Encountering the Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious: The Roles of Art in Religious Learning

Jane: Mary Poppins taught us the most wonderful words.
Michael: Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious
Mr. Banks: What on earth are you talking about? Supercali—super--or whatever the infernal thing is.
Jane: It’s something to say when you don’t know what to say.

ABSTRACT
This paper considers two films, Mary Poppins and Pleasantville, in relation to the work of two aesthetic philosophers, José Vasconcelos and Friedrich Nietzsche, in order to reflect on the roles of art in religious learning. It elaborates on three roles in particular, with reference to insights from practice: art as religious presentation, art as religious representation, and art as religious education.

MAIN POINTS / OUTLINE
I. Introduction
II. The Special Pathos of Poppins
   a. Vasconcelos on the limits of reason
   b. Mary Poppins as an avatar
   c. The roles of art in Mary Poppins
III. Dionysus in Pleasantville
   a. Nietzsche on the limits of theory
   b. Pleasantville as a myth of Dionysian rebirth
   c. The roles of art in Pleasantville
IV. The God Who Appears
   a. Art as religious presentation
   b. Art as religious representation
   c. Art as religious education
V. Insights from Practice: How to Tell a True God Story

METHODOLOGY: Literature-based

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: