Fertile Question: *How do I know what’s good and evil?*

**Core Content Area 1: Wisdom through the ages**

**TOPIC 1.1: Making Meaning**

**Extending Knowledge: Wisdom Through Religious Art**

In this lesson students will explore the contributions of religious art to an understanding of goodness, truth, beauty and evil.

**For students to explore the contributions of religious art to understanding good and evil select from the following activities:**

1. Explore a variety of artworks from the Christian tradition. Examples could include:

   - **Adam and Eve** by Lucas Cranach the Elder,
   - **Pieta** by Michelangelo,
   - **Christ of St John of the Cross** by Salvador Dali,
   - **The Gates of Hell** by Rodin,
   - **The Condemned in Hell** by Luca Signorelli,
   - **Christ the King**, Orthodox icon,
   - **The Temptation of Christ on the Mountain** by Duccio,
   - **Jesus Trampling down the dead** Orthodox icon.

   a. Research and examine each artwork carefully, noting the time period and influences on the artist and then respond to the following: What religious theme/s are present in the work, for example, truth, beauty, temptation, evil, hell etc? What has the artist done to represent these themes? For example, choice of medium, size and/or abundance of objects, people or symbols. In your own opinion how successfully has the theme been presented?

   b. Select one theme such as beauty, and select an artwork that you believe best expresses this theme. Share with a partner. Explain to your partner why you chose the work and your own opinion about the power of art to teach.

   c. Identify the influence of religious art on contemporary expressions of good and evil.

2. Examine representations of the **Wheel of Life** from Buddhism and **Kali and Shiva** from Hinduism, again carefully examining the pieces for themes of beauty, truth, evil etc. Answer the following question:

   **What are the difficulties faced when trying to interpret the symbolism of a faith tradition different to your own?**

3. Reflect on your own values regarding goodness, truth, beauty and evil. Construct a small artwork that would portray your own beliefs about the origins/reasons for good and evil.

   Stanislav Traykov, 2008, via Wikimedia Commons.