

# Quakerism, Spirituality, and the Arts



Sylvia Shaw Judson:  
*Mary Dyer*



Gianlorenzo Bernini:  
*The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*

**Quaker Center at Ben Lomond, California  
End-of-Year Retreat**

**Session One**

**What Is Art?  
On What Basis Were Early Friends and Others Opposed to Art?**

By Daniel A. Seeger



In the course of the next few days we will consider “Quakerism, Spirituality, and the Arts.” We will explore the reasons why the Quaker movement was hostile to artistic activity for almost 200 years, and try to determine if any of this skepticism speaks to our condition today. Finally, we will use three mainstream classical artists to examine whether art can be a useful vehicle for exploring and communicating spiritual truth. Today we will devote our attention to the first part of this overall consideration: what is the basis for the hostility to the arts on the part of Friends, a hostility which is shared by significant other religious and social movements?

Even to our modern and enlightened Quaker sensibility an aura of mischief haunts the selection of a topic related to the arts for our reflection together. For although the traditional Quaker aversion to the arts has gradually been overcome, the carefully maintained austerity of our places of worship reminds us constantly that our religious movement is rooted in a perspective which once regarded artistic endeavor as contrary to the cultivation of true spirituality.



**Live Oak Friends Meeting House, Houston, Texas. Constructed 2000 C.E.**

All ye poets, jesters, rhimers, makers of verses and ballads . . . it is your work to tickle up the ears of people with your jests and toys; this proceeds from a wrong heart where dwells the lust . . . which is a shame to all that be in modesty and pure sincerity and truth . . . George Fox (1658)

Pluck down your images . . . I say, pluck them out of your houses, walls and signs, or other places, that none of you be found imitators of his Creator . . . and not observe the idle and lazy mind, that would go and make things like a Creator and Maker. . . George Fox (1670)

As our time passeth swiftly away, and our delight ought to be in the law of the Lord, it is advised that a watchful care be exercised over our youth and others, to prevent their going to stage plays, horse races, music, dancing, or any such vain sports and pastimes. . . *Faith and Practice*, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (1834)

And although Quaker attitudes towards the arts have evolved considerably since the early days of the movement, a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards the arts seems to me to persist. I have been a member of meetings where I gradually discovered that many members were engaged in serious artistic pursuits. Yet this fact seemed to have little or no impact upon the meeting's corporate life as a faith fellowship. It would be going entirely too far to say that people are keeping their artistic work in a closet out of some sort of shame; but certainly there seems to be a supposition that artistic pursuits are irrelevant to our corporate life as spiritual seekers. Of course, some of this "hidden" quality of our meetings as collections of artists may be due to an appropriate modesty. In the mainstream art world egotism, the clever cultivation of attention to oneself, and the pursuit of celebrity have frequently been the hallmarks of artistic professionalism, often with unattractive consequences for the life of the spirit. It seems natural, then, that among Friends a certain low-keyed demeanor would be maintained.

What we want to examine over the next few days is the question of whether or not art can be a useful vehicle for the expression and communication of spiritual truth. Obviously, our answer to this question will determine whether we are inclined to continue the process of enlarging Friends' openness to artistic expression, or whether we will see in current trends a backsliding away from a past perspective which was more pure and true.

# What Is Art?



**Rembrandt van Rijn: The Philosopher**

To get us started on this consideration, we will open today with a consideration of the question "What Is Art?" And, since Quakers are by no means the only religious fellowship or social movement which has a history of skepticism about the arts, we will explore why it is that art has elicited this skepticism. By doing this in an introductory session, I do not mean to start us off in an inappropriate downbeat way, but since the rest of our time is going to be built on the experience of lovers of the arts, the skeptical perspective is apt to get short shrift. So I hope it is not inappropriate to bring into view some of the cautions about the arts which



arise in various spiritual communities.

But first: "What is Art?"

The general term "art" is used to embrace a wide range of activities: painting and sculpture; architecture; music; literature; theater; dance; pottery; tapestry, weaving and needlework; calligraphy; photography, cinema; landscape design and gardening; industrial design, flower arranging; and even clothing design, cuisine, interior decorating, tattooing, advertising, video games, and graffiti, as well as the very contemporary inventions of so-called "performance art" and "conceptual art." I have probably forgotten something. The main point is that there are many activities which we incorporate when we use the term "art," or "the arts."

So in seeking a definition, we are looking for something which all these various activities have in common.



Left wall, Lascaux, Dordogne, France, circa 15,000 -13,000 B.C.E.



The creative activity we call art seems innate to human nature in the sense that it appears to take place in every culture. From prehistoric times until the present there is evidence that people have engaged in artistic activity the world over and in every epoch. This begins with the well-known cave paintings and continues through the centuries, with their art often providing a significant marker of the character and aspirations of entire civilizations.



**Rheims Cathedral**  
**Circa 1225 -1290 C.E.**

But the problem of reaching a definition is that the boundary between what is art and what is not art keeps constantly shifting. Indeed, in contemporary times, the art world itself seems deliberately attempting to defy being contained by any set definition. A person will wrap a mountain in huge plastic sheets and proclaim the result to be art, for example.





Jan Vermeer: Young Woman with a Water Pitcher, 1662

But even in more modest spheres, to people of old who regarded art as the fashioning of ideal forms representing recognizable things so as to arouse a sense of beauty in the beholder, much contemporary art which is now quite mainstream would have been completely incomprehensible.



Jackson Pollock: Number 1, 1950





Parthenon, 430 B.C.E.



Frank Gehry: Stata Center,  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004

**Andy Warhol:**  
*Campbell's Soup I, 1968*



Some of us can remember when Andy Warhol pushed the boundaries of what might be considered art when he accomplished the feat of getting curators to mount pictures of Campbell soup cans and Brillo pad boxes in galleries. Philosophers of art then began to argue who, exactly, the artist was with respect to these pieces: was it Andy Warhol, who merely slavishly reproduced an image of a very familiar commercial object, or was the true artist the gallery curator who had the creative audacity to display these works to a fee-paying public?





Andres Serrano: *Piss Christ*,  
1989

Some of us also remember the incident in 1989 when such an imaginative curator admitted into an exhibition a work by the artist Andres Serrano. The work was comprised of a photograph of a cheap plastic crucifix immersed in a jar of the artist's own urine. This provoked outrage almost as fierce as was recently generated by the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. Serrano's work was denounced on the floor of Congress, not the least because, astonishingly, the exhibit in which it was presented was sponsored and funded by the National Endowment for the Arts using your tax money and my tax money, and Serrano himself had actually received a \$15,000 grant from the Endowment to support his creative efforts!



**Sister Wendy Beckett, who developed and taught a widely acclaimed art appreciation program for the BBC.**

But amid all the outcry, one person defended Serrano. Sister Wendy Beckett, an art critic, consecrated virgin and Roman Catholic nun, who had developed a widely popular series of art appreciation documentaries for the BBC, explained to Bill Moyers that she regarded the work as a statement about what we have done to Christ, a statement about how contemporary society has come to regard Jesus of Nazareth and the values he represents.

Even if we leave aside all the controversies about the boundaries of art – about what should be included and what should be excluded – there remains the problem that the exact nature of artistic experience remains elusive when philosophers seek to analyze it.

From the earliest times and up until the present, some philosophers have sought to relate art to beauty, another very elusive concept, and to claim that true art was an object or activity which brought a kind of pleasure or satisfaction which was an end in itself, having no other purpose.





Francisco Goya: *The Third of May, 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid, 1814*

Yet this definition leaves out much of what we consider to be art, which is intended to heighten our piety, or to evoke horror or sympathy, and even to propel us into action for social change. In this last connection I am thinking of the novels of Charles Dickens, or of many of Goya's paintings.

Picasso's famous painting *Guernica* would also fall into this category, where something else is sought besides a pleasurable sense of beauty. So the term beauty as a defining characteristic for a work of art is not always apt.



Pablo Picasso: *Guernica*, 1937

Other people regard art as a form of communication, although they are sometimes unclear regarding what it is that is being communicated, and they are often challenged by philosophers of art who claim that an audience is irrelevant to the validity of a creative work. In this latter view, the significance of the work of art has nothing to do with an audience, but lies in its function of resolving inner impulses arising in the consciousness of the artist. Once the creative process is concluded, and the inner impulses are resolved, the work of art has achieved its realization, whether or not anyone besides the artist is aware that the activity has taken place or that the artwork has been created. If the work finds an audience which appreciates it, in this view this is entirely a secondary matter, a by-product.

So just as art has been practiced through the ages, it has been thought about through the ages. Plato and Aristotle each give the matter particular attention. In the Middle Ages Saint Bonaventure wrote about it extensively. In modern times Emanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Edmund Burke, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Marshall McLuhan, among many others, have offered theories about what art is. This is not the place to spin out all these



theories. Suffice it to say that none have gained universal acceptance.

Some people who have considered the history of human thought believe they have identified a category of issues which they designate as “essentially contested concepts.” Such concepts by their very nature are open to endless disputes. Some examples are questions like: What is justice? What is a Christian life? What is democracy? What is community? Alas, falling into this category of matters vulnerable to endless debate is the question “What is art?” With respect to all these questions we will probably have to wait a very long time for a universally accepted answer to appear. The question of the nature of art has been described as one of the most elusive of the traditional problems facing human culture. Many contemporary journal articles about art contain comments like: “It is now taken for granted that nothing which concerns art can be taken for granted,” or “It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident any more.”

Nevertheless, we do not have to abandon this end-of-the-year retreat because of all this confusion. Although the boundaries of the answer to the question “what is art” may be quite indistinct, there is probably a valid center of gravity to the concept of art around which our thoughts can usefully gather, and which can form an operating definition for the purposes of our present reflection.

For our purposes, we can say that art is a form of communication. While the primary goal of an artist may be to resolve an inner dilemma of his or her own through the creative process, without any particular regard for the matter of an audience, our concern is with art as a social phenomenon. For us, art is a form of sharing, not only between the artist and the audience, but among members of the audience themselves as they share with others the art to which they respond, and as they somehow come to terms with what others regard as valuable. So, contrary philosophical theories notwithstanding, we are concerned with art as a form of communication.

We can also recognize that the communication which art carries out operates through centers of awareness which are intuitive and often subconscious, and which also have something to do with the emotions. We may seek rationally to analyze why a work of art affects us, but we are apt to destroy the effect in the process of doing so. What we call art usually suffers by being translated into mere words. This is true even of the verbal arts. The recapitulation in ordinary, every-day language of a play by Shakespeare, even though no detail might be omitted, would not have the effect upon us that the play has in the form in which Shakespeare fashioned it.

It is probably further possible to state that the communication which art carries out is capable of eliciting states of awareness which, while they may be subtle, are also extremely specific. As Friends we are naturally very keenly aware of the limitations of words, of their character as crude generalizations. Art does transcend words in communicating states of mind, spirit and awareness with more specificity than words can ever muster. Again, while this is easily apparent with respect to music and the plastic arts, it applies as well to the spoken arts, where the impact upon us of the way words are chosen and arranged transcends their mere literal content.

**Francesco Zuccarelli,  
*The Adoration of the  
Shepherds*, circa 1752**



Even those forms of art meant simply to teach a lesson, art which can easily be “translated” into mundane language, can have the emotional effect of a presentation offered as if it were really meant, as compared with one that is merely tossed off. A painting of the Nativity, for example, can arouse wonder in a way that a mere recounting of the legend might not, even though the painting offers no information not in the spoken legend.

Finally, for our purposes, art communicates with us and has an effect on us which is in some way regarded as transformative and as of positive value. A profound esthetic experience changes us, and changes us in a way we deem to be good. Our sensitivity and awareness of existence is heightened. If a work of art horrifies us, the horror must be seen as beneficial or illuminating in some way.



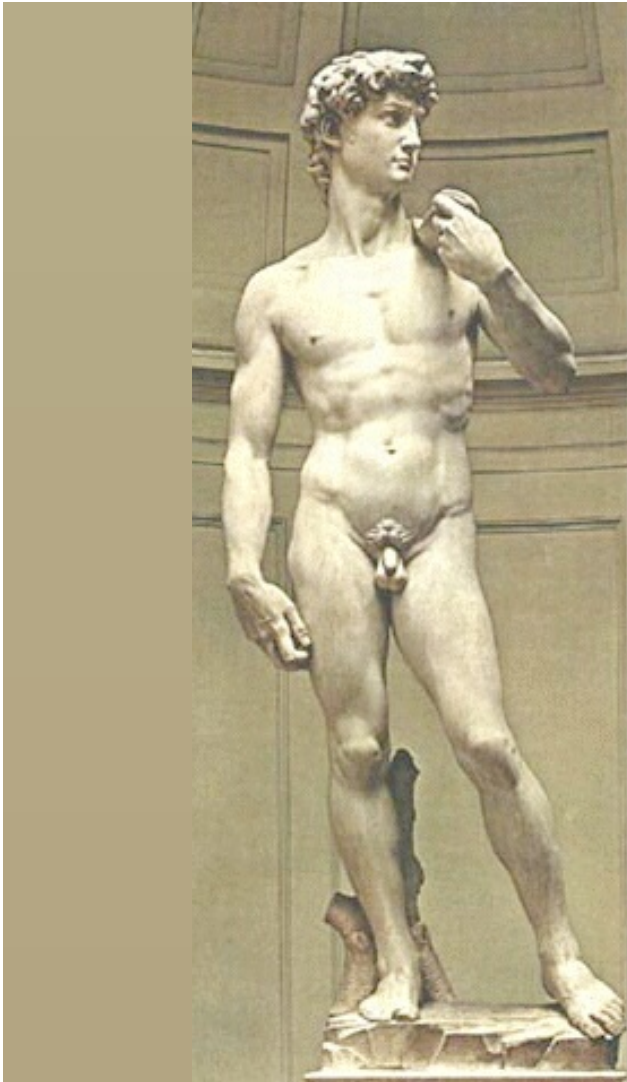
## Some general principles useful in considering the Relationship between spirituality and art:

1. Art is a form of communication.
2. Art addresses intuitive, subconscious and emotional centers of awareness.
3. Art elicits reactions which are both subtle and highly specific, which are beyond the power of words to describe.
4. The transformation of awareness or consciousness which art elicits is of positive value.

So, when we add up all the elements of this working definition of art – it affects us by addressing and enlivening centers of awareness and emotion in ways which we perceive as transformative and as having positive value – the definition, oddly, might as well be applied to spiritual practices. After all, spiritual practices operate at a deep intuitive and subconscious level, and are meant to elevate consciousness and awareness. In the field of art, this communication and the resulting transformative effect occurs through the artist's manipulation of materials or sounds. In spirituality, rituals, devotional exercises, and prayer are the strategies employed, but with music and art often entering into spiritual practice as well.

The fact that the spheres of art and of spirituality somehow overlap has long been recognized. Different religious communities have responded differently to this apparent kinship. Some have whole-heartedly taken art as an ally, seeking to domesticate it within the religion's dogmatic framework, and employing it to heighten piety and the grasp of religious principles. The Roman Catholic Church, of course, is pre-eminently an exemplar of this approach.

But other religious communities, in contrast, have seen in art a kind of unruly competitor, prone to amplifying all the human conceits which religion is trying to transcend. The creators of art often march to a drummer entirely of their own. Even artists in the employ of religious institutions sometimes subtly and sometimes overtly subvert the religious principles they are supposed to be serving.



**Michelangelo Buonarroti: *David*, 1504**

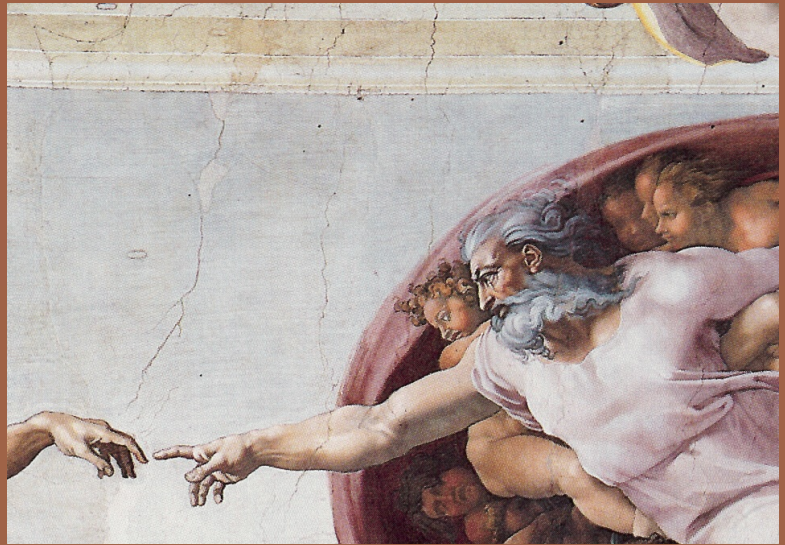
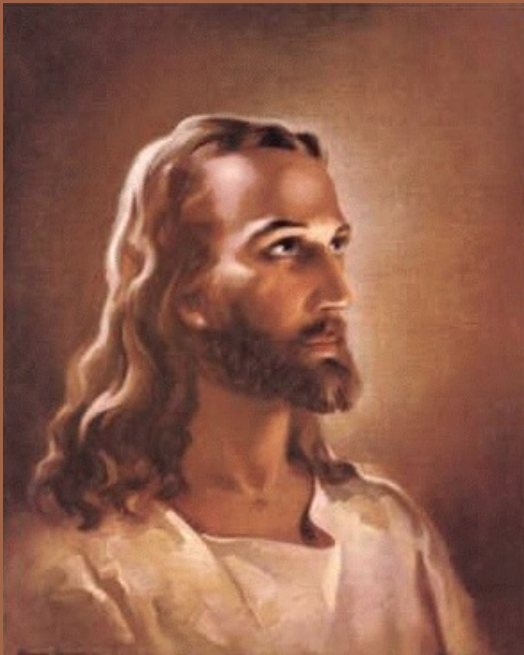
Michelangelo's depiction of David is arguably the most widely recognizable statue ever created in the history of art. It purports to represent one of the great heroes of the Bible, and was originally commissioned to decorate a cathedral, although it was never actually placed in one. But is it an inspiration to Christian piety among the millions and millions of people who are aware of it, or is it merely a celebration of pagan homoeroticism in complete disregard of Church teaching on the matter? At one point, the City of Florence, seeking to make a friendly gesture to the people of the state of Israel, offered to provide a full-sized replica of David to be placed in Jerusalem's main square. After all, Jerusalem is known as the City of David. But the idea quite outraged both Jews and Muslims, who regard the statue as being obscene. So



the gift was never made.

Let us turn, then, to some of the skepticism that serious people have raised regarding the arts. I would like to approach this by presenting some artworks – famous and not-so-famous – and see if we can identify the reasons why some serious people, both religious and secular, might deem the work, and the cultural stream of endeavor it represents, to be illegitimate, or at least of questionable value.

Warner Sallman: *Head of Christ*, 1941



Michelangelo Buonarroti: *The Creation of Adam*, Sistine Chapel, 1612

Let us start with a well-known depiction of God appearing in the Sistine Chapel, and with a familiar and very widely popular modern portrait of Jesus of Nazareth.

The common term employed by people who dislike images of this sort is idolatry. There are several levels on which this sense of idolatry can be understood.

One sense is that by reducing the mystery and ineffability of a divine concept to such concrete

and specific images you, in effect, seek to domesticate it into the human estate. Any image of Jesus or of God, while it might succeed in highlighting and making real one or another attributes commonly attributed to a deity, cannot capture all of them. In Jewish culture there is a long tradition of not pronouncing or even writing in full the name of God, lest by doing so we undermine our sense of the unfathomable scope of the divine concept and reduce it to something familiar and merely notional in human terms. In this case, by representing the deity as a grandfatherly Caucasian gentleman, we subconsciously attribute to God human characteristics derived from the then current concept of humanly organized domination systems. Probably few people in Michelangelo's day, if asked directly, would have claimed to believe that God actually looked like the picture; yet the prominence of an image of this sort undoubtedly reinforces subliminal attitudes about the naturalness of patriarchy.

In Christian thought the deity did indeed become human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. One might expect, perhaps, that human images of Jesus would be less open to question. Yet the early Christian church avoided making images of Jesus for several centuries. For here, again, many difficulties arise with the fashioning of such images. This very popular depiction by Warner Sallman offers us the unlikely image of a Jesus with distinctly Nordic characteristics. Of course, no one knows what Jesus actually looked like, and anything is possible. But this rendition with blue eyes and hair with blond highlights seems improbable, to say the least, and once again we get a whiff of a kind of self-idolatry in the fashioning of an image of Jesus with physical characteristics representing the limited cultural ideal of the maker of the portrait.

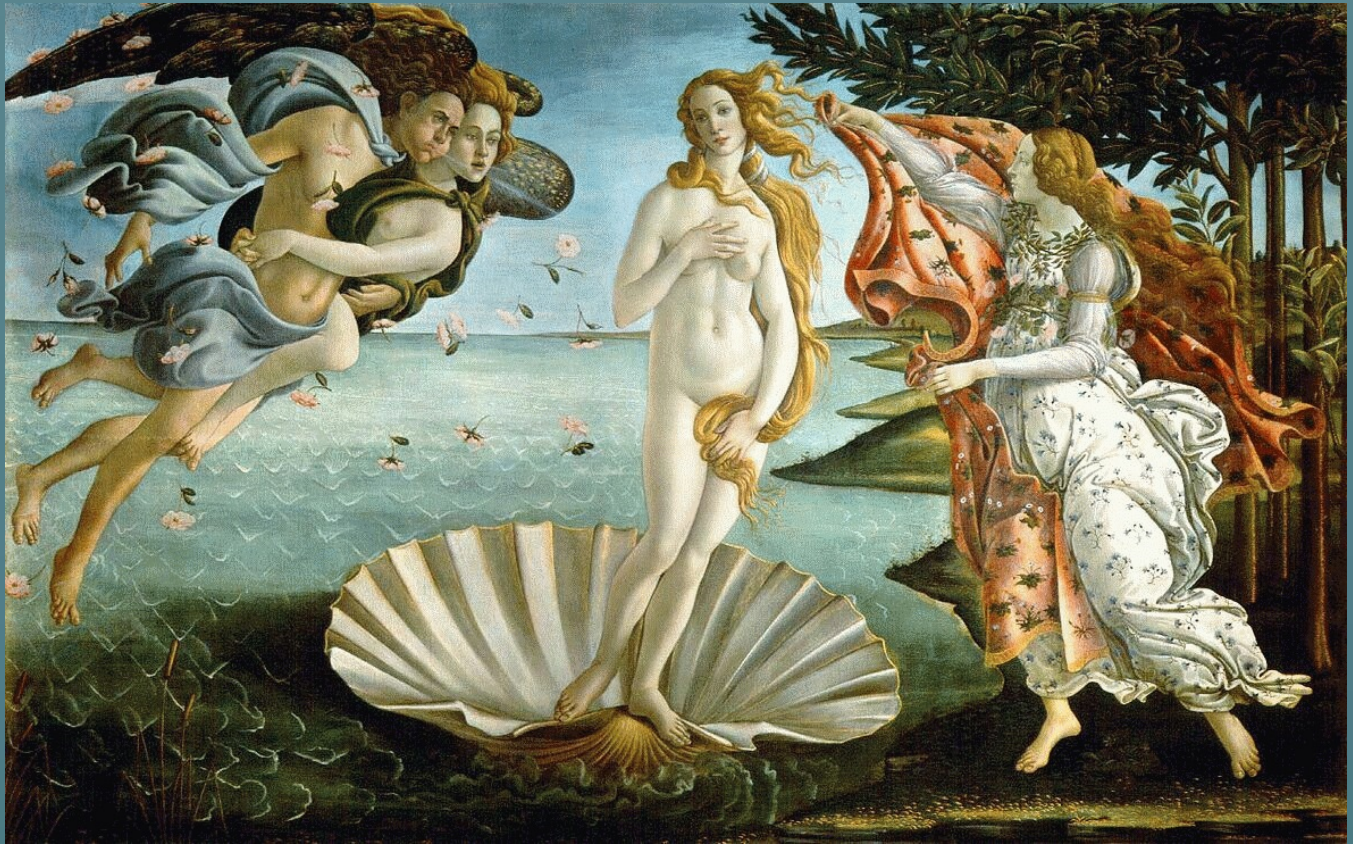
But even aside from this matter of ethnicity and of the subconscious reinforcement of prejudice and of prevailing domination systems, is the projection of spirit which a rendering of this sort offers. It seems inevitably to present to us a partial Jesus and to make that part more visible and more present to us than the rest. Is it fair to say that we have here, if not a meek and mild Jesus, at least a very civilized, manicured and reverential Jesus, not a Jesus who laboriously preached along the dusty roads and amid the surly crowds, not the Jesus who overthrows the money changers and who repeatedly decries the predations of the wealthy and the oppression of the poor. There seems very little in this Jesus's faraway gaze at heavenly places that would disturb the conscience of the principalities and powers of the world. One can imagine this portrait sitting quite comfortably in the ranch in Crawford, Texas, as George W. Bush denies extending the health care available to children while giving huge tax breaks to the wealthy and conducting a cruel war cynically initiated on a fabric of lies.

In short, pictures of this sort invite us to worship Jesus as a physical image while remaining undisturbed by his actual teaching.

There is at least one more level to this aversion to graphic renderings of religious figures. And that is that the sort of conceptual idolatry we have been discussing can actually transform itself into a physical idolatry. The created object can itself end up being regarded as having supernatural properties. Any of us who have traveled to foreign countries are aware of how this is so, as when people rub handkerchiefs on images of Jesus or his mother, thinking that thereby they will carry away with them a source of divine healing power or spiritual strength. Such images can reduce religion to a form of magic.

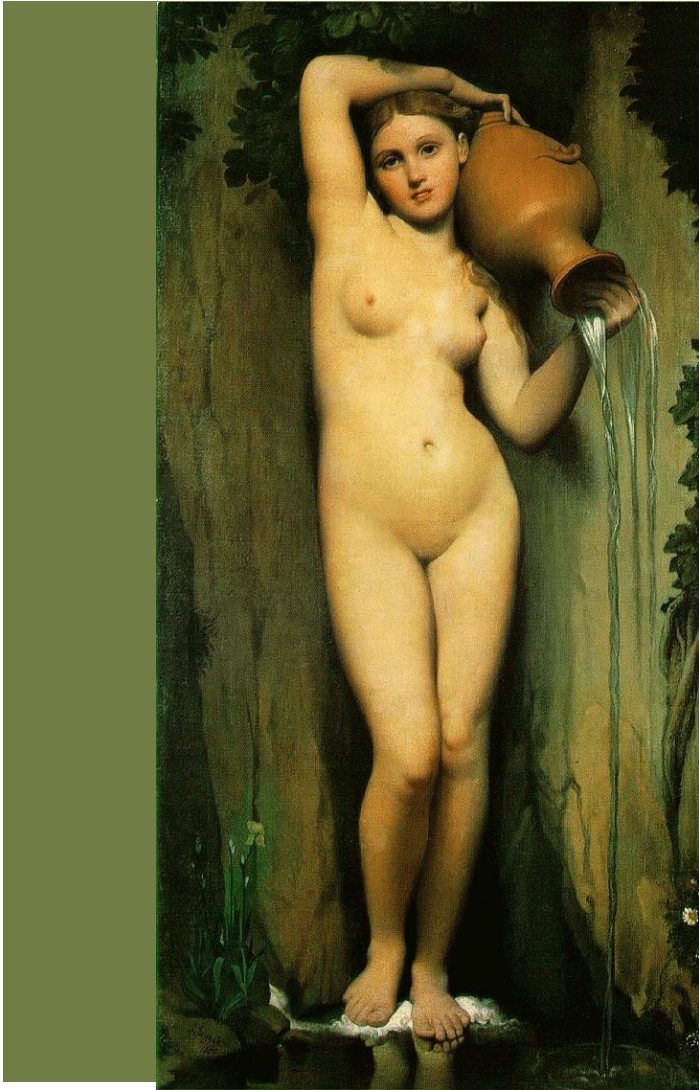


A second general area of objection has to do with sensuality. Trafficking as they do in the depiction and manipulation of emotions, for artists and their art sexuality is at least very close to the surface, and is often quite overt. Sex is an uncomfortable topic for many religious communities, whereas artists seem to revel in it. Religious people are confronted with literature and poetry abounding with tales of romance and seduction. In the visual arts, the portrayal of nudes is a common theme.



Sandro Botticelli: *The Birth of Venus*, 1482 C.E.

Some people would have us believe that anything designated as fine art or high art, anything hanging in the Louvre or the Metropolitan Museum, exists in some pure realm beyond all sensuality. Although some nudes do transcend the first impulses of nature in the finesse of their lines and rhythms, as does this work by Botticelli, even here the empire of the senses is never entirely banished.



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres:  
*The Source*, 1856

However, with most such works the sexual interest is frank and obvious, as with this painting by Ingres, inspired in its composition by the earlier Botticelli, but reflecting to a very great extent the artist's delight that his concierge's daughter was willing to serve as his model. This air of bohemianism and sensuality which surrounds so much art is deeply off-putting to many religious people.

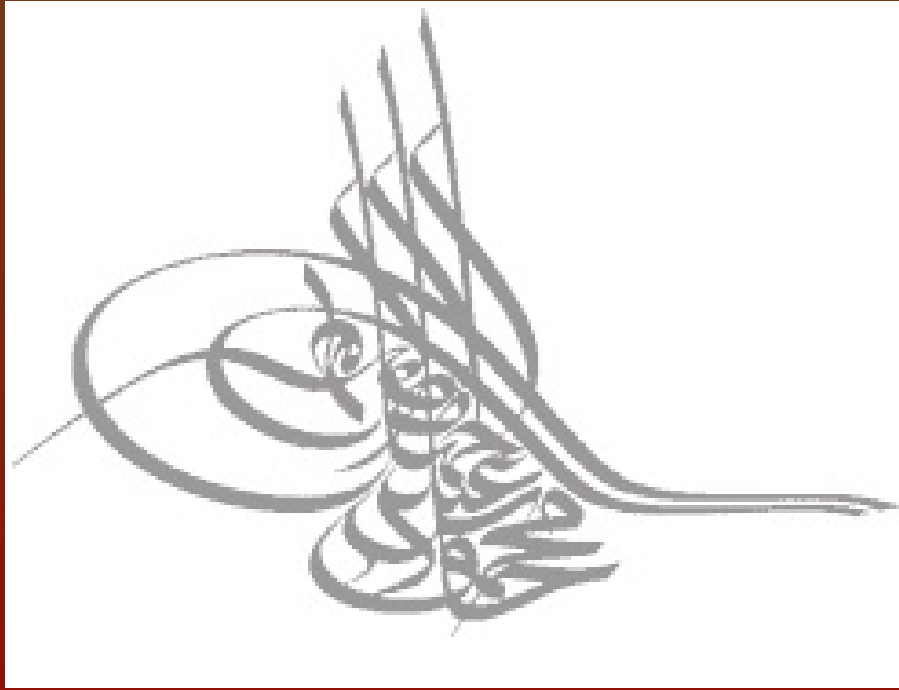




Taj Mahal, 1650

From what I can glean from commentators, it is unclear that the Qur'an actually forbids graphic depictions of people and animals. But, nevertheless, since the Prophet Mohammed's great work featured the advancement of the idea of a single God, which in turn required the dismissal of many tribal gods represented by graven images, there has been a very strong aversion throughout Muslim cultures to depictions of people and animals, especially including depictions of the Prophet Mohammed himself.

But in the case of Islam, as we know, the banishment of some graphic arts, namely painting and sculpture, nevertheless allowed a redirection of esthetic energy in the visual arts to architecture and calligraphy. Some examples of Islamic architecture are universally regarded as being among the most precious legacies of human culture.



**Signature of Sultan Mahmud II of the Ottoman Empire. It reads  
“Mahmud Khan, son of Abdulhamid, is forever victorious.”**

Islamic calligraphy is a little more difficult to appreciate universally, since it naturally is more meaningful to those who know the Arabic language. But everyone can get some sense, at least, of the magnificence and creativity of this art form. It appears both in manuscripts and incorporated as decorative elements on buildings. Here is a sample comprising the signature of Sultan Mahmud II of the Ottoman Empire. The signature actually reads “Mahmud Khan, son of Abdulhammid, is forever victorious.”

A third avenue of criticism regarding art comes from both religious and secular sources. Art is seen as the preoccupation of a parasitic elite, as an upper class activity associated with wealth, with the ability to purchase art, and with the leisure required to enjoy it. Almost anything we designate as fine art is very expensive, as anyone who has tried to purchase a



painting by even a secondary artist knows. Has anyone tried to purchase tickets to a ballet or opera lately? Back in the east where I live prices for a single seat for a two-and-a-half hour experience can range from \$100 to \$400, and this is after massive subsidies have been provided by foundations and even sometimes by the government.

A lack of any utilitarian value, that is, the characteristic of being an end in itself requiring no other justification, which is often considered a hallmark of high art, seems to many to be an insult to the concepts of labor and utility. Labor and utility are perforce the essential characteristics of the activities of poor and working people, who have no time or energy left for activities which have no very practical, life-sustaining result.



**Jean-Honore Fragonard:**  
*The Swing, 1766*



Thomas Gainsborough: *Mr. and Mrs. William Hallett*, 1785

By going to the expense of commissioning artists to decorate their stately homes with depictions of their expensive pursuits and leisurely life style, and by their fondness for portraiture which often seems to deify its subject and to arrogantly display his or her wealth, much art feeds into and reinforces class prejudice, and shamelessly celebrates disparities in wealth and income which ought rather to shock and outrage us.





**Alexander Deyneka: *Women Workers*, 1947**

In the Soviet Union any music which was not readily understood by the masses, and any visual art which did not celebrate the triumph of the working classes, was considered decadent, parasitic and illegitimate, a throwback to the days of the idle rich who exploited the common people. After all, in a society where wealth was owned collectively, artists were supported by the people and should speak to the people's needs.

This produced outraged horror in the west, and perhaps stimulated capitalist people like the Rockefeller family to swing entirely in the other direction and to lavishly support abstract expressionist art, which ordinary people of the time could hardly regard as art at all, although now it is more widely appreciated. And the horror at the Soviet approach overlooked the fact that in every society the people who pay for the art are the arbiters of what is acceptable.



**Helen Frankenthaler: *Bay Side*, 1967 C.E.**

Nevertheless, in reaction to the Soviet approach, people in the West developed a theory of art that claimed that no art which was intended to teach anything or to advance a cause or a movement was really art at all, but was merely propaganda.





Jacopo Comin Tintoretto: *The Last Supper*, 1594

Without their realizing it, this standard, if strictly applied to Western art, would have emptied our museums of countless works commonly held in high esteem. For advancing a Christian world view using an idiom which masses of people would understand was one of the primary inspirations behind the creation of numerous masterpieces in the Western artistic heritage.



**Norman Rockwell:  
*Save Freedom of Speech, 1943***

And anyway, the Rockefellers of the world notwithstanding, the most popular art in America during the Cold War period closely resembled socialist realism in its style and in its focus on the prevailing concepts of civic virtue.

So we have covered three general considerations which have lead religious people to be skeptical of what we commonly call the fine arts: suspicions of idolatry, fear of sensuality, and distaste for elitism.

The fourth general sphere around which scepticism about the fine arts gathers is a little more subtle. I am sure that there are more than four reasons why religious people have developed aversions to some of the fine arts. But four are enough for the present introduction to the topic. I would like to introduce this last issue by asking that you listen to a piece of music.

(Play an excerpt from Pytor Illich Tchaikovsky's Symphony Number 6 in B Minor, Opus 74. Fourth Movement.)



Many spiritual traditions of both the east and the west aspire to the cultivation of a certain coolness of disposition, a release of inner agitation, of grasping desires, and especially of self-pity and self-referenced preoccupations. There is a scepticism about anything that resembles gyrations between manic and depressive extremes. In this view, all sadness is a form of egotism. To the extent that emotions are cultivated at all, the emotions of compassion and gratitude are regarded as most fitting. Some Quaker yearly meeting disciplines, for example, caution against excessive sadness even at funerals.

So from some religious perspectives many works of art stimulate and magnify qualities of spirit which are contrary to a healthy and enlightened state of being. I have selected a piece of music which expresses what might be called a sad or depressive state of mind; but the same criticism might also be leveled against works of art which seem to express bombast, or to celebrate triumphalism and various other forms of human conceit, such as the music of Beethoven's middle period tends to do.

A closely related objection about all this music and art has to do with present-centeredness. All advanced spiritual practice both in the east and the west counsels a careful attentiveness to the present moment, and a clear, unfiltered appreciation of its import and its needs. Much art is a way of escaping from this discipline, artificially importing into the present moment agitations and moods generated in a different time and different place. And so we have the fourth objection to art advanced in the name of religion and spirituality.

#### Objections which some religious people raise to artistic endeavor:

1. Aversion to idolatry.
2. Fear of sensuality.
3. Objection to elitism.
4. Inappropriate emotionalism; excursion from present-centeredness

There is, of course, an art genre which does tend in the opposite direction, which attempts visually and consistently to depict an inner state of serenity, peace, wisdom and compassion. This genre, of course, is comprised of the world-wide collection of images of the Buddha, an ideal pursued over the course of many centuries and in vastly diverse cultures.

So I hope it will be fitting if we close our time together contemplating a few of these Buddha images, while we listen to some music which, although written entirely in a western idiom, expresses a sentiment which I believe is compatible with the images.

(Play John Rutter's *Gaelic Blessing*).



“Deep peace of the running wave to you . . . .”

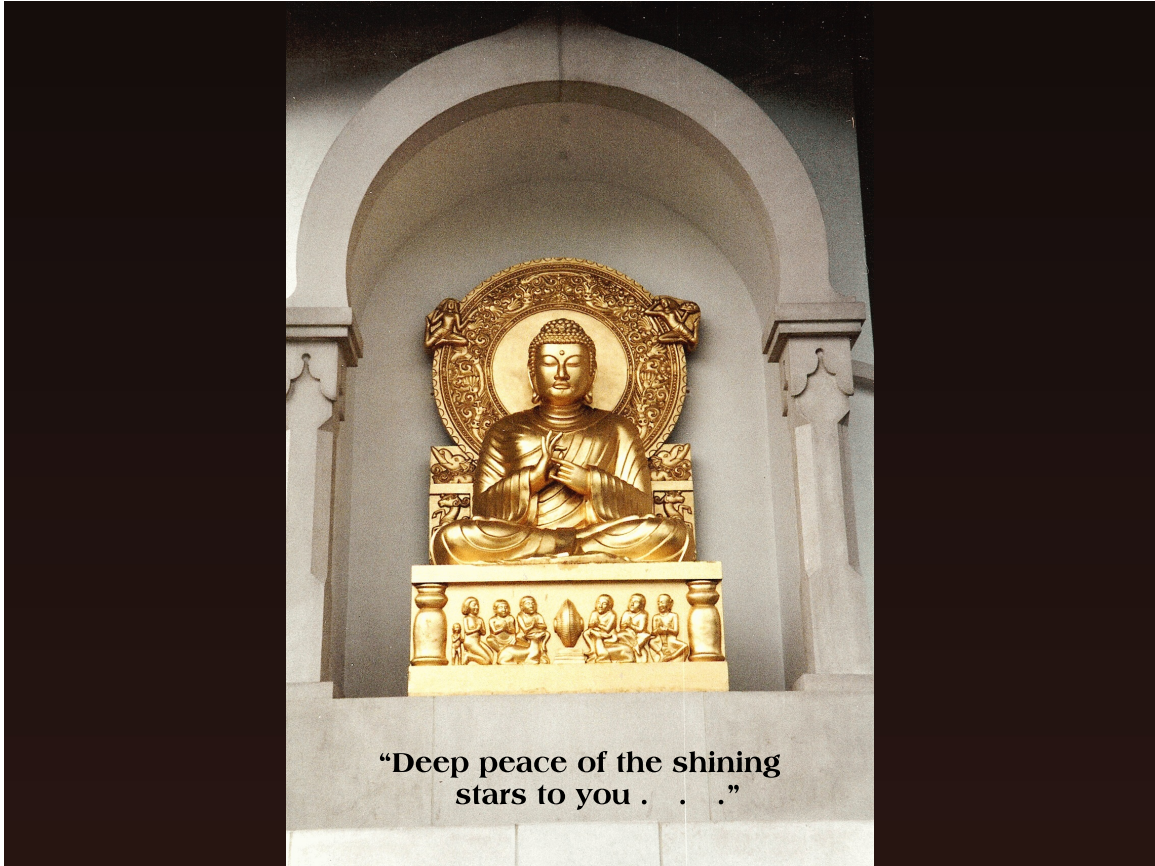




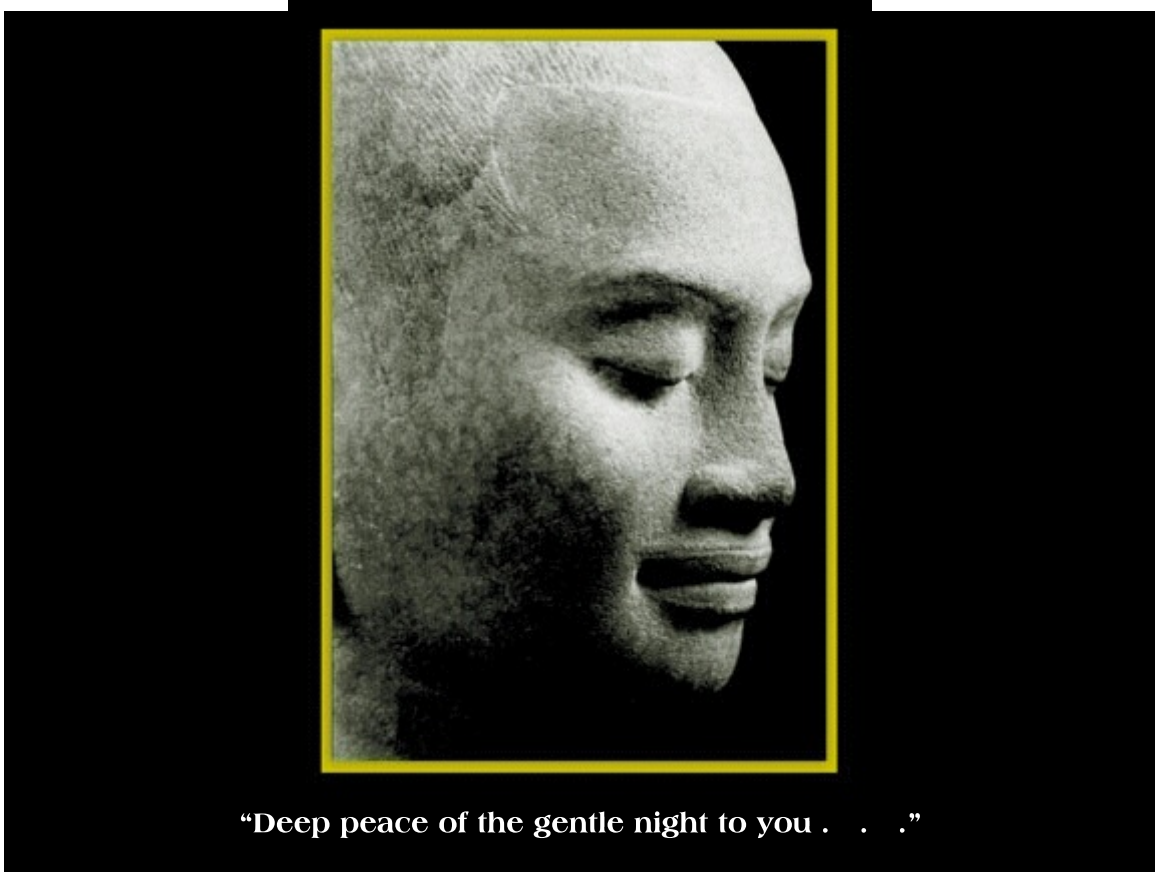
“Deep peace of the flowing air to you . . .”



“Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you . . .”



“Deep peace of the shining  
stars to you . . .”



“Deep peace of the gentle night to you . . .”





J. Doyle Penrose: *The Presence in the Midst*, 1916

**“Deep peace of Christ the Light of the world to you.”**

(Finis)