Stephen Snyder
Boğaziçi University
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7523-4571

An Image of Power in Transition:
St. George Slaying Diocletian and the War of Images

Abstract:

This essay discusses the mounted image of St. George slaying an emperor within the broader context of how and why early Christian images were transformed and adapted to the early Byzantine religious style. The representational framework of Arthur Danto's philosophical system is used to tie together the threads of this research. By drawing parallels between changes in contemporary art and culture – often referred to as the modern/postmodern shift – and the transition of the Hellenistic to the Byzantine era, structures common to artistic creation and reception are brought to the fore. The case study presents the history of the depiction of St. George slaying Diocletian, how it emerged in the Caucasus region, and the manner in which it reflects the stylistic changes that took place in the late antique eastern Roman world. The social, cultural and philosophical ramifications of the shift of high classical art to the early Byzantine style are laid out in terms of art, modes of inquiry, and action-orientation. A theory is presented on what role the image of St. George killing Diocletian may have played in transforming the late antique and early medieval worldview. The final section sketches a philosophical framework that supports the conclusions of this research.

Keywords:

Arthur Danto, early Christian art, Byzantine art, Georgian sculpture, action-orientation, worldview, transformation

At some point, we may have found ourselves in a situation in which it seems as if the people with whom we live and work, though we all speak the same tongue, are speaking another language. This reflects the reality that the political divisions we experience in our world today make palpable the different reference systems, or perspectives, that underlie our words. Such a change in reference was evident in the shift from the late antique to the early medieval world. This shift could be noted in the Greek language. It was not so much the words of the language that had changed with the passing of the Hellenistic world; there was a change in how words were used; the point of reference was different. An example of this shift in reference is found in Roman law. The Roman legal code of third-century jurist Ulpian was more or less the same as that of Justinian's great jurist Tribonian, who reworked sixth-century Roman law. But the orientation, in some cases, was shockingly different. Classicist Clifford Ando writes that torture in the courtroom was allowed under both versions of Roman law. But in the third century, the aim of torture would have been to elicit information. In the sixth century, the purpose would have been to set one right with God. The contrasting action-expectations of third and sixth-century legal practices exhibit a clash of worlds, and it is evident that some versions of these competing worldviews are still in conflict today. Without understanding this contrast, democracies around the world may continue to struggle.

This essay presents a framework through which the *clash of worlds* can be understood using Arthur Danto's representational philosophy.[1] Known mostly for his aesthetic and narrative philosophies, Danto's system is underwritten by the idea that fundamentally, humans are embodied representations. As representations, we manifest a way of seeing the world, a property which, he argues, we share at the most basic level with artistic images. Danto's theory suggests that a clash of worlds is experienced in the changing perspectives of eras past or present, or, pertaining to contemporary culture, the all-too-prominent culture wars. It is also incarnated stylistically in the images that humans create. Danto argues that images have a very real power, and this is why political leaders have always been weary of art's power, often resorting to artistic censorship. Danto's writings on the end of art trace the passage of art's narrative from what he refers to as the "era of art" to "post-history."[2] In this transition, the style of the era of representational art – the era defined by the questions of *what art is* – is superseded by a form of art which asks the question *why is this art?* The struggle of one style of art to over-come the problems of the previous era – for Danto a progression of artistic narratives – climaxed in what Danto

---

1) Arthur Danto is by no means the only thinker who has addressed the issue of art's morphological changes and how they relate to changing epochs. Erwin Panofsky, and alumni of the Warburg Institute such as Ernst Gombrich, carried out significant studies on the issue. Danto, however, develops the topic first and foremost from a philosophical perspective. He speaks directly to Panofsky's position. Panofsky's argument comes close to Danto's insofar as he sees the underlying elements of a cultural system as manifest in a particular cultural form. However, as Danto reads Panofsky, there is no development which links the symbolic forms. In this sense, as I understand Danto's reading, the interpretability of artworks across the epochs would be lost. It is the interpretable structure imprinted in our world that allows interpretation, and it is not a merely a symbolic style of "organizing space." See Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 65. Gombrich also observes in the process of artistic creation different developmental levels that emerge regardless of the precise historical circumstance. In this sense, the continuity with the past is not broken. To explain the change of artistic style that occurred with the shift from modernism to postmodernism, Gombrich's theoretical account of artistic development focused on an explanation of how artists react in terms of artistic practice. Referring to the study of the "relation between objective 'iconicity' and psychological projection," Gombrich speculates that "what has been called the history of 'seeing' is really the history of a learning process through which a socially coherent public was trained by the artist to respond in a given manner to certain abbreviated signs." See Gombrich's Review of Charles Morris, *Signs, Language and Behavior*, cited in Richard Woodfield, "Ernst Gombrich: Iconology and the 'Linguistics of the Image'," *Journal of Art Historiography* 5 (2011): 1–25. See Stephen Snyder, *The End-of-Art Philosophy in Hegel, Nietzsche and Danto* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 215–226.

2) See Arthur C. Danto, "The End of Art" in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) and Danto, *After the End of Art*.

referred to as "the end of art." Regarding the art of the late antique world, Thomas Mathews argues that there is an actual "war" being carried out through the images, and that the powerful new artistic style of the early Byzantine world was the vivification of the cultural struggle occurring between the classical pagan world and the newly empowered Christians.[3] The new style also solved a number of problems which existed in the stylistic choices of the preceding era.[4]

The opposition of worldviews and the expectations that a specific perspective imposes a system of beliefs and the expectation of a certain action-orientation is manifest in the unique image of St. George slaying Diocletian. The image of St. George and the slain emperor is the focus of this study. Using examples from art history that underscore how depictions of power manifest the worldviews of different eras, I trace the transformation of emblems of power that occurred as the classical worldview gave way to the new Christian perspective. Danto's philosophical framework provides theoretical support for Mathews' claim that a "war of images" was carried out among the competing forms of late antique art. Danto frequently writes of what he perceives to be a clash of "worlds."[5] For Danto, each era and culture has a *world*: a point of view that peoples of different eras and societies adopt without awareness. It is the unique way that they define reality. As members of a specific culture in a given historical period, we are not aware that our *world* is merely a *representation* of what the world in actuality is. In Danto's eyes, our representation of our *world* by and large defines who we are. The *world* representation is a set of beliefs with a sentential structure that exists in art, in literature, and enfleshed in the human person. This perspective does not determine us in a hard sense; we still possess *metaphysical* freedom. But our choices are determined more from "representational causality" than laws of nature.[6]

Style, as I use the term here, builds on Danto's definition of the term. For Danto, it is through their style that artists are able to embody in their art the meanings manifest in history. This is because the style of the person is in part derived from the style of history.

> In art particularly, it is this external physiognomy of an inner system of representation that I wish to claim style refers to. Of course we speak as well of the style of a period or a culture, but this will refer us ultimately to shared representational modes which define what it is to belong to a period.[7]

Thus, the artist's style manifests a representation of a world that is both individual and cultural. The artist's style is imperceptible to them. It is, nonetheless, visible to others, and through the beholder's interpretation of the externalization of the artist's inner-world, artworks are actualized, so to speak. Though for Danto, artists are unaware of their style, the rhetoric-like effects of the artist's metaphor plays out in the layer of what Danto refers to as the "artworld."[8] In the quasi-independent realm of the artworld, the artist's style is inter-

---

3) Thomas Mathews, *Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 10.

4) For a discussion of how art's problem solving capacities are at play in contemporary art see Snyder, *The End-of-Art Philosophy*, 238–262.

5) Danto uses the word "world" differently in different contexts. Here, I will italicize *world* when it means a *representation* of the actual world. It is the world that humans internalize and hold to be "true," though in fact it could be otherwise. I will refer to the actual world without italics. Italicized, *world* will be a representation *of* world. A *world* representation, as I use it, will also refer to the representation *of* the (actual) world.

6) Arthur C. Danto, *Connections to the World: The Basic Concepts of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 272.

7) Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 205.

8) Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571–584, https://doi.org/10.2307/2022937.

preted according to the parameters set by the perspectives of one's world. The effectiveness of the artwork depends on the illocutionary power or rules of the structures upon which the representation is based, but it is not bound to the structures embodied within the artwork in the same way; thus, artworks achieve some level of independence.[9] Danto's philosophical system recognizes this independent power of art. But despite having sketched out this attribute of artistic power, Danto does not acknowledge in it the power of critical reflection. Insofar as I recognize the reciprocal power of critical reflection in art, I push my definition of style further than Danto's.

In regard to the *world* imprinted on our style, we cannot fully step out of our perspective without some *transformation*, which even then is limited. Nor can we directly perceive or intuit our *world*, though we can perceive the *worlds* of others, if they are not the same as our own. Without explicitly intuiting their *world*, it becomes part of the work of artists. By transitivity, through her style, the artist puts the perspective of her world in her work. This transitive property gives the work a perspective which is action-orienting. Art, in this sense, has a kind of "rhetorical" agency of its own.[10] The clash of *worlds* is what allows the orator to sway the people of a given *world*. It is the rhetorical power, or even agency, of art that drives the "war of images" discussed below.

The cultural shifts that occurred as the pagan, classical world of Hellenism transformed into the Christian world of late antiquity – roughly the third to the eighth centuries – are many. The transformations affected politics, religion, a self-understanding in terms of how one fits into the world, legal and social institutions, philosophy, art, magic, ritual and even chance. This list is not exhaustive, and though the topic has been studied extensively, no single explanation has adequately addressed the breadth of these changes. In *The Clash of Gods*, Mathews writes, "The Christian world-view involved not just a re-definition of God, but a redefinition of man's relationship to the physical universe."[11] Agreeing with Mathews, my study of the image of St. George slaying Diocletian focuses primarily on how the change in "worldview" and the understanding of the self is reflected in the art that was used to help bring about these changes in the populace of the Eastern Mediterranean world.[12] In particular, I aim to show how structures common to artworks and their beholders effect change reciprocally, and how the new style solved a problem for the Christian viewers of late antiquity.

This essay is divided into three sections. First, I layout the historical background and the social, cultural and philosophical implications the shift of high classical art to the early Byzantine style, discussing a) the story of St. George killing Diocletian, b) the emergence of a "conceptualized" style of religious image-making that met the needs of the populace and the criteria of the theologians, c) the Arch of Constantine and how the emergence of a new style can manifest a form of resistance, d) an analysis of two perspectives relating to how one understands one's role in the world – orthopraxy vs. orthodoxy – and e) how the action-orientation of a worldview affects depictions of imperial power. Second, I elaborate on the role the image of St. George killing of Diocletian may have played in transforming the late antique early medieval worldview, making it more amenable to Christianity. Finally, I sketch a philosophical framework which supports the conclusions of this research.

---

9) See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures,* trans. Frederick G. Lawrence, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 202–203. Also see Snyder, *The End-of-Art Philosophy*, 260–267.

10) Arthur C. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 176–182. For a comprehensive discussion of Danto's notion of *world* and agency in art, see Snyder, *The End-of-Art Philosophy*, chapter 4; Stephen Snyder, "Artistic Conversations: Artworks and Personhood," *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 19, 56 (2019): 229–248.

11) Matthews, *Clash of Gods*, 149.

1. A Brief History of the Image of the Holy Rider

The image of St. George slaying the dragon, which became common around the eleventh century, is well-known throughout much of the world. The image shows the saint on horseback slaying a dragon with a spear. This portrays St. George as the protector of the weak, shielding them from the symbolic threat of the dragon or monster. Over the centuries, the rider slaying the serpent or dragon has become a "universal" apotropaic image. Nonetheless, images of holy riders existed long before the emergence of the medieval image of St. George and the dragon with which modern viewers would be familiar (figure 1).

This essay focuses on how early Christian images were transformed into the early Byzantine religious style. In the process of this transformation of *worlds*, new meanings emerged as the early Christian and Hellenistic imagery formed the style of the new Christian empire. The image of mounted men spearing opponents is almost universal, and can be found well before the Christian era. However, several examples stand out that can be seen as the forerunners of the form the later image will take. These examples could show a connection between the pre-iconoclastic image of St. George and the early medieval depiction that became a central motif in eastern Mediterranean religious art. The rider was seen in magic gemstones such as Solomon's Seal, a ring said to have the power to dispel demons (figure 2). The power to dispel demons was thought to be essential to the holy rider's early form.[13] The fourth century image of Horus, mounted and spearing a crocodile, is also thought by some to be a precursor to the image of St. George spearing a man or serpent (figure 3).

St. Sisinious may be one of the first named saints to take on the magical power of Solomon's Seal (figure 4). Pre-iconoclasm, the saint's "magic" was seen in household objects used to repel demons.[14] The Church adopted the post-iconoclasm image of St. George slaying Diocletian as part of its ecclesiastic program. In this form it would be used to request intercession, rather than protection from magic. Images of Christian saints on horses spearing dragons date back to the sixth and seventh centuries; nonetheless, the earliest images of St. George, depicted on the sixth-century chalices of the Syrian Attarouthi Treasure, display a standing George spearing a serpent (figures 5–6). Interestingly, one of the images shows George spearing a serpent with a man's head, indicating a connection of the serpent to a specific individual, likely an unpopular ruler.

a)   Saint George and Diocletian

A majority of the earliest images of St. George depict him spearing a man usually identified as Emperor Diocletian. According to historical accounts, it was Diocletian who had George put to death. A relief from the Martvili Monastery in Georgia is perhaps the earliest known depiction of St. George slaying Diocletian. It imparts to the viewer that the transition to the Christian world will be accompanied by a superior form of protection (figure 7). St. George, said to be the cousin of St. Nino, who led the Georgians to Christianity, has a deeply rooted Georgian identity. Though for the most part specific to (early) medieval Georgia, images of the martyred saint returning to this world to depose of an emperor are also found outside of Georgia, for the most part in areas that were outside the borders of the late antique Eastern Roman Christian world: in the Caucasus, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and as far south as Ethiopia. The warrior saints Theodore, Demetrius, and Mercurius share a similar hagiography. According to legend, each saint was martyred, and then called from the "afterlife" to slay an unpopular person. This Old Testament passage foreshadows this form of protection, which, through resurrection, is availed to those who put faith not in *this world* but in the *other world*: "So when he was ready

---

13) Oya Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia," *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004), 152, https://doi.org/10.2307/25067102.

14) Ibid., 152–153.

to die he said thus, It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be raised up again by him: as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life." (2 Maccabees 7:14).

b)   A New Style of Depiction

It is my conclusion that the format of this image, that manifests an otherworldly protection, even in the face of a *this worldly* defeat, is related to the change of the late Hellenistic realist style to the more symbolic style of early the Byzantine icon. It is commonly said that the late antique and medieval artists did not know how to create images that conformed to the object of representation, but the artists of the early Byzantine period clearly had the capacity to create images in a realist style.[15] They simply chose not to, and the factors involved with this choice may also have been a factor in the stylistic presentation of the image of St. George slaying Diocletian.

The stylistic choice of late antique and Byzantine artists was the result of a coordinated effort to resolve a number of problems that arose when depicting religious figures. In the third century, the patriarchs of the Church raised iconoclastic questions regarding the use of imagery, challenging the artistic style emerging through the metamorphosed classical form. The restrictions on images came from several sources, among them, the Judaic prohibition of idolatry, Platonic philosophy's concerns with mimetic representation, and the growth of the Christian populace. As Christianity grew, more converts came from the western pagan population, rather than eastern Judaic. The depiction of religious images embodied the clash of the classical and the early Christian *worlds*. A need arose to resolve this problem, and the answer was found in the formation of a new artistic style that better fit the philosophical and theological requirements of the eastern Mediterranean's new religion (figure 8).[16]

In a manner linked to the way that the Byzantine icon adopted a style contrived to represent sacred persons in a non-representational manner, the image of the warrior saint killing the man represents domination in style that is not this worldly. The early Christian *ethos* of trusting other-worldly powers in the face of the physical threats they faced from secular rulers or opposing religious groups is clearly articulated in texts and in early Christian art. The Roman *ethos* of power was often manifested publicly in the way that Christians were martyred in the arena and persecuted in daily life. In light of their disdain for the Roman glorification of physical strength, an alternative way of depicting domination would have been desirable, and useful, for the early Byzantine Christians.[17] Because of the complexity of how an *otherworldly* power is depicted, these images embody a type of dualism insofar as the style of presentation of the emperor and saint represent the domination of one worldview over another – Orthodoxy vs. Orthopraxy.[18] The depictions explored in this essay

---

15) Kitzinger argues that the choice is a political rejection of the old powers of classical Rome in favor of the images of the "sub-antique." (Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977], 12–14.) Elsner makes the case that the choice of style is a preference for the forms of art oriented toward the transformative over the visual experience. Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 26.

16) This example exhibits the stylistic shift well insofar as it uses three perspectives to show the different statuses of the divine ontology 1) Angels under the hand of God are depicted in a naturalistic manner. 2) Mary and Christ are shown as other-worldly, with eyes averted. Viewers cannot access them directly. 3) Demetrius and Theodore exhibit an other-worldly style, but with their eyes directed to the viewer. The beholders can access Mary and Christ through them.

17) Though images venerating martyrdom expressed the identity of the Empire's new religious majority, they were of questionable use to its armies and problematic for the emperor when it challenged the continuity of the state authority of Rome. See Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante-Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003). The Byzantines looked more to the Old Testament than the New. David was the ideal king, emphasizing the history of the Israelites over the peace of Christ. Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 10–11.

18) Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), xiv, 13.

exhibit a structural linkage between worldview, action-orientation, and pictorial representation. This linkage is explained by Danto's representational philosophy insofar as he views the representation as a medium embodying perspective and action-orientation in art and the person.

c)   The Arch of Constantine: Resistance through Style

Before discussing further the notion of causality in perspective, Ernst Kitzinger's account of how the "sub-antique" style of the fourth century manifests a rejection of classical realism is instructive. Kitzinger's example demonstrates that the choice of style can represent a stance toward the world and a form of political resistance. The Arch of Constantine, dedicated in 315 CE to commemorate Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge, is the largest of Rome's triumphal arches (figure 9). The arch incorporates *spoila* from other eras, using friezes made in the high classical style from the eras of Emperors Marcus Aurelius, Trajan, and Hadrian. Some historians assert that the skill to create works in the high classical style did not exist in the fourth century. But Kitzinger argues that this is not the case.[19] The friezes appropriated from the time of previous Roman emperors exhibited continuity, placing Constantine among the other great emperors of Rome. Regarding the friezes that were created in the frontal style, Kitzinger argues that the rulers of the tetrarchy, starting with Diocletian (293 CE), opposed the senatorial class of Rome, who represented more closely the classical ideal of optical fidelity.[20] The reliefs appropriated from the classical period exhibited a realistic style. They were window-like, presenting a scene that one might step into. The figures in these scenes had no interaction with the audience; they are portrayed as if the audience did not exist (figure 10). The "sub-antique" style was articulated with less refinement, but it gained in depth and the ability to carry expression. The *enface*, or frontal, style of the "sub-antique" art gave it an expressive power (figure 11). Kitzinger claims that this stylistic choice was not arbitrary; there must have been a preexisting class of people to whom the "sub-antique" style appealed. Their "submerged" existence came to light through this form of expression: "One thing is certain: here, too, the sub-antique style became the vehicle of a message which the traditional classical vocabulary could not have conveyed with anything like the same directness and palpability."[21] This rejection indicates a choice of perspective, the choice of one *world* over another. The choice implies a form of political resistance that the art of the high classical *world* could not articulate.

d)   Representations of Divine Causality: Orthopraxy vs. Orthodoxy

In this section several examples are presented that identify how natural and divine causality are depicted in artworks, emphasizing how gods or God and men are related in terms of different causalities. The manner in which causality is depicted changes along with a people's understanding of their relation to the world, and this shift is of philosophical interest. In classical times, for example, the visual arts portrayed mortals and immortals on the same natural spectrum (figure 12). Though divinities were clearly at the upper end of the scale, divine interventions are shown to originate in the same world, or a single system of nature (figure 13). In late antique and medieval religious art, the monotheistic God lies in a separate world. Divine intervention is often depicted using the hand of God or a dove, indicating the *cause* is not of this world (figures 14 and 15). It is not a leap to say that our notion of causality is linked to how we relate to and act in the world. The notion that causality is embedded in one's worldview – one's *world* – has some bearing on actions when expressed in artistic perspective.

---

19) Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, 35.

20) Ibid., 11–15.

21) Ibid.,13.

Kitzinger's discussion of the Arch of Constantine demonstrates that a choice of style can embody a form of political resistance. The "war of images" Kitzinger alludes to provides insight into how stylistic preference was related to cultural consciousness in the Eastern Roman world. The images of the classical *world* emblemized the values of strength and conquest, while those of the early Christians showed that if their relation to God was correct, neither fire nor beasts could harm the souls of believers. The aesthetic forms established in Byzantine art transformed how viewers understood the truth. *Orthopraxy*, the mode of aesthetic production in classical antiquity, parallels a social organization aimed at empirically verifiable manifestations *in the natural world* of the higher truth, or correct performance. In Byzantine times, political structures and textual descriptions mirror the production of art *to match religious dogma*: *orthodoxy*, or correct belief. Each of these perspectives, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, in some manner affects the action-orientation of those holding them. Of interest here are the consequences for artistic creation, inquiry and social practices when the monotheistic notion of an active God, fundamentally different in nature from its creation, is plugged into a neoplatonic worldview in which the divine is passive. In the classical understanding of the cosmos, though all things depend upon the highest level of being (the One, the Form of the Good), all of existence still lies on a continuum with the natural world (figure 16). A shift away from the trial and error process of reaching the truth, whether as a form of inquiry or in pictorial representation, occurs with the Abrahamic notion of God. Faith is the way to truth, so the prototype is revealed through a change in attitude, not in acquisition of worldly knowledge. (Illusionistic and fallible sense data could conflict with correct belief.)

The new worldview that emerged from the early Christian experience was one of martyrs whose comportment was toward the *right* relationship to the Christian God and church community. The classical Roman worldview was articulated empirically through a give and take relationship with external reality. In art, the empirical stance led to more accurate forms of visual representation (figure 17). Culturally, the Romans believed that the probability of receiving the favor of the gods could be increased by adjusting the ritual process. Ando writes that early commentaries on the Roman religion often assess it in terms of lack of "faith." However, Ando argues that this assessment does not accurately reflect the Roman *religio*, for the Romans did not have faith as Christians knew it.[22] The Christian notion of faith is orthodoxy, or correct belief. On the other hand, according to Ando, pagan Romans believed they had knowledge, albeit indirect, of their gods. For them, correct action, or orthopraxy, was of primary importance.[23]

The Roman religious practice, Ando continues, did not ritualize a narrative of the past in order to keep it alive for cultural reproduction. The aim of their rituals was to ask specific things of the gods, to which Romans believed they were entitled because of their worship. They engaged in an *ongoing* empirical process that sought to correct or change rituals when they appeared ineffective; thus, the Romans felt they could *know* what the gods wanted and how to interact with them.[24] If the Romans had a myth, it was based on current and past history because its narrative was adapted based on historical response to the ritual: accurate historical record was not the primary aim. In Ando's estimation, this worldview was unable to absorb the sack of Rome. Though the Christian worldview was less flexible, worldly events did little to alter the faith relationship.[25] In Ando's eyes,

---

22) Ando, *Matter of the Gods,* ix–xi, xvii, 3–5

23) Ibid., xiv, 13.

24) Ibid., 13–15.

25) Ibid., xvii. Foucault writes on the differing worldviews of the pagans and the Christians. In the Greek tradition, submission to the teacher was dependent on the achievement of knowledge. With the Christian relationship of the pastorate to flock, it is the relationship itself that is important.:"There is another transformation – maybe the most important. All those Christian techniques of examination, confession, guidance, obedience, have an aim: to get individuals to work at their own 'mortification' in this world. Mortification is not death, of course, but it is a renunciation of this world and of oneself: a kind of everyday death. A death which is supposed to provide

an example of this difference is exhibited in the changing legal practices of the Roman world. Though Ulpian's (170–223 CE) legal code was in many ways equivalent to Tribonian's (500–547? CE), the difference in mindset is seen in the attitude taken toward torture in the courtroom. In the Christian and pagan courts, public torture could be used to further the case of the prosecution. While the point of torture in the pagan court was to elicit a truthful statement from the defendant, bringing to light some *fact in the world*, the Christian court employed torture to convert, or make the accused *right with God*.[26]

The relationship of the individual to the divine, which differentiates the epistemic worldview common in the second sophisticate (late first century to early third) from that of late antiquity, is seen when examining how classical pagan and early Christian art was created. In the case of the classical Greek and Roman relationship to art, the drive for optical fidelity was not merely a style. The artistic aim of achieving similarity with the object represented entails a progressive learning process resulting in knowledge of how to create depictions that tricked the eye.[27] In the classical age (particularly the Greek), achieving empirical perfection was linked to formal perfection. Some philosophers, Plato in particular, held that such a direct link was impossible. Nonetheless, the depiction achieved its visual resemblance to the object it represents by sharing in its formal attributes. This implies two things. First, the more accurately represented object has achieved a higher degree of formal participation; thus, it is closer to the divine. Second, the formal properties, the divine, are achievable through a learning process. Though in *Republic*, Plato denied that artists could achieve this through mimetic art, he did believe that philosophers could attain knowledge of the Forms and could become "godlike" in their knowledge (383c).[28] Achieving divine knowledge, directly or indirectly, was a possibility for those who held the classical worldview. Similarly, for the Romans, the trial and error ritual process led, through sacrifice, to something akin to knowledge of the Gods.

The message of early Christian art, which was infused into pictographic forms adopted from the classical world reflected a different *world*; it indicated that the relationship to the divine was of primary importance. The stories of Daniel and Jonah told those who saw meaning in their depiction not to expect anything this worldly for their sacrifice. They would be safe in their relationship to God if they held to their faith with the correct attitude. Little is known of the Christian art of the first and second centuries. However, in the third century, distinct patterns emerge that allow differentiation from the images of classical Rome. At this point, it is clear that the Judaic condemnation of idol worship is combined with neoplatonic arguments against mimetic representation.

Images were used by the early Christian community, but records show that certain forms of image-making were discouraged.[29] Images that directly depicted Jesus or the saints were eschewed. Direct depiction could be considered idolatry; it was the universal God that was to be worshiped, not the particular saint, especially not a particular image of a saint. As well, images that were mimetic, following Platonic critiques, could result in

---

life in another world. This is not the first time we see the shepherd theme associated with death; but here it is other than in the Greek idea of political power. It is not a sacrifice for the city; Christian mortification is a kind of relation from oneself to oneself. It is a part, a constitutive part of the Christian self-identity." See Michel Foucault, *Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason*, "The Tanner Lectures on Human Values," delivered at Stanford University, October 10 and 16, 1979.

26) Ando, *Matter of the Gods*, 70. See Angelo di Berardino, "Christian Liturgical Time and Torture (Cod. Theod. 9,35,4 and 5)," *Augustinianum* 51, no. 1 (2011): 191–220, https://doi.org/10.5840/agstm20115119. Here, the suspension during Lent of trials which would result in torture in the reign of Theodosius is discussed.

27) Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2002).

28) See Plato's discussion of gaining knowledge in Books 6 and 7 of *Republic*.

29) See Snyder, *Ante-Pacem* and Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312–1453* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

a deception, causing the viewer to confuse the real divinity (reality in the Platonic sense) with the image.[30] The solution stipulated that images acceptable for religious use could be either narrative, showing a history and not something to be venerated, or should present the divine in such a way that they could not be confused with the *real* (figure 18). Thus, a style emerged that represented the divine in a non-particular way, lacking dimension and weight, shown in a nimbus or in a manner that could not confuse the eye.[31]

The prohibition of images prevalent in the east seemed to form a compromise with the image-rich west when the Christian population shifted from a predominantly Judaic church to a heathen church.[32] As the creation of images became a topic of significance in the early church, the theoretical provenance, and hence the manner of creation, also shifted. As mentioned above, the classical tradition sought to produce an image that was distinct from the object it represented.[33] Whether it was a copy of something in nature, an object, an animal, a human or a divinity, the depiction could be assessed based on how well it was able to manifest the formal properties in which it participated. This represented a learning process, and left room for the will of the artist in the image's making. It also indicated that the formal *object* existed on a continuum with the maker's object. In neoplatonic thought, there is no decisive break between the objects in the world and the One; it is just a matter of degree. In the monotheistic traditions, there is a critical *break between the creator and the created*.[34] Metaphysically speaking, what is copied is *fundamentally different from the copy*. In the post-classical tradition, the process of creation cannot be mimetic for there is no way that the divine image can be copied by any means found in the material world. Thus, the sacred image can be created only through divine dispensation. It is the creator's power that allows the artist to create the divine image in the first place. For this reason, the effort to create is not a learning process; it is simply a gift.[35] The epistemic shift from orthopraxy to orthodoxy described above does not just exhibit different action-orientations in terms of how art is created and viewed; it also demonstrates the different rationales with which one approaches the world. Each *world* embodies what Danto referred to as "representational causality," which directs the choices of people based on their historical narrative more than objective causality.[36]

e)   Depictions of Imperial Power

Though the Roman Empire was radically changed by the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, the cult of the emperor was one of the sacred institutions that remained. In the pagan era, the Romans allowed a plurality of gods. The new gods of conquered territories were taken into the pantheon through legal and ritual means. Roman religion had, in essence, become secular, and the Roman emperor was the one element bringing political unity to this plurality.[37] Toleration was the rule during the second sophisticate; the only sects not tolerated were those intolerant of the plurality. These groups, who would not accept the cult of the emperor, were

---

30) Ernst Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* (New York: Phaidon, 1985), 6–8.

31) See Robin Jensen, *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 26–28. In some manner, this approach reflects the response to Plato's criticism of mimetic art presented by Aristotle in *Poetics*.

32) Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7.

33) John Beckwith, *The Art of Constantinople* (London: Phaidon Press, 1961), 47–48.

34) I.P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Philosophy of Icons," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967). Joseph Margolis, "Medieval Aesthetics," in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes (New York: Routledge, 2005).

35) Sheldon-Williams, "The Philosophy of Icons."

36) Danto, *Connections to the World*.

37) See Ando, *Matter of the Gods*, 97;Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 43.

the Christians and the Jews. This intolerance of other religions was the major cause for their persecution.[38] As the Christian population grew, their refusal to recognize the sacred status of the Emperor became a significant problem, and persecutions hit a peak under the rule of Diocletian. When Constantine embraced Christianity as the preferred religion of the state, he reasserted the unifying role of the emperor declaring himself to be Christ's representative on earth. The earliest depictions of the Christian emperors place them in consort with or in likeness of the gods (figures 19 & 20).[39] But this mode of depiction did not sit well in the new Roman *world* in which men were connected to divinity only through their faith. Over time, the image of the emperor was to be shown under the command of Christ as a lesser prototype of a divine image (figure 21). The imperial style of Constantinople increasingly used Christ's emblem to show not only the emperor's authority but the emperor's *right relationship* to the divine. The plurality of religions disappeared, and the unifying presence of the emperor for the Empire could only succeed if it was subsumed under the singular command of Christ.[40] From a theological perspective, the singular image of Christ served well as the premier earthly prototype. The emperor only needed to be second to Him. Still, the statue of an emperor, if made in the realist style, was said to be vulnerable. Unlike the emperor, a saint portrayed in the otherworldly style was thought to be invulnerable.[41] Because of this, how the emperor was depicted and who depicted the emperor became a crucial matter of social and political control. Ultimately, the possession of the divine revelation, which gave one the mystical power to create the icons, could not be controlled. Because of this, the emperor's image was open to challenge from unauthorized sources, such as the hermits or mystics who fashioned icons possessing magical powers outside of church or state purview.[42]

2. Images of St. George Slaying Diocletian and the Early Christian Magic Scenes

In the pages that follow, I focus on the dualism exhibited when images of the warrior saints are integrated into Old Testament narrative scenes. This, I surmise, was done to show the beholder that one is still protected as the naturalistic understanding of the cosmos is transformed into a two-worlds understanding. Placing the protective images of George and other warrior saints together with Old Testament scenes implies that those who subscribe to the new monotheistic worldview will, through resurrection, be protected by a more powerful form of magic.[43] It shows the domination of one *world* over another, using a style designed to be unique to the new Christian *world*.

a)   Christ Not Depicted as Emperor in Early Christian Art
In *The Clash of Gods,* Mathews presents a convincing argument that those holding Christ to be depicted in the style of an emperor are mistaken. Briefly, he makes the case that the motifs used – Christ enthroned, Christ as Pantocrator, Christ as teacher, and Christ in procession – are not imperial (figures 22 & 23). He shows that

---

38) Jaś Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire A.D. 100–450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 211.

39) See Snyder, *Ante-Pacem*; Beckwith, *The Art of Constantinople*. The Christ Helios mosaic in the necropolis under St. Peter's Basilica depicts Christ himself as the sun-god.

40) See images on ivory and coin, Beckwith, *The Art of Constantinople*, 32, 34, 38, 40; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 164–167.

41) Anthony Eastmond, "Between Icon and Idol: The Uncertainty of Imperial Images," in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, eds.. Anthony Eastmond and Liz James. (Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2003).

42) See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 41–46; Beckwith, *The Art of Constantinople*, 55–56.

43) Matthews, *Clash of Gods*, 65–67.

a) the throne upon which Christ is depicted is not the throne used to depict an emperor (*sella curulis*), though it is often used when representing the gods; b) Christ depicted as the bearded Pantocrator resembles more Zeus or Sarapis than an emperor; c) Christ's dress resembles more closely the philosopher than an emperor; and d) the procession, though certainly an imperial function, was also used by common folk. In fact, Christ entering Jerusalem could not be an imperial depiction because Christ is riding side-saddle on an ass.[44]

Rejecting the widely held claim that Christ was pictured as an emperor in early Christian art, Mathews shows that the one motif tying nearly all of the early Christian art together is that of the miracle scenes, which he refers to as "magic." There is no place for the pacifistic, non-military and non-imperial miracle scenes in imperial imagery.[45] Numerically speaking, Mathews contends that miracle scenes are the most prevalent of all. These miracle scenes are often mixed with Old Testament miracle or magic narratives, which, according to Mathews, show the continuity of the powers of the Old Testament tradition with the new movement. Mathews argues that magic powers were commonly contested in the first centuries after Christ. One of the greatest powers of the pagan gods was magic, and for Christ the miracle worker, the resurrection was his greatest magic trick (figure 24). In coming back to life, he bested the powers of Rome and Judea that condemned him.[46]

A list of frequently employed scenes that represented a transformation, resurrection, or depicted the power of Christ's magic in early Christian art would include the following:

Transformation
- Christ entering Jerusalem
- Crucifixion
- Adam and Eve
- Baptism

Old Testament "Magic"
- Moses and the burning bush/Ten Commandments
- Jonah and the whale (*ketos*)
- Abraham sacrificing Isaac
- Daniel and the lion's den
- Sampson and the lion

Christ's Magic (Miracles)
- Resurrection of Lazarus
- Water to wine/multiplying loaves and fishes
- Healing the sick (blind, possessed, paralytic, hemorrhaging woman)

The images I referred to in this section show numerous examples of Christ working miracles or bringing transformation in early Christian art. The gold glass bowl (figure 25) depicts three scenes in which Christ is performing miracles with a wand: the three young men in the fiery furnace, the wine miracle, and the cure of the paralytic. What is most interesting in this fourth century artifact is the image of Christ performing the saving miracle on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, which is an Old Testament story.

---

44) Ibid., 39–46, 98–111.

45) Ibid., 54–61.

46) Ibid., 91.

In this depiction, Christ's magic is connected to the magic of the Hebrew tradition. This motif is often seen in early Christian art when Old Testament miracles, or magic, are reinterpreted in light of the transformative power of Christ. Figures 26–32 are just a few of the numerous examples of Old Testament stories represented alongside scenes from the life of Christ on third- and fourth-century sarcophagi.[47]

b)   St. George in Narrative Sequences Depicting Miracles

After the fifth century, the images of Christ's miracles appear far less frequently. Thus, it is of interest that these images were used with far greater frequency in the Christian East, particularly in the Caucasus. It is of particular interest to this study that as late as the eleventh century images used during the early Christian period were placed together with St. George and St. Theodore in Georgian and Armenian art. Though Walter notes that the first firmly dated and identified version of a mounted St. George spearing a man is on the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on Akdamar Island, there are numerous earlier examples of Georgian depictions identified as St. George slaying Diocletian.[48] The earliest example is found at the Martvili Monastery (figures 33–35). The narrative sequence on the western projection of the Martvili-Chkondidi Cathedral dates to the seventh century. The sequence depicts St. George spearing Diocletian, Samson and the lion, two riders spearing a two-headed serpent, Christ's ascension, and Daniel in the lion's den. On the eastern facade is a hunting scene that likely depicts St. Eustathios. St. Eustathios is a warrior saint martyred by Emperor Hadrian, often shown mounted and hunting, who is seen as a transformative figure.[49] The Tsebelda chancel-barrier is another example of seventh or early eighth century relief sculpture. The narrative sequence, in a carpet-like arrangement, presents images depicting the themes of "Redeeming Sacrifice and Resurrection, Second Coming and Salvation of the Mankind."[50] The chancel-barrier is broken into two pieces with some parts lost. One fragment includes images of Christ's crucifixion, Mary at Christ's tomb, Christ's baptism, the sacrifice of Isaac, the crucifixion of St. Peter, and St. Eustathios hunting (figure 36). The other depicts St. Theodore spearing a serpent and St. George spearing a man, Daniel in the lion's den, and Mary with Jesus as a child (figure 37). The reliefs framing a chancel window at the St. George Church in Joisubani, dating to the tenth century, depict another narrative sequence that includes the Old Testament themes of salvation and redemption together with the warrior saints. The reliefs show, from top down, the image of Christ enthroned with Peter and Paul, directly below are scenes of the last judgment, at bottom, on either side of the window, are two riders, St. Theodore spearing a serpent, and St. George spearing a man, presumed to be Diocletian. Below the window are two reliefs, now lost, of Jonah and the whale and Daniel and the lion's den (figure 38).

The tenth century Church of the Holy Cross on Aght'amar Island in Eastern Turkey provides some of the most stunning examples of Old Testament miracle scenes of which I am aware. Though these reliefs were created much later than those of Tsebelda and Martvili, their design may have an earlier provenance. The historian Thomas Artsruni tells us that the Church's architect chose the model of a seventh century church for the design.[51] The Armenians' "almost reverential use of 7th c. models" is seen in the use of the images that had been

---

47) For a breakdown of scenes found on pre-Constantinian sarcophagi see Snyder, *Ante-Pacem*, 87.

48) Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 128–129.

49) On the outer walls of the Ateni Sioni Church in the central Georgian Mkhare region, there are three related reliefs: one that resembles the hunting scene of St. Eustathios, another of Samson and the lion, and Habakkuk being carried to Babylon by an angel to feed Daniel in the lion's den.

50) Tamar Dadiani, Tamar Khundadze, and Ekaterine Kvachatadze, *Medieval Georgian Sculpture* (Tbilisi: George Chubinashvili National Research Center, 2017), 230.

51) Takeko Harada, ed., *The Book of Ahtamar Reliefs* (Istanbul: A Turizm Yayınları, 2003), 10.

employed in early Christian art.[52] Because these images had not been used in Byzantine or western Roman artistic motifs for centuries, the choice of these "dispossessed" narrative scenes supports the notion that these images may have been adopted from an earlier era.

Like the Georgian images already discussed, we find in the tenth century Armenian friezes on the Church of the Holy Cross images of the holy riders integrated into a program of Old Testament scenes.[53] The south facade is covered with scenes from the Old Testament, including Moses and the Ten Commandments, David and Goliath, and a Jonah Cycle (figure 39). On the north facade, reliefs of St. Theodore spearing a serpent, St. Sergius spearing a tiger, and St. George spearing a man, appear directly after the images of Adam and Eve and the serpent in the tree (Figures 40–42). Immediately following the images of the three holy riders are images of Samson and the lion, the three youths in the fire, Daniel and the lion's den and the baptism of Christ (Figures 43 and 44). The juxtaposition of holy riders with images from the Old Testament miracle or transformation scenes, on a tenth century church, is a notable departure from the early Christian motifs of the West, which as stated above, had not been used for several centuries. The Armenian's "reverential" use of seventh-century designs is important here. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only example of St. George slaying Diocletian found in Armenian art.[54] That the Georgian and Armenian styles split after the Arab invasion in the seventh century indicates that the image of the mounted saint subduing an emperor persisted from a late antique form which, though not frequently used in Armenian art, was carried on in Georgian art tradition. This provides support for placing this tenth century Armenian image of St. George in the same category as the Georgian images.

The Ikalto altar is the latest of the Georgian narrative sequences examined here. Dating to the tenth or eleventh century, the two-tiered altarpiece shows the narration of the passion cycle, the nativity scene, the resurrection of the widow's son from Nain, Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the annunciation, the adoration of the magi, and the crucifixion.[55] Two riders, situated between the scenes of Christ entering Jerusalem and the crucifixion, appear with a tondo of Christ. The riders are identified by initials as St. George and St. Theodore, spearing a man and a serpent respectively (figures 45–47).

c) Transformation of the Image of the Holy Rider

The aim of this article has been to show how the image of the holy rider merged together with early Christian themes in the Georgian art of the middle ages, forming an image that represents protection through transformation and resurrection. My research supports the conclusion that these themes unify local Georgian mythical/religious images by adding St. George to the story of Christianity. It also buttresses the claim that the image of St. George slaying Diocletian may have been transformed from the apotropaic depictions of holy riders in gem stones and household objects to become a religious icon used by the Church as an emblem of the protection

52) *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 841–842. The tenth century Armenian Holy Apostles Church in Kars, Turkey, is similar to the seventh-century church of St. John in Mastara in design (http://virtualani.org/karscathedral/index.htm). This further supports the notion that in the tenth century, the Armenians were following the plans of the seventh century designers.

53) Jones carried out a study of Aght'amar Island's Church of the Holy Cross, analyzing the church's palatine function. The study focuses mainly on the east and west facades, which articulate a "unified royal message" through the association of depictions likening King Gagik Astruni's rule to that of Adam in Paradise. See Lynn Jones, "The Church of the Holy Cross and the Iconography of Kingship," *Gesta* 33, no. 2 (1994): 108, 104, https://doi.org/10.2307/767162.

54) Thirteenth century Armenian reliefs of a mounted rider spearing a dragon or serpent are found next to a gate in the Saint Thaddeus Monastery (*Kara Kilise*) in northwest Iran and on the portal of the Saint Bartholomew *Kilise* near the Iranian border in Turkey. The Church of the Holy Apostles in Kars has reliefs of the twelve apostles on the upper rim of the dome. A number of them are praying with hands raised up, like the orante often seen in early Christian art. The warrior saints, though, are not represented.

55) Dadiani, Khundadze, and Kvachatadze, *Medieval Georgian Sculpture*, 239.

that faith in the powers of the *other-worldly* Christian God offers. In this sense, the image of the holy rider, who returned from martyrdom to carry out divine justice from the afterlife, offers a symbolic depiction of transformation and resurrection. These represent the power of the monotheistic, two-world religion that the raw depictions of this worldly power cannot convey. It takes the images of classical *world*, and shows domination through a transformation of style which combines worlds past and present. Though it goes beyond the scope of this essay, there are alternative theories regarding what the origins of the image of St. George slaying Diocletian may be. Some speculate that George spearing Diocletian comes from the image of the moon-god sacrificing a man. The arbitrariness of the sacrifice to the moon-god would not have been compatible with the Christian *ethos*; hence, Diocletian became the sacrificial victim. Others have argued that the narrative of George's torture and martyrdom have made George into a local version of Christ. These alternative stories do not necessarily contradict the broader claims made in this essay.

Regardless of how the image came to manifest itself in medieval Georgian religious art, it represents an iconic form that in early medieval times appeared when the transformation of worldview occurred which also needed to maintain continuity with the past. Like the new style of the Byzantine icon, this image solved a problem that the artistic style of the previous era could not address. The message of the image is to accept God, accept Christ's resurrection, and your world will be transformed. In this new world, you will be protected by George and Theodore from emperors and the powers of evil. Thus, the image offers the depiction of a new form of protection. Playing out in the establishment of the image of the holy warrior who avenges after martyrdom is what Mathews refers to as a "war of images."[56] The emperor, like the god, is shown destroyed. If the emperor's image is destroyed, it in some way harms the emperor, showing vulnerability.[57] Mathews argues that the early Christian art, typified by magical scenes, was anti-imperial. The depiction of the mounted saint slaying Diocletian, though not pacifistic, is in line with this trend of early Christian art. The form of image that names a specific saint killing a specific man appears to have been incorporated after the Roman Empire was established as Christian. Outside of the reach of the Byzantine world, it became an established part of the Georgian social and political culture. Though it is neither pacifist nor non-military, it still represents the might of the new *world*. George was martyred in the old world order; but resurrected and in the army of saints, he is a protector of the new order.

3. Philosophical Conclusions

What I have presented above shows: 1) that the stylistic mode of presentation adopted by a particular era embodies a perspective – a point of view that influences the way one interacts with the world and to some extent guides one's action-orientation; 2) the choice of style can represent a form of political resistance, as was the case with sub-antique friezes on the Arch of Constantine; 3) the way in which imperial power is presented is influenced by 1) and 2); and lastly, 4) the power of an image from one era can be enhanced by making reference to the apotropaic powers of a past era. These points support my argument that the image of St. George killing Diocletian creates a protective image for the people transitioning from the pagan worldview of the Hellenistic world to the two-world perspective of monotheism.

Danto's representational philosophy provides a philosophical framework through which this clash of *worlds* can be understood. Danto's writings on the transition of modern art to what he refers to as "post-historical"

---

56) Matthews, *Clash of Gods*, 10.
57) Eastmond, "Between Icon and Idol."

art track a similar phenomenon.[58] The transition of art from a representational to non-representational format occurred as the narrative of one *world* ended and another began. Unable to transition out of the style of what Danto calls the age of Vasari, Clement Greenberg became the critic of modernism. As Danto writes, Greenberg is modernism's critic precisely because he was unable to understand the shift that art had undergone when Pop Art and Warhol's ready-mades arrived on the art scene. As Danto sees it, the art of post-history is free from past styles, and because of this, all styles are open. Of course, there is no such freedom in the style of Byzantium. Though conceptual, as Jaś Elsner describes it, Byzantine religious art adheres to a rigid format, the theology of the time baked into the style and its interpretation.[59] For the most part, Danto writes that we have little room when making choices that go beyond options presented through our *world*. Because we are unaware of the parameters imposed by our *world*, we are for the most part unaware of those actions not guided by explicit choice. Only when we become aware of our own *world* in hindsight, as if we are viewing the *world* of another, can we be aware of it, and our past *world* becomes visible. Danto writes that though these worldviews define us, some are able to leverage their *world* to transition to another *world*.[60] He uses the example of Thomas Kuhn and Carl Hempel. Though, Danto suggests, Hempel's philosophy of science may have been better in some ways than the theory Kuhn presented in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, Hempel remained in the past era, while Kuhn could move forward to the era after modernism.[61] Analogously, the art of the "era of art," what Danto refers to as modern/representational art, no longer holds the meanings for those of the post-historical era. These images are of a past era, and their rhetoric, in becoming clear, are no longer as effective; their effectiveness requires that the meaning remain submerged. New styles can be appropriated for the post-historical era, but involves *recontextualizing* the works. Thus, images of a past era, past styles, can be appropriated if they are adapted to the new era.

This brings us back to Mathew's claim that there is a war of images. The suggestion that there is some form of agency effective in art is a somewhat Averroean notion. It is not my intention that this agency be understood in the sense of artists adding "magic" to the artwork. If a philosophically coherent account of agency in art is possible, it is my contention that it is best understood within a framework that does not generally comport with the Western notion of the person who is fully in control of her agency and who best understands her inner workings. If a notion of subjectivity is used that recognizes and gives priority to the influence of external factors in the formation of the person, it makes sense that the point of view one adopts from one's *world* would bestow a kind of agency. Danto sees this in terms of Nietzsche's writings on the independent power of language, a will-to-power that is extra-personal.[62]

Certainly, this notion of human agency breaks with the traditional Western view. If the relation of the *world* to the person is understood as Danto describes it, such that human agency is not an *interior* structure of

---

58) Danto, "The End of Art"; Danto, *After the End of Art*.

59) Elsner makes the case that what he refers to as ritual viewing is a form of perception distinct from naturalistic viewing. Elsner emphasizes that ritual viewing evokes a transformation that is highly theoretical and anything but static. This difference, I would argue, is reflected in the stances toward the world articulated through orthopraxy – correct practice – vs. orthodoxy – correct belief. Elsner points out that the complexity of works evoking a transformation that enables insight into a suprasensible realm may be more theoretically complex than the works that present our visual world à la naturalism. See Jaś Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8–9; Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 22–26.

60) Danto, *Body/Body Problem*, 176–177.

61) Ibid., 176–182.

62) Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher. Expanded Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 80, 88–98; Danto, *The End-of-Art Philosophy*, 167–186, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94072-4.

the self, an alternative idea of the person becomes possible. According to this alternative, what bestows *agency* on us (not in the metaphysical sense, but in terms of the reality of our choices) is external to us: it is our *world*. The *world* that we as humans adopt – that is in some sense external to us – is a perspectival stamp. This stamp is passed on by artists to their artworks. When the artworks are interpreted, they carry with them the same "rhetorical" power or causal directives that the *world* imprints on the artist's point of view. Thus, in artistic interpretation a kind of causality is evoked through the point of view.

Danto held that the *causality* of artistic interpretation took place in a different *world*, in the "artworld." In this way, the artworld directed how art was made and perhaps interpreted. But this *causality* would not necessarily have any effect on the world in which we live. With religious art, we see the separation of *worlds*. In this case, the effects of the artwork might have an effect in the *other world* because for those who accept the Christian hermeneutic, the other world is the real world.

Danto did not argue that we could consciously direct the rhetoric of the artwork. If we do this, the work might lack a true style. Explicit politics is just that, politics. Though anything can be art, the rhetorical power of art stems from the unconscious stylistic reflection of the perspective manifest in the artist's *world*, and the style should be embodied directly in the artwork, not indirectly through the manner of a political message. Though Danto acknowledges the power of art, in his philosophy, he does not attempt to formulate a schema for political resistance or change. Art can, and does, transform us when we step into it, but for him, we are not the agents of change.[63]

Danto's theory of art provides the framework that explains the power of art, which is how a representation, a narrative, an image, a belief takes our sensations and gives them a meaning. The same sensation can be seen differently depending on whether one has a heliocentric or geocentric perspective. Redescription of an event can change this. The creation of a work of art, and its subsequent interpretations, also allow for "redescription" of the sensual input.[64] Danto's framework seems to provide the conceptual basis for an art form that is capable of resistance. Perhaps it could even act as a resource for social criticism. But Danto is not interested in following this philosophical path, preferring to remain within the bounds of an analytical/ontological approach.[65]

In regard to the battle of images presented in this essay, what Danto's philosophical framework can account for is the way that people interact with and are influenced by the parallel structures of the *world*, and the artworld. The common structures that humans and their art share show how art does have some power. It does do something. The images we create have the *possibility*, for good or for bad, of having an effect that goes beyond the individual who created it. I would go so far as to say the structure also shows that the image and the person can share a kind of parallel development through which they reciprocally influence each other. The parallel development of a culture's worldview and its art is, in my view, evidence of this.

---

63) See Stephen Snyder, "Transvaluation and Aesthetic Displacement: Gezi Park and the Power of Art," in *Membrana*, Forthcoming.

64) Arthur C. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*. New Introduction by Lydia Goehr and New Conclusion by Frank Ankersmit. Includes Analytical Philosophy of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 221–227.

65) See Danto's reply to Lydia Goehr, in *Action, Art, History: Engagements with Arthur C. Danto*, eds. Daniel Herwitz and Michael Kelly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 77–79.

Figure 1. St. George slaying a Dragon, Georgian, Cloisonné Enamel, fifteenth century, Georgian State Museum of Art, Tbilisi, Georgia. The hand of God is in the upper right corner. (Photo: Sanikidze et al. 1979, 45).

Figure 2. Magic gemstone, Solomon's Seal, second-third century, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 3. Mounted Horus spearing crocodile, fourth century, Egyptian, Paris, Louvre. Photo: Wikipedia Commons.

Figure 4. St. Sisinious spearing a demon, Coptic, fifth-sixth century, Monestary of Apa Apollo, Bawit, Egypt. Photo: Wikipedia Commons from Jean Cledat 1904.

Figures 5 & 6. Chalices, Attarouthi Treasure, Syrian, sixth century, MET, New York. On the right, standing George spearing a serpent. On the left, standing George spearing a serpent with a human head. Photos: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 7. St. George spearing Diocletian, seventh century, Martvili Monastery, Georgia. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 8. The Virgin and Child between St. Theodore and St. Demitrios, encaustic icon, sixth century, Constantinople, St. Catherine's, Egypt. (Photo: Paliouras et al. 1985, 100).

Figure 9. Arch of Constantine, 315 CE, Rome. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 10. High classical realist style, Arch of Constantine, 315 CE Rome. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 11 below. Sub-antique frontal style, Arch of Constantine, 315 CE, Rome. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 12. Antiochus and Apollo. second century Zeugma, Gaziantep Museum, Turkey. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 13. Laocoön, Pergamene, second century BCE. Vatican Museum, Vatican. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 14. Hand of God, Synagogue, second century CE, Dura Europos, Syrian. Photo: Graydon Snyder.

Figure 15. St. Mercurius slaying emperor with hand of God and help of angel. Thirteenth century; St. Anthony's Monastery, Egypt. (Photo: Eastmond 2013, 236).
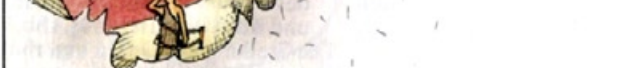
Figure 16. Plato's Allegory of the Cave and the Divided Line. All that exists is on a single continuum. Adapted from (Kuzmannn et al. 1991, 40).

Figure 17. Painted mural, The Rape of Persephone, fourth century BCE, Macedonian. Photo: Wikipedia Commons.

Figure 18. Bust of Eutropios, fifth century, Ephesus, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: Stephen Snyder.
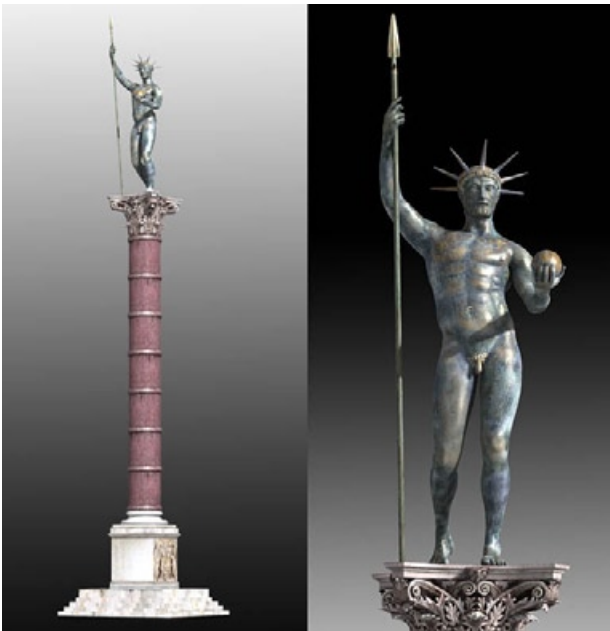

Figure 19. Constantine's column, Constantinople. Computer generated image from Byzantium 1200 (https://www.byzantium1200.com/).

Figure 20. Constantine depicted with Sol Invictus, gold coin, 313. CE. Photo: Wikipedia Commons.

Figure 21. The Emperor Justinian with Christ above, leaf of ivory diptych, 527 CE, Louvre. (Photo: Beckwith 1961, 38).

Figure 22. Scene from the life of Christ, ivory relief, early fifth century, Rome, Bode Museum, Berlin. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 23. Christ as Pantocrator, encaustic icon, seventh century, Constantinople, St. Catherine's, Egypt. (Photo: Paliouras et al. 1985, 99).

Figure 24. Christ as miracle worker with wand, gold glass medallion, fourth-sixth century, Rome(?), MET, New York. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 25. The gold glass bowl showing Christ with wand performing miracles in three scenes: three young men in the fiery furnace, wine miracle, cure of the paralytic, fourth century, Rome, MET, New York. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 26. Early Christian Sarcophagus, orante, Jonah expelled from whale resting in gourd patch, good shepherd, third century, Italian, Bode Museum, Berlin. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 27. Early Christian Sarcophagus, early fourth century, Musée d'Art Chrétien, Arles, France. Adam and Eve eating from tree, Daniel in the lion's den, the sacrifice of Isaac. Photo: Graydon Snyder.

Figure 27.

Figure 28. Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, early Christian , fourth century, Museum of Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican. Adam and Eve by tree with serpent, Daniel in the lion's den, Christ entering Jerusalem, the sacrifice of Isaac. Photo: Graydon Snyder.

Figure 29. Sainte Quitterie Sarcophagus, early Christian, third century, Aire-sur-l'Adour, France. (Above) Tobit and the fish, Jonah and the whale, healing of the paralytic, Sacrifice of Isaac. (Below) John the Baptist baptizing Christ, Adam and Eve eating from tree with serpent, good shepherd, Daniel in the lion's den, Lazarus. Photo: Graydon Snyder.

Figures 30 & 31. Sta. Maria Antiqua Sarcophagus, early Christian, third century, Rome. Jonah cycle: ship and whale (end), Jonah expelled from whale, orante, Christ as teacher, good shepherd, John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. Photos: Graydon Snyder.

Figure 32. Museo Pio cristiano Sarcophagus, early Christian, third century, Vatican. Jonah cycle: ship and whale, Jonah expelled from whale, Jonah under gourd vine, Noah and the ark, Lazarus, Moses and the rock. Photo: Graydon Snyder.

Figures 33–35. Narrative sequence, Martvili-Chkondidi Cathedral, seventh century, Martvili, Georgia. St. George spearing Diocletian, Samson and the lion, two riders spearing a two headed serpent, Christ's ascension, Daniel in the lion's den. Details show St. George spearing Diocletian and Daniel in the lion's den. Photos: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 36. Narrative sequence in stone relief altarpiece, Tsebelda, sixth – seventh century, National Museum, Tbilisi. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Crucifixion, Mary at tomb, Baptism, the sacrifice of Isaac, crucifixion of Saint Peter.

Figure 37. Narrative sequence in stone relief altarpiece, Tsebelda, sixth – seventh century, Georgian Fine Art Museum, Tbilisi. Photo: Dror Maayan, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz.

St. Theodore spearing a serpent, St. George spearing a man, Daniel in the lion's den, Mother and child.


Figure 38. Narrative sequence surrounding window, Joisubani, tenth century, Georgia. Above, Christ enthroned with Peter and Paul, directly below scenes of last judgment. At bottom, two riders, one spearing a serpent, the other a man, below the window are Jonah and the whale and Daniel and the lion's den. The reliefs below the window were destroyed in an earthquake. (Photo: Dadiani et al. 2017, 149).

Figure 39. South facade, Church of the Holy Cross, tenth century, Aght'amar Island, Western Armenia, (Turkey). Jonah cycle, Jonah cast from boat and swallowed by the ketos, Jonah expelled, resting in gourd patch. Photo: Stephen Snyder.
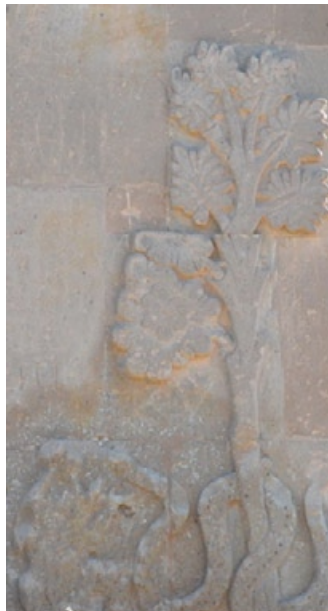
Figures 40–42. North facade, Church of the Holy Cross, tenth century, Aght'amar Island, Western Armenia, (Turkey). Adam and Eve eating from tree; serpent in tree; St. Theodore spearing serpent, St. Sergius spearing a tiger, St. George spearing a man. Photos: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 43. North facade, Church of the Holy Cross, tenth century, Aght'amar Island, Western Armenia, (Turkey). Samson and the lion. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 44. North facade, Church of the Holy Cross, tenth century, Aght'amar Island, Western Armenia, (Turkey). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel in the lion's den, baptism of Christ above. Photo: Stephen Snyder.

Figure 45 above. Narrative sequence, Ikalto stone altar, Ikalto Monastery, tenth – eleventh century, Telavi Museum, Georgia. The narration of the passion cycle, the nativity scene, the resurrection of the widow's son from Nain, Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the annunciation, the adoration of the Magi, and the crucifixion. Between Christ entering Jerusalem and the crucifixion scene is a section with a mounted St. George spearing a man and a mounted St. Theodore spearing a serpent. Figures 46 & 47 details – below. Christ entering Jerusalem; St. Theodore spearing a serpent and St. George spearing a man. Photos: Stephen Snyder.

Photos Cited:

Beckwith, John. *The Art of Constantinople*. London: Phaidon Press, 1961.

Dadiani, Tamar, Tamar Khundadze, and Ekaterine Kvachatadze. *Medieval Georgian Sculpture*. George Chubinashvili National Research Center, 2017.

Eastmond, Anthony. *The Glory of Byzantium and Early Christendom*. New York: Phaidon, 2013.

Kunzmann, Peter, Franz-Peter Burkard, Franz Wiedermann. *DVT-Atlas zur Philosophie: Tafeln und Texte*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991.

Paliouras, Athanasios D., Solon Tzaferis, Helen Zigada, and Nicolas Tzaferis. *The Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai*. Glyka Nera Attikis, Greece: E. Tzaferi A.E., 1985.

Sanikidze, T. and G. Abramishvili. *Orfevrerie georgienne du VIIe au XIXe siècle*. Geneve: Musee d'Art et d'Histoire, 1979.

Bibliography:

Ando, Clifford. *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Beckwith, John. *The Art of Constantinople.* London: Phaidon Press, 1961.

Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art.* Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

di Berardino, Angelo. "Christian Liturgical Time and Torture." *Augustinianum* 51, no. 1 (2011): 191–220. https://doi.org/10.5840/agstm20115119.

Dadiani, Tamar, Tamar Khundadze, and Ekaterine Kvachatadze. *Medieval Georgian Sculpture.* Tbilisi: George Chubinashvili National Research Center, 2017.

Danto, Arthur C. *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

—. "The Artworld." *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571–584. https://doi.org/10.2307/2022937.

—. *The Body/Body Problem.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

—. *Connections to the World: The Basic Concepts of Philosophy.* New York: Harper & Row, 1989.

—. "The End of Art." In *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

—. *Narration and Knowledge.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

—. *Nietzsche as Philosopher Expanded Edition.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

—. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Eastmond, Anthony. "Between Icon and Idol: The Uncertainty of Imperial Images." In *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium.* Edited by Anthony Eastmond and Liz James. Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2003.

Elsner, Jaś. *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

—. *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire A.D. 100–450.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

—. *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Foucault, Michel. *Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason.* "The Tanner Lectures on Human Values." Delivered at Stanford University, October 10 and 16, 1979.

Gombrich, Ernst. *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation.* New York: Phaidon Press, 2002.

—. *Meditations on a Hobby Horse.* New York: Phaidon, 1985.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures.* Translated by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

Harada, Takeko, ed. *The Book of Ahtamar Reliefs.* Istanbul: A Turizm Yayınları, 2003.

Herwitz, Daniel and Michael Kelly, eds. *Action, Art, History: Engagements with Arthur C. Danto*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Jensen, Robin. *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Jones, Lynn. "The Church of the Holy Cross and the Iconography of Kingship." *Gesta* 33, no. 2 (1994): 104–117. https://doi.org/10.2307/767162.

Kitzinger, Ernst. *Byzantine Art in the Making*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977.

Mango, Cyril. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312–1453*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.

Margolis, Joseph. "Medieval Aesthetics." In *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. Edited by Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Mathews, Thomas. *Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Pancaroğlu, Oya. "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia." *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 151–164. https://doi.org/10.2307/25067102.

Sheldon-Williams, I.P. "The Philosophy of Icons." In *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. Edited by A.H. Armstrong. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Snyder, Graydon F. *Ante-Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003.

Snyder, Stephen. "Artistic Conversations: Artworks and Personhood." *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 19, no. 56 (2019): 229–248.

—. *The End-of-Art Philosophy in Hegel, Nietzsche and Danto*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94072-4.

—. "Transvaluation and Aesthetic Displacement: Gezi Park and the Power of Art." In *Membrana*, forthcoming.

Walter, Christopher. *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

Woodfield, Richard. "Ernst Gombrich: Iconology and the 'Linguistics of the Image'." *Journal of Art Historiography* 5 (2011): 1–25.