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"Conversion" in Religious Art

In order to consider the place of conversion for religious art, two preliminary matters must be considered. First, the process of religious art itself, what it is and how it relates to religion and art, must be discussed, and then there must follow a brief inquiry into what I mean by the word "conversion". The final section will then be prepared to consider conversion in religious art.

I

Religious art is a perceptible event of supreme reality.[1] The remainder of this article will try to analyse what this definition means and how it involves conversion. Let us begin with how I am using the word "reality."

There are two sides or poles of reality: what is experienced in a negative way, and what is felt as its manifestations or aspects. Often the two sides are expressed together. For example, in the *Upanishads*, there is a conversation between a father and son in which the father defines reality for the son by having the son divide a fig and then its seed. Finding nothing within the seed, the son is instructed that the "nothing" which he cannot perceive both initiates a great fig tree and is shared by the whole world; this "nothing" is *atman*, reality.[2] In the *Tao-te ching* also, the Tao, reality, is expressed as having two poles, one pole elusive and vague, the other having form and "things" in it.[3] Finally, in the *New Testament*, Paul says that reality can be perceived in what is manifested, and, quoting Epimenides, that it is the one in whom we live and move and have our being.[4] The other side of reality is ex-

1. Unless otherwise noted, the word "reality" will hereafter refer to supreme reality.
2. *Chandogya Upanishad* 6.12. 1-3.
3. *Tao-te ching* 21.
4. Romans 1, 20; Acts 17, 28.

pressed in the Gospel of John, "No one has ever seen God."[5] In the light of these statements, and in terms of religious art, I view reality as that force which is imperceptible in itself yet capable of manifesting itself in perceptible forms, the source of all, that which allows things to interrelate and be manifested, what is fundamental and ultimate, and what serves as an agent of communication.

From this definition of reality, I extract three primary integrants: energy, relatedness and creativity.

The energy which is reality is its rich and fertile base, a vat of potential which invites infinite directions and which resists fossilization. Hence reality's movements are through events rather than states, processes rather than objects. The integrant energy is experienced by us most clearly in the many varieties of biological, instinctual, intellectual and intuitive life-forces. We experience energy not in the variety itself, but in the power of will which created and which continues to sustain it.

The second integrant, relatedness, revealed in the passages taken from the *Upanishads* and the *New Testament,* describes the mode of communication of reality's manifestations and functions. It is felt as *a bond, a sense of* strength of relationship, wherein all of reality are interrelated since all are rooted in that which is reality. All participate in and are of reality, connected to one another fundamentally by their share in the real nature. In man, the force of relatedness is described by Galileo and later, though developed to a much greater extent, by Charles Peirce as *il lume naturale.*[6] *Il lume naturale* may be concisely defined as an intuitive power-link between man and the real nature which enables man to grasp intuitively the processes by which reality

5. John 1, 18.

6. *Il lume naturale* is used in Galileo's *Il saggiatore.* See the English translation by Stillman Drake in his *The Controversy on the Comets of 1618* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania press, 1960), p. 189. However, Galileo uses many other similar phrases, such as *logica naturale* and *il naturale discorso,* in his other works. For Peirce, see *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce,* ed. by C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss and A. Burks (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1931-1935, 1958), 1:630, 5:604, and 6:10. For a more extensive discussion of *il lume naturale,* see my "Peirce's Religious Metaphysics," *International Philosophical Quarterly,* 19 (1979), 407-425.

manifests itself. Man thus senses intuitively the way of the real nature because man has something akin to the real nature within him. It is the kinship of all things of reality which fosters relatedness.

Finally, reality is creativity. Reality not only moves from event to event, as I noted in discussing energy, but its movement's impetus in creativity. The creativity of reality is so powerful and awesome that we come to experience many realities of the supreme reality. And our experiences are often paradoxical. For example, we sense permanence yet fluidity, variety yet unity, order yet spontaneity, structure without tyranny and purpose without necessity. All these and other aspects are merely indications of reality's endless quest for creative modes.

All three integrants truly integrate themselves in existence, that is, all three encourage but do not compel all of reality to imitate and share in energy, relatedness and creativity. Those who are sensitive to the profound movements of reality, who will to participate in reality, will strive in every way to be creative, to use their natural powers and to stress relatedness in order to merge in some way closer to reality. From their efforts emerge events of reality.

Religious art is one of these events of reality. Its individuality as an event lies, in general, in its greater potential for accessibility to the real nature than other real creations, since it is the result of man and reality. More specifically, its uniqueness as an event arises because of the dynamic and perceptible mode in which it presents the integrants. In sum, the uniqueness of religious art as an event of reality, as I shall discuss in more detail in another section, is in its power of conversion.

There are four stages to the event of religious art: First, there is the ever-present influence of reality. Second, there is the need for union with reality, an openness to reality's converting power. Third, there is the experience itself. And fourth, there is the quest for means to express the experience. One who initiates a need for real union, has the union experience, seeks for a means to express it, and then crystallizes it in a concrete, perceptible, livable and continually transforming creative process. It is important to state, according to this view of religious art, that the stages may occur from a new or an old religious art process. The fourth stage, in other words, may be fulfilled in an existing religious art process. It follows then that

among the three participants in the religious art process—the created, the creator(s) and reality—the creator(s) include both the artist and the spectators or audience. The spectator creates his/her own event upon each encounter with the art and its power of conversion. Each encounter is new and potentially transforming because each event of reality, religious art or otherwise, has many sides and dimensions. Since it is an event of reality, religious art does not exhaust its power or lose its freshness after a single visit or experience of its content. This fact has long been acknowledged by artists and traditional religious arts which often seem to prefer to take one theme or subject and explore it from many perspectives.[7] Moreover, even if the subject, theme or concept is similar from one event to another, each religious artist will project a different event.[8] But the form, the source (reality) and the purpose (conversion) remain the same; the fourfold pattern of the religious art event—the real influence, need for union, the experience and quest for means—is unvaried; and finally the participants are the same: the created, the creator(s) (artists and spectators) and reality.

Even though I have now offered a summary of my view of religious art, it is possible to show religious art's distinction in an even clearer light by contrasting it with the realms of religion and art. It is necessary to point out that the following definitions of "religion" and "art" are offered only as reference points to aid the reader in an understanding of how I view religious art.[9] I define religion as the quest for and union with the mystical, holy and ultimately real through imperceptible means, such as meditation and grace. Art in my view is the clarification of reality by perceptible means. In the light of these definitions,

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7. Examples can easily be found in modern and traditional religious art. See the paintings of Georges Rouault on Christ's passion, Constantin Brancusi's numerous workings of "Endless Column," the art of the Kathakali dancer Gopinath, Buddhist stupas and sculpture of the figure of the Buddha, the sacred art of the Tantric sects' consideration of the theme of union and fertility, and the infinite variety of mosque decoration.
8. Compare, for example, two writers' consideration of the religious values of ordinary life: Tsao Hsueh-Chin (Cao Xue Qin), *Hung Lou Meng* ("Red Chamber Dream" but now translated as "The Story of the Stone"), and James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake*.
9. The difficulty of defining religion and art is clearly shown in Samuel Laeuchli, *Religion and Art in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), pp. 17-55.

there is no need to stress that religious art has many links to religion and art.[10] An appropriate analogy would be parents and child. The child inherits some characteristics from its parents but it still remains an individual. The dimensions of religious art's individuality from religion and art all stem from the fact that religious art is the synthesis of the four stages aforementioned. For example, religious art has perceptible means which traditional religion does not have in the quest for reality, and it differs from other creative art events in the intensity with which it asks about, presents and especially unites with reality. In brief, by doing what both religion and art do, by seeking what both seek, by presenting in one event what both present, religious art becomes a process different from both of them.[11]

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10. It is generally thought by some writers that religion and art were originally one, that is, religious art preceded religion and art. See Von Ogden Vogt, *Art and Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1948), p. 18, G. Van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, trans. D. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 7, who says primitive expressions of art were religious acts.

11. To my knowledge, there have been eight explanations for the meeting of art and religion. I shall summarize them here in order to present a contrast to the view offered in this article. The first is the analogical. According to it, the creative activity of art is a kind of divine mandate by which man both co-operates and imitates God. Cf. E. Gilson. *Painting and Reality* (New York: Pantheon, 1957), pp. 288 ff, who would qualify the argument with the distinction creation *de nihilo* and creation *de novo;* also D. Harned, *Theology and the Arts* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), p. 190, J. Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), p. 60, and the document of Vatican II concerned with art, "Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings. 2) and 3) The second and third explanations are logically similar. In one religion arises from art; in the other art arises from religion. Advocating the former was George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Dover reprint of 1896 ed.), pp. 114-117, who claimed all artists were trying to be creators of religion. A different form of this argument is presented by T. R. Martland, "Analogy between Art and Religion," *Journal of Philosophy*, 63 (1966), 511 ff., and *Religion as Art: An Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981). Martland claims that religion does what art does. The third 3) point of view, perhaps the oldest and most common, is found in Von Ogden Vogt, *Art and Religion*, p. 21, Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (New York: New American Library, 1974 [1909]), pp. 21, 24, and quite recently, in S. G. F. Brandon, *Man and God in Art and Ritual* (New York: Scribner's, 1975), p. 4, where he writes that art is a primary form of religious expression.

Indeed it is then doing something which transcends the efforts of both religion and art as I have defined them: In one event, it is questing for reality, uniting with reality and clarifying reality. In sum, religious art is not separate from religion or from art, yet it is different because it combines the essential intent and function of both, and by combining, becomes an event which transcends them. It transcends other art because it more directly and intensely focusses on the mystical, the holy and that which is ultimately real, and thus more intensely is real and involves reality than other art processes. Other art, in fact, concerns itself with other realities, not the supreme reality. It transcends religion because it clarifies its own process through a perceptible means. In brief, religious art addresses in one concrete, perceptible process-event the three basic questions: what is (which encompasses the question of origin), what will be, and how to attain what will be, namely, the questions of reality, destiny and conversion.

The fourth 4) explanation is that art and religion arise from the same source and motive, have a similar end, but are different. This view should be distinguished from the second explanation, which subordinates religion to the ways of art. For this view, see Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958 [1913]), pp. 68-69, R. Baudry, "Activité esthetique et experience mystique. Vers une nouvelle conception de leurs rapports," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 73 (1972), 229-335, and the several works of J. W. Dixon, Jr., including "The Way into Matter," in J. Waddell and F. W. Dillistone, eds., *Art and Religion as Communication* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), pp. 26-27, *Art and the Theological Imagination* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), Chapter 7, and "Art as Religion: Religion as Art," *Semeia*, 13 (1978), 131-153. The fifth 5) explanation is the sociological. It sees religion and art coalescing or separating according to societal values and pressures. This is a favourite argument for those such as Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* and H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973) eschew much of modern art's religious values because, to them, it seems to reflect a mechanized, godless and secularized society. See also H. Schade, "Zum Problem einer christlichen Kunst," *Stimmen der Zeit*, 182 (1968), 181-192, J. Bernhart, "Religiose Kunst im gewandelten Weltbild," *Hochland*, 62 (1970), 314-319, J. Duvignaud, *The Sociology of Art*, trans. T. Wilson (London: Paladin, 1972), pp. 85-95. The sixth 6) explanation evaluates the nexus of religion and art solely in terms of the art "object." It claims that if the object manifests something either greater or other than man and his world, then it is religious. There are many variants of this position. See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J. Harvey [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950 (1913), pp. 65-71, Paul Tillich, "Art and Ultimate Reality," *Cross Currents*, 10 (1960), 1-14, G. Van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane*

II

Actually the question of conversion can be seen to involve the matters of reality and destiny as a kind of bridge to both. For how we are transformed involves both that which transforms and the purpose of the transformation. Let us then turn to the meaning of conversion.

How we attain our ultimate end is through constant conversion. Conversion requires a fundamental turning and continuous change of heart toward a closer and closer union with reality. It entails a shift away from one's ordinary plane of existence, namely, away from the patterns of one's inner life. Conversion happens because a catalyst injects something into the complex pattern of forces of life which communicates with and transforms the basic nature of human being away from its habitual patterns to other patterns; something which human nature can appreciate intuitively *(il lume naturale)*, and which offers, as we would expect, a different level of belonging, a sense of creative power and a raw feeling of energetic freshness corresponding to the three integrants of reality: relatedness, creativity and energy. Conversion happens because human being confronts something intensely real and irresistible for human nature. Human nature is mysteri-

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Beauty, pp. 333 ff., G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, Paul Weiss, *Religion and Art* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1963), p. 96, Gilson, *Painting and Reality*, p. 299, F. David Martin, *Art and the Religious Experience* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972), 160-164. The seventh 7] and eighth 8] explanations are related. The former, advocated by Paul Weiss and Hegel among others, states that all art created by a truly religious person becomes religious. Weiss, *Religion and Art*, pp. 38-39, writes that "a religious work of art. . .must be made by a religious man." The latter, the eighth argument, focusses on the artist also. Here the artist is a prophet, communicating his message revealed from another sphere. See especially R. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938], pp. 335-336, R. Hazleton, *A Theological Approach to Art* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), pp. 88-123, D. Ziegler, "Artist as Prophet," *Brethren Life and Thought*, 12 (1967), 11-17, G. Rombold, "Kunst als prophetie," *Theologisch-Praktisch Quartalschrift*, 125 (1977), 19-28. Artists like Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, trans. R. Mannheim (New York: Wittenborn, 1960), p. 82, view the artist as a medium for reality.

Among these studies, and many others I have not recorded, only the work of Paul Weiss has developed to any extent the difference of religious art from the realms of religion and art. See Weiss, *Religion and Art*, p. 80.

ously attracted to this pattern of forces, longs to contribute its own natural gifts, seeks the means and conversion happens.

Hence conversion concerns only the essential nature of each person and community, namely, the soul. It concerns only that which is real and can merge with reality. One discovers in the conversion process not only a new attitude, but newer and newer attitudes combined with means to maintain and quest for newness and freshness in one's life. Naturally this change of heart creates changes in what we do and think, and together with the closer basis in reality, invites experiences of new events and even creates new events. The one requirement for conversion is that we become real, that is, that we fulfil and imitate in every way the three primary integrants of reality itself : energy, relatedness and creativity. We fulfil the integrant energy by completely using all our energies, our natural powers. We fulfil the integrant relatedness by seeking interrelatedness in every act and thought. And we fulfil the integrant creativity by endlessly seeking ways to be real and reflect reality. Accomplishing these three tasks affect the soul and accomplish a life of conversion.

Why then is religious art the ideal tool of conversion ? Not only is religious art an ideal vehicle for expressing conversion, since it can present and clarify the extraordinary patterns of reality, not only is it also an agent of contemplation through its unique mode of presenting contemplative subjects, but it can also be a way for others to be converted. For it reflects the three integrants of reality which inspire and convert us: It directs the natural powers to the ultimate energy by concerning itself only with the supremely real; it itself is a form of relatedness by bringing together a community of participants of reality; and its technique, its materials and its form offer unlimited creative potential. Let us, however, place these claims on a firmer basis by a more detailed discussion of the forces of conversion in religious art.

III

In the first section of this article I pointed out that religious art is concerned with the aforementioned fundamental patterns and forces of life. It appeals to that deep intuitive level of human being which effects conversion because it can concretely attempt to present the web of forces which other events describe or present obscurely or ambi

guously. Religious art answers the questions of the soul, allows the soul to use its natural powers to seek the ultimate, offers a profound mode of communication (relatedness) and opens unlimited possibilities for creativity. It accomplishes these three key elements of real conversion in the most direct way for human kind, namely, through a concrete, perceptible process. It injects a clarifying catalyst into our lives which is so full of creative power, so rich with fundamental concerns, and so directly a mode of communicating reality that we, if receptive, are drawn by its beautiful allurement to contribute something of ourselves and to participate. With this creative intent, the event of religious art occurs, and, at the same time, conversion also occurs. It is important to stress that religious art happens only when we contribute, when we take that creative step toward effective the communication of reality in our own pattern of forces. It does not happen to one who simply stands before a painting without involving himself nor to one who listens to religious music without contributing something of his own to the process. Religious art, like all events of reality, occurs only in a mutual context, for only then can relatedness be real.

In the right of this general view, the more specific forces of conversion in religious art can be mentioned. It is not possible to discuss all of them in the space remaining, but I shall present several with examples to give a clear idea of the direction involved. These forces are not abstractions imposed on the event, but have come to mind from actual religious art events. After due consideration, one can discover that these and other forces of conversion apply throughout the entire spectrum of religious art, from prehistoric magical signs to *modern avant-garde* Zen events.[12]

12. Writers are divided on whether modern art without traditional symbols and subjects can be considered religious art. The main issue is whether a work of art can indeed have profound meaning and ontological significance if it presents nothing of the traditional religion and gives no indication of ordinary reality. Studies which are favourable to religious art without traditional symbols are J. F. Hayward, "Religious Implications of Modern Painting," *Journal and Religion,* 24 (1954), 195 ff., F. and D. Getlein, *Christianity in Modern Art* (Milwaukee : Bruce, 1961), pp. 40-41 and pp. 192 ff., Dixon, *Nature and Grace in Art* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina, 1964), pp. 186 ff., K. Lüthi, "Das Ende des Christusbildes in der modernen Malerei," *Zeitschrift für evangelische Ethik*, 10 (1966), 266-267, H. Schade, "Zum Probleme iner christlichen Kunst," 192, W. Gaudnek "Religious Archetype in Ontomorphic and Polymorphic Art," *Union Seminary Quarterly*

One of the most powerful experiences of religious art is the sense of a self-replicating and infinitely fertile force. Forever fecund and young, it regenerates us by its profound energy and freshness. Hence it injects into the web of life an element of renewal which can spark conversion in those sensitive to it. The catalyst for this force of conversion can be traced to *il lume naturale* which, as I have discussed above, is attracted to the powers of the real nature. The key here is the feeling which relates us to a greater force behind nature, the world or life in general, an absolute force which regenerates and rejuvenates all things. This power of relatedness is the critical bridge between all

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Review, 25 [1970], 313, J. Chandler, ed., "Symposium on the Sacred in Art," *Artscanada*, 28 [1971], 19, S. Terrien, "Modern Painting and Theology," *Religion and Life*, 38 [1969], 177, F. D. Martin, *Art and the Religious Experience*, p. 182 claims that abstract art can only be implicitly religious without conventional symbols, L. Dupre, "The Enigma of Religious Art," *Review of Metaphysics*, 29 [1975], 42, H. Schade, "Wassily Kandinsky: Der 'Universale Karfreitag' und das 'Zeitalter des heiligen Geistes'," *Stimmen der Zeit*, 195 [1977], 311-324. On the other side are those who find modern art not only without religious significance, but idolatrous and destructive of the real function of art in religious life. Extreme condemnation is stated in H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, M. E. Stucki, *War on Light: The Destruction of the Image of God in Man through Modern Art* [Orlando, Fla.: Freedom University Press, 1975] and George S. Heyer, *Signs of Our Times: Theological Essays on Art in the Twentieth Century* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], Ch. 6. Those who more or less question the possibility of a modern religious absolute [without conventional symbols, figures and total abstraction] art include J. Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* [New York: Pantheon, 1953], p. 217. A. Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, trans. S. Gilbert [St. Albans: Paladin, 1974], pp. 468-642, K. Ledergerber, *Kunst und Religion in der Verwandlung* [Cologne: Schauberg, 1961], R. Ladwig, "Ende des Christusbildes in der modernen Malerei?" *Zeitschrift für evangelische Ethik*, 11 [1967], 181-182, Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963], III, 199-200. For an excellent discussion of the whole problem of how religion and art can conflict, see Samuel Laeuchi, *Religion and Art in Conflict*. Laeuchi, however, does not commit himself to one side or the other in this book, but stresses that both religion and art should be open to one another.

The effect of modern art of all kinds on our lives needs much more in-depth analysis, from the point of view of its religious values, than it has so far received. It seems rather inappropriate to evaluate modern art in terms of traditional religious standards, and yet I personally would disapprove calling all modern art "religious art."

forces of conversion and the actual conversion event of religious art. I call this force fertility. In architecture it is experienced as an organic focus, in structures which somehow seem alive and reflect natural processes. In the West, the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Habitats of Moshe Safdie provide examples. In the East, fertility is evident in Shinto and medieval Hindu temples, and in Japanese transplanting songs. The latter's power of fertility emerges in the songs' constant repetition of references to the divine powers of the earth and the need for a rich harvest. Native art in general has a similar impact.

Another force of conversion, related to fertility, is reattachment. It too reconnects us with that which lies at the base of existence. It can refer to reattachment to nature, to ancestors, to some past sacred time or place, or to any ontological experience. The conversion occurs from the fact that one is recalled to his heritage, destiny and community. Again native art, such as the American Indian chants, lays great emphasis on returning to and reliving the most profound experiences of old. The tendencies in many religious cultures to enact myths in their ceremonies, as well as in their paintings, is a form of reattachment. The way Judaic art recalls the temple and the heritage of Israel presents another dimension of reattachment, mnemonic reverence. Primary vehicles for Judaic reattachment are mizrachs, ark curtains and cases, and ketubahs. Chinese landscape painting and *chin* music also reveal reattachment. In the former, man's position in the entire cosmos is reflected. The task of the painter is to reflect that state which, according to Taoist thought, is expressed by neither words nor silence. The art itself then becomes a means to reattach oneself to the tao. In *chin* music, the five musical tones are related to the order of the universe. In modern art, Anton Webern in his lectures compared musical processes to natural processes.[13] When one is transformed by the music, one has been in harmony with natural processes. And these natural processes for Webern were not superficial physical modes, but universal laws of the cosmos to which all reality conformed. For Webern music reattaches us to those primal laws.

Another force of conversion is discontinuity. It arises from the fact that the event of religious art shifts a person from one plane to another, so that a kind of gap becomes evident. Icons present a clear example of this force, since the emphasis on unnatural perspective and

13. *Der Weg zur neuen Musik* (Vienna: Universal, 1960), pp. 9-11.

distortion of features is a sign shifting the participant to a deeper and extraordinary level of reality. Grotesques from all religious cultures, including many of the medieval pietas, are also presenting the principle of discontinuity. The terrifying expressions and appearance shocks one across the gap, urging one toward transcendence and conversion. The canonic exaggerated poses seen in Hindu and Buddhist painting and sculpture, particularly evident in the Yakshis, also illustrate and project discontinuity. On each occasion these perspectives and poses are a kind of trigger which, in the soul of the believer, sparks the power to leap the gap between a life out of communion with reality and a life in harmony with reality. To suggest the leap, the natural is made discontinuous with itself, that is, somehow distorted from his natural proportions. In the twentieth century, the art processes of Paul Klee and John Cage explore the possibilities of discontinuity.[14] Klee's work, such as "Dance of the Red Skirts" and "With the Two Lost Ones", breaks up the continuity of the natural, obscures the line between the inner and the outer, and stresses the relatedness of the material and the immaterial. When one experiences Klee's religious art, one is compelled to reorient one's old mental structures. John Cage reorients the soul by concentrating only on what is, by trying to remove contrivance and structure and by creating intensely mutual contexts for art so that there is no rupture between art and life. The discontinuity arises in the leap which is necessary for us to turn away from a fabricated and stagnant view and experience of reality to a more open attitude in which we do more participating in events. For example, Cage's *Variations* series presents a powerful illustration of discontinuity.

Religious art often revels in the extraordinary, but it does not neglect the needs of the ordinary believer. This force of conversion

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14. On Klee, see Dixon, *Art and the Theological Imagination*, pp. 141-159. On Cage, see his books *Silence, A Year from Monday* and *M* (Middletown, Conn. : Wesleyan University Press, 1961, 1967, 1973) and R. Kostelanetz, ed., *John Cage* [London : Penguin 1971]. In his world-view, Cage has been deeply influenced by Zen Buddhism. He studied briefly with the master D. T. Suzuki. In several of his composition processes, he has used the *I Ching* ("Music of Changes" and 'Imaginary Landscape No. 4"). Cages defined the purpose of music as follows : "Music is edifying, for from time to time it sets the soul in operation. The soul is the gatherer-together of the disparate elements [Meister Eckhart], and its work fills one with peace and love.' From *Silence*, p. 62. The work of music is the work of conversion.

is called struggle. It focusses on the trials of man to transcend those things which obstract him from his destiny. Michelangelo, in the Christian tradition, seems to place much of his attention in his sculpture on the struggles of man to release the divine element from the corporeal prison which traps it. In a different vein, the paintings of the Jataka Tales, where the Buddha in various lives over-comes different problems through Buddhist ideals, present interesting examples of what one might call serene struggle. Buddhist sculpture, however, exemplifies struggle in a negative or indirect manner. The Buddha is totally merged with reality; the struggle has passed. In Hindu culture, struggle is powerfully evident in the great literature, i. e. *The Mahabhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Tale after tale in the *Mahabharata* tells of one confronted with various tests in which Hindu ideals, particularly *dharma*, are to be employed. It is a variegated tapestry of the arduous journey of the soul. Struggle combines with discontinuity in the Ronchamp chapel of the architect Le Corbusier. The chapel, which challenges space rather than conforms to it, offers the participant numerous incongruous elements, such as the form of the structure and the use of light on the inside. A parallel temple from ancient times is the Parthenon, which was Le Corbusier's ideal structure.[15] Despite its striking beauty even in ruins, its simplicity and symmetry, it was built to reflect Athena, the goddess who delights in struggle.[16] Standing on Acropolis, it challenges man to her ideals, the use of clarity and strength to master the task.[17] All these varied dimensions of struggle throughout religious art impress the soul with the need to seek transformation and to demand it exercise its natural energies toward a closer intimacy with reality.

Finally, there is the force rhythm. The Hindu tradition especially has developed and generated many of the dimensions of rhythm in its sculpture, architecture and, of course, its varied styles of dance. Its source is said to be the creation and destruction cycle presented in the dance of Shiva as Nataraja.[18] Indian dance with its extensive *mudra*

15. Le. Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. F. Etchells (London: Architecture press, 1927), pp. 203-204.
16. W. F. Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion*, trans. M. Hadas (London: Thames and Hudson, 1955), p. 60.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
18. F. Bowers, *The Dance in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), pp. 15-16.

vocabulary can express also practically the entire range of Indian mythology. The dancer who imitates Shiva's acts or re-enacts Krishna's and Radha's love attempts to relate to, represent and become influenced by a cosmic rhythm, the rhythm of reality. A similar correspondence between the dance and the forces of reality is found in native ceremonial dances, i. e. the Hopi snake dance.[19] Rhythm is evident also in Chinese landscape painting, where the brush-strokes vibrate, in the hand of a master, according to the energy of the cosmos.[20] The power of rhythm as a force of conversion can also be felt in religious poetry such as T. S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday", the Japanese transplanting songs, Basho's haiku poetry, and Ibn 'Ata' Illah's *The Book of Wisdom* (Kitab al-Hikam). Modern dance too, in figures such as Martha Graham ("Circe") Alwin Nikolais ("Imago"), Erick Hawkins ("Black Lake") and George Balanchine ("Serenade"), has reached new heights in the expression of the rhythm of reality. One often feels, in experiencing many modern works, that one is participating in a ritual.[21]

IV

In summary, this article has developed and discussed the following points : 1) Religious art is an *event* rather than only an object or state. 2) It is an event *of reality* which 3) involves a *mutual* context (including the created, creator(s) and reality) and 4) is *continually* active. 5) Religious art is a *perceptible* event of reality. 6) Its perceptibility makes it a very *accessible mode* for reality's transforming powers. Thus, religious art is a synthesis of the powers to clarify reality, to merge with reality and yet to be real. This synthesis in one event 7) *distinguishes* it from religion and art, its parents. 8) The effect of its expression of reality's energy, creative power and sense of relatedness is *conversion*. Some examples of the forces of conversion are fertility, reattachment, discontinuity, struggle and rhythm.

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19. Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (New York : Viking, 1963), Pt. III, Ch. 9.
20. Mai-mai Sze, *The Way of Chinese Painting* (New York : Vintage, 1959), pp. 37-63.
21. Cf. J. Highwater, *Dance : Rituals of Experience* (New York : A & W, 1978)