Reflecting Theologically by Creating Art: Giving Form to More Than We Can Say

Courtney T. Goto

Imagine being a theology student in my course Doing Theology Aesthetically. I have invited you and the other students to choose a personally significant theological question about which you have strong feelings, to gather objects from home that express associations with, aspects of, or feelings about the question, and to bring the items to class to create a mixed-media sculpture.[1] Think for a moment about your question and consider what items you would collect. Notice your experience of this mental exercise or perhaps your reaction to the prospect of doing it. Many students feel excited by and confident about approaching their theological question aesthetically, others feel challenged but stimulated, and still others feel uncertain where to start. In any case, learners register that they are being asked to depart from the standard practice of preparing for class solely by reading. You do have a reading assignment,[2] but being asked to gather objects requires you to be open to the unfamiliar, even if it means feeling decentered.

In this class, I engage students in a mixed-media sculpting exercise to introduce what theological reflection has to do with creating art.[3] I demonstrate how helpful it is to choose a base for the sculpture. The base might be a basket, a hat, or a milk carton—something that can be enhanced or trans-

Courtney T. Goto is Assistant Professor of Religious Education at Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA. She is the author of *The Grace of Playing: Pedagogies for Leaning into God's New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016). Email: cgoto@bu.edu.

Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry
ISSN 2325-2847 (print)* ISSN 2325-2855 (online)
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formed by other elements.[4] I identify multiple tools for adhering materials, for example, a glue gun, tape, stapler, or wire. I also organize students into small groups to discuss theological questions, the materials they brought from home, and their preliminary ideas about their sculptures.

I then give you and the other students thirty minutes to go on a "scavenger hunt" to look for additional materials in the surrounding area that you may wish to add to your sculptures. I encourage you to be open to finding wildcard elements that you (and classmates) can use or donate to the community pile of supplies and materials that I have provided. Your group agrees not to build the sculptures they had originally planned but to allow whatever they find to guide the artistic process.

I allow the students one hour and fifteen minutes to build their sculptures, reminding the group that we are not pursuing artistic excellence per se but depth of engagement in the process. The room hushes as you and the other students are absorbed in your creative work. Time flies. Imagine what you might construct with the materials that you brought or found.

A sample sculpture

In all likelihood, you are like my own students—practiced at theological reflection as a verbal, maybe even cerebral exercise for *reflecting upon* faith. *Reflecting upon* is a complex activity in which one verbalizes and discusses ideas about reality. This article explores the value of retrieving the act of *reflecting* as basic to and intimately related to *reflecting upon*. *Reflecting* refers to the "bouncing back" of an image or sound, such as in the case of a mirror or a space that echoes.[5] In this essay, I demonstrate that reflecting

theologically by creating art enables learners to interact with an artistic medium and their inner reality, which allows them to discover, contemplate, and express dimensions of their faith that they know but cannot express fully in words. I argue that embodied knowing and meaning conveyed beyond or before words are basic to and intimately related to analytic knowing and meaning conveyed in and through words.

As theological *Homo fabricans*, we are beings who are constantly creating theological constructions of one kind or another. As we play with the stuff of faith, we fabricate theological images, narratives, texts, spaces, objects, and sounds that reflect back to us who we are and what our faith is, giving us an opportunity to revise what we have created. We constantly create (and re-create) theological constructions of all kinds and often without thought, catching subtle nuances and new associations as we experience what we have fashioned. Playing with/through art encourages learners to recognize by analogy the theological constructions they make in everyday life *as reflexive constructions* and to think more critically about them.[6] In short, theological construction involves the complex processes of knowing and reflecting, not only through words, statements, and theories but also through aesthetic sensibilities.

Limitations of the Sayable

Unfortunately, ministry, as well as seminary training, suffers from an overdependence on verbal, cognitive approaches to theological reflection. Drawing on some combination of tradition, culture, experience, and personal beliefs as starting points, traditional models of theological reflection involve conversation in which people talk with one another (or communicate in writing) about ideas, issues, and concepts that help to illumine lived faith.[7] Even more significantly, learners discuss what another says to them in texts—always participating in conversation with authors and sources. For example, in an academic setting, one could begin with a scripture passage and, using one or another hermeneutical tool, interpret how the text speaks to our lives today. Alternatively, one could start with a personal experience, perhaps in the form of a narrative, and proceed to discuss it in light of theological tradition past or present and in conversation with one or more disciplines, such as pastoral theology. Or, one could take a cultural phenomenon (for example, a social movement) and identify theological themes by drawing on scripture and various social scientific methods. All of these are

familiar, valuable ways of thinking theologically that form Christian believers into people who are thoughtful, rational, and articulate about their faith.

Without minimizing the importance of language, it is important to recognize how easy it is to become enamored with and lulled by the exclusive use of words in theological reflection. New Testament scholar Timothy Luke Johnson writes,

> In the first place, language fixes what is in fact fluid and ever-changing—our experience of the world—into something that appears stable and secure. In the second place, the stability created by words can seem to be the only way in which experience can be perceived and interpreted, can even claim to be an adequate replacement for the experience of the world that is always fluid, ever-changing.[8]

Language can lend the illusion that we "have" something concrete, a grasp on reality that others can understand and possibly appreciate.

Words inevitably distort memories of experience through "slippage," always falling short of the fullness of what happened.[9] Speaking and writing limit us to thinking and expressing thoughts and feelings in coherent, logical sequences within the confines of language, fluency, and literacy. However, experiences and communal memories of faith, mystery, and grace are far more ineffable, unruly, embodied, and nonlinear. Words may approximate inchoate, felt senses of faith experiences, but they may also restrict, unnecessarily and unhelpfully, what the gestalt was like. Although words point toward, they also point away from a wide range of information. They deflect as they select.

Using technical language, including "church speak," in theological reflection boosts our confidence that we are communicating clearly and convincingly, but actually we are removing ourselves and our audience from lived experience.[10] Jargon and confessional language foster the illusion that we all mean the same thing. Catch words and glib phrases from scholarly circles or church cultures can serve as convenient identity markers that reinforce a sense of belonging for the group that uses them,[11] but they hide differences between and among lived experiences and simplify the ineffable complexity of any given experience.

Of course, Christian believers have historically turned to the arts to express what cannot be said in words, to experience the sublime, and to seek God's beauty,[12] but these aesthetic practices have often been marked as something different from and other than "theological reflection." The arts have long been embraced, especially in worship, but primarily to the degree

to which they serve a supporting and subsidiary role in Christian formation, often (in the Protestant tradition) taking a back seat to guiding beliefs and actions through verbal appeals to reason and authoritative texts.[13] Unfortunately, the arts have often been kept separate from (and therefore treated as marginal to) the heady business of theologizing, even though artistic expressions of faith *are* theological statements.

I do not wish to demonize verbal, cognitive processes in theological reflection and elevate aesthetic processes as the substitute. Rather, because verbal approaches have been over-emphasized, I am focusing on aesthetic approaches so that the notion of theological reflection can be expanded and enriched, inviting a wider range of knowing. Along the way, we will recognize that reflecting theologically through aesthetic media is more common than we realize.

We Are All Creators

Those of us with little, if any, formal training in theology or the arts tend to leave theological reflection to ordained clergy or scholars and the creation of art to divinely inspired artistic geniuses. Calling ourselves "non-theologians" and "non-artists" has an unfortunate, unintended consequence: We fail to appreciate that though most of us lack advanced degrees in theology and the craftsmanship of celebrated artists, each and all of us *are* in fact *creators*—theologians and artists.[14] We tend not to recognize that we have, in fact, been making theological and aesthetic judgments all along—perhaps unconsciously and uncritically. We fail to realize the natural ability, inclination, and disposition of human beings to express their inner reality through aesthetic means.

In daily life, we tend to take for granted numerous practices of reflecting theologically by making things that convey who we are and the faith we live. Many people create home "altars," for example, on a mantle, the top of a dresser, a special shelf, or a coffee table. We stylize and mark the space, making aesthetic judgments that distinguish it from more utilitarian spaces used for eating, sleeping, cooking, working, bathing, or storing. An altar space might be designated as a clutter-free zone, a place where candles are lit, or a location where incense is burned. On the altar, we place objects that we make sacred—images, symbols, and mementoes that evoke memory, meaning, and associations in meaningful ways. Of course, few people

call it an altar, but such spaces function to surround us with what we value, believe, need, and remember.

People often craft or find and keep objects to comfort or remind them of significant people, events, and ideals, helping them to make sense of what is of ultimate concern. Many Christians wear a cross on a necklace or another symbol that is sacred to them. Creating or finding objects that one endows with meaning is not so different from the sculpting exercise my students engage in. Both are aesthetic, theological responses to spiritual questions or values. They allow us to see, touch, and hold our answers not expressed in words.

Whether or not they are aware of it, people create or adopt rituals and habits that involve reflecting theologically. We inherit or develop personal and familial rituals to cope with grief or loss, facilitate transition, and celebrate achievements that church traditions may not address adequately or at all. Believers also make choices about how and where to pray—on a prayer bench, in the car, aloud, in silence, alone, in public, and/or in church. What posture one takes, how much background noise is acceptable, and who is around when one prays are aesthetic as well as theological choices. They reflect where we think God is, what we need, and what we think we are doing when we pray. Many of us do not ponder these judgments in words, let alone with theories or concepts.

Of course, Christians "do" theology aesthetically not only when they participate in ecclesial rituals but also when they make everyday decisions about ministry. Laypeople make banners for the church sanctuary. Committees buy Communion ware and choir robes and remodel spaces for worship. All of these involve making theological aesthetic assumptions, whether people realize they are doing so or not. Everyday aesthetic decisions about ministry reflect back to the community what/who is important and who the community has been and should be, as well as who/what God is.

Each of us possesses and draws upon degrees of the "artistic intelligence" that plays an important role in each and all of us as artists and theologians. Educational theorist Howard Gardner argues that artistic intelligence can be called into service as a person exercises any one of seven intelligences—linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal.[15] Any of these seven intelligences can be put to artistic use, which demands creativity and other forms of artistic intelligence.[16] Despite the importance of artistic intelligence, formal education in the United States heavily promotes linguistic and logical-math-

ematical intelligences rather than musical, spatial, or bodily-kinesthetic intelligences, let alone artistic intelligence.[17] Biases in public education help to explain why most of us do not see ourselves as "artists." I would argue that artistic intelligence (in conjunction with other intelligences) is involved in creating, finding, and keeping sacred spaces and objects as well as practicing (and sometimes developing) rituals and habits that assist in reflecting theologically through aesthetic means. When we make intelligent, theological aesthetic choices preconsciously or consciously that feel right to the body and spirit, we feel nourished and experience grace.

Furthermore, when we make choices as everyday artists and theologians, each and all of us draw upon and strengthen "aesthetic reason," which is vital to practical theological construction.[18] In the context of theology, aesthetic reason is a faithful response to God's appeal to humanity that leads people to "construct form[s] and [mold] images that rediscover new dimensions of meaning in the everyday *via* experiences of transcendence."[19] Aesthetic reason assists the faithful in creating God-images that are relevant to their lives and situations. When we make an object sacred, for example, we use aesthetic reason to establish how the object helps to express what is of ultimate concern and our relationship to it.

Every day and throughout our lives, Christians construct theology in conjunction with artistic intelligence and aesthetic reason, but as *Homo fabricans*, we are artists and theologians in an even broader sense. The fact is that we are *always* imagining, creating, constructing, and fashioning answers to theological questions (as well as re-forming the questions)—perhaps not with paint, marble, or music but with images, ideas, and approaches that are by definition interpretations. In other words, we have been functioning as theologians, imaginatively, all along—without recognizing what we have done as creative, aesthetic, and theological.

Ironically, aesthetic engagements like the sculpting exercise appear to deviate from the norms of teaching theological reflection (which has been reduced to "reflecting upon" in words), but in fact they are *closer* to what we human beings naturally and inevitably do as theological creators (reflecting by creating with all available resources). Decentering what is standard practice in the academy and in many communities provides opportunities for re-centering ourselves more fully and thoughtfully in (or, if you will, reconnecting us to) an expanded notion of reflecting theologically that gives form to the sayable and the ineffable.

Enhancing the Process by "Reflecting Upon"

Reflecting theologically by creating art is enhanced by the process of "reflecting upon" in words what has been created. These are moments when nonverbal and verbal practices work dialectically to deepen learning. After creating art individually, I facilitate a time of sharing, which is a form of creating together and building upon solo work.

Imagine that after the time for building sculptures has expired, we gather around a work of art made by Brian. I invite the group to respond to questions such as, What do you see? What responses does the piece summon in you? And, What associations do you have in experiencing the art? Finally, I ask Brian to share his experience of making the art—what surprises emerged, what insights bubbled up, and how did his thinking and artistic process evolve. Rather than analyzing the art by being "objective," our process involves trying to be present to our own experiences of the art and to one another by listening and making offerings that support the communal labor of being theological creators.

Brian called his sculpture *The Triumph of Seeing*, and his theological question was "What is the speed of love, the nature of presence, and the boundary of spirit?" A pair of sunglasses was the only element of the sculpture that he brought from home. All other items he found within and outside the building, including a marble block deeply gouged by heavy machinery from a construction site next door. Brian was able to "see" beauty and value in items discarded by others, seeing what others could not. In his final paper, Brian explained that his question about the nature of presence arose in the wake of a beloved friend's passing. He practices seeing her beauty in the ordinary, conquering, as it were, the separation caused by death.

In talking about his sculpture and his process, Brian could express some of what he had gleaned from the experience, which we could not know. We could also offer insights that might not have occurred to Brian, as we described what we saw and/or felt in the art.[20]

What is Going On as We Reflect Theologically by Making Art

When students create sculptures inspired by a theological question, the complex dynamics that enrich learning can be better understood by taking a perspective grounded in multiple disciplines. I will offer three points of view: epistemological, psychoanalytic, and theological.

Though reflecting critically is vital at times, including in aesthetic teaching, we work within a relatively narrow epistemological bandwidth when we confine ourselves to using words and statements to deconstruct/reconstruct what we think. In contrast, when working aesthetically, learners become more aware of sensations, feelings, and images related to their question. In the process of creating art, their labor is not primarily to translate felt senses into written or spoken statements but to enter into, stay with, and feel what they know beyond or before words. They contemplate with their full selves and express sensually some of what they know. Playing with/through art gives them more tools and sensual resources to see, hear, and touch what they bring from the inside to the outside—much of which is ineffable.

Especially in critical modes of thinking, knowers try to remain separate from that which they contemplate in order to maintain objectivity. In the sculpting activity, learners are in dialogic relationship with what they are creating in an I-thou rather than an I-It relationship.[21] The materials and the emerging form of the sculpture speak back to the learner as if it were an "I," putting up resistance, creating new possibilities, and pushing the learner's thinking in new directions. The student artist/theologian learns to "listen" to him or herself as well as to the medium and what is emerging in the engagement.[22] The artistic creation reflects something of the learner back to the learner.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the sculpting exercise makes it possible for learners to bring forth something about themselves that they might not otherwise know. As an object relations theorist and clinician, Marion Milner was interested in what people's artistic creations could reveal about their inner lives.[23] She observed that making art allows for the bridging of the internal and the external because art allows for a bit of the external world in the form of an artistic medium to be shaped by what is internal to the artist.[24] In a Milnerian sense, the sculpting exercise allows students to find and work with bits from home and the surrounding area and to create a bridge that expresses some of the complexity of their faith. The bridge provided by art can bring together disparate, discordant, or even nascent bits and pieces from different times, places, and parts of the self that cannot be easily put together. The bridge can express in the moment, for example, what is and is not yet, what is in the making, as well as what has been lost yet remains. In the case of Brian's sculpture, the *Triumph of Seeing* gives form to what can only be seen by the heart's perceiving, which is an act of faith.

In the sculpture exercise, learners are given parameters, materials, and guidance to make manageable the psychic work involved in reflecting aesthetically. The time for meeting, the place, and the structured environment provide conducive conditions for creative work together. The base of the student's sculpture creates what Milner calls a "frame," which "marks off an area within which what is perceived has to be taken symbolically, while what is outside the frame is taken literally."[25] She theorizes about the psychic value of the "framed gap," which is a blank space framed by the edges of a page, a wall, or some other physical frame.[26] Limiting the space for painting (or sculpting, in this case), helps to direct attention to the blank space to be filled with the subject as well with as the artist's thoughts and feelings about it.[27] In the space of the white canvas (or the base of the sculpture), there is possibility for contemplation and freedom of expression, yet it is contained and directed, which invites playing. The base of the sculpture becomes the playground for reflecting theologically and aesthetically.

From a theological perspective, the sculpting exercise creates an opportunity for students to participate in what elsewhere I have called revelatory experiencing, where Spirit can be revealed in the midst of playing with/through art.[28] Johnson rightfully argues that the body is the primary medium for God's spirit at work in the world, including the body at play through art. He recognizes that sculptors use their bodies to give birth to works of art that have not yet been seen (and perhaps need to be seen). In this sense, sculptors potentially participate in what "God is up to in the world." Johnson focuses on genius artists, but I would argue that novices can also experience what is revelatory by playing with/through art. Furthermore, I believe that playing with/through art in Christian community is key to inviting revelatory experiencing. The community of learners, in the case of the sculpting exercise, provides support for and bears witness to what is created, helping to extend and deepen theological reflection.

When students create their sculptures, they exercise aesthetic reason for the sake of faith. Aesthetic reason allows believers to respond to and identify with God's beauty such that they imagine greater possibilities through metaphors and images.[29] In identifying with God's beauty, believers lose themselves, much like theatergoers experience self-forgetting in being fully absorbed in the world of the performance.[30] One might say the same of students losing themselves in the process of playing with/through art. **Daniël** Louw writes, "Aesthetic reason views metaphor as the venture of imagination to explore new avenues of conversing about God by creat-

ing images that correspond with contextual issues which touch our very quest for meaning.[31] My sense is that the sculpting exercise, for example, calls upon our capacity to think with metaphors and images to reclaim, reinterpret, and create with the stuff of tradition as it relates to our lives. In other words, aesthetic reason is key to traditioning.[32]

The Gifts of Reflecting Theologically by Creating Art

Making art powerfully forms the faithful by providing an extended process for creating, wider access to information, and expanded space for reflecting theologically. It guides the faithful in turning to their inner reality, through words but in other ways as well. They learn to move within this reality, to gather and collect information using all the senses, to perceive more deeply, and to retrieve more expansively from a wider horizon of knowing. They practice sensing, navigating, and conveying glimpses of their inner reality in conjunction with a wide array of materials—images, symbols, movements, sounds, gestures. Reflecting theologically by creating art forms people who can express this range to others, thereby encouraging these others to be open and present to a similarly expansive spectrum of "information" within themselves, to meet and engage in this enlarged space in an encompassing way.

Teaching aesthetically mirrors learners as "makers"—creators who can explore and convey knowledge both with and beyond words. If we embrace our identity as creators, we begin to recognize why and how we are constantly making theological aesthetic judgments in everyday life and in ministry. Practices like the sculpting exercise help learners to associate their God-given gifts of creativity, artistic intelligence, and aesthetic reason with being Christian. Because we are constant partners with God's spirit in creating in the world, we have the responsibility to grow into the craft of being everyday artists and theologians. We can reflect more critically on what we create no matter the form. We can also hone our abilities to create or find more perfect forms, not only for what we personally need but also for what the world needs. And in practicing creating, we live into the image of God, the Creator.

NOTES

1. Asking students to choose a question with some emotional importance to them is key. John Dewey argues that through art a learner can fruitfully deal with emotions that need to be expressed, producing not simply prior knowledge but something new. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980), 60–84.

2. For this exercise, I assign Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994). We compare Killen and De Beer's model of theological reflection to the class experience.

3. The pedagogy of the course is inspired by the work of religious educator Maria Harris, who engaged graduate students in theological reflection in response to and in the midst of aesthetic experiences. Maria Harris, *Teaching and Religious Imagination: An Essay in the Theology of Teaching* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). Harris is by no means alone in advocating aesthetic religious education. For more recent work in this area, see Yolanda Y. Smith, "The Table: Christian Education as Performative Art," *Religious Education* 103, no. 3 (May 2008): 301–5; Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Education as Creative Power," in *Handbook of Whiteheadian Thought*, ed. Michel Weber and Will Desmond (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2008), 199–214; Barbara Javore, "Rising from the Ashes: Aesthetic Experience and Creative Transformation," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Religious Education Association, Atlanta, GA, November 3, 2012; Ruth Illman and W. Alan Smith, *Theology of the Arts: Engaging Faith* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Barbara Javore, "Aesthetic Empathy and Imagination: The Pedagogy of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis with Applications for Religious Educators," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Religious Education Association, Atlanta, GA, November 8, 2016).

4. In contrast, we would typically begin with a text of one kind or another if we were engaged in theological reflection in graduate school.

5. For more on art and mirroring, see Kenneth Wright, *Mirroring and Attunement: Self-Realization in Psychoanalysis and Art* (London: Routledge, 2009).

6. The notion of playing can help free student imagination and creativity in that what is created need not "count" unless one wants it to "count." Students need to feel relieved of the pressure to produce art that reaches a certain level of aesthetic excellence (though it occasionally does). The concept of playing with and through art emphasizes the experience of creating. For more on playing with/through art, see Courtney T. Goto, *The Grace of Playing: Pedagogies for Leaning into God's New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016).

7. See Edward de Bary's discussion of the two-, three-, and four-source models of theological reflection. Edward O. De Bary, *Theological Reflection: The Creation of Spiritual Power in the Information Age* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 117–20. Bary's model, as well as others, relies heavily on linguistic reflection. See also, for example, Killen and De Beer, *Art of Theological Reflection*; Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006). Edward Foley argues for a reimagined form of theological reflection called "reflective believing" that is a new "language game" (Wittgenstein), with "language" broadly conceived. Edward Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions: The Turn to Reflective Believing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 23–43. He imagines that reflective believing can occur through nonverbal forms such as silence, body language, and ritualizing (pp. 34–39). It seems problematic to relegate what is nonverbal to the trope of language,

which only serves to reinforce the primacy of language and the assumptions of how language works.

8. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 1–2.

9. Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 178.

10. Given the long history of idolizing words and language in theology, our habit of engaging in cognitive forms of theological reflection come as no surprise. See Johnson's discussion of this history in *The Revelatory Body*, 8–16. He concludes that despite the emergence of mysticism in some traditions and despite scholarly interest in experience in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the preference for verbal theology and theories prevails. I would add that the privileging of language in academic theological reflection is particularly illumined by the history of elitism and the quest to make theology a legitimate science. See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "The "Clerical Paradigm": A Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness?," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 11, no. 1 (April 2007): 19–38.

11. Privileging what can be said with words and statements in theology is supported by a concurrent trend in parts of the church toward what Robert Neville calls "identity theology." Among radical Orthodox, conservative evangelical, and fundamentalist Christians, identity theology is predicated on the ability to convey a common identity based on professed beliefs. Among like-minded believers, members of the group can prove their belonging by saying the right words, for example, "As an X, I believe . . ." Robert C. Neville, *On the Scope and Truth of Theology: Theology as Symbolic Engagement* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 19.

12. For a readable, concise history of art in the Christian tradition, see Robin Margaret Jensen, *The Substance of Things Seen: Art, Faith, and the Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

13. Although faith communities have often welcomed the arts in support of various forms of ministry, there is also some wariness about getting too theologically creative. The untamability and unpredictability of the arts, especially the visual and plastic arts, are in tension with or even threaten the preservation of tradition. Art can be a sublime witness to God's beauty and mystery, but it can also blaspheme, distort, and threaten what some Christians hold dear. Practical theologian Friedrich Schweitzer argues that practical theology (and, by implication, parts of the church more broadly) has historically failed to embrace the full expressivity of the arts because of the potential threat that the arts can pose. Friedrich Schweitzer, "Creativity, Imagination, and Criticism: The Expressive Dimension in Practical Theology," in *Creativity, Imagination and Criticism: The Expressive Dimension in Practical Theology*, ed. Paul H. Ballard and Pamela D. Couture (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2001), 4.

14. In a related argument, Edward Farley writes that ordinary humans are not so different from artists in that all of us feel and respond to the pull of the aesthetic. Edward Farley, *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 166. All of us have the ability to sense "presences" of beauty and mystery that draw us to the heart of God (ibid., 162). Farley observes that we do not take in these presences as "data" but interpret and respond to them creatively (ibid.)

15. Howard Gardner, "Intelligences: Implications for Art and Creativity," in *Artistic Intelligences: Implications for Education* (New York: W. J. Moody, 1990), 19–20. Gardner does not present artistic intelligence as an eighth or separate intelligence, nor does he believe that any intelligence is inherently artistic. It appears that artistic intelligence can be linked to all seven.

16. Gardner, "Intelligences," 20.

17. Gardner, "Intelligences," 19–20.

18. Daniël J. Louw, "Creative Hope and Imagination in a Practical Theology of Aesthetic (Artistic) Reason," in *Creativity, Imagination and Criticism: The Expressive Dimension in Practical Theology*, ed. P. Ballard and P. Couture (Fairwater, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2001), 91–104.

19. Louw, "Creative Hope and Imagination," 99, emphasis in the original. Beyond theology, aesthetic reason has broader meanings. For example, political theorist Morton Schoolman describes aesthetic reason as "a form of rational thought that perpetually disrupts and revises every identity it constructs, so that thinking is necessarily incomplete in relation to everything about which it forms ideas and images. . . . To reason aesthetically is to pluralize thinking by forming thoughts that are acknowledged to be limited, while at the same time re-forming these same thoughts to exceed limits reason recognizes cannot be overcome once and for all." Morton Schoolman, "Avoiding "Embarrassment": Aesthetic Reason and Aporetic Critique in Dialectic with Enlightenment," *Polity* 37, no. 3 (July 2005): 359.

20. This pedagogy raises challenging issues about assessment for those teaching for credit. In my course, students are assessed on their written work, not on the art they make. On the one hand, it would be difficult to develop rubrics to determine the extent to which a student has reflected theologically in making art. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to assess the work on an artistic level since this is not an art class. On the other hand, to give no credit for student art risks dishonoring the work they are doing without words. I have no easy solution to this conundrum. In practical terms, it means that a student who is artistically brilliant but needs improvement in written work might not receive a high grade in the course, which might seem unfair or contrary to the spirit of the pedagogy. However, I want all my students to think and work creatively and critically, which is why I teach both aesthetic and analytic exercises.

21. Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937).

22. Harris, *Religious Imagination*, 120–21.

23. Milner argues that the problem with education is that it concentrates on "only one half of our relation to the world, the part of it to do with intellectual knowing, the part in which subject and object have perforce to be kept separate." Marion Blackett Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint* (New York: International Universities Press, 1957), 68. I do not think intellectual effort is as much the problem as objectivism, which discounts one's subjectivity.

24. Vencenzo Bonaminio and Mariassunto Di Renzo, "Creativity, Playing, Dreaming: Overlapping Circles in the Work of Marion Milner and D. W. Winnicott," in *Art, Creativity, Living*, ed. Lesley Caldwell (London: Karnac Books for the Squiggle Foundation, 2000), 98–99.

25. Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint*, 158.

26. Marion Milner, *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men: Forty-Four Years of Exploring Psychoanalysis* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 80.

27. Milner, *Suppressed Madness*, 81.

28. Goto, *Grace of Playing*.

29. Louw, “Creative Hope and Imagination,” 95, 98.

30. Ibid., 93.

31. Ibid., 99.

32. Mary Elizabeth Moore describes a “traditioning” model of religious education that addresses both continuity and change, and Diana Butler Bass has discussed the need for “re-traditioning” in churches today. Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Education for Continuity & Change: A New Model for Christian Religious Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 59–85; Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), 47–50.