

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

ALL PHOTOS BY THE CHAPTER, CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL



In the early 1200s, 12 stained glass windows, about 30 feet tall, were made to depict the events of Thomas Becket's life and death, including miracles attributed to him. The series of windows, called the "miracle windows," surround where Becket's now-lost shrine was once placed. This particular window (L, the top half of the window, R, the bottom half) shows how Becket helped ordinary people.

## HISTORY

# A Window Into Thomas Becket's Life, Death, Sainthood, and Miracles

The exhibition: 'Thomas Becket: Murder and the Making of a Saint' at The British Museum, London

## LORRAINE FERRIER

It is Dec. 29, 1170, at Canterbury Cathedral in southeast England, one of the most important places of worship in the country. The archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket is settling down for dinner in the Archbishop's Palace after a busy day.

It is a day like any other, yet an extraordinary event is about to happen, a heinous act of sacrilege that will affect the king, country, and much of Europe for centuries to come.

Five vivid eyewitness accounts, some of them graphic, help us re-create the scene. Outside Canterbury Cathedral, four of the knights of King Henry II have just arrived from Normandy, France, home of the royal court. They traveled to England with an express purpose: to avenge the king.

Barging their way into the palace, the knights demand Becket's arrest. He refuses to cooperate. Becket's monks persuade him to take refuge in the cathedral. But the sanctity of the church will not protect him from the knights' blood-thirsty rage.

Storming into the cathedral, the knights abruptly interrupt the glorious sound of monks singing and chanting Vespers, evening prayers. The knights shout: "Where is Thomas Becket, traitor to the king and the kingdom?"

Pandemonium ensues.

Becket grabs one of the cathedral's pillars in another attempt to resist arrest. Enraged, one of the knights raises his sword high over his head, and then strikes the archbishop. The other knights follow his lead, until England's most powerful churchman lies lifeless in a pool of blood.

His murder shook Europe. Three short years after his death, in 1173, Becket became St. Thomas of Canterbury.

### 'Thomas Becket: Murder and the Making of a Saint'

Becket's life and martyrdom has fascinated many for centuries. The British Museum in London hopes to open in May its new exhibition: "Thomas Becket: Murder and the Making of a Saint."

Remarkably, the exhibition is the first large UK show dedicated to the saint and

focuses on Becket's life and legacy, how he rose and fell, and how 350 years after he died, he was once seen as a traitor by King Henry VIII.

Stunning pieces of jewelry, sacred reliquaries, illuminated manuscripts, and an 800-year-old stained glass window from Canterbury Cathedral are some of the items that shed light on Becket's intriguing life and legacy.

### From Clerk to Archbishop

Becket's parents came from Normandy and settled in England after the Norman Conquest. His father was a merchant of no notable wealth. He was educated in Merton Priory in southwest London, and then he studied in Paris for a few years. On his return to England, Becket began working as a clerk for Theobald of Bec, the archbishop of Canterbury.

Becket was charming, intelligent, and had an authoritative presence. These qualities impressed the archbishop to such an extent that he put his clerk forward for the role of royal chancellor.

Continued on Page 4

**Three short years after his death, in 1173, Becket became St. Thomas of Canterbury.**

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Bolshevik revolutionaries attacking the czarist police in the early days, 1917, of the Russian Revolution. From Edward Alsworth Ross's "The Russian Bolshevik Revolution," 1921.

### LITERATURE

## Undermining the Foundations: Lessons From Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'Devils'

JEFF MINICK

**E**arly in March, I was sucker punched by a Russian. A dead Russian, as a matter of fact. Let me explain.

Late in December, I made a New Year's resolution to read at least six classics that were new to me in the coming year. Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" was my first choice, and I found that excursion into the days of King Richard and Robin Hood an agreeable adventure.

Next up for investigation was Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Devils," the Constance Garnett translation that had sat unopened on my shelf for years. Long ago, I'd read "Notes From the Underground," "The Brothers Karamazov," and "Crime and Punishment," and I later taught these last two books to my Advanced Placement Literature students.

And so I began "Devils," unfazed by the novel's length—almost 700 pages—and inspired to make my march through that story by the book's blurb, which proclaimed that the novel centered on a group of radicals and revolutionaries in 1860s Russia, a "prophetic account of modern morals and politics, with its fifty-odd characters, amazing events and challenging ideas."

For almost 200 pages, I read of love affairs and intrigue, listened in on bizarre conversations, and met strange characters like those who inhabit all the books I've read by Dostoevsky. "So where are the radicals?" I kept asking myself, and was shocked when the author revealed that several of them were already planted in the story. Like real revolutionaries, they had hidden themselves away until the time came to put their plans into action.

That was the punch that knocked me to the canvas.

Now let's look at "Devils."

#### The Plot

The above subhead is a double entendre, for here I will briefly summarize a complicated plot that in fact involves a plot. Also titled "The Demons," "The Devils," or "The Possessed," depending on the translator, "Devils" involves a group of conspirators in a fictional provincial town that has links to other cells of those seeking to overthrow the government.

Composed primarily of atheists, socialists, idealists, adventurers, and criminals, this collection of radicals intends to seize control of society and begin the process of leading the Russian people toward a heaven on earth.

Eventually, a sort of rebellion takes place. At first, a few people are murdered or commit suicide—Dostoevsky based the execution of one man on

a real-life incident of a revolutionary murdered because he wanted out of the movement—but by the end of the novel, the pages are littered with more bodies than at the close of "Hamlet." Some of the key figures in this movement are Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky, a school teacher and liberal idealist who unintentionally helped create some of these radicals; his son Pyotr Verhovensky, who is a leading figure among the revolutionaries; Ivan Shatov, who initially is a member of the group but comes to despise their ideas; and the charismatic Nikolay Stavrogin, who tests the limits of morality while acting as a skeptical commentator on the plans of the radicals.

### When the Russian Revolution occurred, many contemporaries of that event pointed to Dostoevsky as a prophet, a prognosticator who had foretold this upheaval.

#### Difficulties

"Devils" is not an easy read. First, the Russian names ring unfamiliar in the ears of most of us, and so many characters step in and out of the story that for a while keeping track of them was difficult for me.

Moreover, as I wrote above, the blurb mentions "fifty-odd characters," referring, of course to the number, but if we remove that hyphen, the description would be just as apt. Here are odd souls indeed, men and women very different from fictional American characters then or now.

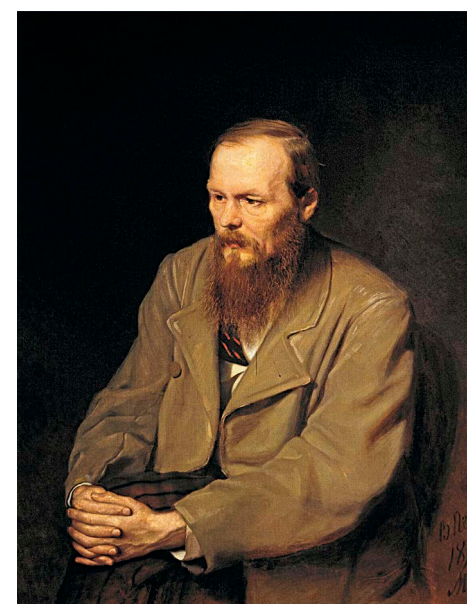
Dostoevsky's Russians dash from self-pity to anger, from love to hatred, in the blink of an eye. The stiff upper lip and restraint associated with such American characters like Natty Bumppo in "The Leatherstocking Tales" or even the obsessed Captain Ahab in "Moby Dick" stand in stark contrast to the nervous tics of the inhabitants of Dostoevsky's novels.

A tip: Readers who decide to undertake reading "Devils" might consider using the online sites that distill the plot, themes, and characters of this novel as guides for this journey.

#### Prophecies and Philosophies

Despite these stumbling blocks, "Devils" has much to say to our own time.

When the Russian Revolution occurred, many contemporaries of



Apparently, Dostoevsky could foretell the future. A portrait of Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1872, by Vasili Perov. Tretyakov Gallery.

that event pointed to Dostoevsky as a prophet, a prognosticator who had foretold this upheaval. I would go even further than these men and women of letters and declare "Devils" a crystal ball in which the author predicted the totalitarian movements of the last 100 years, with their statist philosophies, their utopianism, and their willingness to murder, often on a grand scale, to advance an agenda and to seize power.

In "Part Two: Chapter Seven: A Meeting," for example, we encounter a gathering of "the flower of the reddest Radicalism of our ancient town." This assemblage discuss subjects as diverse as the family ("a superstitious form"), a moral compass ("There's no such thing as moral or immoral"), and "the division of mankind into two unequal parts," with one-tenth, an elite, acting as governors while the others "have to give up all individuality and become, so to speak, a herd, and through boundless submission, will by a series of regenerations attain primeval innocence, something like the garden of Eden."

**The More Things Change,  
the More They Remain the Same**  
As Pyotr Verhovensky says, "It's a new religion, my good friend, coming to take the place of the old one."

At one point, Pyotr Verhovensky tells Stavrogin: "A teacher who laughs with children at their God and at their cradle is on our side. The lawyer who defends an educated murderer because he is more cultured than his victims and could not help murdering them to get money is one of us ... The juries who acquit every criminal are ours. The prosecutor who trembles at a trial for fear he should not seem advanced enough is ours, ours. Among officials and literary men we have lots, lots, lots, and they don't know it themselves."

Sound familiar?

### In 'Devils,' a collection of radicals intend to seize control of society.

#### Ultimate Goals

Near the end of "Devils," one of the radicals confesses his part in the attempted uprising. When asked what was "the object of so many murders and scandals and dastardly outrages," he replies: "It was with the idea of systematically undermining the foundations, systematically destroying society and all principles, with the idea of nonplussing everyone and making hay of everything, and then, when society was tottering, sick and out of joint, cynical and skeptical though filled with an intense eagerness for self-preservation and for some guiding idea, suddenly to seize it in the hands, raising the standards of revolt..."

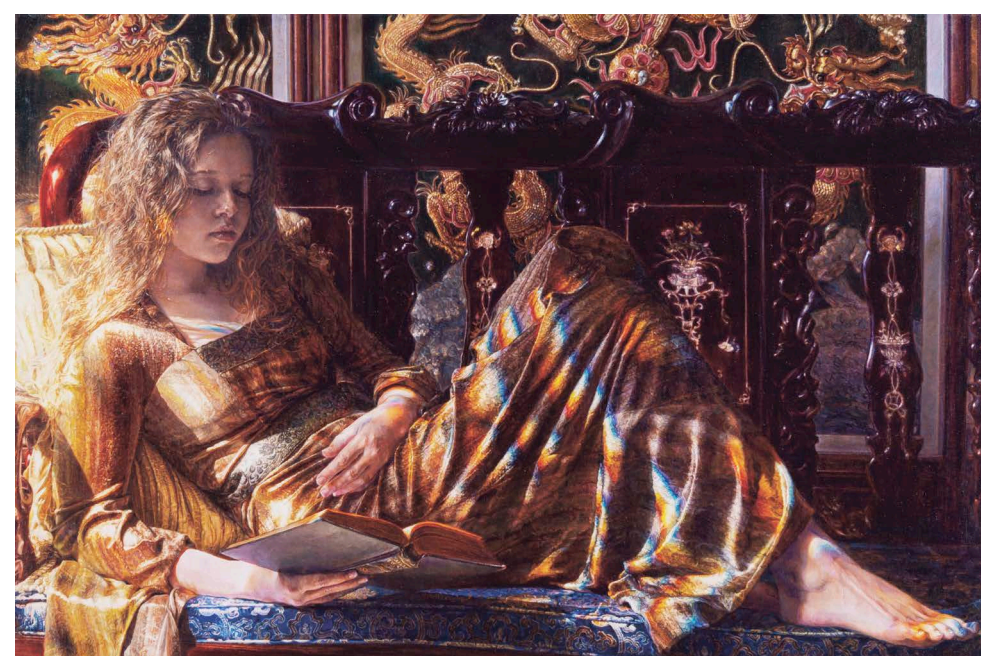
Sprinkle this explanation with some of the obscenities used by today's radicals, and you could well be listening to a member of Antifa spelling out that organization's goals.

This year marks the 150th anniversary when installments of "Devils" first began to appear in "The Russian Messenger." Given humanity's various catastrophes since then, we are apparently a race of slow learners.



Dostoevsky depicted demons, possessed by revolutionary furor, attacking the foundations of civilization. An engraving, "The Temptation of St. Anthony," circa 1480-90, by Martin Schöngauer. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.



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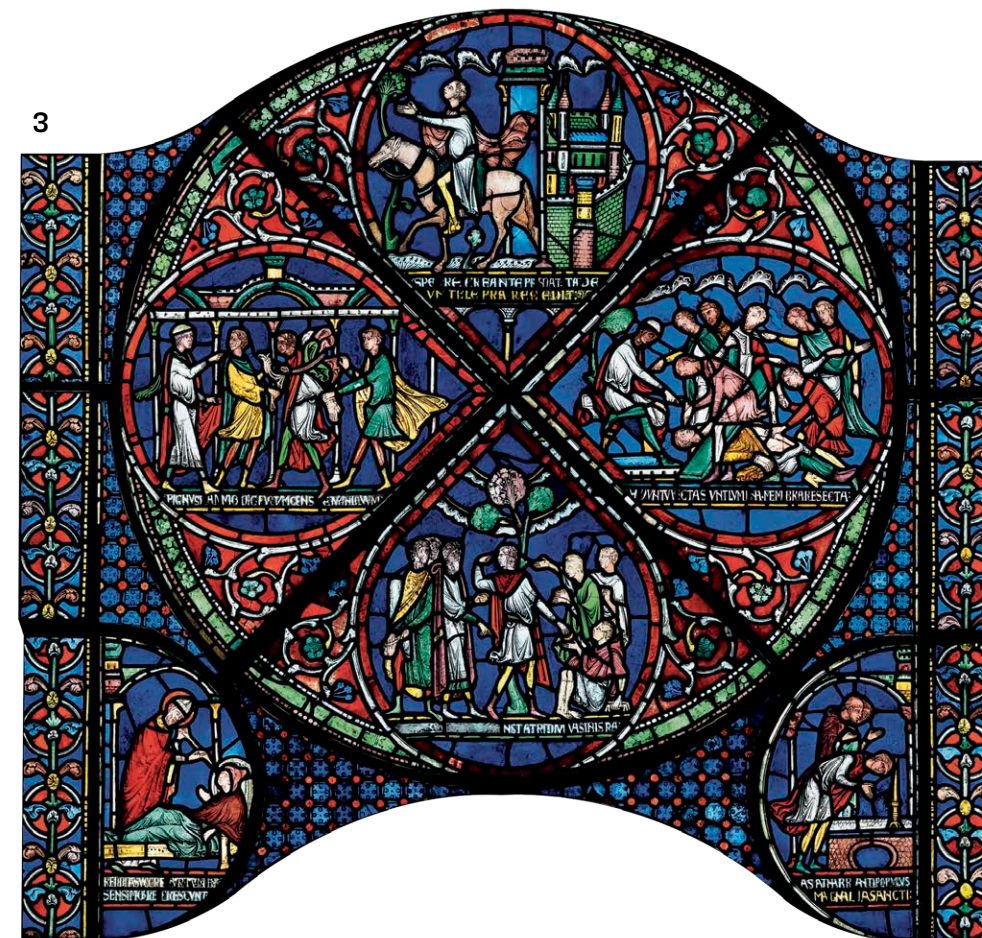
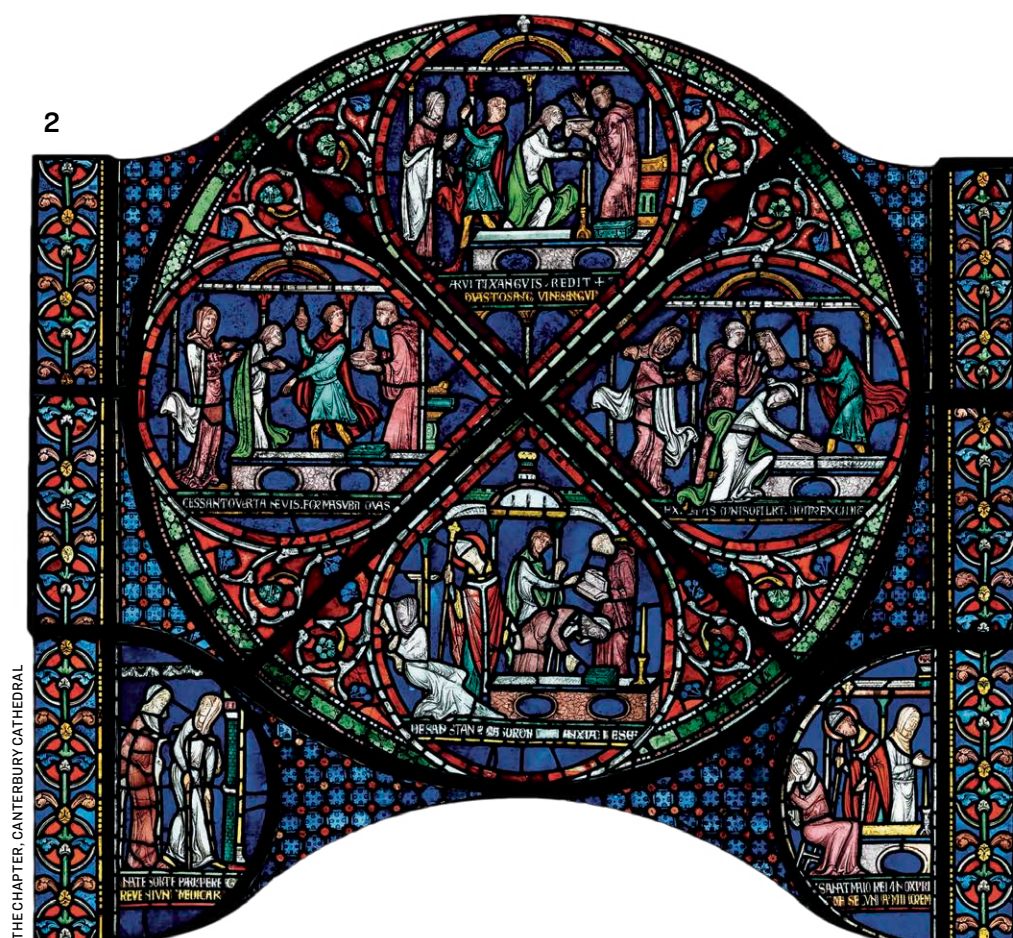
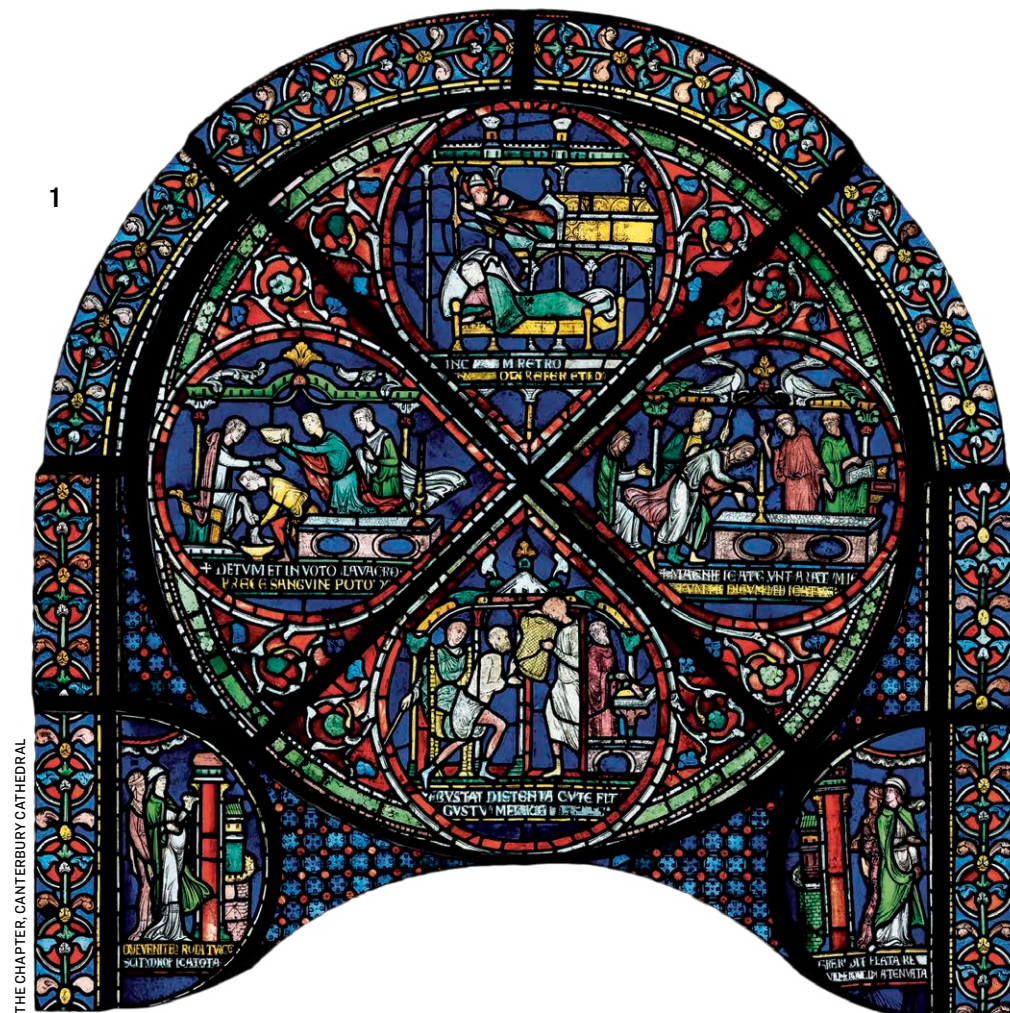
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Details from the fifth "miracle window" at Canterbury Cathedral shows pilgrims seeking cures: 1) Ralph de Longeville has leprosy, and Goditha of Hayes has dropsy; 2) Etheldreda comes with a high fever, and Saxeava from Dover suffers from painful arms and a stomachache; 3) Eilward of Westoning recovers from blindness and castration; and 4) monk Hugh is purged of an illness.

HISTORY

# A Window Into Thomas Becket's Life, Death, Sainthood, and Miracles

Continued from Page 1

It was as chancellor that Becket and King Henry II became firm friends, enjoying the pleasures of the royal court, including hunting and traveling together.

As royal chancellor, Becket had a lavish lifestyle, living in opulent homes and traveling to France on his own ships.

When the archbishop died on April 18, 1161, Henry wanted Becket to become archbishop. The king had a political motive for appointing his friend: He wanted Becket to be both chancellor and archbishop so that he could have a close ally in the church. Ultimately, as king, Henry wanted to reduce papal dominance and restore sovereign power to the state, as it had been during the reign of his grandfather, Henry I.

At the time, Rome exerted dominance over much of England. For instance, most of England was educated by the church. In addition, any crime committed by an ordained churchman was tried in the church court and was not under the crown's jurisdiction, regardless of the crime committed.



This 13th-century English ampulla shows Thomas Becket between two knights.

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Becket was appointed archbishop on May 23, 1162, and consecrated on June 3. But Henry's idea did not go as he planned. Becket resigned as royal chancellor later that year, and he fully embraced his responsibilities as archbishop.

### From Friend to Firm Foe

In just a few years, a firm rift would form between the king and the archbishop—Becket would stay loyal to the church and its interests while Henry still hoped to restore the crown's power. The fallout would lead to Becket's murder.

In the years prior to Becket's death, the problems between the two men worsened. In October 1164, Henry summoned Becket to the King's Council where, among other accusations and demands, he was ordered to relinquish all non-landed property and to make his accounts from when he was chancellor available for scrutiny. He refused to accept the council's decisions.

In 1165, Becket fled to north-central France, where he spent six years exiled at Pontigny Abbey. During that time, Henry's son, Henry the Young King, was crowned (becoming joint sovereign) by the archbishop of York, Becket's rival. Becket was furious: Coronations were traditionally presided over by the archbishop of Canterbury.

Becket appealed to the pope, and after intense negotiations, Henry and Becket spoke for the first time in years. Henry promised to restore Becket as archbishop of Canterbury and assured him that it was safe for him to return home to England.

But before Becket left France, he wrote to the archbishop of York and two of the bishops present at the recent coronation, excommunicating all three. This action may have proved fatal for Becket.

The archbishop of York and the two bishops traveled to Henry's court in Normandy and told the king what had happened. Henry was incensed: "What miserable drones and traitors have I nurtured and promoted in my household who let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born clerk!" he said, according to one of Becket's biographers.

To this day, no one knows if Henry himself sent his knights to Canterbury. A commonly held belief is that the knights set off on their own accord, after hearing the king's angry outburst.

### A Window Into Becket's Miracles

After Becket's death, Canterbury Cathedral became an important pilgrimage site, with many seeking cures for their diseases. In medieval times, illness was believed to be divine retribution for sins, and so saints were often sought for a cure.

At the cathedral, monks filled ampullae, often pewter flasks, with Becket's diluted blood that they believed had miraculous properties. Pilgrims could

purchase these ampullae filled with this concoction they called St. Thomas's Water.

Several artifacts in the exhibition demonstrate how the water was used. One astonishing ampulla depicting Becket flanked by two knights is on display. The knights have their swords drawn as if they have been caught the moment before they strike the archbishop.

## For the first time, one of the 30-foot tall stained glass windows will leave Canterbury Cathedral to be installed in The British Museum exhibition.

Detailed scenes of pilgrims using St. Thomas's Water are depicted on some of Canterbury Cathedral's stained glass windows, called "miracle windows," made in the early 1200s. The series of 12 windows once surrounded Becket's shrine in Canterbury Cathedral's Trinity Chapel. Becket's shrine no longer exists, but seven of the windows do and show the miracles that occurred in the three years after he died.

The cathedral's miracle windows are the only known media to show Becket's miracles. The stories on the windows must have been "reassuring and uplifting" to the pilgrims who had journeyed to the cathedral, said Leonie Seliger, director of stained glass conservation at Canterbury Cathedral, in the exhibition press release.

For the first time, one of the 30-foot-tall stained glass windows will leave Canterbury Cathedral to be installed in The British Museum exhibition. The chosen window is the fifth in the series of 12 that shows several stories of healings.

Last year, researchers working on the windows in preparation for the exhibition made a startling discovery. Looking at the window under a microscope, they realized that some of the glass panels were in the wrong order. They deduced that, when the window was restored in the 1660s, the craftsmen must have made the mistake when the window was reconstructed. For the first time in over 350 years, the window can be seen as it was intended.

### The Stories of the Miracles

The window in the exhibition shows depictions of common folk being healed. At the top of the window, in the left-hand teardrop, Ralph de Longeville sits next to Becket's tomb, where an attendant bathes his legs in St. Thomas's Water, after which he is cured of leprosy. Below the four teardrop panels showing Longeville, Goditha of Hayes enters on

the left; her stomach appears swollen from dropsy. Moving along to the right of the window, she's seen leaving the tomb, looking slimmer and healed of her disease.

The second story (from the top) of the window shows a group of women traveling to Becket's tomb. Among them is Etheldreda who suffered from a high fever, and Saxeava who had painful arms and stomach. Both women are depicted as being healed.

In the third panel from the top of the window, Eilward of Westoning is depicted. This is the only known medieval artwork to depict a castration. Eilward had been blinded and castrated as punishment for stealing. Remarkably, after he prayed at Becket's tomb, his eyesight returned, as did his testicles.

Interestingly, "The ineffectiveness of surgeons and physicians is a theme in the miracles of St. Thomas," said expert of medieval visual culture M.A. Michael, on the Getty website. This is especially clear in the bottom story of the exhibition's miracle window. In the left-hand teardrop, Hugh, a monk from Jervaulx Abbey in Yorkshire, north-east England, is bedridden and being attended to by a lay physician. Hugh's story progresses in the top teardrop, where he's at Becket's tomb, sipping St. Thomas's Water. In the right teardrop, his illness can be seen being purged by a sudden and violent nosebleed.

### The Legacy of St. Thomas of Canterbury

On July 12, 1174, a remorseful Henry walked barefoot three miles to Canterbury Cathedral, confessing his sins in an act of penance. When he entered the cathedral, he ordered the bishops, who had been present when Becket was murdered, to each flog him five times with a rod. He then commanded each of the 80 monks to flog him with the rod three times. Henry's blood spilled on the spot where Becket died.

Before Henry's penance, his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and two elder sons were plotting against him with his archrivals William II of Scotland and Louis VII of France to take over his land. After Henry repented at Becket's tomb, miraculously nothing came of the rebellion, and his sons sought Henry's forgiveness.

From that day, Henry often prayed at Becket's shrine. Becket's legacy traveled far and even prompted England's first visit by a head of state: Louis VII. The French king's 14-year-old son, Prince Philip, was gravely ill, prompting the king to make the pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral in the hope that St. Thomas of Canterbury would heal his son. Philip recovered.

Even now, Becket's martyrdom is remembered by world dignitaries. Last year, on the 850th anniversary of Becket's murder, President Donald Trump said: "Thomas Becket's death serves as a powerful and timeless reminder to every American that our freedom from religious persecution is not a mere luxury or accident of history, but rather an essential element of our liberty."

The British Museum's exhibition "Thomas Becket: Murder and the Making of a Saint" is due to open in May, pending COVID-19 restrictions. To find out more, visit [BritishMuseum.org](http://BritishMuseum.org)



On the southern side of Canterbury Cathedral's Trinity Chapel, seven stained glass "miracle windows" depict the miraculous healings that were said to have taken place at St. Thomas of Canterbury's tomb between 1170 and 1220. The fifth of these windows is part of a new exhibition at The British Museum.



(Left) Thomas Becket's murder is depicted on an alabaster altarpiece panel, around 1425–50, in England. The sculpture would probably have been part of a sequence of similar sculptures showing scenes from Becket's life and death.



(Right) French reliquary casket showing the murder of Thomas Becket, about 1180–1190.



An illumination shows Becket's martyrdom on an English manuscript, mid-1180s, containing Alan of Tewkesbury's "Collection of St. Thomas Becket's Letters," and John of Salisbury's "Life of St. Thomas Becket."

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## TRADITIONAL CULTURE

# The End of Education

SEAN FITZPATRICK

The school should always have as its aim that the young man leave it as a harmonious personality, not as a specialist. This in my opinion is true in a certain sense even for technical schools... The development of general ability for independent thinking and judgment should always be placed foremost, not the acquisition of special knowledge.—Albert Einstein

There are at least two senses of the word “end”—the one being fulfillment of an aim, the other, the death or failure of something. A large part of the crisis in education today is that the aim, the fulfillment, or end of education is so mistaken in schools and the world at large that it effectively takes on its other meaning: an end, or a failure, of education.

One major source of this misunderstanding of education’s purpose is that education is seen as utilitarian. The purpose of education, however, is not servile. It is liberal. That is, education is not for the sake of a career; it is for the sake of character. The aim of education is to bring people to more perfect knowledge of themselves in the context of the highest realities, and when it deviates from that end, education ends.

## Education Today

Modern schooling strategies tend to apply broad-based benchmarks to arm students with 21st-century skills before marching them off like money-making militants to collaborate, innovate, and compete in a 21st-century global economy. The prevalent Common Core initiative is especially retrograde and degrading, developing and implementing comprehensive statistics together with assessment systems to measure student performance, to ensure that all students are equally provided with a program of prepackaged expectations designed to meet the requirements of colleges and careers. But the end of education, of true education, is not to get a degree or a job or a financial portfolio. It is a Marxist principle that man is determined by his technologies, his means of production, and an “education” modeled after commercial culture is not leading out (e-ducere) but digging in. The world sorely needs to go back to school, as in, go back to schooling. The aim and end of education is to

form the whole person according to timeless, intrinsic values, rather than train all people to conform to a contemporary set of uniform, economic standards. Thus, education responds to the universal truths of man rather than to the specific particulars of the multitude. When first things are put first, the rest tends to fall into place.

The Common Core standards are far too common to address the human core. It shrinks learning into a one-size-fits-all centralized set of informational sessions designed to achieve success by narrowing the focus to basic facts for measurable recall. This requires a reduction of the human to empirical calculus in a lowest-common-denominator paradigm—which is so far from the end of education, it only serves to bring an end to education.

## ‘A Call to Something Higher Than Ourselves’

Real education lifts the intellects of all students to the highest aspirations of man, encompassing a student’s capacity for imaginative and emotional appreciation of reality, as well as for analytic and scientific habits of mind. It is that cultivation of mind which, as John Henry Newman says, “implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character.”

For the ancients, the ends of action and of education were the conformance of the soul to reality for the sake of wisdom. For the moderns, the ends of action and of education are the conformance of reality to the soul by means of technique. Excesses of technique and overspecialization, however, dull the desire to experience through the distance they create from reality and life, and thereby dull the ability to learn.

Dr. John Senior, who headed a storied program at the University of Kansas in the 1970s called the Integrated Humanities Program, and whose legacy is gaining attention and traction in various spheres of academia, once wrote: “Education is not the acquisition of marketable skills, or self-improvement, culture, personal fulfillment, or even knowledge—though these benefits normally occur; but, essentially, it is a call to something higher than ourselves.”

I remember being summoned to things higher than myself at the boarding school I attended. The first time was at six o’clock in the morning. I was awoken by the headmaster, who stood below my bunk in rubber boots. None of my five roommates were stirring, but the birds

were. He informed me that one of his sheep down in the barn had hoof rot to the point where he had to shoot it with his revolver, and the carcass needed to be disposed. “You look like you could use the experience,” he told me matter-of-factly, and he was right. After some brief instruction, he left me, a city kid, with the filthy, inconceivable task of hauling a 200-some pound dead sheep over hill and dale to the dump at the crack of dawn.

The second time was at night. “There’s a ewe giving birth to a lamb in the barn,” the headmaster told me. “I want you to stay with her until the lamb can stand.” Down I tramped with a flashlight. Blood last week and this week, birth. A full circle was completed that was educational—and not because I was studying to be a sheep farmer. Education is about furnishing such real lessons in reality—pure teaching moments that corroborate the readings and lectures on the true, the good, and the beautiful, and prepare students for the human condition, for life and death. But to achieve this, education must be governed with exceptional care that cultivates experiences that both complement and confirm a curriculum and fosters genuine character in an atmosphere of friendship: experiences in classrooms, on playing field, in the woods, or any place least expected—like a sheep pen. Education can happen anywhere, and it happens best when it points students toward encounters with real life that are informative and formative.

This approach involves launching students into interactions with reality by leading them in a relationship that balances hardship and friendship. English teachers should spur students to undertake Shakespeare, and then congratulate them when they share a thought on a sonnet before peers. Coaches should push their charges in facing physical fears, and then acknowledge a young athlete when they bloody their nose on a rugby pitch. Choir directors should demand perfection, and then honor a student for singing beautifully at Mass. Camping leaders should command excellence, and then praise a youngster for telling a story around a fire.

Education pursues its end when it dwells in what all people should know as knowers—the truth. The result of this is not necessarily “useful,” but it is good and beautiful and humanizing. At its best, education assumes tra-

ditional anthropology that includes treatment of the human as a spiritual being in possession of appetites, intellect, imagination, and will; thus, it cultivates wonder as the root of inquiry and the beginning of wisdom. At its worst, it cuts people off from divine and moral agency and is reduced to a set of objectives and operations geared toward gainful employment; thus, subordinating the higher inclinations of man to the acquisition of functional and workaday knowledge.

Such an “education” leaves students prepared for a limited life, and not prepared at all to live in the contemplation of truth for its own sake—which is the end of education. This philosophical mindset goes beyond mere knowledge, rising above the accumulation of facts to a framework whereby all things might be understood in their proper relation to one another—a vision that is not only the end of education but the end of human life as well.

“The whole point of education,” wrote English author G.K. Chesterton, “is that it should give a man abstract and eternal standards, by which he can judge material and fugitive conditions.” Education ascends to excellence in cultivating the virtues, leading toward that interior knowledge and exterior knowledge which comprehends the order of reality, both visible and invisible. To know the whole truth of things and to think well for the sake of living well is the excellence that education strives for: to gain self-rule and the habit of virtue.

Education has descended to considering man’s excellence as consisting of mere means rather than ends. The modern mantra is to work rigorously and vigorously for the sake of living well—which is to say, to gain self-sufficiency and the marks and accoutrements of worldly success. There is far more to living, however, than making a living. The current concept of worldly success is for the sake of economic excellence, while education’s end is for the sake of human excellence. Anything less than the latter educational end is a participation in the end of education.

Sean Fitzpatrick serves on the faculty of Gregory the Great Academy, a boarding school in Elmhurst, Pa., where he teaches humanities. His writings on education, literature, and culture have appeared in a number of journals including *Crisis Magazine*, *Catholic Exchange*, and *the Imaginative Conservative*.

Since ancient times and until recently, education has meant the formation of character. “The School of Athens” fresco by Renaissance artist Raphael depicting the Platonic Academy, a famous school in ancient Athens founded by the philosopher Plato in the early fourth century B.C. In the center are Plato and Aristotle, in discussion.

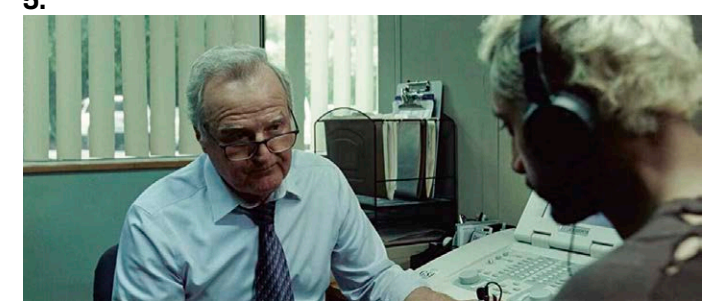
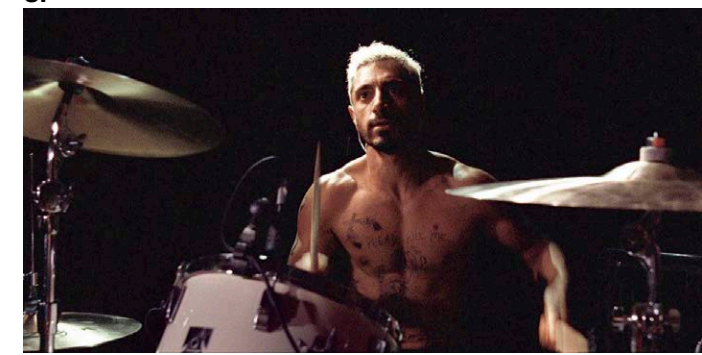
G.K. Chesterton at work at *Crisis Magazine*.



“The whole point of education is that it should give a man abstract and eternal standards, by which he can judge material and fugitive conditions.”

G.K. Chesterton, English author

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1. Rockers Lou (Olivia Cooke) and Ruben (Riz Ahmed) coming to grips with the reality that their profession has damaged Ruben’s hearing, in “Sound of Metal.” 2. Ruben Stone (Riz Ahmed, C) begins to get the hang of sign language. 3. Joe (Paul Raci, L) and Ruben (Riz Ahmed) have a facing-reality talk. 4. Ruben Stone (Riz Ahmed) tries to convince his girlfriend Lou (Olivia Cooke) not to leave him. 5. Dr. Paysinger (Tom Kemp, L) conducts a hearing test on Ruben Stone (Riz Ahmed). 6. Ruben Stone (Riz Ahmed) behind his drum kit.



## Don't Take Your Soundscape for Granted

MARK JACKSON

I love the sound of metal. That is, the unmuffled rumble of V-8 and V-twin engines of American muscle cars and Harley-Davidson motorcycles, respectively. I own a bike of significant loudness. I also used to drum in a rock band. I sometimes worry about ... my ears.

Early in my riding career, like an addict needing a stronger fix, I took the baffles out of my exhaust pipes. Crossing Manhattan’s George Washington Bridge at rush hour was an immediate, literal power trip. When cars and trucks hear that infernal din encroaching on their six o’clock, they part like the Red Sea—you sail through an hour’s worth of traffic jam in ten minutes. It’s like having Thor’s hammer connected to your throttle hand. Loudness is power; power is addictive.

After a month of that, even with earplugs, my ears started complaining. I also realized I’d become one of those super-loud bikers people tend to hate. I put the baffles back in the pipes. But many Americans also love that sound and will stand at attention on their porch and salute you even if you weren’t in the military like you should have been. Hmmm ... I should quit it. But I don’t wanna. Just yet.

**When the Ears Can't Handle the Profession**  
“Sound of Metal” is about a metal drummer (“metal” = a form of hard rock music) who loses his hearing. Ten minutes into the film, and after seeing the lead character experiencing familiar symptoms of hearing loss, I noticed a state of denial coming on; I suddenly didn’t want to watch it anymore. Luckily, I had a job to do.

## ‘Sound of Metal’

**Director**  
Darius Marder

**Starring**  
Riz Ahmed, Olivia Cooke, Paul Raci, Lauren Ridloff, Mathieu Amalric

**Rated**  
R

**Running Time**  
2 hours

**Release Date**  
Dec. 4, 2020, on Amazon Prime Video; in cinemas May 17



The couple's well-appointed RV.

Riz Ahmed plays Ruben Stone, a former heroin addict with bleached-blond hair and many tattoos, who drums in a White-Stripes-like two-person band with his girlfriend Lou (Olivia Cooke) who’s got bleached-blond eyebrows, and many self-harm cutting scars on her forearms.

They appear to have done rather well, living a nomadic life touring the USA in a well-appointed, cozy Airstream RV that doubles as a recording studio on wheels.

When Ruben’s world suddenly goes silent after many ignored warning signs, their relationship, both personal and professional, is immediately on thin ice. Hearing tests are taken; there’s a possible expensive surgical option that Ruben, in a complete state of denial, decides will be a tidy fix to this temporary setback.

But Lou, recognizing the warning signals of an imminent addict-relapse stemming from Ruben’s heightened stress levels, insists he go another route. In the form of a rural farm-and-school community of recovering addicts who also happen to be deaf.

## Fork in the Road of Life

The pervading philosophy of this community, espoused eloquently by deaf 12-step counselor and community leader Joe (Paul Raci), is that theirs is not a disability, and silence is a reality to be embraced—celebrated even—and not run from, especially not run from in the addictive state of mind that Ruben is displaying.

There’s an extended period of dissonance, when Ruben slowly acclimatizes and accepts his situation, learning a new lifestyle, sign language and all, of how to be deaf. Throughout most of the film, though, Ruben clings desperately to his old life, sneaking into Joe’s office to research online, borrowing from Peter to pay Paul, obsessing, and contemplating selling his beloved RV for money to get the operation.

However, the seeds are planted early that this will be a spiritual journey. As it is said in faith-oriented literature: When one leaves the shore and heads out on the stormy seas (like the boats leaving the Grey Havens in “Lord of the Rings”), one should be prepared to not see land for a long time.

Meditation is introduced, along with the concept that if one can learn to embrace and cherish the deep, cozy silence—that gift will be forever. As opposed to the fickle and potentially addictive information coming to us through the five senses.

Will Ruben get the surgery? Will it resurrect his old life, such as it was, with the intense assault and battery of his ears?

Will he reconnect with Lou? Will there be a resolution of the dissonance? Will the journey into silence be completed—or will

Ruben exit this movie in a cloud of Lou’s power chords and shrieked vocals, accompanied by his own drum-kit bash-ery?

## Performances

Ruben is not an easy character to like: an edgy, hair-trigger temper in an aggressive, arrogant, dismissive, hyper-type-A personality. It’s easy to be thoroughly annoyed with him until at least halfway through the film. If there was ever someone who has to learn the hard way, it’s him.

Armchair quarterbacking is easy; to roll one’s eyes when we can predict the outcome of certain actions is facile. Teaching is hard. And so it becomes easy, watching “Sound of Metal,” to appreciate the wisdom and patience of good teachers (like Joe) who can see the mistakes and the pain coming but don’t interfere in the process.

There’s also a sense that Ruben is trying hard to learn and change. And so Ahmed’s is a virtuoso piece of acting. He walks a fine edge of being off-putting and yet generating just enough likability for us to root for him.

## ‘Sound of Metal’ has been nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award.

Olivia Cooke as Lou is tasked, on the one hand, with the challenging portrayal of a woman with enough low self-esteem to have had self-harm issues, along with the codependent-addictive connection to an addict, and on the other, someone with enough self-awareness to try to evolve beyond her dependency on Ruben. It’s pretty masterful.

The third main character in this film is the sound design. It depicts and simulates how losing one’s hearing happens. It also functions as a powerful reminder for hearing people not to take life and its run-of-the-mill sounds for granted—coffee dripping, birdsong, wind, talking on the phone.

It brings to mind Albert Einstein’s observation that there are only two ways to live life: One is as though nothing is a miracle; the other is as though everything is a miracle. Part of the path of spiritual cultivation and evolution is learning to cherish everything in the moment for its miraculous wonderment. It seems like a no-brainer. But go have your hearing taken away by “Sound of Metal,” and you will go home with a heightened appreciation of the subtle noisecape around you.

The film also brings up the understanding that it’s only by way of experiencing hardship that we ever really change for the better. We often hear people say they wouldn’t trade their bouts with cancer for anything, knowing how far they were able to evolve spiritually. It’s the universal law of “No loss, no gain.” The riches hidden behind pain and sacrifice are always more desirable than the unawakened state. As Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

That said, should I maybe sell the bike ...? I feel like Saint Augustine, saying, “Dear Lord give me quiet pipes. But don’t give them yet.” Or was it chastity? I’m pretty sure it was chastity. Similar deal.

“Sound of Metal” has been nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award, and Riz Ahmed and Paul Raci have been nominated for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor Oscars, respectively.



REACHING WITHIN:  
WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

# How to Be Worthy of Being Human

## A Look at 2 Paintings

ERIC BESS

Many stories in Western culture warn of the woes that come from challenging the divine. Today, we will investigate two paintings that illustrate one of these stories: “Apollo as Victor Over Pan” by Jacob Jordaens, and “Apollo and Marsyas” by Bartolomeo Manfredi.

### The Musical Contest Between Apollo and Pan (Marsyas)

As the ancient Greek story goes, Athena was playing the flute until she saw her reflection in a body of water. Playing the flute distorted her beauty so much that she threw the flute away in disgust.

The satyr Pan (also known as Marsyas) found the flute and blew into it. Since it once belonged to a goddess, the flute effortlessly made beautiful sounds.

Marsyas believed it was his own talent that produced the beautiful music, and he soon challenged Apollo, god of music and dance, to a musical contest.

Apollo accepted Marsyas’s challenge on the condition that the winner could punish the loser however he wished. According to differing sources, the judges were either the Muses or the god Tmolus and the mortal King Midas. Tmolus and King Midas are the judges depicted in Jordaens’s painting.

Apollo played beautifully on his lyre, and he was followed by Marsyas who also played beautifully on the flute. In the second round, however, Apollo outdid his competitor by either turning his lyre upside down to play or singing along with the tune he played. Marsyas could do neither.

The Muses agreed that Apollo was the greater musician. The god Tmolus believed that Apollo had produced the most heavenly sound he had ever heard. King Midas, however, disagreed and said that the ruling was unfair. For this blasphemy, Apollo turned King Midas’s ears to donkey ears.

Apollo was deemed the winner. For challenging a god, Apollo decided to punish Marsyas by pinning him to a tree and flaying him alive.

### Illustrating Blasphemy

Jordaens and Manfredi both illustrated the consequences of challenging a god. Jordaens, a 17th-century Flemish painter, depicted four figures on a mountainside. Apollo is at the far left holding his lyre. According to Ovid’s poem, Apollo is dressed in robes dyed with Tyrian purple, but Jordaens depicted him in pinkish robes, unless the original color has faded.

To the right of Apollo is Tmolus, who is in the act of crowning Apollo the victor. Beside Tmolus is Marsyas, whose face is distorted since he continues to play his flute. The figure to the far right is King Midas. According to the Prado Museum website, Apollo is pointing at King Midas to give him donkey ears.

Manfredi was a late 16th and early 17th-century Italian painter and lead-

“Apollo and Marsyas,” between 1616 and 1620, by Bartolomeo Manfredi. Oil on canvas, 37 5/8 inches by 53 9/16 inches. St. Louis Art Museum.



ALL PHOTOS IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

ing member of the Caravaggisti, a group of painters who followed in the high-contrast style of Caravaggio. He depicted Marsyas enduring the punishment that comes from challenging a god.

Marsyas is on the left. He is tied to a tree and wears an animal pelt around his loins. Apollo is shown to the right of Marsyas; he wears the victor’s crown of laurel leaves and is dressed in a purple robe.

Apollo has just begun the act of flaying Marsyas. He looks calmly but intently at the satyr as he seems to slowly slice into his skin. In response to the pain, Marsyas leans forward, revealing some of the veins in his neck. The corners of his mouth draw downward, his eyebrows lift, and his eyes widen as the knife starts its journey.

### Avoiding Blasphemy and Recognizing the Divine

Modern culture openly challenges the divine. Whether it’s in the sciences, academia, or arts and culture, traditional beliefs in the divine, in heaven, in God, in angels, and so on, are being challenged.

Challenging the divine, however, comes with its consequences. Marsyas didn’t realize that the flute’s creation was divinely inspired or that the sound it emanated was a consequence of its divine nature. His pride, one of the most dangerous of character flaws, caused him to challenge Apollo, the divine representation of music itself.

Of course, Apollo wins the contest. Mere mortals may think they can challenge the divine, but they can never truly compete with divinity. But we must presume that Apollo, as a god, knew he would win. Why might he participate in the contest, then?

Maybe Apollo sought to leave a lesson to those who would later think it wise to challenge the heavens. In Jordaens’s painting, Apollo is shown turning King Midas’s ears to donkey ears.

Is it the case that Apollo punishes King

Midas for even daring to side with anyone who would challenge the heavens?

Is it also possible that Apollo turns King Midas’s ears to donkey ears because, unable to hear the beauty of heavenly music, Midas is no longer deserving of human ears? If so, this suggests that being worthy of being human is directly connected to recognizing and appreciating the divine, wherever and however it manifests.

### Challenging the divine, however, comes with its consequences.

Of course, the real punishment comes to those who directly challenge the divine. Because he challenged the heavens, Marsyas is tied to a tree—which, to me, represents the earth—and made to suffer. Challenging heavens causes Marsyas to be imprisoned and tortured on earth. Apollo, however, is framed by the heavens, which reasserts his divine and heavenly nature.

Manfredi doesn’t depict Apollo as taking pleasure in the punishment he causes Marsyas. Instead, Apollo seems to calmly but intently do what he ought to do as a being of heaven: punish those who challenge the heavens. And Marsyas is punished greatly for his sin.

Both King Midas and Marsyas were proud mortals. Their hubris did not affect them at first, but it eventually made them suffer.

**For Those Who Recognize the Divine** This is not a call for us to attack those we think are challenging the divine. This kind of act would suggest that we are divine ourselves, a claim that is itself blasphemous.

But if we do possess a connection to the divine, and if we are to be worthy as human beings, shouldn’t we try to recognize and appreciate the divinity in things?

Is it the case that we should spend more time celebrating and encouraging an appreciation of the heavens and the divine, while leaving punishment to God? Should we repopularize, encourage, and appreciate the moral lessons that are prevalent in traditional stories concerning divine things, so that we may once again be worthy of our humanity?

*The traditional arts often contain spiritual representations and symbols the meanings of which can be lost to our modern minds. In our series “Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart,” we interpret visual arts in ways that may be morally insightful for us today. We do not assume to provide absolute answers to questions generations have wrestled with, but hope that our questions will inspire a reflective journey toward our becoming more authentic, compassionate, and courageous human beings.*

*Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist and is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA).*



The Justice League in “Zack Snyder’s Justice League.”

CULTURE

## ‘Zack Snyder’s Justice League’: The Postmodern Struggle for the Mythic

SEAN FITZPATRICK

The legions of keyboard warriors and hardcore comic-book fanboys finally have their victory over the Hollywood horde of mass-entertainment executives. “The Snyder Cut” has been released. Justice prevails. The world can now stream “Zack Snyder’s Justice League,” a superhero film unlike any other in its shameless length and sheer spectacle that packs, perhaps, the biggest punch to date toward making comic-book heroes less comic and more mythic, and whose seriousness should be of serious cultural concern.

The theatrical “Justice League” (2017) was reviled as one of the most specious entries in the superhero film genre and deemed a \$3 million failure that died on the cutting-room floor after director Zack Snyder left the helm due to a family tragedy. Rumors of a “Snyder Cut,” however, led to a vociferous campaign for its release, and three years later, with the film industry gasping under pandemic restrictions, Warner Bros. succumbed to pressure and funded the completion of Snyder’s original vision in all its gritty Wagnerian glory.

Besides the unrestrained artistic precedent that “Zack Snyder’s Justice League” sets with its four-hour runtime streaming on HBO and slow-motion magnificence, there is also a deeper bow here before the will of the consumers when it comes to what they want to consume, no matter how bombastic. It also gives a new burst to the streaming platform as the movie theater slips into the mists of the past.

And further, another cinematic stone has been set on the strange and serious foundation of the temple being built up by a myth-starved multiverse, who are yearning to elevate comic-strip pulp into a grand and gorgeous postmodern mythology.

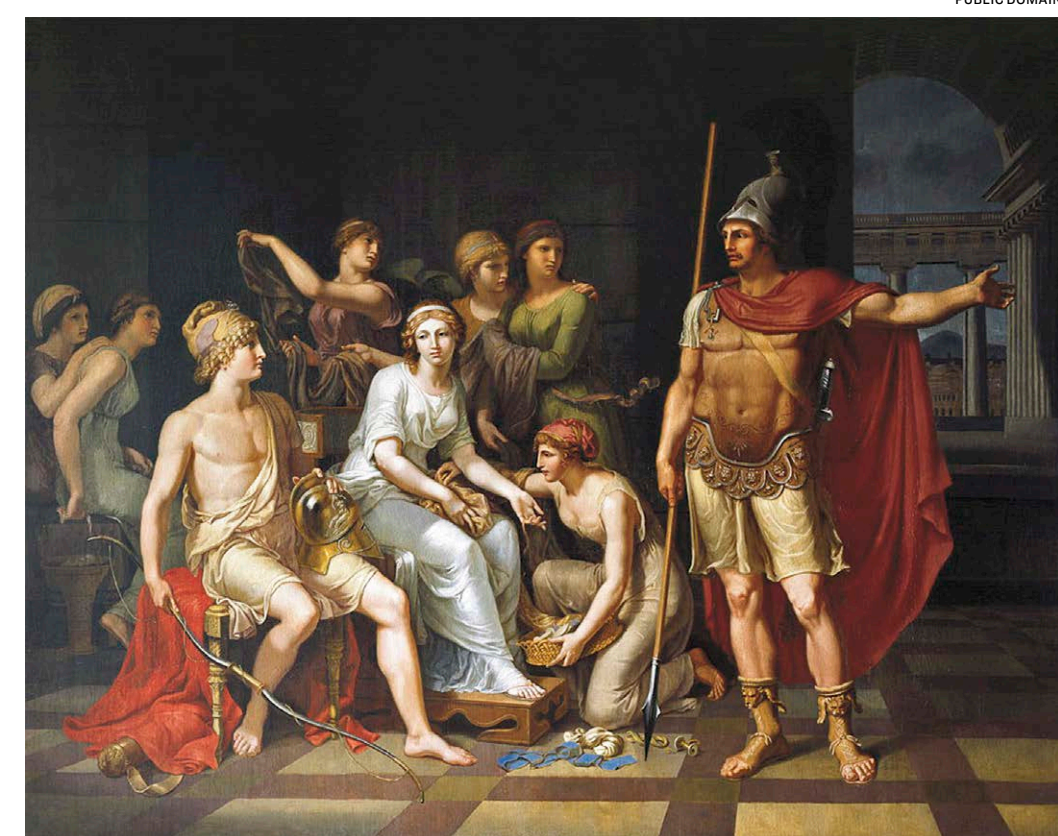
### Why So Serious?

The self-important superhero films of the last few years have left many asking the question made famous by the late Heath Ledger’s menacing, anything-but-funny Joker: “Why so serious?”

The motivation behind this trend of grounded and grueling seriousness—begun by Tim Burton’s “Batman” movies, canonized by Christopher Nolan’s “Dark Knight” trilogy, and given even sharper edges by Zack Snyder’s films—is a desire to make the superhero more realistic, more relatable, more flawed, and more psychologically divided. Struggling to fight crime in a world where the line between good and evil is grayed, the hero is caught in the calamity of moral judgment.

People have always established fictional archetypes to echo society and the souls that make it up, and their mythologies have always been diagnostic and didactic. As such, they fervently seek answers to the cosmic questions arising from the primal and mystical sensitivity of the human spirit. What are the secrets behind the mysteries of nature? What is the purpose of life? How does man relate to the divine? These are serious questions that deserve serious consideration.

Traditionally, mythic heroes are solemn types. There is nothing lighthearted



Our modern superheroes, such as Batman and Superman, cannot compare with, say, the noble hero Hector. “Hector Admonishes Paris for His Softness and Exhorts Him to Go to War,” 1786, by Johann Tischbein. Augusteum in Oldenburg, Germany.

about Hercules. Sigurd is no wag either. Beowulf is brutal. Lancelot is a paradox of imperfection.

One explanation for this serious trait in the ancient heroes is that the ancients took their heroes seriously. This serious tone in superhero movies like “Zack Snyder’s Justice League” may signal a kind of artistic evolution. Even if they are just entertainment, there seems to be an attempt to capture a poetic tone that aligns more with the form and function of classical myth.

### Traditionally, mythical heroes are solemn types. There is nothing lighthearted about Hercules. Sigurd is no wag either. Beowulf is brutal. Lancelot is a paradox of imperfection.

### Making Myth Meaningful

The current tendency to depict the heroes of our culture more seriously may indicate a traditional longing and its reaction, whether conscious or unconscious, to make our heroes more meaningful. If comic-book superheroes, however, are a contribution to the folklore of the human race, representing the ideals of the age, there is cause for some concern.

The Fantastic Four do not hold a candle to one Fionn mac Cumhail, as Irish tales will tell. Compare the multiverse episodes of Green Lantern to the Mesopotamian



Christopher Nolan’s “The Dark Knight” (2008) canonized the grueling seriousness of our modern myths.

ogy of materialism (which is a species of nihilism) and will necessarily be dark if taken seriously.

Even though Snyder’s “Justice League” incorporates characters called the “old gods,” like Zeus and Ares, hearkening to the mythical importance our superheroes wish to inherit, there is a bizarre reductionism in these classical borrowings and translations. The “gods” are consistently made technological or archeological, more like faraway races from faraway planets or cultures rather than present spiritual entities demanding and requiring worship.

Though it is all in good fun, and it is better to have the vestige of gods than none at all, there is a loss here, for what had once been depicted as mighty deities are now mere aliens.

### What’s at Stake

The struggle of postmodern myth is to portray greatness and grandeur in a world that has grown too small for the heroes we want to be inspired by. The world has certainly changed in the past few millennia and, consequently, so has the reality and understanding of heroism. Mankind needs heroes and, though the heroes of our age are not the heroes of antiquity, they may be the very heroes we need. People still uphold their heroes to idealized standards. Though the standards are not the same, nor as high, the principle retained is that good should overcome evil.

Whether or not postmodern mythology holds a key to cultural preservation is, in all fairness, yet to be seen. There is cause to be wary, however. The concepts of moral consequentialism are slipping with the times, and the optimism that shines from an understanding of objective truth, goodness, and beauty is getting harder to grasp. Good and evil themselves are growing more confused in our mythology because they are more confused in our society.

Our mythology, insofar as we can claim one, reflects our world. Entertainments like “Zack Snyder’s Justice League,” in all their silly seriousness, are the closest thing that we have as a culture to the classical myths, but they are emblematic of a world that has fallen short of the fullness of truth, though it retains fragments of it. While these movies are flashy fun in spite of their stern tones, like so many myths of old are, their aspiration to be more than cheap (or expensive) escapism is delightful even if it is dubious.

When the world is pathetic, desire for the epic will be keen. When vice predominates, men will grope for virtue. When heroism has lost its clarity, there will be a struggle to depict heroes. And these are issues to take seriously because, after all, the human race still needs to be saved.

*Sean Fitzpatrick serves on the faculty of Gregory the Great Academy, a boarding school in Elmhurst, Pa., where he teaches humanities. His writings on education, literature, and culture have appeared in a number of journals including Crisis Magazine, Catholic Exchange, and the Imaginative Conservative.*

For more arts and culture articles, visit [TheEpochTimes.com](http://TheEpochTimes.com)



## POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

## Biopic About Self-Determination and Self-Reliance

IAN KANE

Serendipity is astounding. I recently began watching a series of motivational videos, and once in a while they feature a black gentleman with a distinctively deep voice, but I never see his name. One of the things he says over and over is that you have to do things yourself because the cavalry isn't coming to save you. I kept wondering why they'd intertwine his parts of the videos with scenes from a movie featuring Will Smith and his son Jaden. Curious, I looked up Smith's filmography (well, scoured through it, actually) and found out that the film was titled "The Pursuit of Happyness." I also discovered that it's a biographical piece covering the rags-to-riches life of a man named Chris Gardner.

And guess what! After watching the film, I looked up Gardner and discovered that he was the man who has affected me in all of those motivational videos.

**'The Pursuit of Happyness' should compel many folks to feel more than inspired.**

**A New Dream**

Helmed by director Gabriele Muccino, the film is set in San Francisco during the early 1980s. Salesman Chris Gardner (Will Smith) has invested virtually all of his money in bone marrow scanners. He lives with his wife, Linda (Thandie Newton), and young son, Christopher (Jaden Smith). Through the opening scenes, we can see that Linda constantly nags Chris and isn't supportive of him in the least.

One day, Chris is walking the city streets to sell his medical devices when he spies an elegant, red sports car. The car's expensively suited driver steps out, and Chris spontaneously asks the man what his profession is. How can he afford such a vehicle? When the man replies that he's a stockbroker, Chris's eyes light



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up: His destiny has been decided.

But when Chris reveals his new dream to Linda, their divide ruptures and she walks out on both her husband and their son. Instead of wallowing in despair, an ambitious fire engulfs Chris, and through much effort, he scores an internship with a major brokerage firm.

However, there's a catch: He'll have to not only survive but strive through a six-month unpaid internship to earn his shot at a paid position. He also has to compete with other hungry interns.

**Hard Work and a Positive Attitude**

The rest of the film covers his many ups and downs as he struggles to keep himself and his son from falling into homelessness, and works his behind off at the firm, while maintaining a positive outlook about his slim prospects.

Much of the film features Chris running from place to place, either with his son, a briefcase, or one of his devices, in the "pursuit" of happiness, both literally and figuratively.

This film has many outstanding scenes, some tragic and heartbreaking, and others heartfelt and inspirational. Of course, there's a little of that good old Will Smith comedy sprinkled in to keep things from becoming overly serious or



(Top) Father and son Will and Jaden Smith play father and son in a story of a man working hard to achieve his dream.

(Above) Christopher (Jaden Smith, L) and Chris Gardner (Will Smith) struggle to keep a roof over their heads.

**'The Pursuit of Happyness'**

**Director**  
Gabriele Muccino

**Starring**  
Will Smith, Thandie Newton, Jaden Smith

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 57 minutes

**Rated**  
PG-13

**Release Date**  
Dec. 15, 2006 (USA)

★★★★★

self-indulgent.

For example, there's a humorous scene where Chris shows up at a run-down daycare center in Chinatown to drop off his son. The place is run by a Chinese woman who speaks broken English and seems to think that having the kids watch TV all day is educational. When he complains about that, as well as that the daycare's sign outside spells "Happiness" as "Happyness" (the film's title), she responds in some fast-talking Cantonese, and we get the gist of what she's intimating.

The more dramatic scenes are handled equally well, such as when Chris and his son get kicked out of their low-rent apartment and have to spend their nights sleeping in a scummy (and dangerous) subway bathroom. Despite their circumstances, Chris's ever-positive spirit rises to the occasion: He portrays the bathroom to his son as a cave where they're hiding out from dangerous creatures.

One of the things that I really appreciated about this film is that it never pulled out the tired and worn-out race card found in so many movies that portray blacks struggling. Chris's story simply reveals that with inner fortitude and self-reliance, anybody can make it in this great country, no matter where they're from on the socioeconomic spectrum.

The actors' performances were also spectacular, with Smith turning in a riveting portrayal of Chris Gardner. Smith never becomes overly dramatic to make scenes feel impactful. Instead, he registers subtle emotions in both his facial expressions and his body language. Smith's son Jaden, as well as Thandie Newton, were also excellent as his wiser-than-his-years son and angry ex, respectively.

"The Pursuit of Happyness" should compel many folks to feel more than inspired. It'll make you feel like you can take on the world—and win. I think that's a pretty good message to broadcast in today's tumultuous and uncertain times.

*Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To learn more, visit [dreamflightent.com](http://dreamflightent.com)*

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