The Artist Alive: Explorations in Music, Art & Theology, by Christopher Pramuk (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2019). Copyright © 2019 by Christopher Pramuk. All rights reserved. www.anselmacademic.org.

When the artist is alive in any person, whatever his kind of work may be, he becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature. . . . Where those who are not artists are trying to close the book, the artist opens it, shows there are still more pages possible.

—Robert Henri

The universe is a score of eternal music, and we are the cry, we are the voice.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel

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Introduction
Seeds of Awareness

This book is inspired by an undergraduate course called "Music, Art, and Theology," one of the most popular classes I teach and probably the course I've most enjoyed teaching. The reasons for this may be as straightforward as they are worthy of lament. In an era when study of the arts has become a practical afterthought, a "luxury" squeezed out of tight education budgets and shrinking liberal arts curricula, people intuitively yearn for spaces where they can explore together the landscape of the human heart opened up by music and, more generally, the arts.

All kinds of people are attracted to the arts, but I have found that young adults especially, seeking something deeper and more worthy of their questions than what they find in highly quantitative and STEM-oriented curricula, are drawn into the horizon of the ineffable where the arts take us. Across some twenty-five years in the classroom, over and over again it has been my experience that young people of diverse religious, racial, and economic backgrounds, when given the opportunity, are eager to plumb the wellsprings of spirit where art commingles with the divine-human drama of faith.

From my childhood to the present day, my own spirituality[1] or way of being in the world has been profoundly shaped by music, not least its capacity to carry me beyond myself and into communion with the mysterious, transcendent dimension of reality. From high school to undergraduate and graduate school classrooms, I've also marveled at the impact of engaging the arts with students as a doorway into life's most enduring human, spiritual, and theological questions.

Can the so-called "secular" music of artists like Pink Floyd, Joni Mitchell, Lady Gaga, and Bruce Springsteen bear us into realms of the holy and sacred? Can the social and racial critique embedded in Stevie Wonder's music disturb our personal and collective consciences, perhaps even opening the eyes of the "blind" to see? To what extent do songwriters, painters, filmmakers, and other artists play a prophetic role in society and church? Can art be a vehicle of hope,

1. By *spirituality* I mean broadly the everyday way of life flowing from one's deepest beliefs, desires, and values; it is a way of living into our calling and identity as human beings. Everyone "has" a spirituality insofar as every person's self-understanding and behavior flow from core beliefs and values. *Christian spirituality* flows from faith in Jesus Christ, marked by openness to the love of God, self, neighbor, and the world through the power of grace or the Spirit who dwells in the community. There is no single normative Christian spirituality but there are many ways, unique to the gifts of persons and cultures, of following Jesus.

stirring that wondrous if elusive capacity in human beings to imagine a more just, humane, and joyful future? Such questions are implicitly theological insofar as they engage us in the search for answers to the deepest yearnings of human experience, and are attentive to moments in which that search confronts us with mysteries beyond understanding, not least, the ineffable reality believers name "God."[2]

This book is an invitation to explore some of the deepest questions rising from the human spiritual and social journey as mediated by artistic voices in both popular and religious culture. By facilitating engagement with classic works in music and the arts, both "secular" and "sacred," and by offering a contemplative framework for doing so, I hope this book might help you discover, or perhaps rediscover, as I have my whole life long, the wonder of the arts as a doorway into the life of spirit and sacred presence, the strange and beautiful interweaving of the human and divine. Rather than proposing clear or fixed "answers" it invites you into a process, a way of seeing, hearing, and praying through some of life's most enduring spiritual and theological questions.

With gratitude for all I have learned from my students through the years, I hope this book might provide to other students, teachers, and seekers an exemplar, and perhaps a dose of inspiration, for embarking on a similar journey. More broadly, I dare to hope this book will contribute something original and adventuresome to the flourishing body of discourse today on theology and the arts.[3]

From the outset one has to acknowledge formidable obstacles to such a project. In the first place, words like "wonder," "mystery," "faith," "God," "transcendence," and "the divine" are freighted with difficulties today in academic circles, and may not resonate favorably or intelligibly in the minds and hearts of many people. Is there room left in our classrooms to cultivate what once was called "art appreciation," even as prevailing models of education take their cues from the utilitarian presumptions and dictates of the marketplace? Are there adult mentors and professional educators in our hyperactive society prepared to share with young people the wisdom-practices of slowing down, the unpredictable delights of contemplating a classic album, a religious icon, a film scene, an epic poem?

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2. By *theology* I mean, in the classic formulation of Saint Anselm, "faith seeking understanding." I also appreciate Jesuit Fr. Anthony De Mello's two-fold description of theology: "The art of telling stories about the Divine. And the art of listening to them." See Anthony De Mello, *The Song of the Bird* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), xvi. Both Anselm and De Mello underscore the active, dynamic, searching dimension of theological inquiry, a task that never ends because its final "object" is no object at all but the transcendent mystery of God, who lies beyond all grasp. In this sense I would describe theology as a lifelong conversation with wonder and mystery, a searching (and, at times, a being found) that is both personal and communal, discursive and poetical, all at once. The point to emphasize here is that spirituality and theology, while distinct, are inseparable. Both find their root in the experience of grace or holy Mystery as it breaks into human consciousness in historical time and space, and which ultimately lies beyond all attempts to define, contain, or manage it.

3. See "Additional Resources" at the end of the introduction.

I believe that the answer is a resounding yes. Long ago my students convinced me that the rewards of doing so are far and away worth the effort, notwithstanding some obstacles in the prevailing culture of higher education.[4]

A Contemplative, Case Studies Approach

The title of this book, *The Artist Alive*, takes its inspiration from the American painter and teacher Robert Henri (1865–1929), best known as the founder of the Ashcan School of American realism. I knew nothing of Henri (pronounced "HEN-rye") until a few years ago, when a dear friend, the iconographer Fr. Bill McNichols, suggested I read Henri's classic work of 1923, *The Art Spirit*.[5] Eagerly I did, and as Fr. Bill predicted, I was deeply moved by the book. Its lengthy subtitle describes it as a compendium of "Notes, Articles, and Fragments of Letters and Talks to Students Bearing on the Concept and Technique of Picture-Making, the Study of Art Generally, and on Appreciation." In truth, the book is about *seeing*, or the art and discipline of perception. In Henri I seem to have stumbled upon a kindred spirit, someone who intuitively describes what I struggle to do each day in the theology classroom: namely, to open the doors of perception, imagination, contemplation, and critical thought.

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Robert Henri

4. One of the more prominent critics of higher education today is Yale professor William Deresiewicz, who laments its "toxic" atmosphere for the humanities and the loss of values traditionally served by a liberal arts education. See *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York: Free Press, 2014); see also the thoughtful review by Jackson Lears, "The Liberal Arts vs. Neoliberalism," *Commonweal* (Apr. 20, 2015).

5. Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* (1923; repr., New York: Basic Books, 2007).

What intrigues me most is the image of "fragments" in Henri's subtitle. It suggests an image of the teacher not as a dispenser of fixed or predetermined truths but rather as a guide toward insight, as one who listens and responds, offering hints and gestures based on "fragments" or "found materials" of experience and latent wisdom in the students themselves. These can only be surfaced gradually and patiently, through an encounter from person to person that is at once structured, spontaneous, and free. Above all, Henri insists that "the art spirit" lives in everyone. "Art when really understood is the province of every human being," he writes. "It is not an outside, extra thing. When the artist is alive in any person, whatever his kind of work may be, he becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature."[6]

Thus the image of the "artist alive," as I hope to convey in these pages, is intentionally expansive, signaling as inclusive an understanding of the arts as possible. What Henri calls "the art spirit" points to a creative and spiritual dynamism that dwells in everyone, but which requires nurturing, encouraging, drawing out.[7] I've titled the book in homage to Henri and to artists and teachers everywhere who nurture in the human spirit something essential. What that "something" *is* eludes easy definition, but it is my hope that this book helps to awaken it within you, the reader, and to offer a common framework from which to explore it.

The Artist Alive invokes an alternative spirituality or way of orienting oneself in the world, more humane than the ubiquitous, globalized marketplace vision of reality that bears down on so many people, an alienating way of life in which not a few people feel themselves herded together, numbered, and ranked as mere consumers—little more than a "name on the door," to cite Joni Mitchell, or "just another brick in the wall," as Pink Floyd famously has it. Beginning with my own experiences of music as a child, chapter 1 attempts to paint a mosaic of the artistic sensibility—in religious terms, akin to a mystical-prophetic spirituality—that grounds the epistemological framework or contemplative "way of knowing" for the rest of the book. Drawing especially from Henri and from Jewish poet, mystic, and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel, chapter 1 charts a number of qualities or "seeds of awareness" that broadly characterize the artistic disposition—once again, *seeds that dwell in every person but that must be cultivated*. These include a capacity for wonder, amazement, and mystery; multi-sensory awareness, or synaesthesia; a quality of presence or heightened attunement to the gifts of the present moment; and critical resistance to conventional, predetermined, or culturally imposed ways of perceiving.[8]

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6. Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 11.

7. It is not incidental that the word "education" comes from the Latin *educere*, "to draw out."

8. The epistemological-metaphysical framework established in chapter 1 is resonant with George Steiner's classic study, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Steiner reinforces the contemplative and participatory dimension of the arts, where the best "criticism" is not didactic or reasoned analysis of a work but wholesale immersion via performance and contemplative appreciation.

Chapters 2 through 9 each take their inspiration from a single artistic work or the juxtaposition of several, evoking images and themes from the complex web of human life in relationship with self, others, the earth, and divine mystery. Art thus serves as a common "text" or "doorway" into shared reflection on our lives in public society, spiritual formation and discernment, ethics, race relations, environmental awareness, sexuality, justice, the question of God, and the life of faith. These chapters present case studies that aim to do the following:

- attend to evocative tonal, visual, and lyrical details in the artistic work at hand (the world *within* the text)
- reflect on the artist's historical and social location (the world *behind* the text)
- invite you, the reader, through deep listening, contemplation, and journaling, to respond to the work and its possible "surplus of meanings" in your own life's journey in society, and for some of us, in communities of faith (the world *in front of* the text)[9]

The conclusion steps back to ponder the whole mosaic, offering a number of summary insights and working conclusions at the intersection of music, art, and theology.

It should not surprise that people of all ages and backgrounds would relish the invitation to linger deeply, unhurriedly, in a single work of art, and to do so with others in a serious way. To immerse oneself in Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*, for example (the subject of chapter 2), as a whole work of art—by contrast to the downloading and consumption of single songs—and further to explore the creative processes of the band that gave birth to the album in its social and historical context, is both fascinating and potentially transforming. Beneath the complex synaesthetic or "psychedelic" landscape of *Dark Side of the Moon* are timeless, penetrating questions: Are human beings really capable of empathy, and if so, what empowers us to practice it? Does money, and the shiny perks that go with *lots of it*, promise happiness? What does it mean to be "sane" or "well-adjusted" in a hyperactive, technological, war-soaked environment? Has language itself been drained of meaning, tied inextricably to power and self-interest? Can primal wordless expression "speak," and touch the mystery of God, more directly and truthfully than words, doctrines, formal theology?

The tools of critical and contemplative appreciation practiced in this book invite the reader to develop more intentional habits of consuming music and other art forms. In truth I hope to persuade the reader that the arts at their most authentic and empowering have far less to do with "production" and

9. The "experimental" and contemplative approach I recommend in these chapters shares much with Roger I. Simon's recommendations in *Teaching against the Grain: Texts for a Pedagogy of Possibility* (New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1992).

"consumption" than with personal and social transformation. Indeed, one of the most compelling qualities that joins Pink Floyd with the other artists considered in this book is the degree to which they recognize and frequently resist in their work the unholy alliance between the arts and commerce—or, for that matter, the often very thin line between the adoration of their fans and idol worship. Indeed the "culture industry" itself, with its genius for co-opting and homogenizing even the most subversive artists under the lure of money and the banner of popular acclaim, will also have to be taken into account in the pages that follow.

It is important to note from the outset that many art forms—e.g., dance, pottery, photography, sculpture—do not serve as exemplars in my analysis. While chapters 4, 5, and 7 explore works from film, literature, and the Bible, and chapter 8 is centered on religious iconography, the balance leans decidedly toward music. Poetry also takes pride of place to the extent that song lyrics, the voices of poets as such, and the poetical texture of the Bible are integral to my method and voice as a theologian. In no way do I wish to imply that the arts not represented here are somehow inferior as portals to the divine. Indeed, my students across the years—including not a few dancers, sculptors, photographers, and the like—have taught me that insights arising from a deep engagement with music can resonate powerfully, if distinctly, across a wide range of art forms. The lean toward music in this book is simply a reflection of my own expertise and inevitable limitations.

While the works explored in these chapters reflect my own social location, artistic tastes, and biases—e.g., classic rock and folk music more than country, rap, or classical; North American artists more than Latin American, Asian, or African; Eastern iconography more than Western religious art—I have been careful to choose works representing a wide array of gender, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Each has attained the status of "classic" in its genre, and each, I have found, resonates widely with students of diverse backgrounds. Of course this will not always be the case for every reader. Catholic theologian David Tracy describes the "classic" as any truly significant book, person, work of art, or piece of music that bears a certain "excess of meaning" as well as a certain timelessness.[10] I will say much more about what makes a classic in chapter 2, but my point here is that even works of art that do not delight or move one personally can dramatically enlarge and even transform one's personal, spiritual, social, and theological horizons. This is especially so when the work is engaged in conversation with others.[11]

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10. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 102.

11. In this sense the particular works I present are less important than the tools of appreciation at play. In other words, my aim is not to offer a fixed method or content to be adopted rigidly by others in considering a work, but rather a framework or model with which to experiment in ways fitting to the particular context and community at hand.

Along the way I introduce principles of hermeneutical theory (rules of interpretation) and insights from seminal figures in philosophy, theology, and art criticism from a range of religious and philosophical viewpoints: Roman Catholic (my tradition), Protestant, Jewish, Buddhist, humanist, atheist, and others. In keeping with the spirit of the artists themselves, I have tried to avoid academic jargon and to write in a key true to my own experiential and sometimes poetic voice.

For all of this, the greatest potential value of this book resides not in what I have written but in your engagement with the works at hand, or even better, reflection with others in the context of a class or group study. Because the power of art ultimately resides in the eye and ear of the beholder, that is, in the *whole person* who sees and listens, appendices A, B, and C provide guidelines for personal and classroom engagement, contemplative listening, seeing, and journaling, as well as practical suggestions for the teacher or group moderator, all intended to help you slow down and deepen your engagement with the material. As much as possible in group or classroom settings, ample time and space should be built into each session in ways that free both students and teacher to work (and play!) with the material at hand, developing tools of appreciation and insight together.

Appendix D details guidelines for a team project in which students have the opportunity to research and present to their peers a work of art or music of special significance to them. As with the journaling, this team project aims to reinforce the practice of interdisciplinary, communal learning from which this book rises. Appendix E offers guidelines for a final "Art and Spirituality" paper that aims to give free play to the art spirit itself as a creative capacity within each person. In everything that follows, facilitators should feel free to use and adapt what is most helpful or resonant in their particular context and pass over what is not.

Imagination and Sacred Mystery: Unbuffering the Buffered Self

Much of the terrain this book covers is "prereligious" or "pretheological," probing experiences, images, and narratives from ordinary and sometimes extraordinary human experience that give rise to artistic and theological expression. Indeed the discipline of theology comes into play the moment we seek *to communicate* our most formative life experiences with others, seeking meaning through the manifold languages and practices of faith, and indeed through the arts, as human beings and cultures give shape and direction to their experiences and beliefs, hopes and desires. In other words, as I hope the following chapters will bear out, the image- and language-worlds of the arts, theology, and spirituality share far more than what may be evident at first glance—and this is true, I suggest, whether or not you identify yourself as a "religious" or "spiritual" person. To put

it another way, the religious or spiritual quest faces its greatest challenge today not on the level of specific theological concepts or beliefs so much as in the more hidden or subterranean realm of human freedom and imagination. This crucial point bears some explanation.

In his magisterial work on the challenges confronting religious faith in "a secular age," philosopher Charles Taylor suggests that what has shifted dramatically for religion in the postmodern era is not really the faith-vision itself or the explicit *content* of religious belief so much as the *context* within which people decide for or against faith, what Taylor calls the "social imaginary."[12] In the face of a social imaginary characterized by a seemingly endless pluralism of life-options and possible commitments, the question of faith is no longer simply "Do you believe in God?"—where "God" implies certain shared assumptions and ideas about the divine. Today the more apt question is this: "In *which 'god'* (or gods) do you believe?" In whom or what do you place your ultimate security and trust? To what or whom do you commit your fundamental freedom?

Taylor worries in particular about the retreat of the modern secular self into a sort of solipsistic or self-enclosed bubble—what he calls the "buffered self"[13]—a self that suffers from a deep sense of instability, anxiety, and loss of meaning while at the same time doing everything it can to reflexively protect itself from vulnerability and pain over that loss. Against a cultural horizon of rapidly shifting, multiplying, and clashing worldviews, the buffered self takes refuge in a highly individualistic "therapeutic culture," in consumerism, and in various forms of "soft relativism."[14] While apathy reigns among the privileged, hopelessness takes hold of the poor and marginalized.

The notion of a social contract or common good that binds different groups together and to which "we" are all mutually beholden disappears in such a culture. Individual self-realization becomes the main agenda of life. As Jesuit theologian Michael Paul Gallagher remarks, "The question of God can seem to have gone asleep. The drama of decision is lost in a postmodern fragmentation of life-style."[15] If Taylor's sobering prognosis is accurate—it certainly resonates from where I stand—how can religious traditions respond to the existential isolation and rootlessness he describes?

Gallagher suggests that religion must strive to meet people, especially young people, at the "prereligious" levels of desire and imagination. On this frontier "the worlds of imagination—including art, poetry, music, and the new media—are more needed than a communication of theological content." Facing a social imaginary in which the very question of God "can seem to have gone asleep,"

12. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 146.

13. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 303.

14. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 484, 618.

15. Michael Paul Gallagher, "What Are We Doing When We Do Theology?," *Landas* 28, no. 1 (2014): 1–12.

theology needs to "create languages of attraction and of invitation," insists Gallagher. "It needs to be aware of the distance from explicit faith experienced by many people today, and indeed their allergy to many perceived forms of religion. We need a creative and less austere version of John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord today."[16]

Of course John the Baptist is the wilderness prophet who "prepared the way" for Jesus through his dramatic preaching and baptizing—confronting, challenging, and opening the minds, hearts, and imaginations of his hearers. Art, poetry, music, and new media can (and do) serve analogously today, Gallagher provocatively suggests, by addressing the desires of a people lost in the "wilderness" of postmodern culture. Like John the Baptist, the arts can "prepare the way" in our hearts for the experience and language of grace, the mystery of the divine, no matter a person's formal religious or spiritual background.

"Music, poetry, religion—they all initiate in the soul's encounter with an aspect of reality for which reason has no concepts and language has no names."[17] How might the arts serve as a kind of doorway to provoke and stir a deeper sense of divine presence, and therefore of hope, in people living, working, and surviving at street level, people in classrooms and coffee shops, sports arenas and shopping malls, synagogues and mosques, cathedrals and storefront churches—people who hunger for meaning, direction, and joy in their lives no less than the restless and anonymous crowds of Jesus' day? Might the tools of artistic appreciation cultivated in this book help to prepare the way for more sensitive, hopeful, and even joyful practices of shared theological reflection and vocational discernment?

"The theologian is a translator," notes Gallagher, "standing at the crossroads of cultures, receiving a vision within a tradition, and reimagining it so as to incarnate its transformative potential for now."[18] Gallagher, I believe, has it exactly right. Whether Christianity or Judaism, Islam or Hinduism, Buddhism or secular humanism, so much of the appeal and transformative potential of religious faith and practice takes place in "the zones of human freedom and of imagination." In Christian terms, this is the realm of grace, the Holy Spirit, "the creative artist of our freedom as we move into the flow of life. This is the zone of the inner word, the prereligious presence of God in each of us."[19] More important

16. Gallagher, "What Are We Doing When We Do Theology?," 3–4.

17. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 36.

18. Gallagher, "What Are We Doing When We Do Theology?," 11. To emphasize the prereligious realm is not to neglect the importance of doctrine but to frame doctrine within a larger operational map, "as dealing with theology as truth, which then has to be understood (systematic theology) for today and also inculturated in different worlds" (p. 11, n. 16). See also Michael Paul Gallagher, *Faith Maps: Ten Religious Explorers from Newman to Joseph Ratzinger* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), following Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972).

19. Michael Paul Gallagher, *The Human Poetry of Faith: A Spiritual Guide to Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), 134.

than clarity of ideas, doctrinal precision, or even ethical and moral norms—all crucial, to be sure—people "need to feel themselves part of a larger Story. Like the parables of Jesus, what is needed are . . . moments of human poetry that give voice to the language of desire. And this would be a response on the level of prereligious spiritual imagination."[20]

In sum, where the cultural ethos of a secular age tends to mesmerize the imagination (the realm of desire) with technological over-stimulation and flights of fantasy—or starve it through superficiality and deadening consumer-culture sameness—an approach to faith and the life of spirit that addresses the prereligious realm "of searching, of struggling to live genuinely, of being slowly transformed by the adventure of life"[21] can begin to reshape our impoverished hearts *as lovers*. Approaching theology through the arts can break open our hardened hearts to wonder and mystery, to the subtle movements of grace in silence, in solitude, in vital webs of relationship with the earth, with nonhuman creatures, and with other cultures. Theology "cannot remain merely cognitive." It needs "to develop existential and affective wavelengths" that can soften and break open the fearful or complacent shell of the buffered self. Theology, as Gallagher sums up beautifully, is called "to reach people's freedom through their imagination."[22]

To speak of theology openly and without embarrassment as a language of love is to imply a fierce commitment to love's possibilities amid a host of other possible responses: apathy, cynicism, loneliness, despair. This book is about the option for faith, hope, and love, "the Love that guides the sun and the other stars," in the words of the poet Dante, not in spite of the darkness that engulfs the larger human story but precisely in and through the darkness. Moreover, to speak of the formation of "lovers" in the context of the classroom is to risk a holistic and person-centered approach to education *as* spiritual formation that is well-suited to the arts, and surely no less to theology. I take theology here as that art and discipline in which human beings are invited and set free to think, question, pray, reason, and speak with one another of God, the loving Mystery who finally eludes all categories of speech—including theological ones! To speak *about* God in human words, of course, is to attempt what is logically not possible. To speak *from* God, if haltingly, in the language of the poets and mystics, is

20. Gallagher, *The Human Poetry of Faith*, 136.

21. Gallagher, *The Human Poetry of Faith*, 134.

22. Gallagher here cites Newman: "The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination" ("What Are We Doing When We Do Theology?," 12, n. 17, citing Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909], 92). By imagination Newman does not mean the realm of make-believe or fantasy but rather that dynamic, holistic, and cumulative faculty of human cognition that enlarges reason, which orders the data of experience and seeks to make sense of the whole. The act of faith depends on the imagination's capacity to hold together multiple and sometimes apparently conflicting experiences, perceptions, or "antecedent possibilities, those attitudinal preambles that make faith either existentially credible or incredible" (*The Human Poetry of Faith*, 133).

quite another matter. For Love yearns to speak, is diffusive of Itself, and cannot remain silent. Both the artist and the theologian who have come to trust in Love are compelled to sing for a silent yet everywhere symphonic God.[23]

All of this is to finally confess that my interest in these pages is neither neutral nor pedagogically "innocent." As a whole person myself—scholar, teacher, musician, husband, father, person of faith—I write from the desire to deepen my own sense of God's friendship in the midst of my stumbling journey while also trying, in the somewhat archaic phrase of Saint Ignatius, "to help souls"—by which I mean, in all humility, to help others discern God's hidden presence in their lives, especially those who live under the shadow of doubt, apathy, loneliness, or looming despair. The painting by Italian artist Pasquale Rapicano that graces the cover of this book—*Rust* (*David Gilmour Live at Pompeii*)—somehow captures for me this human yearning for transcendence and grace that I have discovered in music since my childhood, not least in the artistry of Pink Floyd's David Gilmour. There is a swirl of shadow and light, motion and color, in Gilmour's luminescent solo guitar-work, instantly recognizable, which centers me down bodily and carries me skyward even to this day. I am very grateful to Rapicano for the permission to share his beautiful work.

Much more will be said along the way about resonances across the arts, spirituality, and the language of faith. For now perhaps it is enough to make clear that it is from within this space of gratitude and commitment to a community of faith that I write, and invite you to join with me in this exploration of the arts as a doorway into a lifelong journey toward greater empathy and wonder, solidarity, and new being in grace. I ask in advance your pardon wherever my efforts to speak may offend, assume too much of the reader, or fall well short of their subject. I trust and urge you to fill in the gaps with your own poetry, your own images, your own music, your own silence.

Additional Resources

Groundbreaking studies at the intersection of the arts and theology include the following:

Begbie, Jeremy, ed. *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

23. Drawing from Canadian theologian Bernard Lonergan and Pope Benedict XVI, Gallagher suggests that theology today, insofar as it seeks to meet people where they live, should stop attempting to be falsely "objective" and pay more attention to the living context or "spiritual adventure" of theologians and ordinary people of faith. "The foundation of theology has shifted from texts and authorities to interiority. The old foundations for theology were externalist, logical, a question of conclusions drawn from premises. The lived horizon of the theologian was often forgotten but in fact is central. All this emphasis challenges theologians not to imitate a neutral model of academic work, one that is so naively and universally accepted in university culture today." Gallagher, "What Are We Doing When We Do Theology?," 10.

———. *Theology, Music and Time.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

González-Andrieu, Cecelia. *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012.

O'Connell, Maureen. *If These Walls Could Talk: Community Muralism and the Beauty of Justice*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012.

Robinson, David C., ed. *God's Grandeur: The Arts and Imagination in Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006.

Saliers, Don E. *Music and Theology.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2007.

Viladesau, Richard. *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000.

Vrudny, Kimberly. *Beauty's Vineyard: A Theological Aesthetic of Anguish and Anticipation.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016.

———, ed. *Visual Theology: Forming and Transforming the Community through the Arts.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009.

Other titles with emphasis on music include the following:

Beaudoin, Tom, ed. *Secular Music and Sacred Theology.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013.

Hodge, Daniel White. *The Soul of Hip Hop: Rims, Timbs and a Cultural Theology.* Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2010.

Keuss, Jeffrey F. *Your Neighbor's Hymnal: What Popular Music Teaches Us about Faith, Hope, and Love*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011.

Marsh, Clive, and Vaughan S. Roberts. *Personal Jesus: How Popular Music Shapes Our Souls*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.

Nantais, David. *Rock-A My Soul: An Invitation to Rock Your Religion*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011.

Scharen, Christian. *Broken Hallelujahs: Why Popular Music Matters to Those Seeking God.* Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011.

An enormous body of literature expounds the benefits and methods of integrating the arts into the classroom. Studies with an emphasis on teaching as formation of the whole person include the following:

Edwards, Linda Carol. *The Creative Arts: A Process Approach for Teachers and Children*. 2nd ed. New York: Prentice Hall, 1997.

Henri, Robert. *The Art Spirit.* New York: Basic Books, 2007. First published 1923 by J. B. Lippincott (Philadelphia).

Knippers, Edward. "Toward a Christian Pedagogy of Art." In *Teaching as an Act of Faith: Theory and Practice in Church-Related Higher Education*, edited by Arlin Migliazzo, 188–209. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.

1

CHAPTER

"I Asked for Wonder"

Rediscovering the Artistic Spirit

> What keeps me alive is my ability to be surprised. . . . I am surprised every morning that I see the sun shine again. . . . When I see an act of evil, I am not accommodated—I don't accommodate myself to the violence that goes on everywhere. I'm still surprised. That's why I'm against it; why I can fight against it. We must learn how to be surprised, not to adjust ourselves. I am the most maladjusted person in society.
>
> *—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel*

> There are moments in our lives, there are moments in a day, when we seem to see beyond the usual. Such are the moments of our greatest happiness. Such are the moments of our greatest wisdom. If one could but recall his vision by some sort of sign. It was in this hope that the arts were invented. Sign-posts on the way to what may be. Sign-posts toward greater knowledge.
>
> *—Robert Henri*

When I was eight or nine years old, learning to play the piano was my doorway into a world of wonder. Our piano lived in the basement. I was scared of the basement. Every afternoon, reluctantly but dutifully, I would descend the stairs groping in the dark, until my hands found the small lamp that rested on top of the piano. A turn of the switch and the old console lit up before me. Those moments of relief and silence as I settled onto the bench were almost magical. The monsters now scattered, I could breathe again. As I struck the first chords, feeling the hammers strike against strings and vibrate through my body, I seemed to dissolve into the sound, no longer conscious of myself as a separate, observing being. The play of music seemed to take my breath away and give it back in the same stroke. Time dissolved, touching the eternal. I was alive, discovering that this life, this being, is flush with light and grace.

But there was darkness, too, and foreboding, as I learned to improvise and experiment across minor keys and dissonant modes, the piano perhaps teaching

me the art of discernment and attention. Behold, life will come before you in so many keys and disparate colors! I can remember many times, when my father would call down from the top of the stairs for dinner, I would stop playing, draw a deep breath, and whisper into the dark basement air, "Thank You." To whom I imagined saying these words as a nine-year-old, I cannot say for sure, yet I always felt—and still do—a palpable sense of "presence" at the piano, a something or someone other than me, at once with me, yet also rising from me, bearing my spirit into the rhythms of the day.

Musician Eddie Vedder, lead singer of Seattle's pioneering grunge band Pearl Jam, remembers a similar kind of presence that accompanied him as a teenager. "When I was around 15 or 16," he recalls, "I felt all alone. . . . I was all alone—except for music."[1] I don't know whether Vedder would link the gift of music in his life explicitly with faith or a religious sensibility. I do know that when I listen to him sing, something of that ineffable mystery I call grace stirs within me.

Listen, for example, to a track called "Light Today"[2] from Vedder's spare solo album *Ukelele Songs*, and see if you aren't stirred by wonder, as Vedder sings mantra-like over rhythms of ocean surf, conjuring the sun as it rises over water. Or search the song "Better Days,"[3] from the film *Eat, Pray, Love*, starring Julia Roberts. Turn up the volume on your headset, and see if you aren't carried skyward on the wild wings of Vedder's soaring voice. *My love is safe for the universe / see me now I'm bursting*. How is it that one man's voice can pulse with so much joyful ecstasy and world-weary sorrow at the same time? Might the crucible of loneliness he endured during his teenage years account for the pathos in Vedder's voice, give hints of insight into the darker notes of the human condition, a pathos perhaps many listeners will recognize, even feel bodily?

Radical Wonder: The Forgotten Mother Tongue

When Motown great Stevie Wonder (born Stevland Hardaway Morris) came into the world six weeks premature, underdeveloped optic nerves and an incubator over-rich with oxygen left the newborn without his sight. As he grew, his

1. Robert Hilburn, "He Didn't Ask for All This," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1994.

2. Eddie Vedder, *Ukelele Songs*, Monkeywrench Records, 2011. Songs cited throughout this book are readily available via YouTube and other internet sources. For reasons of copyright protection and because internet domains are frequently unstable, web addresses will not always be provided here, with the exception of web domains officially authorized by the artist or archival material in the public domain. The reader is encouraged to search relevant songs and works of art cited in the text and wherever possible to rely on official web domains of the artist. Song lyrics are also easily located via internet search. Where lyrics appear directly in the text, I cite brief portions only to facilitate scholarly analysis, generally permissible under current US copyright law.

3. *Eat, Pray, Love: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*, Monkeywrench Records, 2010. Official music video, Sony Pictures Entertainment, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJdgkyOzWOs*.

mother brought him to numerous doctors and faith-healers, unable to accept that there was no cure for her son's blindness. One day, as Wonder recalls, after yet another episode of strangers "digging into my eyes," the boy said to his mother, "You know, Mama, maybe, maybe God doesn't mean for me to see. You know, maybe God meant for me to do, to be, something else."[4] Whether or not divine providence accounts for Wonder's blindness, who can doubt that his music has inspired something akin to the miraculous in millions of listeners ever since he first burst onto the scene in 1963 as "Little Stevie Wonder"? Who is this child who wows audiences with his harmonica and a smile that could light up a football stadium? Berry Gordy, the founder of Motown records, explains that the stage name "Wonder" stuck as people who heard the kid play were describing him as "The Eighth Wonder of the World."[5]

Asked about his songwriting process, Wonder says that it has been the same from his childhood. "I just play and songs sort of happen. Like a painter, I get my inspiration from experiences that can be painful or beautiful. I always start from a feeling of profound gratitude—you know, 'Only by the grace of God am I here'—and write from there. I think most songwriters are inspired by an inner voice and spirit. God gave me this gift, and this particular song was a message I was supposed to deliver."[6] In an interview with Larry King, Wonder suggested that physical blindness has been for him a great gift: "I think I've got a pretty good imagination. And I think that, you know, we really feel before we see. We really hear before we see. . . . But when you have preconceptions, if your vision gives you preconceptions, then you've got a problem with yourself."[7]

Could a blind person be more attuned to reality than many with working eyes to see? Can the brilliance of Wonder's music, or the joyfulness that shakes the soul of the rapt listener, be explained? Think about it. *We really feel before we see. We really hear before we see.* From the watery womb, human beings are formed and emerge into life with the capacity for multisensory perception, what scientists call "synaesthesia," the "simultaneous blending or convergence of two or more senses, hence a condition of heightened perception."[8] What if we practiced such heightened receptivity every day—what Wonder calls "a pretty good imagination"—in our daily activities beyond the womb? What miracles might be revealed that we now habitually, blindly pass over?

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4. "Stevie Wonder," *Biography*, TV documentary, aired June 8, 1994, with host Jack Perkins; part 2, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMwnUFDplcM*.

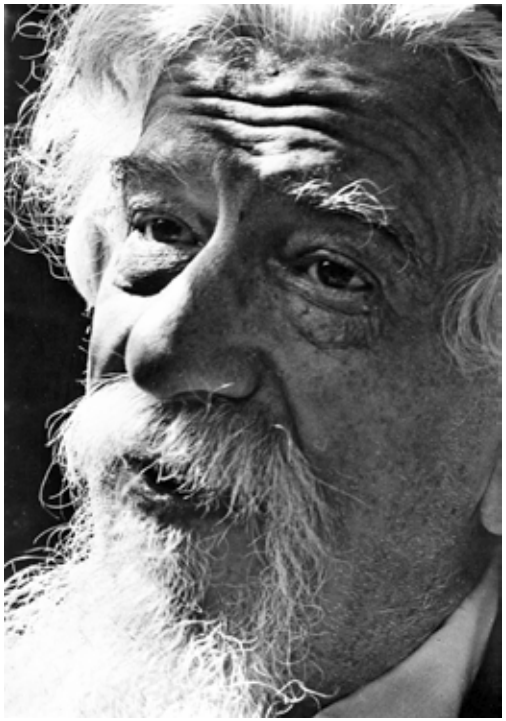
5. "Stevie Wonder," *Biography*, part 1, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCx077iTXb4*.

6. Marc Meyers, "How Stevie Created 'Love's in Need of Love Today,'" *The Wall Street Journal*, March 17, 2015.

7. Larry King Live, December 5, 2010; *http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1012/05/lkl.01.html*.

8. Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 1. We will revisit this phenomenon in chapter 2 with reference to the music of Pink Floyd.

Let me return to my nine-year-old self, lost in the reverie of improvisation at the piano. The rationalist might hear my story and, citing a host of empirical studies, explain such episodes as the explosion of neurons firing throughout my nervous system and developing brain as a young child. And I would not necessarily disagree. The neurological explanation bears its own beauty and complexity. But can it account for the whole experience? Perhaps I really was—metaphysically speaking, as it were—tuned into something more than the play of neurons firing across synapses inside my head. Perhaps those encounters with the piano were my initiation into what the great Jewish poet and philosopher Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel calls the "forgotten mother tongue,"[9] the language of wonder and radical amazement, *before* I would have a chance to grow up and forget—before adult sophistication, the best professional education that money can buy, and a host of "reality checks" would threaten to squeeze the last remnants of all such language out of me.



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Abraham Joshua Heschel

The question of wonder's deepest metaphysical source brings us straight into the heart of the religious sensibility, the question of faith. Notice how Stevie Wonder links his own artistic creativity (an "inner voice and spirit") with a palpable sense of being held every moment, as it were, in the presence of the divine: "Only by the grace of God am I here." Such experiences seem to suggest the reasonable possibility that artistic creativity springs from neither a purely natural biological process nor a sheer act of will.

Of course not every artist or every act of artistic creativity can or ought to be described in this way. Yet like Stevie Wonder many artists describe a sense of gratuitousness within the creative process itself, an element of surprise and grace, a kind of "presence," even, that breaks into the creative act and cannot

9. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), 75.

be predicted, measured, compelled or quantified. As Heschel puts it, "We sense more than we can say," gesturing to a sensitivity that "precedes conceptualization, on a level that is responsive, *immediate*, *preconceptual*, and *presymbolic*."[10] Artistic creativity seems to spring from this primordial level of perception and insight, and from the need in human beings, as it were, to do the impossible: to express the inexpressible. Whether the artist is a self-described religious person or not would seem to be quite secondary to the giftedness embedded in the sense of wonder itself, our attunement to the ineffable, and the creativity that springs forth from the deep-seated human impulse to respond to it.

Between Wonder and Despair: Roots of the Religious-Prophetic Sensibility

Sixty years ago, under the shadow of World War II, Heschel worried about the diminishment of our capacity for wonder as a species. "As civilization advances the sense of wonder almost necessarily declines," he wrote in 1951. The human race "will not perish for want of information, but only for want of appreciation."[11] A glimpse into Heschel's life experience as a young man will shed light on his anxiety about our collective capacity for wonder.

Born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1907, the sixth child of parents descended from prominent Hasidic rabbis, Heschel had been groomed from childhood to lead the Warsaw Jewish community of which his father was rabbi. In 1927, he began his doctoral studies at the University of Berlin, enrolling simultaneously at one of the finest rabbinical seminaries in the world. For ten years he would study in Berlin, a city whose "magnificent streets" he loved. In those same ten years, Adolf Hitler would rise to power. Imagine at the tender age of twenty finding yourself living in a cultural landscape almost completely foreign to your own, and, moreover, a political atmosphere of increasing contempt and peril for "your kind." How to maintain your equilibrium? Poetry would become a lifeline for Heschel in these years, a means of inscribing his fierce faith in God *and* his faith in the sacred dignity and goodness of human beings as embodiment of the divine image.

Heschel's first book of poems, the most intimate of all his work, was published in 1933, the year Hitler came to power. Its title, *The Ineffable Name of God: Man*, belies the inhumane fury that was about to engulf Europe. His poems announce themes that would haunt his thinking for the rest of his life: the struggle for holiness in the midst of evil; awe and silent wonder before nature;

10. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), 115.

11. Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, 37.

God's passionate pursuit of human friendship; an unwavering ethical commitment to repair the broken world; loneliness and even indignation before God's silence and seeming distance from a world spiraling into ideological fury and violence.[12] Significantly many of Heschel's poems pulse with playful longing for "an unknown lady in a dream," an erotic sensibility not alien or threatening to the young man's faith but deeply resonant with his longing for God. To her, he writes, "Your eyes are greetings from God. / Your body—an oasis in the world, / joy for my homeless glances."[13]

Gathering all of the poems within one all-encompassing desire, the young poet asks God to increase, not diminish, his sense of wonder. "I asked for wonder instead of happiness, and You gave them to me."[14] Heschel, it seems, had been willing to sacrifice peace and good fortune in exchange for a lifetime of wonder and radical amazement. Yet he discovers that sacrificing peace and good fortune does not cost him happiness at all—for he has found it in wonder! Was Heschel out of his senses? Or, to the contrary, was the young poet and scholar—not unlike Stevie Wonder—discovering a way *back* to our senses? Might the poets help us to recover holistic ways of insight, truth, and wisdom that we have forgotten?

I asked for wonder instead of happiness, and You gave them to me. Notice the spark of tension flashing between the poet's first-person intimacy with God and his looming sense of alienation, the threat of despair. As a modern person of faith, Heschel contains both: "You gave *them* to me."[15] To wonder for Heschel is not only to stand in awe at the beauty of the world and the glories of human accomplishment; it is also to shudder at the world's terrible brokenness, our seeming inability to break free of prejudice and fear, greed and violence. To stand in wonder is to stand in shock at our seeming addiction to war, our willful failure to bridge the boundaries that divide us from other humans, from nonhuman creatures, and from the planet Earth. Who would wish to grow in such unsettling awareness? It seems an insane option, not least for a young Jew in the heart of the Nazi empire: to allow the world's joy *and* its pain to break open our hearts when it is so tempting to close one's eyes or to escape in various forms of distraction. "Wonder is not a state of esthetic enjoyment," Heschel would write two decades later. "Endless wonder is endless tension, a situation in which we are shocked at the inadequacy of our awe, at the weakness of our shock, as well

12. See Edward K. Kaplan, introduction, in Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Ineffable Name of God: Man*, poems translated from the Yiddish by Morton M. Leifman (New York: Continuum, 2004), 7–18. Here and in what follows I am indebted to Kaplan's masterful interpretation of Heschel's poetry.

13. Heschel, *The Ineffable Name of God: Man*, 89.

14. Heschel, *The Ineffable Name of God: Man*, 23; the translation I adopt is taken from Edward K. Kaplan and Samuel H. Dresner, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 183.

15. Kaplan and Dresner, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness*, 183.

as the state of being asked the ultimate question."[16] Between history and the act of faith stand "immense mountains of absurdity."[17]

Narrowly escaping the catastrophe engulfing Europe in 1940, Heschel arrived as a refugee in New York City at age thirty-three, fully aware "that his family and the thousand-year-old Jewish civilization of Europe were being annihilated."[18] Twenty-five years later, he defined himself in terms of that unspeakable event: "I am a brand plucked from the fire, in which my people was burned to death. I am a brand plucked from the fire of an altar to Satan on which millions of human lives were exterminated to evil's greater glory."[19] Like so many intellectuals of his generation who were impacted by the war, Heschel understood the difficulties confronting any attempt to find meaning after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, much less to do "theology" or engage in "God-talk" in any traditional sense. To wonder is not just to contemplate the beautiful stuff. A sense of wonder includes our terrible awe before the demonic elements of human experience.

Haunted by God

"Any genuine encounter with reality," writes Heschel, "is an encounter with the unknown. We sense more than we can say."[20] "Wonder" and "radical amazement" are the terms Heschel uses to describe this sense of being caught up speechless by life's endless mysteries—and still more, the sense that we ourselves are the object of God's questioning and concern. Paradoxically, it is the *gap* between what we sense and what we can say—described negatively as the "ineffable"—which discloses divine Presence and meaning. In other words, the certainty of God's realness does not follow directly from "experience" as such, suggests Heschel, but rather "from our *inability* to experience what is given to our mind,"[21] the *poverty* of our intellectual categories before the allure and meaning of life. How can human beings affirm the realness of God, a living sense of the sacred, even amid apparent absurdity? It begins, as noted above, with a sense of wonder that "precedes conceptualization, a level that is responsive, immediate, preconceptual, and presymbolic."[22] To recall a key point from the introduction borrowing from Charles Taylor and Michael Paul

16. Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, 68–9.

17. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Essential Writings*, selected with an introduction by Susannah Heschel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 173.

18. Edward K. Kaplan, *Holiness in Words: Abraham Joshua Heschel's Poetics of Piety* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1996), 10.

19. Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 21, no. 2 (January 1966): 117–34; also Kaplan, *Holiness in Words*, 10. Heschel's mother and two unmarried sisters perished in the Warsaw Ghetto, while a third sister who lived in Vienna was sent to Treblinka with her husband and murdered in Auschwitz.

20. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 115.

21. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 117.

22. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 115.

Gallagher, what breaks through the shell of the postmodern, "buffered self" are "moments of human poetry that give voice to the language of desire."[23]

And here potentially is where the mystic and the theologian share common ground with the musician, the poet, the artist. Religion at its existential core, says Heschel, by training the mind to attune itself to the ineffable pulsing in everyday life, moves us beyond the beautiful and beyond even the good to the *holy*, the "mood of reverence" that hovers within and beyond all things. The language of the mystics, prophets, and saints—"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed," says Jesus (Matt. 13:31)—is not so far from the language of the poet—"To see a world in a grain of sand / And a heaven in a wild flower," says Blake. Both seek to open our eyes, to stir our wonder.[24]

Yet Heschel also, as noted above, worried about our capacity for wonder in an age of mass industrialization, instant communication, and increasing captivity to utilitarian concerns. Enthralled by humanity's wholesale mastery of nature and mesmerized by modern technological achievement, people increasingly, he thought, risk losing the sense of mutual vulnerability, dependence, and finitude from which empathy and ethical living in society flow. "The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder."[25] Heschel was far from alone in these concerns. "[We] have to face the fact," observed Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., "that modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit, which stands in glaring contrast to his scientific and technological abundance. We've learned to fly the air like birds, we've learned to swim the seas like fish, and yet we haven't learned to walk the earth as brothers and sisters."[26]

In an influential essay in 1958, the famous German physicist Werner Heisenberg suggested that the human race now finds itself "in the position of a captain whose ship has been so securely built of iron and steel that his compass no longer points to the north but only towards the ship's mass of iron."[27] The

23. Michael Paul Gallagher, *The Human Poetry of Faith: A Spiritual Guide to Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), 136.

24. Heschel described his own phenomenological approach to religious language as "depth theology." "Theology speaks for the people; depth theology speaks for the individual. Theology strives for communication, for universality; depth theology strives for insight, for uniqueness. Theology is like sculpture, depth theology like music. Theology is in the books; depth theology is in the hearts. The former is doctrine, the latter an event. Theologies divide us; depth theology unites us." See Abraham J. Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 115–26.

25. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 117.

26. From news footage, KPIX-TV, San Francisco, February 27, 1967, at *https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/190080*; see also "The Man Who Was a Fool," in Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 75.

27. Werner Heisenberg, "Role of Technology in Man's Relationship with Nature," in *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*, ed. Peter Y. Chou (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1958), cited in Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone and Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 76–77.

moral and spiritual peril of the "ship's captain" can be averted, judged Heisenberg, only if he recognizes what has gone wrong—that his compass no longer responds to the magnetic forces of Earth—and "tries to navigate by some other means—for instance, by the stars."[28] What would it would look like, I wonder, to learn (or relearn) how to "navigate by the stars" in an age such as ours when Google Earth and other technological marvels let us "see" nearly every street corner and star in the universe, and seem to place these multiverses in the very palm of our hands? Our crisis, it seems, is both scientific *and* spiritual: Are we capable as a species of reorienting our "compass" to the shifting forces of our wondrous but deeply wounded planet?

Seeds of Wonder, Resistance, and Hope

When Saint Francis of Assisi gazed upon the starry heavens, he did not respond with the utilitarian eye of the economist or market trader. He responded with naked wonder, awe, and kinship; he sang of "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon" with the heart of a mystic and poet. When Julian of Norwich in fourteenth-century England looked out from her hermitage upon green hills illuminated under a gentle dawn sky, she sang in her heart to "Jesus our Mother," an intuition of the sacred feminine who sings in the fecund beauty of Earth herself. In our own time, Pope Francis, when asked about his choice of name, recalled that the moment he was elected to become pope, a brother cardinal from Brazil "embraced me and kissed me and said: 'Don't forget the poor' . . . and that struck me . . . the poor. . . . Immediately I thought of Saint Francis of Assisi. Francis was a man of peace, a man of poverty, a man who loved and protected creation. These days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we?"[29] Notice how Francis links reverence for creation with concern for the poorest peoples of the earth. A God-haunted wonder joins them both.

The poets and prophets, scientists and saints, teach us that the capacity for wonder is not enough. If we do not cultivate *the will to wonder* in ourselves, our children and grandchildren, a singing reverence for life in all its forms, it risks atrophying and dying in us a slow but inevitable death. Here perhaps is the gift and burden of human freedom in history: every generation must learn anew how to "navigate by the stars," to hear the transcendent call of freedom in response to the crises of the times. Once again, as noted in the introduction, even more vital for religious traditions today than clarity of belief statements or even ethical norms, people "need to feel themselves part of a larger Story," a story that speaks

28. Merton, *Love and Living*, 77.

29. Pope Francis, *Address of the Holy Father Pope Francis*, March 16, 2013, *https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130316_rappresentanti-media.html*.

to our deepest human desires for connection, meaning, relationship, love. "And this would be a response on the level of prereligious spiritual imagination."[30]

Perhaps the key point is this: such creative responses are not limited to the explicitly religious or theological realm. Like the astrophysicist who awakens our sense of wonder and participation in the drama of a still-evolving cosmos, the computer programmer who "shows" us the rings of Jupiter on our smartphones, and the mystic who sings of the sacred Presence that pulses from within all of it—the great poets and artists open doorways of perception into a world pulsing with vitality and spirit.[31]

When Jesus of Nazareth addressed his disciples and the crowds with words like, "Let those who have ears to hear, hear" (Matt. 13:9), and "Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear?" (Mark 8:18), scholars tell us he was speaking as a poet of Jewish wisdom (cf. Isa. 6:10; Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 12:2), appealing not just to the head but to the whole person of his listener: heart, body, mind, senses, and imagination. Like a lure flashing before a school of fish, Jesus' words dance before the imagination, interrupting our conventional assumptions about God and "the way things are" in the realm of human possibility. This, too, is the gift of the poet and artist, but it is not always an easy or pleasant gift to receive. To be "born again," borrowing from Jesus' own vivid imagery (John 3:3–8), is to break free of conventional wisdom and to risk the vulnerability of a poet's kind of faith: listen to the silences, hear the forgotten histories, let the music of things seen and unseen speak to you, awaken you from your slumber. Nothing is impossible with God. But can we believe it?[32]

The will to wonder is a subversive act, an act of resistance against every force of distraction or despair that would deaden our attunement to life's possibilities. The Buddhist tradition calls it Beginner's Mind, that capacity for wakefulness with which every person is born. It is the joy of living mindfully, as if every minute life begins all over again. The Christian mystical tradition calls it purity of heart, a posture of loving awareness that flows like nutrients through the vine from Christ himself, who says, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Heschel calls this will to wonder radical amazement, a heightened sensitivity

30. Gallagher, *The Human Poetry of Faith*, 136.

31. For a wonderful example of theology attuned to both the poetical and scientific spirits, see Dennis Hamm, "Reading Hopkins after Hubble: The Durability of Ignatian Creation Spirituality," *Horizons* 41, no. 2 (2014): 275–95.

32. "Speech about hope," writes biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann, "cannot be explanatory and scientifically argumentative; rather, it must be lyrical in the sense that it touches the hopeless person at many different points. More than that, however, speech about hope must be primarily theological, which is to say that it must be in the language of covenant between a personal God and a community. Promise belongs to the world of trusting speech and faithful listening." See *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 63–64, 67; also Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

to the divine Presence that bears an ethical imperative, a sense that something urgent is being asked of us.[33] In every tradition, the language of wonder is poetry, music, liturgy, the arts—indeed, this is why, as Heschel insists, "it is certainly no accident that the Bible is written in the language of poets."[34]

"The readiness is all," proclaims Shakespeare from the lips of Hamlet. What thrills me in the classroom are those moments when the "readiness" of my students' already wonder-saturated horizons are enlarged further by the encounter with a great musician, poet, storyteller, or artist. As Heschel urged and encouraged his contemporaries, in a thousand different ways, we must never allow the seeds of amazement that dwell in each of us to atrophy or be relegated to a fondly remembered but ever-more-distant childhood past. We must do everything we can to intensify and deepen our sense of wonder and that of our children, not least through rigorous immersion in the arts our whole lives long. What the theologian shares with the artist is a grammar of desire and imagination already "written on human hearts by the divine creator," and thus a vital search for new forms of expression that will engage and transform the whole person.[35]

Awakening the Artistic Spirit in Ourselves and Others

One of the most compelling accounts I have yet seen of the arts as a doorway to insight and wisdom belongs to Robert Henri, the celebrated painter and teacher of the Ashcan School of American realism, in his 1923 classic, *The Art Spirit*. As I noted in the introduction, the book is really an extended meditation on seeing, or, more precisely—keeping Stevie Wonder in mind—the art and discipline of *perception*, not limited to visual stimuli. In the opening lines of the book, Henri writes,

> Art when really understood is the province of every human being. It is not an outside, extra thing. When the artist is alive in any person, whatever his kind of work may be, he becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature. . . . Where those who are not artists

33. See "What to Do with Wonder," in Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, 68–69. The integral link between wonder and ethics—or better, the mystical and the prophetic, the latter being the consciousness "that something is asked of us"—will be emphasized in our exploration of the various artistic case studies throughout this book.

34. Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, 37.

35. Pope Benedict XVI, "Message for World Day of Peace," *America* 196, no. 2 (2007): 2; cf. Mark S. Burrows, "'Raiding the Articulate': Mysticism, Poetics, and the Unlanguageable," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth A. Dreyers and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 348. Much in the spirit of Heschel's depth theology and Gallagher's emphasis on engaging the imagination, Burrows asks, can we find a manner of thinking, writing, and *teaching* theology in our classrooms and churches that would embrace the poetical and artistic imagination as constitutive of its very method?

> are trying to close the book, the artist opens it, shows there are still more pages possible.[36]

Notice again Henri's insistence that the capacity for aesthetic insight and creativity is not just a mark of the expert, but "is the province of every human being." One does not have to be Vincent van Gogh or Stevie Wonder to come alive in heightened wonder and appreciation. The spirit of the artist beats in our very blood, whether we want it to or not.

The "art spirit" is that secret intuition that Reality is much more than what can be explained and quantified, bought or sold, demonstrated or proven. Remembering my nine-year-old self sitting before the piano in the dark, to surrender to the art spirit is to allow the doors of perception to expand, opening onto realms of presence and meaning that are real and *trustworthy*, even if hidden. But there is more, says Henri. The art spirit is that latent capacity and desire in all persons—we might call it empathy, or even love—that surrenders itself to ever-widening circles of discovery, generating, like ripples in a pond, what Henri calls "the Brotherhood."

> Those who are of the Brotherhood know each other, and time and space cannot separate them. The Brotherhood is powerful. It has many members. They are of all places and of all times. . . . If the artist is alive in you, you may meet Greco nearer than many people, also Plato, Shakespeare, the Greeks. In certain books—someway in the first few paragraphs, you know you have met a brother.[37]

If the artist is alive in you, says Henri, *there is no person, past or present, who is not potentially your sister or brother.*

It is fascinating to consider that two decades earlier, W. E. B. Du Bois, in his classic of 1903, *The Souls of Black Folk*, voiced a similar insight about the fellowship across time and space that he discovered in books, unbound by race, place, or culture. "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not," wrote Du Bois. "I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension."[38] For Du Bois, of course, the sense of kinship he discovered in literature was tinged with painful irony, set against his experience of the daily body blows of racism, wherein the natural bonds of human fellowship were *shattered* by the race veil in America. To this day *The Souls of Black Folk* remains a devastating indictment of racial injustice, a prophetic summons to build a more humane, just, and beautiful society than the one we have inherited.

Clearly not every work of art positively nourishes the human spirit or cultivates empathy and understanding between peoples. Neither would every artist

36. Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* (1923; repr., New York: Basic Books, 2007), 11.

37. Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 15–16.

38. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903), 109.

link their creative process with a sense of kinship in God or the wider human community. Indeed, some of the most renowned "artists" in history have been notoriously, pathologically antisocial. In Du Bois's era, for example, D. W. Griffith's infamous propaganda film, *The Birth of a Nation*, demonized African Americans while lionizing the Ku Klux Klan through the powerful new medium of moving pictures. The music of Wagner was employed to similar ends in the anti-Semitic machinery of Hitler's Third Reich. Much closer to home, a considerable slice of video gaming and pop music culture today—rock and rap music video in particular since the dawn of MTV—is flush with images of misogyny and sexualized violence. These now ubiquitous "art forms" seem to have normalized for many consumers a kind of pornographic gaze, where the objectification of human bodies is linked explicitly to gendered and racialized hierarchies of power and sexualized violence. Here the seductive power of music and provocative visual imagery, underwritten by corporate profits, reveals its darker impact on culture.[39]

Nevertheless, as a powerful countersign to the dehumanizing impact of such mass media on ordinary people's lives, Henri witnesses to the potentially humanizing gaze of the artist, as he celebrates the many and diverse subjects ("My People") whom he is drawn to paint.

> My People may be old or young, rich or poor, I may speak their language or I may communicate with them only by gestures. But wherever I find them, the Indian at work in the white man's way, the Spanish gypsy moving back to the freedom of the hills, the little boy, quiet and reticent before the stranger, my interest is awakened and my impulse is to immediately tell about them through my own language—drawing and painting in color.[40]

Just as Stevie Wonder's unforgettable *Songs in the Key of Life* come to us in vibrant colors of rhythm, sound, and poetry, so do Henri's portraits rise from a heart that gazes on other human beings—male, female, black, white, yellow, red, and brown—through eyes of kinship and love, not objectification, fear, or hatred. Henri's "language" is paint on canvas, but each brush stroke rises from a heart of empathy; his protest, in beauty, rises from love—a "reaching toward" the subject that refuses the violence of objectification or imposed uniformity.[41]

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39. See *Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex and Power in Music Video*, dir. Sut Jhally (Media Education Foundation, 2003). We explore these themes in considerable depth in chapter 7.

40. Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 141. An internet search of Henri's work unveils an astonishingly beautiful catalogue of portraits.

41. Recall Stevie Wonder, "[If] your vision gives you preconceptions, then you've got a problem with yourself." It is moving to juxtapose Henri's portraits as a celebration of human diversity against Stevie Wonder's recollection of his first experience of "the whole color thing" as a child, being called the "N" word by a group of other kids (see "Stevie Wonder," *Biography*, part 2). Chapter 5 explores the racial dimension of Wonder's life and music in some detail.

And love, finally, is what gives birth to hope, the graced capacity to imagine again.[42] Thus Henri writes, "There are moments in our lives, there are moments in a day, when we seem to see beyond the usual. Such are the moments of our greatest happiness. Such are the moments of our greatest wisdom. If one could but recall his vision by some sort of sign. It was in this hope that the arts were invented. Sign-posts on the way to what may be. Sign-posts toward greater knowledge."[43] It is this tenacious capacity for imagination and hope, I wish to suggest, our capacity "to see beyond the usual" and to raise up "sign-posts on the way to what may be," which accounts for the lively resonance between artistic creativity and prophetic religious faith. And just as Stevie Wonder's creativity is inseparable from the black church and streets of urban Detroit in which he was formed, so is Heschel's God-haunted vision of things saturated with the religious sensibilities of the Hasidic Jewish community of Eastern Europe in which he was formed. The artistic-prophetic spirit emerges from within and *for* the life of the community.

But then each of us will have to ask: Who, precisely, are My People? Is my capacity for empathy bound only to those who look like me, think like me, pray like me? To what extent do I fall prey to the habit of "othering" and scapegoating those who are different, reinforced by the feeling that God is on "our side"? Indeed without a sense of kinship binding me to all things in the vast web of creation, to people and cultures well beyond my limited field of vision, how easy it is to take refuge inside the "buffered self," or worse, inside a kind of political or religious tribalism, motivated not by the will to wonder but *the will to survive*, to endure, to conquer, to preserve "our way of life" by any means necessary.

Against all such presumption, the authentic prophet is painfully aware of his own people's limitations, the dangers of corporate blindness. His cry is a twin cry of love for his people and of internal social critique and resistance, questioning everything from the divine perspective. It is the pathos of Marvin Gaye pleading, "What's Going On?" and Dr. King asking, "Where do we go from here?" in the midst of social upheaval. It is the cry of the mystic linking "Us" and "Them" into one mosaic human family. No wonder the prophets are never safe in their own country! To proclaim the fundamental goodness and unity of the human race is not mere Sunday school talk. For Gandhi, King, and Jesus, as for countless other nameless prophets and peacemakers, such ideas were and remain a threat to the reigning order of things. "If love and nonviolence be not the law of our being," confessed Mahatma Gandhi, "the whole of my argument falls to pieces."[44]

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42. See William F. Lynch, *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965); also Christopher Pramuk, *Hope Sings, So Beautiful: Graced Encounters across the Color Line* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).

43. Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 9.

44. Cited in *Gandhi on Non-Violence*, ed. Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1964), 17.

Before concluding this chapter I'd like to share one more story from the realm of music that powerfully evokes for me the spirit of heightened receptivity and attunement that characterizes the artistic-prophetic disposition as I have described it, a faith in divine-human possibilities for which, as Heschel writes, "reason has no concepts and language has no names."[45]

The Possibilities of Presence

In the deep winter of 1986, under the dark cloak of night, two musicians set up their instruments in the sanctuary of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City, the largest Baroque church in the world. Cellist Eugene Friesen and pianist Paul Halley had played together for years with jazz and world music pioneer Paul Winter, but they had never played or recorded apart from Winter's band. Alone together in the silence of the vast sanctuary, save a recording engineer, the two began to play, tentatively at first, and then, as the night deepened, with greater confidence and abandon, circling around each other in a kind of dance, structured and spontaneous, disciplined and free. None of the music was rehearsed. The nine songs that came to birth that night were drawn forth, as it were, "out of nothing," from the womb of the cavernous cathedral. The acclaimed album *New Friend*[46] is the astonishing result, unlike anything I have heard before or since.

I often play for my students the album's final track called "Full Circle." After settling into silence for several moments, I invite the class to imagine sitting unseen in the choir loft of the great church, gazing down upon the musicians, waiting and listening. Friesen breaks through the silence first with percussive strikes on the cello, laying down a spare melody in space and time. The circle opens, the piano enters the dance, and the two musicians are off, circling in spirals, moving in, leaning out, turning around and around—now bearing us with them on glorious waves of sound. On one occasion in class, when the song had ended and I asked students for their impressions, a long silence ensued. Suddenly a burly baseball player in the back row, a young man who rarely spoke up in class, thrust his hands into the air and exclaimed, "Dr. Pramuk, that was *a fucking miracle*." Of course we all erupted with laughter. But there wasn't a person in the room who didn't share the sentiment exactly. For the rest of the semester, whenever we found ourselves caught up short for words, "AFM" became our go-to turn of phrase. And why not? There is more than a hint of the miraculous in the human spirit, if our eyes are open to behold, our ears open to wonder.

In truth, of course, Friesen's and Halley's music was not created out of nothing. The two musicians brought *themselves* to the dance, including the long

45. Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone*, 36.

46. Eugene Friesen with Paul Halley, *New Friend*, Living Music, 1986.

history of their friendship. Moreover, years of solitude, sacrifice, and discipline mastering their instruments—not unlike my nine-year-old self practicing scales at the piano—had gifted each artist with an unconscious technical virtuosity and a complete freedom to sing through their instruments when they finally "came out to play." Indeed, one could say that decades of seemingly disconnected moments had prepared both men for this singular encounter in the sanctuary of Saint John's. And just as in life itself there was considerable risk in this unrehearsed experiment. It might have failed. Thus in many respects it was an act of courage and trust—many such acts over the course of many years—that gave birth on this night to something wholly unpredictable, spontaneous, beautiful.

And still there was another factor at play, another *presence*, not obvious at first glance: the cathedral itself. During an interview about the album, Friesen describes Saint John the Divine as "an acoustical place that has a spirit, a magic of its own, a place that affects our improvisations." The cathedral, he says, "was kind of a third musician whose sound is very much present on the album."[47] How can great blocks of stone, stained glass, and vast empty space constitute a living spirit, a real presence? To the empirical mind it makes no sense. To the artist and poet, the mystic and prophet, such awareness is the beginning of insight, the seed bud of unforeseen possibilities springing to life in the pregnant spaces between freedom and imagination.[48]

You Are Not a Machine

In one of the last interviews he gave before his death, Rabbi Heschel was asked what advice he would give to young people. He replied,

> I would say, let them remember that there is a meaning beyond absurdity. Let them be sure that every little deed counts, that every word has power, and that we can do, everyone, our share to redeem the world, in spite of all absurdities, and all the frustrations, and all the disappointment. And above all, remember that the meaning of life is to build life as if it were a work of art. You're not a machine. When you're young, start working on this great work of art called your own existence.[49]

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47. Bob Protzman, "Cellist Friesen Takes Music into a New Age," *Chicago Tribune*, December 11, 1986, *http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-12-11/features/8604020831_1_paul-winter-consort-jazz-elements-classical-music*.

48. This observation forms the core of music therapist Susan Elizabeth Hale's study of sacred spaces around the world in her mind-expanding book, *Sacred Sound, Sacred Space: The Acoustic Mysteries of Holy Places* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 2007).

49. Interview with Carl Stern, 1972; cited in Arnold Eisen, "The Opposite of Good Is Indifference," interview with Krista Tippet, *On Being*, NPR, June 5, 2008, *https://onbeing.org/programs/arnold-eisen-the-spiritual-audacity-of-abraham-joshua-heschel/*.

The artistic spirit as explored in this book is that spirit of heightened receptivity and creative response that resists unthinking conformity to The Way Things Are, daring us to imagine again what is possible in a world charged with grace. We are not machines; we are human beings, created in the divine image. Always and everywhere a third musician haunts our movements in time and space, galvanizing our courage, inviting us to participate in the general dance of life's renewal and flourishing. "See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isa. 43:19)

In the whispering of the grass under our feet; in the turning of leaves in the half-light of dusk; in the music of children's laughter when they are really free to be children; in the desires and dreams that stir through our own childlike wonder before the beauty of the earth and the earthen pathways that unfold before our feet; perhaps in such moments we can catch an echo of the voice of God, a murmur from the sacred depths of our own being, asking: Are you listening? Are you awake? We must help each other learn again, with every waking hour, "how to be surprised, not to adjust ourselves."[50]

This book is written from the conviction that lying dormant in every person, indeed, in the stuff of the earth and the dark matter of the cosmos itself, are the seeds of an eternal loving Presence—the "mark of God," to borrow an image from the prophet Job. These seeds, however, must be nurtured. "Love by itself is hollow," says Stevie Wonder. "For love to be effective it has to be fed."[51] When we allow the seeds of love to be fed, look out! For life made from love is AFM. While it is true that not every work of art nurtures the human spirit in life-affirming ways, nevertheless the arts in every era have nourished humankind's will to wonder, the deep taproot of empathy and communion, justice and love. More than our scholars and theologians, and certainly more than our politicians and daily newsmakers, it is the world's artists who can help us reclaim the will to wonder, and so enkindle hope, even, perhaps especially, in places of apparent hopelessness. That is a bold hypothesis, I admit. In the pages that follow, I invite you to test its truthfulness, its latent possibilities, for yourself, and even better, to test it in conversation with others.

In 1963, a gray-bearded Heschel, at age fifty-six looking every bit the Hebrew prophet, marched arm in arm with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and thousands of ordinary Americans of every age, race, and creed, singing songs of freedom, united in their commitment to build a more just society. Of marching with King, Heschel would famously say, "I felt my feet were praying." Perhaps their courage and will to wonder, and that of the artists explored in this book, can galvanize our own.

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50. ABC News interview, November 1971, cited in Heschel, "The Spiritual Audacity of Abraham Joshua Heschel."

51. Meyers, "How Stevie Created 'Love's in Need of Love Today.'"

When I wander through avenues
of poems, of dazzling visions—
I compress into that precious space
my young, raw secrets.

I don't want to plaster posters of God
on all wide-open street corners,
but instead, celebrate the birthday of eternity
in the tiny corner of every moment.

I want to set up—old sowings
from the harvest of my spirit—
verbal wine for distant generations
in the coolest abyss of a poem.

—"Untitled," Abraham Joshua Heschel[52]

Addendum and Additional Resources

The language of theology, or talk about God, faces considerable challenges in our time. First among these for many people is epistemological. How to speak credibly of God in a post-Darwinian universe and advanced technological milieu? In the face of human and planetary suffering? When not a few self-identified religious people (and their leaders) appear to be hypocritical or even corrupt? When the language of theology or doctrine itself seems abstract, bereft of poetry and connection to human experience?

Critical, then, to any effective introduction to theological method (and religious formation) is the bridging of traditional language and religious wisdom about God (revelation, scripture, liturgy, theology) to the contours of ordinary human experience. What Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel calls "depth theology"—a poetical and phenomenological account of religious experience—corresponds closely to the language of "grace" in the Catholic tradition, especially as articulated by the German Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, and more broadly, to the poetical sensibilities of the Christian mystical tradition as described by Mark Burrows.

Jewish scholar Edward Kaplan is a masterful translator of Heschel's depth theology, and Catholic popular spiritual writer Bill Huebsch does the same for Rahner's theology of grace. Much in the way of Heschel, the German Lutheran

52. Heschel, *The Ineffable Name of God: Man*, 134. Used with permission from Continuum US, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.

and pioneering feminist theologian Dorothee Soelle brings a compelling poetical and political lens to theology that encourages readers to discover God in ordinary experience, especially in social movements that seek justice and the common good. The late American writer David Foster Wallace challenges students in his famous Kenyon College commencement speech to break free of the "default-setting," while Rabbi Harold Kushner chronicles his crisis of faith after his son's death, and how it brought him to a radically revised notion of how God relates to the world through the "incarnation" of caring people. Jesuits John Haught, George Coyne, and Dennis Hamm bring evolutionary and cosmic perspectives to the table, merging religious, scientific, and poetic insights in ways that my students have found very compelling.

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Music, Audio, and Visual

An accounting of songs, films, lectures, or other art forms that give expression to wonder and the ineffable dimension of human life would, of course, be endless. Here are a few of my favorites. (What are yours?)

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McLachlan, Sarah. "Fumbling Towards Ecstasy." *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy.* Sony Legacy, 1994.

Vedder, Eddie. "Light Today." *Ukelele Songs.* Monkeywrench Records, 2011.

———. "Better Days." *Eat, Pray, Love*. Monkeywrench Records, 2010.