Northrop Frye Newsletter

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It has been almost a year since the last issue of the *Frye Newsletter* made its way through the mails. The editor has no excuse, except that he has been busy with other projects, having mostly to do with getting Frye's unpublished papers into print. The first of these will be *The Correspondence of Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp, 1932-1939*, which will be issued in 1996, as the first volumes in the Collected Works of Northrop Frye project, sponsored by the Northrop Frye Centre at Victoria University. This project received a severe setback in July with the untimely death of John M. Robson, who was general editor of the project. Recently a committee has been appointed to select a new editor. The second volume in the series will be *Northrop Frye's Early Papers,1932-1938*, a collection of twenty-two essays Frye wrote as a student at Victoria and Emmanuel Colleges and shortly thereafter. (The current newsletter is devoted to one of these papers.) Presently Alvin Lee of McMaster University is editing a volume of Frye's writings on religion. So the Collected Works project is underway, thanks to the exceptional guidance it received under Jack Robson's leadership.

Since the last issue of the newsletter *The Legacy of Northrop Frye* has appeared (see the ad in this issue). The additional items that need to be recorded in the Frye bibliography will, alas, have to wait until a future issue.

Jane Widdicombe has issued a final call for her "*Norrie Stories*," a collection of personal anecdotes by and about Frye that she is putting together. Readers who would like to contribute to the collection should send their accounts to her at Box 545, Nobleton, Ontario, L0G 1N0.

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The Relation of Religion to the Art-forms of Music and Drama

Northrop Frye

The following paper was written by Frye during his final year at Emmanuel College (1935-36). On the cover sheet he wrote "Theology Elective," and the paper was submitted to Kenneth H. Cousland, Professor of Church History at Emmanuel. It is one of seventeen essays that have survived from Frye's three years at Emmanuel. The original typescript is in the Northrop Frye Fonds at the Victoria University Library, University of Toronto (1991, box 37, file 13). The paper recapitulates a number of ideas drawn from Frazer and Spengler that Frye had treated in his earlier papers at Emmanuel, especially those he wrote on fertility cults, Orphism, the Jewish background of the New Testament, and the concept of sacrifice; and it provides an embryonic version of many of the principles that Frye developed much more extensively in *Anatomy of Criticism*. The eleven notes

that Frye himself provided—of the *vide* variety—are followed by "[NF]." The paper is reproduced with the kind permission of Jane Widdicombe, executrix of the Estate of Northrop Frye.

1. The Three Goods

In attempting to examine the connection of religion and art in general, before passing on to a more specific application, the thing to be avoided at all costs is any attempt at a strict definition of the words "religion" and "art." The only possibility is to indicate roughly where we believe their respective fields to lie in relation to this thesis. For the present writer, religion, true or false, adequate or inadequate, signifies a form or stereotype of activity certain individuals follow in order to bring them to what they consider a better way of living. If there is any question-begging in this definition, it seems to the present writer to lie rather in the word "consider" than in the word "better." Not all religious activity is considered or deliberate: perhaps none of it entirely so; and of course the individuals who pursue religious activity do not always do so as individuals. It is in fact necessary to religion that some communal factor be present. But all religious activity does aim at putting the worshipper, either as an individual or as a member of a group, in a more satisfactory relation to his environment, natural or supernatural. This does not mean that all such activities are religious: a man getting up to close a window when he is sitting in a draught is not necessarily performing a religious act, except indirectly through the observance of a taboo. But all religion aims at a goal, however vaguely or unconsciously, and that goal can be postulated, in a rationalized treatise like this, as "the good." If we came on a group of people sacrificing a child to an idol, and asked them why they did so, they might have no clear conception of "good" as an ethical abstraction, but would probably say that they thought they had "better" do it. If we came on a group of inquisitors torturing a heretic in a dungeon, they would no doubt postulate a "good" aim in more explicit and conscious terms.

Religion, then, is the practice of the "good" life. Now in a society that has struggled for a moment above a brutal sacrificial or persecuting stage (there are usually a few members in every society above that level) the "good" comes to be defined in more analytic terms. Western civilization from the time of the Greeks onward has made many attempts to express the nature of the good, and has not yet got very far away from the Platonic division of the "good" into the "just," the "beautiful," and the "true."[1] If these words have a more sentimental connotation than "good," it is only because the less earnest minds today prefer to use "good" as a euphemism with a more non-committal meaning as a blanket term for the other three. But a little reflection will show us that these three words refer to different aspects of behavior. "Just" relates to action: it is the compulsion the "good" exerts on the will. "Beautiful" relates to emotion: it is the compulsion the "good" exerts on feeling. "True" relates to thought: it is the compulsion the "good" exerts on reason. Each of these aspects of the "good" is systematic and constructive, as it leads toward an ideal. So we get three systems of compulsion of the "good" to a definite aim. From "just," "beautiful," and "true" we pass to "justice," "beauty," and "truth." We now have morality, the system of justice; art, the system of beauty; and logic, the system of reason.

Further examination of our vocabulary will bear out this thesis of the interdependence of the just, beautiful, and true in the good. When we say that a work of art is "good" we mean that it is "beautiful." Unfortunately the latter word has become so limited in its meaning that it is now practically synonymous with "loveliness": around this pun, for it is nothing more, half the discussions about the "beauty" of modern art are waged. Loveliness is an important part of beauty, and should never be confused with sentimentality, but it is not the essential element in beauty: it presents the half of the world that attracts us, and it is the business of art to present the repellent half as well. "Beautiful" works of art in the broad sense of the word are often little more than

morbid gloatings over the repulsive and grotesque. If however we speak of a point in an argument as a "good" point we mean primarily that it impresses us as true rather than beautiful. In short: goodness is the whole of beauty, and the two words can be used interchangeably when a work of art is in question. But beauty is not the whole of goodness.

2. Morality and Art

This analysis has been made only in the interests of clarity. Every "good" action has a just, a beautiful, and a true aspect. When we wish to justify the *raison d'etre* of such goods as art or scholarship we usually explain them in terms of one of the other good, pointing out, for instance, that they may be beneficial to morality in some way. Morality is usually employed as the apologist for the other two, as it relates more directly to the concerns of the vast majority who are incapable of scaling any very lofty altitudes in the latter. It was formerly fashionable to say that poetry should "delight and instruct"[2] and the poet, up to the end of the eighteenth century, was frequently regarded as a prophet or seer, someone with superior insight which could only be called religious.[3] The advent of the atheistic and blasphemous society ushered in by the Industrial Revolution naturally provoked a reaction. Truth stopped at the empiric stage; morality at the criterion of the useful; and art, under the aegis of the romantic movement, declared its independence and proclaimed its battle-cry of "art for art's sake."[4] The fact that the artists who believed this motto were usually bad artists made it doubly reassuring. There were, of course, some whose revolt took on the nature of replacing justice with either truth of beauty. One school, around the time of the French Revolution, contended that our actions were only good if they were rational, or, as the phrase went, obeyed the dictates of pure reason.[5] Pure reason got herself worshipped in Paris under Robespierre. The other school, with which even Schleiermacher might be associated, being more subtle, was less fashionable. Its point was that our good actions are carefully selected actions, and as art depends on this faculty of selecting the significant, the good life is a work of art. All that this means, of course, is simply the point we have just made, that as all good actions have three aspects, it is not difficult to explain goodness in terms of any one of the three simply by isolating it.

The most usual tendency during the last century, however, was toward the discrete. The three goods came to be conceived as separate. Art became impatient of moral restrictions. In this there was a good deal of justification, for the very word "restrictions" implies something negative and undesirable. Justice being one thing and truth another, it is impossible to make a science of ethics, a logic of activity. Law, the general name given to attempts in this direction, is a system of approximations, which when applied to anything so specific as a work of art becomes irrelevant. And of course any system of approximations is a reflection of mediocrity. So the moral restrictions imposed on art have usually veered between theological obscurantism and moral prudery, depending on whether the mediocre level of the society is inclined to be pedantic, as with the society contemporary with Tasso,[6] or sensual, as with the society of our own day. But this protest of mediocrity against genius has nothing to do with the interrelation of art and morality. The real question is, When we say that a work of art is "good," do we ever, in any case, have in mind a goodness which has a moral as well as an aesthetic aspect?

It is apparent that all but the most bigoted of art critics do recognize as valid aesthetic criteria certain moral qualities. Sincerity is an obvious instance. It would be very difficult to prove that the kind of artistic sincerity that helps to redeem the works of Bunyan from prosy and tedious sermonizing is not fundamentally the same thing as moral sincerity. The revulsion which invariably sets in against a stuffy, cynical, niggling period of artistic decadence is usually both a moral and an aesthetic reaction. A perhaps more questionable example of a moral goodness necessary to good art is economy. When we say that Racine is economical and that Swinburne is extravagant we are using

moral categories, but are implying that Racine is a better artist than Swinburne. (We do not raise the rather silly question, at this or any other point, of whether art is essentially communication or not. The alternative is to regard art as self-expression. But expression, as opposed to impression, means the putting of certain ideas or impressions into a communicative form.)

These are random examples: what we are really interested in at the moment is the difference between art and morals. The question has a peculiar importance today owing to the fact that the "art for art's sake" shibboleth is now out of fashion, and a reaction has set in which restates the moralist's approach to art in narrower and more bigoted terms than ever before. This reaction centres around the word "propaganda," which is at present extending its meaning to include all forms of morally persuasive art. Our feverish political consciousness has imposed on us a concept of art as diatribe, as a weapon to be used in the interests of certain groups with certain philosophies and political ambitions. In Germany and Italy today, and in Soviet Russia until recently,[7] the intolerance and bigotry of the government has stifled artistic activity. Some of the propagandic school of thought even go so far as to maintain, with a combination of zeal and ignorance that would shame a Montanist[8] that art and propaganda are the same thing: that class-conscious proletarians should avoid Shakespeare, whose art-propaganda was pro-bourgeois, that any artist who reflects the class-struggle is greater than any artist who does not, that agreement with certain political dogmas is a positive aesthetic quality, and the like. This is, of course, only the lunatic fringe of an important and intelligent body of thought, and the question it raises so uncompromisingly deserves some examination.

Morality, we have said, is the only good attached very firmly to mediocrity: both creative genius and high thinking are products of a privileged class, on the whole: the artist may starve in a garret; but if he does not get enough money for him to be able to spend all his time creating, he disappears as an artist. So a society, particularly a democratic society assuming that the dominance of the mediocre, or the majority, is equivalent to political justice, comes to feel that morality is the only "good" that really matters. This sentiment is exploited whenever any plea of political emergency can be raised. Then, the extremists tell us, we should forget everything else and concentrate on immediate social ends, revolutionary, reformatory, or repressive as the case may be. Art and learning are luxuries to be enjoyed after privileges have been distributed more evenly. This kind of challenge is inescapable from Christianity, and that it can be an extremely subtle attack will be obvious to any Christian, with his interest in the regeneration of humanity and his recognition of the claims made on him by the less fortunate.

But what about the artist? The assumption is that the artist's sympathies should be with a certain outlook; that he will illustrate those sympathies in his work, and will choose subjects lending themselves to that type of illustration. In other words, the artist should explain what his point of view is: the average swallower of propaganda feels himself cheated if the artist does not do so; he feels that he is being treated dishonestly. The early critical writings of Bernard Shaw, a typical propagandic artist, betray this feeling—or exploit a similar feeling in others—in regard to Shakespeare. And of course the nervous, itching attempt to find out "what Shakespeare really thought" lies behind a large proportion of critical work on that artist, and remains the supreme North-West Passage fallacy of literary criticism.[9]

It is here that we touch on the essential difference between art and morality. The moralist explains and argues; he wants his points made as clearly as possible, and he allows nothing to intervene between the presentation of his idea and the reader. The artist is equally interested in communication, but his method of communicating is somewhat different. Between himself and his audience he sets up something objective. The boundary line is impossible to draw, of course. The satirist, for instance, is an artist appealing to a moral sense on the part of the reader. Next to him comes the propagandist, preacher, orator, prophet, *vates*, or censor, as he has variously been called,

who starts with a certain philosophy and applies it in his works of art to society. Swift was not himself a moralist, perhaps, but his work appealed to common sense, to the instinct to regard everything abnormal as ridiculous or disgusting. For this reason many satirists, from Aristophanes onward, have been conservatives and resisters of new ideas. The prophet or censor, of the Carlyle type, is more explicitly a man with a moral message. Yet the objective element in the specifically artistic presentation remains. Take the following:

> Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land! In mine ears saith the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.[10]
>
> The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?[11]

There is no doubt about the artistic power of Isaiah, nor the moral passion of Jesus, yet the former gives us what is essentially propaganda, the latter a work of art. The story in the second extract is the objective element: we get a specific illustration instead of a general principle. In the first the moral lesson is explicit, in the latter implicit. The one explains, the other suggests. In the former we are passively following another's line of thought; in the latter we are forced to make an active effort of response: the effort we call interpretation. Of course, this parable of Jesus is propagandic art, and we chose it deliberately as a border-line case: the objective material of the story is arranged in a certain way, so that we can hardly avoid its moral implications. But even there we have a certain latitude: we can interpret the story as tragedy or satire, or both. The story challenges our whole minds, for interpretation is largely intellectual and our appreciation of the power and concentration apparent chiefly emotional. The preaching of Isaiah appeals more to our instincts and prejudices: it is based on the assumption that in us is a chord which will vibrate automatically when touched with a certain stimulus.

From this example we can see that propagandic art is, when properly handled, more powerful *as propaganda* than straight preaching, which is of course the reason why propagandists always try to dragoon the artists, or turn to art themselves. But the essential element in the artistic presentation, we have seen, is the objective element which we found in Jesus but missed in Isaiah, not the propaganda itself. So it is obviously possible for art not to be propagandic at all. Propaganda, we have said, explains, art suggests, and propagandic art suggests in such a way as to compel a certain conclusion. But frequently the greatest art is arranged so objectively that it can be interpreted in all sorts of ways. Shakespeare was, no doubt, a member of the bourgeois class; but it would be extremely difficult to find a defence of the ideals of that class in his work. The class he belonged to was purely a matter of accident, having no relation whatever to his work. Music is another example of creative activity which can never do duty successfully for the propagandist.

3. The Kind of Thinking in Art

We have tried to distinguish art form morality: let us see how it compares with reason. Many have felt that between a logical activity like mathematics and an artistic one like music there is a very close

connection. This feeling goes back, of course, to the Pythagoreans. With a mathematician, the whole personality goes into the working-out of mathematical relationships, emotional as well as intellectual; and, to him, mathematics is beautiful as well as logical, and a mathematical demonstration takes on the proportions of a work of art. It is also possible to "interpret," though with what significance it is difficult to discover, a piece of highly concentrated music like a fugue in terms of mathematics. There have even been attempts made to reduce the rules of prosody, theoretical and practical, to mathematical formulae, or arrive at all possible kinds of dramatic situations by permutation. Similarly, the intellectual qualities obvious in all works of art have led some critics to exalt them as the only necessary ones, connecting emotion with subjective or lyrical expression, and lyrical expression with immaturity.[12]

What we are interested in here is the kind of intellect evident in works of art. Intellect works in two ways: it may be analytic or synthetic: it may work toward a meaning that denotes, or it may work toward a meaning that connotes. The former is typically the scientific intellect. It is interested in arriving at exact and invariable meanings, and for science to permit anything like latitude in interpreting its communications would be nonsense. It sticks to the concrete, and avoids the generalized. On the other hand, the philosophical and theological intellects work with generalizations, and consequently look for abstract concepts covering a wide variety of concrete data. Often this capacity for abstraction is pure verbalism, of course. Parmenides, starting from the fact that the verb "to be" meant existence and served as a copula, came to the conclusion that all things that existed were eternally linked together, and that consequently motion and change were impossible. The speculations of Empedocles about attraction as a universal principle were based on the double meaning of "attraction" in the sense relating to sexual love and the sense relating to the law of gravitation.[13] These are purely metaphysical speculations: a scientist would sniff at them. But they are fairly close to artistic thinking. For the intellect of the creative genius is synthetic and connotative as well: he differs from the metaphysicians, and resembles the scientists, in working with concrete rather than abstract material; but he too looks for connections, snatches at the associative sets of meanings in words, instead of quarrelling with them, as a scientist is apt to do when they are not technical enough for him, and establishes unities where the ordinary man sees chaos. But his unities are very different from the uniformities the scientist tries to establish.

The relation of the artist to the scientist boils down to one very similar to his relation to the moralist or propagandist. The scientist explains, and his words and images denote; the artist suggests, and his words and images connote. No two people will look at a picture in the same way; and if I am looking at one, all the other possible reactions to it, which I may or may not share, form a sort of nimbus around my head, which I try to get away from. If I am looking at Mona Lisa, for instance, I withdraw into myself in order to escape both from Walter Pater[14] and the gum-chewing tourist beside me. This leads immediately to a very important principle. Morality we associated with the will; art, with feeling; logic, with reason. Now will and reason are alike in this, that they both are communal rather than individual aspects of the personality. In making a judgment we bow to an objective standard: everybody has to agree that two and two make four, and anyone arguing from that basis is appealing to reason rather than to individual intellects. He addresses "common sense," the sense all men hold in common. There can be no question of a private interpretation of mathematics, as there can be a private interpretation of Cézanne. The same quality holds good for the will. An individual's will is expressed in a social environment, and that environment is protected by rules which apply equally to all. The propagandist appeals to group consciousness and mass action, and to the individual as a factor in that larger unit. But feeling is the individual, discriminating side of the personality. In our emotional reactions to things we express our uniqueness. The artist, we have said, creates an objective situation for us to interpret in terms of our own experience. His work is a synthetic, co-ordinated unity. Our lives are mostly chaotic and

meaningless: in our struggle toward the religious or "good" life we strive to make our experiences more significant and unified. The artist, by his creation of significant unities, imposes a pattern on experience. We absorb that pattern into our own experience and thereby advance a step in our own process of co-ordination.

Art is thus a peculiarly central and direct expression of religion as compared to morality and logic. Scientific activity may, and usually does, lose sight of a religious goal; and theology may become arid and abstracted from experience. Morality may be legalized into a passive routine. But art, in retaining this unique, discriminating factor of feeling as central, has a persistent vitality about it.[15]

4. Explicit and Implicit Religion in Art

Now as religion embraces all forms of the good life, it is dependent on communal as well as individual impulses. Its ultimate goal is ideal; and is never revealed in actual experience. Yet it is essentially the same goal as that of the artist: the selection of a significant unity of experiences in life. The work of art is however a concrete, specific, sharply outlined unity, or ought to be; where the work of religion is a small fragmentary phase of a vast and dimly conceived process. Consequently the most obvious relation for art to bear to religion is that of illustration. A work of art is a formal expression of a religious impulse. The whole of religion is far too large for any one mind to grasp it; but in the work of art it is seen, if only through a glass darkly, as a kind of prismatic perspective. Hamlet called the drama a mirror of nature;[16] but a work of art is more active than that: it catches the light of nature selectively, like a carefully cut gem. In short, a work of art *symbolizes* the religious impulse. One might turn this around, as Blake did, and, putting the individual creative will at the centre, say that religion is a social form of this creative or artistic activity, which Blake called the "poetic genius" and identified with the "true man."[17] The work of art, either way we take it, is a microcosm, an epitome of all experience, the revelation of the universal in the particular. I once read a book on Joyce's *Ulysses* which said that as every great work of art was an epitome of the universe, a knowledge of the elementary principles of the universe would prove a valuable aid in the understanding of *Ulysses*.[18] It is not necessary to go that far in order to agree with the general principle implied, that the co-ordination of art helps us to co-ordinate our own lives, and thereby adjust them better to our environment, which is ultimately the universe.

But perhaps it is high time we began to limit our terms a bit. We have been proceeding on the assumption that all constructive or "good" activity is religious. Ultimately that is probably true. Science is an end in itself, but its accumulation, description, and arrangement of data seem to suggest general principles which are elaborated intellectually by philosophy, and welded into other forms of activity by theology, so that all thinking, from this point of view, is ultimately theological. Recently a reporter on a local newspaper assaulted a Catholic priest and asked him if he "believed in evolution." "That," said the priest in effect, "is a scientific question. My field is in religion; I am not a scientist." Asked if he thought evolution was related to religion, he said: "Everything is related to religion."

Here we have the word "religion" used in two senses. The second sense is the sense in which we have so far been using it, as a general word covering all forms of activity considered constructive or "good" by those performing them. The first sense is the ordinary sense, as a word relating to a specific stereotype of activity. We have said that the work of art symbolizes religion because it is hard and sharp where religion is incalculably extensive. A precisely similar demand for consolidating, clarifying and making concrete the generalized religious impulse operates in religion itself. From the general idea of religion we pass to a clearly outlined body of doctrine with definite dogmas, organization, and historical tradition. The two conceptions are not contradictory, but

supplementary: they are both necessary to avoid a vague and sentimental deism on the one hand and a narrow sectarianism on the other. We have said that the action of a man closing a window when he is sitting in a draught is not specifically a religious one. In the general sense of the word religion it would be, as it relates to the care of the body, and the body is the Temple of God. But we do not ordinarily speak of religion in this absolute way. When Jesus spoke of the religious quality of the action of giving a cup of cold water in His name,[19] He brought together these universal and specific aspects of religion, and incidentally showed how the more general aspect had to be corrected by the limitation of the other.

Similarly we must limit our three approaches to the good. There is a special type of religious reasoning, in our new sense of the term, we call theological, and a special type of moral activity we call—or used to call—pious. There is also an explicitly religious kind of art in addition to the general implication of all art. For example:

Goe, and catche a falling starre,
  Get with child a mandrake roote,
Tell me, where all past yeares are,
  Or who cleft the Divels foot,
Teach me to heare Mermaides singing,
  Or to keep off envies stinging,
        And finde
        What winde
Serves to advance an honest minde.[20]

At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise,
From death, you numberlesse infinities
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom warre, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
Shall behold God, and never tast deaths woe. [21]

These passages are by the same author, though one is the voice of young Jack Donne, shiftless, flippant, cynical, always in trouble and occasionally in gaol, and the other is the voice of the great Doctor Donne, Dean of St. Paul's. The second is explicitly a religious poem, the first is not; yet in the first, the extraordinary variety of things, most of them having religious connotations, unified in the pattern, the synthesis of emotions of disillusionment, cynicism, irony, and the hunger of the soul for an ideal, go to make up an incisive, concrete outline in which religious impulses common to all men are suddenly caught and frozen. So the difference between an explicitly and an implicitly religious poem is largely one of convenience: the difference between a religious poem, in the general sense, and a non-religious poem is the difference between a good poem and a bad poem.

The work of art symbolizes the religious impulse, we have said, and the inference is that the symbol is the unit of artistic creation. Explicitly religious art, therefore, would work with certain generally recognized symbols. Or, more exactly, there are certain archetypal patterns in general religious experience that are reflected both in the dogmas and myths of the historical religion and the artistic conventions which illustrate them.

One more consideration remains to be noted. For art to have any explicit connection with religion, religion itself must be sufficiently catholic and true to its communal nature to admit of all

three approaches to the "good." As society becomes secularized, its various activities become discrete. We have already dealt very superficially with a late stage of this process in our own cultural tradition. This process began with the Renaissance-Reformation: since that event, religion as something binding all forms of activity disappeared. Since the sixteenth century, the possibility that in society a group so varied as the Canterbury Pilgrims could all travel to the same place with the same object has become inconceivable. Hence an individualizing tendency arises in religion itself, a tendency which with us reached its culmination in Calvinism, repudiating the "good" as a conscious goal of religion. According to Calvinism, no man can alter his moral status or perform a "good" action, except as God wills it, so that all religious activity is God's. From this point of view any discussion of "religion and art" becomes confined to the explicit illustration of one by the other. Our own approach is Arminian, *via* Schleiermacher, and anti-Calvinist:[22] in accepting the statement that "man's chief end is to glorify God" we leave room for deliberate and consciously controlled forms of adoration as well as for vaguely emotional spasms. Not only that, but we believe, too, that Haydn's dedication of his music to the glory of God[23] (the result, incidentally, being that his masses are so cheerful that no church will perform them) is qualitatively superior to an uncontrolled, unskilled, and amorphous glorifying of God. We take our chances on whatever cultural snobbery that may lead to.

5. Symbolism

Art symbolizes religion, and therefore the symbol is the unit of art, we have said. A symbol is something which stands for something else, and symbolism in art means the bringing together of two or more ideas into one object. The symbolic units are words in literature, and images in the graphic arts. In music, though music is so highly concentrated and abstract an art that this point is rather difficult to establish, the fact that every note has a melodic, harmonic, contrapuntal, rhythmic, timbric, and tonal context makes it a symbolic point of reference. The meanings of all words are similarly complex: they contain a large number of associations which are both historical, relating to their etymology, and syntactical, relating to their place in a given passage.[24] The symbolic nature of imagery is more obvious. The aim of symbolism may be generally stated as an attempt to relate something in the outer environment to the inner experience by giving it a mental significance and reference which inner experience can grasp. We may see a tiger, and simply add it to the list of things we have seen; we may experience strength, beauty, terror, the splendor of sheer physical power even when destructive, or the effects of these emotions, without organizing them. But when the artist relates these factors of experience to the tiger:

> Tyger! tyger! burning bright
> In the forest of the night.[25]

he has given the tiger a mental significance for us on the one hand, and has given our chaotic and disordered sensations and emotions a concrete point of reference we can associate them with on the other.

Now of course this is not purely a conscious process. The symbolism appeals to us at a subconscious level: we instinctively grasp the association, and in a way it may be said to be innate, or at least potential, in us. It follows that if the artist speaks, or otherwise expresses himself, in a symbolic language, that language is, like ordinary language, evolved unconsciously. As a matter of fact, of course, ordinary language itself is pure symbolism: the relating of objective phenomena to inner experience by mentally significant patterns. Onomatopoeic words are the most obviously symbolic, perhaps, but the difference between them and more abstract words is only one of degree.

Art is a further complication of languages of communication in general: languages proper remain for us, with all their inflections and syntax, as impressive enough examples of unconscious logic. The symbolic language of art is also fundamentally an unconscious language. If it were not so, all connection with religion would disappear, for religious activity demands a communal sense art has to evoke.

The scientific investigation of the unconscious nature of symbolism has only begun, and it would not have started at all without a cross-fertilization of two otherwise separate fields of scientific activity. Psychology and anthropology both tend toward an examination of the unconscious activities of man, and where they converge is generally on this point of the unconscious language of symbolism, and particularly on the relation of religion and art. For their discoveries bear out our thesis that art is the expressed form of religion, and that consequently all religious rituals are matrices of artistic development. When we say that frost forms a "design" on a window-pane, we do not mean that the frost is consciously an artist, but simply that it unconsciously builds up something we interpret in terms of logical pattern. In the same way the psychological examination of dreams, from Freud on, has shown that our dreams are expressions of desires that fail to come to the surface and have to be transmuted into symbols. These symbols are largely phallic, but they follow coherent and regular lines of symbolic structure. Anthropology, starting from the investigations of Mannhardt and Frazer,[26] has similarly shown that there are certain archetypal patterns running through primitive myth: ideas of a universal deluge, of a dying and reviving god of vegetation, of an incarnation of a god in the form of a man, and that as a result primitive rituals take on the same symbolic significance as dreams, the same potentiality of logical interpretation. Freud interpreted art as the dreams of unsatisfied sex-neurotics. But investigators with a wider point of view have felt convinced that there is a less negative approach to art possible, and from the work of Jung on, we shall probably turn more and more to this idea of archetypal pattern in art, following from a universal subconscious language of symbolism.

After this, it should not surprise us that many great artists evoke symbolic patterns that go back to matters of which they can have no direct knowledge. Just as a reader of Frazer becomes accustomed to realizing that peasants in Czarist Russia and Aztecs in Mexico perform similar harvest rites, and that the natives of Kamchatka and Basutoland have similar sets of taboos for similar superstitions, so a student of literature should not wince if he comes across a remark like the following:

The inspired prisoner who wove the *Pilgrim's Progress* (as he tells us) out of the substance of his dreams, has reproduced with marvelous fidelity the very incidents of the initiation ceremonies of ancient Egypt, almost in the language of the Book of the Dead. (Allen Upward: *The Divine Mystery*, p. 222)[27]

6. Music and Drama

In saying that the function of art is to "illustrate" the religious impulse, and in speaking of the symbolic structures common to both as "patterns" we are using metaphors derived from graphic art. Now there is no doubt that the stationary arts give the most direct and obvious interpretations of a religious tradition. Painting and sculpture seem to have been originally iconic: primitive people felt that by drawing a picture of some incarnation of mysterious power they could get control of it. More sophisticated developments of the religious treatment of the stationary arts are easy enough to trace. Most religions supply a set of ready-made symbols and conventions for the artist to treat. The Annunciation, the Pieta, the Theotokos[28] are, it can be seen at a glance, products of Christian genius. Conventionalized symbols like the cross or the halo also belong to the iconic tradition of

Christianity. But with the dynamic arts the relationship is not quite so obvious. Where the stationary arts depend on pattern, or the imposition of a mentally significant form on the space-world, the dynamic ones depend on a similar imposition of form on the time-world, which we call rhythm. Now rhythm is essentially regular recurrence. The movement of time is chaotic and lawless: in order to get into it the stability and permanence the artist needs it is necessary to regulate it, and the only possible way of regulating it is by some form of predictable repetition.

The fundamental activity associated with dynamic art is the bodily expression of rhythm, which is, of course, only a clumsy periphrasis for the dance and the song. The former is the rhythmic control of movement, the latter the rhythmic control of sound, movement and sound being the two phenomena of sense-experience that we receive in a temporal rather than a spatial order. Now there are all sorts of artistic developments of dance and song, but those explicitly religious are the ones that concern us here. Originally all art was explicitly religious, and the dance and song, consequently, were part of a religious ritual. As society develops, divides, and becomes increasingly secularized, the arts follow a similar process. But, bearing in mind that religion requires a communal basis and art an individualistic one, we should expect group-arts to be more closely associated with religion than more subjective ones. Religion, is derived from *religare*, to bind together.

Music and drama are both group art-forms: that is, they are ensemble performances for audiences. The ensemble performance in music may be only an ensemble of ten fingers, and the dramatic performance may be a monologue; but the group-concept is there: both arts are presented rather than read, interpreted by some performer or group of performers intervening between the artist and his public. Both music and drama, therefore, flourish chiefly in an integrated society: if the drama is to flourish, for example, there must be a large number of interests common to the audience, otherwise it will not "get across."

Examples of this are easy enough to find. In our own culture, for instance, music and drama were both born from the womb of the Church. The great Renaissance developments of music and drama in England, France, and Spain did not take place until after a religious settlement had been made, following the split of the Reformation. The great musical and dramatic achievement of the Elizabethans would have been impossible without the Anglican "middle way" established in religion. But the Anglican church in Elizabeth's time had to fight the new force of Puritanism, which was strongly individualized: that is, it dispensed with all cultural connections and facilitated the advance of secular art. Its one great dramatic artist, Bunyan, is well on the way to the novel, which was established by the Whigs, who carried on the Puritanic attack after it had changed from a religious to a political struggle. The novel is, of course, the individualized drama, addressed by the author directly to a single reader. But the Puritans themselves fought music and drama from start to finish, trying to transform their instinctive dislike of a communal art-form into a moral principle. They closed the theatres as soon as they seized power in 1642; they attacked music in the church service as sinful. The Restoration, on the other hand, brought back a revived drama, and Purcell in music. Shakespeare adds his final touch to the portrait of Cassius, the ruthless Puritanic revolutionary, when he makes Caesar say of him:

> he loves no plays
> As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music.[29]

Music and drama, then, belong to an era of integrated cultural development, and their communal nature brings them into line with religion. Perhaps it will be most logical to approach them one at a time, from more or less a historical point of view, the historical approach being, in art criticism, the most empiric and concrete, showing what connection they have so far actually had

with religion. We must keep in mind, however, the points established a little earlier. Music and drama are time-arts; they depend on rhythm, and rhythm depends on recurrence. Consequently, we should expect them to symbolize a time-element in religion, specifically, religious experiences in life, which take place in time, and to impose on those experiences a pattern of recurrence. Let us take the drama first.

7. The Dramatic Presentation of Recurrence

The elemental form imposed by the human mind on the time-world being rhythm, and rhythm depending on recurrence, it follows that the feeling of something regularly recurring in experience marks the first conquest of fear, the first assurance of permanence and stability in the scheme of things. Two recurrent phenomena in nature come at once to mind: the renewed progression of the sun across the sky, and the death and revival of vegetation with the changing of the seasons. The primitive feeling for these phenomena is of course economic rather than metaphysical, in an agricultural community particularly.

Out of this feeling of regularity comes the artistic expression of it. The impulse to worship through certain ritual forms is an artistic one, ritual being, we have said, a matrix of art-forms. This naturally takes the form of imitating, in a conventionalized form, the movements of the god worshipped. Along with this purely artistic impulse there is another mainly magical. Magic postulates the same kind of universe the artist works in: a universe in which like is connected with like. All forms of occultism, where magic impinges on science, are essentially products of artistic thinking and are frequently sources of inspiration for art, although they are bad science. The magician believes that by spilling water on the ground he can compel it to rain, just as a Persian actor can convey to his audience that a scene is in a desert by exhibiting a handful of chopped straw. So leaping in the air to promote the growth of crops comes to be an established form of ritual dance, which perhaps accounts for some of the energy traditionally associated with this rite. In any case drama is associated with action; it means etymologically something done, just as poetry means etymologically something made.

All primitive peoples dependent on the growth of vegetation of any kind for their existence tend to evolve similar myths of a god of fertility dying in the fall and reviving in the spring. In Babylonia this god's name was Tammuz, in Egypt Osiris, in Syria Adonis, in Phrygia Attis, in Thrace Dionysos, in Sparta Hyakinthos. The annual death of the god was mourned, chiefly by the women of the tribe (cf. Ezekiel viii. 14)[30] and his revival in spring celebrated. As his death usually coincided approximately with the harvest season, it was accompanied by a sacrifice, originally human, later of course an animal.

It is in Greece that the particular development from fertility rite to drama took place. The worship of Dionysos the fertility god centred around a spring festival. It was instituted in Greece at a fairly late period, and was Thracian in origin. Beginning in rural districts, it was brought to Athens during the tyranny of Peisistratos.[31] Repetition of a rite (the Greeks called their rites *dromena*) gets rather monotonous for people who do not particularly believe in it: Peisistratos had superimposed on the rite mimetic presentations of stories from Homer, in much the same way that the Catholic rites in the middle Ages eventually expanded into presentations of Bible stories, and so brought to birth Western drama. Aeschylus, who remarked that all his plays were slices from the great banquet of Homer, is of course the first great name in the evolution of the *drama* out of the *dromena*. But the tradition developing from him retained its sacerdotal connection with Dionysos: the performances of plays were attended by the chief priests, headed by the priest of Dionysos, and the poets preserved their connection with Greek religion. The transition from the cult of Dionysos to the illustration of Homeric stories merely evidences the fact that by the time of Peisistratos the official

Olympian religion, for which the Homeric epics were sacred books, had become fused with the later, more popular Dionysiac cult. Even the skeptical Euripides has given in the *Bacchae* an unforgettable picture of Dionysiac rites.[32]

Originally, of course, the rites of Dionysos were the ordinary, crude leaping into the air and similar gesticulations to promote the growth of crops. Dionysos, however, was always a vintage-god rather than a harvest-god, and his rites gradually took on an orgiastic, frenzied character. The aim of the worshippers was to become united to the god by enthusiasm, or possession of themselves by the god (the original meaning of enthusiasm). The sacrifice associated with Dionysos was that of the goat (*tragos*): the word means both goat and a kind of barley, and may go back to a time when the fertility spirit of the barley crop was conceived as incarnate in the form of an animal lurking near it). The attendants of Dionysos developed a characteristic ritual song, the dithyramb, noted for its rugged and irregular rhythmic energy, and a characteristic dance, noted for the same qualities, performed by the male attendants of Dionysos, the satyrs or goat-men, and called after them the satyric drama. In the dramatic period proper the satyric drama was retained as the final play of a tetralogy.[33]

The tragedy, then, developed out of the tragos, or goat-sacrifice. Our next step is to see why the ritual of sacrifice is a potential art-form. Investigators have tended to move away from Tylor[34] and his early conception of sacrifice as essentially the bribing of a god, and have generally placed the emphasis on the desire for communion. This has two aspects: in the first place the savage depends on the coherence of his tribe—without it he is almost at once a lost man—and needs to be regularly assured of its coherence. In the second place, the savage tries to strengthen himself by absorbing into himself a power greater than he. Taking those two ideas together, it becomes inevitable that the thing of superior power to be absorbed is that which incarnates the unity of the tribe, that is, the king. And as the savage's ideas of absorption are appropriately primitive and materialistic, the ritual of regularly killing and eating the king of the tribe grows up. Usually this is done as soon as the king's virility (which means the virility of the tribe) shows signs of waning. The king is dead, long live the king:[35] his successor must be appointed the instant the old king dies. Eventually, as primitive man becomes more conscious, he comes too identify the spirit of fertility with the vegetation, as we have already mentioned; at the same time an animal sacrifice is substituted for a human one, and so grow up rites like the tragos, sacrifices with the same idea of communion with the god—now considered either incarnate in or bound in some way to the animal—retained.

The purpose of communion is a renewal of strength. The king dies, but in being divided and eaten by his tribe he reunites in the bodies of his worshippers and creates a new spirit of unity among them. It is possible that, as the psychologists suggest,[36] the king is to each member of the tribe a father, a representative of the father-complex of his youth, so that his death brings to the worshippers a freedom from a neurosis. In any case, the sacrifice, even on this level, is implicitly an art-form. The archetypal pattern of tragedy is this slaying of a divine king, of a hero, usually represented as a monarch, with unusual if not supernatural powers. And in his fall the tragic hero creates in us a new sense of strength, of unity and renewal.

To explain this we should of course have to bring out the moral ideas implicit in the tragedy, and we can see these more clearly by turning to Hebrew culture. The Hebrews were originally desert nomads, and developed no fertility cult and no drama. But what they lost in cultural development as a result they made up in moral penetration, and the Old Testament brings out very clearly the moral implications of sacrifice from the beginning. The interpenetration with the Canaanites brought some elements of the fertility cult into Palestine, of course: in spite of the careful revision of the redactor, we can see a local Iphigenia in Jephthah's daughter, and a vegetation myth in Joseph's coat of many colours.[37] Later, in Hellenistic period, these symbols of recurrence are repeated in more sophisticated forms. The sun goes down into darkness and recurs the next day:

the soul symbolizing that pattern of experience would go through a similar death and resurrection. This is what happens at the sacrifice: the worshipper dies in the sacrificial victim and is reborn in communion with the god incarnated in that victim. The Jews put a moral emphasis on the sacrifice: their goat was not the Dionysiac *tragos*, but the scapegoat, who carried the *sins* of the people to the wilderness. Hence for the Jewish worshipper sacrifice was purification, a freeing from sin. So the symbols of the death and resurrection of the soul are purgatorial symbols, symbols of initiation. Daniel goes into the lion's den in defence of his piety, emerging unscathed.®MDSU¯38 The Three Children go through the purgatory of Nebuchadrezzar's fiery furnace for the same reason, and come out unharmed.[39] In Jonah's descent into the fish's belly the moral nature of the initiation symbol is even more clearly marked.[40]

This moral interpretation of the recurrent death and resurrection of the soul was present in Greek culture too, of course, and was especially associated with the religion of Orphism. In literature, it gives us the art-form of the katabasis, the descent into the underworld, which meets us in *Odyssey* XI (probably an Orphic interpolation), in *Aeneid* VI, and in Dante, where it because part of the Christian tradition. But on the whole the Greek interpretation of the purgation or purification of the spirit in sacrifice took on a different form. Even to the Orphics, for example, who believed that this purification, or katharsis, was nothing less than the deliverance of the soul from the body, the process was largely physical and magical, and was conceived as resulting automatically from the performance of certain rites. But to Aristotle the katharsis conception had a more naturalistic appearance as a purging or cleansing of the spirit by a powerful surcharge of emotions, which he specified as pity and terror.[41]

We have said enough to show the connection of tragedy and sacrifice; what about the origin of comedy?[42] To get at this we have to go back to our sacrifice of the divine king. As the society developed and the old cannibalistic feast disappeared, the idea of a *substitute* sacrifice for the divine king became very widespread. Sometimes this was the king's own son; but later it came to be someone selected by lot who was made a mock king for a year and then was stripped of his false glory and slain. The Aztecs of Mexico were still at this stage when their culture was destroyed by the Spaniards. Still later it became a condemned criminal who was made a mock king for a time and then executed. The festival of the Sacaea at Babylon was of this nature:[43] the criminal was even given access to the royal harem. In the end this sacrifice of the mock king developed into the saturnalia, or periodic overturning of social distinctions, and the carnival accompanying it, presided over by some buffoon or lord of misrule.

Just as tragedy is an artistic development of the sacrifice, so comedy is an artistic development of the carnival. Fundamental to the whole idea of comedy is the idea of false values, of something unreal, of sham in high places, of pretensions taken seriously. When Falstaff and Prince Henry confront one another we have a typical presentation of a lord of misrule and the real king who dethrones him after his brief tyranny. Falstaff's exit marks the end of the saturnalia, and of the comedy with it.®MDSU¯44 But the point is that we are left with a very strong impression that there is something more real about the kingship of Falstaff than there is about the puppet-gesticulations of Prince Henry, so that we get a double comedy, with implications so powerfully satiric as to be quite unmistakably tragic. We shall return to this in a moment.

8. Christianity and the Drama

In the Supreme Sacrifice we have, of course, the supreme drama, and in that drama are woven both tragic and comic elements. In Christ's death we are saved from sin: He provides a universal katharsis for mankind. Slain at the height of his virility, the Divine King of all men, in the role of the sacrificial victim or Lamb of God, He represents the consolidation in fact of a universal religious

impulse. That is, all mankind approximates the Christian religion: non-Christian myths all strive to approach the Passion, which is the nexus of all religious symbolism. Christianity could not claim to be a universal religion did not all religions, however primitive, adumbrate, in one way or another, what it provides. People have occasionally attacked Christianity on the ground that it contains nothing that cannot be found in other religions. The point is, of course, that there is nothing in other religions that cannot be found in Christianity, the difference being that Christianity alone provides a concrete basis of historical fact and thereby has a reference to the time-world of existence other religions lack. This connection with the time-world gives a peculiar significance in the dramatic quality of the tragedy of the Passion.

Sir James Frazer has shown that the story of Esther goes back to the idea of substitute sacrifice we have been treating. Haman is the unfortunate mock king, stripped of his glory and hanged at the end. Esther and Mordecai are Ishtar and Marduk, ancient gods of Babylon. The story is an etiological account of the rise of the Feast of Purim, the Jewish saturnalia. Frazer's theory is that Christ was crucified in the role of the mock king Haman. His tormentors would be Syrians, or else Romans of the outpost camps, to whom the saturnalia would be not the good-humored carnival of Rome but an actual bloody sacrifice. Hence the mockery of Christ, the crown of thorns and the sceptre, the salutation of "Hail, King of the Jews!" and the ironic (to them) inscription over the Cross. Barabbas, we are told, was probably released in the role of buffoon and lord of misrule for the popular carnival.[45] This is the only thing needed to complete our conception of the Passion as the matrix of all drama: it is the world's supreme comedy as well as its supreme tragedy. The magnificent irony of the Passion as a carnival is the ultimate treatment of the double comedy we noted in connection with Falstaff and Prince Henry.

Since the death of Christ the whole concept of drama, particularly of tragedy, has been revolutionized. In Greek tragedy the whole point of the katharsis was the complete irrationality of the force striking down the hero. The hero was usually faultless in himself, and he was attacked by a blind and purely external Fate. Christian tragedy, on the other hand, sees the tragedy as emanating from the character of the hero. Hamlet and Othello are both invulnerable, like Achilles, except at one point, and on that point they are struck and killed. Interchange their roles and both tragedies become meaningless: Othello could have killed Claudius in no time; it would have been nothing for Hamlet to have trapped Iago in his own web of lies. The tragedy of Judas Iscariot is the first Christian tragedy: it is a tragedy of character where the tragedy of Oedipus Rex is a tragedy of incident. In other words, since Christianity the world has been faced with an ethical challenge, and drama reflects, as no other art could reflect, the critical nature of that challenge.

The medieval drama was, of course, a product of the Church, growing up in a way somewhat similar to the growth of Dionysiac drama in Greece, as we have indicated. The matrix of ritual from which it grew was, of course, the Mass. In the last century it became fashionable among some sentimental aesthetes who occasionally turned Roman Catholic to regard the Mass as the world's supreme work of art. But the Mass is not art; it is a religious rite, and therefore communal where art is individualistic. Art is ascetic in a way, that is, it works with one sense at a time; or, if it uses two senses, it avoids the more intimate ones. Taste, smell, and as a rule touch (sculpture being a dubious exception) are excluded for works of art. But the Mass has something for the gratification of every sense: taste in the Eucharist, smell in incense, hearing in the chant, and so on, precisely because it is not art, but the expression of the completeness of the religious life. As a general rule those who admire the Mass solely as a work of art are decadents; and it was a contemporary sign of decadence when programme music was followed by the symphonies of Scriabine, with their colour-organs and perfume-engines. If Scriabine had had his way, he would have plunged ahead into what could only have been called a Black Mass.

The medieval drama developed in two directions. One, the presentation of Biblical legends which parallels the absorption of Homeric legends into the Greek drama, we have dealt with. The other, the morality play, was concerned more with the moral and instructive element of religion. There are in the main two kinds of partial symbolism which help to bind the drama in its earlier stages to a religious tradition. One of these is the allegory: this is peculiar to the Christian development, with its increased moral interest. The other is the myth or presentation of the actions of divine or otherwise supernatural or heroic beings: this was of course the sole intermediate stage for Greek drama and was a very important one for Christian drama, developing as it did the so-called "mystery" plays.

In Elizabethan drama, of course, the greatest dramatic development of the West, we have a purely secular drama. It was a Renaissance art form, and the Renaissance was in at least one of its aspects a re-incorporation of much of the pagan spirit of the Classical world into a Christian tradition. But Shakespeare, by the intuition of transcendent genius, approached nearer and nearer the sacerdotal drama as his genius developed. To prove this assertion would be a colossal task obviously; but the main outlines of the development are clear enough. With our thesis of the development of the comedy from the carnival, it is surely significant that Shakespeare called his greatest comedy after the saturnalia of the Western world—Twelfth Night.[46] His heroic figures were Classical and national rather than Biblical, as the taste of the time demanded, and of course any explicit association of religion and drama would have been impossible in the rising tide of Puritanism. Even Milton, whose Christianity is not in doubt, was compelled to turn to Classical mythology for his only dramatic work intended for performance.[47] But from the commencement of Shakespeare's mature period onward, the themes of his plays become more and more evidently folk-lore, and hence approach nearer to the archetypal religious patterns of recurrence. It is possible to trace back the stories of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* till they dissolve in nature myths; and about the folk-lore nature of such comedies as *All's Well that Ends Well* there can be no question.[48] After this period comes the last group of plays, and in these, the fertility theme of *The Winter's Tale* is impossible to mistake. Fairly obvious even in *Cymbeline*, in the later play the ideas of the sudden fury of winter storms, the banishment and apparent death of the vegetation, the sullen self-absorption of the young plants covered over with snow, and the revival in spring, are too insistent to overlook. As for the last play of all, *The Tempest*, that has now been fairly proved to be an extraordinarily faithful presentation of the Greek ideas of initiation and of the ritual that accompanied them.[49] And, as we have seen, these initiation symbols are logical developments of fertility symbolism, with which they were, both in the Eleusinian rites and in Shakespeare's play, explicitly associated. There are five years of complete silence between *The Tempest* and the death of Shakespeare; and, from the standpoint of our thesis at any rate, the only possible development from the theme of *The Tempest* would have been the Passion Play itself.

9. Paean and Dithyramb

Let us now turn to music. Here we are dealing with an art so profoundly abstract, so utterly devoid of all naturalistic symbolism, so complete an artistic control over time-movement, that it has frequently been regarded as the most fundamental of arts. The first enunciation of this theory is in Plato's *Republic*, though it must have played an important part in Pythagorean conceptions even earlier; Schopenhauer is perhaps the most conspicuous modern exponent of it. "Tous les artes," says Baudelaire, "faisent *rejoindre* la musique."[50] Walter Pater's view is similar: "The arts may be represented as continually struggling after the law or principle of music, to a condition which music alone completely realizes; and one of the chief functions of aesthetic criticism, dealing with the products of art, new or old, is to estimate the degree in which each of those products approaches, in

this sense, to the musical law."[51] The problem this envisages, a philosophy of history in which the arts symbolize culture and music the arts, has not yet been seriously attempted, owing, undoubtedly, to the extreme difficulty of being able to interpret the history of music in any but the most abstract, tenuous and metaphorical cross-references.

Now beside this fundamental fact, that music is the central art, we place another. There has only been one systematic development of a musical tradition in the world, and that was produced by Western culture under the spiritual leadership of Christianity. There are great dramas in every great culture in the world today, but without belittling the loveliness of much Hindu, Mohammedan, or Chinese melody, there seems to be no one outside our own tradition we can point to as a great composer, as we can point to Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven as great composers.

In examining what we know of the history of Greek music the conviction breaks on us that it was precisely the sense of the mysterious, ultimate nature of music that paralyzed the Hellenic development of the art. There are two tendencies traceable in Greek music, corresponding to the two branches of their religion. The first tendency, which belongs to the stately, orthodox, official Olympian religion, is best symbolized by the Paean, or devotional hymn to the Olympian god of the arts, Apollo. The second tendency, associated with the passionate, orgiastic cult of Dionysos, is a development of the wild, ecstatic, irregularly constructed Dithyramb we have mentioned. Now of these, the word Paean appears in Homer as the name of a great physician,[52] and the connection between these two meanings of the word seems to be that the song came to be conceived as having a magical character. The same tendency is observable among American Indians, where each deity or totem has its own song, a development of its *numen*. The use of the song in curing melancholic disease is familiar to every reader of the Old Testament. As for the Dithyramb, the magical nature of the music of Orpheus, the reformer of the Dionysiac cult, is too well known to dwell on. The master musician, who by his lyre could attract even inanimate objects to him, is a figure symbolic of the whole Greek conception of music, which was worked out in more rationalized terms by the Pythagoreans, who combined the worship of Apollo with the way of life prescribed by Orphism. Their interpretation of music was the rationalized development of magic we call occultism. If Orpheus could control the universe through music, that was only because the ultimate principles of the universe were connected with the elementary mathematical relationships of numbers, which again were expressed in the time-world by music. Hence the "music of the spheres," the mysterious unheard music which only someone both musician and magician could evoke.

Similarly Plato, in the *Republic*, after remarking that all phenomena can be reduced to *a priori* relationships expressed spatially by mathematics and temporally by music, ascribes moral qualities to the various modes: those starting on too high a note are shrill and effeminate; those starting on too low a note are sullen and insubordinate.[53] In other words, the Greeks seem on the whole to have thought of music plastically, as a relation between tones. Their greatest cultural achievements were in the plastic arts, and in them they expressed their love of the finite, the easily bounded, the tangible. Music, which evoked such mysterious and fearful hints of infinity, they left in an abortive stage: perhaps the myth of the Sirens, whose music was an irresistible but fatal lure, best expresses their opposition to the art.

Nevertheless, we have, in the Paean and the Dithyramb, the two essential elements in music. The Olympian religion, or, as Nietzsche[54] called it, the Apollonian religion, was the respectable religion of the processional, and the Paean was accordingly a solemn devotional chant. The Dithyramb on the other hand was fundamentally a dance; in it the bodily expression of rhythm came to the fore. Precisely the same development took place in the Middle Ages. There was the stately, academic plain chant, developed in a monastic tradition by retired scholars and devotees of the orthodox faith. Outside was the popular element: the ballad, the carol, the old festival dances absorbed by Christianity, all going to make up the folk-song and the dance. Suddenly, just before

the Renaissance, these two traditions fused. Sometimes the juncture was a bit unfortunate, as when a composer would make a church anthem out of a contrapuntal setting of a bawdy army song, but none the less a systematic development of music started, which is now an essential part of our cultural tradition.

Where lay the difference between this development and that of the Greeks? The answer is fairly obvious. Music, to become an art-form, needs three dimensions: it has to have a solid thickness of body, or rhythm, length or melody, and breadth or harmony. And of course it was this harmonic development that Greek music, and all music except Western music, lacked. No other culture has ever had any idea of counter-point, of the organic welding of melody and harmony into a rhythmic pattern. And it should be noted that the development of counterpoint is not "Western" in the sense of having been originated by the Teutonic tribes who destroyed the Roman Empire. The eddas and sagas of Northern Europe give no hint of a future Bach. Counterpoint was a product of Christian genius through and through: the development from Greek mode to Western scale, which made counterpoint possible, was largely the work of two great Doctors of the Christian Church, St. Ambrose and St. Gregory, and as far as contrapuntal music goes, there is no relation between the quality of a nation's folk song and its contribution to systematic music, except perhaps an inverse one. Germany, the nexus of Western music, has a folk song far poorer than that of Ireland or Wales, who have done nothing for music.

When we turn to Christian theology, and the reasons for its conquest over Greek speculation, we are struck by the extraordinarily dynamic quality of the former. Where Greek virtues are all to some extent negative, expressed in terms of avoidance of extremes, Christianity rests on a vital unity of subjective factors. This dynamic quality, and in addition the extraordinarily concrete nature of the Christian faith and its insistence on the historical nature of its God, give evidence of an attitude to life much more congenial to a parallel cultural conquest of the time-world. Then again, the dynamic nature of Christianity works out, in theology, to the idea of a tension of opposites. This opposition finds perhaps its most direct theoretical formulation in the doctrine of the Trinity, in which the eternal creative activity of the Father and the temporal redemptive activity of the Holy Spirit are brought together by the impact of Jesus. The connection between this kind of thinking and the kind of artistic thinking that produced the tension-forms of Gothic cathedrals has been often noted.[55] Its connection with the development of contrapuntal music is perhaps even easier to trace, in view of the fact that the feeling of the magical power of music never entirely disappeared—even in the enlightened sixteenth century Orlando di Lasso was credited with the power of Orpheus. It is perhaps less surprising that Paganini should, in a more superstitious age, have made half his fortune out of people who believed that his technique was literally diabolical in its skill.[56] The same half-superstitious reverence for music was undoubtedly an influence on that very superstitious man, Pope Gregory, and helped to make the connection of music with the sacerdotal tradition more explicit.[57] The unwillingness of the monks to experiment, out of respect for the Trinity, with any other than 3/4 rhythms is a random example.

To deal at all fully with this aspect of our thesis would extend its length to well over a hundred pages. As we propose making this extension later on,[58] and are at present concerned only to unite music to the dramatic presentation of the concept of recurrence in religion, it may be considered sufficient if we present a few further suggestions in a summarized form.

10. Summary

A. The Jewish insistence on the importance of music in ritual must have played some part in the development of Christianity. The Chronicler's sole cultural interest is in music, and that seems

to be true for Jewish culture generally. In early Christian art the figure of Orpheus, the master musician, insensibly melts, via David, into the Good Shepherd Jesus.

B. The Renaissance, when it came, was too much of a Classical throwback to be of much help to music. The madrigal excepted, there seems to have been little in music we can explicitly call Renaissance; most of it stems from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The traditions which preserved music on the whole tended to mediate between extreme Catholic and extreme Protestant obscurantism. The Reformation, involving as it did the separation of Teutonic and Latin racial traditions, also brought the central development of music further North. Spain produced a dramatic but not a musical Renaissance: Germany produced a musical but not a dramatic one. The personal influence of Luther also played its part in establishing a cultural connection between religion and music, which the Calvinists were only too willing to destroy. In particular, the Protestant nations, as opposed to the Palestrina tradition in Italy, seem to have developed the concept of rhythm in music as a linear series of accents: a development which necessitated a conventionalizing of tonality. The maturation of the Elizabethan madrigal shows this transition from strict madrigal with vague tonality to the later airs based explicitly on a chromatic scale with major and minor chords as points of repose. The idea of equal temperament in music was thus implicit as early as Byrd.

C. This conventionalization made possible strict forms of musical drama, and, in consequence, the explicit illustration of the Christian tradition in independent art-forms. From the Renaissance onward, music rather than the strict drama took over the task of the artistic presentation of the religious impulse already deal with. First, we have the development of the opera, in the early seventeenth century, with Greek tragedy as a model. Out of this early opera grows the later opera and the oratorio. We have mentioned the fact that medieval drama began in the illustration of Christian doctrines by Bible stories, just as Greek drama had similarly treated Homeric stories. The supreme development of this belongs to the oratorio. At the climax of the oratorio comes Bach, who, working in music, was able, in a way that Shakespeare was not, to present, in his two greatest works, the *Saint Matthew Passion* and the *B Minor Mass*, the supreme sacrifice and the supreme sacrament or symbol of it. The oratorio proper keeps the Greek tragedy form of recitativo or narration and chorus. The oratorio is thus an essentially tragic form. The opera, when similarly brought to its artistic culmination by Mozart, was established as a comedy or carnival-form. Along with these vocal forms go the strict instrumental forms of the fugue and the sonata, the development of each being also brought to its culmination by Bach and Mozart respectively. The fugue develops from the Paean side of music: it is a very sophisticated product of the academic contrapuntal song. The sonata on the other hand is a development of the suite, and so is similarly connected with the Dithyramb side. Both are, however, essentially forms in which a theme or group of themes go through a process of analytic development and are re-stated at the close in a more rigorously unified form. In other words, we are close to the archetypal pattern of recurrence we have already noted: the same disappearance and re-emergence pattern of the katabasis.

D. With the advent of romanticism these strict forms break up as art becomes more individualized. Beethoven, after tearing the sonata form to pieces in search of a complete subjective control of form, was forced to make a similar assault on the oratorio (Ninth Symphony) and the fugue in his final period. What he did for music Wagner did for music and drama, and in his gigantic Dionysiac mythology we have the climax of the anti-religious art of the time. The tendencies of Scriabine toward a "Black Mass" we have already noted. Only Caesar Franck preserved the forms of oratorio and fugue. The exhaustion of the possibilities of the chromatic scale in our in our own day make it obvious that the rigidly conventionalized art-forms of music based on this scale will break up and give place to something else. But as music is a group art-form, this cannot be done theoretically: Schönberg is a grim reminder of that fact. It cannot exist apart

from a new and more co-operative form of society: and if we get that we shall assuredly get a new form of musical drama as well as a renewed strength in religion, and the two things are bound to be associated. The ballet[59] is perhaps our nearest our nearest approach as yet to this form.

Bibliographical Note

The generalized and partly summarized nature of the argument has compelled me to refer to the general theses of books rather than to specific passages. Hence the footnote references are mostly of a *passim* nature. The main ideas on which the essay is based are developed from Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, and Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*. The former work suggested in particular the "comedy" archetype in the Passion. I am indebted to Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, for the phrase "archetypal pattern" and for some suggestions on the psychological connection between tragedy and sacrifice. The observations on the development from fertility cult to initiation and purgatorial symbols are based on previous work of my own.[60] I might also refer to the standard works on early Greek drama consulted: Cornford, *Origins of Attic Comedy*; Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religions*, *Themis*; Norwood, *Greek Tragedy*. The comparisons suggested between Greek and Western conceptions of music and drama are based on Spengler, *Decline of the West*.[61] The more technical part of the music section is entirely my own, and adequate references would entail a much fuller treatment in the text than I have space for. The opening sections are also my own; the thesis of the three goods is developed from some suggestions of Dr. McCallum.

Notes

[Frye's notes are followed by "[NF]"

1. The tripartite division of the "good" is found in various configurations throughout Plato but is explicitly set forth in *Cratylus*, 439c-400e, *Phaedo*, 65c-d and 75d; see also the *Republic*, bk. 5, 476.
2. The argument for the dual aim of poetry is rooted in Horace's *Ars Poetica* (ca. 20 B.C.); in the British tradition it appears in such well-known critical texts as Sidney's *A Defence of Poetry* (1579-80; pub. 1595) and Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* (1688).
3. See, e.g., Sidney's account of the poet as *vates* (prophet) in *An Apology for Poetry* (1580; pub. 1595).
4. The concept originated with Lessing's *Laokoön* (1766) and continued throughout the nineteenth century; during the last two decades of the century Oscar Wilde became a leading advocate of the idea that art is intrinsically valuable.
5. Diderot, d'Alembert, and other *philosophes* believed that rational behaviour was the only means for moral improvement.
6. That is, the last half of the sixteenth century.
7. *vide* Max Eastman: *Artists in Uniform* [NF]. Eastman's book (New York: Knopf, 1934) is about the effects of Soviet bigotry and bureaucracy on arts and letters.
8. Montanism was an ascetic, enthusiastic Christian movement of the second century.
9. That is, the hope that some natural, direct passage into the content of Shakespeare's plays can be discovered without considering their aesthetic qualities, which serve only as a barrier to Shakespeare's essence.
10. Isa. 5:8-9.
11. Luke 12:16-20.
12. *vide* Wyndham Lewis: *Men without Art* [NF]. Lewis announces in the introduction to *Men without Art* (London: Cassell & Co., 1934) that "in the serious work of art will be found . . . all the great intellectual departments of the human consciousness" (9). For his attacks on subjective expression, see especially the chapter on "The Terms 'Classical' and 'Romantic,'" 185-211.

13. The philosophy of Parmenides (ca. 515-450 B.C.) has come down to us through the fragments of his *On Nature*; for the views of Empedocles (ca. 493-433 B.C.) on attraction, see his *Purifications*.
14. The reference is to Walter Pater's essay on Leonardo da Vinci in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873).
15. The dichotomy between poetry and science, feeling and reference, and connotation and denotation, which underlie NF's argument in this section, was a familiar opposition underlying the work of the New Critics, whose principles were beginning to be influential in the 1930s. NF appears to be drawing chiefly on the oppositions found in the work of I.A. Richards, including *The Meaning of Meaning*, with C.K. Ogden (1929), *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Practical Criticism* (1924), and *Science and Poetry* (1926).
16. *Hamlet*, 3.2.24 (Riverside).
17. "Principle 1st. That the Poetic Genius is the true Man, and that the body or outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius." William Blake, *All Religions Are One* (1788). See also "Principle 2d" and "Principle 7th."
18. NF is recalling, if a bit imperfectly, a passage from the introduction to Stuart Gilbert's book on *Ulysses*: "*Ulysses* is a book of life, a microcosm which is a small-scale replica of the universe, and the methods which lead to an understanding of the latter will provide a solution of the obscurities in *Ulysses*." *James Joyce's "Ulysses": A Study* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 42. NF had read the 1930 British ed. (London: Faber & Faber) or the first American ed. (New York: Knopf, 1931).
19. Mark 9:41.
20. John Donne, "Song" ("Go and Catch a Falling Star") (1633), lines 1-9.
21. From John Donne's "Holy Sonnets" (no. 4) (1633), lines 1-8.
22. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and his followers believed, as against the Calvinists, that Christ died not simply for the elect but for all people. For Friedrich Schleiermacher's views on election see *The Christian Faith*, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 536-60.
23. Joseph Haydn inscribed *In nomine Domine* and Laus Deo on all his scores.
24. *vide* William Empson: *Seven Types of Ambiguity* [NF]. Empson's first book (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930) is a classic of the New Criticism; Empson deals systematically with the different forms of poetic ambiguity, a trope of compression that causes the reader to hold in suspension several complementary or contradictory meanings.
25. William Blake, "The Tyger" (1794), lines 1-2.
26. See Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911-14). NF's knowledge of Wilhelm Mannhardt's researches into myth and folklore probably derived from his reading of Frazer, who frequently cites Mannhardt (1831-80). None of Mannhardt's books had been translated into English in 1935.
27. (Letchworth, UK: Garden City Press, 1913).
28. Theotokos = Virgin Mary.
29. *Julius Caesar*, 1.1.203-4 (Riverside).
30. "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house, which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz."
31. Peisistratos (or Pisistratus) was tyrant in Athens from 561 to 527 B.C.
32. See especially the parados and the third episode of the *Bacchae*.
33. The source of NF's paragraphs on Dionysus is primarily Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 363-453.

34. *vide* E. B. Tylor: *Primitive Culture* [NF]. For Tylor's analysis of the sacrifice as gift, see *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (New York: Holt, 1883), 2:375-410.
35. "Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!"—the words of the captain of Louis XIV's bodyguard, exclaimed from the window of the state apartment after the king's death.
36. *vide* Maud Bodkin: *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* [NF]. See p. 17 of Bodkin's book (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934).
37. Judg. 11:34-40; Gen. 37:3.
38. Dan. 6.
39. Dan. 3:19-30.
40. Jon. 1-2.
41. *Poetics*, chap. 6.
42. *vide* F. M. Cornford: *Origins of Attic Comedy* [NF]. Cornford's chapter on "Classification of Types" in *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934) connects the beginnings of comedy with the fertility ritual. What follows in NF's paragraph derives from vol. 4 (*The Dying God*) and vol. 9 (*The Scapegoat*) of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.
43. A five-day festival during which the master and servant changed places.
44. Prince Hal, crowned Henry V at the end of *Henry IV, Pt 2*, banishes Falstaff in 5.5.
45. See Sir James Frazer, *The Scapegoat* (vol. 9 of *The Golden Bough*), 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1913), 412-23.
46. The twelfth night from Christmas, 6 January, is the eve or vigil of the Epiphany.
47. *Comus*, Milton's pastoral drama, which was first printed anonymously in 1637.
48. *vide* William Lawrence: *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* [NF]. Lawrence's interpretation of *All's Well that Ends Well* draws on themes that are present in tales from the Italian, Indian, Turkish, Icelandic, and French traditions (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 32-77.
49. *vide* Colin Still: *Shakespeare's Mystery Play* [NF]. NF seems to have first read Still's book (London: C. Palmer, 1921) after seeing T.S. Eliot's reference to it in his preface to Wilson Knight's *Wheel of Fire* (1930), and NF often noted the book in his subsequent commentaries on Shakespearean romance. Still points to the parallels he sees between Shakespeare's plays and the ancient mystery rites.
50. The source of this quotation, with its faulty French, remains unknown. The passage NF might have had in mind is from sec. 39 of Baudelaire's *Mon coeur mis à nu*: "La musique donne l'idée de l'espace. Tous les arts, plus ou moins; puisqu'ils sont *nombre* et que le nombre est une traduction de l'espace" ["Music conveys the idea of space. All the arts do this, more or less; for they employ *number* and number is an interpretation of space"]. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1961), 1:1296.
51. "The School of Giorgione," *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), 111. Compare Pater's remarks in his essay on "Style" in *Appreciations* (1899): "If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then, literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import, will be but fulfilling the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere, of all good art."
52. *Iliad*, bk. 1, line 473; Robert Fitzgerald translates the word as "the One Who Keeps the Plague Afar."
53. *Republic*, bk. 3, 411a-c.
54. *vide* Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy* [NF].
55. *vide* Ruskin: *Crown of Wild Olive* [NF]. NF is referring to John Ruskin's lecture, "Traffic" in *The Crown of Wild Olive* (New York: Merrill & Batzer, n.d.), 47-80.

56. The association of Paganini's virtuoso gifts as a violinist with a demonic skill was widespread in his day. Jeffrey Pulver's *Paganini: The Romantic Virtuoso* (London: Herbert Joseph, 1936), a book NF might have known, records dozens of such associations from contemporary reviews. See, e.g., pp. 164, 204, 214, 222, 250, and 282.
57. Gregory the Great, who was pope from 590 to 604, promoted the development of liturgical music; his name is so closely linked with plainsong that it is commonly known as the Gregorian chant.
58. For several years NF had been planning to do a B.D. thesis, either at Emmanuel College or in England, on music. In April 1934, he wrote to Helen Kemp, in connection with his thesis plans, that "there are two things which are absolutely unique about the Christian religion and which guarantee its truth—one is music, the other a philosophy of history, and, though I'll do them both eventually, I don't care which I start on. They're intimately connected, of course, and it may be better to get a solid musical background first. We'll see how things turn out. The Catholic Church has four great `doctors of the Church'—St. Ambrose, St. Gregory, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome. The first two were musicians, the second two philosophers of history." The thesis never materialized, NF having turned to literature instead.
59. *vide* H. N. Frye: Ballet Russe (*Acta Victoriana*, Dec. 1935), Jooss Ballet (*Canadian Forum,* Apr. 1936) [NF]. NF cites two of his earliest published pieces. In "Ballet Russe," a review of two ballets by Tchaikovsky and one by Rimsky-Korsakov, NF analyses the function of rhythm, symbolism, and convention in ballet, concluding that the particular performance of the Ballet Russe under review was too allegorical and did not properly represent the emotional range of the form. "The Jooss Ballet" was ostensibly a review of four performances by the Jooss Ballet, but most of NF's remarks have to do with the ballet as a musical art. He speculates that in an age when the oratoria is dead and the opera moribund the ballet may emerge as a "genuinely new art-form."
60. "The Fertility Cults," a paper written for Professor Richard Davidson's Old Testament course at Emmanuel College.
61. See *The Decline of the West*, 1:128-31, 227-32, 282-3, 320-3.

The Legacy of Northrop Frye

Edited by Alvin A. Lee and Robert D. Denham

This collection of essays by scholars from a wide range of disciplines and institutions pays tribute to the richness, diversity, and significance of Frye's contributions to culture and society in Canada and around the world.

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