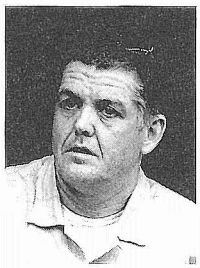
国際研究フォーラム映画の中の宗教文化報告書

セッション5



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（グレゴリー・ワトキンス）
「映画と宗教を教える際の新しい傾向」

レスポンデント：山中弘

井上　第５セッションに入りたいと思います。ワトキンスさんは最近 *Teaching Religion and Film* という本を編集され、オックスフォード大学出版から出されまして、映画をどう宗教を教えるときに使えるかということに、きわめて実践的に関わっている方です。かなり長いペーパーを用意していただいたんですが、時間の関係で少しカットしてお話していただくことになると思います。

Watkins　Despite having a background in film production, it didn't immediately occur to me to make film the subject of my academic work while a graduate student in a religious studies department. It wasn't until I attended my first panel of the Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group of the AAR that I became interested, driven mostly by a sense that the kind of work I heard in the panel presentations was falling far short of capturing the depth and uniqueness of the film medium. To my mind, the connections being drawn between religion and film were too broad and mechanical, falling under the rubric of what I have now come to think of as the "theological/literary approach". Specifically, the problem I wanted to tackle boiled down to the following question: if film is a distinctive medium of art—if there are elements of film that are unique in artistic media—then might there also be unique forms of religious expression and experience in film?

Clearly, films could be *about* religion, and, just as clearly, one could expect that theologies and theories of religion could be used to talk *about* both films and movie culture just as much as any other cultural product or practice. But my particular interest was in thinking about that specific bit of terrain (if it existed) that represented

a synergistic union between religion and film—where something new had been created. Furthermore, and as a kind of corollary to this initial orientation, I knew already that there were several brilliant filmmakers who had taken the time to put in writing their own understanding of the nature of film art and, what is more, of the religious dimensions of their own work (having thought immediately of Ingmar Bergman, Robert Bresson, and Andrei Tarkovsky). What might a scholar of religion make of these filmmakers' attempts to express religious visions in film, and would that investigation answer the question about the possibility of unique forms of religious expression and/or experience in film?

As scholars are wont to do, I drew upon this particular research interest when I had the opportunity to teach a course on religion and film. And the goal of my talk today is to describe for you how I organized a class around the intellectual question that was interesting me: does the medium of film make possible unique forms of religious expression and/or experience? To answer that question, the class would have to consider both what to identify as fundamentally religious and what, if anything, is unique to the medium of film. What is religion, anyway? And just what is film? Of course, the *process* of answering those 'preliminary' questions is the main work and value of the course. While students might, by the end of the class, decide to dismiss this thesis question as unanswerable or ultimately unimportant, they would have investigated some of the many ways of thinking about religion as well as becoming much more skilled viewers of film along the way.

SO, MY ARGUMENT IN THIS TALK:

1. Teaching 'religion and film' is radically affected by underlying assumptions related to the questions: what is religion? And, what is film?

2. Religion and film scholarship and religion and film teaching have been, until recently, dominated by a) what I will call literary approaches to film as text and b) essentially theological modes of criticism which analyze films as cultural products expressing a particular set of values

3. By leaving those two questions open in the classroom (What is religion? What is film?), students engage in an active, dynamic exploration of the question of the relationship between the two.

4. The background questions, then, both for me as a scholar and for the students

in the class I am outlining here, is: Is film a distinctive medium? If so, does its distinctiveness allow for equally distinctive modes of religious expression/experience?

In what follows today, I'd like to describe some of the "units" I use in this course in a way that I hope, in turn, opens up some creative discussion for us as well.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

What is religion? What is film?

In the first class meeting, I break students up into groups of three or four people to come up with preliminary answers to the question: what is religion? I give them ten or fifteen minutes to talk about it as a small group, warning them that someone from the group will have to report on their findings when the class comes together again. I encourage them to approach it as a brainstorming activity, describing both how they think about religion and how others might think about it. In the class-wide discussion, I write elements of their reports on the board, prompting discussion as we go, and finally organizing their answers into three general approaches to theories of religion: functional theories, substantive theories, and 'family resemblance' theories. I make it clear we are developing a vocabulary in the course that I expect them to use in their reaction papers, in class discussion, and in their exams and papers. I then ask them to do the same with the film side of the equation: what is a movie? Though it seems simpler on the face of it, students tend to have more trouble answering this question in a satisfying way, and I am less inclined to lead this discussion to any definitive conclusions. Indeed, what is essential to this thing called a movie? Is narrative essential? Is there a specific setting and/or ritual for watching a movie? What elements does it have in common with other art forms, and what elements are different? One way of describing film is as a sequence of photographs, but exactly what is photography? What does it mean to take a picture of something, and what is the experience of viewing it? (I find it especially valuable to leave the question about photography open, as the readings from Stanley Cavell will probe that question systematically.) During this open conversation about film as a medium, I will often ask for volunteers to describe their favorite images from movies. This question sometimes stumps students, as 'favorite' movies are usually dictated by the story. When students start offering memorable images, they are usually of the 'spectacle' variety—some

image or sequence that amazes with its virtuosity or pyrotechnics. But invariably we arrive at a suggested image, the meaning of which is tied in a complicated way to story and style. I like to suggest in the course of this particular conversation that film art might be about the creation of meaningful images.

Finally, I end the discussion of these two 'preliminary' questions by introducing the so-called central thesis of the class; assuming we can figure out what religion is and what film is, will we then discover some distinctive realm of human expression and experience? In movie terms, this thesis question is the MacGuffin in the class; it is the plot device around which the story and the drama of the class advance, whether or not our plot comes to a satisfactory conclusion.

Elements of film

Another goal of the class is teaching basic film language. Several entire class sessions can be devoted to this purpose, though I will sometimes focus on particular aspects of film language as the course proceeds, linking such discussions to the specific films of the week. Whether or not it is used as assigned reading for the students (I don't), I highly recommend David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's *Film Art: An Introduction*. As with the discussions about religion, an introduction to film language (both of filmmaking and of talking about film) is part of the enterprise of developing the vocabulary of the students, with the expectation they use the terms they are learning throughout the course.

I start by asking students to consider film as a language and then introduce them to Bordwell and Thompson's general approach, which breaks film language into what they refer to as four sets of cinematic technique. Two of these sets relate specifically to any single shot of a film: 1) mise-en-scene (essentially everything in the frame: actors, sets, costumes, staging, lighting strategies and the effects they create, etc.); and 2) cinematography (the photographic element of how things look, including discussion of lenses, depth of field, filters, film stocks, types of shots and camera movement, etc.). The third set focuses on the relationship between shots (examining technical aspects of editing as well as the idea of creating meaning through the juxtaposition of images). And the fourth set considers the relationship between sound and image. Bordwell and Thompson also do a great job of talking about how these sets of technical elements are part of a way of talking about the overall style of a film. I will often also use this focus on film language to introduce students to three major styles of film language: realism,

'classical cinema' (Hollywood narratives), and expressionism. These three categories help students compare the films in the course.

Film Theory—Stanley Cavell

I do not assign any readings from the classics of film theory. For the purposes of this class, I find it is enough to teach film language and style and then explore connections to the films we are seeing and to our consideration of religion. Of course, discussion of cinematic language and style *is* theorizing about film, but I have found no need to supplement this approach with readings from canonical works of film theory. Though not generally considered a major work of film theory, Stanley Cavell's *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (1979) is the only reading I assign expressly about the nature of film. I find Cavell's plain-language approach to thinking about the distinctive nature of film to be perfect for the purposes of the course. Focusing especially on the first six chapters, I take time in class to work through Cavell's questioning of the film medium, starting, as he does, with an inquiry into photography (is a photograph a record of something, in the same way a sound recording is?, is it a kind of memory?, etc.). Cavell's remarkable conclusion to this part of his argument is that a photograph is an indication of a world that extends beyond the borders of the image, and that we, then, function as viewers of a world that cannot see us, creating a unique set of ontological relationships within the world of art. Working through Cavell's argument in class has proven rewarding (partly due to the pleasure of making clear philosophical progress in so Socratic a fashion) and often transformational for how students are thinking about what movies do and how we relate to them. The Cavell reading is not integral to any particular week in the course, but I try to work through his argument during the first couple of weeks.

THE FILM AND READING UNITS

What I'd like to do next is give thumbnail sketches of the reading and film elements I have put into specific units. Again, I aim to be brief, hoping a sense of the general approach proves suggestive.

1) Bible and Film: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *David and Bathsheba*, and *A Short Film about Killing*

Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989, dir. Woody Allen) has proven to be a great first film for classroom viewing. As a simultaneously funny, mainstream, and intelligent

movie, it successfully engages students in talking about religion and film, raising explicit questions about the role of philosophy, religious tradition (Judaism), and even movie culture itself in modern moral life. The story is brilliantly crafted and warrants in-depth discussions of theme, characterizations, and the director's viewpoint. The texture of the story usually comes out by asking where 'the good' can be found in the movie. I am also careful to tie discussions of the movie to our theoretical questions about the substantive versus functional definitions of religion. In the world of the movie, is there a moral order inherent in the universe, or is religion just a means of social control? Students assume it is the latter, but I think the movie is trying to make a case for the former.

From here I move to *David and Bathsheba* (1951, dir. Henry King) and issues of the adaptation of Biblical stories. If time allows, it is a helpful and fun exercise to look at the David and Bathsheba story (*2 Samuel*, 11, 12) in class and talk about how it could be turned into a movie. What do we *not* know about the story that we would have to fill in? What about casting (students are always happy to play at casting a movie)? How will casting decisions affect the adaptation? It is good to engage the students' own creative imaginations about a particular story before seeing a movie version because it gives them a better sense of the obstacles the filmmakers faced and of the decisions they made. The bigger issue here, of course, has to do with the enterprise of adapting sacred text into movies. How does a text work differently from a movie, and is anything important at stake in those differences? If, for example, it is in the very nature of Biblical text to leave important elements of a story open to interpretation (thereby fostering an interpretive community), what is the effect of firmly deciding so many story elements in a movie version? And what are we to make of movies contradicting or distorting the stories they adapt? In contrast to *2 Samuel*, for example, this adaptation opens with David on the front lines of a battle, fighting alongside his men, including Uriah. Students could consider why the writer (Philip Dunne) would make that choice. (This movie, incidentally, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Screenplay). Also, what about the sheer power of images versus text? Will we ever picture King David again as anybody but Gregory Peck? What happens to 'religions of the book' in an increasingly visual culture? And, a final suggestion: is the theology of the movie (the image of God and his relationship to society) the same in the movie as in the text? The other reason I like starting with these films is that it is a

natural set-up to the "theological/literary" approach to the film and religion connection: here's a set of religious traditions and texts over here (Judaism and the Hebrew Bible), and here are some films over here that deal with the same themes/questions/stories; what can we say about comparing them? It's a natural mode of analysis for most American college students; they feel comfortable with it and seem to know what to do. However, I'm hoping as I teach this unit that the already 'open' questions about the nature of religion and of film are already making these literary connections more tenuous. For example, I hope that the *David and Bathsheba* investigation leads to the students wondering at some fundamental level if the Biblical text and the Hollywood movie are, in fact, from two completely different worlds: one profoundly conscious of the role of literary text in the tradition and the other, a movie, quite possibly at odds with literary culture.

A Short Film about Killing (1988, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski) works in sobering contrast to many of the themes in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. On the face of it, both movies are about the Biblical commandment against killing, but the movies are so different in style that they produce a lot of comparative discussion about film language and thematic impact. Kieslowski's movie tells interweaving stories of a young man who commits a premeditated but essentially random murder and of the lawyer who unsuccessfully defends him against the death penalty. Depicting both the random murder and the state-sanctioned capital punishment, the movie is powerfully textured and makes a great companion piece to *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, thematically and stylistically.

2) Religion as Feeling: Friedrich Schleiermacher and *The Green Pastures*

Attempting to move into a new way of thinking about religion while also sticking with issues of Biblical adaptation, this unit pairs reading from Friedrich Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* and the movie *The Green Pastures* (1936, dirs. Connelly and Keighley). Assigning text from Schleiermacher's first two speeches, we start to consider Romantic theories of religion with their emphasis on the feeling component of religious experience (and even, for Schleiermacher, their express rejection of the prevailing view at the time that religion is fundamentally about metaphysics or morals). The reading itself is always harder for the students than I expect it is going to be, especially in light of the fact many of them are actually very receptive to the theory itself once they understand it (my sense is

that the modern phenomenon of 'spiritual but not religious' is related to an implicit effort to emphasize a dimension of feeling over convictions about metaphysics or morality). *The Green Pastures* is not a completely natural fit with a Romantic theory of religion, but it manages to continue the discussion of Biblical adaptation while making just enough connection with Schleiermacher's argument. A film version of a wildly popular Broadway show, *The Green Pastures* presents a series of Old Testament stories told from the perspective African-Americans in the rural South. Working out the contrasts in style between *David and Bathsheba* and *The Green Pastures* is always productive, with the discussion of *The Green Pastures* eventually focusing on the idea that Biblical stories are meant to be in the service of a kind of native and fundamentally emotional piety. Additionally, the Schleiermacher readings introduce the idea of artist-as-prophet, arguing for a deep and abiding link between the role of the prophet and the role of the artist in connecting with the divine. This issue of the status of the artist as such is revisited throughout the course.

3) Auteur Theory and the Search for Meaning: Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*

Working almost entirely from lecture and the discussion of these two movies, the class then moves into a consideration of religion construed as that which gives meaning to life. Students have little trouble digging into Bergman's provocative mix of Protestant religiosity and philosophical existentialism in an essentially Catholic universe. The Knight's spiritual crisis after a Crusade to the Holy Land, in Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957), serves primarily as a pretext for the modern crisis of meaning at the same time that the movie shows a world in which God categorically exists (Jof's visions and the absence of the most pious characters from the famous 'dance of death' make this clear). This particular movie rewards both a close analysis of each character's view of the Christian universe in which they live and a discussion of how to determine what the *director* thinks in the midst of these many voices. Given Bergman's cinematic genius, the film also deserves discussion of its techniques (touching on all of the Bordwell and Thompson sets of techniques).

Adding *Wild Strawberries* allows several strands to develop. First, it puts Bergman's search-for-meaning theme in a rather less explicitly religious setting (though there are still many references to religion). It tells the story of an aging professor's road trip to accept an honorary degree and the spiritual crisis he has along

the way, provoked by disturbing memories, nightmares, and strained family relationships. Because of all the psychodrama, there is a potential for introducing psychoanalytic approaches to religion, but I tend to focus on the personal search for meaning, tying that in turn to auteur theory—namely, the idea that the films of a single director represent the unique creative vision of an artist (or 'author'). I try to emphasize this filmmaker-as-artist idea because American students are utterly unfamiliar with it. If students know any directors by name, it is usually for their technical brilliance (or perhaps their skill in storytelling) and not for the personal vision they express in their work. Does *Wild Strawberries* help us understand *The Seventh Seal* and vice-versa? Is there a development in the artist's thinking? Will learning more about the director help us understand what is going on in the movies? It is hard to find discrete pieces of writing by Bergman or single interviews that are good on this front, but it is important to lecture on relevant aspects of his biography, tortured as he was by his religious background and by fundamentally religious questions. Finally, this discussion allows the introduction of the idea that art itself might play a role in the creation of meaning. What is filmmaking doing for Bergman personally? If religion serves a meaning-making function for essentially existential predicaments, can art (and movies) do the same for filmmakers and their audiences?

4) Surrealism and the Critique of Religion: Breton, *Un Chien Andalou*, and *Exterminating Angel*

This unit looks at the Surrealist movement and two of the films of Luis Buñuel. It is good to show the brilliant and historic *Un Chien Andalou* (1929, dirs. Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali) without much of an introduction, especially as it consistently provokes gasps, groans, and an averting of the eyes! Running about 16 minutes, this Surrealist classic has many shocking elements even by the standards of today's students. Indeed, one can ask in class how *Chien*'s images can be so troubling when our visual culture is awash in movie and television media images of sex and violence. Of course, shock is part of the original intention of *Un Chien Andalou*, so it is good to do the historical contextualizing after the first viewing. And with such a short movie, it is good to add a second viewing as well, after a fair amount of discussion. As part of the discussion, I like to use this film to emphasize just how radically new this film art is. *Un Chien Andalou* demonstrates that something is going on in this medium that can be found in any other form of art, and students should find a way to talk about that

fact. Of course, this film also has students wondering fairly early on what, exactly, this could have to do with religion. The connection to religion is developed with the Breton reading, the discussion of Surrealism generally, learning more about Buñuel as an artist, and watching and discussing Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel*. (To be clear, I think *Un Chien Andalou* has a great deal to do with religion in itself, considered in the way this unit suggests; it is just that the case for seeing it in that light needs to be constructed more carefully than with the films to this point.)

The reading for this unit is taken from the opening sections of André Breton's "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924). My argument in this unit has to do in part with the religious zeal of Surrealism itself, its conviction that bourgeois culture and mentality (especially the tyranny of logic) have blinded us to the freedom that is our human birthright. Even a cursory reading of the Manifesto makes this clear—Breton's argument, for example, that dreams could be used "to solve the fundamental problems of life". A page later, Breton puts the process in terms of atonement and later sums up his argument with these words: "Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life". Salvation, indeed. For Buñuel's part, the Catholic Church plays a particularly noxious role in our spiritual oppression, and he attacks Catholicism in many of his films (though often with great humor; "Thank God I'm an atheist," Buñuel was reportedly fond of saying). Through the combination of Breton and Buñuel, these films can be seen as critical of institutional religion at the same time they claim for themselves a kind of religious salvation in freeing people from the bourgeois rationality and morality that blind them to the truth (with, once again, the artist functioning as prophet). It is precisely this two-fold Surrealist project of institutional critique and human liberation that makes Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel* so powerful and interesting. It tells the strangely compelling story of Mexican aristocrats becoming inexplicably trapped at a formal dinner party. Here, the titular exterminating angel invisibly does its work of breaking down the thin veneer of social convention, uncovering, I would argue, expressions of raw religiosity beneath the surface.

5) Horror and the Holy: Rudolf Otto and *Jacob's Ladder*

The idea for this unit came from a syllabus I found on-line of a course by Francisca

Cho (a contributor to *Teaching Religion and Film*). As I remember it, she was combining Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1957) with a screening of *Carrie*. Although I had no other information to go on, I could see the potential (I have yet to be able to compare notes with Cho). Reading from Otto (chapters 1-7) allows a return to pure theory of religion—in this case, of the substantive variety. The reading can be tough going for students, so covering the material carefully in class is especially important. Put briefly, Otto emphasizes the non-rational dimensions of religious experience, the role of evocation (vs. argumentation) in religious experience, and, indeed, the methodological emphasis that theory requires experience (advising readers who lack experiences of the "numinous" to not bother reading his book). But it is really in connection to the horror genre that this theoretical model takes hold with students. Because of Otto's emphasis on the *mysterium tremendum* and experiences of dread and awe in the encounter with the 'wholly other,' a link to horror films is easily drawn. As Otto puts it: "The ghost's real attraction rather consists in this, that of itself and in an uncommon degree it entices the imagination, awakening strong interest and curiosity . . . and it does this because it is a thing that 'doesn't really exist at all,' the 'wholly other,' something which has no place in our scheme of reality but belongs to an absolutely different one, and which at the same time arouses an irrepressible interest in the mind". Otto's argument linking fear, awe, and dread to the Holy has a powerful effect on students once they start to relate it to their own visceral experiences of the same (whether in their own lives or at the movies); at a minimum, they get a good sense of how a non-propositional, non-rational understanding of religion might work.

My pairing of this text with *Jacob's Ladder* (1990, dir. Adrian Lyne) is not a perfect fit with Otto; something more firmly in the horror genre would probably work better. But the movie allows for a lot of connections to the course as a whole (including retrospectively, when we get to Buddhism) at the same time that it works with these religious claims about the horror genre. Indeed, one of the movie's themes deals directly with the idea that fear is integral to spiritual progress, that the demonic becomes angelic when we come to a deeper understanding of ourselves.

6) Buddhism and Film: *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* and the documentaries *The Tibetan Book of the Dead I & II*

This unit takes a leap to a significantly different frame of reference than the Jewish and Christian material before it. Continuing the survey approach, however, I

try to let the films teach the Buddhism that is necessary for the purposes of the class (I have significant experience teaching Buddhism but am not a specialist). I start with the two-part documentary, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Way of Life* and *The Great Liberation* (1994, dir. Barrie McLean), which focuses on the Bardo Thodol and the funerary ceremonies intended to help the deceased to a good rebirth. While introducing students to a different religious worldview, the film also creates an opportunity to talk about the documentary genre (in contrast to all of the fiction films to this point) and raises the special problem of the representation of spiritual states. The documentary uses only moderately successful animation sequences to try to represent spirit states and spiritual progress. In a fundamentally visual medium, how might a filmmaker capture what otherwise can't be seen? I don't mean this just in respect to *documenting*. As part of the challenge of thinking about the intersection of religion and film, one has to think carefully about what images can and cannot communicate, about what can and cannot be shown. Indeed—as several chapters in this volume ask—can film allow us to see things that can't be shown? If so, what does that actually mean, and how does it work? This line of thinking is in part a preparation for a later discussion of the 'transcendental style' (the argument that cinematic style can communicate the non-visual through a visual medium, or, better, that cinematic style can allow us to see in an image what the image itself does not show).

Although from an entirely different tradition of Buddhism, *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* (1989, dir. Bae Yong-Kyun) is also shown in this unit. It tells the story of a young man who comes to a Buddhist hermitage in search of enlightenment, and of his relationship to the old meditation master and the orphan boy who live there. Slowly paced and coming in at 137 minutes, *Bodhi-Dharma* can be difficult for students to watch. Like the documentary, though, it is quite possible to teach the film without necessarily doing a lot of introduction to Buddhism in the class. It is much better to build to the Buddhist insights contained in the movie from a discussion about the movie. The director himself claimed he wanted audiences to see the film without preconceived notions, adding that it was his goal to provide the audience with a vision of reality rather than the assertion of doctrines. This point is central to my use of the film, namely, the proposition that a film can be a kind of cultivation of a certain way of seeing. So, when students describe the difficulties they

have watching this movie, it is then possible to discuss what it might be about their own 'habits of seeing' and how the film might be seeing differently. Specifically, what might we take to be the message of the film, and in what ways do the cinematic techniques of the film play into that message? And, working backwards, what might we conclude about Buddhism knowing this movie is in some sense a Buddhist movie? Is this movie seeing reality differently? And might it be possible that watching this movie actually cultivates a spiritual state? This last question often leads to comparisons of 'consumable' and non-consumable art. Other discussion topics include whether or not the process of making a film can have religious dimensions (can a film be 'meditatively' made, as I would argue this one was?). Indeed, might there also be a meditative mode of film viewing? Though too sophisticated to assign as reading in an introductory class of this kind, I highly recommend Cho's article "Imagining Nothing and Imagining Otherness in Buddhist Film" (1999) for a remarkable analysis of this movie and its relationship to a more general theory of Buddhist film.

7) Filmmaker as Religious Thinker (Tarkovsky): *The Sacrifice* and *Sculpting in Time*

This unit is guided too much, perhaps, by my own admiration for Tarkovsky and his films. Though he is considered one of the true geniuses of cinema, he is not nearly as popular as even some of the art-house film directors discussed in this chapter. Still, I find students have often developed the patience by this point in the course to pay somewhat careful attention to *The Sacrifice* (1986), Tarkovsky's last film, which he completed while dying of cancer. It tells the story of an aging intellectual, Alexander, who is troubled by the spiritual state of the modern world, a world that his young son will inherit. During his sedate birthday celebration at a remote summer home, World War III breaks out, marking the beginning of a nuclear holocaust. In the eerie aftermath of the event, Alexander learns he might have the power to turn back the clock and redeem the world through personal sacrifice.

This movie, like so many of those above, could stand on its own in this kind of course. The religious tropes in this movie are abundant, and it is clear that here is an artist trying to directly address modern spiritual questions. But what makes Tarkovsky especially worth including are the meditations on cinema and spirituality found in his book *Sculpting in Time* (1986). I typically assign passages from chapters 2, 4, 7, 9, and the conclusion, emphasizing Tarkovsky's discussion of art in general: "The allotted function of art is not, as is often assumed, to put across ideas, to propagate

thoughts, to serve as example. The aim of art is to prepare a person for death, to plough and harrow his soul, rendering it capable of turning good" (43). There is a sense in which this is also the deepest layer of my pedagogy: for students to see that art can have profound purposes. Using the artist-as-prophet formulation we came across in Schleiermacher, Tarkovsky puts it this way: "Touched by a masterpiece, a person begins to hear in himself that same call of truth which prompted the artist to his creative act. When a link is established between the work and its beholder, the latter experiences a sublime, purging trauma" (43). By no means do I expect students to find this kind of experience in the Tarkovsky movie, but my sense is they have resonant experiences in their own lives (usually with music) to allow them to understand and appreciate the argument. For Tarkovsky, the mass appeal of cinema demonstrates that modern people are seeking to fill the spiritual vacuum that comes from constant activity, the curtailment of human contact, and the culture of materialism and consumerism. This unit, at a minimum, encourages students to ask if the movies they watch exaggerate modern alienation, cover it over, or provide a nourishing, if traumatic, alternative.

8) Mythic Time/Secular Time: Eliade, *The Last Wave*, and *La Jetée*

For this unit, I focus on a few specific features of Mircea Eliade's theories of religion, assigning the foreword, preface, and first chapter ("The Myths of the Modern World") from the collection *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries* (1957). First, there is the general theme of this collection of essays that there is a fundamental difference, which affects our understanding of religion between modern and traditional, or archaic, societies. After describing the mythic world of traditional society—a world circumscribed by sacred history—Eliade asks what has happened to these myths in the modern world. So the second element is the historical one, the idea that our understanding of religion may need to consider profound historical shifts. For Eliade, we have not, as human beings, lost complete touch with our archaic selves, and it is precisely the uncomfortable fit between modern society and archaic consciousness that allows his theory to function as description and criticism. The third feature has to do with our very sense of time: "It is by analyzing the attitude of the modern man towards Time that we can penetrate the disguises of his mythological behaviour" (34). This method yields two lines of inquiry for the purposes of this class. First, is it possible to understand the religious value of the content of at least some movies in terms of their

appeal to archaic consciousness and mythic modes of thinking? Of course, there are lots of movie possibilities here (and Plate's chapter in this volume addresses some formal aspects of this mythic function of film), but I like that *The Last Wave* (1977, dir. Peter Weir) builds its story around this exact theme. It tells the story of an Australian tax attorney who falls into defending five Aboriginals in a murder case. Through dreams and visions, the lawyer is pulled into the 'archaic' worldview of his clients to the point of discovering the mythic role he has to play in their drama. The story makes great connections with the Eliade material, and there is a lot to discuss about how Weir gives a cinematic sense of mythic versus secular time (Weir is also typically brilliant in his use of sound editing). The movie feels a bit dated in style, but students find it an engaging movie overall.

The second line of inquiry has to do with Eliade's arguments about *concentrated time* and *distractions* as the modern accommodation to sacred time. These concepts are useful for thinking about the cultural practices of movie-going, seeing them as both practices of concentrated time and distraction from the rigors of secular time. This discussion often leads to wider observations about the modern obsessions with sports (concentrated time) and activities like video games (the need for distraction). Furthermore, many contemporary movies have turned to thinking about time itself, in the mode of eternal return or time travel, for example, as a way into considering fundamental questions of human meaning (see *Groundhog Day*, *Twelve Monkeys*, etc.). It is as if the contemporary impotence of mythic stories and sacred history has forced the human drama onto the stage of mechanical time, of the ticking of the clock and the ceaseless progression of days. *La Jetée* (1962, dir. Chris Marker) is one of the great films in all of cinema, and it connects well with Eliade's arguments about time. Running just 28 minutes, it tells the story (using almost exclusively still-photo montage) of an apocalyptic future and of experimental attempts in an underground camp to travel back in time as a means of saving the human race (*Twelve Monkeys* is the Hollywood adaptation of this Chris Marker original story). What is remarkable about this story is precisely the attempt to use historical time itself to address issues of human meaning—I would argue that the movie is an attempt to make historical time sacred without an appeal to traditional mythic stories. As cinema, *La Jetée* is also a powerful reminder to students that cinema need not be spectacular in the usual ways in order to hold their attention; even today's students tend to be deeply engaged in this

story told with little more than black-and-white photos and voice-over narration.

9) "Transcendental Style": Paul Schrader, *Tokyo Story*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, and *Pickpocket*

There is a sense in which this unit is at the heart of the class, if only because Paul Schrader's argument in *Transcendental Style in Film* (1972) is in itself a kind of answer to the 'thesis question' of the course. Through his analyses of the style of Ozu, Bresson, and Dreyer films, Schrader argues for a particular link between the uniform filmic style found in these separate analyses and an expression of the 'Transcendent' (Schrader works with a substantive theory, and references to Otto can help with explaining Schrader's argument). Through the interplay of *the everyday*, *disparity*, and *stasis*, each filmmaker is able to express the Transcendent (not *feelings* of the transcendent but of the Transcendent itself). As Schrader puts it in one of his summary formulations: "If a viewer accepts that scene [of 'decisive action' amidst disparity]—if he finds it credible and meaningful—he accepts a good deal more. He accepts a philosophical construct which permits total disparity—deep, illogical, suprahuman feeling within a cold, unfeeling environment. In effect, he accepts a construct such as this: there exists a deep ground of compassion and awareness which man and nature can touch intermittently. This, of course, is the Transcendent". It is a remarkable argument and worth careful study.

Amazing films in their own right (and richly suggestive in the context of this course, even without Schrader's theory), I show a film from each of Schrader's three filmmakers: Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953) (though long and slow, students are often moved by this film), Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), and Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959). There are many films to choose from, of course, but these three are generally considered to be among the greatest movies ever made. This unit, then, presents the most sustained single argument of the course, working through a particular theory of religion and film by analyzing in class three of the films used in the development of the theory.

10) Sacred Canopy: Peter Berger and *Baraka*

There is always at least one or two students who come into the class as fans of *Baraka* (1992, dir. Ron Fricke), but I often wonder if the classes as a whole would like the movie as much as they usually do if it weren't for everything they had learned up to this point in the syllabus. In any event, this movie always works very well. Difficult

to describe, *Baraka* is in the mold of *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982, dir. Godfrey Reggio), for which Fricke served as a writer, and *Powaqqatsi* (1988, dir. Godfrey Reggio). It consists of sequences of stunning cinematography showing a mix of the power and beauty of nature, the effects of industry, the destruction of war, and the practice of religion (people in prayer, chanting monks, pilgrims). Again, the movie invites discussion as it stands, and, given the weeks students now have behind them in the course, the discussion can head in many different directions (it is also a great movie for discussing the cinematic technique of sound). The reading for this unit includes selections from Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* (1967). Berger's theory of religion is, of course, worth working through in its own right, and I usually end up focusing on the argument he makes about the human need to tie *nomos*, or the social order, to *cosmos*, or the order of the universe as a whole. Religion, he argues, is that attempt to project the human order onto the totality of being. Once students get a good sense of Berger's argument, it is fun to think through films from the entire course using this perspective, all the way back to the central question of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*: is the proscription against killing a reflection of a moral order writ into the very fabric of the universe, or is it only an attempt to give a social utility a 'sacred canopy'? With respect to *Baraka* specifically, Berger gives students a language for critically evaluating the apparent impact of the movie, namely, the sense of a sacred order, which can in part be found in nature, and to which we seem to be trying to relate. But does the film's emphasis on a kind of unifying sensibility run roughshod over the importance of difference in thinking about the many provocative images it shows? Can a kind of generalized 'sacred canopy' work, or do 'sacred canopies' have to run deep, in a way that puts them at odds with each other?

SUMMING UP

By way of concluding the class, I ask students to consider the same question that is at the core of this volume: what are the many ways religion and film can intersect? Recalling to their minds our initial consideration of the concepts of religion and film, we explore together the many different points of contact we have experienced and considered along the way. This discussion eventually settles into four different categories: 1) film as both vehicle and subject of particular theological perspectives (that is to say, both film as expressly incorporating theological perspectives and

theological perspectives that take film as their subject matter); 2) theories of religion as tools for understanding certain films, and vice versa; 3) film as vehicle of modern cultural values and therefore religious in the sense of creating meaning and guiding the conduct of life; 4) and, finally, the thesis proposition of the class, that film is a distinctive medium and therefore must make possible unique forms of religious expression and experience.

Inoue Thank you. Then Professor Yamanaka, please comment on the discussion by Professor Watkins.

Yamanaka Professor Watkins's paper is very informative and intriguing, especially when we consider how we can use film in teaching religion. Recently many people have come to think that film is a very useful medium to teach religion, partly because it can provide a visual image of religion for young students who are very sensitive to visual images.

For most of my career, I have studied religion as it changes in contemporary society from a sociological point of view. And tourism, rather than film, interests me more and more lately. This is because tourism, particular travel to religious sites (perhaps, we could call it a form of "pilgrimage"), is an interesting issue, when we analyze contemporary religion. In this sense, I'm not sure I am qualified to comment on his argument. In addition I have to confess that I've watched just only two or three of the films he mentioned in his paper.

However, that doesn't mean I am not interested in film and religion. On the contrary, film, specifically animation, has been one of my favorite academic topics for a long time. I've written several papers on Miyazaki's animation films from a sociological perspective. Certainly Prof. Watkins' perspective is different from mine. I would say that my standpoint would be located in the third point he mentioned in his summary part of the paper that is, "film as vehicle of modern cultural values and therefore religious in the sense of creating meaning and guiding the conduct of life." (Anyway, I guess that I was asked to make a comment on Prof. Watkins's paper because of my academic papers on this topic.)

Now, I'd like to point out two significant issues in his paper.

that film arts might give us unique forms of religious expression and experience.
Are you saying that either film itself might be a form of a certain kind of religious expression and experience, or through viewing some excellent film arts we might be able to have a certain kind of religious experience? If the latter is your opinion, do you think would it be possible for film to give us a sort of alternative "salvation" apart from traditional religion in contemporary society?

The second question is for the audience:
When we teach religion in our classes, is it possible to apply his model? If possible, what problems might we face in adapting it? I think this provides us with a good opportunity to discuss the possibility of applying Prof. Watkins's model to a Japanese academic context.