Art: Spiritual Discipline in Process

Lydia Erwig-Straughan

A Thesis

In

The Department Of

Theological Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Theological Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

December 2003

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-91025-3
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-91025-3

Abstract

Art: Spiritual Discipline in Process
Lydia Erwig-Straughan

Much has been written on the significance of art and Christianity; the vast majority dealing with as a product. In this thesis the role art-as-process is explored to discover the effects and ramifications of the two approaches on churchly and individual spiritual life. The terminology of art-as-process and art-as-product is introduced to delineate between the former active art making process and the latter focus on end product seen in the church today.

The purpose of this study is to discover possibilities for the use of art-as-process as a spiritual discipline. In so doing, the history of art in the Christian church is briefly explored to understand reasons for the focus on art as contemplative tool hence product based. All three major streams of the faith are considered, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant.

The problem of idolatry is also addressed in relation to the art-as-product mindset. The role of art in society is linked to idolatry in examining the institution of high arts, kitsch, the effects of consumerism and the situationalist concept of the society of the spectacle.

Relevant theological, psychological and philosophical sources are consulted to form a portrait of the benefits of creativity on spirit and psyche. Art is regarded as the vocation of all and not a compartmentalized activity commonly held in art-as-product mindset. Art-as-process is proposed as a valuable spiritual discipline in light of the following revelations of this research: art as antidote to idolatry, as release from the effects of original sin, and as eschatological transformation.

Table of Contents

Art: Spiritual Discipline in Process

Introduction

Growing up in a fundamentalist Protestant church, I never gave much thought to the use of art in Christianity save to condemn it as idol worship. All that changed, however, when I went to Paris as a young teen and entered Sacre Coeur Cathedral. I was completely transfixed by the artwork and statues I saw there. It began in me an instant appreciation and love for religious art. This appreciation was only heightened upon entering Notre Dame cathedral and I owe to Paris my continuing love of Christian art which leads me to my theological interests today.

Before theology, I began studying art history and technique to learn more about art appreciation and also to create my own works in addition to admiring other's. When I examined a religiously themed work of art, I experienced a deepening awareness of the divine and a heightened feeling of prayerful meditation. I also felt inspired as an artist to create my own works in a similar vein. Years of this awakening process instigated a change: instead of being prayerfully inspired by another, I was beginning to explore my religious and worshipful experiences through the process of creating an artwork.

I found the artistic creative process could be a form of spiritual discipline apart from focusing on artistic end product. I discovered intense joy in the all-absorbing aspect of art making that caused me to forget myself. I began to wonder what the source of this was and I found it puzzling that the Church and/or Christianity had so little to say about the artistic process. The commentaries I found were based on contemplation of a work, not on the actual doing of it. The fact that the sole purpose of art was for contemplation

seemed to be taken for granted; Art was for looking, not doing. This was a more passive use for art than what I was interested in. I wanted to see art not as finished product, but as an active, in process form of worship and contemplation.

In my search for artistic meaning, I realised I was rapidly becoming disenchanted with my fine arts education; my spiritual and theological concerns were not considered relevant in that domain. Preoccupation with process over product also put me at odds with my art school contemporaries. Their overwhelming concern with product and the appearance of artiness had an entirely different focus than mine. I also began to question the purpose of art; my experience at school and my knowledge about art history lead me to believe that art's function as communicator of meaning had been lost in the scramble to look good, sell art and become famous. Thus I found no place in the Church and was alienated by my Christian perspectives towards the art process in the secular art world

With no recourse in traditional venues for exploring the role of art making and Christian spirituality, I turned to theology, as this was a true case of faith seeking understanding! Thus, the goal of this thesis is to discover the theological significance of the artistic process and to uncover its possibilities as a spiritual discipline. In so doing I will also examine the function of art in the church today which will be a comparison of art-as-process and art-as-product.

By art-as-process I mean the active creation of a work of art in process without regard to end product. Art-as-product signifies a finished work of art being valued in of itself and divorced from the creative process. A comparison of the two undoubtedly requires study of artistic development within and without the Church to ascertain the reasons art-as-product has become the dominant form today. To transcend the limitations

set on artistic expression in Christianity, we must first understand what the limitations are. Thus, the first part of my thesis will investigate the developing history of art in Christianity. Attitudes and restrictions placed upon art and art production are revelatory in comprehending the impetus behind the Church's concentration on art-as-product. The second part of my thesis will scrutinize art-as-product. Art-as-product based thinking has problematic results that impinge on the creative process and nullify the communicative power of art as tool of the masses. As such, an examination of art-as-product based dilemmas such as artistic elitism, kitsch, consumerism and idolatry is required. The problem of idolatry needs examining in depth since this is the major peril of artistic production and is connected to the marketplace mentality of our consumerist culture.

Since art-as-product is the reigning consciousness about art, conversion will be involved in the revelation of art-as-process. . This will form the binding third chapter between the opposing sections of art-as-product and art-as-process. Conversion and transcendence are also part of the art-as-process experience in its function of a spiritual discipline. The third chapter thus segues into an exploration of art-as-process and the theological and psychological meaning of the creative act. Ways of encouraging artistic process in artists and regular people and the spiritual fruits of said process will be postulated.

I believe this will not be a new method developed but rather one that takes art back to its original use as a tool of spiritual enlightenment. This will be a return to a time before the exclusive focus on product, contemplation and aesthetics - a time when the process was valued in of itself. The primordial meaning of art-in-process and its potential in spiritual development remains to be seen. This thesis is but a small brushstroke on the

enormous potential work to be done on art process and Christianity. I am sure many questions will be answered and many more posed by the end - a typical state for the artist-in-process.

1. Chapter One: Art in Christianity

1.1 Sacred Art Today

It is impossible to examine potential *uses* of art in contemporary Christian worship without first understanding art's *role* both in the present and in the past. Art has always had a place in the history of the church, whether it expressed and illustrated beliefs, beautified our places of worship or enhanced worship and ritual. This type of art is referred to as Christian sacred art and it plays a part in the three main kinds of religious practice in the church: regular congregational worship, 'occasional' rites and ceremonies, and private or personal religious acts (Moore 15).

Regular congregational worship is the gathering of the Christian community to offer praise and thanksgiving to God, to ask her for help and to commemorate events in sacred Christian history. This would commonly be understood as the purpose of church services today. (Moore 15).

Occasional rites and ceremonies reflect events in the lives of individual adherents to the faith and their families, for example weddings, baptisms, and confirmations. Similar to congregational worship, these events take place in the wider community in which the individuals celebrating belong. Regular and occasional worship form the Christian *liturgy,* which literally means 'work of the people'. Liturgical services typically take place in a building along with liturgical clothing and ritual objects, which are considered Christian sacred art (Moore 16).

Private or personal religious acts are different than congregational and occasional worship in that these are individual acts of prayer, meditation, scripture reading, etc. that

are performed by an adherent. Individual acts also may use sacred art to aid these private acts with articles such as holy images, devotional items, statues, etc (Moore 17-18).

The varied use of artwork in the church indicates both the diverse functions it serves and the needs it fills. These needs are very specific to the role assigned to the artwork. Traditionally, Christian sacred art serves four major functions: aesthetic, didactic, devotional, and sacramental.

The aesthetic function of art is measured by the enjoyment and appreciation of beauty it evokes in its viewers. The beauty of a religious work of art is a measurement of how much it evokes or expresses the right religious feeling in viewers (Moore 18).

Religious artwork can also serve a didactic function in that it teaches or reminds us of our beliefs and the correct way of life according to those beliefs. This was particularly important historically; when the majority of people were illiterate, artwork acted as a visual aid in church teaching (Moore 20).

Religious artwork not only teaches visually, but can also inspire feelings of devotion in the viewer. The devotional function of art is such when it plays a part in prayer and worship. Examples of this function can be seen in the use of images and statues as aids to prayer. The art object itself is not to be venerated but seen as channelling veneration to the subject represented (Moore 21).

Sometimes art objects go beyond this function and become in themselves holy. This is the sacramental function of art, when artwork brings us into the presence of the sacred. Sacramental art outwardly symbolises and makes present an inwardly spiritual power. Eastern Orthodox icons are an excellent example of the sacramental quality of art (Moore 22 – 24).

It is interesting to note that of the three main branches of organized Christian religion (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant) the Eastern Orthodox Church most employs the use of sacramental art through its tradition of icons. In the Roman Catholic tradition art seems more devotional and didactic in its function and the Protestant tradition utilises art more as a didactic tool. Though each tradition has its unique functions for art, each has the similarity of using art as a finished product. The use of art as a process has not been part of traditional Christian worship. Artwork used in Christian practice focuses on finished work but there seems to be no development of the artistic creative process as a way of worship or spiritual practice. To understand the focus on art-as-product and the differing development of the function of art in each major denomination we need to briefly chart the art history of the Christian Church and the effect the Church had on art's development as a whole.

1.2 Iconic and Aniconic Attitudes

Very early in Christianity two extreme attitudes could be discerned that would characterize its history of art: iconic and aniconic. Iconic strains favoured the use of images in worship, whilst aniconic opposed it as idolatry; art and anti-art traditions developed in tandem with the nascent faith.

The earliest evidence of distinctly Christian art can be found in late second century in the form of frescoes in catacombs, home churches and sarcophagi carvings on a biblical or liturgical theme (De Gruchy 19). These art forms were mainly simplistic since the Christian Church was persecuted and did not want to draw undue attention.

Also, as a persecuted Church, the resources and tradition were not established enough to provide for more complex artistic expression (Moore 32).

As Christianity became more established its art developed and became more elaborate. It is evident that the Church was becoming more iconophilic in the early 300s with the first evidence of aniconic voices raised at the council of Elvira (306). Canon 36 of Elvira states: "There shall be no pictures in the churches, lest what is painted on walls might be worshipped and revered" (Laechli 57). This canon was based on the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, which Christianity inherited along with its tension between image and idol. The main scripture reference for aniconic belief is the commandment, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them" (Exodus 20: 4 – 5 NRSV). This would seem to be the final word on the use of images, however contradicting voices could be heard.

Considering the Bible as a whole we can see many references where art, ritual, temple worship, icon and image are accepted alongside other references where they are rejected. Some examples positive to the arts can be found: the brazen serpent in the desert (Num.21:8), the artist Bezalel (Ex.31: 1ff), Teraphim protected the people (1 Sam. 19:13) Rachel stole a teraphim and there was nothing wrong with her keeping it (Gen 31:19) Solomon builds a house for god (1 Kings 5:5ff) and the temple is decorated with cherubim, lions, flowers etc. (1Kings 6:23ff). Voices against iconic worship can also be found: the golden calf (Ex.32), prohibitions against carving idols (Ex 20:4), Teraphim are wrong (Ezek.21: 26, Hos. 3:4), God will destroy the temple (1Kings 9:7), amongst just a few examples (Laeuchli 59 - 61).

It is evident that there were completing claims for and against idolatry in the Hebrew Scriptures. Significant to note is that when a negative or condemned sort of image making occurs, it is usually in the context of excessiveness. Image making requires wealth and security to financially support the artists and provide time and materials for production. The Old Testament prophets who railed against idolatry perhaps railed at the symptom of the problem: idolatry as a symptom of religious indolence. When comfort and decadence sets in, worship can become slack, relying on easy externals like idols and images instead of dealing with the internal requirements and discipline of religion.

Similarly, we can also observe the effect affluence and comfort had on the art of the Christian church. Early Christian iconography was simple since the Church was persecuted. The Church gained legitimacy and financial support when Constantine converted under the sign of the cross in 312. As a result, Christian art grew more and more elaborate in this comfortable setting. The conversion of the Emperor also took the Church from private home worship to public worship in a building, thus providing artists with a ready venue to house their iconography. Concerns about the growing presence of art and idolatry were evidenced not only in the declarations of the council of Elvira, but were also expressed in the writings of the Church Fathers including Tertullian, Cyprian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Origen (Viladesau 53). The many voices raised in concern about the role of images make clear their use was on the rise in the early Church. This increasing presence of art and the voices for and against it culminated in the Iconoclastic controversy in the 8th century.

1.3 The Iconoclastic Controversy

Essentially iconoclasts were what their name signifies, image breakers. The iconoclast objected to images, especially those of the saints and particularly those images of Christ – they believed the divine nature of Christ was impossible to represent visually. The main concern of iconoclasts was with perceived idolatry, however social and political factors were also involved in the dispute. Also continued in this debate were the controversies over the nature of Christ previous to the Iconoclast controversy.

A major catalyst in the beginning of the controversy was Byzantine Emperor Leo III's (717 - 741) banning of figural images in churches. This commenced a long period of dispute and bloodshed over icon veneration up until the death of Theophilus, the last iconoclastic Emperor in 843 (De Gruchy 23). Emperor Leo's successor, Constantine V was very rigorous and influential in his development of the iconoclastic position. In 754 he called the Council of Hieria and condemned the making and venerating of icons. Widespread persecution of iconophiles took place with many monks and nuns being exiled, tortured or martyred (Nassif 20). The cause for iconodules gained ground in 787 during the reign of Empress Irene (780 – 802) who was favourable to iconic worship. She convened a council in Nicea, now known as the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which relied upon the theology of St. John of Damascus.

Iconodule St. John of Damascus most effectively answered the iconoclastic charges of the importrayable divine. He belived if Jesus Christ was truly God and truly human he could be pictured visually. Here John echoes St. Paul when he wrote in Colossians 1:15 that Christ is the image (icon) of the invisible God. Therefore Christ, the Theotokos and the saints could be shown in iconic form because they displayed the

visible reality of salvation through God. He also argued that God made the painter's art, gave us wood and paint and so there was nothing wrong with using his creations to glorify him (Chadwick 17).

In regards to the concerns over idolatry, the Seventh Ecumenical Council made an important distinction between veneration and worship of Icons. Icons can receive the veneration of honour (*proskunesis*) but not the true worship (*latreis*) of the faith. *Latreia* means absolute worship and is exclusively given to God alone. *Proskunesis* refers to showing relative honour like bowing and kissing, and other marks of respect. Images may be thus honoured since the honour rendered to the image ascends to its prototype (Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nassif 20).

Despite this Council, a new attack on icons was launched under LeoV the Armenian from 815 until 843 when Empress Theodora returned icons to worship, where they remain to this day. This return happened on the first Sunday of Lent and it is still celebrated as the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, a day that marks the end of the first iconoclast controversy (Nassif 20).

1.4 Ramifications of the Iconoclast Controversy for Christian Art

The Iconoclastic Controversy was a seminal moment in art and Christian history. Hans - Georg Gadamer observed that the outcome of this controversy in favour of iconic images was a "decision of incalculable significance" and still determines European cultural consciousness (Gadamer in De Gruchy 21). Since the church was the repository of Western culture, allowing images allowed visual arts to flourish. It is interesting to speculate the results if the outcome had have been the opposite. Our artistic culture would be very different with the absence of images in the Church since it was the cradle of

artistic expression for so long. Perhaps our artistic output would mirror Islam's with its focus off direct imagery and elaborate calligraphy and lettering as a result.

Another benefit of the iconoclast controversy was the rise of iconodule theologians developing a theology of icons ensuring proper use of art in worship. This evolution of pro - iconic arguments cemented the firm foundation of the icon within the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church. Icons were more than mere artworks, they were sacred images and revelations and required strict rules of production to avoid the problem of idolatry. Icon painting therefore became a canonical art form that would change little throughout time. They were to be painted according to certain rules about materials and content of the icon (Walker 14). Icon painters were also expected to participate in the worship life of the church and to offer prayers and fasting in preparation before working. The content and method of icon painting was set in tradition and there was less emphasis to be placed on individual creation. For example icon painters never signed their works and were not to deviate too far from the established iconic norms.

These rules show concern for the artistic process of creation and have an appreciation that Iconographers must be in the correct mind frame during the process of creation. However the main focus of icons is on the finished product, not in the process of creation. The aesthetic, emotive and religious power of the finished icon in worship is acknowledged in that there are strict rules to control its production. The power of the creative process in worship is not so acknowledged and may even be restricted by such rules.

The Church was also concerned with artists to ascertain that the correct kind of art was being produced. The Seventh Ecumenical Council made clear the role of the Church

in the creative process, "The substance of religious scenes is not left to the initiative of artists; it derives from the principles laid down by the Catholic Church and religious tradition. The art alone belongs to the painter; its organization and arrangement belongs to the clergy" (Dewey 329). During the iconoclast controversy both iconodules and aniconic factions within the Church were evidently concerned with the motives and inspirations of artists.

1.5 The Dangerous Image

Iconoclast Emperor Constantine's Council of Hieria in 754 condemned icon making and their makers stating "The ignorant artist who with a sacrilegious lust for gain depicts that which ought not to be depicted, and with defiled hands would bestow a form upon that which ought to be believed in the heart" (Viladesau 54). Artists were suspected of not creating for worship, but for idolatrous reasons like financial gain. Here we see idolatry connected with the desire for comfort, gain and a focus on externals when the internal belief in the heart is truly what is required. This is very similar to the condemnation of idolatry in the Old Testament and its link to spiritual indolence. Iconoclasm highlighted other causes of idolatry among many, from the worldly influence of pagan cultures to the political impetus of conquering and destroying images in the empire's struggle against the aniconic Islam.

This controversy makes apparent that the creative process and its products can be very threatening to the Church in times of doctrinal debate, hence the rigorous efforts to control it by quelling or conforming it. We can learn from this experience today since we see the threat of art making in times of flux. A more stable, secure tradition and belief is required to permit the creative chaos of art making as worship

Since the early Orthodox Church was not in a position of stability, it regulated a form of iconography that passed on from master to apprentice and remains distinctive today. Icons today are still considered sacramental and are used in congregational and individual worship. Image making was legitimized and thus stabilized, halting once and for all the spectre of iconoclasm in the Eastern Church. The West did not exert the controls that the East did and as a result art evolved and sometimes resurrected issues of abuse and idolatry. Iconoclasm, as Balthasar noted, is not merely a phenomenon of the past, but to a certain extent is always a feature in Christianity (Balthasar 41).

1.6 The Image and the West

The Western Church took a different view towards iconoclasm than the East; several iconoclasts went West after the triumph of the iconodules. Their great influence and the admiration for Constantine in turn influenced the 'new Constantine' – Charlemagne (De Gruchy 30). The empire of the West gained prestige in the face of Eastern instability and further legitimized itself by accusing the East of condoning idol worship in the *Libri Carolini.* Essentially a critique of the Greek Seventh Ecumenical Council, the *Libri Carolini* (Caroline Books) were based on a poor Latin translation of the Council. The authors of the books allow that images may be used for aesthetic purposes, to instruct, or to remind of things past, however adoration in the form of burning incense and prostrating oneself before them was wrong.

The Caroline books foreshadowed iconoclastic tendencies in the West, including those of the Protestant Reformation. They also displayed a focus on the word as opposed to the image, a characteristic that featured in the Reformation's *sola scriptura* base. As

theologian Andrew Ugolink writes of the Carolingians "They also show us the birth of a distinctly Western aesthetic – an aesthetic which arises in reaction against the centrality of the image in Eastern Christian thought. In the *oculus mentis*, the 'mind's eye' of the *Libri Carolini*, we can see the first glints of a Reformation consciousness" (Ugolnik 14).

The centrality of the image in Eastern Christianity naturally results in a more mystical locus than does the Western primacy of the written word. Focus on the word lends itself to a more rational basis of faith and a suspicion of the more mystical or ephemeral power of art. As a result of the *Libri Carolini*, art in the Western Church acquired a didactic and aesthetic function unlike the sacramental function of Eastern art. Both the Council of Frankfurt (794) and the Synod of Paris(824) ruled that images were unimportant to Christians and only could be of benefit aesthetically (Evdokimov 167). Still, this did not prevent images from being used in the Church and this use was justified in their didactic function as the visual word to the mostly illiterate masses.

1.7 The Image Ascendant

As images proliferated in the Medieval Church concerns over idolatry sprang up again, particularly idolatry in the form of financial gain and distraction. As churches grew larger and the cult of the saints and their relics gained popular devotion, wealth was accrued and places of worship became increasingly elaborate and resplendent. Pilgrimages were also a source of revenue for the Church and donations of artworks, material goods or money from devoted visitors resulted in very ornate ecclesiastic interiors. Pilgrims could also purchase their own art objects related to a particular saint (medallions, images, statues) which served a devotional function.

The growing sumptuousness of the church was distressing to some as so many worshippers were living in poverty. Orders like the Franciscans, Cistercians and the Cartusians countered this extravagance with a focus on poverty and asceticism. These medieval reform movements may have captured popular imagination, however images held steady in popular religious practice where "distinctions between worship and veneration, between images and idols, were lost in the frenetic activities of popular piety in search of divine pity and consolation" (De Gruchy 32).

'Frenetic activities' of piety caused a prolific flowering of the arts in worship and with this development grew freer in expression. Artistic output responded to meet the demands of pious worshipers and the burgeoning market for religious art. Lay interest and acquisition in and of the arts increased and attention to Church imposed restrictions decreased. The growing popularity of images loosened the Church's official control of art, enabling individual artists to move beyond the previously imposed limitations to meet worshiper's demands. This freedom translated itself into a shift in artistic subject from the religious to the more secular by the time of the Renaissance.

1.8 Reform, Counter-Reform and Secularization

The Renaissance artist was seen less as a maker and more as a creator, more God - like with his or her own authority, not a maker relying passively on the authority of the Church (Walker 28). Artists could now work without the inhibiting encumbrances of the Church's discipline but they would also lose its sponsorship as a result. Therefore a new phenomenon was introduced with art's secularization - economic servitude. Artists were free to express themselves so long as that expression ensured a marketable end product (Read 133).

The Renaissance movement and the Enlightenment influencing these artistic changes also affected religious reform. The artistic output of late Medieval and early Renaissance times and the intense connection to religious practice drew criticism from reformers. Perceived Church abuses at issue in the Protestant Reformation had significant correalation to images and iconic signs such as the cult of the saints and relics, pilgrimages, masses for the dead, veneration of images and statues and the accompanying financial exploitation these abuses entailed (De Gruchy 37). As a result, the Protestant Reformation brought with it a renewed spirit of iconoclasm in their favouring of word over image. With the privileging of the word, the only images allowed were of didactic function to further expound the word. The Reformation ushered Christians into a new world, in the words of Margaret Aston, "God was to be heard, not seen. In learning to live by the word, people gradually learned to find in their Bibles the compensation for that huge deprivation of their century, the enforced withdrawal of the 'goodly sights' that had been accumulated over centuries (81).

The Catholic response to the Reformation was the Counter Reformation and a reaffirmation of the place of the image at the council of Trent (1545 – 1563). The synod in essence reaffirmed past teachings on art and its usefulness didactically and devotionally. One important point was made, however, that is indicative of the growing abuses in artistic expression of the Renaissance. The Renaissance artist was more secularized and more prone to individual expression. The synod ruled in response to this development, "And if any abuses have crept in amongst these holy and salutary observances, the Holy Synod ardently desires that they be utterly abolished; in such wise that no images, (suggestive) of false doctrine, and furnishing occasion of dangerous error

to the uneducated, be set up...Moreover, in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, all filthy lucre be abolished; finally, all lasciviousness be avoided..(Council of Trent, Session XXV in Waterworth 235). The place of art was thus reaffirmed in the Church with a re-echoing of previous rulings and a redirection of the popular worship which had overblown the veneration of images to levels of gross superstition and profit. Art production continued unabated but the influence of the Church over artistic content waned in the face of secularism. Art in Protestant society went further – it went out the church door and into the secular world of the courts and museums.

2.8 The Enduring Results of the Renaissance

The period of the Reformation and Counter Reformation was defining for both Protestant and Catholic belief; delineations made about the use of images remain fairly constant today. The Catholic Church has maintained its support of the image in its didactic and devotional function. The Protestant church subordinated the image to the word and relegated the arts to a purely didactic function, if at all. As with the Eastern Orthodox Church, we see the iconoclastic spirit rising up in times of uncertainty and change. The Renaissance was a time of changing worldviews and it attests to the power of art that the conflicts of this time were played out over images. John W. De Gruchy writes, "The Reformation may even be regarded as a contest over the meaning and control of images, their power to save or damn, and the legitimate authority or tyranny they represented"(38).

The common populace understood the power of images, whether it was in the iconodule's popular piety or seen as religious abuse by the iconoclasts. Control over that

power was exerted in restrictions, whether by Catholic discipline or Protestant privileging of the word and abasing of the image. The didactic veiw of art in both favoured direct thought over the indirect, thereby losing the mysticism that sacramental art encouraged in the East. We witness here the differing artistic development, from sacramental in the East, to didactic and devotional in the West, to simply didactic in the Protestant tradition.

While the Catholic Church allowed devotion to images and thereby maintained some mystery, the Protestant removed all mystery. The effect of the removal of the image and its accompanying rituals and supernatural presence from Protestantism was to take a part of magical nature of belief away. The outside trappings of the church were stripped away and the individual directly related to God. (Walker 32).

2.9 A Note about Modernism and Mystery

Reliance on reason, individuality and the spurning of the mystery was indicative of the modern mind stemming from the enlightened worldview. Relationship with God was disrobed of its mystery and clothed in rationality. The Christian claim could be argued within the limits of reason as with any other claim in enlightened times. These symptoms describe the modern mind in that modernity is epitomized by the "universal claims of reason and instrumental (or means/ends) rationality; the differentiation of spheres of life experience into public and private; and the pluralization of truth claims (Hunter in Gibbs 21).

The modernity adopted by the Church is clear in its scientific style apologetics based not on revealed wisdom, but on evidence, research, and proofs. Christianity could be proved not by revelation but through empirical evidence, proofs, derived from historical evidence, archaeology, textual studies and so on. Modernistic thinking

precludes revelation, since the revealed implies a hidden mystery beneath the commonplace. This means that wisdom of the cross is foolishness to the world. "For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21 NRSV). Human wisdom, or reason, cannot understand the mystery of the cross alone – it seems a foolishness. What could be more unreasonable than proclaiming a dead man resurrected? However the modern Church has relied on the wisdom of the world to prove its case and has lost its mystery. This is a tragedy since people turn to the Church to receive what they cannot from the world. If the world and the Church offer the same things, what then has the Church to offer?

In our post-modern society, where reason is suspect and truth is relative to personal experience, this modern view is disastrous. Subscription to modernistic thinking limits the mystical from Christianity, and it is no coincidence that the image is also limited in this mode. Art is revelatory and can point the way to the sacred as we have seen in the Eastern iconic tradition. However, the revelatory power of artistic creativeness is restricted is the Eastern Church by prescribed forms of iconography. The Catholic Church also restricts the power of art to didactic purposes. As we explored, the use of art in Christianity as a whole is limited to art-as-product. The average worshipper is not involved actively in creation, so revelation, when possible, is mediated through another person's work. Because the focus of sacred art was and is on the finished product, a proper exploration of the revelatory potential of the creative process has not taken place. This exploration is needed because it may answer the need of the post-modern church.

Post-modern times are image saturated times and so image poverty in the Church begets people poverty in terms of bodies in the pews. The proper use of art is one of the few ways to communicate with our image sensitive generation. According to Simone Weil, the experience of beauty is one of three gateways to God. The other two gateways are through suffering and religious practice. In our comfortable and secular post-modern society, the appreciation of beauty is one of the few avenues to God since the other two do not exert the force en masse they once did (Weil 101).

Art appreciation and production relies on awareness of the world and its beauty, so art seems a good solution to draw people back into the church. We have seen however, that many branches employ art in worship and yet are not experiencing a boom in numbers. The reason for this may be the way that art has been used. The history of sacred art is also the history of art-as-product. The development of art-as-product in the churches paved the way for artwork as commodity, a development that continues today and has a detrimental effect on art-as-process for the everyday person. Post-modern culture is composed of the image as end product, often with the purpose of selling said product! Popular culture is built on the image, still or moving, in media, movies, TV, internet and printed matter. Much of it is also profit based as the focus is on end product. In the complete overexposure of the image we see an underexposure to image creating – images are imposed on us rather than imagined by us.

2. Chapter Two: Art-as-Product

Introduction

When the image is commonplace and linked to commodity it is desacrelised and therefore cannot be used in Church in the function of sacred art. A new method and function needs to be found. To do so, we must understand the development and the ramifications of art-as-product outside the Church in the secular world.

We have seen that the uses and effect of art within the Church have remained constant since the Renaissance when the functions of sacred art were established. The secularization of art that happened in the Renaissance developed art-as-product further. The Renaissance artist as individual was freer to explore her own inspirations but exchanged service to the Church for economic servitude. This change is of major significance for the purposes of this study - artistic output then became dependant on financial viability.

As noted, there is a link between art-as-product and it's potential for lucre and the problem of idolatry. Indolent society turned away from God and to external concerns like status, comfort and prestige. This was matched by external and visible forms of worship using images. When images of God could be possessed and owned, God therefore could be controlled through ownership or images in a form of theurgy, or God manipulation. It followed that money could perform other theurgies, such as buying masses for the dead, obtaining indulgences to spare one from purgatory, lighting candles to the saints and donating to shrines of particular saints or relics.

Problematic for art is that it is a viable product and can support an atmosphere based on lucre. In the mediaeval Catholic Church, it was used to support a religious

system that was highly profitable to the Church. This lead to charges of idolatry from Protestant Reformers and an avoidance of art in the Protestant tradition. Financial gain became a focal point in the 14th and 15th centuries as the Catholic Church relaxed its laws against usury and paved the way for a system that separated wealth from production and made money itself a commodity (Read 136). This allowed for the further accumulation of wealth in individual hands and a growing power of the individual to challenge the organized Church. With wealth came a desire for self recognition, and in the Renaissance times we see a rise in desire for decorative and portraiture painting for the rich and their houses, a market divorced from the Church.

Art continued to develop outside of the Church, under the control of sponsors in the secular world. Individual artists, free of restrictions, began to focus more on their personal self - expression and skill. The more artistic skill and expression became a premium, the less the common person could appreciate it. The demand of common folk for naturalism or realism was supplanted by the artist and the elite whose concern it was to express themselves (Read 144). Here we see the beginnings of an artistic elite, which will have a great effect on the perception, appreciation and function of art up to our times. The common language of image for the common people will be lost in the development of the institution of *high art.*

3.1 The Institution of High Art

> *...theories which isolate art and its appreciation by placing them in a realm of their own, disconnected from other modes of experiencing, are not inherent in the subject matter but arise because of specifiable extraneous conditions – John Dewey (10).*

With the growing creative freedom of artists and the new focus on artistic expression and skill, art began to be isolated from its function. This isolation was necessary for a concept of 'art'. Where formerly function was the focus, with the Enlightenment and beyond art was invested with a value in of itself. The new attitude towards artwork instituted the advent of the museum; an institution that remains with us today. Andre Malraux points out the significance of the development of the museum, writing

> "So vital is the part played by the art museum in our approach to works of art today that we find it difficult to realize that no museums exist, none has ever existed, in lands where the civilisation of modern Europe is, or was, unknown; and that, even amongst us, they have existed for barely two hundred years. They bulked so large in the nineteenth century and are so much a part of our lives today that we forget that they imposed on the spectator a wholly new attitude to the work of art. For they have tended to estrange the works they bring together from their original functions and to transform even portraits into 'pictures'"
> (Malraux 13-14).

The formation of the museum manifested a new attitude about art; art was disjoined from function and existed for its own sake. The purpose of art was contemplation of the artistic product in museums. Artist Wassily Kandinsky described the effects of this bifurcation of function from art in an intriguing way: "With cold eye and indifferent mind the public regards the work. Connoisseurs admire 'technique' as one might admire a tight ropewalker, or enjoy the 'Painting quality', as one might enjoy a

piece of cake. But hungry souls go hungry away". Art displayed for the sole purpose of contemplation does not feed the soul. Those in the "know", the elite, are disdained for their disinterested contemplation. The artist further writes, "The public ambles through the rooms, saying 'nice' or 'interesting'. Those who could speak have said nothing; those who could hear have heard nothing. This condition is called 'art for arts sake'" (Kandinsky 5) The viewer is not affected by the power of art. One wonders if they are dull hearted as those who "seeing, they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand" (Matthew 13:13, NRSV).

The development of this philosophy of art was in tandem with what Nicolas Wolterstorff terms the *institution of high art*. Wolterstorff defines the institution of art as "the characteristic arrangements and patterns of action whereby works of art are produced in that society, whereby they are made available for the use of members of that society, and whereby members of that society are enabled to make use of them" (21). He considers our culture's institution as an *institution of high arts* because there is a cultural elite that almost exclusively uses the works of art in our society. Many people are part of this elite, Wolterstorff notes, who would not consider themselves so, but alas "the vast majority of people in our society never set foot inside a concert hall or art gallery. And if one looks at the cultural status and influence of the group as a whole which does frequent such places, one sees that they constitute an influential elite in our society" (22).

The institution of high art has an elite, one which rarely involves the common folk. This is in marked difference to the pre - Renaissance times, when the image was a form of popular piety and visual vocabulary. The modern era took art away from its origins and placed it in walled off rooms. This resulted in the cutting off of art from the

sphere of normal human undertaking and industry. Therefore it is cut off from the regular workers and elevated into a specialization (Dewey 1).

3.2 The Departure of Art from Everyday Life

The secularization of art and its evolution to an elite not only disconnected it from the common folk but also from its former functions. These functions invested art with power that diminished when art was stripped of purpose and left for its own sake. The focus on the image became a focus on the end product; art-as-product could then be bought and sold like any other.

To create a demand for product, one must create scarcity. A perception of scarcity sparks the desire to posses the scarce object since there may not be enough to go around. The spectre of scarcity in artistic output is perpetuated by the development of a theory of aesthetics and art criticism in the high art institution. Institutions therefore developed norms and standards by which to judge and control "real art". These standards enforced scarcity since they were divorced from the common people and the traditions of folk art and craft. The common is by definition not rare and thus not scarce; scarcity puts the premium on originality and novelty rather than the traditional, conventional nature of folk art. (It is interesting to note that folk art has become popular in recent years with the high art elite. Now true folk art is rare with the dispossession of its practice in industrialised nations).

High art standards require financial means to meet, whether to purchase works or to support the required educational instruction on production and/or fine art appreciation. This further reinforces the rarefied elite of the high art institution and owning art becomes a sign of cultural status for the rich in a capitalistic society. Writes John Dewey,

"Generally speaking, the typical collector is the typical capitalist. For evidence of good standing in the realm of higher culture, he (sic) amasses paintings, statuary, and artistic *bijoux*, as his stocks and bonds certify to his standing in the economic world" (8).

The very nature of an elite is that it is restricted in some way and differentiated from the common. The nature of this elite required some sort of education and financial status and this alienated the regular populace. Establishing high art standards thus devalued folk art and discouraged artists. The influential presence of the high art elite intimidates regular people from creating art. Preconceived notions of correct art, the weight of artistic tradition and the legends of the big name artists make the humble works of the anonymous seem irrelevant and futile. Art creation became a specialized discipline rather than a facet of ordinary life.

3.3 Industrialisation and Kitsch

Accompanying the shift of art from common to elite was the socio - economic features of modernity. Modernity does not generally encourage creativeness so much as it encourages consumption. Before the industrial revolution, culture was channelled via a vibrant folk art tradition. Regular people, not specialists or professionals, would create works to mark important life passages, to memorialise or celebrate events and/or to augment living pleasure (Allen xvi). With the dawn of industrialism, traditions faded away with urbanisation and the subsequent fracturing of rural family life. The regular person had to work and had not the time, money, nor education required to participate in the high art institution. Instead, manufactured art of the new consumer culture replaced folk art traditions to a disastrous effect. Laments artist Diego Rivera, "Popular art produced by the people for the people has been almost wiped out by this kind of

industrial production of the worst aesthetic quality throughout the world" (Rivera in Murray 476).

This aesthetic quality has a name, Kitsch, and it proliferated with the growth of the consumer society and the development of the department store. Kitsch art, as famously described by Milan Kundera, is the "absolute denial of shit, in both the literal and figurative senses of the word; kitsch excludes everything from its preview which is essentially unacceptable in human existence (Kundera in Gorringe 231). Kitsch therefore is inauthentic in that it obfuscates the darker side of reality. This is alarming since it is the art of the average person; a person over whom others may have power and who therefore is most in need of truth. Accordingly, Saul Friedlander writes, "On the side of the affirmation of order, the kitsch vision reinforces the aesthetic criteria of a submissive mass, serene in its quest for harmony, always partial to sentimentality"(Gorringe 230).

Kitsch is for those who seek easy comfort and therefore is conducive to a spirit of submissiveness. It is the watering down of what makes art meaningful, a reduction of meaning to the easiest and most palatable representation. This dilution can only result in the diffusion of true creativity in the masses. Sculptor Edward Robinson eloquently illustrates this effect on the masses:

> "What pornography does to our sexuality, the popularization of cheap beauty does to our creative imagination. The sin, and the tragedy, in each case is clear. Habituated to easy satisfaction, after a time we cease to realize what it is we are missing out on. The very freedom to choose may in the end be weakened: the freedom to make the most of our creative potential, or to squander it in self-indulgence (65).

Freedom to choose requires awareness and truth perception to observe there is a choice and weigh the merits of it. Kitsch masks reality in a sentimental and inauthentic

way; knowledge of the truth is traded for a comfortable oversimplified misrepresentation.

The deception of kitsch is the reason why Karl Barth declared that the task of theology is to move in "ruthless rigor against all kitsch" (Barth in Gorringe 229). Theology is the study of God and her relation to the world and humanity. The pre-requisite to discovering the ultimate reality requires the ability to see and experience reality and meaning as authentically as possible. Kitsch is anti-reality and prevents us from seeing the ultimate meaning. It follows that kitsch is the enemy of theology and we can understand our task to be its refutation. Theology's function, according to Gorringe, is to act as an antiseptic to the spiritual sickness of the world (233). Antiseptic theology is now urgently required as kitsch comprises a vast amount of today's popular culture and this culture has eclipsed the art world. In the face of Barth's clarion call against kitsch we need to ask what effect it has unchecked on society.

3.4 The Society of the Spectacle

If the untruth and creative corrosion resulting from kitsch isn't enough, kitsch is also a small part of the larger soul destroying phenomenon of our society as spectacle. When we look at kitsch, we become part of a spectacle. Milan Kundera describes the reaction in two steps: "Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind (sic), by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch" (Gorringe 231).

What defines kitsch is the experience of the viewer as part of the spectacle. It is an alienation from true reaction to observed reaction of self. Self-consciousness here enjoys the perception of feeling rather than true felt feeling. This self-consciousness was explored and deplored by the Situationalist movement in the 60s. Situalationists were a group of artists and writers who protested against the effect of the modern media and our commercialized ultra-consumptive culture that had sprung from capitalistic society. They believed that the fundamental creativity of humanity was quelled by consumerism. Instead of creative freedom, modern folk were enthralled by the "spectacle" of consumption, hype and its attendant reinforcement via mass media and commercial images (Lasn 101).

Situationalist leader Guy Debord defines the spectacle as, "The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that once was directly lived has become a mere representation" (Debord 1:12). The nature of spectacle is an alienating self-consciousness induced by media culture where everything is represented and all experience mediated. Fellow Situationalist Raul Vaneigem notes, "Even the tiniest of gestures – opening a door, holding a teacup, a facial expression – and the most private and individual actions - coming home, making tea, arguing with a lover - have always already been represented and shown to us within the spectacle" (Vaneigem in Lasn 104).

Further alienation is achieved by a dissociation of the worker from her product in capitalistic culture. Instead of directly enjoying the fruits of her labour, a worker produces and yet never experiences the satisfaction in the end product. A typical worker

is paid for her work on the job, the product goes somewhere else, is further produced and purchased. The producer receives the benefit, not the worker herself (Debord 21).

Disassociation of worker from product can only dampen creativity if industrialisation and capitalism hasn't already diminished it. As we saw before, modern life and its demands reduced folk art traditions in everyday life and was replaced by manufactured goods. Mass consumption of these goods ushered in popular kitsch. Add to this the further distance of the populace from the arts via the institution of high art and we can understand why so few people are compelled to create. Vaneigem eloquently points this out:

> "In an industrial society which confuses work and productivity, the necessity of producing has always been an enemy of the desire to create. What spark of humanity, of a possible creativity, can remain alive in a being dragged out of sleep at six every morning, jolted about in suburban trains, deafened by the racket of machinery, bleached and steamed by meaningless sounds and gestures, spun dry by statistical controls, and tossed out at the end of the day into the entrance halls of railway stations, those cathedrals of departure for the hell of weekdays and the nugatory paradise of weekends, where the crowd communes in weariness and boredom" (Vaneigem 5).

If the regular workaday isn't hard enough, spare time for many comprises itself of further immersion into the deluding, alienating spectacle in the form of TV or other media:

> "To each his own kaleidoscope: a tiny movement of the fingers and the picture changes. You can't lose: two fridges, a mini-car, TV, promotion, time to kill... then the monotony of the images we consume gets the upper hand, reflecting the monotony of the action which produces them, the slow rotation of the kaleidoscope between finger and thumb"(Vaneigem 1:3).

The enthrallment of the masses in the spectacle is problematic because the spectacle itself is deeply inauthentic and isolating, as we have seen by its alienating power. Instead of a life of *being,* our society encourages *having* and the nature of the

spectacle elevates actual *having* to the *appearance* of having (Debord 17:16). Possession is now not enough; with a consumerist society everyone can *have*, now we must also give the *appearance of having*. Everyone can have a pair of shoes cheaply, for example, but can everyone own Nikes? Maybe you have a car, but it's not a BMW...The perceived appearance of having must say something, for example designer articles and brand names give cachet that the same non - branded option would not. This cachet is illusionary and meaningless unless others have the same understanding as you. Fortunately, most people are "in the know" because they are also participating mostly unawares in the spectacle.

A similar effect is achieved with art. In former times, art was about being - you were or someone you knew was an artist or craftsperson. With manufacturing, art could be had easily and cheaply and there was no need to be an artist. Then, with the commonality of production, fine art was required to differentiate the buyer from the masses and give the right appearance (as seen above, collectors are capitalists who want the correct appearance of culture and polish). Art is thereby reduced to the realm of commodity – it is merely another consumable product. Vulgarization of art speeds the disintegration of the high art institution and increases the need for transcendence. Specialization of art comes to an end (Vaneigem 20:4). With the disintegration of art we also witness the loss of the common language it expressed in society. What remains to be seen how a new mode of communication will be found to fill this void (Debord 187:133).

3.5 Mass Restlessness

Before new modes of communication can be found, enough people will have to realise something is missing. It is clear that there is a growing feeling of despondency and

unrest in the Western World. In Canada, the nearly one in five adults who experience mental illnesses in the period of one year give evidence to it. The vast majority of these people will suffer from mood, anxiety or eating disorders (Offord *et al* 559 - 563 and Bland *et al* 33 - 42 in Health Canada). Worldwide depression has likewise been on the rise since the 40s (Lasn 10). The reasons for this rise are hard to pin down, but based on what we know of the spectacle we can reasonably speculate some connections.

The alienating self-consciousness of the spectacle lends itself to endless self - examination. Everyday we are encouraged to indulge in kitsch emotions on talk shows, in self help books and in magazines; kitsch because they are a most common watered down and an overly sentimental sentimental. According to Debord, the more a person contemplates, the less he or she lives and the more readily needs are seen as part of those proposed by the dominating system. The more a person contemplates outside himself, the less he knows of his own self, own desires and own reality. Therefore people immersed in the spectacle are homeless, because there is no home for the self (Debord 30: 23). This echoes St. Augustine's famous insight, "*Inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te* (Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee).

There is no resting place in the society of the spectacle and its spirit of restlessness is exemplified in various ways: short attention spans, irritability, impatience, and the need for instant gratification that consumerist cultures engenders. This restlessness is fuelled by the demands of consumption - our needs must never be truly satisfied or else we would stop consuming and the economy would suffer. Art, now neglected by the masses and rendered practically irrelevant by the elite, is turned as a weapon in service of consumerism. Graphic art, commercial images on TV, billboards,

movies and magazines all provide an excellent arsenal in realising the sole purpose of commercialism – to make a person dissatisfied. In their dissatisfaction, people will be impelled to buy the product that promises satisfaction. But like Mick Jagger sang, "I can't get no satisfaction", the needs of the people are never met and must never *be* met or else the spectacle would cease.

3.6 Idolatry and the Inner Abyss

What is the solution to endless consumption? The same solution to the restlessness of the heart; rest must be found in God. Depression is a symptom of alienation from God, just as hell is alienation from God. Without God, there is a void in our lives that we strive to fill by looking outside ourselves. Henry Nouwen astutely describes this void,

> "There is a deep hole in your being, like an abyss. You will never succeed in filling that hole, because your needs are inexhaustible...Since the hole is so enormous and you anguish so deep, you will always be tempted to flee from it. There are two extremes to avoid: being completely absorbed in your pain and being distracted by so many things that you stay far away from the wound you want to heal" (3).

The temptation to flee from the inner deep is great in the society of the spectacle where self - absorption and self - help are a staple in our popular culture. Alternatively, we could shower ourselves with things and try to stuff our emptiness full of, well... 'stuff'. But the emptiness cannot be filled and people are beginning to realize something's amiss. Bernard Levin, an English columnist, described the ineffectiveness of worldly stuff to fill the inner abyss in an article whose title could aptly be the motto of our age, *Life's Great Riddle, and No Time To Find Its Meaning*. He writes:

> "Countries like ours are full of people who have all the material comforts they desire, together with such non - material blessings as a happy family, and yet who lead lives of quiet and sometimes noisy desperation, understanding nothing but the fact that there is a hole inside them and that however much food and drink they pour into it, however many motor cars and television sets they stuff it with, however many well balanced children and loyal friends they parade around the edges of it ... it aches." (Levin in Gumbel 13).

People sense there is an inner emptiness, but cannot find the filler that is the right fit. So they restlessly cast about, grasping one thing after another in an ever - mounting accumulation of objects promising satisfaction and disappointing once acquired. The Christian response to filling the inner void is that since God has made us, only she can complete us. Trying to fill the emptiness in ours lives with anything else is an erroneous attempt to install and idol where God should reside.

The spectacle is at heart a very complex and deceptive form of idolatry. We have seen throughout history idolatry was associated with objects and material gain. Today, material gain and objects intertwine, now the pleasure of object ownership is wrapped up in the appearance of owning said object and the implication of material wealth given. Even money, the end goal of idol makers has become an idol itself. The old system of idolatry was founded on the power of art; the new system has stripped art of its power and replaced it with a whirling cycle of ever - changing objects of desire, forever making us want more and never satisfying us. The thrust of our yearning towards God is not answered with an object as idolatrous days of yore, rather the very yearning for God herself is rerouted in to a never - ending cycle of desire and unfullfillment. Lack of satisfaction and the inability of the acquired object to really fill our inner abyss leads people to depression and disillusionment. As Vaneigem observes,

> "When the illusion of real change has been exposed, a mere change of illusion becomes intolerable. But present conditions are precisely these: the economy cannot stop making us consume more and more, and to consume without respite is to change illusions at an accelerating pace which gradually dissolves the illusion of change. We find ourselves alone, unchanged, frozen in the empty space behind the waterfall of gadgets, family cars and paperbacks" (1:3).

The message of the consumer culture is to buy happiness, but the purpose of the same is to prevent happiness and therefore keep us in an unceasing state of consumption.

When our hope of change is gone (our hope that finally this new thing will fill the inner void), desire to find a solution to the inner ache dissipates into disillusionment. Cessation of the desire to find a solution to life's alienation is tantamount to spiritual death. Artist Edward Robinson quotes Rene Dumal to illustrate this point,

"I am dead because I lack desire:
I lack desire because I think I possess;
I think I possess because I do not try to give;
In trying to give you see that you have nothing;
Seeing you have nothing, you try to give of yourself;
Trying to give of yourself, you see that you are nothing;
Seeing you are nothing, you desire to become;
In desiring to become, you begin to live" (35-36).

Robinson points out that the tragedy of idolatry is not that it provokes Gods wrath and reckoning, but that our spirits wither "by this slowly wasting disease which imperceptibly drains away the last reserves of spiritual energy" (36). Spiritual death resultant of idolatry is further proof that the society of the spectacle is a system of idolatry. Many people thirst for spirituality and would call themselves spiritual who do

not identify themselves with a religion. The society of the spectacle endorses this since the new agey and alternative methods are vast, diffuse and yield many opportunities for profit. (If tarot cards don't do it for you, why not runes, numerology, or your own personal psychic?)

Sick spirituality is also rampant in organized Christianity itself. Living in a society of spectacle means that one needs to keep up appearances. Going to church to see and be seen as a good upstanding citizen was *de rigueur* up until the 70s and still comes into play with older congregations. People who clearly were (and are) in it for the social prestige climb into power and since they have no real feeling of mission deadlock churches into factions of the traditionalism. Older congregations have a vested interest in keeping the traditions and appearances as for many that is the sole reason why they joined in the first place. Tradition itself can become an idol, since it beguiles believers into thinking they hold exclusive access to God – as if God was about a certain music or prayer preferences. This is the phenomenon of the inner and outer cup (Mathew 23:25) Therefore, people who feel a spiritual vacuum in their lives often find themselves in just another part of the spectacle be it organized religion or in New Ageism.

It is very difficult to break out of the spirit sapping spectacle, because it is an almost "imperceptible" part of life. Kallie Lasn identifies this imperceptibility as the most powerful and insidious detail of the spectacle,

> "The great insidious power of the spectacle lies in the fact that it is actually a form of mental slavery that we are free to resist, only it never occurs to us to do so. Our media saturated post - modern world, where all communication flows in one direction, from the powerful to the powerless, produces a population of lumpen spectators "modern men and women, the citizens of the most advanced societies on earth, thrilled to watch whatever it is they're given to watch" {emphasis his} (104).

We are mired in a powerful system of idolatry that manipulates, misguides and makes us miserable and yet it never occurs to us to cash out, so to speak. And yet the irony of the situation is that the idols that seem to have power over us really only acquire their power from our fixed gaze.

3.7 Idols Enough for Everyone!

Images are no longer fashionable creations, but have become the very world we live in. And the world was made image.

Jean Luc Marion (LCDV I).

The society of the spectacle, as seen, is a spectacular system of idolatry and it is the nature of the image that makes it so. The secularization of art witnessed the development of art for art's own sake. Now in the society of the spectacle we have images for the image's sake. According to theologian Jean Luc Marion, the image has been freed from any context, from any dependency or source except itself. "The more we allow images to exist without questioning their original reference the more the images proliferate"(LCDV I).

The viewer's lack of awareness in the face of the image is key to the maintenance of the spectacle. "Only because one need not say what is being shown, is the show made possible" (Marion, LCDV I). Since there is no reference point to the images, the viewer herself becomes its reference; the image moulds itself to her. This moulding results in voyeurism, since the viewer submits to, controls and defines the image. The voyeur is

someone who sees for the pleasure of seeing;the society of the spectacle helps us to indulge in this pleasure and submit to the temptation that Marion states,

> "...all the Fathers have warned against: libido videndi; a passion for seeing, for seeing it all, above all what I neither have the right nor the strength to look at - in a word, the lust to master with the eye what by right can only be the return of an investment: of exposing myself to the other's stare. The voyeur establishes with the world a rapport which is both perverse and impotent: he flees it and possesses it at once in the image: through a kind of image borne masturbation" (Marion, LCDV II).

The *libido videndi* is evident in our society today with our cult of celebrity, prurient interest in others' sex lives, and morbid fascination with crime, violence and death. The most popular phenomenon in TV programming in recent years can readily sum up the *libido videndi* in two words – Reality TV. We are so alienated from reality that we need to watch it produced on TV instead of living it ourselves.

Passion for seeing renders any image acceptable so long as it fulfill ours lust to see. Fulfillment of our visual desire means that we are really seeing a reflection of ourselves since the image has no reference point other than what the viewer assigns it. This makes the image an idol as Marion defines it and he boldly declares that any image in today's society must be an idol or it will not be seen (Marion, LCDV II).

The nature of the idol is typified by the gaze; it only has power if it is being contemplated. The desire the gaze is seeking to fulfill precedes and precipitates to the goal of the gaze, which is the idol. Once the gaze is settled on the idol, it rests and is filled. The gaze fails to go beyond the idol to perceive the invisible, rather the focus rests with the visible. (Marion, GWB 10 - 11). When our gaze makes the idol, we are not really seeing the object for what it truly is; we instead see our preconceived notion of the

object. The idol thus functions as a mere mirror of our gaze, we do not really *see* the object for what it really is, but rather a projection of our selves. As such, we cannot truly see signs pointing to something else or to the invisible for we are only interested in seeing ourselves. We use our eye to master the object, thing, or person being looked at and are not in relation to it. As Marion said above, we fail to return the investment, that of seeing and being seen ourselves. The idol is a form of mental masturbation in that it satisfies desire and we need not encounter anything, we meet no other, we are alone with the image whose sole source of reference is ourselves. Instead of being in relationship with reality, seeing and being seen, we discover our voyeuristic gaze in the idol mirrored back to us; our gaze is captured in the idol and at the same time discovers itself being captured: "the gaze no longer rushed through the spectacle stage without stopping, but forms a stage in the spectacle; it is fixed in it and, far from passing beyond, remains facing what becomes for it a spectacle to *re*-spect" (Marion, GWB 11).

The idol and its mirroring effect on the onlooker are a re-echoing of the effects of the society of the spectacle. Could it be that the whole spectacle hinges on our idolatrous desires? A consumerist society runs on the laws of supply and demand. If the masses didn't want it, the producers wouldn't produce it. We have seen that the society of the spectacle is simply an idol juggling act, giving more and more idols to respond to our ever restless hearts. Shame on them for exploiting our idolatry but more shame on us for indulging our own idolatrous heart. In light of the mental hamster wheel idolatry brings and its ability to imprison us in our own fantasies the mores onus on us to cast down our idols.

Yet as Lasn observed, this mental slavery is something that never occurs us to throw off. The idol making process prevents this by dominating the awareness of the idol maker. The idolatrous eye loses the ability to judge the idol because the idol itself fulfills and fatigues the desire of the eye. It saps away the spirit because it buries the gaze in it, giving it a resting place, and thereby slaking our desire. Our desire ceases and yet it has been met with a replacement – the idol - since all desires are really all our aspirations for the ultimate meaning in life expressed. Because the idol can never reveal anything other than our own reflections, we lose hope in the possibility of revelation or encounter with the Other.

In former times, idolatrous proclivities were purged by iconoclasm. This would appear to be the solution to shatter the society of the spectacle. Despite this, Iconoclasm is simply another way to show the power of the image that we are trying to destroy. Iconoclasms entail surrender to the tyranny of the image, as it is the reverse response to the image as norm. As Jean Luc Marion points out, instead of including the face of God among images, iconoclasm underwrites the divorce between that face and all images, thus legitimizing the modern tyranny of the image, the norm of all things (LCDV V). What is required is not the destruction of the image but a transformation to a new way of imaging.

3. Chapter Three: Seeing Conversion

3.1 Looking and Seeing

"Seeing. We might say that the whole of life lies in that verb – if not in the end, at least in essence." – Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (31).

If it is a new imaging we require to break free of the idolatry of the spectacle, first we need to find a new way of *seeing*. In the words of Teilhard de Chardin, trying to see more effectively stems not from curiosity or self-indulgence alone but rather, "*To see* or to *perish* is the very condition laid upon everything that makes up the universe, by reason of the mysterious gift of existence. And this, in superior measure, is man's (sic) condition" (31). We need to live according to who we authentically are and see or to perish in unreality and the barbarisms unseeing brings.

But surely we can all *see,* that seems to be the problem; we are caught up in a sea of images, a constantly swirling spectacle. However, we may look at the spectacle surrounding us and never truly see it. If we saw it for what it truly was, we would no longer be enslaved to it. The solution to the all absorbing spectacle and idolatrous eye is found, according to artist Frederick Franck, in the difference between *looking* and *seeing*. Our slavery stems not from seeing, but *looking* and the difference between the two is more than just semantics. Ways of being influence our state of existence; looking and seeing are two such ways because each dictates the way we exist in relation to reality. How we perceive reality depends upon the way in which we interpret it and the criteria we use to judge it.

When we use ourselves as criteria, we are only *looking* at reality and do not perceive it for what it truly is. This is because looking is really only a reflection of our selves and our thoughts and desires. Looking is the action of the *libido vedendi*, when we look we devour the object with our eyes; it is the preferred mode of the ego. The ego *looks* at an object and will let the object in only to the extent that it supports the ego's self idolatry (Franck, AWCE 115). The desire of the ego is to express itself and its interpretation of reality is me - as - measure. This is why the ego so readily falls into idolatry – idols are merely a reflection of the ego's self. Me - as - measure of all things is the temptation of original sin. Humans, not God, become the knowers of good and evil and thereby , as the serpent promised Eve, become like unto God. This is the original source of idolatry; the meaning of life and existence of all things explained by something that appears to be that but is not. (Giussani 137).

When we look with the ego, we lose touch with our authentic self because the desire of the true self is the opposite of the ego; the self desires to find ultimate meaning and experience the sacred. Its desire is not egoistic self-expression, but to see the real and express the sacred. To *see*, as artist Frederick Franck expresses, reveals meaning, "to *see* is to see the Sacred, to *look - at* is to miss it" (AWCE 115). Seeing is living because we are free to encounter reality free from the filters of the ego. When we truly see, our ego does not impose its filter and labels on the world but we experience reality for what it is and all its potential meaning; in essence we are truly alive. In transcending looking's self-referentialism, we start to see a connection between object and subject. In seeing this connection we begin to empathise with what we see. A world full of on – lookers means a world lacking in empathy and connectedness to reality and the result can only be

inhumanity. De Chardin was right when he said the whole of life was in the verb - *seeing*. *Seeing* denotes consciousness, and being conscious is being truly human. Thus when our consciousness is diminished by our inability to *see*, so too is our humanity. "For to be human is essentially a matter of consciousness. The less aware I am of who I am, of who you are, of the living world around me, the less human I am" (Franck, AWCE116).

Consumer society seeks to lull us into a state of unconsciousness by appealing to our idolatrous needs. It promises happiness, yet can never deliver. We cannot be fully conscious and be idolatrous, since we would see our idols for what they were and throw them down. Thus we are kept forever wandering in our own personal hall of mirrors (the ego - mirroring idol), propelled along by new and newer acquisitions. Idolatrous people can only look and in their looking they have forgotten how to *see*. Indeed, truly seeing would expose the idol and point beyond to the divine and the transcendent.

Set free from the ego's imprisonment we see that there is no human situation devoid of meaning. A life that has no meaning quickly extinguishes itself and others along with it. A life that is lived according to the way of seeing, however, is full of meaning and connectedness with others perceived. As de Chardin states, "union can only increase through an increase in consciousness, that is to say vision" (de Chardin 31). Without the consciousness that vision, or seeing, provides, we would never see the purpose of our lives and we would perish in the meaninglessness of it all. In seeing, de Chardin writes that "No longer will man (sic) be able to see himself entirely unrelated to mankind, neither will he be able to see mankind unrelated to life, nor life unrelated to the universe" (de Chardin 34).

In perceiving our relationship to reality, we perceive that our life has meaning in the grand scheme of things. Since the core of human nature is the quest for meaning and fulfillment, it follows that those who see are truly human. To see then is to fulfill the human vocation to find the ultimate meaning in life. This search is an expression of our human nature, and therefore those who see live according to who they really are. Idolaters, as we witnessed, do not see reality and are caught up in a never-ending loop of self-deception. They cannot see and therefore they are not truly human since the hallmark of humanity is consciousness and consciousness denotes the ability to see.

3.2 Seeing and the Religious Sense

Looking and seeing are in essence two different ways of interpreting the world. The way we experience the world has everything to do with religion since the religious sense is awakened by our perception of reality. If we look at reality and do not see it, our awareness of life's mystery diminishes (Giussani 140). In this way seeing is intimately connected to the religious sense and religion cannot sustain itself long without it.

Theologian Luigi Giussani identifies the religious sense as the expression of certain questions we all inevitably ask ourselves: "What is the ultimate meaning of existence, why is there suffering, why is life worth living and or what is reality and what is the purpose of it" (Giussani 45)? He writes that the religious sense "lies within the reality of our self at the level of these questions: *"it coincides with the most radical engagement of the self with life, an involvement which exemplifies itself in these questions"*{his emphasis} (Giussani 45). The religious sense is therefore evoked in a life truly lived, and we have seen that only those who see truly engage reality as it is and live.

Giussani believes that these questions are rooted in the core of our beings (46) and as such they cannot be denied. An attempt to deny our insatiable quest for meaning can only result in restlessness and unease since we would be denying a core characteristic of humanity. These questions "cannot be rooted out, because they constitute the stuff of which we are made" (Giussani 46). That we are made with an insatiable longing for the other, that we are provoked to long for meaning seems to be awareness that there is something more to life than our narrow existence. To deny that there is an ultimate meaning, that there is a God, results in effects very reminiscent of our current society of the spectacle. A godless world would render life as " all splintered into segments, with no true order, no vision beyond the immediate instant, 'full of sound and fury', that is to say, were the single method of relationship is violence, the illusion of possession" (Giussani 57).

The solution to our Godless society is to see. To see is to truly experience and therefore to truly live. True life experience opens up the passageway to true communication and dialogue (Giussani 84). Lack of communication results in solitude and alienation, what Giussani describes is today's exasperating social climate (85). Our social climate is hostile to communication and dialogue and is therefore hostile to religion because communal expression is fundamental to religious practice. Religion left to individual practice would quickly perish, "The community is the dimension and condition necessary for the human seed to bear fruit" (Giussani 131).

The society of the spectacle inhibits community because it erodes experience which is its base. Commonly experience is held to be an accumulation of things tried and sensations and facts stored up. Giussani identifies experience as defined by understanding

something and unveiling its meaning. "Thus experience implies understanding the meaning of things" (Giussani 6). If we accept this definition, it becomes clear that few of us have had many true experiences. Meaningful experiences seem to be an ever-elusive goal for many and it is apparent that our social climate resists the search for meaning. This resistance is symptomatic in life as on looker. Those that see life see meaning and therefore have a base of experience from which to build relationships on.

3.3 Our Ascetic Work

How do we see meaning, in other words, how do we experience, what criteria is used to judge experience? The criteria for evaluating our experiences and therefore finding meaning is based either from within or without. Giussani believes that we must compare everything to our inner elementary experience. This experience is based on certain fundamental needs in all humans, "The need for goodness, justice, truth, and happiness constitutes man's (sic) ultimate identity..." (10). Elementary experience is universal and can be thought of the inner stamp of humanity. (Giussani 8).

This is the true self that operates through the seeing eye. When our elementary experience is our basis of comparison and judgement of reality, we see. If our criterion for comparison is located outside ourselves we rely on the common conventions of the world, what we are told by our families, traditions, schools, and media. This outward source of judgement is in play when we merely look. We are all presumption and are unable to intuit the meaning of the subject or object under observation since we presume it's meaning in advance. Reliance on sources outside ourselves is a guarantee for inauthentic living. In our consumer based society we witness the results of outer reliance,

a tendency to idolatry. Giussani warns, "if we wish to become adults without being cheated, alienated, enslaved by others, or exploited, we must become accustomed to comparing everything to this elementary experience" (10). Seeing reality as it is, and relying on our elementary experiences to interpret it and find meaning, clearly goes against the prevailing winds of the world. Yet this is what must be done in order for us to be free. The work that must be done to overcome outside influences is ascetic "because we must always pass beyond a certain incrustation that life deposits on us" (Giussani 33). Our ascetic work is therefore to see and to judge correctly, to find meaning in reality. We reject the easy control of the looking ego, and instead live mindfully attending to the promptings of our inner self.

Living by looking entails a false experience of reality based on presumption and preconception. Experiencing reality in all its totality is the nascence of religious sentiment. "Reality is a sign, and it awakens our religious sense. But it is a suggestion that is misinterpreted. Existentially, the human being is driven to interpret it poorly; that is to say; prematurely, with impatience. The intuition of our relationship with mystery becomes degraded into presumption" (Giussani 140). Resisting our drive to hastily and incorrectly interpret reality is essential to the development of our religious sense. Reality must be seen as the sign it is in order for us to comprehend the presence of mystery – the Other. Reality is God revealed and to experience revelation we must transcend the limited horizon of human existence towards the other. (Giussani 142 – 143). This transcendence of horizons can only be accomplished through the experience of conversion.

3.4 Conversion

Conversion is the radical turning around of the self. Lonergan aptly describes it as the transformation of the subject and her/his world. It is a change of direction: "Its as if one's eye were opened and one's former world faded and fell away" (130). Conversion changes the way you look at things, indeed instead of looking one sees. Conversion precludes revelation, because the revealed will be misinterpreted without it.

To interpret reality correctly we must not limit our selves to the horizon of human experience. A horizon is our field of knowledge and awareness and what we care about and value. Horizons have boundaries that separate what we know and don't know (Lonergan 237). The conversion experience is required to push us past our limited horizons on to new ones. Without this push we would miss the revelation of reality because it would not be in our horizon. Lonergan, after the work of Joseph de Finace, states that this push is a vertical exercise of freedom that allows us to move to a new horizon and therefore a new beginning characterized by conversion (237 – 238).

There are three different types of conversion, moral, intellectual, and religious. Religious conversion is the most significant for this study since this is most conducive to self - transcendence. Religious conversion has a transformative effect on the person, in that she is infused with religious love. She is "grasped by ultimate concern" (Lonergan 240), and life is transformed. This falling in love actualises the capacity for self-transcendence. The capacity for self - transcendence is formed by our questions and being in love is the fulfillment of it (Lonergan 105 - 106).

Our questioning nature is revealed in our experiences and how we interpret them in comparison with our elementary experiences. This can only be done by seeing and not looking. The ascetic work of seeing is an integral part of the conversion process, and our vision is also affected by our conversion. "Conversion, as lived, affects all of man's (sic) conscious and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgement, reinforces his decisions" (Lonergan 131).

The effects of conversion on the eye are significant since we have seen the dangers of the deficient, looking but never seeing eye. In artistic terms, conversion seems to release the imagination and the powerful symbols that would enhance creativity and artistic authenticity. Since transcendence makes us achieve true authenticity, it translates that the authentic individual should likewise create authentically. What the society of the spectacle lacks is conversion leading to self - transcendence. Lonergan lists the effects of the lovelessness that is hidden in sinfulness – superficiality, evasion of ultimate questions, worldly absorption, bodily indulgence, and mental distraction. Despite these covers, lovelessness cannot be forever hidden, and restlessness, joylessness and pursuit of fun, and depressive disgust with self and humanity is exposed (243). These signs of sinfulness seem a tidy summation of our contemporary life.

If conversion is the solution to modern spiritual and social malaise, how does one bring it on? Conversion is the product of work, the ascetic, of every person. The ascetic is to experience life according to our inner self and its elemental experiences, not from the calcified build up of culture about us. This ascetic is made possible by seeing reality and by our real relationship with reality that shows the Other, rather than basing our

assumptions on preconception. First we need to really see, and in so doing pierce the spectacle of life around us and engage real life. Then we can judge and compare reality to what we know to be true in ourselves, our elemental experiences. This opens the gateway to perceiving revelation. Revelation fires conversion which in turns inflames love resulting in the ultimate fulfillment of self - transcendence.

The interlocking links of this process form a chain that seems simple to forge. Yet how can someone be taught to see? A normal person doesn't usually say to himself "I cannot see for all my looking!" The solution to the inability to see is to cultivate the inner artist, because there is no better discipline for the eye than the practice of art.

> "Is there an antidote against this evil, this perversion? I know of no other than to see again, to reconnect against all odds, with the artist - within, the one in us who can still see and hear the glory and groaning of Creation" (Franck, AWCE 116).

4. Chapter Four: Art-as-Process

Introduction

4.1 Art, Ritual and Creativity

It is not surprising that cultivating the artist within aids the religious sense in its development since both art and religion stem from the same root. This fact is evidenced historically where the main impetus of artistic pursuit was religious - from medieval cathedrals back to primitive cave paintings. Religion is the fount of art and art streams from its attendant ritual (Vogt 18). A culture of religious and or spiritual experience is brought about and maintained by the performing of rituals (Vogt 65). In our time the power of the collective religious experience in the form of ritual is waning and, according to Erich Neumann, the creative principle in art is coming to the fore : " ...the creative individual seems to enjoy such prestige partly because he exemplifies the utmost transformation possible in our time, but above all because the world he creates is an adequate image of the primordial one reality, not yet split by consciousness – a reality that only a personality creating from out of its wholeness is able to create" (Neumann in Egger 29).

The wholeness of the creative person echoes the lack of separation of art from religion for the artist-within, who as Franck says, realizes "his place in the fabric of all that is and has a sense of holistic incorporation of self, religion and art" (TZOS 8).

Ritual and art are intertwined since both are expressions of the religious imagination. Imagination is the spark of creativity that is essential to our humanity. We are made in the image of God, the creator, and it follows that creativity is our essential

human vocation. This means that art is not a distinct study for the elite or specially talented, but rather the calling of every person (Collins 59). Using Frank's term - the artist within - should not be taken to imply artist in the terms of a profession. Rather it is part of our vocation as humans since humans are made with inherent creativity.

Cognitive psychologist Abraham Maslow speaks of creativity as "a fundamental characteristic, inherent in human nature, a potentiality given to all or most human beings at birth, which most often is lost or buried as the person gets enculturated" (Maslow in Eggers 12). We saw how this enculturation dimmed creativity: how the institution of high arts and focus on art –as-product specialized artistic production away from the masses. It is our ascetic work to overcome this enculturation and to reclaim our inherent creativity. One need not be an artist in the classical sense in order to create. Maslow differentiated between special talent creativity of the professional artist and the self actualizing creativeness inherent in all of us that contributes to our mental health and healing (Egger 20). Self-actualizing creativeness is for everyone, no matter what profession or way of life they are engaged in. Rather than an end product, this form of creativity results in an ongoing work in progress of a life well lived: "There are no more artists because everyone is an artist. The work of art of the future will be the construction of a passionate life" (Vaneigem 20:4).

4.2 The Theological Significance of Creativity

If creativity is truly our human vocation and its expression vital to our health and wholeness, then it bears examination from a theological perspective. Religious philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev's principle concern with human freedom hinges upon his

concept of creativity as human vocation: "The matter of creativity and of the creative vocation of man (sic) is not only a facet or one of the facets of my outlook, reached as a result of philosophical reasoning, but a source of my whole thinking and living – an initial inner experience and illumination" (Berdyaev, DAR 207).

Creativity was on the side of human freedom in Berdyaev's paradoxical philosophy of freedom versus necessity. Berdyaev saw the human struggle as caught between the spiritual and the worldly. In this struggle humans have the choice, either to surrender to the world of objects and necessity or to select the true reality of freedom, whose base is in the spiritual and God. In our minds there are two intentions, "One which leads to the enslaving world of objects and to the realm of necessity, the other which is directed towards the truly existent world, the realm of freedom" (Berdyaev, TBATE 59). The world of necessity means a dependence on the outer and an inauthentic way of living that Berdyaev terms objectification. "Consciousness which exteriorises and alienates is always slavish consciousness...The source of slavery is always objectification, that is to say exteriorization, alienation. It is slavery in everything: in the acquisition of knowledge, in morals, in religion, in art, in political and social life"(Berdyaev, SAF 61). Giussani, we saw before, shared this concept about outer reliance resulting in slavery.

Berdyaev states that victory over slavery is creative activity (SAF 71). This victory is achieved because creativity is freedom according to his philosophy. Creativity brings to life something new, it is the state of non-being converting to being. It is the mystery of the new that had not existed before and stems not from the world. "Creativeness pre-supposes non-being...which is the source of the primeval, pre-cosmic, pre-existent freedom in man (sic)" (TDOM 127). As creativeness presupposes non-being,

it hearkens back to the pre-created state of the world and humanity and the total freedom from the necessity of the world that existed then. When we operate creatively we therefore tap into our original source of freedom - it is a response of freedom and not a response of necessity in the face of the world. God created the world in total freedom out of the void and thereby made creativeness possible: "Creativeness is only possible because the world is created, because there is a Creator. Man, (sic) made by God in His own image and likeness, is also a creator and is called to do creative work" (Berdyaev, TDOM 127).

Creativity then, is not just an interesting or beneficial personality trait, rather it is something hard-wired in us as beings made in the image of God, the consummate creator. Berdyaev saw three essential elements in the complexity of human creativeness: the first being our primary uncreated freedom, the second, the gifts given by God to the creative human, and third the world as area for creative expression (TDOM 127). The last two elements are given by God, however the first, our essential freedom, is from each of us. God calls us to live our vocation as creative beings and provides the materials for its expression, but we have the complete freedom to determine our answer to that call.

> "Freedom, not determined by anything answers God's call to creative work", writes Berdyaev, " but in so doing it makes use of the gifts or genius received from God and of materials present in the created world... In every creative conception there is an element of primeval freedom, fathomless, undetermined by anything, not proceeding from God but ascending towards God. God's call is addressed to that abyss of freedom, and the answer must come from it" (TDOM 128).

Freedom of the creative act is the opposite of determinism – the free-will of humanity is honoured when a person is creating. It seems that a lessening or lack of creativity then, equates to a lack of freedom in our lives and reduces our capacity to

respond to God's call. If we are serious about humanity's relationship to God, and as theologians by definition must be, we will consider gravely the fostering of creativity in light this.

4.3 The Function of the Creative Act

It may be difficult to perceive the role of freedom in creativeness because of the constant interplay of between the gift graced by God and the freedom of humanity (Berdyaev, DAR 129). Perhaps the freedom of creativity can be witnessed if not in play, then in the effect of the creative act. Berdyaev delineated two very important aspects of creativeness – the inner and the outer. The inner is the "primary creative act in which man (sic) stands as it were face to face with God." The secondary act is where "he faces other men and the world" (TDOM 128).

The outer of course, is easier to examine than the inner. The inner process of creativity is a matter of inner knowledge and encounter with the mystery of existence. Evidence of the outer process is with the product of creativity, in the case of art, the artwork. Naturally creativity is not limited to the art world alone, but is universally applied and may be witness as good works, products of civilisation, culture etc.

> "Every book, picture, statue, good work, social institution is an instance of this cooling down of the original flame...The inner creative act in its fiery impetus ought to leave the heaviness of the world behind and "overcome the world". But in its external realisation the creative act is subject to the power of the "world" and is fettered by it"
> (Berdyaev, TDOM 129).

The product inevitably is weighted down by the world and the original creative freedom that spawned it is hidden by its end product.

The creative process and not the product is the focus here. As such the creator need not be a talent in a certain field since creativeness is inherent in our very status as created beings. Creativity is a human characteristic says Berdyaev, "it indicates that man (sic) is capable of breaking through to the primary source of life and that his spiritual activity is truly original and not determined by social influences" (TDOM 129). We saw that our ascetic work in life was judging reality correctly in order to perceive revelation and the call to conversion. This ascetic requires creativity since creativity helps one to overcome the world. In the creative act, the creator forgets about herself and thereby her own personality in an act of self-renunciation. The creator experiences self-transcendence in leaving the restrictions of self and personality (Berdyaev, TDOM 130).

In transcending the self and the world, the creative act also fosters a sense of timelessness akin to the experience of eternity. The creative act is time-bound, and yet the intention of the act is eternal. Berdyaev notes that the tragedy of creativeness is that it desires the eternal yet it builds up culture anchored in time. This is the paradox of creativity - that it can be distorted by sin. Berdyaev cites an example, "An inventor in his creative inspiration is transported beyond the earth and time, but he creates a machine which may prove to be a weapon in the struggle against eternity" (TDOM 136).

4.4 Aestheticism and the Society of the Spectacle

The susceptibility of creativity to be distorted by sin once its products enter the world explains the misuse and objectification we see in the world. The society of the spectacle witnessed to the creative power of images and object gone awry. Berdyaev understood the power of spectacle and images in his understanding of the lure of

aesthetics. He defined the aesthetic lure as one where everything was converted into an object of contemplation and the person contemplating was inactive. The symptoms he describes recall the effects of the society of the spectacle: "An exclusively aesthetic orientation to life enfeebles the sense of reality and leads to this, that whole regions of reality fail to be taken into account" (SAF 239). For Berdyaev, the worst result of the lure of aestheticism is the trance like passivity it induces to the point were the subject is indifferent to the truth – a state ripe for de-personalization and de-humanizing possibilities. This passivity takes away creativity and thus also the door to freedom. The aesthete is a consumer yet not a producer, a state very similar to our consumptive culture today. (SAF 240). Here aestheticism is opposed to asceticism – our ascetic work is the discipline of overcoming the world while aestheticism is a symptom of passivity and detachment from life. The ascetic engages life and judges reality based on his elemental experiences, where the aesthete contemplates all the while withdrawn from the world.

Berdyaev believed the lure of aestheticism did not grip the masses, but was a form of slavery for the cultural elite indicative of cultural decline (SAF 237). This elite clearly is part of the institution of high art previously discussed. We saw, however, that the focus on art-as-product symptomatic of the elite also translated itself into the kitsch aestheticism of the masses. Both kitsch and aestheticism have their genesis in an externalisation of consciousness and objectification of reality. The philosopher's concept of the lure of aestheticism, observed in the late 40s was prophetic in that this lure was noted as the primary force of the society of the spectacle by artists in the 60s. While he did not anticipate the susceptibility of the masse to this lure and limited its appeal to the elite, Berdyaev did realise the crisis of culture's democratization. He warned of the

idolatry of cultural creations made possible by the levelling down of culture and the mass production to meet the desires of the populous (SAF 129). Levelling down, as we saw, is the very heart of kitsch, and the kitsching of life and experience is but another description of partaking in the idolatrous spectacular life.

4.5 Breakthrough Experiences and the Creative Act

Our moral task in the society of the spectacle is to rid our selves of the idols it creates. The casting down of our idols may be accomplished by the use of our inborn creativity.

> "Creativeness is by its very nature opposed to idolatry and therein lies its great significance. The ethics of creativeness is concerned with revealing human values and the value of human personality as such, and in doing so it frees man (sic) from the unendurable fear for himself and for his future – the fear that gives rise to idolatry and superstition" (Berdyaev, TDOM 135).

Creativity frees us from our fear, which, due to original sin, Berdyaev states is the dominant emotion in our attitude towards life. The source of this liberation flows from the elation experienced when a person is involved in a creative act (TDOM 136).

Elation is elevation – elevation beyond the self to the eternal and timeless. In this way the creative individual momentarily leaves the fetters of the world behind and experiences the timeless. The experience of timelessness is the key to escaping the ever-streaming spectacle of life that engulfs the modern person. Kallie Lasn writes of the need to experience timelessness as the impetus to culture jamming. Jammers perform gestures that take them outside of every day consciousness to experience real life. He describes

this experience as "so engrossing to the senses – in this instant, this act- that people actually feel they are living out of time" (106).

Transcendence of the creative act from the temporal to the eternal is an example of the breakthrough experience all persons require to be fully functioning, self-actualised human beings. Maslow defined this phenomenon as peak experiences – moments in our lives where we experience maximal wholeness and health. They are moments of maximum freedom where we are unencumbered by the world, each experience engenders a feeling of awe and fear is replaced by fulfillment. (Moody and Carroll 278-279). This experience is a breakthrough where the divine is seen in reality. Common qualities of the breakthrough is a feeling of timelessness, a clarification or unveiling of reality – truth perception, freedom from the fetters of the world, loss of fear and a sense of immortality of the soul, a feeling of renewal, or being born again, and a feeling of ineffability (Moody and Carroll 272 – 273). The creative act has the potentiality of producing such emotions and as such we see why Maslow considered it to be inborn in our nature – creativity is essential to self-actualisation as it spurs the peak experiences every person must have in order to self actualise.

Berdyaev's vision of the creative act and its effect mirrors that of the breakthrough experience defined above. The creative act overcomes fear and takes us away from the world. Timelessness is experienced and the fear of death is suspended, as time ceases its march towards the grave. The timelessness of the creative act allows for true freedom since we experience the eternal and spiritual side of humanity that is in victory over death. Outside the confines of time, death ceases to exist and therefore fear and anxiety for the future also. We thereby escape all determinism since we have no

expectation of the future in the eternal and therefore we do not determine our ends. "In the creative imagination the future is not determined. The creative image is outside the process of time, it is in eternity. Time is the child of sin, of sinful slavery, of sinful anxiety. It will stop and disappear when the world is transfigured" (Berdyaev, TDOM 147). The transfiguration of the world is already taking place according to Berdyaev, because we possess the ability to escape time. In freeing ourselves from fear, anxiety, determinism and their attendant idolatry and de-humanization we may participate in the transfiguration of the world.

4.6 The Eschatological and Prophetic Meaning of the Creative Act

Victory over time means the end of time and the end of time involves eschatological concerns. The creative act is eschatological because it seeks to transform the world and in so seeking has a prophetic role. "It speaks prophetically of a different world, of another, a transformed state of the world" (Berdyaev, DAR 179). This transformed state is opposite to the objectified state of the society of the spectacle, which mistranslates reality on a regular basis. The overwhelming susceptibility of the humanity to the illusions of the world and the objectification of life it entails requires creativity to be a destructor of the present world and prophet of the world to come.

The coming of God's Kingdom is reliant upon the creative act of humanity just as redemption and salvation are dependant on our response to God and are acts of divine-human creativity (Berdyaev, DAR 213). Creativity is innate to humanity as a trait of our creator, it is at once both the call of God and likewise the response of humanity "God awaits man's (sic) creative act, which is the response to the creative act of

God"(Berdyaev, DAR 208). For Berdyaev, the creativity of humanity is through the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the new revelation of the divine-human relationship for our times. "The world is passing through three epochs of divine revelation: the revelation of the law (Father), the revelation of redemption (the Son) and the revelation of creativity (the Spirit)" (Berdyaev, TMCA 320).

The giving of the Spirit revealed the secret of creativeness as it evidenced the possibility of the divine in humanity. The creativeness of the person reveals the *imago dei* and its use makes the divine manifest. The work of the Spirit is in tandem with the work of humanity as witnessed in the divine-human Church and the building up of the Kingdom of God. Creativity in the Spirit is the revelatory activity after the redemption,

> "The mystery of the redemption was accomplished and is eternally being accomplished in the cosmos. After redemption a new, creative being appears in the world and man (sic) is called to extraordinary activity, to creative upbuilding of profit for the Kingdom of God which is known as God-humanity" (Berdyaev, TMCA 98-99).

The creative impulse, whilst originating from the Spirit, is transformative and yet it cannot fully realise itself due to the objectifying effect of the world. Berdyaev viewed this as the tragedy of creativeness – the purpose of creativeness is to overcome the world by overcoming its objectifying influence. The creative act takes us beyond time to the eternal, and therefore pre-figures the moment when time will cease forever – the end of the world. In this way Berdyaev uniquely ties the meaning of the creative act to eschatology. "The failure of the creative act consists in this, that it does not achieve its purpose of bringing this world to an end, of overcoming its objectivity". Despite this failure, there is success in the fact that each creative act anticipates the future world

transformation, "Its success...lies in the preparation it makes for the transformation of the world, for the Kingdom of God" (TBATE 188).

4.7 Two Views on Creativity

The creative act is eschatological since it indicates a desire for a different world. This aspect has been overlooked or ignored by the world due to the prevailing view of creativity and its purpose. For the most part, the sole value of the creative endeavour is found in the contemplative, or aesthetic value of the work. Christianity has also been caught up in the idea that art is for contemplation: "Thus we see once again the bewitchment exercised by our institution of high art. The strength of the bewitchment is evident from the fact that it is effective even in the face of the immense importance of liturgical art in the Christian community" (Wolterstorff 67).

Over emphasis on the creative product and its aesthetic value indicates one of two views define by Berdyaev in regards to creativity. Of the two positions possible regarding attitudes towards the creative act, he writes, "The first is the end of this world and the beginning of the new; and the second is the process of strengthening and perfecting this world. They are respectively the outlook of revolutionary eschatology and that of evolutionary construction" (TBATE 183).

Evolutionary construction is of the world, and therefore falls prey to its objectification. This form of creativity is most common in the world and the concept of revolutionary eschatology is ignored in favour of it. This reverberates Lasn's observation that our absorption in the society of the spectacle is so great that it never occurs to us that we are enslaved let alone the fact that we need to be freed.

The Christian attitude towards creativity therefore is in reaction to the evolutionary constructionist view. It either rejects creativity and its products in a show of hostility to the worldly or gives it a "religious dressing to, or to justify or even sanctify, the social and cultural habits of this world" (DAR 216). Both attitudes are indicative of objectification in that they pass judgment on the creative end product and therefore are indeed of this world. The Church is right to deny the worldly, yet in its rush to denial the real significance of the origins of the creative act have been overlooked. This is evident in the Protestant churches view of art, for example. The dressing up of the creative act is a sign of objectification in the world, in so doing the Church enters into and participates in the spectacle of the world. This can be seen in churches where art is embraced for didactic or devotional purposes, like the Roman Catholic Church. In both instances the Church needs to understand the significance of creativity in terms of the working of the Holy Spirit and its eschatological quality. Revolutionary eschatology sees the world for what it is and desires its end as expressed in the transforming effect of the creative act.

Art and the Creative Act

The creative act is directed towards a different world yet produces a product which exists in the present world. Transcendence and objectification are therefore combined in creative activity, Berdyaev noted, and he warned as a result,

> "Man (sic) is called upon to expend his labour upon the material of this world and to subjugate it to the spirit. But the limits of this way of objectification must be understood, and so must the danger of its exclusive use, for it clinches and strengthens the wrong state of the world" (TBATE 193-194).

The wrong state of the world has resulted in the objectification of creativity and Berdyaev's philosophy has been prophetic in the face of the society of the spectacle. The use of creative product, specifically images and art, has shown the danger of exclusive objectified creative power. A call to conversion must be sounded and the true meaning of the creative act must be revealed. That prophet is none other than the artist within as, "Artistic creativeness best reveals the meaning of the creative act" (Berdyaev, TMCA 225).

The artist as prophet is a common refrain throughout history. Artists see what others just look at – therefore they notice things others ignore. In creating art, the artist must see more, "It must be a genuine attempt to see more things and to see them differently than they are seen during the actions of common life" (Vogt 87). Artistic development is excellent training for worldly detachment in that it naturally demands a clear eye and awareness when creating. The ability to see that which others cannot or will not enables the artist to claim a prophetic role – he points out the truth to us and calls our attention to things most needing attending to.

Artists also bring about change, distilling a creative vision into the fabric of the world and thereby transforming it in some small way (Vogt 88). This change betokens the possibility of improvement in the world and thus manifests a previous motivating dissatisfaction with the world. Art speaks of our destiny, a prophecy of the world to come in its eschatological aspect (Harned 97). "Art always teaches us that everything passing and temporal is a symbol of another form of being, permanent and eternal" (Berdyaev, TMCA 238).

In addition, the artist labours for the good of the world and so creates and contributes to civilisation. In short, while artists never realise the transfiguration of the world, they foreshadow it in an effort that forestalls barbarism. Civilisation is in essence both a failure in its inability to completely transfigure the world, but also a success in that the mere attempt prevents chaos and makes life liveable. Art and all other creative acts are merely symbolic of our spiritual aspirations; they are artefacts of the eschatological yearning of creativity. "The arts contribute to man's (sic) redemption because they affirm that all things in time and space are only images and shadows of what is divine" (Harned 98).

As the end product of the creative impulse, artistic efforts are a foretaste and as such must not be seen as things of value in of themselves. Eastern Orthodox icons are instructive this perspective – art is but a mere window onto the divine, pointing beyond themselves, not of worth in of themselves. This symbolic view would collapse the society of the spectacle, kitsch, and/or the institution of high arts, all of which depend on the idolatrous fixture of the gaze in the image. The pointing beyond of an image prevents idolatry and highlights meaning. "The magic of art is its power to wrench out the roots of finitude and to turn man's (sic) gaze to the eternal" (Berdyaev, DAR 45-46).

The artist is the victor over the world, as Berdyaev writes,

> "In art there is liberation. The essential in artistic creativity is victory over the burden of necessity. In art man (sic) lives outside himself, outside his burdens, the burden of life. Every creative artistic act is a partial transfiguration of life. Creativeness in art, like any other form of creative activity, consists in triumph over given, determined, concrete life; it is a victory over the world" (TBATE 173).

In the victory may also be found defeat for the artist, because like every creative act, art becomes part of the spectacle or objectification of the world. However the very effort of the artist shows the promise of the world to come. The failure of the act to cause transfiguration still speeds the coming of the Kingdom by the artists prophetic role. Each creative endeavour cries "*Maranatha*!" and in the inability to speed the coming lies its success since it signals out the urgent need for world transformation and conversion.

Art-as-Process: the Solution to Necessity

The danger of the artistic act, as we have seen, is the objectification of the end product. In its orientation on the eternal, the creative impulse reorients us to our original freedom, however the outcome of this impulse is the congealing of that upward thrust into an outward worldly object. In the case of art, the upshot of this decline is that the creative act is an important process for accessing the divine rather the source of a valuable end- project. Creativity is merely a conduit for the final output, not a value in of itself. This results based view towards the artistic endeavour may be termed as art-as-product The focus on the process, the creative act in the creation of a work of art, can be likewise termed art-as-process. The concentration on art-as-product has overshadowed the art-as-process to the detriment of humanity.

Art-as-product is part of the objectified world as it is the product of creativity. As witnessed throughout history, art has gone from a religious activity tightly connected with ritual to a secular one with no purpose further than itself. Art was a mode of expression and communication for the masses, pointing to values beyond itself, yet it was sublimated by economics and became a value in itself. The establishment of the

institution of high arts removed art from the commonplace and gave it cachet. Indeed, art was *cacher* - hidden from the regular folk. To support the institution of high arts, schools of aesthetics and critics formed to create "taste" and set the standard for judging the value of art. This institution provides an insurmountable wall for many whose artistic impulses are quashed by the inability to meet the value judgments of the institution.

To create requires freedom, and we cannot be free if we are weighed down by the encrustation of world's value judgements about art. "The struggle for free creation", notes Philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, "is understood in the first place as requiring liberation from aesthetic norms, outside of, objective to, and impinging on, the artist" (54). Some artists have sought to escape these aesthetic norms via various artistic and philosophical movements like Dadaism, Futurism, and Cubism etc. These movements, however, still remain a part of the institution of high art - even a reaction against something still indicates that it has control.

A contemplative attitude in regards to art instead of an active one is the progeny of the high art tradition. The artist is deemed such based on her product not on her creativity, it follows that artists draw not only on creativity but also on what is fitting according to high art standards. Vaneigem declares of the high art institutions galleries and museums:

> "What makes an artist is their state of creativity, not art galleries. Unfortunately, artists rarely recognize themselves as creators: most of the time they play to the gallery, exhibitionistically. A contemplative attitude before a work of art was the first stone thrown at the creator. They encouraged this attitude in the first place, but today it is their undoing: now it amounts to no more than a need to consume, an expression of the crassest economic imperatives. This is why there is no longer any such thing as a work of art in the classical sense of the word. Nor can there be such a thing. So much the better" (20:4).

The solution of creative freedom lies outside of this institution. The problem of rejecting the high art institution is, of course, that the artist cannot earn her livelihood since all value is dictated by that which has been rejected. The concept of artist as professional is part of the art-as-product mindset. A product is created of value and is exchanged for currency. This naturally tends towards a focus on art in terms of money and is very much within the objectifying sphere of the world and necessity.

Art-as-process sees art as *vocation* in terms of a divine call and not occupation. The artist is but one aspect of a life, a vocation almost our other vocations, like marriage, celibacy, and ministry it contributes to a person's life and makes for better scientists, bus drivers, nurse and teachers. Art-as-process is not a way of life but a way to a better life. It is made possible by the realisation of our inherent creativity. We have seen that art is not for an elite, rather it is a potentiality in all of us to claim the fundamental creativeness we were born with. Because of this we must pierce the illusion of the art world and reject the institution of museums and art school, aesthetics and critics. "It would be useful to roundly condemn the popular notion that art is a rarefied experience for the rich and the effete. This common misconception not only fails to appreciate the nature of art. It also misses the mark on what it means to be human" (Collins 59). If we fail to do so we also fail to see art as a potential tool of transformation and instead see it as a lovely frill for snobbish and aristocratic tastes. Art is for everyone one as it is the primary avenue to access of the creative element. That element must be realised in order for us to self-actualise and transcend the world and its necessity.

4.8 Overcoming the Inner Critic

Before the world, the artist must first transcend critics inner and outer if she wants experience the transformational effect of art-as-process. The outer critic is derived from our cultural baggage – stereotypes about the romantic suffering artist, past performances of "great masters", limitations of material, elitist attitudes, restricting aesthetics. It takes enormous awareness to realise the effects of the cultural conditioning about art. The ability to see with the artist's eye should provide the ability to realise the falsity of the art world. In so doing the artist must reject the institution of high arts. This means a rejection of art-as-product and comprises a radical shift in attitude towards artistic production.

If the focus is on the art making process – attention should be drawn away from the end product. Focus on product is characterized by contemplation – looking at and judging art. The concept of art for contemplation must also be rejected as it relegates us to the role of spectator and art-as-process is spectacle destroying. What is needed is a focus on process over product to return the creative act of art making to its source as religious function. Art-as-process rejects contemplation as that is the end of process and the beginning of product. The proper attitude of the artist-in-process is indifference to end product – the creation is the key, not the created. If process is paramount then there is also no judgment or evaluation since the ends are not as important as the means. Evaluating artistic output is evidence of misplaced value since the product is a mere artefact of the creative act. Release from the need to control the outcome of efforts frees the artist from the realm of objectification.

It is important here to remember the reason for our creativity – because we are in the image of God. We must create therefore, like him, and God created in perfect freedom. He was not thinking about what this teacher or that critic would say. It is our ascetic work to overcome the world and the artist's ascetic work is to sacrifice the end product of her efforts to the greater realisation that art is an ongoing process. The focus is not on the failure of the artistic product – which, as we have seen, always fails to transform the world, but rather on its evidence of the coming Kingdom. The eyes should be ever on the world to come – the process, and not on the world that is – the product.

4.9 Sacrifice: The Remedy of Idolatry of Product

The sacrifice of the end product saps the power of the high art elite which is entirely based on art-as-product. The opposite to high art, kitsch, also requires such a sacrifice. Kitsch is the art form of the society of the spectacle and is a cheap filler of our desire never really filling inner emptiness. It is part of the idolatry of the spectacle because its easily accessible nature gives the illusion of satisfaction but can never satisfy the internal longing for the other as it is based on illusion. It promises meaning but is truly meaningless and generic; Kitsch lulls into a false sense of possession of and satiety. This is idolatry since the only answer to our desires is the eternal and kitsch encourages sick spirituality as replacement to our desire. "If we are to avoid idolatry we must recognise that there is no form of the sacred, whether in image or rite or language, which is not totally inadequate in the face of the holy; none which is not provisional, none which is not disposable, none which is not biodegradable" (Robinson 37).

Idolatry begins with a feeling of possession and security - all temptations of kitsch in the society of the spectacle. The solution to idolatry is sacrifice, for in sacrificing an object we declare our independence from it and ultimately our independence from the necessity and objectification of the world. "What is sacrificed must become nothing, it must be a dead loss, so that by this death, and by the necessity it imposes on us to find ever new forms of the sacred, the holy may continue to live among us" (Robinson 37). Sacrifice drives us to find new forms hence it is a most favourable condition to maintaining the creative drive.

Art-as-product has always raised concerns over idolatry in the church – as testified throughout its history and the many iconoclastic crises found there. Art-as-process is the opposite of idolatry since the end is not the focal point. The artist who truly wants to practice art-as-process must completely divorce himself from the end product. If there is to be a focus on product it should rather be on the effects of the art making on the artist, the reality and meaning found in the process, and the sharing of these non-visible products with the world in the form of authentic Christian living.

Total sacrifice of the product seems a difficult task – it is an ascetic practice because it constitutes a denial of the world. It is very alien to the world to suggest that product be deemed irrelevant because our culture is a product based one. Art is commonly seen as something one has or buys rather than something one does. Detachment from the product aims to correct this misconception by throwing light on the importance of process. There are several ways the artist may accomplish this. Let us suppose that the artist practising art-as-process feels he has completed the process. What

is to be done with the product so as not to become ensnared in the art-as-product mindset? Some possibilities may give an idea:

1. The artwork can be given away. Thus control is relinquished over the product. The desire of a person to control product usually is evidence that the product has control over him. When it is given away the right hand should not know what the left is doing in order for a spiritual benefit to be received (Mathew 6:3-4).

2. The artwork can be part of a communal process, the artist is finished and he passes it along to a friend to continue working on and she does likewise.

3. The work can be destroyed in a symbolic or ritualistic gesture in opposition to idolatry.

4. The work can be shelved or hidden immediately. It could be saved for later and recycled.

5. Evaluations or critiques must not be based on product, but a discussion of the process. It is valuable to evaluate process; it can be a form of spiritual direction. The artist may use the product as a memo of experience but displaying product is to be avoided. A possible method could be the artist himself describing his work without showing it to the spectator, thereby engaging and involving viewer in his work also.

These are some techniques that would take the emphasis off of the end result. This is not to say that all works must be destroyed, rather a form of discipline developed to promote the right thinking towards the artistic process. These actions are intended to

simply foster the understanding that it is about the process. In understanding that the process is more important that the product, the artist should come to see the product as a sign of that process. Essentially this is reversing the commonly held order of the world from product to process as opposed to process to product. The product is only significant in that it is symbolic of the creative act. If this insight were prevalent in the world, extreme measures and detachments from products would not be required. It is due to the state of the world today that we need to develop a discipline of detachment from the spectacle.

4.10 Fear in the Face of the Creative Act

Releasing the artist in all of us from the paralysing concern over end product and the judgments that goes with that is one part of reclaiming the creative art for the masses. The internal critic who operates from of fear symptomatic of original sin provides another block for many in creating art. We yearn for our freedom and the eternal - made accessible through the creative act - and yet we are also afraid of it. The pursuit of freedom is a heroic work that takes much energy and discipline. There is always a temptation to sink into the comforts of the world: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mark 14:38b NRSV).

The love of the world is evidenced in the inner critic who would keep us forever complacent. Artist and Art therapist Pat B. Allen describes this critical voice that places obstacles in our way to prevent creative artistic expression:

> "The problem is, the minute I sit down again before a partially finished canvas, the voices start. Damning critical voices, full of derision for my efforts, voices attached to eyes that see only flaws...I am enfeebled by the chorus of voices that moves quickly to a taunting chant: Why are you doing this? Where will it get you? You need a job, art is not a job, you aren't entitled to this. Why paint? You have no idea what you are doing" (45-46).

Allen sees this inner critical voice as a counter to the inner desire to create that all of us have. The voice is a response of fear to the transformative change art can bring, "Changes in perception, changes in how we live our life, changes in relationships raise fear. To live is to change. And no matter how positive the eventual outcome, change often evokes feelings of loss and even death" (Allen 48).

Fear of change is not the only fear that art invokes there is the deeper concern of death. The artist within perceives meaning in the world and meaning is possible only because the spectre of death.

> "Death is the most profound and significant fact of life, raising the least of mortals above the mean commonplaces of life. The fact of death alone gives true depth to the question as to the meaning of life. Life in this world has meaning just because there is death; if there were no death in our world, life would be meaningless" (Berdyaev, TDOM 249).

The end of life gives meaning to it, just as the end of the world gives meaning to art born in the eschatological desire of the creative act. Therefore the artist, who negotiates meaning, comes face to face with the fact of her own inevitable death. The creative act, be it in art or otherwise, seeks the timeless and the eternal and in this search reminds that the bridge to the permanent experience of the eternal is death. "While we are in time, eternity both attracts and horrifies us. We feel horror and anguish not only because all that we hold dear dies and comes to an end, but still more because we are conscious of a yawning abyss between time and eternity (Berdyaev, TDOM 250). We

may know a death in this life in partial through changes, departure, decay and the death of our loved ones. This prefigures our own final death. (Berdyaev, TDOM 251). Just so, we may know eternity in part through the creative act and yet we will not know the whole until the world ends, or we leave it. Now we see through the glass darkly, but one day it will all be revealed.

The creative act, in this case the artistic act, can only answer this fear of death in preparing for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Creative work prefigures the advent of eternity and acts as a sign to humanity. "Christ's second coming presupposes intense creative activity on our part, preparing both mankind (sic) and the world for the end. The end itself depends upon man's creative activity and is determined by the positive results of the cosmic process" (Berdyaev, TDOM 263). We are called not to passive acceptance of death, but rather active struggle in both resistance to the evil and the necessity of the world and in ushering the Kingdom by our creative acts. This is enlightened acceptance of death – the awareness that it death is not to be feared but actually viewed as the portal to eternity. The creative act, in its revealing of the eternal, give as a taste of what is beyond the door of the grave and thus prepares us for that eventual passage. It makes us conscious of our eternal and immortal inner self and may kindle a desire for death and a feeling of responsibility.

It is more comfortable to not believe in eternal life, as the awareness of eternal life infers life meaning and judgment about its meaning as opposed to the meaningless existence of the non-believer (Berdyaev, TDOM 264). The discomfort of belief in immortality lies in the awareness of meaning and therefore the potential judgement of meaning after death. This places an enormous significance on our creative acts, as they

will ultimately be judged on their positive or negative contribution to the Kingdom of God. This then can be the only source of value judgement placed on the artist, if any, testing how the act contributes to the Kingdom. In terms of art-as-product, the end product may act as a signpost to the eternal for the viewer. However, the art-as-product focus has given rise historically to a system that bleeds the significance of art out. Therefore it is not the primary locus of evaluation of Kingdom contribution as it is prone to the corrupting effects of objectification. Art-as-process shall be judged on the effect of its process – primarily its effect on the person and the fruits it bears in life to the benefit of the artist and her surroundings. If art-as-process exposes the eternal and assuages in so doing the fear of death, it prepares the person for the coming of the Kingdom and impresses upon each the need to work for that end. Art-as-process is also valuable because serves as a memo of mortality. We conquer our fear of death but we must also keep a spiritual fear of it in presence of its mystery (Berdyaev, DAR 253).

Keeping the knowledge of death in mind impels us to affirm the value of life and fixes our vision on our victorious end. Death is inevitable and yet so too is our victory because of the Cross; death was conquered by Christ but in so doing Christ died. Christians must ever remember that death has not the final word and at the same time acknowledge that death is price of admittance to the eternal. Our attitudes towards art-as-process can serve a barometer of our attitudes towards this end. Art-as-process, as we have explored, is eschatological and our fears in engaging this process indicate whether we are prepared for the end. We are compelled by Christ to always be ready and keep watch.

> " Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour" (Mathew 24:42-44 NRSV).

Art-as-process helps us get our spiritual house in order, prepares us for the end, and in its prophetic focus on the world to come, awakens us from our spectacle induced slumber.

4.11 Creativity and Conformity

Despite the clear benefits of art-as-process, we may still balk from pursuit of it. This is the classic problem of humanity – the tendency to avoid the clear good we desire in favour of a clear evil. St Paul famously described this conundrum in Romans 7:15: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (NRSV). The world conspires against the creative act because it knows that this act has a desire to bring about its end. The enemy of the spectacle is creativity since creativity is an act of freedom and a rejection of the world's objectification that the spectacle depends on to keep it alive. The world of images cannot hold the person captive who is their own image-maker. Therefore the world tries to block the artist-within starting at a very early age. If you doubt this, cast your mind back to your childhood. The most normal thing in the world for children is to create and explore, especially artistically. Working with children, I see the unhesitant creativities and lack of fear or inhibition when presented with crayons or figure paints. The very walls of my workplace testify to this (much to the dismay of the janitors)! All children have the capacity to express themselves artistically as part of the latent creativity of the human person. That

artistic ability is progressively leached out of children by the school system and socialization of the child. Very soon children are comparing their works to others, conforming their expressions and being rewarded for colouring within the lines. (It is interesting that the expression colouring within the lines denotes conformity to rules – it also accurately describes the dissolution of the artistic ability of children).

If you search your memory to discover your artist-within you probably could recall an instance of its discouragement in the face of conventionality. Musician, artist and philosopher Stephen Nachmanovitch considers this process of conformity a clipping of the wings of childhood; the world of grownups moulds children into conventionality though the educational system. The most powerful tools of the society of the spectacle – mass media is particularity at fault:

> "Our newest and most powerful educational institutions, television and pop music, are even more thorough than school in inculcating mass-produced conformity. People are grown as a kind of food to be gobbled up by the system. Slowly our eyes begin to narrow. Thus the simplicity, intelligence, and power of mind at play become homogenised into complexity, conformity, and weakness" (117).

The reduction of the human person to product is likened to food consumption. Our eyes begin to narrow with the loss of innocence this process must result in and also with restricted ability to *see* as we become more enmeshed in the spectacle.

Nachmanovitch defines the result of mass education as a form of monoculture that discourages variety and creativity in its promotion of specialization and professonalisation. This compartmentalisation of knowledge outs a heavy emphasis on skill and in this way "You begin to emphasise product at the expense of process. It is possible for the artist to have stupendous technical prowess, to be able to amaze and

delight audiences with dazzling virtuosity, and yet there is –something lacking" (Nachmanovitch 118-119). A performance that amazes, stupefies and yet fails to satisfy is a sign of participation the spectacle – all show and no meaning. The specialization of art is what we previously termed the institution of high art. We have already discussed the problems this institution brings to bear on the creative act. The solution, to emphasise process over product, is suitable for those bold enough to enter the field of fine arts. What of the disenfranchised masses, who because of the specialization of the arts could never even conceive of putting brush, pencil or finger to paper? If art is a foundational element of spiritual development and everyone is at heart an artist (as this thesis maintains), then we must find a way to include these excluded unknown as yet artists.

The solution is found in the opposite of the specialized artistic performance: this type of art is embodied in child's play. This is the kind of art we have all experienced as children, before we realised that we weren't 'real' artists. Nachmanovitch describes the common experience of the unskilled, unsophisticated performance like a street busker's or a child-song that engenders "a palpable feeling of awe. There is something godlike about these rare and special performances, something that cannot be intended". This godlike quality he goes on, indicates the presence of "raw creative power, the primal force that made us " (119). Berdyaev's concept that the creative act takes us back to our primordial freedom and thus is a passageway to the eternal is similar here to Nachmanovitch. He believes that every culture defends itself in some way from creativity because creativity always challenges the norm. On a more basic level however, creativity is bound to be extinguished due to the inevitability of growing up. " The fact is that we cannot avoid childhood's end; the free play of imagination creates illusions, and illusions

bump into reality and get disillusioned. Getting disillusioned, presumably, is a fine thing, the essence of learning; but it hurts" (Nachmanovitch 125). The path to adulthood invariably leads to loss of creativity and play because adults are more concerned with necessity. We know that creativity springs from freedom, and the essential fact of human existence in this world is the choice between freedom and necessity. A choice in favour of the necessity reduces freedom and hence creativity; concerns for necessity decreases awareness and lead to a life in the spectacle.

It is a fact of life that adulthood requires a certain amount of inauthentic living via the augmenting habituation the years of life bring. Habituation is a living out of the moment and an unmindfulness of our actions " It means allowing our minds to idle away the time thinking their customary thoughts and dreaming their customary dreams – I want, I don't want, I like, I hate, I remember, I forget. Habituation, viewed in this light, is a form of spiritual sleep" (Moody and Carroll 200). This form of living is based on assumptions about reality; a prefigured idea about reality and therefore a mode of operating that fails to see reality.

A certain amount of habituation is necessary for the adult to filter out external stimuli. The society of the spectacle bombards us with visual candy and in such a way encourages a mental tune out. That is the subtle evil of the spectacle, it compels us to veil reality via habituation. "By mid-life this mechanism becomes predominant in us, censoring, categorizing, distorting, judging, assuming, routinizing, mechanizing everything we see, feel, and think (Moody and Carroll 202). The remedy to habituation is to *see* reality anew. Seeing properly is the function of the artist-within and the artist-within is a manifestation of our inborn creativity.

4.12 *It's Child's Play*

The easiest way for life encrusted adults to decalcify their creativity is to recover their childlike sense of play. This experience is one most people can recall, whereas the same would find the realm of fine art intimidating. We release ourselves from the weight of historical art convention when we return to artistic play. It recalls a time when we were comfortable with art before we knew better (or were conditioned better) and is a means to reintroduce art to the regular folk. Using a common childhood experience that most people share is the gateway through which art can re-enter in to the common experience of life - its original genesis point. Art-as-process and art-as-product makes sense to the artistically inclined and or experienced. Art-as-play is much more accessible to general public who would perceive art as part of a specialized, elite domain.

Returning to play is the same as process focused works since play is involved in creating something new. "The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the object it loves" (Jung in Nachmanovitch 42). Play is part of the creative spirit because the purpose of play is to keep us flexible and open. It develops new ways of interacting in the world, it sheds new light, "To play is to free ourselves from arbitrary restrictions and expand our field of action. Our play fosters richness of response and adaptive flexibility" (Nachmanovitch 43).

It seems play is an essential part of openness towards the world, therefore it rejects habituation and is a response of freedom rather than necessity. Here we see the proof of the conflict of life between the necessity of the world and freedom. As a child

grows, she enters progressively into the world of necessity, of needful things to survive. Before this, she had her parent to concern themselves with life's necessities. Children then, have more freedom simply because parents take on their care. This freedom is expressed in creativity and the major act of childish creativity is play. As Christians we can re-embrace our freedom by cultivating a childlike attitude towards life. Our unique understanding of God as our father should engender a childlike trust and freedom from necessity his care provides. Jesus instructs us not to be concerned with necessity because the Father knows our need and will provide. "And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and you Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his Kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well" (Luke 12:29-31 NRSV). In striving for the Kingdom we will be given what we require to live. The desire of the creative act is eschatological and thus seeks to aid in the coming of the Kingdom. This act can only spring from freedom as opposed to necessity and so awareness of God as father reduces our reliance on necessity and provides the free creative play that Kingdom ushering requires. The building up of the Kingdom that creative play results in explains why a childlike relationship with the Father is crucial to entering the Kingdom, "Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (Luke 18:17 NRSV).

Being a child means being an artist and art can be used to transform our adult mindsets to chid-like ones through artistic play. Emphasising the playful aspect of artistic creation places the focus on the process because play can never be concerned with product. Play is an end in of itself, as soon as it becomes a means to an end it is work.

The point of play, as any child can say, is that there is no point – it just seems fun to do. Patrick W. Collins, a priest and theologian concerned with worship and liturgical renewal, equates playfulness to justification by faith because play brings enjoyment to life. Adult life becomes justification through works when its is centred on end product. Play for adults is not the freedom and enjoyment it should be, but rather a distraction away from the normal state of productivity (33). Play is to be encouraged because it makes us conscious that it is not by our works that we are saved, but the work and grace of the Father " But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace" (Romans 11:6 NRSV).

Play is tied to grace and therefore resurrection,

> "Children's play ends with the universal resurrection of the dead. Adult's play ends with universal burial. Whereas the resurrection is the paradigm of the world of children, the world of adults creates the cross... In play, each day begins with grace not law...The truth of play will become history when impotence becomes power and when that which is now power becomes impotence" (Alves in Collins 33).

Play delivers the revolutionary reverse of power that Christ required. This is because play is the vocation of the child and the child as most powerless in society is destined in Christ to become the greatest. In response to his disciples concerns over who was to be the greatest, Jesus took a little child as his example saying "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me: for the least among all of you is the greatest" (Luke 9:48 NRSV). It befits the Christian in light of this to find a way to play again without worry as to work and product. What better way than the practice of art-as-process?

4.13 *Encouraging the Way of Artistic Play*

A playful attitude towards art banishes the ghosts of the fine art tradition that haunt mind and block creativity with fears and critics. Encouraging play discourages focus on end product and dispels the desire to control outcome commonly expressed in the need for accurate portrayal of the artistic subject. Departure from the need to produce representational art is the first step to encouraging true artistic creativeness. Here are some brief methods suggested:

1. Gesture drawing and scribbling of transitory scenes or moments can release the need for pictorial accuracy.

2. Tools that inhibit fine detail and control prevent pictorial representation by their very make up – for example oversized pencils, markers, finger paint, and spray paint. These materials to a certain extent do what they will and not what we will.

3. Communal works that prohibit too much focus on one aspect such as the passing around of a canvas.

4. Works were the artist cannot see the work in process. For example *cadavre exquis* where each person draws a part of a body of object, folds it and passes it to another who cannot see the whole work.

5. Collaboration in the form of one person telling the other what she sees or envisions acting as a mediator for the artist who doesn't look directly on.

6. Having artists paint a blurred image such as a slide or over photocopied image to combat habituated responses to subjects.

7. Drawing an image upside down or with the non-dominant hand can reduce the need to control or over focus on end product results.

These are just a few ideas, however the subject truly requires in depth research to discover different ways of focusing the artistic venture on the process. There particularly needs to be a consideration of the meaning of art-as-process in Christianity as we have seen that the creative act is fundamental to the Kingdom inaugurating role of the Church. This also is a topic ripe for further research. Berdyaev, whose ideas pointed out the meaning of the creative act in Christianity, has some preliminary insights.

4.14 The Mystical Use of Art

The use of art-as-process in the church would be a mystical one since it deals with inner experience and relationship with God. "It is the mystics who bring creativity into religion. The mystic or visionary attitude expands and concretises art, science, and daily life as well. Do I believe what "the Man" tells me, or am I going to try things out for myself and see what's really true for me" (Nachmanovitch 12)? The mystic's primary occupation is questioning what for others is a given and consulting not exterior option but their internal experiences. This is the ascetic work referred to by Giussani, mysticism entails asceticism because it overcomes the world and judges based on reality and therefore truth. "Final reality is only revealed in mysticism, in which man (sic) escapes from the secondary world of reflections and symbols" (Berdyaev, FAS 248).

Mysticism is viewed with suspicion in the Church because it is more concerned with the divine-human relationship that with personal salvation. Berdyaev notes that a more eternalised form of Christianity faults mysticism because "for them the centre of

gravity of spiritual life lies altogether not in the way of personal salvation, and that they go the perilous ways of mystical love" (SAC III). Mysticism privileges the relationship with God over salvation – the doctrine of *theosis* is primary.

Theosis is the deification of humanity through grace. It is the union of God to the human person that increases consciousness. Consciousness becomes enlightened and the person is no longer bound to the senses (Happold 220). The mystic, as a result of *theosis* overcomes the isolation of creatureliness in a transformative deification of the creature. This doctrine hails from the Orthodox East and is essential to Berdyaev's philosophy of freedom and the creative act "Man (sic) is called to be a creator and co-participant in the deed of God's creation. It is God's call, directed to man, and to which man ought freely to give answer" (SAC III).

4.15 Two Versions of Christian Consciousness

The emphasis Berdyaev placed on the working of the Spirit in the God-Human relationship is indicative of his own Orthodox roots. He believed that only in the Johannine tradition could creativity proceed because only it had the mystical understanding of the Spirit. The Peterine (Roman Catholic) and Pauline (Protestant) churches in their overemphasis on obedience and adaptation (the former) and the word (the latter) had lost touch with the mystical tradition of Christianity and thereby have cut off creativity at its roots (TMCA, 299). This severing of creativity also cuts of the divine - human work that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Berdyaev firmly held that the road ahead for the declining Church was a return to the mysticism and in so doing cultivate the creativity so necessary for the Church to advance in this world.

The mystical locus of the Orthodox Church allows for understanding of the Spirit and her work with the creativity of humanity. Berdyaev viewed the split between the East and the West as one based on competing visions of Christianity, the eastern view of *theosis* and transformation, and the western view of salvation and justification.

Catholic and Protestant churches concerned themselves primarily with justification, "Hence in the west disputes about freedom and grace, about faith and good works, acquire particular significance. Hence the seeking of authority and external criteria of religious truth" (Berdyaev SAC III). The mystical understanding of God, with its emphasis on love, rises above the idea of a judging God and comes to a realisation that love and transfiguration of the person is what is needed. Berdyaev points out that this is the central problem of the Christian consciousness " Whether in justification and judgement, in God's inexorable justice is the essence of Christianity, or whether this essence is in transfiguration and illumination, in God's infinite love" (SAC III). Essentially this conflict boils down to the understanding of creativity – the mother of transformative activity, or salvation for Berdyaev.

The juridical understanding of Christianity "parented the nations, that were full of bloody instincts, cruelty and barbarism" (Berdyaev, SAC III). This attitude is symptomatic in the western triumphalism that made Christianity the dominant social force for decades and in some ways leeched the salt out of the movement. The Church today is still trying to recover from its loss of position and power that triumphalism gave and secularism took away. In the post-modern mind, the idea of the Church has been greatly and negativity shadowed by yesterday's triumphalism and is viewed stereotypically as intolerant, judgmental and self-righteous.

Conflict between creativity and salvation also had ramifications beyond interdenominational differences. It is the source of the schism between the sacred and the secular that happened as a result of modernity. Concerns over salvation and creativity encouraged the compartmentalisation of life, " The Church is concerned with salvation, the secular world however is concerned with creativity" (Berdyaev, SAC I). Creativity is secondary to salvation for the Church and so we see the religious dualism this generates. Every person contributes to the world and to its culture. The whole workweek is devoted to creative or constructive action. One day a week we go to church, (if we are Christian). This means that the vast portion of our time remains "un-justified, non-sanctified, not co-dependant upon the religious principle of life" (Berdyaev, SAC I). If the church fails to recognise the value of creativity, it will fail in permeating into our lives in a significant way – it loses its salt and light. The focus on salvation is individualistic and misses out on the transformative power of the Holy Spirit which affects not only the individual but also the community and the world at large, "...here the creativity of man (sic), and learning, art, discoveries, the betterment of society, etc. is necessary not for personal salvation, but for the realisation of God's intent for the world and for mankind, for the transfiguration of the cosmos, for the Kingdom of God, into which all enters the fullness of being (Berdyaev, SAC IV). Personal salvation denies the eschatological perspective because it focus on saving the self and Christians are called in their awareness of the impending end to save others and help midwife the Kingdom's coming. The Church must take up the creative concern as human vocation, away from the secular forces that have dominated the creative venture so long. "On this depends the future of the church upon the earth, the future of the world and mankind (sic)" (Berdyaev, SAC IV).

5. Chapter Five: Concluding Thoughts

5.1 Today's Task

The charge for the Christian church today is to wrest back the creative concern from the secular world. Indeed, part of this work will be in the sanctifying of all aspects of human life, including the secular. The very concept of the secular should be disposed of as part of this effort, as it is a false divide encouraging Christians to treat their faith as a personal and private issue. Faith that is alive shines out like a light to the world and is not hidden under the bushel to be taken out only on Sunday.

The churchification of everyday life does not mean a return to the heady days of triumphalism where religion was complicit with the power structure. That is not even a possible option in our pluralistic society and this truly is a blessing in disguise. Now the Church truly has a chance to live out its call to be in the world not of it and being in the world denotes a rejection of the modernistic inheritance of compartmentalisation. To not engage the world is a sin, "Withdrawing form the world, negating creativity in the world, ye hand over the fate of the world to the Anti-Christ" (Berdyaev, SAC IV). The Church today is prophet and servant, not king, and in this role should continually redirect the world towards the coming Kingdom of God.

The eschatological creative act will be the crucial instrument in heralding of the world to come. This act can be played out in the redeeming of the artistic function in the Church and conversion from art-as-product to art-as-process. The treasure trove of the spiritual benefits of the artistic process, its revelatory power, gift of timelessness, release from fear, self-actualizing potential and co-workings with the Spirit could very well all

form the wish list of the post-modern person today. The church can and should provide all these things and more to the spiritually starved society we live in. Thus the method of incorporating art-as-process into the Christian church and practice is a future challenge worth pursuing. The how of this proposal is yet to be explored; be it through Christian Education, use in communal worship or individual prayer. No doubt it will be a trial and error process, but a worthwhile one as all process has been proven eminently worthwhile in of itself. It is not with in the scope of this work to suggest or detail possible ways, only for it to propose for the future.

5.2 Dualistic Themes

Through this study there is a palpable thread of dualistic themes significant to note. Art-as-product and art-as-process compared and contrasted results in an enlightening divide in terms of differing theological and ideological attitudes towards art, and creativity. That attitudes about art draws out issues of being and issues close to the heart of Christianity (salvation, theosis idolatry) is a testimony of its vast importance in the scheme of creation. Indeed, what commenced as a study about art and Christianity has prismatically shone light to reveal pressing ontological and theological issues of our time. The table that follows lays out in general terms what we have discovered about the opposing artistic methods.

Art-As-Product	**Art-As-Process**
Salvation	Creativity
Justification	Transfiguration
Individual	Communal
Direct thought	Indirect thought
Evolutionary Construction	Revolutionary Eschatology

Of the two categories charted, we can generally say that art-as-product is a phenomenon pertaining more to the Western tradition and art-as-process to the East. Art –as-product thrives in the capitalistic society of the West. The product driven consumerist culture is not a common aspect in the history of traditional Eastern Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Church does have art as product within it, but has a more symbolic understanding pointing beyond the image and preventing product from becoming a means in itself.

Historically this understanding enabled the Eastern Church to scotch the spectre of iconoclasm very early on. The allowance of icons and their theological understanding at once acknowledged the power of art and was able to restrict it from idolatrous excess at the same time. The mystical understanding of *theosis* informs the orthodox view of icons. "The icon suggests the transfiguration that occurs in whoever, as the Orthodox say, has "acquired the Holy Spirit" (Forest 16). The Eastern Orthodoxy's dominant

understanding of the transfigurating power of the Holy Spirit thus played a major part in its handling of the image.

The Western Church failed to fully eradicate the issue of images and this had massive repercussions on the Church and society. The mystical power of the image was not acknowledged and instead several hairpin rules were developed separating the acceptable and unacceptable uses of the image. Since images were the popular vocabulary of the masses, few had the intellectual subtlety to follow such rules

Also relevant was the Western theological centring on justification and salvation. This pointed towards the judgemental and punitive God the Father of the Old Testament. God is not working with us here in the world in a form of Theosis, but a patriarch who hovers above, looking down in judgment. The response to such a God is fear and insecurity and these are the perfect ingredients for idolatry. By medieval times believers where seeking to avoid the wrathful God in the development of a panoply of saints and the Blessed Virgin to intercede on their behalves. Around these grew cults and idolatrous abuses as images and objects were used in an effort to control God and thereby gain security. The demand for images accrued and a market developed around the image as product. The image as window to the divine held no sway in the West as it favoured the direct thought and a man like punitive God over the mystical indirect though of the Holy Spirit's God transfigured man.

Western privileging of the word over image favours the direct over the mystic. Direct thought is the cognitive process of rationalism, the philosophy that spawned the enlightenment and modernity. With modernity came secularism and the splintering of life

into specialized areas. Secularism also transported art into the world and out of the Church. The failure of the Western Church to properly incorporate the power of the image aided in this rupture. This was a great loss for Christianity as a fundamental feature of religious worship was lost. What the church failed to use, the world did. Inability to harness the creative power of art turns this power over to the antichrist as seen in the society of the spectacle. The spectacle has benefited from our lack of indirect thinking abilities. Mystical comprehension of the image, meaning that we discern the content beyond the physical to the spiritual, would prevent idolatry and make us see the void behind the backdrop of everyday life in the spectacle.

Western Christianity's handling of the image has proved deficient –almost disastrous. A return to the Orthodox tradition of icons is not the answer, however. The concept behind the icon and the mystical spirit it entails is needed but the restrictions on creative art making and the lack of art-as-process for many is problematic. In addition, focus on product is not helpful to the Western mind no matter how correct it is in Eastern philosophy because the abuses of the spectacle loom large in our consciousness. Art-as-process provides much spiritual profit and helps us to escape the world of illusion. It provides the means to conversion and transcendence over the spectacular world.

5.3 Art-as-Process as Discipline to Transcendence

The road to conversion and thus transcendence we road mapped in general terms as seeing and experiencing, then judging our experience which leads to revelation. Revelation kindles conversion and in conversion we find transcendence.

Seeing reality in all its truth is the basic requirement of the artist. Cultivating our creativity disciplines the eye since creativeness connotes the desire to transform reality. The desire couldn't be sparked unless we first noticed the need. The habituated or objectified eye is satisfied and never searches beyond its self-representations. Few people remark that there is something wrong with their illusions, they just change illusions. Creative desire pre-supposes a judgment on reality and a remarking of the need to change something. Thus every single creative artistic act has its origins in seeing.

Judging is based on our elementary experiences as we learned form Giussani. Our judgements must be based on our internal knowledge and not on the external sources in the world. Berdyaev posited that our choice was between necessity and the objectification of the world or our freedom. Either way, we need to reject the externals in favour of the internal or else we become slaves to another. The role of the creative artistic act here is that in creating art we return to our elemental, primordial state of the *imago dei* and thus taste the Creator's perfect freedom in the creative act. Once we experience and know freedom it will become harder to willingly be enslaved by the world. Thus the practice of art is an excellent method of exercising our freedom.

Choice in favour of freedom and our elemental experiences leads to revelation. In the artistic process, the breakthrough or mystical experience attained are sources of revelation in terms of their eschatological possibilities. The feeling of timelessness, detachment from the self and ego, and release from fear are all qualities to be found in the process. These revelations translate into our lives and actions and can spur the turning about of conversion.

Transcendence is found in this conversion because we have the awareness we are co-workers with the Holy Spirit seeking to transform the world. Art-as-process clearly is involved in every step along the way to transcendence when it is used in this way. Of course there are other methods and disciplines as witnessed by the varied ascetical attempts of Christians throughout history. Some are more appropriate to their times than others. Art-as-Process seems a spiritual discipline well suited for this time. It is a discipline that would cast out the most pernicious idolatry of our time – the society of the spectacle. In a time centred on having, art-as-process promotes being. It is an ascetic practice in its overcoming of the world and its necessity. Art-as-process gives hope for the world today and in its Kingdom contributing fashion fulfills the promise of the world to come.

5.4 Let the Process Begin!

The realisation of the promise of the art-as-process discipline is yet to come, dependant on the creative acts of another. What is needed is not more philosophical or theological writing but active engagement in the process. It is my hope that this work, which is hovering perilously close to becoming an end product, will inspire further creative acts to assist in the Kingdom's advent even while it is entering the objectified world. As these words are read, the creative act that enkindled them has already cooled; it will by then be part of the tragic story of creativity. What once was a transcending creative experience now is a mere paper bound artefact of that process. Even so, the congealing of the long cherished creative vision into a lowly object still engenders hope – the hope that it will spark other creative processes in the reader and in that way the Kingdom in some mysterious way will be coaxed along.

"Surely I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
(Rev. 22:20 NRSV)

6. Sources Cited

Aston, Margaret. "Iconoclasm in England: Official and Clandestine." Iconoclasm Vs. Art and Drama ed.Clifford Davidson and Anne Eljenholm Nichols. Kalamazoo : Medieval Institute Publications, 1989.

Allen, Pat B. Art as a Way of Knowing. Boston:Shambhala, 1995.

Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane, ed. Art, Creativity, and the Sacred. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company 1998.

Balthasar, Hans Urs Von. The Glory of the Lord, vol.1: New York: Ignatius Crossroad, 1982.

Benjamin, Andrew, ed. Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts. New York: St Martin's Press 1989.

Berdyaev, Nikolai. The Beginning and the End. Trans. R. M. French. London: G. Bles, 1952.

---. The Destiny of Man. Trans. Natalie Duddington. New York: Harper, 1960.

---. Dream and Reality; An Essay in Autobiography. Trans. Katharine Lampert. New York: Collier Books, 1962.

---. Freedom and the Spirit. Trans. Oliver Fielding Clarke. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1935.

---. The Meaning of the Creative Act. Trans. Donald A Lwrie. London: Victor Gollancz, 1955

---. Salvation and Creativity. June 11, 2002. Berdyaev Online Library and Index. <http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1926_308.html> July 28, 2003.

---. Slavery and Freedom. New York: Scribner's, 1944

Bland RC, Newman SC, Orn H. Period prevalence of psychiatric disorders in Edmonton. Acta Psychiatr Scand 1988;77(Suppl 338):33 - 42.

Brown, Frank Burch. Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Cassou, Michelle, and Stewart Cubley. Life, Paint and Passion. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam. 1995.

Chadwick, Owen. A History of Christianity. London:Orion Publishing Group, 1995.

Collins, Patrick W. More Than Meets the Eye, Rural and Parish Liturgy. Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1983.

De Gruchy, John W. Christianity, Art and Transformation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Debord, Guy. The Society of the Spectacle. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Zone Books: New York, 1992

Deutsch, Eliot. Essays on the Nature of Art. New York: State University of New York Press. 1996.

Dewey, John. Art as Experience, New York:Putnam, 1958.

Egger, Bettina. Seeing Is Believing: The Process of Contact With the Inner Image Through Painting. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989.

Evdokimov, Paul. The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty. Redondo Beach: Oakwood Publications, 1972.

Finney, Paul Corby. The Invisible God. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994.

Forest, Jim. Praying With Icons. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997.

Franck, Frederick. The Zen of Seeing. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

---"The Artist-Within and the Contemplative Eye." Image: A Journal of the Arts. Issue 10, Summer 1995.

---. The Awakened Eye. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Gibbs, Eddie. Church Next. Downer'sGrove:Intervarsity Press, 2000.

Giussani, Luigi. The Religious Sense.tr. John Zucchi. Montreal: McGill University Press, 1998.

Gorringe, Timothy. "Theological Table Talk:Kitsch and the Task of Theology." Theology Today July 1999: 229-234.

Gumbel, Nicky. Questions of Life. Colorado:Cook, 1996.

Hannum, Harold Byron. Christian Search For Beauty. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1975.

Happold, Frederic Crossfield. Mysticism: a study and an anthology. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970

Harned, David Baily. Theology and the Arts. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966.

Hazelton, Roger. A Theological Approach to Art. New York: Abingdon Press, 1967.

Kandinsky, Wassily. Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Tr. M.T.H. Sadler. New York:Dover, 1977.

Kessler, Herbert L. Spiritual Seeing. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2000.

Lasn, Kalle. Culture Jam: the Uncooling of America. New York: HarperCollins Publisher Inc., 1999

Laeuchli, Samuel. Religion and Art in Conflict. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

Lonergan, Bernard J. F. Method in Theology. Toronto: University of Toronto Press for Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, 1971.

Malraux, Andre, The Voices of Silence. St. Albans:Paladin, 1974.

Marion, Jean Luc. God Without Being. Tr. Thomas A. Carlson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

---La Croissee Du Visible. Paris: La Difference, 1991.

Mascall, E. L. Theology and Images. Northampton: John Dickens and Co Ltd, 1963.

Miles, Margaret R. Image as Insight. Boston: Beacon Press 1985.

Moody, Harry R. and Carroll, David. The Five Stages of the Soul. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Moon, Bruce L. Art and Soul, Reflections On an Artistic Psychology. Springfield: Charles C Thomas, Publisher, Ltd., 1997.

Moore, Peter. Christianity. London: Ward Lock Educational Co., Ltd., 1982.

Murray, John. The Artists on Art. Norwich:Pantheon, 1945.

Nassif, Bradley. Kissers and Smashers. Christianity Today Library. March 3, 2003. <http://www.ctlibrary.com/4211> July 30, 2003.

Nachmanovitch, Stephen. Free Play. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1990.

May, John R., ed. Essays On Religion and Culture. Chico: Scholars Press, 1981.

Offord DR, Boyle MH, Campbell D, Goering P, Lin E, Wong M, Racine YA. One - year prevalence of psychiatric disorder in Ontarians 15 to 64 years of age. Can J Psychiatry 1996;41:559 - 563.

Read, Herbert. Art and Society .London: Faber and Faber, 1956.

Robinson, Edward. Icons of the Present. London: SCM Press, 1993.

Rubin, Judith A. Art Therapy: An Introduction. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, 1999.

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. The Appearance of Man. Trans. J. M. Cohen. New York: Harper & Row, 1965

Ugolnik, Anthony. "The *Libri Carolini*: Antecedents of Reformation Iconoclasm," *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Ann Eljenholm Nichols (1989): 1-32.

Vaneigem, Raoul. The Situationist International Text Library/The Revolution of Everyday Life. July 10, 2003. The Situationist International Text Library. July 10, 2003 <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/42>.

Viladesau, Richard. Theological Aesthetics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Vogt, Von Ogden. Art and Religion. Boston: Beacon Press, 1960.

Walker,K Images or Idols:The Place of the Sacred Art in the Churches Today. Norwich:Canturbury Press, 1996.

Waterworth, J. The Council of Trent:The Twenty-Fifth Session.London:Dolman, 1848.

Weil, Simone. Gravity and Grace, tr E.Crauford, Routledge, 1952.

Weiss, Paul. Religion and Art. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1963.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. Art In Action. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980.