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Art and Religion: A Transreligious Approach

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I

Religion and art have from the beginning occupied a major place in human experience. They are, indeed, two of the most important evidences of culture, and no civilization has failed to develop art forms and religious rites or beliefs. Both terms, art and religion, have many different meanings, and I shall not undertake a full or exhaustive definition of either. For my purpose here, religion consists of the rituals, ceremonies, beliefs, and actions that people engage in when they try to interpret human experience and the world in accordance with a relationship to transcendent or immanent divine presence or being. Art I will understand as the images or processes that painters, musicians, dancers, poets, film makers, and others who are working in a tradition of skill, and according to aesthetic principles, create for the purpose of interpreting human experience. The images and processes—paintings, dances, poems—artists produce are symbols for interpreting values, feelings, ideas, and other significant aspects of human experience.

Today there is considerable interest in art and in religion. The arts enjoy a proliferation of styles that range from realism, with its full blown and easily readable images, to “conceptual” styles where the images may be minimal and difficult to interpret. And religion is available in a variety of forms. Public support for the arts is increasing

slowly, and public interest is rising steadily. Religion, too, enjoys a comparable resurgence of interest. From a distance the two might appear to proceed in diverse directions, but I believe that art and religion can best serve human needs when the two work in harmony, pursuing their common interests. The essay will develop the following points: (1) Intersecting crises have created social problems common to the world at large; (2) if religion and art are to perform their function of mediating these contemporary problems, they must establish a new relationship; (3) this end will be accomplished by means of a new conceptual framework for the relation of art and religion, and new art symbols that transcend the boundaries of the different religions.

It is difficult to spell out in advance a complete program for harmonious cooperation between art and religion, but I will provide some indications of the basis for such cooperation. A religion includes in the first instance, of course, internal matters of meditation, worship, and belief that are exercised within a particular religious faith; and at this level, art cooperates with religion primarily as a sacramental element of rites and ceremonies. But religion has also external aspects that relate it to other religions and to more diverse cultural elements. At this external level, art cooperates with religion by providing a means of communication among the various different religions, and between religion and the other elements that make up a specific culture. The cooperation between art and religion, relative to these external relations, must be based upon more universal factors than are operative in the internal matters of particular religions. I will be dealing primarily with the cooperation of art and religion with respect to the external relations in this essay.

One significant way in which art can cooperate with religion is by acting as the catalyst of mutual respect and appreciation among the various religions. Removal of the divisive barriers of ignorance, lack of respect, and lack of appreciation for the values of the "other" religions must precede cooperation that is necessary for the pursuit of common goals. Art can provide a commonly intelligible artistic-religious vocabulary that will enable the various religions to transcend the barriers that separate them. Such a vocabulary of art symbols will of course draw on the insights of both art and religion, because art cannot arbitrarily impose its own symbols upon religion. There are existing art works that do transcend particular religious boundaries,

but these works are too often ineffective because they are interpreted according to an inadequate or outmoded understanding of the relation of art to religion.

My approach to this question of a vocabulary of art symbols for developing mutual understanding among religions is in two parts: The first is to reexamine the conceptual frameworks that govern the perception of the relation of art to religion in general, and to propose a conceptual framework that will accent the transreligious aspects of presently existing artistic symbols. The second is to recommend a self-conscious effort by today's artists who have an interest in religion to develop new images that will contribute to the aim of transreligious understanding among religions. The new artist religious vocabulary that emerges, like previously existing ones with potential transreligious uses, can best be developed on the basis of a transreligious understanding of the relation of art to religion.¹

The complex relations between art and religion require periodic reassessment, because changes in the surrounding cultures alter these relations. For the present age, it is necessary to develop a rationale for mutual cooperation between art and religion that is based on the ways in which we see the world today: as pluralistic, interrelated, facing critical problems of readjustment to moral, aesthetic, environmental, economic, and political crises, all of which threaten the quality of human and other natural forms of life. It is not possible to deal with the question of art and religion in relation to each of these separate areas of crisis, but what is said here is intended to apply to each one.

My approach to cooperation between art and religion in these areas of crisis is based on the following statement: Religion and art are both prominent sources of values that are appropriate to the solution of the major social problems referred to here. Religion draws upon divine presence or being as a principal source of positive, life-supporting values such as benevolence, justice, and love, all of which are affirmed by many different religions. Human intelligence interacts with consciousness of the divine to produce an awareness of these values in what we call social conscience. The same intelligence, acting in a concrete social situation, can apply these principles of benevolence, a commitment to the greatest good; of justice, which is respect for persons expressed through the principle of equality; of love or concern for others to policy and actions in the social order. Artists who experience these values through religion, as participant or as

observer, or who become aware of the values through some indirect source, present the values in art images that can influence a broad range of persons who must make decisions to meet the crises. Dancers, musicians, painters, and other artists continuously generate fresh images for such purposes.

The cooperative impact of art and religion on social issues extends beyond art's role as the transmitter of those values that the artist perceives through the influence of religion. Art contributes its own aesthetic values; indeed, the values that are simply transmitted through art images-benevolence, justice, love-are so embodied in the form and feeling and rich sensuous structure of the art work that these carried values are enhanced by the aesthetic values of the art structures in which they are presented.

The aesthetic values of artistic form, expression, and sensuous quality remind us, moreover, to think of their direct application to such social problems as the urban environmental crisis. Perhaps the immediate contribution of art to the partnership with religion in dealing with the urban environment crisis is more difficult to see. I would like to make the connection in the following way: An understanding of formal structure in art works can provide greater awareness of the importance of design and order in the planning of an urban environment. Expressive values in art works call attention to the qualities of mood, feeling, and atmosphere that are so important to the quality of life; and sensory perception that is heightened by the rich and varied colors, textures, shapes, and patterns of art sensitizes peoples to the necessary presence of such qualities in the planned environments of cities. Environmentalists who fail to realize that the urban crisis includes an aesthetic one will surely fail in their efforts to provide a complete solution to the urban crisis. It is essential therefore that art and religion work together, pooling their value resources and their communicative influence, in the common effort of making certain that humanistic, moral and aesthetic and spiritual values are applied to policy and action in the approach to social problems. They must also influence the selection of economic and political values and means that are compatible with these other humanistic and spiritual values.

II

My essay will examine briefly three historic relations between art and religion: art and religion as inseparable; art as the handmaid of religion; and art and religion as independent or opposing elements of culture. I will then propose a fourth view that I consider the basis for a practical and creative response of art and religion to the crises of the present world conditions. The brief survey of the relations between art and religion that have developed through past ages offers no single homogeneous pattern. The survey will, however, help us to understand the present situation, by showing the progression of changes and by interpreting the various stages in that progression.

Art and Religion as Inseparable Elements of Culture

Primitive cultures of the world provide a model of art and religion as inseparable elements of culture, where the two are integrally connected with each other and with the whole cultural process. As T. S. Eliot has noted, "The Dyak who spends the better part of a season in shaping, carving, and painting his barque of the peculiar design required for the annual ritual of head-hunting is exercising several cultural activities at once—of art, religion, as well as of amphibious warfare."² African arts, particularly the dance, present a paradigm of unity between art and religion.

A recent book, *African Art in Motion: Icon and Art*, documents with rich details the close connections that exist between art and religion in Africa.³ The dance in Africa is "a manifestation of life and vitality and a religious act."⁴ Dancing is thus a part of the African's idea of being fully human. The dance expresses the sorrow of death as well as the joy of life. It would not be at all disparaging to say that for the primitive African religion was danced out rather than thought out in words. The unity that exists between African dance and religion extends to music, sculpture, masks, iconography, and poetry, all of which are replete with spiritual energy that manifests the essence of the sacred. Art and religion appear as coequal partners in such primitive communities, and there is no effort to subordinate "artistic form" to "religious content." The perfection of artistic form and of character are so integrally related as to produce the double admonition: "improve your character to improve your art;"⁵ here, art and the moral aspect of religion merge in actualizing spiritual fulfillment. Other examples of the close relation between religion and

art can be found throughout the world. Hopi snake dances of the Southwest United States combine dance and drama with religion and the hope of influencing nature to provide rain for the season's crops. And the making of a Navajo sand painting can be the occasion of a sacred healing ceremony. So too, in ancient Greece, the religious celebration of the cycles of life was the occasion for dance, poetry, and drama. Dancers and actors representing spring and winter, or life and death, enacted the essential passage of life's seasons and thereby exemplified the indivisible connection of art and religion.

In each of these examples, art and religion function as equal partners, inseparable from each other and from the context of the whole culture. Thus they illustrate local variations within the first pattern that I am using to describe historic relations between art and religion. In this pattern, art and religion manifest themselves as harmonious forces within a culture, and their interworkings exemplify a wider cosmic truth: that every part of an organic whole bears an intimate relation to every other part. Those who regard art and religion as conjunctive activities that should work together as they do in primitive cultures are therefore essentially correct in their account of the unity of purpose and action that links art and religion. The principal limitation of this primitive view of art and religion is not its emphasis upon their essential unity, but localism or parochialism. Primitive man understands the interrelatedness of art and religion primarily through their role in his own local community. He lacks a world view wherein art and religion are the links among diverse communities throughout the world. Primitive people did not comprehend a world as vast as the one we know today, nor did they envision a world that demanded interaction among people of complex and diverse cultures. Their art symbols are formed, consequently, in relation to local religions and local cultures, and are adequate for the local situation where the symbols were intended to function. But locally oriented art symbols do not have sufficient universality to comprehend the necessity of a transreligious, transcultural perspective that must reach across the frontiers of many religions and diverse geographic, economic, and political climates that produce *world* social problems such as the ecological crisis. The conditions of the modern world have altered the nature of society, and so it is necessary to consider other models.

Art As the Handmaid of Religion

The handmaid thesis alters substantially the equal partnership of primitive art and religion. Religion, or its articulation in theological propositions, is the primary and authoritative norm against which all other views, including art, must be measured.⁶ Such religions as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, have adopted the handmaid thesis at various times in their respective histories, and some of their believers still operate under its aegis. The handmaid thesis functions positively to incorporate art into the religion and also negatively to exclude images that do not fit. The handmaid thesis sees art from the point of view of religion: art arises and operates within the context of a religious faith, is subordinate to the aims of the religion, is used primarily for the promotion of religious aims such as worship, and for educational purposes, and requires that the artist be attentive to the difference that God or sacredness makes to the form of human existence that is being treated in the art work.⁷

Christianity's approach to art, particularly in stages of the religion's development prior to 1300, is an especially clear instance of the subordination of art to religion. During this period, Christian art was considered "bearer of the sacred, an operative mode of the sacramental,"⁸ and the work of art was seen as an object functioning within Christian life. Sacramental art, that is, art which is developed for and from the point of view of religion, is the one case in which the handmaid thesis is satisfactory, because the characteristics of the theory and the art happen to correspond.

There are, however, art works originating within a context of religious faith that transcend the boundaries of religious faith because of their superior aesthetic qualities or their universal themes. Gerard Manley Hopkins, the nineteenth century poet and a Jesuit, writes from within the Christian faith.⁹ Hopkins often treats religious subjects, but his poems unfailingly speak to the world and defy the constraints that the handmaid thesis impose upon the relation of art and religion. Even the most religious of Hopkins' poems exhibit values that transcend the boundaries of his particular religious faith, and it is not necessary to share Hopkins' religious faith to appreciate the artistic power and depth of insight into life that is manifest in his poetry. Such works as Hopkins' do not receive adequate interpretation under the handmaid thesis.

Art works that originate independently of a particular religion can also serve the aims of religion. Matisse designed and decorated "Chapelle du Rosaire," the Dominican convent chapel at Vence, a riviera town near Paris, and this work is used as a worship space.¹⁰ I have seen Sartre's play, "No Exit,"¹¹ performed in Boston churches, offered as a religious statement about the present state of mankind. But when the handmaid thesis is applied to Matisse's chapel or to Sartre's play-that is, to art works which are able to serve religion because of their themes or implications-the inadequacies of the handmaid thesis become apparent. The works that fall into this category cannot be completely subsumed by religion, because such works proceed from a more universal aesthetic base. Art, other than sacramental art, sees itself as a free, autonomous mode of experience that is capable of discerning truth from its own point of view.

While seeking to harmonize the two points of view, the handmaid thesis ironically brings art and religion to the point of separation. Religion places art in a subordinate role that is ultimately incompatible with the autonomy of art. Art is by necessity a free and autonomous activity that is capable of discerning truth and meaning in its own right, without subjecting its perceptions to the measure of religion. Like any other forms of creative activity-religion or science, for example-art can make mistakes in the interpretations that it gives to events. But such errors of artistic insight are not corrected by subordinating the perceptions of art to the judgment of religion, as if the latter were a superior partner.

Art and Religion Isolated

The handmaid thesis has resulted in a necessary division between art and religion. At a certain point, art can no longer tolerate the attempt of religion to subordinate it, as if it were only the handmaid. Art and religion then go their separate ways. The inevitable result of this separation is that art and religion consciously struggle not only for autonomy but for dominance, and their progressive isolation from one another is reinforced by the specialization of function that characterizes modern society. The unity of the primitive stage is now completely lost, and with unfortunate consequences for both art and religion. Religion is deprived of aesthetic sensibility, and art, disengaged from or at war with religion, finds itself lacking in spiritual significance.¹²

The state of opposition between art and religion is played out dramatically in Hegel's aesthetics, where Hegel shows art, the sensuous manifestation of divine spirit, in a dialectical relation with religion: At a certain stage in the dialectical process, art appears to disengage itself from its vocation as a manifestation of the divine spirit.¹³ In this state of disengagement from its religious grounds, art loses its highest vocation and exists in a state of rootless freedom where it can offer at its best an occasion for the exercise of the artist's imagination and a means of diversion for its viewers.¹⁴ The temporary opposition of art and religion in the dialectical process of Hegel's aesthetics has prompted such post-Hegelian writers as Harries and Heller to see in Hegel's work the very death of art.¹⁵ But Hegel himself, in contrast to his followers, does not see the opposition of art and religion as a final state. Art and religion dissolve their prior relationships only to become reconciled, through philosophy, and thus become capable of a more complete understanding of the organic whole of being.

The opposition that I am using to characterize the third general pattern relating art to religion parallels Hegel's analysis. If the opposition remains unresolved, it constitutes a misguided direction, because it operates in antipathy to the principles of cultural unity and organic relatedness of the whole of being. But this stage of opposition is actually necessary to correct the deficiencies of the primitive and the handmaid theses. Primitive art and religion were limited in focus to their local cultures, and the handmaid thesis imposed an untenable inequality between art and religion, in which art is not accorded its equal worth as a valid mode of interpreting experience. Art and religion therefore dissolve their incomplete or defective relations in order to advance to a new level of creative interaction. And their reconciliation on the new level will result in a greater freedom for both religion and art, a freedom that will enable them to cooperate as equal partners but on a more global scope than was possible at the primitive stage.

I personally doubt the possibility of a permanent divorce of art and religion, because both are so closely identified with the common tasks that are necessary to the realization of a humane society. Their common interest in human values requires a kind of cooperation that cannot be realized when art and religion pursue their own independent ways. The strongest efforts toward maintaining the separation of art

and religion have been the Puritan attempts to exclude art from religion, and the encouragement to a division of art and religion in post-industrial materialist oriented cultures of the United States and Russia, where specialization invites fragmentation. The separation brought on by Puritan attempts to exclude art from religion produced corresponding tendency in art to develop itself apart from or in a struggle with Puritan religion for dominance. But except for remnant subcultures such as orthodox Judaism and fundamentalist Protestantism, the Puritan effort is, for all practical purposes, dead. The present state of American culture succeeds in alienating art from religion only at the expense of fragmentation and neglect of important spiritual and humanistic values. And the present circumstance must be regarded only as a temporary state of affairs that is to be explained in part by the relatively short time that American society has had to develop. In comparison with the ancient civilizations of Asia and Europe, America is very young and has yet to realize maturity in its approach to the relation of art and religion.

The Transreligious View of Art and Religion

The three approaches to art and religion that I have discussed up to this point are based on distillations of historical realities. While all three historical patterns still exist in the Twentieth Century, the unique gift of this century, which is also the mirror of needs in the Twentieth Century, is what I would like to call a transreligious view of art and religion. I cannot be as neat about the future prospects for my proposal for the contemporary situation because there is little to draw upon. The transreligious approach to art and religion is in fact breaking new ground. This approach addresses the main issues that art and religion must deal with in the present age: to express creative sacredness or holiness that is particular to the different religions, but in symbols that can be shared through communication across religious frontiers, and to contribute to positive solutions for social problems common to the world that have resulted from intersecting crises. The transreligious view of art and religion provides the conceptual basis for a new relationship whereby religion and art can perform their function of mediating these contemporary problems. This new relationship is to be founded on mutual respect through which religion and art acknowledge one another as equal partners, each contributing its own values and structures to the solution of their shared problems. No

longer can religion assume that its judgments alone are the measure of truth; art and religion are coequal partners in the search for truth. Any mutual or one-sided distrust that may have clouded their relations in the past must now be set aside, in the interest of their common aims.

Although not a great deal can be said about the future application of my transreligious view of art and religion, it is possible to develop support for the thesis by noting certain prophetic themes in the writings of such visionary thinkers as Whitman and Tillich, which are symptomatic of trends in contemporary cultures. In his book *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman expresses great hopes for the redemption of society through creative cooperation between religion and art, particularly when such cooperation takes place in a democratically oriented social order.¹⁶ Whitman may have been overly optimistic about the immediate prospects for the improvement of society through art and religion, but he points in what I believe is the right direction: toward the transreligious approach to art and religion. Only through this new approach to art and religion do we see clearly the need and the possible realization of Whitman's dream.

From a theological perspective, Tillich's last lecture before his death called for a dynamic approach to religion aimed at breaking through the frontiers that divide religions.¹⁷ In this lecture, Tillich confessed that if he were to rewrite his theology, he would take much greater account of the unique manifestations of great moments (*kairos*) in the different religions. Tillich did not live to carry out the implications of his last insights into religion, but the transreligious approach to art and religion provides a frame of reference for further explorations of Tillich's discoveries.

Support for my thesis from these visionary sources, Whitman and Tillich, inspires confidence that the transreligious approach is not without merit. And certain elements of contemporary culture point in a similar direction: The renewed interest in classical mythology and the burgeoning interest in the signs of the zodiac, reaching out across both time and space, are strongly suggestive groupings for a transreligious outlook. Most interesting along these lines is the blending of Eastern and Western themes in contemporary popular music. The Beatles' song, "Let It Be," for example, presents a curious marriage of words adapted from the Virgin Mary's speech when she is informed of her divine mission: "Fiat mihi voluntas tua," (Let it be

done to me according to your will), and instrumental music that exhibits an Eastern influence.

Finally, we can add to these symptomatic "evidences" of the need for a transreligious approach to art and religion suggestions of a theoretical base for the view, that is found in Rahner's studies in the history of religion.¹⁸ Rahner advances the thesis that archetypal forms in every religion exhibit the human search for the divine. There is not time here to examine Rahner's thesis in detail, but if the archetypal thesis were to hold up under critical scrutiny, it would undoubtedly contribute to an explanation of the underlying mind structures from which transreligious concepts and art works can be created.

The beginnings of a transreligious approach to art and religion already exist in such works as Hopkins' poetry and the art works of Rouault who manages to address people of all religions while penetrating deeply into the themes of a single religion. Rouault sensitively combines religious faith and social content in his "Misere" prints and thereby exemplifies especially well these beginnings of the transreligious view from within a particular religion.¹⁹ Beyond these examples of art works with transreligious *implications*, there are a few attempts by artists to produce genuinely transreligious works. I have in mind such works as the chapel at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an instance in which the architect set out with deliberate intent to create a chapel that would communicate to people of all religions. The chapel is the result of a world wide study of religious architecture and thought of the different religions, and it seeks to combine elements in such a way as to transcend all of their boundaries. The chapel at M.I.T. is only one example of possible future efforts that artists may pursue, and it deals with only one of our tasks. That is, it contributes to breaking down barriers between religions, but it does not go beyond this to deal with social concerns.

III

Applications and Future Investigations

The present state of art and religion is in need of the new beginning that the transreligious approach can provide. There is a definite lack of significant art works that address the questions of my paper-communication and appreciation that extends across religious frontiers and attending to the social crises of the day-and particular religions falter in their isolation from other religions and from art. This

lack of significant art to deal with these questions, together with the relative ineptness of the various religions in the face of social problems, has caused critics and sympathizers alike to ask these revealing questions: Is the artist still at his task of interpreting human experience? and has religion lost its relevance for contemporary life? The problem is not that the artist has abandoned his task, or that religion is irrelevant. The problem is, rather, that both art and religion are in need of a new framework in which to address the fundamental questions of contemporary life. I believe that art and religion are still basic elements in the life processes of a culture because they both contribute to and articulate the sense of purpose and meaning that is otherwise lacking. Religion and art, however, do need to improve their respective public images and actively perform their mediating role in relation to the present age. And this can be done with substantial improvement through the adoption of the transreligious approach.

What then are the key areas in which the contribution of religion and art is needed? Here I will add to what I have alluded to in earlier parts of the paper these problems that should concern people of the present age:

1. Religion and art have an advocacy role in public and corporate policy decisions that is largely ignored. Religion and art can contribute essential information concerning the value implications of alternative policies, and bring to bear the importance of aesthetic, ethical and spiritual values in such decisions. Religion and art, together with philosophy, are in a position to raise the value questions that are quite often missing entirely or treated ineptly in major policy decisions of governmental agencies and private corporations, decisions that affect the welfare of the nation and the world. Far too frequently such decisions are left to persons trained in management sciences who rely mainly on the information provided by technicians in economics, politics, and the social sciences. The policy decisions then are made by people who may have little interest and even less knowledge concerning questions of aesthetic, ethical and spiritual values that are at issue in such decisions. And we are painfully aware of the suffering, frustration, and ineffectiveness of policies affecting such areas as urban renewal that did not give adequate attention to the value implications of the policies that reshaped, or, rather, disabled the life forces of many central cities across the country. Policies that treat values only in terms of "scientific" quantifications that are easily

measurable do not supply the lack. The expertise that art and religion can contribute is a specialized knowledge of aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual values, and a language of symbols in which these values can best be communicated. A part of the task of developing a new role for art and religion in policy making will be to help the policy makers to think and experience the values in a language more suitable than is the statistical scientific language that necessarily reduces the value questions to measurable quantifications. Quantification can be useful for compiling information on values. But quantification must always be developed and interpreted in the context of the values that are being served, and it does not provide a full comprehension of such values as the aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual. Art, in cooperation with religion, can supply the "language of values" for the many persons trained in management and social sciences, who lack the experiences that would prepare them for dealing with such issues. There are surely many policy makers who would do more in this area if they only understood *how* and *what* to do. Another part of the task of developing a role for art and religion in policy making will be to make a place for qualified experts in art and religion on the policy making teams of government and corporate agencies. This step is, perhaps, a new idea for policy making, but I believe it must be done in the interest of human well-being. A parochial, self-serving approach in which art and religion think only in terms of "their own interests" will not meet the need. But a plan based on the transreligious view of art and religion would, I believe, provide for the responsible entry of art and religion into the domains of public and corporate policy making processes.

2. There is need for re-examining the definitions of 'human being' in light of changes in the physical, cultural, and social events of the Twentieth century. The dominant views about human beings at the present time are heavily influenced by ancient Near East, Greek and renaissance notions. Art and religion, together with the sciences and philosophy must ask once again, have human beings changed, or do they remain relatively the same amidst social changes? How have such factors as increased population density; changing sex roles; increased knowledge of medical science; nuclear destruction capacity; computers that now perform acts of memory, discrimination, and decision making that were once reserved for the human mind alone; the ecological crisis and other such influences affected the basic character of the human being? Religion and art must act jointly to aid the

investigations that spell out the implications of each of these changes for our definition of the contemporary human being. Working together art and religion can contribute images that symbolize the social changes and develop ceremonies and rituals that integrate the older and the newly emerging concepts that must enter into a redefinition of human identity for our times.

3. Even if it turns out that there is no need to revise substantially our concept of modern human beings; all of these social and cultural changes are in need of interpretation. The implications of these changes for human values, how the changes will affect the quality of life, are of concern to everyone. What, for example, can art and religion tell us of the short and long range effects of environmental ecology? Religion and art can interpret to a large population the importance of sharing resources and of planning for the well-being of future generations, and they can foster respect for all forms of life including the life support systems of nature. These truths of ecology can be interpreted in images of art and can thus significantly influence people's understanding and decision making. And art and religion can advance the understanding of ecological problems by providing interpretations of the problems that include aesthetic, moral and spiritual values, along with the economic and scientific factors. This task must be accomplished with sensibility, however, rather than in a heavy handed didactic manner.

These suggestions for the application of the transreligious approach to art and religion must be carried further than is possible here, and the processes of developing more detailed applications to these and other problems will be a project for future investigations. It would be foolish of course to assume that art and religion alone can solve complex social problems. But it is equally unwise to omit their insights from the solutions that are being proposed. Art and religion have something to contribute that no other activity offers: This is a firm commitment to humanizing values and the powerful symbol carrying capacity of art to influence change in a positive direction, in the direction of producing a social climate that is commensurate with the realization of maximum degrees of human potential consistent with individual and general well-being.

Undoubtedly, the transreligious approach to art and religion raises many other more theoretical questions that will require further investigation. In keeping with my desire to treat the transreligious

approach as an open, on-going discussion I would like to end by simply asking these questions:

1. What are the implications of the transreligious approach for theologians who are investigating the relations between art, religion and contemporary culture?
2. What effects will the adoption of the transreligious approach have upon artists who are working today?
3. What would be the probable effects of the transreligious approach upon critical studies that interpret individual art works of present and future artists?
4. What effect will the adoption of the transreligious approach have upon the place of traditional religious art symbols?

These and other questions offer significant possibilities for future research into the issues raised by the transreligious approach to art and religion.

Notes

- ¹ In order to forestall a possible objection to my proposal I point out that my argument is not against the preservation of local or regional art symbols that are valued primarily for their application to religious activities of an internal nature such as Christian cathedrals, Islamic mosques, Greek temples or the religious artifacts associated with them. My point is that in addition to symbols for internal use in worship and the expression of a particular faith, we must have symbols, these same ones or others, that speak clearly of the things that the different religions have in common to people of all other religions.
- ² T. S. Eliot, **Notes Toward the Definition of a Culture** (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), p. 22.
- ³ Robert Farris Thompson, **African Art In Motion: Icon and Act** (Los Angeles, Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1974).
- ⁴ Arno Lehmann, **Christian Art In Africa and Asia** (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 58.
- ⁵ Thompson, p. 1.
- ⁶ John W. Dixon, Jr., "The Way Into Matter," in **Art and Religion as Communication** (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), p. 23.
- ⁷ Paul Weiss, **Religion and Art: The Aquinas Lecture**, 1963 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press), p. 41.
- ⁸ Dixon, p. 28.
- ⁹ W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie, **The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins** (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

- ¹⁰ Henri Matisse, "Chapelle du Rosaire, " Vence, 1957. Cited in Frank and Dorothy Gellein, **Christianity In Modern Art** (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 116-119.
- ¹¹ Jean Paul Sartre, **No Exit** (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).
- ¹² Eliot, p. 25.
- ¹³ G. W. F. Hegel, **Aesthetics**, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I:9-12.
- ¹⁴ Karen Harries, "Hegel on the Future of Art," **The Review of Metaphysics** 27 (June, 1974): 677-696.
- ¹⁵ Erich Heller, **The Artist's Journey into the Interior** (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 115.
- ¹⁶ Walt Whitman, **Prose Works 1892**, ed. Floyd Stovall (New York: New York University Press, 1964), II: 361-425. I would like to thank Professor Esther Jackson of the University of Wisconsin, Madison for calling to my attention Whitman's discussion of art and religion.
- ¹⁷ Paul Tillich, **The Future of Religions**, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 8 f.
- ¹⁸ Hugo Rahner, **Greek Myths and Christian Mystery**, trans. Brian Battershaw (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), p. 14.
- ¹⁹ Getlein, p. 51.
- ²⁰ I wish to thank Professor William E. Dooley, S.J. for helpful criticisms of a previous draft, and Professor Paton Ryan for suggesting some examples that enriched my presentation, both of Marquette University.

Statement of Barbara Morgan Photographer

The divisive role that science too often plays (due to the drive for power, money, etc.) by magnifying and computerizing beyond human scale is one of the threats to human harmony. As I see it, religion and art have functioned as harmonizers throughout our pre-scientific past-and now the computerized escalations are making it more difficult to sustain our individual to individual-individual to group-individual and group to planet [relations] and our own psyche. And unless a new morality based on concern for others can be made to function, I think we are going to be deader than the dinosaur. If religion on a planetary level can awaken this new cosmic mutuality-aided by art-then maybe we can get science to be an aid instead of an atomic blast and extinction. Because science and religion haven't adequately related to serve mankind, Science is, although needed and helpful, serving the exploiters to a formidable degree for dominance and the fast buck. I don't know the answer, but I think science is the frontier of the human spiritual dilemma that has to be coordinated for survival. This is a rather somber contribution, but it hits me. I also think, on the affirmative side, that the inspiration of religion and art as human interaction is the only real solution to cope with the cold mathematics of the anonymity of the machine science world.

Appendix

See the original published works to see images (listed below) removed from this version of the article.

- **The Praying Jew** by Marc Chagall, oil on canvas, 1914, (detail).
Courtesy: The Art Institute of Chicago.
- **Coventry Tapestry** by Graham Sutherland. Photo courtesy: Provost and Council of Coventry Cathedral.
- **Man-Bird (Homme-Oiseau)**, front view, polychrome wood carving, (detail). Photo courtesy: Collection, Washington University, St. Louis.
- **Mask, Hawk Face.** Tlingit Shaman's grave, Yukutat, Alaska. Photo courtesy: Museum of Natural History, Princeton University.
- Advent banner, Calvary Lutheran Chapel, Madison. Photo courtesy: J. Moldenhauer.
- **Christ** by Peter Paul Rubens. Drawing, study for triptych **Raising of the Cross**. Photo courtesy: The Fogg Museum, Harvard University. Gift of Meta and Paul J. Sachs.
- Calvary Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wisconsin. Photo courtesy: J. Moldenhauer.
- The Rothko Chapel, Houston. Photo courtesy: Hickey & Robertson.
- Jackson Pollack painting (detail).
- Zodiac sign, **Pisces**.
- M.I.T. Chapel. Photo courtesy: M.I.T. Historical Collections.
- Plate 12 for **Miserere: "It is hard to live ..."** by Georges Roualt, 1922, (detail). Photo courtesy: Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist.
- **White Crucifixion** by Marc Chagall, oil on canvas, 1938, (detail).
Courtesy: The Art Institute of Chicago.
- Photograph by Sr. Noemi Weygant. Courtesy: the artist.
- **Pope Clement of 17th Century** by Stella Waitzkin, resin, paper, ink, 1975, (detail). Photo courtesy: the artist.
- **Storm on the Lake**, Darmstadt Hitda-Codex (HS 1640, fol. 117r).
Photo courtesy: Hessische Landesund Hochschulbibliothek, Darmstadt, W. Germany.
- Martha Graham by Barbara Morgan. Photo courtesy: the artist.