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Different Images of God: Theological-aesthetical Evaluation of Films by Andrey Zvyagintsev and Pavel Lungin

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Abstract
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Introduction: The Question of Theology and Film Analysis

Currently the field of film studies from a religious or theological perspective seems to be a trend. Yet, not so many authors suggest theological approaches to film analysis. There is a challenge of personalized readings of films if taken from a theological perspective and there is already quite a history of film interpretation and methodologies that take that route. Sometimes authors concentrate on biblical topics only or evaluate films without clear definition of how theological themes are determined (Baugh, 1997; May, 1997). Too often authors just implement different theological concepts here and there without a clear methodology. There should be some space for personal reading of film, but not as the only reading. In a way this study follows the work of Neil Hurley (Marsh, 2009:62). However, not exactly, because we agree that transcendence is not static. It is more than the idea of transcendental truth. Also there are some scholars that try to apply some trends in contemporary theology to film studies (Nolan, 2009; Brant, 2012).

Though this study also concentrates on viewing films through the lens of the transcendent, it aims at doing this task with the help of theological means. The works and suggestions of David B. Hart and John Panteleimon Manoussakis are used. These two authors are Orthodox theologians, so Christian theological perspective is presumed as a methodological ground for film analyses. Both authors admit the tremendous influence of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s legacy in aesthetic theology (Hart, 2003: 29; Manoussakis, 2007:2). It seems that both Hart and Manoussakis are influenced by the idea found in Balthazar and developed by Jean-Luc Marion of being known by God as a prerequisite of knowledge (Horner, 2005: 58). It is also in Balthazar and Marion where we find an accent on distance (diastasis) (Horner, 2005: 51-53). Henceforth both Hart and Manoussakis continue to develop those areas of aesthetic theology further, concentrating on bridging the distance of the infinite and understanding the experience of being known, touched and called by God (and reacting not only in cognitive manner). They agree that distance (diastasis/diastema) is a space for relationship and relationships themselves
(Horner, 2005: 59-60) and try to incorporate this idea in their definition of aesthetic experience of God and the possibility of a description of the transcendental (Hart, 2003: 179-183; 237-241; Manoussakis, 2007:89-92; 97-101; 141-142).

Therefore, this study will address the possibility of and ways that transcendence as beauty and the Christian God's revelation can be seen and analyzed in films. Though the usage of the term "transcendental" is close to the explanation of Paul Schrader, as it could be described as wholly Other, unexpected and indescribable (Schrader, 1972:5-7), it mostly describes Christian understanding of God as Other which is actually beyond the description of otherness (even called not Other) (Balthasar, 1989: 174), and as a source of being in contrast to the description of total immanence of being in a contemporary philosophy (Hart, 2003:12-15).

Films will be analyzed from a perspective of beauty as transcendental (as a theological aesthetic viewpoint that Hart proposes). There are several qualities of beauty according to Hart that help us to identify it in presented relations (Hart, 2003: 17-28, 439-443), and they are the following: 1) the transcendent and beautiful precede our reaction, and we do not find them – they are revealed; 2) by manifestation of beauty, a distance to the transcendent is created (beauty shows that there is not enough means to present God, yet we comprehend that God was communicated); it also states that accepting difference of things is vital for understanding the reality not as totality; 3) it awakens desire for the transcendental; 4) it crosses boundaries of the transcendent and immanent (the usual story becomes God's story and vice versa); 5) it transcends rational comprehension and not always could be described (it evokes marvel, not description); 6) it is not a symbol (in a sense that it does not correlate to sublime or "ideal" transcendental reality, it is reality by itself); 7) it is generous and life-oriented (not dramatizing its vulnerability, beauty is not Christian sentimentality). Beauty "is an event, or even (one might say) eventuality as such" (Hart, 2013:283); it is an experience of the transcendentality of being (Hart, 2013:284).

Likewise, Manoussakis describes our aesthetic abilities in terms of knowing God through beauty (Manoussakis, 2007:2), and he defines his task in the following way: "The thinking of
God that will emerge through such a topology is that of a personal God rather than a conceptual one; a God to be reached through the relationships generated by the *prosopon* and the icon; a God that exists in the temporality of the *kairos* and appears in the sudden moment of the *exaiphnes* (part 1); a God who is better understood by the doxological language of praise and in the music of hymns rather than by the systematic *logos* of theology (part 2); a God, finally, that touches us and scandalously invites us to touch Him back" (Manoussakis, 2007:1-2). Therefore, these accents of theological aesthetics from Manoussakis’ perspectives will also be applied in this analysis.

To summarize the approaches of Hart and Manoussakis we could present the following points of the aesthetic theology that could be applied for film analysis: 1) the givenness and unexpected vision of Beauty; 2) personal rather than conceptual experience of Beauty; 3) Beauty evokes desire and response to the transcendental; 4) Beauty bridges the transcendent and the immanent and creates the experience of distance; 5) Beauty is life-giving and life-preserving. Of course, it could be described differently and probably more broadly, yet these five points should suffice for film analysis.

The works of Andrey Zvyagintsev and Pavel Lungin have been chosen because they represent a contemporary depiction of God or transcendental reality in Russian cinema (which is not often analyzed from theological perspective). It is also important that both theologians are Orthodox and both directors consider themselves Christians (at least they admit to being influenced by Eastern Orthodoxy). Andrey Zvyagintsev mentions that he is affected by transcendental style in cinema (Dyckhaniye kamnia. Mir filmov Andreya Zviagintseva, 2014: 428). Though Zviagintsev shows transcendental themes through common life scenes, he often uses visual or literal citations to create a double (or even multiple) meaning of the scene. In contrast to this, Pavel Lungin addresses themes of God's revelation and transcendental discovery directly as life experience of his characters (in more or less realistic fashion). He tends to make
less figurative films including religious topics in a relatively direct manner (Mazierska & Rascaroli, 2003: 141-159).

**Religious experience and theophanies in Pavel Lungin's films**

Pavel Lungin is famous for addressing social realities of the Russian society. His art could be even described as grotesque realism. He has quite a filmography, which includes *Taxi-Blyuz* (1990), *Luna Park* (1992), *Svadba* (2000), *Oligakhr* (2002), *Bedniye rodstvenniki* (2005), *The Island* (*Ostrov*) (2006), *Vetka sireni* (2007), *Tsar* (2009), and *The Conductor* (*Dirizhyor*) (2012). In his three latest films (*The Island* (2006), *Tsar* (2009), *The Conductor* (2012)) he addresses the topic of the transcendent. Some authors noticed the importance of a 'God's fool' character in both *The Island* and *Tsar* (Birzache, 2014: 30-32), but this is only one of the distinctive aspects of Lungin's films. These films also could be addressed as hagiopics, as they present life stories of saint characters (both fictional and historical). We will concentrate on the most famous one, *The Island*, and on the most recent, *The Conductor*.

*The Island* (2006)

This film pictures a lonely monk who is constantly carrying a wheelbarrow with coal. We discover that this monk (Anatoly) is a *starets* (a prophetic monastic figure) that attracts many people in search of a miracle or wisdom. We discover that in his youth during World War II he shot a fellow military sailor, Tikhon, being pushed by German soldiers to do so to preserve his own life. For this reason, he is atoning for his guilt of murder with a harsh monastic life. Almost at the end of the film, we discover that the sailor survived and Anatoly did not kill anybody, but his search for closeness with God made him special (in this way his feeling of guilt served him and the community for the better). During the course of the film, we see several people coming
with a need, and discover the personality of Anatoly and ways of God he communicates. There is also a separate storyline of his relationships with a local priest Filaret and another monk father Iov. What aspects of Beauty or transcendental God could be seen in this movie? According to the suggested areas of analysis, we could suggest the following:

1) The givenness and unexpected vision of Beauty.

This aspect could be traced in the personality of father Anatoly himself. His actions toward brethren and his responses to the visitors are quite unpredictable. Obviously, the people experiencing this are puzzled by father Anatoly's words and actions. However, they are not puzzled because it is hard to comprehend (even if it is occasionally the case during the film), but because his actions and words challenge the usual course of life. The same could be said of the unexpected appearance of Tikhon, who was considered dead. The film really illustrates the idea of sudden experience of God (exaphanes) expressed by Manoussakis: "When this happens, when my perspective is countered, inversed, returned to me, I am no longer the privileged subject that establishes and constitutes the objectivity of the world (the thinghood of the things), but merely a dative; I become this “to whom” the world, as the world- to-come, is given. For only then can there be a world given, when I make myself available as a receiver, as gifted (l’adonnü) with the gift of givenness" (Manoussakis, 2007:64-70).

2) Personal rather than conceptual experience of Beauty.

This could also be illustrated by the fact that it is Anatoly himself who is an icon of God in this movie, and that his prayer is personal communication with God (in which he occasionally invites others to participate). In addition, God is revealed in relations of the main characters. Almost all Anatoly does is God's challenge to turn away from materialistic values and the invitation for
fellowship with the divine. It is emphasized by explicit invitation of visitors not only to receive God's miracle, but also to participate in the Eucharist at the local Church service. The ecclesiastical context of meeting with God is emphasized, and though it could be taken as a mere religious activity, it seems to be an invitation for a fellowship with a Church and God himself. Anatoly even takes back a boy from a boat saying he will not be healed completely if he does not receive the Communion.

3) Beauty evokes desire and a response to the transcendental.

This aspect is related to the first one. Obviously, the people are attracted to Anatoly because they admit God's presence in him. Father Iov is attracted to Anatoly, and though he has some envy for Anatoly's gift of grace from God, he is still sincerely attracted to his personality (with a weird attachment, but it could be understood as awe before God).

4) Beauty bridges the transcendent and the immanent and creates the experience of distance.

This aspect is emphasized by the constant prayer and sorrow of Anatoly for his sin of murder (as we know he did not kill anybody, but he shot the man willingly nevertheless). Therefore, we are constantly reminded that all the miracles, wisdom, and God's presence are coming from God, and Anatoly is just a humble receiver of God's gift of presence.

The experience of distance is presented in Anatoly's meeting with Tikhon. This meeting enriches Anatoly's experience of God, and he sees God's mercy in this meeting too. Therefore, though Anatoly is presented as a mediator, he experiences his own encounter. His humanity and personality are never absorbed by God; the distance between the creator and creation is preserved (we may even say it is emphasized).
5) Beauty is life-giving and life-preserving.

This aspect is revealed mostly in the experience of healing and exorcism, but it could also be seen in preventing the girl from having an abortion and in the restoration of personal relationships for most visitors (to Anatoly's fellow-monks too).

*The Conductor* (2012)

Lungin's latest film was made in relation to a musical work by an Orthodox priest on the text of the Passions of the Christ according to Mathew. The music is used throughout the film, and most of it relates to a concert in Jerusalem. The conductor Viacheslav Pietrov discovers that his son has committed suicide and is to be buried by his friends (yet they lack some money for his burial and ask him for help). Simultaneously, his soprano Alla is struggling with her not so faithful husband. An Orthodox Christian, Alla tries to communicate her Christianity to her husband. During the flight to Jerusalem, Sergey (Alla's husband) meets a young single mother Olga traveling with her twin sons for spiritual enlightenment. Alla experiences strong feelings of betrayal on Sergey's part and asks Olga not to come to a concert. Later Alla discovers that Olga has been killed in a suicide bomb attack because she did not come to the concert hall but went to the local market instead. Both Pietrov and Alla understand that because of their lack of love somebody died. Both of them experience some "passions" in Jerusalem that help them to identify their true religiosiy. The film is open-ended and does not answers all the questions that could be raised, but it seems that the main characters find some comfort and meet God. What aspects of transcendence and beauty could be traced here?
1) The givenness and unexpected vision of Beauty.

Both Pietrov and Alla think that they control their worlds, and both think they are right in their life position and relations to others. Pietrov thinks he is the hard-working man and that he has raised his son properly. His attitude to life is expressed in his relations to Eugene, the troublesome tenor. Similarly, Alla is certain that Sergey's continuous affairs are the real problem in her life and that she is a good person and a good Christian.

However, they discover the true presence of God in a tragedy. Pietrov reads the letter of his son (from beyond the grave) where he asks for forgiveness for his suicide and tells him, "daddy... I love you very much. Sasha," and Alla discovers Olga and her children in a hospital after the bombing (realizing both the possibility of Olga's safety if she had not asked her not to come to the concert and the scale of a true problem in light of her personal self-righteous struggle with her husband). Therefore, both main characters discover that they are ignorant and need to meet God. It seems that both of them - Pietrov on Via Dolorosa and Alla at the hospital - meet God. This correlates with the soundtrack of the Passion giving the visual experience even more levels of comprehension. This film presents the unexpected realization of a need of grace, of God's intervention, and realization of it in suffering.

2) Personal rather than conceptual experience of Beauty.

The whole film is built around different conflicts and the inability for meeting the other. Lungin shows it explicitly when one of Alexander's friends speaks to him in Hebrew and he speaks back in Russian. But at the same time it seems that this Jewish girl that does not speak Russian is the only person that feels what it is like for Vyacheslav Pietrov to go through the death of his son and shares with him real human love (she is the one that brings him to the room with Alexander's body, and guides him to his hotel afterwards). Alla also does not see Olga as a person at the
beginning; she just concentrates on her as the woman that her husband is attracted to. It is only after the terrorist attack that she sees her as a person and even feels some attraction to her and her children. Pietrov leaves a note at his son's grave written on Alexander's letter he received from his friends, so he is building a dialog with his son after his death. He starts appreciating personal encounter. It is in these discoveries of others where glimpses of God are seen. At least we hear the words of the Passion speaking of resurrection and see some peace in their faces at the end.

3) Beauty evokes desire and a response to the transcendental.

Pietrov and Alla are both awakened in the process of loss. *The Conductor* depicts the crises that the main characters go through when they discover the value of relationships and their failure to build them. Yet, as it was mentioned, they are moving beyond their negative experience to find inner reconciliation and forgiveness. It is interesting that the experience of guilt and overcoming it are interwoven into the concert and the Passion performance. It is also interesting that a deep crisis leads Pietrov to walk the way of Jesus' Passion and, in a way, experience Christ as the last drawing of Alexander suggests (where dead Christ is depicted with Pietrov's face). The scene at the graveyard is interwoven into his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and we can hear the words sung by the choir, "and concurred death by death." Therefore, we could see the awakening of desire and some response in the film, and though it is not directed at God, it is presented in the context of Easter and the death and resurrection of Christ.

4) Beauty bridges the transcendent and the immanent and creates the experience of distance.

The distance between God and people is both emphasized and partially bridged in the film. It is emphasized by the self-righteousness of Pietrov and Alla and bridged through their facing others and admitting their true value. Their lives are not healed by their losses, but they find some
peace, so the transcendent is present by the end of the film (where we hear again the words about resurrection and praise to the Lord).

5) Beauty is life-giving and life-preserving.

Life is present in the film in a twisted manner because we are witnessing at least two deaths (there were probably more victims of the terrorist act including the bomber himself). Nevertheless, we see healing of relations, with the topic of the death and resurrection of Christ always being implicitly in the background (mostly through art).

Pavel Lungin creates realistic pictures of human experience, yet he also shows some miracles and worship as a part of his art. No wonder these two films seem to fit well in the expectations of theological aesthetics because it seems that Lungin intended them to depict religious experience of a different type.

Religious experience and theophanies in Andrey Zvyagintsev's films

Andrey Zvyagintsev usually presents meeting God not in a direct way but as his characters' ordinary life experience (he is mostly not depicting religious people or stories as such). Zvyagintsev emphasizes human inability to see God, yet he still shows His presence in all the stories through different signs or dialogs. His films emphasize our inability to comprehend God: we can only have glimpses and moments of illumination. He also teaches the importance of trustful attitude and the role of compassion in all of his films. All of these characteristics of Zviagintsev's films correspond to the definition of beauty by the aforementioned theologians. Zvyagintsev mentions in one of his lectures that he is eager to create mythic reality through his art and for him it is the true meaning of the world we live in. He also thinks that we could communicate the transcendental only through a paradox and correlates myth and paradox.
(Dyckhaniye kamnia. Mir filmov Andreya Zviagintseva, 2014: 148-151). Andrey does not address the question of transcendental beauty directly; in his opinion, it is something he would describe as poetic. In a similar way, Hart describes beauty: "the truth of being is 'poetic' before it is 'rational'... Beauty is the beginning and end of all true knowledge"(Hart, 2003: 132). In order to see how he depicts theophanies of the transcendental in his film we will analyze his first and last films: *The Return* and *Leviathan*.


This film tells a story of a family trip. It begins with a scene where Ivan, the younger of two brothers could not jump into the water from a tower. Later boys tease him and he quarrels with his older brother Andrei because he has told everybody about his fear. They come home and discover that their father, who has been absent for years, is back. They see him in a pose very similar to Mantegna's painting *Lamentation over the dead Christ*. Later on, the boys and their father travel to a strange uninhabited island. In the process, the father teaches the boys different aspects of life, but Ivan constantly doubts his love and intentions. Finally, Ivan confronts his father and says he is going to jump from a tower on the island (which would probably kill him). However, it is the father who dies falling from the tower trying to stop Ivan from jumping. The brothers carry their father's body and try to bring him back to the mainland, yet their boat sinks and they lose the body.
1) The givenness and unexpected vision of Beauty.

According to Zvyagintsev, this film presents a metaphorical intrusion of God into human life (Marko, Zvyagintsev, Golubovich, 2007: 137). The father comes unexpectedly to challenge the world of Andrei and Ivan. He is fully revealed as their father in his death. First, the kids identify him as their father with a photo and "because mother said so," but at the end, they both fully acknowledge him as their father. When they try to find the photo, they look for it in the illustrated Bible and open pages picturing creation and Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. They see their father as a dangerous figure, yet in his fall they discover him fully as their loving father and start to appreciate the experience they have had with him. Therefore, the father could be viewed as a main representation of transcendental beauty.

2) Personal rather than conceptual experience of Beauty.

Ivan "meets" his father only after his death because he did not believe in his fatherhood until his sacrifice. During the film, we observe Ivan's fight against the will of the father. He constantly does the opposite, confronts him with accusations, and questions his motives. There is no data to prove him wrong, and his little talks with Andrei confirm this attitude. Yet, it is in relations and his father's attitude where he discovers true love and care, and the true personality of his father.

3) Beauty evokes desire and a response to the transcendental.

Ivan confronts the father all the time and tries to convince Andrei that he is wrong in trusting and obeying the father. Yet after the latter dies, both of them are attracted to him, especially Ivan. It seems that Zvyagintsev presents enlightenment of both brothers only at the end of the story, yet he guides us to a deeper understanding by the striking images of Mantegna and Durer, and by
arranging the story to seven days of the week, starting from Sunday (the day of resurrection). The two brothers are puzzled by the unexpected visit of the father, but in the end they are amazed by him and truly meet him.

4) Beauty bridges the transcendent and the immanent and creates the experience of distance.

This aspect is presented most prominently because Zvyagintsev creates very ordinary characters, yet he uses this story to tell something more. We can view the father's actions as both godlike and ordinary and even ethically provoking. On the one hand, Zviagintsev gives the viewer religious clues from the beginning, on the other it is still a story of family relationships. Personal response and involvement are heavily emphasized. The father is "unseen" for Ivan, just as God could be for a skeptic. Beauty is explicit only in the father's last words and deeds when we discover his true nature. This is exactly how it is described by Manoussakis and Hart: sudden revelation of both distance that could not be comprehended and closeness of love in God's saving act (Hart, 2003: 322-323; Manoussakis, 2007: 93-95, 108-112, 137-142).

The transcendence is emphasized by the inability to keep the father's body. He comes and goes unexpectedly. He is even absent from photos of the trip, which creates an iconoclastic depiction of a transcendent personal experience of Ivan and Andrei.

5) Beauty is life-giving and life-preserving.

The father saves Ivan's life, and all his hard lessons are aimed to help the boys survive (they partially practice what they have learned when they try to bring the father's body back home). The final part of the film transfigures all the harsh experience of Ivan and Andrei and leads to their maturity. It empowers them with the qualities they are lacking at the beginning of the story. Therefore, the father carrying true beauty brings life and transformation.
Leviathan (2014)

The latest film directed by Andrey Zvyagintsev bears the name of a biblical monster described in details in the book of Job. In the film, it is supposed to present the brute power of the state. The main character Nikolay is pushed to give his property for a small compensation to the local mayor Vadim Shelevyat. He hopes his friend Dmitriy, who is an attorney, will help him to save his house and land, but it seems not to be the case. The mayor threatens Dmitriy, so he escapes from the town and uses the death of Nikolay's wife Lilia to get Nikolay to jail and take his land freely. We also discover that Lilia had an affair with Dmitriy, and that their family life is not in the best shape. Nikolay questions God concerning his hard situation, but it seems there is no explanation to what is happening. It is ironic that Nikolay's land, taken by violence, is used to build an Orthodox church (and the bishop seems to be supportive of the way things are done by the mayor).

1) The givenness and unexpected vision of Beauty.

There are many icons presented in this film, and religious ministers are present too, but the most unexpected images are whales (and their bones) and the old destroyed church, which seems to indicate God's quiet presence. The film is really harsh in its presentation of the characters because nobody really searches for God except Lilia and, in a very twisted way, the mayor.

2) Personal rather than conceptual experience of Beauty.

The film presents the inability to communicate and experience love. Nikolay does not see problems that are challenging to Lilia; nor does he see and understand her anxiety (even her
hidden hunger for God). There are many conflicts but almost no signs of reconciliation. Nikolay thinks that having sex with Lilia is reconciling, but he fails to build relationships with his son, wife, and a friend and addresses only the surface of his problems. Friends are shown as not real, and all of them betray him at a certain moment. Church ministers do not help; they rather support the oppression of the mayor or practice the status quo.

The story in *Leviathan* presents the inability to see beauty in all the images of Christ or saints, which occasionally appear on the screen, and inability to see God in other people.

3) Beauty evokes desire and a response to the transcendental.

There is no desire for the transcendental, except only in Lilia, who is not happy with her life and relationships. Nevertheless, Lilia too fails to see God or experience enlightenment. Nikolay blames God for the harsh life and says that going to church would not prevent bad things from happening. Yet, he is not ready to change: even his son Roman says that he has to stop drinking vodka at least. When Nikolay experiences all the terrible things, he starts to think of God and his will, but still without the desperation and willingness to change that Lilia had.

In a perverse way, the mayor also is attracted to God. Through his actions, we may see that he is not looking for a personal encounter with God, but rather religious experience that allows preserving his lifestyle. The persecution of Nikolay and confiscation of his land is the mayor's way of offering a gift to his own image of God. The mayor is attracted by God, but because he twists his experience of God, he becomes blind to see and understand Him. He sees no beauty, is distressed, and compensates for this by communicating with the bishop.
4) Beauty bridges the transcendent and the immanent and creates the experience of distance.

There is distance in the film, but it is the distance of God's silent judgment. We see many icons and hear many words of Christian truth preached, yet those that consider themselves worshippers live ungodly lives or are hypocritical. Church leaders fight Pussy Riot (there are references to the acts of the band in a TV program and in the bishop's preaching) but ignore local violence of the mayor and false witness in court.

Scenes of nature and surroundings at the beginning and the end also demonstrate a transcendent perspective on what is happening. In light of this bigger scale perspective, the power of evil is minimized, yet we see no definite resolution, so the distance of incomprehensibility of God's acts stays.

5) Beauty is life-giving and life-preserving.

The whale's bones are the only sign of the transcendental justice that will come one day on everybody, illustrating the idea that no monster is infinite: if there is God, there is hope. Roman and his openness to the whale bones, the old Church, and his ability to discern problems in Lilia's life give us some hope, but that hope is dim.

Zvyagintsev presents the beauty to a film viewer, but it is not so obvious to his characters. Both in The Return and Leviathan he emphasizes inability to trace transcendent beauty by presenting visual hints to a viewer. His films truly present beauty, but rather in the inability to grasp it (it could be seen in The Return's ambivalence of the father, or Leviathan's spiritual vacuum surrounded by images and contexts filled with references to God). All tensions are related to Zvyagintsev's accent on relationships as a unique space of transcendent beauty, and lack of relations as blindness to the transcendental. Finally, Andrey Zvyagintsev's art may be
described as pointing to beauty rather than presenting it, though keeping in mind the theme of the transcendental is crucial to understanding his films.

**Conclusion: Interpersonal Approach in Film Studies and the Role of Aesthetic Theology**

A methodology based on a theological approach similar to those of Hart and Manoussakis could provide an analysis that places an interpersonal and transcendental perspective on films. Of course, films that have been analyzed in this study raise theological topics or address some transcendental themes. Any film could be analyzed from the aesthetic theology perspective, and the five points of Beauty’s definition as transcendental could be applied to theological analysis of different films. The transcendental Beauty is not related to certain characters, and sometimes could be seen in their refusal to see or react to this Beauty. The most important feature of this kind of approach is admitting that Beauty appears in the context of relations, and one's participation (both as a film character and a viewer) is important. The transcendental could not have a form, yet Beauty is revealed through the form. Nevertheless, this form comes from interrelations and by presenting these relations in a film the transcendental is presented. Sometimes it could be the whole plot of a film, and sometimes the transcendental Beauty is revealed only at some moments (the experience of *exaiphnes*). The Beauty could be seen even in the presentation of godless people or society, as long as relations in the plot could create space for Christ like actions and qualities, or invite a viewer to see transcendence in them.

We saw that openness to an unexpected experience of God could be traced in the works of Lungin and Zvyagintsev. We could also observe that distance (*diastasis/diastema*) plays an important role for Zvyagintsev’s films and that he tends to emphasize inability to comprehend God and his ways. He mostly depicts God through the negative depiction of relationships, yet he still uses many aspects of the transcendental experience. His movies expose experiences that could be described as sudden enlightenment (*exaiphnes* in Manoussakis). Most problems that
both Lungin and Zvyagintsev present in their films relate to personal ability to face and see the other, or face God. Though Lungin's films could be almost described as hagiopics, he goes beyond presenting God only through characteristics of the main characters – interpersonal relationships play an important part in his art.

Experience of God as it is depicted in the films of Lungin and Zvyagintsev may be described with the suggested categories of Beauty, and we could state that most of its features are relational and interpersonal. Therefore, films could be analyzed on their depiction and quality of interpersonal relations, both with the divine and others human beings. It is in personal rather than conceptual categories that the theological method could be applied and it is in combining the aesthetic "body" of a film with its transcendental themes and allusions that theology of films can flourish. Therefore, aesthetic theology could present us with a very proper tool for film analysis bridging philosophy, theology and aesthetics.
Bibliography


