

Beauty, Truth, and Christianity: An Essay
Outlining Socio-Phenomenological *Acedia*

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*I dedicate this book to Krishna, a friend,
philosopher, and brother in Christ.*

CONTENTS

I. Truth, Beauty and Christianity: A Kantian Thesis

The book briefly explained. Kantian thesis is explicit: Christianity's demise follows from its failure to be beautiful. Working on the truth of Christianity—which is successful i.e., contemporary analytic philosophers of religion and philosophical theologians work on natural theology and reformed epistemology—will not work if it fails to be beautiful (for it deals with theism and atheism—not necessarily 'apatheism.'). Showing the disastrous consequences of atheism is not enough; if Christianity is not seen as beautiful, the 'meaning void' is not filled. Christianity's failure to be beautiful i.e., religious war, Church history, lack of care etc., has resulted in a rejection of Christianity—not of reasons, but of taste (Nietzsche). Thus, working on the truth of theism might move some, but there are many to whom the statement of Nietzsche applies. Thus the modern predicament is that of rejection of God and all that follows from it. One important consequence: *Acedia*. With *acedia* comes the metaphysical failure to 'see.' Learning to 'see' again is a call to action for Christians to make Christianity beautiful again i.e., through living out the faith. It is then that socio-phenomenological *acedia* can be broken through, and evangelism can be most effective.

II. Our Current Predicament: What are the facts?

The facts are laid out: We live in a culture dominated by joylessness, despair, anxiety, escapism, distractionism, lightness of being, endless busyness, suicide, depression,

weariness, discouragement, instability, lack of peace and joy et cetera. Here are societal examples: music, neoliberal and meritocratic myth in contemporary educational institutions, pornography, movies, books, religious pluralism, et cetera. With the rejection of God in culture the process of ‘losing sight’—in other words *secularization*—unfolds and has manifestly disastrous consequences. There are two steps. One immediately identifiable in the 21st century and one more philosophical. The first is the secular movement and its attack on the family, self, traditional values, and religious experience. (JP II on Family; Richard Dawkins (we are biological machines); Attack on Traditional Values (and values themselves—Michael Ruse), especially marriage too; religious experience transformed into political experience (Pirani)). This attack has a philosophical past, namely, the attempt to secularize and demystify the world through scientism, individualism and distractionism. Evidence of this is Nietzsche’s concept of the *Übermensch*, 20th century individualist French existentialism (dominantly Sartre) and the contemporary cultural milieu i.e., cheap entertainment, the religion of sex (as Turek notes), the idolization of socio-economic power (Metcalf) and the scientism of Alex Rosenberg and Lawrence Krauss. Pascal has a lot to say here: This is an attempt to *distract* us and move us away from ‘seeing.’ Why have we begun to fail to ‘see’? ‘Seeing’ what? The original source of all goodness—God Himself. *Acedia* is more than a condition; it is a sickness (Kierkegaard).

III. III. Hermeneutics, Metaphysical ‘Sight’, and *Acedia*

What is needed is (i) a definition of *acedia* and (ii) an interpretation of the relationship between the contemporary condition and *acedia* itself. The best

explanation of the phenomena is the rejection of God from an inability to 'see'; however, the peculiar problem begotten here is *acedia*, the refusal to be oneself and fulfill one's essential nature (since without God there is no self nor duty). The concept of *acedia* is defined and systematically developed clearly (the work of Snell). The relationship between the facts of what socio-culturally is happening i.e., joylessness and *acedia* is made by noting the impossibility of "constructing" the vacuum of meaning left with the rejection of God "into something objectively real." (Merton 22). This is no reason to think *acedia* will persist; rather, the only way to 'see' again is by making Christianity beautiful again.

IV. Beauty: Overcoming Socio-Phenomenological *Acedia*

Acedia, wide-spread and ingrained into contemporary culture, might be deemed '*socio-phenomenological acedia*'; while this is problematic and difficult to get a firm grip on, the following question demands an answer: How is it to be overcome? My suggestion is not novel, but a work already in progress: living out Christianity. The beauty of Christianity is exemplified through its being lived out in the real world. This is explored in many directions: living out the joy of love, the family, acting morally i.e., social justice and displaying its beauty. Only then can objective beauty be seen, and evangelism by beauty be possible.

Conclusion: Learning to 'See' Again

Josef Pieper and Frank Sheed on the notion of 'seeing' are examined. Metaphysical reflections on beauty, love and truth are considered and expanded on. The current movement of analytic philosophy of religion is headed in the right direction, but must be aware of the considerations

aforementioned in this book. It is then that evangelism—as Patrick Sullivan goes through it: by beauty, truth and goodness—can—God willingly—be maximally fruitful. Optimism, not pessimism, is the conclusion of this book.

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To add for the final copy: Bibliography, Taylor, Balthasar, Dostoevsky and Kreeft. Perhaps more Pascal, Lewis and Pieper too.

CHAPTER I

Truth, Beauty and Christianity: A Kantian
Thesis

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) has allegedly made the following argument: If Christianity ceases to be lovable or beautiful, its demise is inevitable.¹ I, with Kant, agree that this is the case; more than that, I think that Kant's thesis has received empirical support in the 21st century. It is no surprise that—well before the 21st century—philosopher

¹ Patrick Sullivan's note. 'Beautiful' is my addition since presumably what is lovable is beautiful—*intrinsically*. If this misses Kant's thesis, I deflate my view to that of a, well, a 'Rehmanian' thesis—much less valuable but my thesis nonetheless.

Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) noticed this truth very clearly: “What is now decisive against Christianity is our taste, no longer our reasons.”² Without sufficient reason to view Christianity as a live and viable option—one even worth thinking about—Christianity becomes a backburner topic, a ‘past’ idea that no longer works and which goes contrary to our ‘taste’. Frank Turek, a contemporary Christian philosopher, asks the following question: “If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian?”³ The question “if Christianity were true, *should* you become a Christian?” misses the socio-cultural fact: It might be

² Gay science, 132.

³ “Frank Turek: If Christianity Were True... (James Robison / LIFE Today)” at 0:09 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb11PWlpuXI>. Accessed October 23rd, 2016.

the case—as I think it is—that *rationally speaking* it is absurd to deny Christianity based on not wanting it to be true, but the question of its denial—in the face of good reasons for thinking it to be true—demands explanation. So, the structure of this book should be thought of in the following way.

Instead of beginning with the Kantian thesis, I want to work my way towards it systematically and philosophically towards the conclusion by laying out what might be called ‘Our Current Predicament.’ By this, I mean the facts that are both pressing and seemingly unending i.e., exhaustion, despair and depression, for instance. While it would be a glittering generalization to say this is the case for everyone—and it is a claim I do not want to make—it is no doubt a

sociological and phenomenological problem faced in modern culture (and I develop what this means—fully—around the end of the book by coining the term ‘socio-phenomenological *acedia*’). By laying out the facts of our current predicament, we are better able to make the *interpretive* question, seeking hermeneutical insight into why the facts are as they are. Why does, for instance, *apatheism*⁴ exist? Why is it so wide-spread? (‘Apatheism’ is the view that whether or not God exists, it ultimately does not matter). While this seems a historical question, that is, one most apt for the historian to answer, in my view this is false: It is a philosophical question, demanding hermeneutical clarity

⁴ I take apatheism, *acedia* and socio-phenomenological *acedia* to be roughly the same concept (differing in degrees, though, depending on the context).

and philosophical precision. True, there is a historical dimension to the problem—and I am indeed sensitive to it—but the main thread of the problem is philosophical. While I myself am not most apt for such a task, I do think that I can convey the seriousness of the modern predicament and lay out prospects—which are already taking place—towards a solution. So, having laid out the facts of the situation in which we find ourselves, the interpretation I want to make is that this is rooted in *acedia*.

The term *acedia*, which I will define more carefully and fully in the chapters to proceed, is not mere sloth; rather, it is a rejection of human nature (essence) and its teleology (purpose). It is a rejection of the divine goodness immanent within oneself,

and a despair to fail to be oneself.⁵ The facts i.e., anxiety, joylessness, are best explained by *acedia*, *acedia* itself by the rejection of God as the foundation of being and a gateway to further rejection of God as the foundation of being. It is both the *symptom* and the *sickness*. So, by evaluating our current predicament and viewing it from the perspective of *acedia*, we are then able to see that part of *acedia* is an inability ‘to see.’

With *acedia*, I continue, comes the inability to ‘see’ (in a metaphysical/epistemic, not visual sense). If *acedia* includes the rejection of God as the foundation for all goodness, truth and beauty, our ability to

⁵ The former half of this thought is from Josef Pieper. *Leisure*. The second from Kierkegaard (quoted in Pieper).

see the world as beautiful, goodness as beautiful and being itself as beautiful, something must fill the ‘void of meaning.’ This ‘void’ is filled in multifarious ways and contemporary culture is persistent in making it work i.e., technology as distractionism, cheap entertainment, radical individualism, et cetera. There are many ways (and I lay them out on a practical, then philosophical level). To ‘see’ again, I conclude, is by making Christianity beautiful again. It will only be by a concrete example of living the faith out that Christian truth will be heard. Patrick Sullivan puts this nicely: “we have to *show* them.”⁶ This concept of ‘seeing’ I

⁶ (Italics mine). “Life on the Rock with Patrick Sullivan” 18:12

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQuacu0NYY68> Accessed October 23rd, 2016.

will explore through two great Catholic thinkers, Frank Sheed (1897-1981) and Josef Pieper (1904-1997) and conclude that by *seeing*, we can *show*. To 'see' means to see what, in the real world, *is*; helping others to 'see' *is*, ultimately, to show them the beauty again of Christianity.

This book is in some sense my notes and thought on the problem for some time; I have always noticed that there exists this sort of apatheism, and that its popularity is gaining influence. This book serves to highlight some key aspects of the problems, facts surrounding the problem and, hopefully, some insight into the interior mechanics of the problem which, when understood, give rise to a whole conceptual picture of our current predicament. It was

C.S Lewis who wrote that the person who knows some detail of reality knows less than the person who can see the whole for what it is.⁷ While my goal is to give a sort of outline of the problem, my proposed solution and even the details of the outline itself will inevitably be vague and only a partial account. Nietzsche asked a very important question in his 1888 *Ecce Homo*: “Have I been understood?”⁸ While perhaps many of the ideas will appear strange—and all too familiar at times—I am cognizant of the fact that many of the ideas might be too complex (or too confused) to be put simply. Please take this as a literary vice on my part and not on my ideas.

⁷ Ref. Mere Christianity.

⁸ Basic Writings, pg. 788.

The conclusion of the book is optimistic, rather than pessimistic. While the facts to need to be addressed and taken seriously, this should not be reason to doubt that with a loving witness and example to the truth of Christianity, beauty might re-enter in the world and, more optimistically, break through socio-phenomenological *acedia* that prevents real *sight*.

CHAPTER II

Our Current Predicament: What are the facts?

“If we now look at our society, what facts do we observe, facts that should make us think?”⁹

-Josef Pieper

“Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing?”¹⁰

-Friedrich Nietzsche

Unfortunately, like many great insights, the truth of the matter isn't always pretty. Fortunately, though, even Nietzsche agreed that the *ugliness* of truth is no reason to deny that it is truth nonetheless: “Something might be true while being

⁹ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*, pg. 49.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*. Pg. (Ref. Madman story).

harmful and dangerous in the highest degree.”¹¹ So, just because a truth is ugly i.e., our current moral situation, does not mean that we can deny its truth, that is, deny that we have a serious moral problem. To give a concrete example, religion might have always had a horrible ‘living out’ aspect i.e., religious wars, but from that we cannot infer the falsity of the religion itself.¹² But, further than that, I want to employ something like a metaphor that Nietzsche adopted in exploring our current predicament:

“Every philosophy is a foreground philosophy—that is a hermit’s judgement: “There is something

¹¹ Basic Writings, 239.

¹² Two notes. This is WLC’s argument Ref. Craig vs. Hitchens debate. Secondly, for an account of the danger of religion, see Ward’s work “Is Religion Dangerous?”.

arbitrary in his stopping here to look back and around, In his not digging deeper here but laying his spade aside; there is also something suspicious about it.” Every philosophy also conceals a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word also a mask.”¹³

Instead of “leaving [the] spade aside”, I want to dig deeper into the modern predicament, and so thereafter get a grasp of our topic—*acedia*. From these foreground considerations, we can have a much clearer view on the facts of our culture: Anxiety, escapism, distractionism, lightness of being, endless busyness, suicide¹⁴, depression, weariness, discouragement, instability, lack

¹³ Nietzsche, basic writings, pg. 419.

¹⁴ Consider the importance of suicide as even Albert Camus (1913-1960), beginning his *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), says the following: “There is but one truly philosophical problem and that is suicide.” (pg. 1).

of silence, peace and joy. There are three of these that I think are almost umbrella terms for the rest, namely, an *inability for silence*, and a constant sense of *anxiety* and *joylessness*. While there is much to be said here—and eventually there will be—it is appropriate to continue with the list of facts of our current predicament in addition to the aforementioned ones; however, this time the examples will be *in concreto*.

The consumeristic ideals of the modern “working world” come in two forms: *homo economicus* and an inability to have *leisure*. Josef Pieper (1904–1997), the great Catholic German philosopher of the 20th century, argues that a culture without leisure is the culture we inhabit, and that in our ‘bourgeois world’ “a man accepts his

environment defined as it is by the immediate needs of life.”¹⁵ Thus, the world has mere superficial depth; what is most important is the ability to satisfy immediate needs. Notice the consequence though; there is no room for leisure since time is spent aiming for ‘security’, and thus “nothing wonderful ever happens in this [bourgeois] world.”¹⁶ While this is most certainly correct, there are educational implications: “Education concerns the whole man; an educated man is a man with a point of view from which he takes in the whole world.”¹⁷

Bryan Metcalfe, a Canadian social and political philosopher, argues that it is

¹⁵ Leisure, 99.

¹⁶ Leisure, 99.

¹⁷ Leisure, 36.

precisely in contemporary educational systems that two socio-political myths—‘myth’ in the sense that Hans Blumenberg conceived of—ruins democratic myth and fosters a morally destructive, philosophical anthropology. The neoliberal and meritocratic myth, he says, brings forth a decaying educational system. He gives an anecdote of his pedagogical experience:

“For instance, as a teacher in a publicly funded Catholic secondary school, I have noticed that there is a significant tension between Catholicism’s embrace of altruism and equality rooted in a collective and spiritual struggle for social justice and a neoliberal myth that has entered into the narrative goals of my school that stresses mass, individual competition for grades, consumerism, and the sorting of

students into hierarchical classes.”¹⁸

Unfortunately, if I myself can be anecdotal along with Metcalfe, having experienced the truth of this (I myself having been educated in the same high school he taught in), I am convinced that Metcalfe’s analysis is, to the core, correct. Be that as it may, there are unanswered questions: How did this happen? What fosters these myths? How are we to escape their morally eroding effects? These, and many other questions, are directly addressed in his doctoral dissertation *Pedagogy of Mythos* (2013). And so we have two societal examples of a culture in ruins. The list, sadly, continues.

¹⁸ *Pedagogy of Mythos* pg. 204.

The desire and oppressive need for ‘more’, a sin—yes, to use that dreaded word—typically called ‘greed’ has received not merely a suggestive force i.e., don’t be greedy, but sometimes splurge, but a socio-political *fostering* of it. Kierkegaard put our culture like this: “Give me money, he will say, and I am saved.”¹⁹ The culture which we inhabit—similar to the one Kierkegaard was imagining—is capitalistic in this respect, but more fundamentally a culture in which the notions of ‘want’, ‘need’, ‘desire’ of material objects are so intertwined that the notion of ‘identity’ becomes merged into our consumeristic ideals; and when the latter is destroyed, so is the former: “You have absorbed its being and it is now

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Present Age*, pg. 12.

evacuated as an object, but so are you evacuated.”²⁰ There exists, though, something behind the desire for material objects. It is not merely the object itself that is what one wants, but, rather, its effects.²¹ But what effect could be produced by material consumption? A speculative guess might be the following: The modern person has an inability to *see*. To see what? To see *what truly matters*. The apathy toward what really matters receives interesting literary expression by the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) in his *Notes from the Underground* (1864): “Consumption is a peculiar disease. It’s not like a fever, you

²⁰ Snell pg. 69. (Here is referenced a reference to Percy’s six stages of consumption and desire as relevant to fashion—the last stage I am using here).

²¹ One thinks of St. Augustine’s stealing story in *Confessions*.

know. A consumptive keeps hoping and cheering himself up till the very last minute, saying that he's all right."²² So, what is desired—including consumption *itself*—are distractions which fill the void of meaning in one's life, and which hopefully constitute something like 'meaning' for that person. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) had much to say on distractionism, and here is just one line from his *Pensées*: "We run heedlessly into the abyss after putting something in front of us to stop us seeing it."²³ But what is the problem, you ask? Simply this: All these finite attempts and endeavors to devour the object in question are simply ways in which one might re-interpret their own emptiness. There is simply no reason to think that a

²² Dostoevsky, pg. 170.

²³ *Pensees*, pg. 82.

finite set of devoured objects could be constitutive of objective meaning. Moving on, though, from materialistic consumption.

Music, film and books are perfect examples of our current ‘malaise.’²⁴ Since an analysis of these in-depth will not prove fruitful—the point I am making is easily understood without dozens of examples—let me focus on music. Music, that thing “so close to the fundamentals of human existence”²⁵, has taken a turn for the worse in contemporary culture. Music is no longer a great way, method or gateway for silence or wonder, but an empty noise, demanding attention to meaningless lyrics, and which rhythmically promote empty and morally

²⁴ This term is used by Charles Taylor to describe our current situation. Ref. *Secular Age*.

²⁵ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*, pg. 39.

vacuous ideas. It is interesting that the intuition that women are objectified, that the artist deliberately uses provocative language, that much lyric content is morally abhorrent in contemporary music is felt to be very strong, and *yet* we listen to the music anyway as Winston listened to the rhythmic tunes of Big Brother: "...it was a sort of hymn to the wisdom and majesty of Big Brother, but still more it was an act of self-hypnosis, a deliberate drowning of consciousness by means of a rhythmic noise."²⁶

Consider a very telling passage from Josef Pieper:

“We observe [in our society] how much the most trivial and “light”

²⁶ 1984, pg. 17.

music, the “happy sound”, has become the most common and pervasive phenomenon. By its sheer banality, this music expresses quite accurately the cheap self-deception that on the inner existential level is all fine, there is “nothing to worry about”, everything is in good order, really. We observe how much attention is demanded by—and willingly given to—the rhythmic beat of a certain crude and orgiastic music, a music “for slaves” (as Aristotle puts it). Both kinds of music, the “happy sound” as well as the numbing beat, claim legitimacy as “entertainment”, as means, that is, of satisfying without success, the boredom and existential void that are caused and increased by each other and that equally have become a common and pervasive phenomenon. We further observe how music, perhaps on a formally much level, is frequently selected and consumed as a means of personal enchantment, of escapism of a certain pseudo-deliverance, and as a means to achieve delight that remains merely “skin-deep”

(*von aussen her*, as Rilke said)... We fundamentally observe that nihilistic music, a despairing parody of creation, is not only played by great artists in novels such as *Doctor Faustus* but is real, which incidentally prompted the disturbing observation equating the history of Western music with the “history of a soul’s degeneration”.²⁷

I am not sure that I can add anything significant to what has been said, besides Pieper’s own next comment: “We observe all this with great alarm”.²⁸ Another fact of our culture is an obsession with ‘the screen.’

The screen, a wonderful means of using technology, has become a deliberate means for evil in contemporary culture. With hyper-obsession with ‘what is new’—

²⁷ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*, pg. 49-50.

²⁸ Pieper, *OLS* pg. 50

this has been already discussed and so I leave this thought here—and an obsession with the screen, we have found ourselves with a further means for an old problem, namely, that of the “concupiscence of the eyes”:

“The “concupiscence of the eyes” reaches its utmost destructive and extirpative power at the point where it has constructed for itself a world in its own image and likeness, where it has surrounded itself with the restlessness of a ceaseless film of meaningless objects for show and with a literally deafening noise of nothing more than impressions and sensations that roar in an uninterrupted chase around every window of the senses. Behind their papery façade of ostentation lies absolute nothingness, a “world” of at most one-day constructs that often become insipid after just one-quarter of an hour and are thrown out like a newspaper that has been

read or a magazine that has been paged through; a world which, before the revealing gaze of a sound spirit uninfected by its contagion, shows itself to be like a metropolitan entertainment district in the harsh clarity of a winter morning: barren, bleak, and ghostly to the point of pushing one to despair.”²⁹

It is not hard to see what is going on here; the eyes, inasmuch as they are now means for viewing what is unlawful, immoral and contrary to our fundamental nature, are put into a position where the “deafening noise” of the “ceaseless film of meaningless objects for show” can constitute our meaning. Put more bluntly and in conjunction with technology, we are now seeing a vindication

²⁹ Josef Pieper, *OVHH*, pg. 40.

of Pieper's statement in modern times. Let me give a technological example.

The ability to view pornography on the internet is beyond 'simple.' In fact, with a simple ability to use the internet—an ability that is stretching uncomfortably to younger ages every year—so the ability, too, for the viewing of such material becomes possible. Consider the insight Reinhart Hutter has to offer:

“What seems most characteristic of the compulsive consumption of pornography is that the consumer no longer finds any pleasure in looking at the simulacra. All he has left, when the act is completed, is a craving for stimulating a desire that will always remain unsatisfied. What is to be learned from the testimonies of pornography's users is the important fact that, contrary to prevailing cultural assumptions,

the lust of the eyes is not a "hot" but rather a "cold" vice. *It arises from the roaming unrest of the spirit rooted in a spiritual apathy that, again, despairs of and eventually comes to resent the very transcendence in which the dignity of the human person has its roots.* The lust of the eyes that feeds on internet pornography does not inflame but rather freezes the soul and the heart in a cold indifference to the human dignity of others and of oneself.”³⁰

The italics are mine here, and the use is deliberate. The fact that there is a connection between apathy and the watching of pornography is significant,

³⁰ Hutter, Reinhard. "Pornography and acedia: Reinhard Hutter offers a spiritual analysis of and remedy for lust of the eyes." *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, no. 222, 2012, p. 45+. *Academic*

OneFile, go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=lond95336&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CA283945662&it=r&asid=780874314f2903336b05561dd17c183e. Accessed 11 Nov. 2016.

fundamentally, for many reasons. One of which, though, stands out: Pieper called this a “ceaseless film of meaningless objects for show” and that is what is happening here; women and men in these pornographic contexts become meaningless objects, used and abused for the benefit of the viewer, making no reference to their intrinsic dignity. Technology, rather than preventing this, becomes a means to it. This is not to say that technology is intrinsically bad—quite the contrary! Rather, what I am urging is that this misuse of technology has its roots in *acedia*. Moving, though, to the phenomenon of our current *philosophical* ³¹ predicament.

³¹ I include scientists here too, though they are amateur philosophers—and thus their views are often not wholly surprising.

There have been many movements in philosophy which deny the existence of God and many which do not. To give classic examples of the former (not in order): 21st century post-modern thought, logical positivism, 20th century French existentialism, 19th century existentialism (at least Nietzsche), Artificial Intelligence (at least atheistic strands of it), and so forth. While these historical episodes are interesting in their own right, they are not important here; rather, what is important is our current predicament. So, besides the developments in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion, theology and philosophical theology, what have philosophers been arguing? Let me give some brief 21st century examples.

Physicist Lawrence Krauss argues that science can determine our values, that there is no need for God anymore, and that science is the only way to truth.³² Biologist Richard Dawkins argues that religious people are deluded, and that human beings are determined biological machines, existing in a pointless, indifferent universe.³³ Neuroscientist Sam Harris argues that there is no free will, that all actions are determined and that naturalistic human flourishing determines values.³⁴ Philosopher of science Michael Ruse argues that ethics is illusory³⁵; quantum physicist Stephen Hawking thinks that we live in a godless universe and that our ethics is

³² See Krauss' debate with Craig.

³³ See his "God Delusion."

³⁴ See his debate with Craig.

³⁵ See Craig's reference to Ruse.

derivative from the evolutionary processes.³⁶ Interestingly enough, Hawking argues that, too, philosophy is dead³⁷—only to engage in it thereafter, I might add.³⁸ More politically oriented, the current cultural milieu in the West has been a sharp decline of the traditional family structure and marriage and, more forcefully, an *attack* of the traditional family structure and marriage itself. Strides of ‘religious tolerance’ have—intolerantly—been forced upon religious folk in order to preserve the only (meaningless) virtue and moral left, ‘niceness.’³⁹ Religion, in its more traditional forms, has also been on the decline, and

³⁶ See his *Grand Design*.

³⁷ Ref. *Grand Design*.

³⁸ Craig puts this ironically.

³⁹ Kreeft calls this what we have done with all our values.

while there are often explicit reasons⁴⁰, there are two notes to make regarding its rejection, namely, denial of the traditional religions and denial to make room for a new religion i.e., consumerism, hedonism and radical individualism. One of the most interesting hermeneutical, existential insights has been in the realm of certain thoughts with respect to political theology. The insight is an interesting one: Many of the concepts used in jurisdiction i.e., laws and exceptions, are pseudo-religious concepts—natural laws and miracles.⁴¹ Whether or not this is the way things truly are, it is an interesting idea that many legal-political concepts are religious concepts, deflated and rid of their ontological-

⁴⁰ Moreland's video.

⁴¹ Ref. Carl Schmitt. (Ask Pirani for help here).

religious significance and structure. It is interesting how these philosophies can serve as pseudo-religions. Consider what philosopher and theologian William Lane Craig has to offer on this score:

“We often find the same inconsistency among those who say that man and the universe came to exist for no reason or purpose, but just by chance. Unable to live in an impersonal universe in which everything is the product of blind chance, these persons begin to ascribe personality and motives to the physical processes themselves. It is a bizarre way of speaking and represents a leap from the lower to the upper story.⁴²

Craig then goes on to give concrete examples. For instance, Francis Crick begins to spell nature with a capital ‘N’ half

⁴² <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-absurdity-of-life-without-god#ixzz4PjcenMPy>

way through his book and personifying nature (and similarly Fred Hoyle deifies the cosmos). He also points out that Freudian psychologists cannot complain that it degrades women if atheism is true, nor can B.F Skinner's behaviorist theories prevent the amoralism that follows from it. According to Craig, the ontological void that is left in the absence of God is fully understood in light of the amoralism that inevitably follows. Philosopher Alex Rosenberg summarizes, quite nicely in my view, the underlying—atheistic—philosophy of our current society:

*“Is there a God? No.
What is the nature of reality? What
physics says it is.
What is the purpose of the
universe? There is none.
What is the meaning of life? Ditto.
Why am I here? Just dumb luck.*

Does prayer work? Of course not.
Is there a soul? Is it immortal? Are
you kidding?

Is there free will? Not a chance!

*What happens when we
die?* Everything pretty much goes
on as before, except us.

*What is the difference between right
and wrong, good and bad?* There is
no moral difference between them.

Why should I be moral? Because it
makes you feel better than being
immoral.

*Is abortion, euthanasia, suicide,
paying taxes, foreign aid, or anything
else you don't like forbidden,
permissible, or sometimes
obligatory?* Anything goes.

*What is love, and how can I find
it?* Love is the solution to a
strategic interaction problem.
Don't look for it; it will find you
when you need it.

*Does history have any meaning or
purpose?* It's full of sound and fury,
but signifies nothing.

Does the human past have any lessons

for our future? Fewer and fewer, if it ever had any to begin with.”⁴³

Sure, it is not the prettiest answer—but that is what the social conception of the right philosophical anthropology looks like. It is interesting that these answers are given, despite the responses which have been given to them. Besides these intellectual problems which have been dealt with, there is an underlying problem here; these answers get us away from seeing the *truth*. To think that there are no morals, freedom, meaning to life, history and philosophy, lessons we can learn for the future, love and the like, is not only counter-intuitive—and counter to our best philosophical, historical

⁴³ Alex Rosenberg. *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2011. Print. (Find page number—right around the beginning).

and scientific data—but assisting the problem of *acedia* by masking existential problems with intellectual ones. The latter become superficial excuses for apathy viz-a-viz the former. But, if apathy is present, what is *that which* the person is apathetic towards? Truth, goodness and beauty? Being? The ground of all love, purposefulness and meaningfulness?

Nietzsche foresaw what modern culture was going to look like—at least in part—and he was certainly correct about the need for an honest acknowledgement of our current predicament. In his 1888 *The Gay Science*, the very often-quoted story of the madman and the ‘death of God’ typically has the force that Dostoevsky’s “if there is

no God, then all things are permitted”⁴⁴ has. However, what Nietzsche does in the story brings to our attention is not the ontological death of God—that is metaphysically and necessarily impossible—rather, he brings to light the importance of the ‘death of God’ culturally, socially and phenomenologically. The person suffering from acedia is left with nothing but him or herself, a void that cannot be filled, because what was constitutive of objective meaning has been replaced with empty, illusory shadows. For those who have not heard Nietzsche’s narrative, I will close the chapter with it:

“The madman. - Haven't you heard of that madman who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran

⁴⁴ Ref. Brothers Karamazov.

around the marketplace crying incessantly, 'I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!' Since many of those who did not believe in God were standing around together just then, he caused great laughter. Has he been lost, then? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone to sea? Emigrated? - Thus they shouted and laughed, one interrupting the other. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tell you! *We have killed him* - you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space

breathing at us? Hasn't it got colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again? Don't lanterns have to be lit in the morning? Do we still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we still smell nothing of the divine decomposition? - Gods, too, decompose! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers! The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games will we have to invent for ourselves? Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it? There was never a greater deed - and whoever is born after us will on account of this deed belong to a

higher history than all history up
to now!"⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Ref. the gay science Cambridge edition. Pg.
119-120.

CHAPTER 3

Hermeneutics, Metaphysical ‘Sight’, and
Acedia

“Indifference is the very nadir of the soul. And it is the very definition of the modern soul.”⁴⁶

-Peter Kreeft

At this point, I think it appropriate to define acedia with some extensive detail. For one thing, and as a preliminary comment, acedia is by no means merely *sloth*. The connotation of sloth is ‘laziness’ or an inability for ‘activity’ or perhaps ‘moral activity.’ However, acedia extends much farther and deeper, taking into account not merely finite and contingent realities,

⁴⁶ Kreeft, Pascal, pg. 188.

but infinite and eternal realities: “*acedia* or spiritual sloth goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God, whose goodness it denies...”⁴⁷ In his monumental work on *acedia*, R.J Snell gives some insight to the term as it is considered as broadly sloth, but adds that it “seeps into our loves and lives in virtually every domain, before finally transforming itself into boredom and nihilism.”⁴⁸ So while sloth is in one sense a passivity from all good, true and beautiful things, it turns and transforms into a boredom with being, and a turn to an attempt to construct nothingness into something objectively real. (I will come back to the concept of boredom eventually). It is worth, though, noting the implications

⁴⁷ Catechism, pg. 564.

⁴⁸ Snell, pg. 61.

this has on our conception of what it means to 'be human.' Thomas Merton has much to say here, but consider one insight he has to offer on the attempt of creating a 'false self', that is, the self that one is fundamentally not, and that the distractionism and escapism we engage in fundamentally are attempts to "construct [the false self's] nothingness into something objectively real."⁴⁹ While this might seem like the only way out of such a dilemma, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard argues on the contrary, and thinks that acedia is the "despair from weakness"⁵⁰. Josef Pieper's interpretation is along the following lines: "Metaphysically and theologically, the notion of acedia means that a man does not,

⁴⁹ Merton, pg. 22.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Pieper's *Leisure* pg. 38.

in the last resort, give the consent of his will to his own being...”⁵¹ But, Kierkegaard’s concept of *acedia* extends into the realm of despair as well (and is roughly synonymous with it). Consider a quote from his *Sickness unto Death* (1849):

“Every human existence that is not conscious of itself as spirit or conscious of itself before God as spirit, every human existence that does not rest transparently in God but vaguely rests in and merges in some abstract universality (state, nation, etc.) or, in the dark about his self, regards his capacities merely as powers to produce without becoming deeply aware of their source, regards his self, if it is to have intrinsic meaning, as an indefinable something—every such existence, whatever it achieves, be it most amazing, whatever it explains, be it the whole of existence, however

⁵¹ Pieper *Leisure* pg. 38.

intensively it enjoys life esthetically—every such existence is nevertheless despair.”⁵²

For Kierkegaard, despair is encompassed by a spirit that does not rest “transparently in God” but rather “vaguely rests in and merges in some abstract universality”. It is that ontological grounding which the subject recognizes and finds him or herself in; it is a denial of this that *acedia* and despair come into the picture. In another context, Kierkegaard puts the situation more interestingly, and more in conjunction with Merton’s insight:

“A despairing man despairingly wants to be himself, he will not ant

⁵² Marino, pg. 76.

to get rid of himself — or so it seems. But if one inspects more closely, one perceives a contradiction. The self which he despairingly wishes to be is a self which he is not — for to wish to be the self that one truly is is the opposite of despair. The despairing man wants to tear himself away from the Power that created him. But he can never do this because the Power is too strong, and compels him to be the self that he truly is. If only he could see this truth, he would be freed from despair, and joyfully accept his own true self.”⁵³

It is here that Kierkegaard gives profound insight into the relationship between the self, joy, despair and *acedia*. It is when we accept our true nature that we are freed from despair, and can enter into joyful activity; until then, though, we are trapped

⁵³ Daily Readings with Kierkegaard, pg. 26.

by a false subjectivity that will never break the threshold of objectivity (as Merton aptly pointed out). Nietzsche noticed what Kierkegaard was getting at and construed it as a form of sickness in his *Genealogy of Morals* (1887):

“Where does one not encounter that veiled glance which burdens one with a profound sadness, that inward-turned glance of the born failure which betrays how such a man speaks to himself—that glance which is a sign! “If only I were someone else,” signs this glance: “but there is no hope of that, I am who I am: how could I ever get free of myself? And yet—I *am sick of myself!*”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, Pg. 558.

Kierkegaard, in another context, makes this clearer, but with a clearer reference to the ‘eternal’:

“If there were no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the bottom of everything there were only a wild ferment, a power that twisting in dark passions produced everything great or inconsequential; if an unfathomable, insatiable emptiness lay hid beneath everything, what would life be but despair?”⁵⁵

Thus, as Kierkegaard points out, it is when we get rid of the eternal in man that despair inevitably follows. Acedia, though, has many more aspects. For instance, St. Aquinas argues that it is a sin against the third commandment⁵⁶, and that “despair

⁵⁵ Fear and Trembling, pg. 14.

⁵⁶ Pieper, Leisure, pg. 39.

and the incapacity for leisure are twins”.⁵⁷ This notion of an ‘inability for leisure’ is closely connected with an inability for *silence* and *contemplation*. The former has endless diversions; in a world of technology and busyness, silence seems an impossibility and, worse than that, a waste of time. Consider silence:

“Listen in silence because if your heart is full of other things you cannot hear the voice of God. But when you have listened to the voice of God in the stillness of your heart, then your heart is filled with God. The contemplatives and ascetics of all ages and religions have sought God in the silence and solitude of the desert, forest, and mountains. Jesus himself spent forty days in the desert and the mountains, communing for long

⁵⁷ Pieper, *Leisure*, pg. 40.

hours with the Father in the silence
of the night.”⁵⁸

It is this lack of silence that creates busyness, and which fosters meaningless talk. Pieper had a particularly interesting way of putting it, when he argued that a lack of telling the truth resulted in saying *nothing*—meaning that in telling a lie is logically and metaphysically equivalent to saying *nothing at all*:

“Any discourse attached from the norms of reality is at the same time a mere monologue. What does it mean, after all, to be detached from the norms of reality? It means indifference regarding the truth. To be true means, indeed, to be determined in speech and thought by what is real.”⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ref. In the heart of the world. pg. 20-21.

⁵⁹ Pieper, AL,AP, pg. 17.

What follows from a neglect of silence, contemplation and leisure, though, is *boredom*. Samuel Beckett (1903-1989) characterized this idea quite well in his *Endgame* (1957):

“Hamm: There’s no one else.

Clov: There’s nowhere else.”⁶⁰

Simple and to the point: *Acedia’s* consequent boredom causes an indifference—apathy—towards both community and seeing Being as a realm of home. Nietzsche, writing much earlier than Beckett, noticed something similar: “One is no longer at home anywhere...”⁶¹ Albert Camus, in his *Summer in Algiers*

⁶⁰ Beckett, *Endgame*, pg. 13.

⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, pg. 225.

(1950), realizes that there exists this desire for 'home' on not merely a physical level, but a spiritual level: "But at certain moments everything yearns for that spiritual home."⁶² More directly aimed at boredom, Snell says the following: "Boredom, then, is a phenomenon of modernity."⁶³ What is interesting, though, is modernity's busyness and inability to rest (lack of leisure). This, says Snell, is not surprising:

"We might actually anticipate the slothful individual and culture to be very busy, and, as the purposelessness and arbitrary nature of their business is revealed, to be ever more distracted, exhausted, and bitter in the

⁶² Camus, *Summer in Algiers*, pg. 12.

⁶³ Snell, pg. 67.

unending attempt to express and display freedom without humility before the jokes of place, limits, order.”⁶⁴

As a last word on boredom, *acedia* and indifference, consider the following:

“Bored with everything, there is no hiding place, no ability to lose oneself in any interesting and distracting reality, and no one is, says Heidegger, compelled to listen. To what? Listen to what? To the indifference of it all. To the meaninglessness of everything, even the meaninglessness of our own existence. When distracted by this or that, it is easy enough to slumber through reality with incredible lightness because everything distracts just enough to allow us not to recognize its pointlessness.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Snell, pg. 66.

⁶⁵ Snell, pg. 68.

Continuing, though, to the initial definition of sloth from the Catechism; the Catechism rightly notices a peculiarity of *acedia*, namely, its *spiritual* aspect. While much should—and can—be said here, *acedia* cripples a longing for community and moral action (and this is indeed a spiritual aspect of the problem). Beginning with the former, *acedia* has the following consequence:

“what remains is a sadness or bitterness within the one who distances himself from the community and who, being separated from others, finds himself likewise separated from God.”⁶⁶

It is important to see what is happening here. The lack of sense of community cripples the ability to perform moral

⁶⁶ Nault, referenced in Snell, pg. 66.

actions, since the philosophical anthropology the person suffering from *acedia* espouses disables moral action—since it is futile. Beginning with community generally, Kierkegaard gives profound insight in his *Works of Love* (1847):

“All through the ages everyone who has thought deeply over the nature of man has recognised in him this need for community. How often has this been said and repeated again and again, how often have men cried woe upon the solitary person or portrayed the pain and misery of loneliness, how often have men, weary of the corrupting, noisy, confusing life in society, let their thoughts wander out to a solitary place—only to learn again to long for community! Thus man is always turned back to that observation by God, this is the first thought about man. In the busy, teeming crowd, which as community is both too much and too little, man becomes weary of

society, but the cure is not in making the discovery that God's thought was incorrect. No, the cure is precisely to learn all over again the most important thing, to understand oneself in one's longing for community."⁶⁷

As Tyler Journeaux puts it, God in Himself is a Communal Being:

"...the Christian (at least) can give an account of God's motive. In the doctrine of the Trinity one finds the idea of God whose love is shared between the persons of the Godhead; each person loves the others with a sort of outpouring of love, a self-giving love. The kind of love which is the precondition of, and makes sense of, Kenosis (κένωσις). Why would such a God want to create a world? Well, He has an internal source of motivation: to love (with all that entails). Why did he create a world of rational free agents who can

⁶⁷ Ref. Works of love. Pg. 153.

choose to enter into relationships with him? So that he could love, could pour Himself out (Kenosis) in love, et cetera...His nature, exemplified by the outpouring and self-giving love of the three persons, gives God a plausible motive for creating other persons with whom He might enter into a love-relationship. He creates out of, and as an expression of, that love which characterizes his Nature as a community.”⁶⁸

It is no surprise, then, that the attack of community—and the desire for radical individualism—is inherently linked to an attack of belief in God (all because *acedia*). It is here that this attack on the belief in God—via *acedia*—creates a moral inability, that is, an inability to act: “Sadness about the order of love cripples action.”⁶⁹ Karol

⁶⁸ This was retrieved from email correspondence.

⁶⁹ Snell, pg. 65.

Wojtyla (1920-2005), in his *Love and Responsibility* (1981) puts it in a profoundly simple sentence: “I can only act while I am.”⁷⁰ It is only while I am my *essential self* that I can act in the world. Not only does it cripple action, but it rejects joy as well—as was pointed out by Kierkegaard. But, it moves beyond this, and makes the absurd leap of faith into thinking that joy is only possible in a deep sorrow.⁷¹ Joy, however, “must have the stab, the pang, the inconsolable longing.”⁷² The nature of joy, it should be remembered, is the opposite of despair. Given that the nature of joy is, by definition, friendship with the divine, the question is how to break beyond the ties of

⁷⁰ Wojtyla, pg. 51.

⁷¹ Snell, pg. 64.

⁷² C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, pg. 82.

acedia. While truth and goodness are often not enough—despite incredible efforts⁷³--the question arises more forcefully: *What is left?* Perhaps a simple “time along can bring the just man to light”⁷⁴ is not enough here. Perhaps the answer lies in “the immortal instinct for beauty”⁷⁵, that which led even a nihilist like Nietzsche to think “we possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*.”⁷⁶ It is here, having understood many aspects of *acedia*, turn to an important Platonic inspired question (and indeed it comes right out of the *Symposium*): “What will have been

⁷³ See the whole of contemporary analytic philosophy of religion and natural theology. Ref. (See consciousness paper for massive references).

⁷⁴ Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, pg. 194.

⁷⁵ Maritain, *Man's Approach to God*, pg. 18.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *will to power*, pg. 435.

gained by the man who is in possession of
beauty?"⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Symposium, pg. 84.

CHAPTER IV
Beauty: Overcoming Socio-
Phenomenological *Acedia*

*“How can man preserve and safeguard the
foundation of his spiritual dimension and an
uncorrupted relationship to reality?”⁷⁸*

-Josef Pieper

By now, the notion of ‘acedia’ should be understood. But, the notion of ‘acedia’, I think, does not stand alone. There are two interpretations to this. First of all, it means that the person suffering from *acedia* often suffers it in conjunction with other sins; on the other hand, the second interpretation means that there is something more to *acedia* than what is present at face value. By

⁷⁸ Pieper, OLS, pg. 34.

now, it is seen that acedia is not merely a problem of persons, but also of entire cultures. It is here that I want to coin the term ‘socio-phenomenological acedia.’ I think that any real assessment must assess this, and I hope in this small essay I have done so adequately. The significance of ‘phenomenological’ is derived from its connotations with ‘orientation in the world’, and since we all have an orientation in the world—whether it is through the lens of faith i.e., Christianity, or myth i.e., Ancient Greeks—what is important is that acedia becomes a way of interpreting the world and a way of approaching the world—thus the need for ‘phenomenological’ (and ‘sociological’ for its wide-spread ontic status). So, what can be done with respect to ‘socio-phenomenological acedia’?

Josef Pieper put it well, when he says in his *Divine Madness* (1962) the following:

“For beauty, specifically physical beauty, if man approaches it receptively, can affect and strike him more than any other “value”, can push him outside the realm of his familiar and controlled environment, outside his “neatly explained world””⁷⁹

Instead of interpreting beauty here in terms of a ‘material’ beauty i.e., the beauty of a human body, the sky or the night stars in the billions, one interpretation might make reference to the nature of beauty, physically, but *in action*. Beauty, often unlike truth and goodness, can put into a mode whereby we see the world for what it

⁷⁹ Pieper, *Divine Madness*, pg. 42.

is, and what is beyond it (Ultimate Reality, if you will): “In [beauty’s] power to lead toward a reality beyond the here and now, beyond immediate perception, it cannot be compared to anything in this world.”⁸⁰ I think it is appropriate to direct in on the question at stake here: What is the relationship between *acedia* and beauty? In my view, and this is my ‘proposed solution’ to the problem, the latter is the solution to the former. In beauty’s “prompt[ing] the soul to sprout wings again,”⁸¹ the person who suffers from *acedia* experiences a sort of *existential realization*. It is a realization akin to the realization in

⁸⁰ Pieper, *Divine Madness*, pg. 44.

⁸¹ Pieper, *Divine Madness*, pg. 47.

Albert Camus' "The Voiceless": "He thought only of himself because he knew only himself."⁸² While truth often seems impartial and absolute—which it is, no doubt, inasmuch as "objective reality plays no favorites"⁸³—beauty has the power to move beyond boredom and nihilism, into the realm of being: "...the deep erotic emotion tied to the encounter with beauty is a form a theia mania, the god-given being-beside-oneself" which "entices our inner existential space to reach for some infinite fulfillment not available here and how except by way of yearning and

⁸² Camus, *Exile*, pg. 53.

⁸³ Sullivan on objective truth (Youtube).

remembrance.”⁸⁴ In order to break the apathy that defines the modern man, we must make Christianity beautiful again. Frank Sheed puts it this way: “...love helps sight. But sight helps love too.”⁸⁵ Kierkegaard noticed the profundity of this: “wherever love is, there is something infinitely profound.”⁸⁶ In Catholicism, the New Evangelization is about re-establishing the beauty of the faith through a *concrete* living it out. Patrick Sullivan, in his segment on “Life on the Rock” (2015), puts it nicely:

“My response has been let’s not talk about it [the differences between the world religions] so

⁸⁴ Pieper, *Divine Madness*, pg. 48-49.

⁸⁵ Sheed, pg. 28.

⁸⁶ Kierkegaard, pg. 282. (*Works of Love*).

much as let me show you how we [Catholics] are different. And in there there's a challenge to myself. If they can't tell that I am different from how I'm behaving, from how I am living, from how I am speaking, then there's already a problem. For me most people are asking that question [are religions basically the same?] because they don't see a difference from the Hindu, from the Christian et cetera, They're looking at us and saying you blend in too well so what is different anyway? And I think the New Evangelism is about this."⁸⁷

Thus, living out the faith through speaking, living, thinking and so forth are ways to make Christianity beautiful again. While Kant was correct that what is needed is Christianity to be lovable—and by

⁸⁷

Ref.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQucu0NYY68>

CONCLUSION:

Learning to 'See' Again

“Love is not an affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person’s ultimate good as far as can be obtained.”⁸⁸

C.S Lewis

While the presence of socio-phenomenological *acedia* is indeed a problem with much existential significance, it is a spiritual problem. When one begins to see again, the profound difference it brings into one’s life can be understood almost as poorly as Dostoevsky’s “ridiculous man” tried to capture the beauty of his dream of a world without sin: “I was

⁸⁸ Lewis, *God in the Dock*, pg. 37.

unable to embody them in our feeble words” and it was only after having experienced reality that he could cry out “it was life, life!”⁸⁹ Consider, too, the following fictional scenario derived from Albert Camus’ *The Outsider* (1942): “A moment later she asked me if I loved her. I said that sort of question had no meaning, really; but I supposed I didn’t.”⁹⁰ This sort of situation—that of an attitude of *acedia*, I might add—stands in sharp contrast to—in Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993)—the situation that Jonas found himself in after he had received the memory of *Family*:

“Gabriel’s breathing was even and deep. Jonas liked having him there, though he felt guilty about the

⁸⁹ Dostoevsky, *Dream of a ridiculous man*, pg. 122 and 126.

⁹⁰ Camus, *The Outsider*, pg. 42.

secret. Each night he gave memories to Gabriel: memories of boat rides and picnics in the sun; memories of soft rainfall against windowpanes; memories of dancing barefoot on a damp lawn.

“Gabe?”

The newchild stirred slightly in his sleep. Jonas looked over at him.

“There could be love,” Jonas whispered.”⁹¹

⁹¹ Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*, pg. 128-129.

