The Apologetics of Cultural Re-Enchantment in 3D
A Review Essay of Fujimura’s *Culture Care & Gould’s Cultural Apologetics*

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In *Culture Care: Reconnecting With Beauty For Our Common Life* (IVP, 2017), internationally renowned Christian artist Makoto Fujimura recounts that:

> When I began to exhibit in New York City in the mid 1990s “beauty” was taboo . . . It signified cultural hegemony, imperialist power, the corruption of the past, or the cosmetic sheen of superficial contemporary culture . . . As a National Scholar graduate student in Japan, studying the art of Nihonga, I found myself using such extravagantly beautiful materials as gold, silver, malachite, azurite, and exquisite paper and silk. I wrestled with beauty revealed in front of me . . . I did not then have a conceptual framework to incorporate beauty as a valid premise of contemporary art . . . on finding the central reality of Jesus Christ, I was for the first time able to find in Christ himself an integrating premise behind beauty . . . the reality of beauty prompted my own journey of faith.2

Fujimura goes on to note that after the September 11th attacks in 2001: “beauty was much needed, and the contemporary art world seemed to rediscover it as a value.”3 As John Cottingham observes:

> truth, beauty and goodness . . . carry with them the sense of a requirement or a demand. The true is that which is worthy of belief . . . the beautiful is that which is worthy of admiration; and the good is that which is worthy of choice. The true is that which is worthy of belief . . . the beautiful is that which is worthy of admiration; and the good is that which is worthy of choice.4

Fujimura echoes this transcendental-unifying sense of *worthiness* when he states that: “Beautiful things are worth our scrutiny, rewarding to contemplate, deserving of pursuit.”5 Christians should apply these insights to God6 and the gospel of Jesus Christ as pre-eminent examples of realities “worthy of belief . . . worthy of admiration [and] worthy of choice”,7 being “worth our scrutiny, rewarding to contemplate [and] deserving of pursuit.”8

In *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (Zondervan, 2019), Christian philosopher Paul M. Gould highlights the growing recognition amongst contemporary apologetics that apologetics needs to embrace rationality without being narrowly rationalistic, that our understanding of apologetics needs to incorporate beauty and goodness as well as truth, together with a holistic understanding of humans.9 For example, Joseph D. Wooddell writes:
The Church must confess that it has thought far too narrowly in recent years about how to do apologetics . . . Apologetics is the task of helping people see not only the truthfulness but also the attractiveness of the Christian faith . . . Christianity is true, for it corresponds to reality; but being true, it is also both (morally) good and (aesthetically) beautiful . . . Adding aesthetics to the apologetic toolbox can only help the apologetic enterprise.10

Likewise, Fujiimura notes that “a lack of attention to beauty in presenting the truth hampers its appeal and adoption.”11

Gould paints a biblically grounded, holistic and culturally engaged vision of Christian apologetics. On the one hand, he helpfully “affirms man’s rational nature, but situates it within a more comprehensive account of what it means to be human.”12 On the other hand, he accurately observes that: “Christianity is relegated to the margins of culture, viewed as implausible, undesirable, or both.”13 In response, Gould argues persuasively that Christians need to engage in “the work of establishing the Christian voice, conscience, and imagination within a culture so that Christianity is seen as true and satisfying.”14 It is this task that Gould calls “Cultural apologetics”, and his book not only explores the theoretical foundations of cultural apologetics, but also provides clear practical guidance for cultural apologetics.

Gould affirms “that God provides evidence of his existence to everyone, yet many suppress this truth and worship idols instead of the one true God (Rom. 1:18–23).”15 He explains that:

What we see and understand depends, to some degree, on our perception of reality. To the extent that our primary way of perceiving the world is one of disenchantment, which is common in modern, materialist conceptions of reality, God’s existence will be muted. The gospel message will seem implausible and, often, undesirable.16

Hence Gould describes the missionary work of the church as bringing about “a return to enchantment—a re-enchantment of reality through the awakening of desires and a ‘return to reality.’”17 Gould urges:

Re-enchantment is possible. While man’s desire for truth, goodness, and beauty has become distorted, the desire remains. Part of our job as cultural apologists is to help re-awaken these universal and natural human desires and redirect them toward their proper end.

In the course of his discussion Gould sketches several theistic arguments: William Lane Craig’s version of the Kalam cosmological argument, the meta-ethical moral argument, the argument from reason and the argument from desire.19 However, this is a book about apologetics rather than a book of apologetics, so these discussions are very much at an introductory level, being primarily intended to show how different theistic arguments link with the human faculties of reason, conscience, and the imagination.

Gould contrasts “cultural apologetics” with “traditional”20 apologetics. Here he points to William Lane Craig as a representative of “traditional” apologetics, quoting Craig’s statement that cultural apologetics “does not even attempt to show in any positive sense that Christianity is true; it simply explores the disastrous consequences for human existence, society and culture if Christianity should be false.”21

Gould’s example is over-played. For one

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thing, by “cultural apologetics” Craig means the sort of negative cultural analysis presented in the apologetic works of Francis A. Schaeffer, who traced what he called “the line of despair”, rooted in the denial of absolutes, running through Western culture:

Schaeffer believes that the Theatre of the Absurd, abstract modern art, and modern music such as compositions by John Cage are all indications of what happens below the line of despair. Only by reaffirming belief in the absolute God of Christianity can man and culture avoid inevitable degeneracy, meaninglessness, and despair.²²

Craig engages in this sort of “cultural apologetics” when he argues for the existential ‘absurdity of life without God’.²³ Gould unfortunately misses this context, apparently because (as he admits in a footnote) he quotes Craig from a third party.²⁴ Moreover, Craig recognizes the rhetorical importance of an ethos that expresses goodness in apologetics (see Titus 2), observing that: “More often than not, it is what you are rather than what you say that will bring an unbeliever to Christ. This, then, is the ultimate apologetic. For the ultimate apologetic is: your life.”²⁵

That said, Craig does represent an apologetic methodology focused upon the quest for truth through reason and wherein cultural analysis focuses upon the negative consequences of rejecting God, rather than seeing in culture expressions of human longings for truth, goodness and beauty that might be used as positive bridges to the gospel.²⁶

Indeed, in a 2018 dialogue with Catholic Bishop Robert Barron, Craig commented:

I’m intrigued with your desire to appeal to beauty in evangelism, and this seems to me to be a good idea, but I wouldn’t know how to do it. I don’t think it’s enough to just point to . . . the rose window in Notre Dame or something; I don’t think that that it going to draw people to Christ. What can we do in our evangelism that would use beauty, in some way, that would help present the gospel?²⁷

Barron responded:

First of all, I would say, it does. There’s all kinds of examples of it working. Think of the famous Paul Claudel experience, precisely with the North Rose [Widow] at Notre Dame, seeing it converted him . . . And I think by a kind of alchemy, if the transcendentals are related to each other, that the beautiful leads to the good and to the true . . . it’s an opening of a door into the fullness of Christianity . . .”²⁸

He went on to appeal to the writings of Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar,²⁹ and to mention C.S. Lewis’ use of beauty in apologetics. As Barron explains in his 2017 Erazmus Lecture on ‘Evangelizing the Nones’:

Balthasar was deeply influenced by [French poet, dramatist and diplomat] Paul Claudel [1868–1955], who famously underwent a conversion to Catholicism on Christmas Day 1886, while he was standing in Notre Dame Cathedral, gazing at the north rose window and listening to sung vespers. It was not argumentation that brought Claudel to faith, but a visceral experience of the beautiful.³⁰

In response to Baron’s examples, a puzzled Craig asked: “Can you put, though, some shoe-leather on that for me? I mean, I’m trying to think of practical applications, maybe church architecture . . .”³¹
One of the major benefits of Gould’s book is that it engages with Craig’s call to put practical “shoe-leather” onto the theoretical desire to appeal to beauty in apologetics.

Gould’s holistic approach to apologetics resonates with Fujimura’s proposals about the need to engage in ‘Culture Care’, defined as the project of providing “care for our culture’s ‘soul’ . . . Culture care restores beauty as a seed of invigoration into the ecosystem of a culture. Such care is generative.” Fujimura explains that “we call something generative if it is fruitful . . . What is generative is the opposite of degrading . . . it is constructive, expansive, affirming, growing beyond a mindset of scarcity.” Hence he writes that:

thinking and living that are truly generative make possible works and movements that inspire us to be more fully human. We can be comfortable . . . in affirming a cultural contribution as generative if, over time, it recognizes, produces, or catalyzes more beauty, goodness, and flourishing.

Fujimura argues that “Culture care ultimately results in a generative cultural environment: open to questions of meaning, reaching beyond mere survival, inspiring people to meaningful action, and leading towards wholeness and harmony.” And this, we can note as cultural apologists, is the antithesis of any spirituality built upon the naturalistic foundations of materialism and scientism.

‘Cultural Apologetics’ and ‘Culture Care’ both resonate deeply with my own work on ‘Apologetics in 3D’, a holistic approach to apologetics that begins with a generic (though Biblical) account of ‘spirituality’ as concerned with how humans seek to relate to reality via their worldview assumptions (including beliefs), concomitant attitudes and subsequent actions. In other words: “spirituality is about how one relates to reality through the combination of one’s head, heart and hands.” These three components of spirituality are judged by the classical transcendental standards of truth, beauty and goodness as communicated through the three classical elements of rhetoric (logos, pathos and ethos) [see Fig. 1]. Hence, I define apologetics as ‘the art of persuasively advocating Christian spirituality, through the responsible use of rhetoric, as being objectively beautiful, good and true/reasonable.’

In a schema that clearly aligns with and rounds out my own [see Fig 2.], Gould begins with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spirituality</th>
<th>Communicated by</th>
<th>Rhetoric</th>
<th>Judged by</th>
<th>Transcendental values</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands</td>
<td>Communicated by</td>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>Judged by</td>
<td>Goodness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Communicated by</td>
<td>Pathos</td>
<td>Judged by</td>
<td>Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Communicated by</td>
<td>Logos</td>
<td>Judged by</td>
<td>Truth</td>
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Conversely, Gould observes that Godless spirituality leads to spiritual disintegration.\textsuperscript{40}

As we narrate the story of our lives and embody habits that are motivated by misplaced desire, our character (de)forms, and our perception of the world changes. We become blind and foolish. Money, entertainment, excess, gluttony — the litany of vices and her spoils — blind us to goodness and beauty.\textsuperscript{40}

Whereas Gould begins with three spiritual capacities of longing aimed at three transcendental values, I begin with a tripartite analysis of humans as spiritual subjects in relationship to the rest of reality, subjects to whom Gould’s capacities of longing belong and in whom they jointly function as potential paths to integrative spiritual shalom (i.e. wholeness and flourishing) or spiritual disintegration.

Fujimura likewise affirms the holistic, relational nature of humans, writing that: “Any experience that affects our relationships affects our minds, which affects our bodies, and so on, back and forth.”\textsuperscript{41}

Moreover, Fujimura notes that there is “significant overlap for culture care . . . with soul care, which is the spiritual development and psychological integration that can result when we diligently follow good guidance.”\textsuperscript{42} Thus he observes that: “One way to envisage culture care at work is to transpose our knowledge of mental health and spiritual formation to culture.”\textsuperscript{43} Culture care and spiritual formation that virtuously integrates our head, heart and hands both happen as we diligently follow the guidance of truth, beauty and goodness, communicated by logos, pathos and ethos, as appreciated by our reason, conscience and imagination.

Gould explains that:

If we utilize these three universal human longings as starting points from within culture to build [rhetorical] bridges and connect them with the three ‘planks’ of reason, conscience, and imagination, the following model of cultural engagement results [see Fig 3] . . .\textsuperscript{44}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spirituality</th>
<th>Spiritual Capacities</th>
<th>Communicated by</th>
<th>Rhetoric</th>
<th>Judged &amp; Fulfilled by</th>
<th>Transcendental values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands</td>
<td>Conscience</td>
<td>Communicated by</td>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>Judged &amp; Fulfilled by</td>
<td>Goodness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Communicated by</td>
<td>Pathos</td>
<td>Judged &amp; Fulfilled by</td>
<td>Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Communicated by</td>
<td>Logos</td>
<td>Judged &amp; Fulfilled by</td>
<td>Truth</td>
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Fig. 2.

![Diagram](image)

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Gould notes that there are two directions in which to take this apologetic task. On the one hand, this means working “to awaken those within culture to their deep-seated longings for goodness, truth, and beauty.” On the other hand, this means “engaging with and working within the culture-shaping institutions – the university, the arts, business, and government – to help others see the reasonableness and desirability of Christianity.”

Gould explains that:

A cultural apologist . . . has local and global concerns. Locally, [they seek] to help others hear and understand the gospel by building a bridge from some common starting point – such as our universal longings for truth, goodness, or beauty – and addressing barriers to belief along the way. The primary question each unbeliever needs to face is the question of Jesus: What do you make of Jesus Christ? Globally, the cultural apologist should be concerned with the collective mind-set, conscience, and imagination of the culture, including the people and institutions within the culture that shape this collective way of perceiving. His or her global concern is that the gospel will be viewed as reasonable and desirable . . . The primary question the cultural apologist asks of the nonseeker is a question that awakens awareness of desire: What do you want? By attending to his loves and longings, whether through the way of imagination, reason, or morality, our hope is that the nonseeker will become cognizant of his deeper longings and set out on the path that eventually leads to Jesus. At the global level of culture, we do this by creating and cultivating beauty, goodness, and truth in the spaces we inhabit, the lives we live, and the things we make (and by supporting the Christian intellectuals, artists, and innovators who do this well). In this, we help the nonseeker see Jesus and the gospel as plausible and desirable . . . [the cultural apologist needs to be] listening, prodding, discussing, providing evidence, inviting, and serving the tangible needs of the seeker. We do this in the hope that the seeker begins to view Christianity as reasonable and desirable and will set out on the road of “return” to reality. The seeker squarely and seriously faces the ultimate question as well: What do you make of Jesus Christ? He realizes the choice before him and weighs the cost of abandoning his old self and old ways and placing his faith in Another.

It’s no co-incidence that Gould’s call for “creating and cultivating beauty, goodness and truth” co-insides with Fujimura’s call for a generative culture, for Gould lauds Fujimura’s Culture Care as “a helpful discussion of God’s call for Christians to care for and cultivate culture.” Taking inspiration from Fujimura, Gould writes:

Christians ought to (1) see and delight in reality in the same way that Jesus sees and delights in reality and (2) invite others to see and delight in reality in the same way. This re-enchantment is not the political takeover of culture or the re-establishment of the Christian Right or a new Christian Left. Our call is to be curators of culture in the hope that Christianity will be seen as plausible and desirable. We “cultivate” the soil so that the “seed” of the gospel will take root in the lives of those we seek to reach (Mark 4:1-9).

As Elliot Clark comments:

While the approach [Gould] envisions is one of graciously answering
objections and presenting sound arguments, it’s also an embodied apologetic. In this way Gould expands our categories of apologetics beyond the propositional and incorporates the necessity of a lived-out and enculturated faith. We must herald and embody the gospel.50

Gould’s analysis of cultural apologetics yields some particularly powerful practical advice to church leaders:

we must think about ministry in a new light, pushing our horizons beyond immediate needs to think years or even generations ahead. Our metrics should include more than conversions and baptisms – which are vital, of course. What is missing are metrics that measure the cultivation of the soil in which the seeds of the gospel are planted. . . . till ing of the soil is the most important task we can do to prepare ourselves and our culture for the seeds of the gospel that God sows so lavishly.51

As Fujimura comments: Soul care will require nurturing spaces for [spiritual] formation – but I see these looking less like celebrity rehab clinics and more like working neighborhood gyms or Olympic training centers. Such spaces would feature, purposeful, visionary leadership by active mentors and trainers committed to culture care. In each space, a community of peers would gather together and challenge each other to excellence and growth to prepare themselves for competition and collaboration.52

It is part of the calling of the Church (see Matthew 5:13), and thus of Christian Universities, to offer such nurturing and generative community.

Finally, Gould pointedly observes that: A cultural apologist will be an iconoclast within the church, shattering images and the reductive and pragmatic impulses that define much of contemporary Christianity. He or she will also be an iconoclast within the institutions that shape the broader culture, pushing back against the dehumanizing impulses that inform the spirit of the age.53

Not only Christian apologists, but Christian artists, preachers and educationalists at all levels would do well to address the question of how best to approach their ministries using the cultural insights provided by Fujimura and Gould.

Recommended Resources

Websites
Makoto Fujimura: www.makotofujimura.com
Two Tasks Institute: https://twotasksinstitute.org

Video Resources
Peter S. Williams’ YouTube Playlist, ‘Paul M. Gould on Cultural Apologetics’ www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWh7q9MrHdd6t3CQNGytrps
Peter S. Williams’ YouTube Playlist, ‘Makoto Fujimura’ www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWhaT1joG5yl52_kMFCJhKAi
Peter S. Williams’ YouTube Playlist, ‘Beauty’ www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWiL488-SGbOdhf6kLPSZbJ
Peter S. Williams, ‘Apologetics in 3D’ https://youtu.be/hiUFHeaEaPLA

Audio Resources
Peter S. Williams, ‘Composing: From glory to glory’ www.peterswilliams.com/composing/

Readings
Stratford Caldecott, Beauty for Truth’s Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education (Brazos Press, 2009)
Joe Carter & John Coleman, How To Argue Like Jesus: Learning Persuasion From History’s Greatest Communicator (Crossway, 2009)
Makoto Fujimura, Culture Care: Reconnecting With Beauty For Our Common Life (IVP, 2017)
Douglas Groothuis, Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against The Challenges Of Postmodernism (IVP, 2000)
Nancy Pearcey, Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, & Meaning (B&H, 2010)
Nick Pollard, Evangelism made slightly less difficult, second edition (IVP, 2004)
Patrick Sherry, Spirit and Beauty (SCM, 2002)
Michael Ward & Peter S. Williams, C.S. Lewis at Poets’ Corner (Cascade, 2016)
Peter S. Williams, ‘A Pre-Modern Reflection Upon the Modernist Foundations of Postmodernism’ www.peterswilliams.com/2016/02/09/postmodernism/
Peter S. Williams, ‘Spirituality & Education’ www.peterswilliams.com/2016/02/09/spirituality-education/

Peter S. Williams, *C.S. Lewis vs the New Atheists* (Paternoster, 2013)

Joe Winston, *Beauty and Education* (Routledge, 2010)


Notes


5. Fujimura, op cit, 50.


8. Fujimura, op cit, 50.


11. Fujimura, op cit, 49.


16. Ibid.

17. Ibid, 45.


23. Craig, op cit, chapter two.

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25. Craig, op cit, 302.


27. William Lane Craig, 'A Conversation with Bishop Robert Barron & William Lane Craig: Claremont McKenna College – 2018' https://youtu.be/C8aHq5NASXk (see the dialogue at 1:32.16-1:37.26).


33. ibid.

34. ibid, 24.

35. ibid, 24-25.


40. ibid, 58-59.

41. Fujimura, op cit, 29.

42. ibid, 45.

43. ibid, 45.

44. Gould, op cit, 30.

45. ibid, 24.

46. ibid, 24.

47. ibid, 210-213.

48. ibid, footnote 47, page 92.

49. ibid, 82.

50. Elliot Clark, 'It's Time for a Holistic Apologetic'


52. Fujimura, op cit, 48 (see also 106-107).


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