You paid $150 for good seats, and you see that they will be playing Beethoven’s 5th Symphony. However, when the time comes, the kid with the kazoo comes out and plays “da da da dum, da da da dum.” You paid $75 to hear Beethoven’s 5th Symphony, but instead, you got a kid with a kazoo. Upset, you ask for a refund. However, the box office manager points out that you said earlier that day that the kid with the kazoo played Beethoven’s 5th. You got what you paid for, so you shouldn’t complain. Besides, Timmy has been practicing kazoo very hard, and you should be more appreciative. So: did the kid with the kazoo play Beethoven’s 5th Symphony, or not? The goal of this section is to answer this question.

Here, third-way thinking can help answer the question. One might suppose that there is an absolute conception of music that is independent of any society or musical practice. Thus, our analysis of the kid with the kazoo should not consider how musical practices might influence what it means to perform Beethoven’s 5th Symphony. On the other hand, one could claim that ‘music’ is whatever a given society or musical practice says that it is (in the case of Beethoven, our analysis would only consider musical practices in the Western classical tradition).

My definition of music as "beautiful sound that, as qualified by musical practices, is intended to be so" is a third-way approach to this question. My definition incorporates both cross-cultural aspects of music—beauty—while recognizing that our understanding of beauty is to an extent tied to the musical culture in which it is created. God, as the ultimate creator of beauty, has put limits on what can be considered beautiful. However, what is considered beautiful in Western classical music is not what is considered beautiful in Tibetan throat singing, and vice versa.

Likewise, an understanding of what constitutes a performance of a piece of music will have both elements that are tied to culture and some that transcend it. In the case of the kid with the kazoo, his performance—while well-meaning—does not meet the standards of Western classical music to be considered as an instance of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. Some of these standards may include a basic orchestra with strings, woodwinds, and brass, trained musicians, a conductor, an attempt to play most of the notes that Beethoven wrote, and a reasonable degree of musical accuracy. The kid with the kazoo meets none of these standards—he does not have the instrumentation that Beethoven intended, he cannot reasonably try to play all of the notes because a kazoo is not capable of playing what Beethoven wrote, and his musical accuracy is quite low. Therefore, the kid with the kazoo is not playing Beethoven's 5th Symphony.

Since the practice of kazoo-playing is significantly less stringent that the requirements needed to be met for a full performance of Beethoven's 5th Symphony, one can still say that the kid with the kazoo is playing Beethoven's 5th Symphony. So long as one places the kid with the kazoo within the musical practice of kazoo imitations of classical repertoire, then there are no problems calling it Beethoven's 5th Symphony. The problems only arise when the kid with the

kazoo is transplanted into the concert hall, where the musical practices and expectations are much different.

Many of the above elements that define a performance of a classical symphony are determined by musical practices. However, musical practice is not omnipotent; even if a culture included desert pastries in the category of Beethoven's 5th Symphony, chocolate chip cookies would still not count as Beethoven. Cookies are not sound waves, so they will never be musical in and of themselves. No cultural practice can violate these fundamental categories. Therefore, while what counts as an instance of a piece of music is, to a large extent, culturally determined, musical practices do not get to run roughshod over the basic order that God has created in the universe. Thus, the Christian worldview presents a third way to address the problem of the kid with the kazoo.

Beauty in Music

In this section, I want to lay out what I think is the best option for a Christian philosophy of beauty in music. I am going to argue that the "Great Theory of Beauty," as Tatarkiewicz (1972) calls it, is most consistent with a biblical worldview. I want to show that the Great Theory, if formulated correctly, is in line with the biblical account of beauty. First, I will define what I mean by the "Great Theory of Beauty." Second, I will show how it fits a biblical worldview. Third, I consider some other potential accounts of beauty and argue that they do not fit the Christian worldview as well as the Great Theory.

1. The Great Theory of Beauty

Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz (1972) calls the formulation of beauty that was created by the Pythagoreans the “Great Theory of Beauty.” The Great Theory was espoused, in one form or another, by Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Augustine, Aquinas, and many others, and it remained the dominant account of beauty until the 18th century. Tatarkiewicz says:

> They [the Pythagoreans] maintained that "order and proportion are beautiful and fitting," and that "thanks to numbers, everything looks beautiful." This conception was taken over by Plato, who declared that "the maintenance of measure and proportion is always beautiful" 18 and that "the absence of measure is ugly." Aristotle adhered to the same view,19 asserting that "beauty consists in magnitude and ordered arrangement" and that the main forms of beauty are "order, proportion, and definiteness" (horismenon). The Stoics thought likewise: "The beauty of the body resides in the proportion of the limbs in relation to one another and to the whole."

In other words, beauty consists in order, proportionality, and measure. Indeed, Augustine’s own formulation of beauty quoted in Tatarkiewicz (1972) is similar: “Only beauty pleases; and in beauty, shapes; in shapes, proportions; and in proportions, numbers.” For this thesis, I will use the Aquinas’s formulation of the Great Theory, as translated by Michael Dickson (2021):

> Three things are required for beauty: first, integrity or perfection, for things that are diminished are for that reason ugly; and second, due proportion, or consonance; and last clarity, whence things that have brilliant color are said to be beautiful.

Dickson goes on to elaborate on the terms "integrity," "proportion," and "clarity." He defines integrity as the attribute wherein "…the beautiful thing is a *whole*, not missing relevant or available perfections, but also not exhibiting irrelevant or incongruous features." For example, a beautiful jazz chart would not be missing improvisation, which is a relevant perfection for that genre. It would also not have unnecessary or incongruent features, such as a bagpipe interlude (unless someone intentionally wanted to create "bagpipe jazz," though one could reasonably wonder whether this decision would highlight either party's best features).

Next, he argues that Aquinas's conception of "proportion" includes arithmetic and geometric ratios, but that it also has a broader sense. For example, a fugue where one of the voices is much louder than the others would violate the principle of due proportion, but not in a numerical manner. Therefore, one could have a beautiful symphony where one of the four movements is longer or shorter than the others. Despite the lack of numerical proportion, if musical practitioners determined that an extended fourth movement were part of "due proportion" for symphonies, then this principle would not have been violated.

For "clarity," Dickson (2021) claims that there are two aspects that are important for beauty. First, he says that "…the beautiful is *striking*, perhaps in the manner of the brightness of a field of sunflowers or a chorus of trumpets, but equally so in the manner of the serene and muted tones of a Japanese garden or a plaintive oboe. The clarity of the beautiful thus makes the beautiful thing *impressive*, i.e., it *makes an impression*." In other words, music does not need to be loud or aggressive to be striking. The beauty of the "plaintive oboe" can be equally striking as that of the brass fanfare.

For the second aspect of clarity, he says that "…if the beautiful makes an impression on us, then there is something, some idea, that it impresses on us…all natural things are, as God's

creation, potentially beautiful, and are actually beautiful insofar as they exhibit…God's intention, that is, God's idea of 'what the thing is'…" For example, a piano concerto where the trumpet has more solos than the piano would fail to impress upon the audience the true nature of a piano concerto. Therefore, such a piece would be less beautiful than the concerto where the piano has the most important part.

To summarize Aquinas's definition of beauty: there are three things required for beauty; first, integrity, so that there is no obvious improvement missing, nor are irrelevant features included; second, due proportion (including, but not limited to, numerical ratios); and third, clarity, so that the beauty is striking, and the nature of the beautiful object impresses itself upon the viewer.

2. The Great Theory and the Bible

The Great Theory of Beauty aligns well with a biblical worldview. Though its origins are not Christian, there is nothing in it which contradicts the biblical account of beauty. The origins of a truth should not disturb Christians—mathematics and logic also have origins in secular thought. Christians should recognize that God is the God of all truth, and that the Bible is not exhaustive. Therefore, I will seek to show that because Great Theory of Beauty aligns with Christian scriptures, it should be espoused by Christians.

First, let us turn to Song of Solomon. In this book, a man and a woman exchange love poetry and declarations of their adoration for one another. Chapter 4, verse 7 says, "You are all together beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you." Here, the man references two notions: beauty and flawlessness. At the very least, this passage implies that beauty and flawlessness can be found together. They are not mutually exclusive. However, if one goes a step further, this

passage could be read as claiming that beauty and flawlessness share a deep similarity. Sometimes, the authors of the Bible list multiple qualities together to emphasize their point. An example is Romans 1:28-29a, where Paul describes fallen humanity: “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.” Paul’s point here is not to distinguish between a failure to acknowledge God, unrighteousness, and evil. While these terms may have various nuances, Paul’s repetition emphasizes the important connections between these concepts.

If we interpret Song of Solomon 4:7 in the same way, then we could read it as implying that there is a connection between beauty and flawlessness. If this interpretation is correct, then it agrees with the third point of the Great Theory—namely, that there are no obvious or missing perfections. Works of beauty display a level of refinement so that its imperfections have been removed. Thus, the entire work has an inability to be improved. Song of Solomon 4:7 hints at this idea.

Second, Psalm 33:3 says, “Sing to him [God] a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.” For my purposes here, I am most interested in the statement “play skillfully”. The psalmist is telling his audience that God is worthy of skillfully performed music. This passage evokes the idea of “due proportion.” Part of what is means to be “skillful” is to be capable of creating things with due proportion. It takes years of training for wind players to match their volume with other members of an orchestra—tastefully expressing music is no easy feat. God deserves good music, and good music is that which is skillful. This passage also calls to mind the fact that what is beautiful is not missing any obvious improvements. Playing skillful

music implies that the musician does not leave out available perfections (such an act would be less than skillful).

Another passage that makes a similar point is Exodus 36:1, which reads, "Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the LORD has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded." Skilled workers would have been needed to complete the tabernacle with the due proportion and perfection that God had commanded.

Third, in the book of Exodus, God gives Israel instructions for creating priestly garments. He says,

> "You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a garment, so that it may not tear. On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, around its hem, with bells of gold between them, a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell, and a pomegranate, around the hem of the robe."

In this passage, God commands that the priestly robe have both function and ornamental features. The hem on the head opening functions to prevent the garment from tearing. However, the embroidered pomegranates are purely aesthetic. They are gold and red— they are striking, even brilliant. Thus, we see that God does not restrict beauty to mere functionality; if he did, then the pomegranates would be a flaw. Rather, in God's own instructions for how Israel should worship him, he requires non-functional embellishment. That God values non-functional aesthetics shows a strength of the Great Theory—it does not reduce beauty to functionality. Beauty is more than a description of an object's suitability for a task. The Great Theory and the Bible agree on this point.

Fourth, Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” The claim that the beauty of nature is declaratory aligns with the Great Theory’s claim that beauty is clear. There is something striking about the beauty of the skies and heaven such that one could not easily fail to recognize it. To touch on the second aspect of clarity, beauty declares something concrete; in this case, it is the glory of God. Thus, this passage from the psalms implies both the aspects of clarity; that is, it is striking, and it communicates something.

Fifth, Isaiah 53:2b says, “He [the Messiah] had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.” This passage evokes the idea that beauty is something “desirable.” This description of beauty aligns with Aquinas’s claim that the effect of beauty is pleasure, for beauty is “That which pleases when it is perceived” (Quoted in Tatarkiewicz, 1972).

On the topic of creativity and order, Christopher Watkin (2022) claims that God’s creative order finds a “sweet spot” between chaos and structure. He writes the following:

> “We can think of order and creativity as two extremes between which there runs a spectrum. Complete order is the monotone discussed above in relation to necessity: unchanging, predictable, precise. Unfettered creativity is the white noise of chaos, devoid of discernible structure. The universe of Genesis I sits at the sweet spot on this spectrum, where order does not drain creativity and creativity does not destroy order…Everywhere we look, the creation is a symphony of similarity and difference.”

Watkin’s (2022) remarks rely on the idea of “due proportion.” For there to be a “sweet spot” between creativity and order, there needs to be an artist (in this case, God) who knows how far

one can go without being distasteful. He goes on to discuss Bach Fugues as an example of music that is "…systematically ordered but with just enough spontaneity and surprise to leave the listener never quite knowing for certain what is coming next." For example, Bach's use of modulation is frequent, but not overbearing. He modulates often enough to keep the music fresh and interesting without making the music sound unstable. Too much modulation would be chaos, but Bach finds a balance that contributes to the overall beauty of a piece of music.

3. Alternatives

Tatarkiewicz mentions several views that philosophers offered to replace the Great Theory. I will discuss a few of them and argue that they are less consistent with a Christian worldview than the Great Theory.

First, Tatarkiewicz (1972) speaks of the theory that beauty is perfection. This view was popular in Germany with philosophers such as Leibniz and Christian Wolff, who used the medieval conception of perfection; that is, perfection is a quality that a thing has that makes it the thing what is. It is what it is to a greater or lesser extent based on the extent to which it contains these qualities. Therefore, something that expresses well the qualities of type of thing that it is would be more beautiful than if it were missing some of those qualities.

While this view is similar to the Great Theory, it has a few weaknesses. Let us imagine a category called "bad music" and give this category the following qualities: it must be performed by unskilled musicians, the instruments must be out of tune, and the music should be hard to distinguish from random sound effects. An instance of "bad music," then, would be a group of beginning band students who have no previous musical training. They lack skill, they are out of tune, and the music is hard to distinguish from random sounds. Per the view that perfection is

beauty, the 6th grade band would be beautiful. They have all of the qualities of "bad music", so their performance is beautiful insofar as matches the ideals of "bad music".

An example like "bad music" illustrates why the view that beauty is perfection is inconsistent with a Christian worldview. In the Bible passages quoted above, God often emphasizes skill and clarity. However, if beauty is only perfection, then we imagine a category wherein skill and clarity are to be avoided. Therefore, something lacking skill and clarity could be beautiful if it has a high degree of perfection in this category. This reasoning, however, runs contrary to the Christian worldview. While perfection is an element of beauty, something cannot be beautiful if it lacks due proportion or brilliance.

The example of "bad music" further illustrates the connection between due proportion and skill. To achieve due proportion, musicians must have a working knowledge of harmony, rhythm, intonation, melody, and many other complex musical concepts. Composers as well as performers must know how far they can "push the boundaries" of a certain piece of music without falling into disorder. These boundaries will differ from genre to genre—the ornamentation in baroque music is quite different from improvisation in jazz, for example. Only skilled musicians can create and perform well-proportioned pieces of music. In "bad music," however, the performers lack the skill to create the due proportion needed for beauty.

Second, Tatarkiewicz (1972) mentions the expression theory of beauty that was particularly popular with the Romantics. An expression theory of beauty claims that beauty lies in the expressivity of the art. Expression doesn't mean that the artist is only saying something about his or her personal biography—it is supposed to be representative of the general idea. Some element of the universal is incorporated, which makes the art relevant to others. For

example, music that sounds sad could be beautiful because it incorporates the idea of sadness, which is relatable to the audience.

Therefore, music and art that do not reveal something personal about the artist would not be beautiful. This view is inconsistent with the Christian worldview for a few reasons. First, God's instructions for building the tabernacle and the sanctuary do not express sentiments or ideas. God Second, the psalmists consistently emphasize playing skillfully and joyfully unto the Lord. They do not, however, call on their readers to express themselves. While many of the psalmists do express emotions, they do not make it a rule that only sentimental expression is beautiful. Third, natural beauty does not express a sentiment. If beauty requires expression, then it is not clear how a sunset or a mountain can be beautiful.

To summarize this section: I have argued that the Great Theory of Beauty, as framed by Augustine and Aquinas, best fits with the Christian worldview. While the Bible is not a philosophy treatise, its implications work well with an understanding of beauty informed by the Great Theory. I have also examined some alternative theories and shown some of their weaknesses, such as the perfection theory of beauty, the expression theory of beauty, and the idealistic conception of beauty.

Conclusion

Despite the choir director's jokes about whether the bagpipes, I am still convinced that bagpipes count as a musical instrument. They are a music-making tool in the Scottish folk genre, and musicians use them to bring order out of chaos. The end result is beauty, which glorifies God. The Christian worldview does not have a monopoly on the claims that I have sought to defend in

this thesis. However, as I have shown, the Christian worldview has a robust explanatory power that can provide answers to perplexing philosophical questions about music.

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Note: all scripture references come from the English Standard Version.