

Biblical Worldview-Whose Message?

Assertion of The Question of The Media, Technology, & Entertainment

I. FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The analysis begins by establishing clear definitions for key terms based on their etymological roots, providing a framework for subsequent discussion.

- **Media:** Derived from the Latin *medium*, meaning "the middle, midst, center." It is described as a "middle agent" established for the purpose of transmitting information.
- **Art:** Traced to early 13th-century English and Latin *artem*, meaning "skill as a result of learning or practice," "practical skill," or "craft." The Greek root *artizein* means "to prepare." In a biblical context, art is defined as the information and skill required to produce something, encompassing a broad range of human work and activity.
- **Technology:** From the Greek *logos* (discourse, speaking), technology is defined as a "discourse or treatise on an art or the arts." It represents the meta-systems, methods, or sets of established rules that govern a particular art or skill.
- **Entertainment:** Originating from the Old French *entretenir* ("hold together, support"), this term evolved to mean "gratify, amuse" in the 1620s. It involves the activity of holding someone in a specific frame of mind with the objective of amusing or gratifying them.

II. COMPETING WORLDVIEWS ON THE PURPOSE OF ART AND MEDIA

The Secular Humanist Perspective ("Inside the Box")

Secular Humanism is defined as a progressive philosophy that, without theism, affirms human ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives for the greater good. Its core tenets regarding art and media are:

- **Foundation:** Assumes God does not exist or cannot be known and rejects the concept of transcendent, absolute truth.
- **Methodology:** Believes human beings can build a better society through science, reason, and rationality, with democracy as the primary mode for achieving this.
- **Purpose of Art:** Art aligns with scientific, historical, and sociological understandings of behavior and evolution. Its purpose is to promote societal and cultural cohesion and communicate the particular values of that culture. It is seen as an expression of complex brains that evolved for complex tasks and serves to communicate inspiration, promote humanity's ultimate purpose, and preserve the human species.

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The Secular Humanist Perspective ("Inside the Box")

- **God as Originator:** God uses His own framework of media, art, and technology to reveal Himself.
 - **Media:** Creation itself reveals God's divine and unique attributes.
 - **Art:** The divine information and skill used to produce creation.
 - **Technology:** The meta-systems that operate within creation.
- **Scriptural Foundation:**
 - **Romans 1:18-20:** "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."
 - **Genesis 1:26-27:** Humans are created in God's image and likeness, granting them the capacity and ability to learn "art" (craft and skill).
 - **Job 38-42:** God's questioning of Job underscores the divine wisdom, skill, and craft involved in creating the heavens and the earth.

III. THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF ART IN A BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Early Biblical Examples of Art and Technology

The book of Genesis provides immediate examples of humanity engaging in art and technology as a reflection of their created nature:

- **Cain and Abel:** Cain practiced the art and technology of a farmer ("tiller of the ground"), while Abel was a shepherd ("keeper of flocks").
- **Jabal:** The father of those who use art and technology in textiles and ranching ("dwell in tents and have livestock").
- **Jubal:** The father of those who use art and technology in music and audio ("play the lyre and pipe").
- **Tubal-Cain:** A master of art and technology in engineering and blacksmithing ("forger of all implements of bronze and iron").
- **The Tower of Babel:** Humankind utilized the technology of construction and engineering combined with the art of brick-making and laying to build a city and a tower.

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Linguistic Analysis of "Art" in Scripture

Term	Language	Meaning	Occurrences	Biblical Context
Ma'ăšê / mahaseh	Hebrew	"Work," "deed"	235	Associated with the work and labor of humankind, involving the information necessary to complete a skill. Its focus shifts: the "work" of God in creation (Psalms), the activity of humankind (Ecclesiastes), and the work of God through the Israelites (Exodus).
echne / technay	Greek	"Art," "trade"	3	Refers to a trade or a skill that a person has developed, as seen in descriptions of idols formed by the "art and thought of man" (Acts 17:29) and the "trade" of tent-making (Acts 18:3).

Core Principles of Biblical Art

1. **Activity over Production:** The primary emphasis concerning art is on the activity or the craft itself, rather than solely on the final product.
2. **Broad Application:** The term "art" technically refers to all types of work and activity that humankind has learned, extending beyond modern "creative" arts like painting and sculpting.
3. **Not All Art Has a Message:** Some forms of art, like tent-making, are practical crafts that do not necessarily communicate a specific message.

IV. ART AS COMMUNICATION AND THE MANDATE FOR ANALYSIS

The Case Study of Paul in Athens (Acts 17)

The Apostle Paul's engagement with the culture in Athens provides a key example of how to interact with art that communicates a message.

1. **Observation:** Paul's spirit was provoked as he observed a city full of idols, which he described as "the objects of your worship."
2. **Identification of Truth:** He found an altar inscribed "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" and also identified statements within pagan poetry that aligned with biblical truth. He quoted the poets Epimenides (*Cretica*) and Aratus (*Phaenomena*):
 - "...For in you we live and move and have our being..."
 - "...For we are also his offspring..."

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3. **Redirection of Message:** Paul recognized that while the poets were speaking of the false deity Zeus, the statements themselves were true. He co-opted this artistic message, declaring that the truth it contained was not about Zeus but about the one true God whom the Athenians worshiped in ignorance.
4. **Principle:** This demonstrates that art can align with biblical truth even if that was not its original purpose. The message ought to be analyzed, and the parts that align with biblical truth should be acknowledged and utilized.

The Distinct Role of Entertainment

- **Definition:** It is an art form (such as acting, dancing, or music) specifically intended to amuse or gratify oneself or others.
- **Biblical Reference:** The Hebrew word **daḥăvâ/dakhavaw'** appears only once, in Daniel 6:18. After Daniel is thrown into the lions' den, the king fasts, and "no entertainment was brought before him," referring to instruments of music for amusement.

V. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

- **Interconnected Concepts:** God's act of creation establishes the foundation for Media (the means of transmission), Technology (the systems of operation), and Art (the information and skill).
- **Reflection and promotion of the Imago Dei:** Humankind's innate drive and ability to pursue media, technology, and art is a direct reflection of being created in God's image.
- **Sociological and Anthropological Dimensions:** These concepts are relevant to sociology (as they relate to information and skills communicated among people) and anthropology (as they stem from humanity's created nature and ability to produce).
- **Final Mandate:** All art that communicates a message ought to be carefully examined against the standard of biblical truth. Truths that align should be acknowledged, regardless of their source, while entertainment should be understood as an art form specifically created to gratify or amuse.