

Art and Philosophy: Complementary Paths to Truth

By Halen A. Gamino



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Steve Cortright, Advisor

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Introduction

Even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom, for myth is composed of wonders...

-Aristotle's *Metaphysics*

The pursuit of the Truth by argument has always been a cornerstone in Western thought. Plato's Socrates argues for supremacy of virtue, Aristotle for an unmoved mover, and Nietzsche evaluates the development of morals. Alongside this noble endeavor stand the works of the arts. Fyodor Dostoevsky writes *The Brothers Karamazov* and St. John of the Cross pens his poems. Artists do not argue in the same manner as the philosophers, but they do in an "imperceptible way and over a long period of time"¹ draw conclusions.

Furthermore, the Bible alone is filled with great narrative storylines, poetry, and parables, making the Bible a foundational pillar for Western Society. Yet the Bible speaks of Truth in Person, a Truth that is revealed and knowable. This conclusion about the Truth was revolutionary and raised the Bible from being one text among many, to being the emblem of the West. Could mere art lead and direct a civilization? No, but the Bible is not only argument either, so what is it? Not purely art; not mere argument.

What are the ends of these writings? Philosophy pursues the Truth by examining all aspects of life, that is, by subjecting them to argument. But these other texts, the works of art, take a different path. These texts perform their own dialogues and inquiries, construct dialogues, create worlds and characters that embody ideas, and so these texts direct their readers to Truth that might be told in philosophy. On the other hand, these texts are written for a variety of reasons; they are not philosophy by other means. In spite of their worlds being fabrications, these worlds are nevertheless derived from reality, and

¹Blain, *THE LIFE OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE*, 61.

offer readers unique and complementary discourses which aim to complete and perfect the very same thoughts philosophy has on all aspects of life.

Truth

Truth springs from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

- Psalm 85:11

In philosophy to ask, “What is Truth?” is a question for metaphysics. When philosophers look at a thing they will try to determine what this thing is and, of equal importance, what this thing is *not*. Aristotle, defining true and false, stated,

To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and what is not that it is not, is true; so he who says of anything that it is, or that it is not, will say either what is true or what is false; but neither what is nor what is not is said to or not to be².

While this is given by Aristotle as a clear-cut example of what the meaning of true and false are, rarely do Plato’s Dialogues conclude with clear true and false answers.

In the practice of philosophy to ask questions seems to be an exercise in attrition. In the *Sophist*, Theaetetus and the Stranger adventure to answer the question, what is a sophist? Yet, as any reader of the *Sophist* will find, the two use multiple dichotomous divisions; all conclude with the two coming to some understanding of a characteristic of the sophist. At the end of the *Sophist* the two do come to a conclusion of what a sophist is, one “[who] uses short speeches in private conversations to force the person talking with him to contradict himself”³. The end of *Ion*, unlike the ending of the *Sophist*, does not conclude with so clear an answer.

Ion has Socrates and Ion, a ῥαπσοδός, or one who recites poetry in public, looking into the cause of inspiration in rhapsodes. This dialogue ends with Ion abandoning the

² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011b25.

³ Plato *Sophist*, 268b.

discussion after Socrates concludes that Ion can only consider his recitations as either acts of dishonesty or as a divine act⁴. The dialogue concludes after demonstrating a truth of the rhapsodes, that is, a rhapsode's profession requires either skill or inspiration. Socrates also concludes that to be a rhapsode is not an art. Though there isn't a definitive answer of what title Ion would choose for himself, readers are now aware of what a ῥαψωδός is and is not. From here, any reader can continue the dialogue with reason.

The Truth also seems to offer a variety of paths to those who would uncover what is true and false about a thing. The most direct path to defining a truth principle would be the path set by logic. If $a=b$ and $b=c$, then $a=c$.⁵ Reasoning is the primary tool used by the philosopher. For any idea, or theory, to be proven true the idea must be put through a stringent examination with one's own reason. Yet this examination is not a completely solitary operation, and in practice this examination becomes a sort of good natured intellectual show of force.

Simone Weil proposed that force is "that [which] turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing"⁶ Weil skillfully examines, through the lens of the *Iliad*, this force and concludes that it has to do with the relationships between people. According to Weil's understanding, this force is highly destructive to all parties involved, going so far as to cause people "[to refuse] to believe that they both belong to the same species"⁷ as well as turning "man into stone"⁸. While her argument is clear that force should never be used against another individual, her harsh depiction measures what level of ferocity is needed

⁴ Plato, *Ion*, 542a.

⁵ Example of Aristotelian Logic (Barbara).

⁶ "The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force" in *Simone Weil an Anthology*, 163.

⁷ *Ibid*, 173.

⁸ *Ibid*, 165.

in the examination of ideas. This ferocity, framed within the practice of a dialogue, will behave like the ferocity in the *Iliad*. Ideas will be taken captive, ideas will be subjected to the ideas and problems of counter-argument. As man is made stone, so too will ideas be driven to the absurd, something to be trodden under foot and disregarded by the dialoguers.

There is a worthwhile payoff for such a fierce pursuit of the Truth. Force leads the Lacedaemonians to completely destroy the Trojans' way of life, but if people were able to successfully redirect force and contain it solely within the dialogue, force would become a tool of people rather than a subjugator of people. Finally, diverting it from being used against another person, instead directing it into arguments – and only arguments – people may avoid the destruction of the *Iliad* in favor of the destruction of falseness.

When one person delivers an argument, and the above show of force begins, the best course of action for all involved is to barrage the argument relentlessly with questions and counter-arguments. Opposition refines the argument: weak points will be exposed, points of confusion clarified. The remarkable part of this oppositional examination is the mirror effect it has on those asking questions. The original idea is battling questions asked and counter-arguments leveled; and so it, too, will expose weak points and force the questioners into greater precision. As the dialogue continues, weak points will be made firm and underdeveloped, confusing notions made clear on both sides of the cross examination. Proverbs tells “iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”⁹: just so, the dialectical conflicts of ideas (not persons) takes arguments of iron and sharpens them with the iron of counter-arguments. Finally, that is, most

⁹ Proverbs 27:17.

importantly, each party is made to yield, not to the other party, but to an argument's truthfulness as the arguments are pitted against each other's ideas.

While dialectical cross examination will uncover the truthfulness of an argument, no argument can be pinned between dialectical alternatives; for each, there is a plethora of questions that could be asked. Look only to *Metaphysics Book III* to see twelve different answers to the question "What is philosophy?" Or look to any of the questions in the *Summa*, or again look to Kant and his antinomies. These writers can actually show the variety of dialectical structures as well as the different ways a conclusion can result from a pursuit of pure reason.

Kant: two arguments disagree antithetically with one another, but each argument is well thought out, "well-founded"¹⁰. Kant concludes that these apparent paradoxes are the result of empirical reasoning grasping at something beyond its competence. Thus, for Kant, the two dialectical "truths" must yield to each other: the truth of inquiry lies elsewhere. A conclusion that determines the "conflict" of the two dialectical truths is based only on assumption.

Aquinas: Question, objections, on the contrary, I respond, and response to objections. Thomas patiently looks into each question, looking both at sources that affirm his response and at sources that deny it. Amazingly, Aquinas reduces each question down to a yes or no answer. The bulk of Aquinas's work is in his reasoning for answering yes or no. Aquinas focuses on those points that distinguish his arguments from the queries brought about by the objections. Therefore, Aquinas has to respond as well as defend his response against objections. Each objection seems to be a valid and

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B85.

thoroughly reasoned objection to the original reply, yet upon further explanation, Aquinas can refute the objection or distinguish a case in which his reply is still valid. This is the goal of all the articles: reach an answer in the affirmative or negative to a question, and develop reasons for the conclusion that remains valid in the face of reasons offered in the converse of Aquinas's response.

Aristotle: After stating the twelve questions which must be answered in order to understand what philosophy is, Aristotle proceeds to answer by slowly chipping away at them with his own arguments. Aristotle is an interesting case because each question and answer seems independent from the others. Yet, all the questions are tied together by the overarching question "To what does philosophy itself pertain?" Each question and respective answer is its own path to the truth of the overarching question. This relation between reason and truth is vital for understanding the relation between arts and philosophy (but more on that later).

The use of reason in a dialogue or examination does not assure one clear, precise answer. There appear to be a few different outcomes.

1) Two valid independent arguments are given stating two opposing truths about a thing, they contradict each other, and since a thing cannot both *be* and *not be* then both conclusions cannot possibly be true, both arguments cannot possibly be sound, and another course of argument must be found.

2) A question is posed and a reply given which has its own truth conditions. Next an objection is given which is aimed at invalidating a truth condition of the reply, then a reply to the objection is given which either refutes the objection's own truth conditions or distinguishes a case which affirms the objection's point, but shows that the objection

doesn't apply to the original reply.¹¹ This process continues until all objections are answered.

3) An overarching question that seeks to define an object is asked, follow-on questions are asked and objections are made until a final answer must, or mustn't, be. This result becomes a truth condition for judgements on the nature of the object. Yet, some conclusions seem independent deductions. But, while one path of inquiry seems not to cross with another path of inquiry; they all point to the same end. Further, since each path points to the same end then each path is connected by a similar truth, that is what a thing **is** or **isn't**.

Each of these dialectical *schemata* result in valid conclusions, well-reasoned answers to questions. All have in common the dialectical practice of question and answer, through which questions become pieces of iron to hone the answers towards the Truth.

The Arts

Why, it's all nonsense, Alyosha. It's only a senseless poem of a senseless student, who could never write two lines of verse. Why do you take it so seriously?

- Ivan Karamazov to his brother

Art is an inclusive term for everything that depicts the natural world yet is also an imitation, or μίμησις. By this definition paintings, literature, poetry, and plays would all be considered various modes of art. This definition comes, in part, from Aristotle's

Poetics:

Epic poetry and Tragedy, as also Comedy, Dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and lyre-playing, are all, viewed as a whole, modes of imitation. But at the same time they differ from one another in three ways,

¹¹ See, for example, *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars*, Q2 A1: reply to objection 3.

either by a difference of kind in their means, or by differences in the objects, or in the manner of their imitations.¹²

An imitation is a created thing that is used to represent, or stand in for, natural things that occur in the world. Further, each imitation should stimulate the senses as the original object would, or direct the mind towards thoughts of the original object. Some paintings are created to represent landscapes, while others are painted to convey the artist's emotions. In both cases, a painting would be considered an imitation of either the landscape or the emotion. If the artist was proficient in the "μίμησις"¹³, or representation, then the work of art should stimulate the onlooker's mind and evoke thoughts, and feelings, similar to the artist's. This simulation of thoughts not of a person's own mind, but of the artist's, is in actuality a fabricated thought in the onlooker.

The problem that Aristotle does not seem to take into consideration is the vast variety of interpretations that arise. As the imitative arts have seemed to balloon in modern time, together with people's exposure to them, people have been creating interpretations that touch on all points of interest, the realistic or the abstract, contemplation or entertainment. The influx of participants in art has caused conflicts among interpretations to increase. To onlookers a piece of art can be an expression of the artist's appetites, and yet, to another interpreter, the same piece can be a meditation depicting the artist's own thoughts.

All of these interpretations are stimulated from the same imitation. How does one interpret a piece of art? Is there one conclusive interpretation? These questions are

¹² Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447^a15.

¹³ *Poetics*, 1447^b 15.

not new to this inquiry; rather they are just a rephrasing of “Is there a definitive truth?” Thus, the answer resides in the dialectic; yet this time some differences mark the approach to such questions. This is because a piece of art can be a reply, a product of inspiration, and one complete side of a dialogue.

Art can be a reply, for while the replies of Aristotle and Aquinas are more straight forward, a piece of art may try to imitate a world where a particular thought is completely true. Dostoevsky’s Ivan is created to be an embodiment of Kantian ethics and metaphysics. Thus Ivan is an atheist¹⁴ consumed by thought, which will eventually drive him mad; yet he is a champion of reason above all. In an amusing passage of the novel, Ivan and some monks discuss an article he wrote about the Church and State. The article is said to have claimed that the Church and State are essentially different entities that cannot coincide, though Ivan concludes the article with the idea that the Church should include the whole State.¹⁵ By the end of the dialogue, all the monks have a different interpretation of Ivan’s article. Païssy thinks that the Church would make heaven on earth, while Miïsov thinks that the Church would cease to be the Church and become the State. The reason why Ivan writes such an article is to articulate the need for a single judiciary system. Kant himself established a moral system that excluded the need for a god, and like Ivan, places moral judgements under a system of reason.

Ivan is a reply to Kant, for Ivan is the embodiment of Kantian ethics. Throughout the novel, Ivan may be supposed to display these ethics to the reader. In dialogues between characters, Ivan is supposed to participate in place of Kant. This allows for the reader to witness thoughts and engage with the world. The thought takes substance,

¹⁴ Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 36.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

questioning and responding to the characters in the novel. This personification of thoughts gives way to the imitative art's most pronounced characteristic, the dialogue of thoughts.

Philosophical works try to find and define truths about the world, but the arts seem to take these discovered and defined truths and make them active participants in the *schemata* of the imitative work. Therefore art allows for two thoughts to converse with each other more directly than in the natural world. *The Brothers Karamazov* allows Ivan and Alyosha to have one final discussion before Ivan leaves for Moscow. These two have been depicted throughout the novel as being complete opposites in matters of belief and personality. Alyosha, as his name indicates, takes the place of the defender of man: his character takes on the ideals of Christianity as well as thoughts that arise out of Christian mysticism. Alyosha prioritizes the needs of others often over the needs of himself.¹⁶ Alyosha tends to look at the heart of the other characters.¹⁷ Thus, the meeting of Alyosha and Ivan is a stand-in for a dialogue between Kantian ethics and Christian teaching, particularly the Christian teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church, of which Dostoevsky was a part.

From this discussion Ivan reveals that he has a “Euclidian mind” that can accept God, but not the world created by God.¹⁸ Ivan holds this belief because he has read about the ruthlessness of humanity and thus does not wish to be in “harmony”¹⁹ with it. On the other side, Alyosha affirms that Ivan does believe in God, yet allows for a “hell in [his] heart”²⁰. Alyosha also strikes a chord in mentioning that Ivan’s method to endure

¹⁶ Matthew 19:19.

¹⁷ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 131.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 218.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 227.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 243.

the world seems to come from the idea that “everything is lawful”.²¹ Ivan seems to become uncomfortable with the direction their talk had taken and immediately becomes patronizing to Alyosha and leaves the dialogue. By ending quite abruptly, this great imitation of a dialogue between Kant and a Christian mystic indicates an objection Kantian ethics would need to reply to: “What if an individual reasoned that everything was lawful?”

To summarize: this whole section of the novel can be used as a reply to Kant. Kant’s arguments are not portrayed as weak by Dostoevsky. Rather, Dostoevsky makes Ivan give good arguments by pointing out the apparent difficulty in concluding that ethics could exist universally when people vary widely when it comes to moral living. Dostoevsky takes the strongest of Kant’s arguments and places them against his strongest counter-arguments. Dostoevsky simulates a dialogue between his Christian beliefs and Kant through the characters of Ivan and Alyosha. Therefore, Dostoevsky has responded to Kant by the imitation of his art.

While an artist might imitate both sides of a dialogue in the art, an artist might opt to give just one side of dialogue; allowing the onlooker to be a part of the dialectical practice. St. John of the Cross is an example of an artist delivering one side of an argument, viz. his poems, and then subjecting the poem to dialectical examination. St. John isn’t just the artist of the poems, but also takes on the role of an interpreter.

One may ask, with good reason, “Why doesn’t St. John just give his intentions instead of writing a treatise?” St. John is considered a Catholic mystic from Spain, a part of the Discalced Carmelite Order. He is attempting to make sense of his poems as well as

²¹*The Brothers Karamazov*, 243

use them as an aid to teach people about the spiritual life. St. John is working with inspiration, what Kant might call “cognition” with “insufficient [information] to supply us with material (objective) truth”, and so information acquired “[independent] of logic”.²² Thus, St. John is in effect trying to retroactively apply reason to his poems. While one might criticize inspiration (a task for later in the inquiry), regardless, St. John is trying to reason with the feelings and thoughts that are being expressed in the poem.

Another critique of St. John’s approach to interpretation is his great reliance on biblical scripture, limiting the use of knowledge that comes from “experience or science”²³. St. John is however using all his faculties of reason to interpret the meaning of his poems. Further, St. John is trained in the use of philosophy, being a part of the University of Salamanca’s arts program, before moving on to theology.²⁴ Ultimately, St. John is trying to compose a work of theology that originates in his faith, and so St. John must bridge the gap between intellect and faith. To the intellect “faith is also like a dark night”, or purgation. Overall, St. John’s approach is invaluable when trying to understand how to apply reason to artistic imitations.

One dark night,
fired with Love’s urgent longings
-ah, sheer grace!-
my house being now all still.²⁵

St. John is trying to chart a path towards union with God. He first reasons that the soul is in need of purgation, or a sort of “night”.²⁶ St. John continues to reason: night is the purgation of light to the eye; thus, the purgation of desires, or appetites,

²² *Critique of Pure Reason*, B85.

²³ St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Prologue paragraph 2.

²⁴ This was, and still is, a typical practice for men training to be priest; cf. Institute of Carmelite Studies, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, 11

²⁵ St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night*.

²⁶ *Ascent of Mount Carmel Book 1*, Ch. 1, Para.2.

should be a night to the soul.²⁷ The soul should first endure the night of the senses, followed by the night of the spirit. This purgation of the senses, and desires of the soul, is in order to make the soul “arks”, that is, physical representations of Gods marriage to all humanity.²⁸ For the Ark of the Covenant was built by the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt, and after they had received the Law of God. The Ark was meant to house the law as well as the rod of Aaron²⁹, marking Israel as God’s chosen people³⁰. In order to achieve this, St. John argues that the human heart should not have any other loves than that of God and His law.²⁹ This is because St. John sees the stimulation of the senses and the desires of the soul as “light” to these faculties, yet in order to achieve the desired union, darkness was needed. St. John reasons, as Aristotle did, “that two contraries cannot coexist in the same subject”³¹, and thus one only can exercise the soul. People either obtain light or darkness, not both.

St. John is not arguing for people to sequester themselves forever, but all who desired to pursue a union with God would first need to strip their souls bare by the purgation of the night. Though, as an object still exists in the dark, so, too, can people retain their faculties while immersing themselves in the dark night. The section of the poem included above is supposed to represent the soul that has, by grace, gone through the night and found union with its beloved.³² While this short explanation comes very early in the treatise, the art of his poem acts as a lens that focuses St. John’s thoughts. From there St. John uses his reason, organizing and developing his ideas in the same

²⁷ *Ascent of Mount Carmel Book 1*, Ch. 4, Para.3.

²⁸ *Ibid*, Ch. 5, Para 8.

²⁹ *Numbers*, 17:10.

³⁰ *Exodus*, 6:7.

³¹ *Ibid*, Ch. 4, Para. 2.

³² *Ibid*, Ch. 1, Para. 4-5.

manner as Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*. As St. John works through the poem he articulates a point, expands on ideas, and concludes arguments. In the end, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* becomes its own response, in the dialogue, to the ideas given in the poem.

While St. John's poem, and the subsequent treatise, are works of complex theology, nevertheless his works show a dialectical approach that one might take to art. St. John takes an idea given by the poem, and then using all his faculties for reasoning, gives a treatise on the path to spiritual union with God. St. John takes the ideas of the poem and responds, slowly chipping away at the question "What is a dark night?" He gives well-reasoned arguments to why one should follow his teachings. St. John also considers the argument that his teachings are too strict, but counter argues that point with an appeal to Aristotle. St. John of the Cross's use of reason to explain the art of his poems and teach his students, shows how art can initiate a dialogue with in its onlookers. Further, St. John's treaty is an example of how one can bring together art and philosophy. The treatise is a product of the poem, and the poem is enriched with meaning by the treatise.

One of the greatest difficulties with art is its ability to be a product of inspiration. Inspiration complicates art's ability to be used in obtaining the Truth by dialectical participation. Also, due to the complicated answer to the question "Where does inspiration come from?" it must first be discussed before the argument can move towards art and philosophy's complementariness. St. John of the Cross claimed that his poems were products of mystical experiences while in prison. Those mystical experiences are considered the inspiration for St. John to write his poems.

Inspiration

*Its origin (since it has none) none knows:
But that all origin from it arose,
Although by night.*

-St. John of the Cross

The reason why inspiration is difficult to reconcile with philosophy is because inspiration is the admitting that starting points of an artistic dialectical exchange are unknown. One could ask Dostoevsky for a reason why he wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*, and he might reply so that he could examine the effect Kantian ethics might have on a person's reasoning. He may have as many replies as there are themes in the book. Though if one were to ask St. John why he wrote his poem, he might at first be able to say that he was trying to make sense of something that he experienced. If he were pressed and asked "What was the experience like?" he would most likely say "I am unsure" and be speaking truthfully. This might be why *Ascent of Mount Carmel* is an examination of only the first few stanzas of the poem *A Dark Night*.

Plato's Socrates likens inspiration and the poets to the movements of a chain in *Ion*. The gods are the holders of the chain, and the poets are the first links of the chain. From the poets come the rhapsodes, of whom Ion is a part, and the links continue until the auditor-spectators are the sole remainders.³³ Socrates can only conclude, later in the *Phaedrus*, that inspiration is like a form of madness. There is the madness of the prophets as well as that which arises from "mystic rites and purifications".³⁴ The last type of madness "is possession by the Muses"³⁵ which sends people into a "Bacchic

³³ *Ion*, 535e.

³⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244e.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 245a.

frenzy of songs and poetry”.³⁷ Thus, Socrates’s final conclusion is that inspiration is a “sort of madness . . . given [to] us by the gods to ensure our greatest good fortune”.³⁶

Socrates’s conclusion that one possible source of inspiration is the gods complicates this inquiry; because philosophy asks, “Does God or gods exist?” If the answer is no, then inspiration is just madness. If the answer is yes, then one could argue that a god might inspire an individual. Rather than following this path, what if the beginning question was “Can an artist be inspired?” This question allows for the question of god to be postponed till later.

Following this path, artist do claim to be inspired: look at St. John. Thus inspiration, seems to be art whose *μίμησις* is considered appealing or good, but the artist themselves don’t seem to have the knowledge as to why their art is appealing or good, so that they may be able to come to a conclusion of their own. An artist might suppose that their inspiration came from their surroundings. An example of this might be looking towards extraordinary people in the world, and so an artist, upon seeing these people, might see that which makes them extraordinary, their perfection in an action, and consider that appealing or good. This would lead to people being deficient with regard to some skills, and exemplars with regard to others.

Changing focus to this extraordinary individual, this person must either know or not know that their actions are exceptional. If they do not know, then the dialectic repeats. For these people are producing, not just art but effects that are appealing or good, yet they lack the knowledge as to why. Thus, they are unable to come to a conclusion about why they act in such a manner, which implies that their actions are

³⁶ *Phaedrus*, 245c.

products of inspiration. This answer may be expressed in a variety of ways: for one might say they, too, are emulating surroundings, or they might attribute their exceptional actions to being taught by another. If the action was taught and the teacher acts only out of instinct, then they do not know why either. A person who was taught should be able trace that learning back to an explanation which could account for why, but, in such a case, ceases to be a person who was merely taught an exceptional action and is made a person who acts out of the goodness of the action.

If they do know, then good agents should be able to explain why their actions are good. The person with such wisdom and virtue would not be one who acts out of inspiration, but rather one who acts virtuously. Plato describes virtue as,

This harmony of the soul, taken as a whole, is virtue; but the particular training in respect of pleasure and pain, which leads you always to hate what you ought to hate, and love what you ought to love from the beginning of life to the end.³⁷

Thus the dialectic has concluded so far that inspiration is akin to virtue which is visible in other people, yet those who act exceptionally by inspiration do not know why that action is exceptional, and may not know why they act in an exceptional manner.

The dialectic has yet to consider St. John, who was imprisoned and yet experienced inspiration; that is to say, he experienced inspiration from pure thought, not from his surroundings. Plus, St. John would be the first to say that in order to experience that which is pointed at in the poem, one must shut out one's surroundings. Also, the dialectic has not considered the cycles of inspiration that never close.

³⁷ Plato, *Laws*, 653c.

To conclude this part of the dialectic, the use of Aquinas's analogous thinking is needed as well as Aristotle's categories.³⁸ But first to Aristotle to understand the factor that makes art appealing.

A realistic mode of imitation is required to give its onlookers a picture of the world that is believable. This is because people delight in viewing "the most realistic representations"³⁹ of the arts. The realistic imitations offer onlookers a picture of the world while at the same time allowing them to learn something.⁴⁰ Alyosha is depicted in the novel with Christ-like qualities. He is caring to a fault and full of a love for humanity⁴¹, and so his character seems almost too good to be an actual person. Similarly, Mitya seems to be an unrealistic character, too wild and brash. While people do exist like these characters, these people are rare. Though Alyosha and Mitya would both be considered by Aristotle to be realistic characters, these men are pictures; yet through them, readers of the novel are offered insight into guiding principles of the natural world. To make a realistic representation shouldn't mean to recreate the natural world to a tee, but rather to make a world with similar "execution[s] or colouring[s] or some [other] cause."⁴² Characters may be fantastical in their creation, supernatural in their abilities, or purely imaginative in their being, but their appeal comes from the principles and ideas they embody and reflect to observers.

And so, if in each case of inspiration the artist is trying to express something that is appealing or good, then all cases of inspiration are linked by similar "executions . . . colour[s] or some cause"⁴⁴. These principles of inspiration, whatever they may be, either

³⁸ *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars*, Q13 A5: reply.

³⁹ *Poetics*, 1448^b 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 1448^b 16.

⁴¹ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 332.

⁴² *Poetics*, 1448^b20.

originate from Aristotle's categories, because they can be differentiated as principles, or, if one wished to go farther, to God by analogy. This is because if they are a part of the categories then they must partake in the genus of being. To Aquinas, God is being, and thus principles of inspiration could be "said of God and [the principles] analogically."⁴³

Complementary

*The man said,
This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.
-Genesis 2:23*

Finally, this inquiry reaches the point to look at whether art and philosophy are complementary. For, while this inquiry has been a demonstration of the use of the philosophy to understand art and *vice versa*, little has been said about whether each could be considered complementary to the other. "Complementary" is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as:

"Complementary, adj. and noun.

Adj.:

a) Forming a complement, completing, perfecting.

b) Of two (or more) things: Mutually complementing or completing each other's deficiencies."⁴⁴

Philosophy and art are complementary, for each makes up for the deficiencies of the other by way of completing or perfecting. Both are attempts, by people, to explain the world around them. Thus, philosophy and art dwell in the same world. Philosophy takes the ethereal world and attempts to understand it and define it. Art, being

⁴³ *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars, Q13 A5*: reply.

⁴⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, definition of complementary.

unconcerned with definitions, desires to show and express that which is beautiful and otherworldly: hence, the ethereal.

Philosophy would then initially seem to be the opposite of art. This is because philosophy deals with the principles that exist in the natural world, desiring to know these principles and define them. Art deals with fabrication and imitation of the natural world. These worlds become expressions not of the natural world, but of the artist's own perceptions. Making worlds that resemble the natural one, artists exploit the world's malleability to their own ends: either persuasion, entertaining, or profit-making. And since the end of philosophy is wisdom, art initially seems to oppose philosophy.

But on the contrary, many of Plato's works are fabrications, events designed to deliver an argument of his own creation. Further, religious text are consisting of arts, which encourage their adherents, who are a part of the natural world, to live with virtue, virtue which is affirmed by philosophy. And so, if an artist didn't desire the three ends listed above, but instead the good or appealing, then philosophy would be a concern of art. Also, if art allows philosophy to express ideas and engage the dialectic, then art, likewise, would be a concern of philosophy.

To continue, art and philosophy are complementary because, in one regard, art prepares the mind for philosophy and philosophy makes appealing or good art. This is because art desires to be appealing to its observers, but the people seem to be most interested in those things that are realistic and that they can relate to most. The most realistic representations that people can relate to are present in natural things. Thus, if art wished to be appealing, or good, it should try to show imitation of the natural world that best communicates similar principles, i.e. "executions... colour[s] or some

cause[s]”⁴⁵, that exist in the natural world. Of course art may exaggerate, but this will come to cost art its realism. Now, if an artist wished to present principles of the natural world in art, the fabricated world, too, would be governed by the same principles that govern the natural world. Yet, these principles are discovered, defined, and differentiated by philosophy. If the fabricated world is similar to the natural world, by means of principles, this would make the fabricated world realistic. If the world is realistic, then people will find the art appealing or good. Thus, philosophy does make appealing or good art.

With the use of art in philosophy, the argument for that they are complements takes a different path. Art has a greater accessibility to people than philosophy. Surely, a great many more people know of Frodo and the Ring of Power than of the ring of Gyges. If philosophy informs the modes of imitation by means of governing principles, then people could know in part the wisdom of philosophy. But remember, philosophy is a dialectic, and so the greater number of people that can assist in refining dialectical conclusions would be desirable. But in order to get people to participate in the dialectic they must first be trained in philosophical practices, learning principles and how to dialogue, traveling the path their teachers took before them to understanding. It is easier to teach one who knows in part than one who knows nothing at all. In addition, ask any kid: to have a desirable thing now is more preferable than to have a desirable thing later. Therefore, most preferable would be well-trained people to participate in the dialectic as soon as possible. Thus, the quickest route to the most preferable desire of

⁴⁵ *Poetics*, 1448^b20.

the philosopher is to teach those who know in part. But those who know in part were first prepared by art. Thus, art prepares the way to philosophy.

To be clear, the objection is right if art were only focused on the three ends of persuasion, entertaining, or profit-making. But if an artist desired to make good art, then the artist would need to define the good and make that represent that definition in art. The finding of the good is a question for the philosopher; thus, the artist can become the philosopher, desiring to know the principles of the world.

A counter-argument might begin: “Is this relationship, as described above, really complementary, or just two fields benefiting from each other?” To which the reply would be: if art desires the same end as philosophy, which is knowing what is good and what is not, appealing art is possible. By what was demonstrated in the section on inspiration, the knowledge of the good would be considered knowledge of the wise and virtuous. Then a knowledge of philosophy will help complete the artist’s knowledge of the good in order to realistically represent that which is good in the art.

If philosophy wished to see a first cause or final cause, or to see the precise effects of a principle on the world, then a specific case must be examined. Though, the natural world is complex, multiple principles are constantly in effect, and thus it is impossible to view a specific case in the natural as the result of one particular principle. But art can fabricate a world that can emphasize one principle. Thus art can be a useful tool in examining principles of philosophy.

If philosophy wants arguments to be refined, then more counter-arguments are needed as well as defenses. If art helps in the end by creating more discussion and, by extension, helps in the ultimate end of refining arguments, then art has helped perfect

the conclusions of arguments. By definition, those things that complete and perfect each other are complementary; thus, so are art and philosophy.

The last objection this inquiry will handle is, Socrates claimed to know nothing:

So I withdrew and thought to myself: "I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know."⁴⁶

Is this the desired end of training someone philosophically, a Socrates-like philosopher?

And so, in fact, it would be desirable to have people that know nothing rather than people that know in part. Thus, there would be no need for art to prepare the way for philosophy, ultimately making the relationship one-sided and not complementary.

Let it first be said, Socrates was like a gadfly, not a teacher. At the end of teaching, one might say that they still have a lot to learn; therefore, it is possible there is actually no finite end to teaching. This is an idea that Socrates would agree with and which his speech would affirm, namely, the need of philosophers to admit and confront that which they don't know. And the entire use of inspiration in art is expressing that good which was confronted and admitting that one does not know that good's origin. With regard to teaching, the goal of teaching is fostering individuals with whom you are able to foster dialogue and pursue truth.

To simplify, art is lacking boundaries, residing mainly in the ethereal world. Similarly, philosophy lacks the appeal and distribution seen with art. In order to understand the arguments given, a person must first train the mind and reason in the dialectical skill. Yet, the use of philosophy in art perfects the imitation by making it

⁴⁶ Plato, *Apology*, 21d.

appealing and good. Equally important, the use of art in philosophy completes the ends of philosophy by allowing people to practically obtain wisdom. Through this mere acquaintance with wisdom, understanding is already at work molding the mind to examine ideas, question, and think reasonably.

Conclusion

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*
-Robert Frost

Let this be brief: the fact that art and philosophy can be used to complete and perfect each other's dialectic indicates the two are complementary. Both art's imitations, and philosophy's conclusions, are able to be subjected to the force of the dialectic. While the dialectic refines the principles of philosophy, the dialectic also draws out and affirms meaning in the modes of imitation. Further, art makes use of the dialectic itself by using it as *schemata* to examine principles present in the world in a controlled environment, that is, as the fabricated worlds of art. And this is only but one way the natural world's governing principles can be realistically represented in the imitations of art. Art and philosophy are people's attempt to make sense of the world, tied together by this pursuit of what is and is not; both paths arrive at conclusions that point towards the Truth.