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# Practicing to Aim at Truth: Theological Engagements in Honor of Nancey Murphy

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## "Then Sings My Soul"

Brad J. Kallenberg

"What must the world be like, what must I be like, if between me and the world the phenomenon of music can occur?" –Victor Zuckerkandl

Well meaning evangelicals unfamiliar with Nancey Murphy's philosophical theology frequently worry that her work in philosophy of mind has the effect of depriving us of our souls. When such an objection is voiced after a speaking engagement, Murphy's "reassurance" is predictable: "Don't worry! There is nothing to be lost; we never had souls to begin with!"<sup>1</sup>

Underneath her wry reply is a deep concern that philosophical confusion about "having a soul" is seriously undermining Christian discipleship. For example, it has become second nature for many Christians to hold that the soul is more important than the body; regardless of the state of one's body, the state of one's soul is what really counts. Using this line of reasoning, St. Augustine (d. 430) concluded that the rape of women by invading barbarians did not cost them their chastity. He reasoned that chastity is

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<sup>1</sup> I am extremely thankful for the many helpful comments made by my generous colleagues Aaron James, Colin McGuigan, D. Michael Cox, Elizabeth Farnsworth, Ethan Smith, Jason Hentschel, and Lucas Martin.

primarily a property of the soul that becomes the body's by association: "not only the souls of Christian women who have been forcibly violated during their captivity, but also their bodies, remain holy."<sup>2</sup>

Augustine's conclusion seems forced, to say the least. But the line of reasoning that cannot but bifurcate bodies and souls can be avoided if we reconsider where to imagine the dividing line between the "inner" and the "outer." It is without question that human experience is marked by both "inner" and "outer" aspects. (I cannot feel your pain in the same way you feel it.) The question is *where* best to locate the dividing line. I cannot deny the popularity of the dualistic picture, which sees the dividing line "in here" (pointing to one's head or heart) as it were, between body and mind (or soul). But there is another way to understand the dividing line.

I begin with the suggestion (following Stephen Mulhall<sup>3</sup>) that the primary dividing line between "inner" and "outer" is not between *soul* and *body*. Rather the dividing line is better understood as lying between *body* and *surroundings*. This is not a bright, red line but a fuzzy boundary constituted by a set of "skins." After explaining the concept of "skins," I will argue that both language and technology function as "skins" in distinctive ways. The upshot of my reasoning is that "soul" is not something we have but something we are. The difference in these verbs, "have " and "are," connotes a difference between *substance* and *time*. In surrendering the notion of *souls-as-substance*, Murphy is not

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<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *City of God*, 1.16-19 (trans. Gerald G. Walsh, et al., ed. Vernon J. Bourke; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), 53. For an earlier version of this argument see Brad J. Kallenberg, "Holistic Spirituality as Witness," in *Vital Christianity: Justice, Spirituality, and Christian Practice*, ed. David L. Weaver-Zercher and William H. Willimon (New York & London: T & T Clark, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Mulhall, *Wittgenstein's Private Language: Grammar, Nonsense, and Imagination in Philosophical Investigations §§243-315* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2007).

obligating herself to deny the notion of *souls-as-timeful*. I end with a comparison of the grammars of “time” and “soul” by considering the nature of music.

### **An Alternative Model to Dualism: Body-World**

In biological terms, we call the surface that demarcates body from world our “skin.” If skin is taken to be the dividing line, then everything under the skin is presumed, functionally at least, to be a unity—not two parts, but one. I assume this as my starting point: humans are *bodysouls* (or perhaps “soulish bodies”).<sup>4</sup> In short I am proposing that we deliberately abandon anthropological dualism (fig. 1) in favor of anthropological holism (fig. 2):

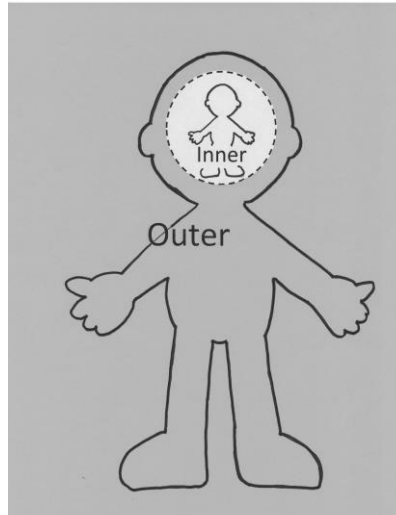


Figure 1

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<sup>4</sup> Thus Wittgenstein’s observation, “The human body is the best picture of the human soul.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), Part II.iv, p.178. For contemporary trends in philosophy of mind see Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1998).

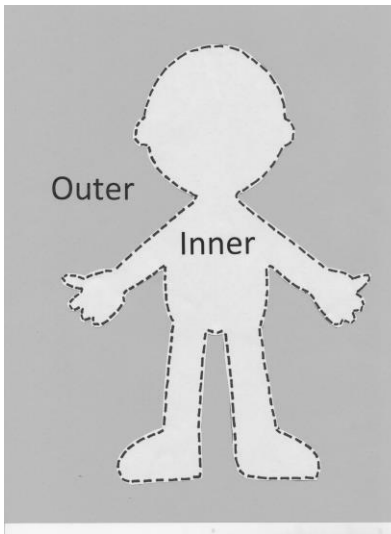


Figure 2

The latter picture makes “skin” the crucial dividing line between the “inner” and the “outer” dimensions of human experience.

The epidermis, of course, is only one of our skins. The epidermis is the interface between us and the *tactile* world. If all we had were tactile sensations, the world would seem to us very thin, for most tactile events take place on or near the surface.<sup>5</sup> The olfactory “world” for human beings is a bit further out. The olfactory skin, as it were, is “thicker.” Sometimes, though not always, we can smell something stinky before we step in it. Some smells (e.g., ammonia, fresh brewed coffee, *Pinesol*) fill the entire room. Of course, the human sense of smell is nothing compared to that of a bloodhound, or a shark, or a bear.

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<sup>5</sup> Exceptions would include temperature gradients which can be detected as we approach hot objects.

The “skins” of our eyes and ears reach much, much farther than our tactile and olfactory skins. Here again our visual and aural worlds are nothing compared to eagles or beagles. But compared to our own tactile and olfactory senses, the “skins” of our seeing and hearing are extremely baggy—the outer extent of “me” has a greater range.

### **Language as skin**

It is in this spirit that Herbert McCabe writes of language as “skin.”<sup>6</sup> As each of our sensory skins are interfaces between a person and his or her respective surroundings, so too is language. Both kinds of skin, sensory and linguistic, are means by which our surroundings are “taken up” by us, become meaningful to us, become significant for us.

When I lived in densely populated southern California, I encountered an astonishing variety of animals while on long trail runs in the foothills: bobcats, rattlesnakes, deer, bear, owls, and, most surprisingly, entire flocks of sheep! Imagine that on one such run, I and the flock of sheep espy a wolf.<sup>7</sup> For both the sheep and I, the wolf is significant; its presence spells danger. The meaningfulness of the wolf is “taken up” by means of sensory skins by both the sheep and me. At the moment of sensory perception the sheep and I share a world of significances, a world of meanings; we are “in communion,” we are *co-munus, same world*. Thus we both react as we are apt to do—nostrils flare, muscles tense, eyes widen, head rears, heartbeat quickens. However, unlike the sheep, I have another skin, the skin of language. The wolf’s meaning is also taken up by means of my linguistic

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<sup>6</sup> Herbert McCabe, *Law, Love and Language* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 74.

<sup>7</sup> The illustration is McCabe’s. “Soul, Life, Machines and Language,” in *Faith within Reason*, ed. and introduced by Brian Davies; with a foreword by Denys Turner (London & New York: Continuum, 2007), 123-49.

skin. Unlike my other skins, which are more or less tight fitting, the “skin” of language is loose fitting, extending much farther than eyesight and earshot—it circles the globe and extends backwards in history. I have listened to tales around campfires, watched NOVA, read scientific accounts, and even heard music recounting the behavior of wolves. In the linguistic world the wolf is also significant. But this is not a world that I can share with the sheep (“Well, Dolly, things are looking baaaaaad for us!”). I have read and heard that the wolf is one of the only other mammals that, like humans, hunts in the daylight and *hunts in packs*. So the sheep, who cannot help but flee directly from the lone wolf will unwittingly run directly into the teeth of the rest of the pack while I, running orthogonally (at 90°), may escape both the scout and its pack.

On McCabe’s account, the shared world-of-meanings (*co-munus*) of language is of a higher order than the shared world (*co-munus*) of animal senses. I share the latter with other mammals; I share the former with other language-speakers. There is an asymmetrical relationship between the two. The sensory world is, in an important sense, the “material basis” for the linguistic world.<sup>8</sup> (It is because we naturally squint at bright lights that the word “bright” is used in the way we use it.) Yet the linguistic world is of a

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<sup>8</sup> I might have equally said that human language “supervenes” upon bodily senses so long as “supervenience” is understood in a non-reductive way. I’m indebted to the extension Nancey Murphy has given to the philosophy of mind of Jaegwon Kim. See, for example, Nancey Murphy, “Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues,” in *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1998), 127-48; “Supervenience and the Downward Efficacy of the Mental: A Nonreductive Physicalist Account of Human Action,” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, ed. Robert John Russell, et al. (Vatican City State & Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory & CTNS, 1999), 147-64.

higher order than that available to other animals.<sup>9</sup> The linguistic world does not and cannot be reduced to sensory meanings any more than a sphere, which exists in three dimensions, could be exhaustively explained to someone living in “Flatland.”<sup>10</sup> Yet in both animal and linguistic worlds, there are sets of interfaces between you and your surroundings. To recall: I am proposing that the crucial dividing line between you and your surroundings is not that between “mind” and “body,” a division “in here” (head or heart), but a set of *skins* between your body and your surroundings. It is this image that will help us get clearer on the possibility of one more skin: Technology.

### **Technology as skin**

In order for it to function as a skin, Technology must be seen as a vast system in which human beings are today embedded. When attempting to define “Technology” with a capital “T,” it is helpful to think in terms of mereological systems, systems of parts whose properties emerge at increasing levels of complexity.<sup>11</sup> To choose a familiar example, the basic building block of material stuff is (say) the atom and each atom possesses certain properties, such as the property of mass. When atoms are bound together in various complex ways, molecules are formed. Molecules also have the property of mass. In fact, molecules have a mass that is additive, simply the sum of the mass of each

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<sup>9</sup> Except, perhaps, the dog. Of all mammals, dogs alone have the natural ability to read human faces and follow the gesture of our pointing—even when we point with our eyes! Even Koko the gorilla could not learn to follow this simple gesture of pointing. See Dan Child, “Dogs Decoded,” in *NOVA* (9 Nov 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Edwin A. Abbot, “Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions,” Public domain, <http://www.math.brown.edu/~banchoff/gc/Flatland/>.

<sup>11</sup> For Murphy’s own employment of this notion see Nancey Murphy and George F. R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology and Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996).



constituent atom. No surprise here. However, at the level of the molecule, a *new* property emerges—three dimensional shape. Dextrose (or D-glucose) and L-glucose are chemically identical, but stereoisomers of each other; one is “right-handed” with respect to three dimensions and the other “left-handed.” The property of dimensionality cannot be reduced to anything at the atomic level; it is an *emergent* property. Large organic molecules, join to form organelles, organelles form cells, cells form organs, organs form organisms, organisms form societies, etc. At each level of complexity new properties emerge that cannot be reduced to lower level phenomena.

The same emergence of properties can be observed in the mereological organization of Technology. Every technology can be analyzed into its constituent parts.

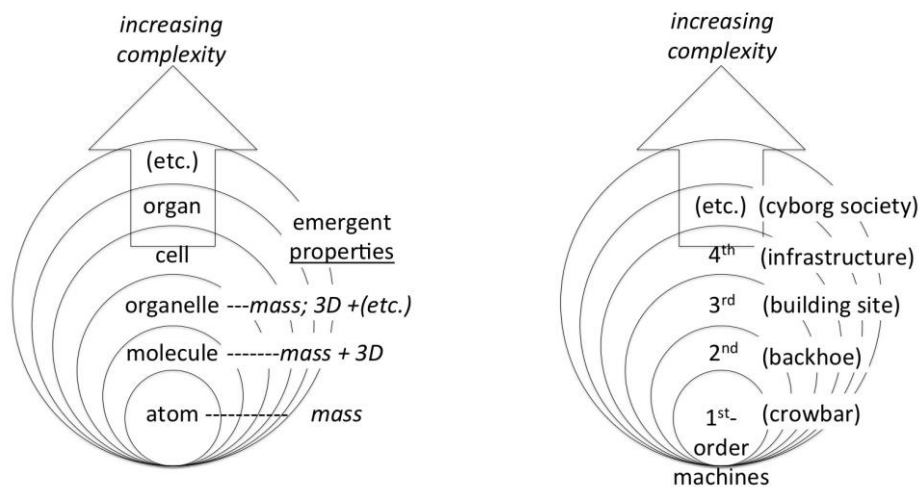


Figure 3 Mereological hierarchies

The corollary to atoms are called “first-order machines.”<sup>12</sup> The crowbar is a first-order machine with correlative first-order properties (i.e., the principle of the lever). First-order machines can be creatively combined to form second-order machines, and second-order machines can be combined to form third- and fourth-order machines. At some point the vast network of simple properties becomes an infrastructure (indoor plumbing; electricity; cell phone, etc.). Let us not get sidetracked by trying to draw clear boundaries between the orders, but simply admit the point that *new properties may emerge at each level of complexity*. I will capitalize “Technology” as reminder that we are not considering isolated hammers or crowbars but also vast infrastructures and networked industries, the entire mereological system that has made us, together, as a species, a “cyborg society.”

The interweaving of emergent properties and human living makes plausible the notion that Technology itself is one of our skins. Human beings have skins we share with animals—in addition to the five senses, animals have the kinesthetic sense (proprioception) and balance (equilibrioception), etc. But human beings also share a linguistic skin with other human speakers. In addition, residents of developed countries share the skin of Technology by which we—together—“take up” meanings, the sharing of which constitute (at least in part) our contemporary social-cyborg world, our world of meanings, our *co-munus*. When my automated email replay announces that I’m blissfully offline for three weeks in July, people trying to reach me take that to be as meaningful (perhaps more so) than were they to walk past my home and notice my car is gone. Many

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<sup>12</sup> The terminology derives from Barry Allen, *Artifice and Design: Art and Technology in Human Experience* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2008).

of us are individual cyborgs: we have fillings in our teeth, we wear eyeglasses, we ambulate by means of artificial hips and knees, and so on. But *together* we form a cyborg society; we are *social* cyborgs.

### **Technology as impeding Christian *co-munus***

Christian discipleship, which Murphy is intent on preserving in her work (whether directly<sup>13</sup> or indirectly<sup>14</sup>), presupposes the vitality of an extant community. By her lights, the vitality of Christian community is threatened by soul-body dualism. Reconceiving the division between inner and outer as comprised by a set of skins may help repair the distortion wreaked by dualism. However the skin of Technology itself may be a distorting influence in the formation of Christian community. To be a community entails, among other things, the sharing of a world of meaning. As I've argued above, creatures come to share a world of meaning by means of "skins." Animals of a given genus share a world of significance constituted by meanings taken up by their physical senses. In addition, language speakers share a higher-order world of meanings, namely those taken up by the skin of language. We might say that the limits of one's skin(s) is the limit of one's world. But now a puzzle emerges: if the skin of eyesight "takes up" meanings that are ocular, and ears "take up" meanings that are aural, what *kind* of meaning does technological skin

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<sup>13</sup> E.g., Nancey Murphy, "Using MacIntyre's Method in Christian Ethics," in *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Brad J. Kallenberg, and Mark Thiessen Nation (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010).

“take up” and in what sense might this uptake affect and even distort Christian discipleship?

### **Technology as a Time Bandit**

To recap: thus far I’ve tried to give an alternative to the dualistic picture of human persons by exploring what changes in our perception of technology follow if we reconceive the boundary between the “inner” and “outer” as lying not “in here,” between mind and body, but rather “out here,” between body and surroundings. But note: on this alternative picture, everyday phrases such as “he’s my soulmate” or “her soul is in a frightful state” are not barred on the grounds that “soul” has no substantive referent.<sup>15</sup> In point of fact, they are not barred at all. Rather, such phrases make the rich sense they do because souliness is embodied in our manner (or mode) and ways of being in the world. And it is precisely this notion—“ways of being in the world”—that technology threatens to change. As we shall see below, a cure for our bewitchment is timeful practices, such as music.

What do I mean by “ways of being in the world?” We are bodies. We are solid. We are vulnerable. We are fragile. We are aging. We take up space, and we take up time.<sup>16</sup>

Taken together these features mean that our lives can only be recounted in *story* form; we

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<sup>15</sup> As Wittgenstein strove to point out, our trouble is that we are forever at risk of assuming a substantive (noun) corresponds to a thing, an object, a *substance*. “The mistake we are liable to make could be expressed thus: We are looking for the use of a sign [‘soul’], but we look for it as though it were an object co-existing with the sign.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 5.

<sup>16</sup> This way of speaking is drawn from Rowan Williams, “Art: Taking Time and Making Sense,” in *Images of Christ: Religious Iconography in Twentieth-Century British Art. Exhibition Catalogue* (St. Matthews, Northampton, UK: Centenary Art Committee, 1993), 25-27.

are material critters who can only be one place at a time and who journey from beginnings through middles to endings, each according to her or his own distinctive plot, settings and fellows. For all its benefits, when taken to the extreme, Technology-as-skin inflicts a kind of myopia on account of which we can no longer quite see the *storied* character of creaturely life. *Technology-as-skin obscures the timefulness of the meanings we uptake.* All of our other skins take up meanings that only make sense in time. We see the flight of the baseball *in time*; we hear the progress of a symphony *in time*; we feel the ever-so-slow abatement of the pain of a stubbed toe *in time*; we tell stories that *take time*. But the meanings taken up through our technological skin are liable to be untruthful for *having collapsed temporality into spatiality*.

Bodily (aka creaturely) engagement with our surroundings is simultaneously spatial and temporal. I spot a friend in a crowded room and rush to deliver a hug. That episode is timeful—it has a beginning, a middle and an end. It is also spatial—I cross the room, bumping into other bodies along the way, and deliver an embrace that takes seriously the robustness or fragility of the friend and delivers a bear hug or a light squeeze. This event is at once spatial and timeful. In sharp contrast, Technology has the effect of shifting our attention, sometimes violently so, to objects-in-space to the exclusion of living-in-time.<sup>17</sup> It is not so much that technology-as-skin is unable to register the “passing” of time. It is rather that Technology-as-skin distorts our perception of time, often by turning time itself into a “thing” with “thingish” properties. It is no wonder that we Thoroughly

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<sup>17</sup> Edwin Hutchins explains that Micronesian (i.e., pre-modern) navigation takes place not in terms of distance but in terms of time alone. See Edwin Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 65-115.

Modern Millies have become even more enamored than our medieval forebears by souls-as-thingish. This may strike some as a surprising claim. But consider: for medievals, everything was sacramental; everything was shot through by the presence of God. What held all creation together in their eyes was the forever immanent God (Col. 1:17). In contrast, today we assume that what holds everything together is a scientific theory about stuff. In our modern outlook, to be real a thing must be constituted by stuffness and be intelligible against the field of all the stuffs there are in the cosmos.<sup>18</sup> Thus do Christians fight for the recognition of the “soul’s reality” as real by asserting its materiality: the soul is a substance, a special “immaterial” substance, but a substance nonetheless.<sup>19</sup> But I digress. I was addressing the issue of our conception of time as itself thingish.

As every child will confirm, “things” have shape and weight and position—all of which can be specified to (virtually) any degree of accuracy we desire.<sup>20</sup> Since the scientific revolution, technological tools have enabled ever-increasing precision in our measurements of these thingish properties. Thus the question seems inevitable: Cannot time itself be quantified with equal precision? We seem happy to imagine so. It is said that the continuous cold Cesium fountain atomic clock (known as the FOCS-1) in Switzerland can be trusted not to lose more than one second every 30 million years! But notice that underneath all the striving for precise measurement of time is the presupposition that time is something material, like a brick. We can talk about the mass

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<sup>18</sup> On the contrast between the enchanted outlook of medieval and the “buffered selves” of modernity, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Sadly, analytic theism has today done the same to God, making God a part of the furniture of the universe as the only conceivable way to champion God’s reality.

<sup>20</sup> Within quantum limits, of course.

of the brick because we all know that bricks do not spontaneously change size, shape, weight or location! Similarly, when we set out to measure time, we presume that time plays fairly, that it doesn't change "shape," "weight" or "location" (note the spatial metaphors), that time is something *regular*, something *divisible* into standard units. But in fact, I wonder whether "regularity" may be an alien property pressed onto time by Technology, first with the invention of the clock and now by the entire Technopoly.<sup>21</sup> To live under regularized time alters the manner, pattern, and rhythm of our proper way of being in God's world.

Consider the significance of a very recent shift in English-speaking onomatopoeia. When I was a child everybody knew that clocks spoke: the clock says "Tick, tock!" But today, if a clock speaks at all—most are silent—the child learns that it says "tick-tick-tick." This change is significant. The difference between a "tick" and a "tock" is not so much the character of the sound as the position of the pendulum which swings gently back and forth: tick (perhaps to the left) then tock (perhaps to the right). The motion of a pendulum is *reciprocal*. Granted, a pendulum's *period* is entirely regular, the reciprocity of a pendulum depends only upon the length of the arm (and not its arc). However, the motion itself is not constant. The pendulum accelerates as it heads toward its midpoint, then decelerates. When it reaches its highest point, it stops and reverses direction, accelerating again toward the midpoint. This rhythm of speeding up, slowing down, stopping, and changing directions is repeated over and over. Meanwhile the pendulum is

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<sup>21</sup> Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, Revised ed. (New York: Vintage, 1993).

imperceptibly losing energy (“winding down”) until it finally ceases movement altogether. Such a rhythm is a paradigm of the ordinary experience of biological bodies. For example, the pendulum mimics the human gait. We lean forward, begin falling, accelerate toward the ground until we catch ourselves with an extended leg. Our body position is righted, we retract the trailing leg and for a brief instant we are at rest before we fall forward again.

*Reciprocal* rhythms are mirrored everywhere in nature. Twice a day the tides change. The moon that causes the tides itself passes through phases that recur monthly. Once a day the sky passes from night to day. And, perhaps excepting life on the equator, no two successive days are identical in duration. Moreover, because the earth’s axis is tipped, its annual journey around the sun produces the reciprocal transition of seasons: planting and growing, then harvest and rest.

Perhaps no one in Newton’s day was very much troubled by his suggestion that the world was a clock, because the “clock” in view would have been a pendulum clock, and the innumerable *reciprocal* patterns of the cosmos were manifestly obvious in the metaphor. But the *reciprocal* motion of the pendulum clock has given way to, has been displaced by, *rotary* motion. Henry Ford may have benefitted the workers on the assembly line when he increased their pay and reduced their workday from nine to eight hours. But his motives were more nefarious: an eight-hour shift meant that there could be three shifts in a 24-hour period. Like a flywheel that keeps spinning rather than a pendulum that is punctuated by moments of rest as it slowly winds down, manufacturing could continue unabated by any temporal restrictions. Such changes in manufacturing



drove the culture further toward the myth of *standardized* time.<sup>22</sup> *Can time be standardized* like the shape of light bulb sockets or the thread count on nuts and bolts?<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps none of my readers is troubled by the standardization of time or the universal applicability of “efficiency” as the criterion by which bodily work in time is assessed. These are not objections I intend to take up here. My point is simply that the kind of meaning we take up by our shared technological skin, and thus the kind of *communus* we’ve become, is distorted because of what technology has done and continues to do to our perception of time. Our other skins do not thus mislead us. Our sensory skins adjust to the rhythms of reciprocal time, informing us when time is swift (as when engaged in an interesting task) or creeps slowly (as when bored) or when it is moving without us (e.g., during sleep) or at a standstill (insomnia). In other words, our sensory skins are able to take up meanings that preserve both the spatiality and temporality of our bodily existence. Even our linguistic skin does *not* threaten to distort the timefulness of bodily existence. Granted, there are biblical expressions that treat time materially (“redeem the time,” “count your days,” and so on). But Christian language also makes room for time to serve as its own figure. In other words, Christians need not understand time by means of spatial or mechanical or material figures. Time is *sui generis*, therefore, we may only begin to understand it by attending to its manifold intersections with our lives. The best place to begin to attend to that intersection is by attuning ourselves to the

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<sup>22</sup> For a history of standardization in western engineering see Merritt Roe Smith, “Army Ordnance and the ‘American System’ of Manufacturing, 1815-1861,” in *Military Enterprise and Technological Change: Perspectives on the American Experience*, ed. Merritt Roe Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

<sup>23</sup> Bruce Sinclair, “At the Turn of the Screw: William Sellers, the Franklin Institute, and a Standard American Thread,” *Technology and Culture* 10, no. 1 (1969): 20-34.

way we *speak* of time, what Wittgenstein called the *grammar* of the word.<sup>24</sup> Thus the biblical poets urge us to attend to time's changing rhythms: "there is a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...."<sup>25</sup> The telling of such times cannot be answered by consulting the atomic clock in Switzerland. Rather, these times come in seasons, in rhythms, and to tell the time one must know what is appropriate and proper ("You give them their food *at the proper time*"<sup>26</sup>). I do not speak hyperbolically. I mean to say that the kind of time learned by immersion into, say, literature and poetry better equips us to live well (i.e., truthfully and faithfully) as bodies in creation than the kind of tin ear toward time that our technological skin gives us. Technologically speaking, the answer to "What time is it?" can receive only one true answer, for example, "12:52 pm EST." But if it is time to mourn (or to dance) then "12:52" wildly misses the point of the question. To the same thing differently, reciprocal time is inherently storied time while technological time (aka mechanical or rotary time, i.e., time conceived as discrete, identical, punctiliar units in mere linear sequence) is not essentially story-formed or story-formable. Despite its inherent repetition ("tick," then "tock," then "tick" again), *reciprocal* time consists of beginnings and middles and endings. So, to the extent we (unwittingly) live by technological time our lives are stripped of poetry, leaving us unsung and unstoried.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Essence is expressed by grammar." In stark contrast to the analytic school, which seeks to understand a thing by reducing it to its constitutive parts, Wittgenstein leans the other way, insisting that what something is is shown by its connections. How we ordinarily speak about time, its grammar, is a record of these connections. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §371. See also §373.

<sup>25</sup> Eccl. 3:4.

<sup>26</sup> Ps 145:15. See also Eccl 8:5.

<sup>27</sup> I owe these insights to Aaron James.

## Music of the Soul

One way to untangle the confusion over the notion of the soul is to reconceive the dividing line between “inner” and “outer.” To recap, the alternative to the received account (the Cartesian homunculus; Fig 1) is to understand the boundary as a set of skins by means of which we take up various kinds of meanings. The “thinnest” skin is our epidermis, while the other skins are “thicker.” The skin of hearing being thicker than the skin of smell; the skin of eyesight being thicker than the skin of hearing, and so on. To the extent that the “soul” inevitably (but wrongly) gets identified with the “inner,” to understand the division as a set of skins may help one see the soul as itself thicker than our epidermis, lying not inside, but perhaps well *outside* our bodies!<sup>28</sup>

A second phase of my proposed conceptual therapy involves loosening the grip that a particular analogy holds over our understanding of time. As physical critters, human beings experience “reality” in terms of both space and time. For the sake of argument, I will assume that Catherine Pickstock’s conclusion (without reproducing her argument) that technological progress, especially since the time of Peter Ramus (1515), has resulted in a perceptual outlook in which *temporality* tends strongly to be elided in favor of seeing

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<sup>28</sup> Wittgenstein often attempted to get readers to see that language does not need to be grounded by something more interior, such as “meaning” or “intention,” because there is no way to think the meaning or intention of a sentence without simply repeating the sentence. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch, English translation with the amended 2nd. ed. (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 10e. If as McCabe suggests, language is a skin, then the work it does is not “inner” in the Cartesian sense (“in one’s head” so to speak) but “inner” in the language-as-skin sense which is to say, interior to the community of language speakers and thus decidedly “outer” on the Cartesian scheme.

*spatiality* as absolute.<sup>29</sup> If human temporal sensibilities have atrophied, then when it comes to thinking about the soul, we are left all the more vulnerable to a lopsided conception of the “real” solely in terms of spatiality. Also without argument I will assume that the priority of spatiality in our perception is often manifest as an attunement to, and penchant to think in terms of, materiality: to be counted as real, souls *must* be substantial. I aim to hint in the direction of a challenge to this “must” by supplying one telling counterexample.

I return to the claim made above that time ought to be allowed to serve as its own figure (rather than frame our understanding of time along the lines of nontemporal, mechanical metaphors). The therapy I propose follows Wittgenstein’s admonition that we attend to the ordinary activities in which a word is at home in order to understand it. For example, the fact that we understand “cheese” to signify the sort of thing that does not spontaneously changes size, weight or location is shown by the simple activity of our buying cheese by the pound.<sup>30</sup> In the present case, the word is “time” and one of the activities in which “time” is at home is the practice of music.

In his masterful study, *Theology, Music and Time*, Jeremy Begbie suggests that music

might be of considerable value in a culture which...is disaffected with certain alienating and imprisoning conceptions of linear<sup>31</sup> time, which rely on simple and rigid patterns of cause and effect, and which can easily lead to mechanistic notions of progress....But movements such as the Beethoven [String Quartet in

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<sup>29</sup> Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford, UK & Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 49-94.

<sup>30</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §142.

<sup>31</sup> Begbie does not deny that “linear” has its place in music (e.g., “linear pitch set”), but by the term “linear” takes into his sights “simple and rigid patterns of cause and effect, and which can easily lead to mechanistic notions of progress” (117).

F major] so obviously *break through the categories of singular linear narrativity*, yet while being directional, without evoking temporal chaos.<sup>32</sup>

It is important not to miss Begbie's underlying argument. The linear model of time—on which we imagine time as divisible into standard units as though the regularity of these units were guaranteed by a rotary mechanism—is drastically incomplete. In so far as music (itself a rational activity<sup>33</sup>) cannot be rationally accounted for by a one-level linear model of time, then “[m]usic’s very rationality challenges the assumption that time must be conceived in *one-level linear terms*” (110, emphasis added).

There are at least two ways that attention to music might provide therapy for our bewitchment by the mechanical image of time. First, musical time is not one-leveled, but multi-leveled.

### **Music is multi-leveled**

Wittgenstein once stated what should be obvious, “The temporality of the clock and temporality in music....are not by any means equivalent concepts.”<sup>34</sup> This is because a single piece of music has multiple temporal layers at work. Generally speaking, temporality in music is expressed in terms of *meter* and *rhythm*. When a tune is played, it is possible to identify a time signature simply by observing how a listener claps, or bobs, or nods, or toe taps. This is meter. Interestingly, not only are some beats more accentuated, than others, but not every beat of the meter is sounded (played). So meter is

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<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117-18. Emphasis added. Hereafter, citations will be in text.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Work of Making a Work of Music,” in *What Is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, ed. P. J. Alperson (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1987), 103-29.

<sup>34</sup> Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 80e.

intuited (or tacitly detected).<sup>35</sup> Bodies are apparently well suited for detecting meter because meter is reciprocal, like most natural motions of our bodies. Meter washes over us in regular iterations like the breaking of waves upon a seashore.

The second feature of music that conveys temporality is rhythm. Unlike meter, rhythm is explicitly played and therefore always heard.<sup>36</sup> If meter is the regularity of the breakers (regularity being one of the few features that mechanical time *can* capture), rhythm is the “shape” of each incoming wave. The “shape” of each wave may be unique (surfers wait for the “just right” wave to ride), yet the large-scale pattern of their arrivals is regular (41).

Here is where things get interesting: waves are additive. There can be multiple waves simultaneously expressed by a series of incoming musical measures. Said differently, as measures of music strike the listener’s ears, multiple waves flood over the listener at once, each wave embodied in measures of music, but the played measures expressing more than one temporal wave at a time. Begbie gives several detailed examples. Consider Chopin’s Waltz in A flat major, op. 34, measures 17-24, part of which is reproduced below (42). Each measure consists of three beats. But if one looks carefully, measures 17 and 18 in the treble clef are similar (two dotted half notes) and measures 19 and 20 are similar to one another in a different way (three quarter notes, especially visible in the bass clef).

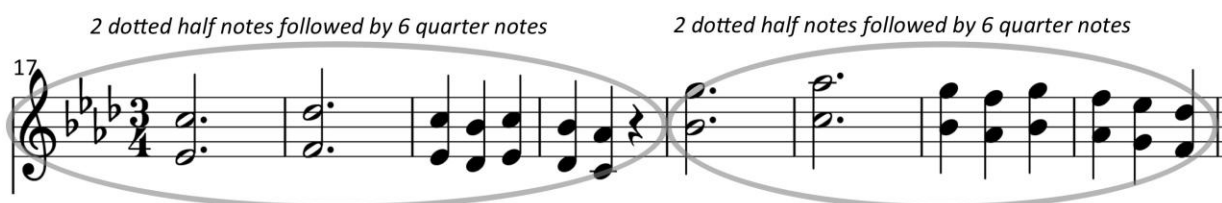
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<sup>35</sup> When a beat is played, giving it duration and accent, it is called a *pulse*. One of the most startling pulses in choral music is Brahms Deutsche Requiem. In the second movement, beginning in bar 22, the simple  $\frac{3}{4}$  time is expressed by a half note rest followed by a quarter note falling on beat three, followed by a half note on beat one of the next measure. The pattern is short-long, 3-1, 3-1, 3-1, 3-1 or unmistakably: lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub; a terrified heartbeat expressing the choral text: “*All flesh is grass....*” (Isaiah 40:6)

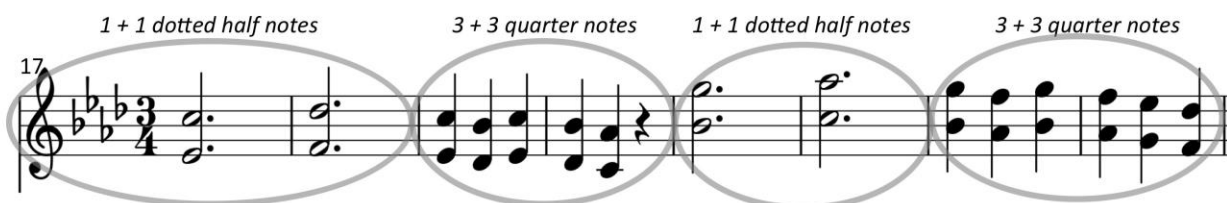
<sup>36</sup> As Begbie explains, “the meter is implied and sensed through the rhythm of tones. Rhythm and meter may coincide very closely, but they can be out of step, sometimes quite radically.” Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time*, 41.

This is a wave structure in its own right. Begbie goes on to point out that this second-order wave is called a “hypermeasure.” There is a third-order hypermeasure that links measures 17-20 and 21-24. Begbie identifies a fourth-order hypermeasure consisting of measures 17-24 and 25-32...and so on. These hypermeasures may (or may not, for there is no necessity in music) extend until the entire piece is expressed.

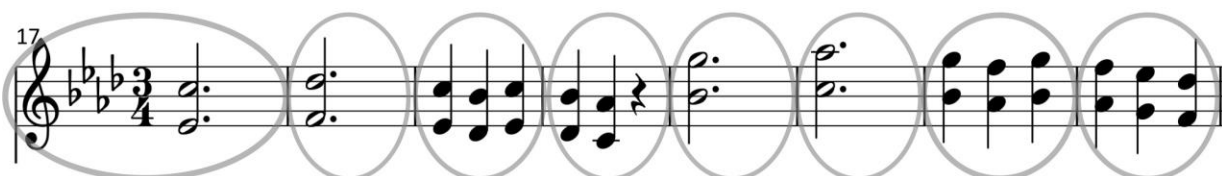
### 3<sup>rd</sup>-order hypermeasure: repeating quatrains



### 2<sup>nd</sup>-order hypermeasure: mirrored pairs of measures



### 1<sup>st</sup>-order (hyper)measure: each measure of three beats



### Measures 17-24 as composed by Chopin:



Figure 4 F. Chopin, Waltz in A flat major, op. 34, measures 17-24

The patterns exhibited in the example are simple enough for even amateur musicians to recognize. And Begbie provides many other (more complicated) examples.<sup>37</sup> His point is that each temporal pattern falling on our ears is distinct but concurrently enmeshed with other patterns.

This organization of hypermeasures is reminiscent of the mereological hierarchy that we saw in Figure 3 above.

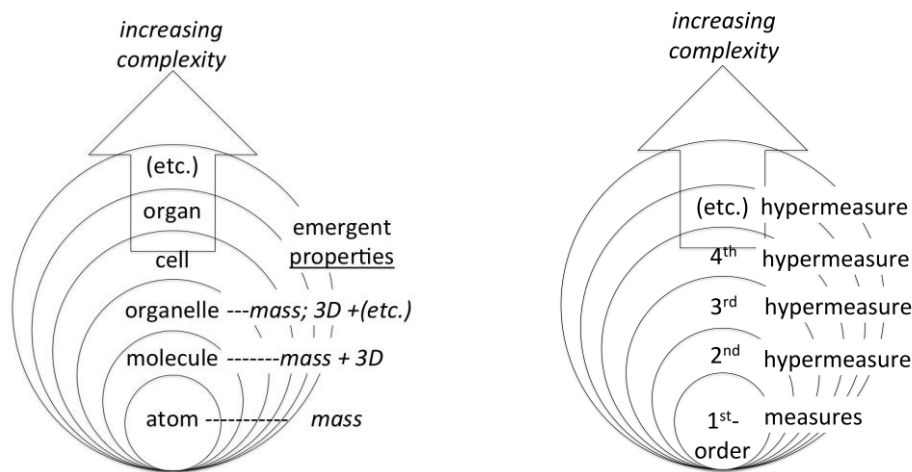


Figure 5 Mereological hierarchy of spatial entities and of musical time

I mean to imply by Figure 5 simply that this hypothesis is worth further study: time may be in one important sense be as complexly organized as physical stuff. Such a claim cannot be fully defended in this context, but the comparison is suggestive enough to allow us to provisionally conclude that mechanical time, being flat (one level), is too simplistic to provide adequate description of our world.

<sup>37</sup> See also Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York & London: Schirmer, 1988).



The second way that music may provide a way out of our conceptual enslavement to mechanical time is that, in addition to understanding musical time as multi-leveled, it is also true that musical time is not linear.

### **Musical time is directional yet not linear**

#### *Musical expectations*

The diverse temporal patterns that constitute multi-leveled hypermeasures are likely to be indistinguishable to the listener (especially on the first hearing) and even to the professional musician (especially on the first playing). That measure 17 in the Chopin waltz begins a fifth-order hypermeasure, as Begbie claims, cannot be assessed at the downbeat of measure 17 but rather in retrospect from further down the line (e.g., from the vantage of measure 32 or later). Of course, even the casual listener may sometimes be surprised and delighted by a sudden musical turn.<sup>38</sup> That is because the patterns of both tone and rhythm set up tacit expectations which may be fulfilled later on in various ways (musical reprise, musical joke, musical irony, etc.). That expectations are set up early and fulfilled later shows there is undeniable directionality to musical time. Yet while directional, musical time is not linear. Music is not simply one note after the other any more than history is one thing after another. For, in addition to expectations that are set up in the present and fulfilled in the future, there are two other temporal features of musical time that evade capture by the reductionist linearity of the mechanical model.

#### *Endlessness*

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<sup>38</sup> E.g., Mozart's musical joke, the very last couple bars of K522 -IV Presto.

On the one hand there is an endlessness to musical time. The sameness of mechanical time entails a kind of drudgery, since each successive nanosecond is the same as the last. But a given piece of music is able to gesture, even to yearn beyond the border of the (closing) double bar. My favorite example is Duruflé's Fourth Motet. The choral text is surfeit with praise to the Trinity culminating with a drawn out "Amen." But the last chord doesn't sound right. Since it does not return to the tonic chord of the key, the ear is restless. There is an earlier hint that the tonic will come, but then it never does. The ear waits, even yearns for a future which is unlike the present, a future in which there is closure and fulfillment.

In terms of meter (rather than tone), Begbie gives a complicated example of musical endlessness. The form of the Sonata is *Introduction, Exposition & Development, Recapitulation* (and sometimes a *Reprise*). The long middle section, *Exposition & Development*, is a unit with strong closure. At the moment of closure, the piece is tonically resolved (i.e., it returns to the root note of the key) and in the Sonata form both rhythm (played) and meter (intuited) close in *agreement* (rather than discord) at the end of the *Exposition & Development*. But just then the final section (*Recapitulation*) begins.

The strong accented metrical beat of the hyper[measure] (the return to the tonic) is followed by weak beats within the recapitulation, but there is not another first beat of comparable strength to complete the wave. Hence the entire movement [i.e., the Sonata as a whole] can be described as a complete hyper[measure] followed by an incomplete one. So, in the field of key, a cadence is a closure, but in the field of meter it occurs *prior to closure* and *demand*s (metric) resolution. In one sense [i.e., in terms of tone] the music resolves; in another [i.e., in terms of meter] it strives ahead toward resolution....The music is projected beyond the final cadence into the ensuing silence. (126)

On Begbie's view, this "unfinishedness" makes the Sonata form eschatological by nature. Said differently, the Sonata form (and others) look to a future that is necessarily unlike the present. In stark contrast, mechanical time is marked by perpetual sameness: the future can only be exactly like the present. There is nothing in the mechanical model of time that helps us understand the source and end of temporally transcendent longing.

### *Temporal contextuality*

Finally, not only does musical time differ from mechanical time in its ability to gesture into a future outside itself, musical time is also constituted by a present that is only intelligible in light of what precedes and follows, in light of past and future. Wittgenstein asks, "Doesn't the [musical] theme point to anything beyond itself? Oh Yes! But this means: the impression it makes on me is *connected with things in its environment*....A theme, no less than a face, wears an expression."<sup>39</sup> We can read the expression (the look) of our friends because we connect it with previous interactions, we connect it with the whole of their lives with us up till now. We understand today's expression in light of what life together was like yesterday. But that isn't all. We are sometimes compelled to reinterpret today's looks and expressions in light of what happens *tomorrow*. What holds for a facial expression, a line of poetry, a sentence in a play or story, or a comment spoken over dinner also holds for music: the intelligibility of the present is a function of *both* what precedes and follows. Begbie observes that in Beethoven's String Quartet no. 7 in F major, op. 59, no. 1, the return to the tonic is "spread out, dissipated, over five timepoints" (103). Each of the five only makes sense in light of

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<sup>39</sup> Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 51-52.

the others and all five together only make sense in light of the whole. (Which is why we are drawn to listen to music again and again and again.) Mechanical time can make no sense of such temporal loopiness. For mechanical time, the past is gone, the future is not yet, and the present has no duration. But in musical time,

We are not given an evaporating present but a present through which the past is directed towards the future, or—to put it another way—with phenomena which in their physicality are intrinsically and very closely bound to earlier and later musical occurrences. (67)

## **Conclusion**

The task of this paper was to sketch two lines of a defense for Murphy's oft-misunderstood position that humans have no souls. Her claim is not so much a denial as a grammatical remark: the word "soul" does not refer to the sort of thing we possess; souls are not "things" at all. I have argued that readers will perpetually misunderstand Murphy so long as they (1) insist on a particular way of drawing the boundary between "inner" and "outer" and (2) unwittingly kowtowing to a mechanical model of time. In the first instance, I deflated the insistence by proposing that the division between "inner" and "outer" is better conceived as constituted by a series of "skins." In the second instance, I shed light on the inability of the mechanical model of time to account for the nature of that noblest of human activities, the making of music. This second move aimed to counter our need to locate the soul "somewhere" by restoring attunement with temporality over the totalizing lure of spatiality.

I return in closing to the epigram: “What must the world be like, what must I be like, if between me and the world the phenomenon of music can occur?”<sup>40</sup> If Begbie’s analysis holds and time may be conceived in some sense as consubstantial with music<sup>41</sup> and the human soul in some sense as consubstantial with both time and music, then we are in desperate need of a change of figure.

Sir Edward Elgar composed *Variations on an Original Theme for Orchestra* (“Enigma”), Op. 36, in the winter of 1898-9. Like Mozart’s variations on “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” each variation is a beautiful piece in its own right. But unlike Mozart’s, Elgar took a mystery with him to his grave. Each variation was composed to delight (or to infuriate!) by capturing in music each of his friends particular idiosyncrasies (thus each variation is labeled with the friend’s initials). As these particularities have become widely known, the identities of the friends are *not* the enigma. Rather, the enigma is that the main theme is never identified! Each variation is a harmonizable tune meant to be played *on top* of the common theme. If ever identified, the missing theme would complete and unify the entire work. Without the theme each variation (each friend) is beautiful, but beautiful in isolation. Many musical themes have been proposed, but the answer will never be certain since the secret died with Elgar.

Perhaps here we have the beginning of a better conception of the soul. Pascal once said each human soul was materially incomplete, lacking an enormous piece that only an

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<sup>40</sup> Cited by Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time*, 55.

<sup>41</sup> As far as music is concerned, time is neither a container which music fills, nor is it a river along which music floats. Rather, time is “consubstantial with the tones themselves, with the particular melody they form. Here one thinks not in time but with time; indeed one thinks time itself in the form of the tones.” *Ibid.*, 54.

“infinite object,” God in Christ, can fill. A hole in the soul? Why not rather understand the soul as a musical variation on a missing theme? What human beings quest for is not a missing “piece,” but a missing *tune*. Jesus is that tune.