

Truth That Appears

Drama, Presence, and the Christian Imagination

*"We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."*

— T. S. Eliot



Caravaggio – *Supper at Emmaus*

Week One — Learning to See

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

John 1:5

Our Question

How do we first come to know truth?

Long before we can explain reality, we must first learn to perceive it.

This evening begins with a simple observation: some moments change us not because we receive new information, but because we suddenly see what has been there all along.

The Christian faith begins with this conviction. Revelation is first God's gracious act before it is our understanding. We do not manufacture truth; we receive it.

Our task, then, is to become people who learn to see.

A Central Claim

Truth often appears before it is fully understood.

The greatest works of Scripture and the arts rarely *force* conclusions upon us. Instead, they invite patient attention. They prepare us to receive what is already present.

Perhaps the purpose of drama, the arts, beauty is not to distract us from reality, but to help us perceive reality more faithfully.

Scripture for Reflection

Read slowly (and out loud if possible) this week.

- Genesis 1:1–5
- Psalm 27
- John 1:1–14
- 2 Corinthians 4:6

As you read, ask not only, “What does this passage teach?” but also, “**What does this passage help me see?**” and “**What does this passage invite me to see?**”

Works We Will Encounter

This week we will experience several artistic works together. You are invited to experience them, as you see fit, as your time and interests fit. You are not expected to analyze them as experts. Simply pay attention. Encounter them. In class we will discuss them, and perhaps listen to excerpts.

- J. S. Bach — *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqZE54i-muE&list=RDDqZE54i-muE&start_radio=1

German/English interlinear translation: <https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Texts/BWV140-Eng3.htm>

- Arvo Pärt — *Spiegel im Spiegel*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJ6Mzv3XCc&list=RDTJ6Mzv3XCc&start_radio=1

AFTER you have listened to this at least once, read the comments on YouTube. But please, not before 😊

- T. S. Eliot — *Little Gidding* (final movement)

<https://www.columbia.edu/itc/history/winter/w3206/edit/tseliotlittlegidding.html>

- George Jones – *He Stopped Loving Her Today*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpEew3M-Kvg&list=RDzpEew3M-Kvg&start_radio=1

- George Strait – *Blue Clear Sky*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kDotYBr8rc&list=RD-kDotYBr8rc&start_radio=1

- ee cummings – *I thank you God for most this amazing*

<https://www.thereader.org.uk/featured-poem-i-thank-you-god-for-most-this-amazing-by-ee-cummings/>

- Undertaker's Entry to Wrestlemania 29

<https://www.wwe.com/videos/the-undertaker-enters-on-the-grandest-stage-of-them-all-wrestlemania-29>

- U2 – *I still haven't found what I'm looking for*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3-5YC_oHjE

- U2 – *I still haven't found what I'm looking for* – Gospel version

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8Wt3dhF4fU&t=10s>

Please watch this version only after you have exhausted the original version

- *Adagio*, choreography by Pina Bausch

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrPcP7ZbbeQ&list=RDRrPcP7ZbbeQ&start_radio=

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- One Day More flash mob

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cn8PiqIXEjQ>

Each of these works invite the question: **How does truth become visible? How does truth become present? How does truth become ascertainable?**

Questions for Conversation

As you encounter these works, consider:

- What first drew your attention?
- What became visible that had not been visible before?
- Was there a moment that invited silence rather than explanation?
- What did you notice only after waiting?
- Did this work change your perception of reality in any way?
- What is the nature of the truth presented and encountered?

Reading (Optional – But Encouraged)

Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (Chapter 1, The Deadly Theatre)

Amazon link to whole book: <https://bit.ly/3S7nnvO>

Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action* (Preface and Part 1)

Amazon link to whole book: <https://bit.ly/4wzimKu>

Video Essay (Optional – But Encouraged)

Roger Scruton, *Why Beauty Matters*

<https://vimeo.com/549715999>

Additional Optional Resources:

Mark Cole talk on professional wrestling as a dramatic art:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s19hM3JxZoo>

Mark Cole essays:

<https://bymarkcole.com/culture>

Note that many of the ideas that we discuss and explore I will also have previously written about.

A Final Thought to Carry Into the Week

Perhaps the deepest purpose of drama and art is not to tell us something we never knew.

Perhaps it is to help us know the place where we already stand—for the first time.