Preface

Two significant contemporary works of art that participate in the Catholic artistic tradition, each in its own distinctive way, were presented (coincidentally) within a few blocks of each other in downtown Los Angeles during mid-January 2015: the first performance in the United States of Henryk Górecki’s Fourth Symphony by the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Walt Disney Hall, and the first West Coast presentation of Andy Warhol’s Shadows at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art Grand Avenue, described by the museum as “a monumental painting in 102 parts.” The Roman Catholic roots of Górecki’s work as a composer are well known; the influence of Andy Warhol’s upbringing as a Byzantine Catholic and his continuing practice as a Catholic have been widely discussed since his death in 1987.

There is much drama in the story of the composition of Górecki’s Fourth Symphony, even apart from the oft-told story (but I will not repeat it here) of the surprising rise in popularity starting about 1992 of his Third Symphony: Symphony of Sorrowful Songs composed in 1976. The Fourth Symphony was scheduled for its world premiere in London in April 2010 and for its American premiere in Los An-
geles in January 2011, but the performances were cancelled when Górecki was unable to complete the work because of failing health. He died on November 12, 2010 leaving the work unfinished, and its fate was unknown for several years thereafter. It was eventually determined that the composer had completed the work in piano score, and his son, Mikolaj, who is a composer in his own right, was able to orchestrate the work according to indications of his father’s intentions. The London Philharmonic Orchestra first performed the work in London in April 2014, conducted by Andrey Boreyko, and Boreyko then conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic performing the work in Los Angeles on January 16–18, 2015.

In a talk given prior to the Los Angeles performance on January 17, Boreyko speculated that Górecki was well aware of his failing health and perhaps his impending death as he composed the piece. When asked by interlocutor Christopher Russell about common elements found in Górecki’s Fourth Symphony and Shostakovich’s Fifteenth Symphony (his final symphony), each quoting the funeral march from Wagner’s Siegfried and ending on an A major chord, Boreyko speculated that each symphony was indeed a kind of farewell to life but that the two composers approached the awareness of death in contrasting ways. Noting that in general Górecki did not feel an affinity for the music of Shostakovich, Boreyko suggested that he found a significant contrast between the underlying foundation of Christian hope embedded in Górecki’s symphony and the feeling of despair that he sensed in Shostakovich’s final symphony.

Górecki’s Christian faith establishes a key to his Fourth Symphony, in Boreyko’s opinion. While cautiously noting that he did not think the symphony has a necessary program that the listener must follow, Boreyko nonetheless disclosed that after considering the importance of quotations in the work from the funeral march from Wagner’s Siegfried, from Karol Syzmanowski’s Stabat Mater, and from the final movement of Modest Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition, titled “The Great Gate of Kiev,” he found the work to be “a musical ritual with a deep religious background.” He also suggested
that the work might be thought of as Górecki’s Passion, with sections suggestive of the *via dolorosa*, the lamentation of the mother, and the Resurrection, among other moments.

This account of the symphony so far produces an inaccurate picture of the work as a whole because the elements that most directly suggest the religious background of the composition are embedded within the modernist musical framework that is also an important part of Górecki’s compositional style throughout his career. The work is built on a short initial theme whose notes are derived from the name of Polish-born composer Alexandre Tansman, and much of the first movement involves what music critic Alex Ross describes as “an almost torturous repetition” of elements. Ross speculates that Górecki is reacting in this *Fourth Symphony* to the widespread popularity of his *Third*, the cult popularity of which was probably facilitated by its departure from Górecki’s more daring compositional moves, suggesting that the *Fourth Symphony* is “a remarkable document: at once a cogent, self-sufficient musical narrative and, possibly, a coded critique of the mode of listening that had helped to make a phenomenon of the *Third*.”

Górecki’s final composition brings the spiritual fruitfulness of his Catholic faith to expression through the musical materials that he shaped as an artist fully engaged in the contemporary development of the craft of composition.

As previously mentioned, the coincidental opportunity to encounter an important work of a contemporary visual artist on the same day that I heard Górecki’s final symphony turned out to be illuminating. No one would expect the curators of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and the musical directors of the Los Angeles Philharmonic to have considered the possibility of even a distant affinity of spirit between artist Andy Warhol and composer Henryk Górecki (and no doubt I am at risk of overstating such an affinity through my observations). One of Górecki’s best-known choral compositions, *Totus Tuus*, was written to celebrate Pope Saint John Paul II’s third visit to Poland during his papacy in 1987, and
his religious identity, and the importance of that identity to him was well known; and while there is in fact a photograph of Andy Warhol shaking hands with John Paul during an audience on April 2, 1980, it was only after Warhol’s death in 1987 that the importance to him of his identity as a Byzantine Catholic was broadly discussed. No doubt the cultural and historical circumstances of the life of each artist (Warhol was born five years earlier than Górecki) played a significant part in the way in which each chose to inhabit his religious identity and to allow that identity to come to artistic expression. For Górecki, his Catholic identity like that of his compatriot John Paul was doubtlessly bound up with spiritual resistance to the regime in power in his homeland throughout much of his life and with his sense of national identity. Warhol was raised within a strongly religious Byzantine Catholic family and he remained devoted to his mother until her death, but his life as a leading artistic figure in New York especially in the 1960s until his untimely death in 1987 would likely not have encouraged an overt expression of his religious identity, and Warhol apparently remained very quiet even among his friends concerning his religious practice and faith.

When I viewed Shadows, I recalled only dimly and uncertainly having heard something about Warhol’s religious identity; it was the spiritual resonance of the work itself that motivated me to search out information about the religious dimension of Warhol’s art. The work consists of a sequence of 102 paintings each 76 by 52 inches that are hung edge to edge and close to the floor in the gallery. The paintings are repetitious without being identical and consist of 2 types: one type features a narrow pointed shadow called by the curators the “peak” and usually set against a colored background, with the colors varying widely among paintings; the other type features what is called “the cap,” a smaller pointed figure varying in color from one painting to the next but always against a black background. The viewer walks the circumference of the rooms in which the paintings are hung, though without the sense of a necessary narrative sequence, and notes the play of variations within the frequent
repetitions of the work. The paintings invite a meditative approach, and perhaps it is the structured, slow walking pace required to take in similar image after image without a definite awareness of progression that brought to mind for me the spiritual exercise of walking a labyrinth.

However idiosyncratic that thought might have been as a program for viewing this work, the peak and cap forms took on in my viewing the sense of a partially enclosed and partially permeable spiritual center set within various moments of spiritual experience, ranging from intense vitality signaled by brilliant color and contrast to an almost dormant state signaled by the cap form becoming only dimly perceptible against a background of a very similar color. I understand from that perspective an observation made about the work by Jane Daggett Dillenberger: “When one studies Shadows, the eschatological question of mortality and the end of time arises.”4 While in these works abstaining from the use of Christian iconography, and without himself offering a Christian contextualization through the work, Warhol brings to mind the kind of retreat from the engagement and attraction of the world into an inner spiritual awareness that must have characterized the hidden interior spiritual life of the artist during his career.

Being able to place this work of Warhol within a broader context of his works with an overt Christian context is no doubt helpful. And we now know that in the last years of his work as an artist, Warhol became deeply involved in producing various paintings based on Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper. Dillenberger reports that there are at least twenty very large Last Supper paintings by Warhol, which she regards as “a kind of last will and testament of the artist.”5 Certainly Warhol’s work involves his own particular development of Christian iconography, and Dillenberger asserts that these works “range from the startling and playful . . . to the somber and mysterious.”6 In the face of skepticism concerning Warhol’s seriousness about the religious dimension of his work, art historian James Romaine suggests that Warhol’s “faith, and art, cannot be so easily dismissed.”7
I find spiritual nourishment and affirmation from the encounter with the fruitfulness of the Catholic artistic tradition as it continues to manifest itself in surprising new ways. In the work of engaged and forward-thinking artists who demonstrate that the necessary search of the artist for the renewal of artistic forms provides opportunities for the continuing flourishing in culture of Christian faith.

The first article in this issue of Logos provides a careful consideration of the concept of revelation in the Second Vatican Council. Michael Seewald in “As a Human to Humans: The Second Vatican Council’s Understanding of ‘Self-Revelation’ in Context,” considers the intellectual background of Vatican II in its effort to explain Revelation from within the Christian tradition in Dei Verbum. This leads to an account of the different perspectives that are possible in the approach to Revelation even remaining within the Christian tradition. The seven historical models of Revelation developed by Avery Cardinal Dulles provided the basis for the Council’s examination of the issue. After having established the intellectual framework for the consideration of Revelation, Seewald considers Jesus Christ in the context of divine self-revelation as “the only person who expresses God’s self and who encounters man on his own ontological level.” The final two sections of the article examine the topics of “revelation, scripture, and tradition,” and then finally an account of the “theological achievement and epistemological challenge” of Dei Verbum.

Matthew Rose in “The Liberal Arts and the Virtues: A Thomistic History,” brings forward several contemporary claims that the liberal arts can benefit students morally in recent books by Martha Nussbaum, Andrew Delbanco, Mark Roche, and Andrew Kronman, and suggests that these books have been warmly received by many in the academic community because they seem to provide a basis on which to defend the liberal arts. But Rose argues that greater scrutiny of these claims, especially within the context of the Catholic intellectual tradition, is warranted, posing the question in one of its ancient forms: do the liberal arts impart virtue? In pursuit of this
question, Rose first provides a historical account that describes the state of the question as received by Aquinas. The second part of the article then sets out Aquinas’s thinking on the relationship between liberal education, knowledge, and character. “Aquinas proposes arguably the first comprehensive solution for a pedagogical problem in early Christian thought, providing an account of the diverse activities of the soul that explains why those like Augustine were right to praise the liberal arts’ capacities to train intellectually adept students while also being wary of their alleged moral power.”

In “Aquinas on Paul’s Use of the Old Testament: The Implications of Participation,” Charles Raith II provides a critical assessment of the various contemporary methodological approaches to understanding Paul’s use of the Old Testament. Raith suggests that the examination of premodern accounts of this issue have been relatively neglected, while arguing that such accounts are particularly valuable for bringing to light the metaphysical and theological commitments implicit in many modern approaches to the question. His article studies the “fundamental commitments” about Scripture that shape Aquinas’s approach to Paul’s use of the Old Testament, and demonstrates that Aquinas’s theology of participation holds particular importance in this area. This approach understands the order of creation as “an ongoing participation in God’s active providence,” and Raith endeavors throughout the article to bring this method into dialogue with modern methodologies. The important ways in which the doctrine of participation shapes “the spiritual senses, theology and philosophy, history, faith, and Christian tradition” are brought to light in Raith’s article.

Paul Morrissey’s “Faith in Faith: Reason, Faith, and Prayer in the Theology of Servais Pinckaers, OP” is a study of a moral theologian very talented at navigating what Douglas Farrow has called “the borderlands” between faith and reason, theology and philosophy. Pinckaers stressed that theology, especially moral theology, had to begin with a response to Revelation. There had to be a “faith in faith” that had logical and chronological priority over reason in
order for reason to do its work successfully. Morrissey traces the roots of Pinckaer’s thought in St. Paul and Aquinas among others, showing his biblical and Thomistic bona fides, and demonstrates the importance of prayer and worship for the theological (and human) quest for how to express and live in the knowledge and love that constitute the vision of God.

Clemens Cavallin in “Deep Realism: A Discussion of Christian Literary Realism with an Analysis of Passages from Michael O’Brien’s Children of the Last Days Novel Series,” develops a contemporary understanding of narratology that accommodates the possibilities in narrative art of presenting the various ways in which the supernatural reality at the heart of Christian faith is illuminated within the empirical world depicted by Christian realist fiction. The article examines on a theoretical level the general problem of the relation between literary realism and the world of religious belief, and in the second part considers in detail examples from the novel series Children of the Last Days by Michael O’Brien to provide demonstrations of particular artistic solutions devised by O’Brien in this area. The “deep realism” of O’Brien, Cavallin argues, operates through an extension of realism to include the supernatural in a visionary way of seeing, and through this accomplishment O’Brien contributes to a broader trend of “reenchantment” in contemporary literature.

“The Preacher of the Fourth Lateran Council” by Andrew W. Jones provides an insightful account of the reform of preaching accomplished by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Jones derives a description of the ideal preacher as envisaged by Lateran IV and considers how the Council understood the meaning and purpose of preaching. He begins with the thought of Innocent III and throughout the article emphasizes the importance of the recognition that for Innocent, preaching “was not simply instruction or exhortation; rather, it was liturgical and sacramental.”

Angelo Caranfa in “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” brings us a moving account of Weil’s
spiritually rich understanding of the importance of music. He begins with the relational character of music in Weil’s view, through which the cosmos whose order is established in God’s relationship of love with all of creation can be brought to musical expression, making possible our communion with a reality that exceeds our daily experience of life. Attention to music is therefore “the soul’s movement to God,” which means that music is a form of prayer: through listening we raise ourselves to even higher levels of receptivity to the divine. The work of the artist brings to light a sacramental view of the world that sees the relationship between all of reality and its origin in God and sees that relationship as the manifestation of beauty.

The final article in this issue provides a surprising interpretation of a kind of convergence of views between the brothers William and Henry James who each in his own way engages a belief in the immortality of the soul. Roger Duncan in “William and Henry James on the Immortality of the Soul,” acknowledges that the brothers would not have collaborated or shared their views with one another, but sees that each reacted against the prevailing philosophical scientism and materialism to make worthwhile contributions to the topic. William recognizes the limits of scientific thinking and argues that there is no scientific evidence on the basis of which to reject belief in the immortality of the soul. Henry considers the weight of materialism to be considerable, but then discerns in his own life the trajectory of a gradually expanding comprehensiveness of understanding and feeling that seems to have its own momentum toward the future, an experience that seems to indicate the seed of immortality within the soul, unless life were to be a cruel joke through the planting of such a seed only to have it inevitably quashed at death. Duncan concludes with a careful and discerning account of the significance of the views of these writers and brothers.

Michael C. Jordan
Editor
Notes


3. Ibid.


5. Ibid., 79.

6. Ibid., 120.