

Art 2 – The Philosophy and Spirituality in Art

Based on:

The French introduction to Wassily Kandinsky's "On the Spiritual in Art", by Philippe Sers.

The guiding principles of harmony for the ancients.

Sacred Art Symbolism.

* The form this cultural program takes is weekly dialogues, based on the following points.

A. Kandinsky:

1. Kandinsky offering us Art from a philosophical perspective, makes his abstract art turn its back on the ordinary idea of art, that is of painting figures representing the world, and he aims for something more. The use of paint has been in ordinary representational art a means of rendering the three dimensional world on a two dimensional canvas, as faithfully as possible. In abstract art, this is irrelevant.
2. The abstract artist may need to write to justify his work and make it accessible to us and piercing our defenses, which hold to what is easily understood. We are generally hostile, and think the artist is twisting and weaving artificial arguments to justify his work.
3. For Kandinsky, art is an attempt to reach out from the individual to the Universal through painting. He is an avant-gardist in the sense of someone opening the way for others to follow.
4. Trying to use painting to express what cannot be expressed in words. (A.S: The lived in the heart is three dimensional, whereas the mind works in a two dimensional way). But, the personal experience of the artist is not repeatable unless we are given the key to its method. For Kandinsky, the main key is that there is an itinerary of union with Being; such is the pursuit of the Spiritual in Art. Since there is Spirit, the purpose of Art is to reach out for it.
5. As an Orthodox Christian Kandinsky does not wish to philosophise with many words and interpretations over his Art, but to directly seek for the Spiritual in Art. In other words to use Art as a means of Knowledge and Salvation. And not only raising himself but also raising the collectivity.
6. This postulate distinguishes his expectations of Art, from any other theory which relates to harmony, technique, etc... It distinguishes itself, while remaining bound by the same means and method. So Creativity in Art = 1. The philosophical content, 2. Made into a form that is appreciable by the viewer, via 3. A method, which is the means of translation of the content through shapes and colours.
7. Obviously the Content is very important, just as in our dialogue there is a great discrepancy between everyday chatter on the one hand and a clear philosophical

dissertation on the other. So the Content in the work of Kandinsky are The Fundamental Themes, which it is given to Art, and to Art alone to communicate.

8. Method (1): We need to understand how shapes and colours resonate with the human soul. To cause another soul to vibrate through art, the artist must of all necessity proceed from an internal necessity and not superfluously. In other words, from entering into communication with his own soul to Create, and not simply proceeding out of technique and artisanship. If this rule is not respected, then the art remains banal, mundane, dead, unable to change the individual or the world.
9. What is Time in painting??? (see Rembrandt's work at l'Ermitage)
It is the time to read the painting. This is not linear irreversible time, but a freedom in time with the eye covering the span of the painting with its light and shadow. Time of search outward and inward. Outward; the logic through contrast. And inward, through self-awareness, double attention on the painting and its effect in the viewer.
10. To create Time, the artist must render the painting hermetic, so that the viewer may penetrate it little by little. Kandinsky says: "There are parts kept almost invisible, in the dark part of the painting. To be discovered later and bit by bit, relaeasing a sort of anguish." The time is therefore time of a hermeneutic. And this has two aspects: 1. The time of passing to the symbol of the art piece. 2. Time itself is a symbol through which one is marching. You might say, the time of evolution, both personal and human.
11. The question for the artist becomes: Is there a mode of knowledge and existence, which is other than the normal modes of knowledge and existence??? If the answer is yes, then this is the Mystical element in ART. And this is what needs to be elucidated. The Mystical element comes from an inner necessity within ART, which is triple, with two parts subjective and one part objective:
First the element of the Personality of the artist (subjective)
Second, there is the language of the time, which really belongs to a certain time and not to another (this too is subjective)
The third is objective. We can call it the "Pure Eternal Artistic". It is proper to ART and is common to all men, all peoples and all times. This pure eternal is the very essence of ART which transcends Space and Time. Perhaps, it is the Idea Art in Platonic terms. It escapes the Kantian categories and allows us to escape from phenomena to noumena.
12. The first two elements Personality and Language, while facilitating the comprehension of our contemporaries, hamper the manifestation of the third, the "Objective" in Art. This Objective as we said exceeds Space and Time, yet it is through time that it will win the struggle over the subjective and manifest.
13. Today things are one way, and tomorrow another, but what is constant is the Energy propelling towards a forward direction. The Spirit progresses and thus the laws of harmony, which today are inward, will become outward tomorrow, in what Kandinsky calls "a progressive exteriorization of the eternal objective". (Can we call this the Era of Art?).
14. What does all this mean?

There is a Knowledge of “Truth in Itself”, which manifests through ART, and this Knowledge is bound to the evolution of the Spirit.

To be heard, this requires concentration and inwardness. For the practicing artist, the philosophy of Art along with the Creative practice, will open the way and manifest the temporal progression on the individual plane..., and with his evolution, this progression will imbibe his contemporaries.

15. The Triangle as symbol, is progression towards the summit. The leader of humanity is at the summit. The central theme is the collective itinerary of the chariot of humanity, progressing towards the summit. The spaces beneath the summit are filled from the bottom up with those marching upwards, and up to the saints and prophets.

Other themes are The Garden of Eden, and Saint George vanquishing the dragon.

16. In the work of art is the revelation of a superior Reality, disclosed in many different ways, which are all beyond discursive reason.

In its execution and contemplation it becomes a meditation of a metaphysical nature. It is thus the image of the human itinerary, and the support of the meditation.

This brings us to the idea that the work of art thus becomes an active being, creator of the Spiritual atmosphere.

17. In Real Art, we are not looking for pleasure and aesthetics; we are looking for the work that can provoke a vibration in the soul.

Art is thus the language of the Soul. In fact the only language of the Soul.

The Composition is as a Prayer; both are the walk towards the Divine, and the support of the walk.

18. How do different arts portray the same objective reality in such a manner that they are objectively (not reflectively – rationally) interchangeable? Kandinsky’s greater ability allows him to see the same objective reality (the setting of the sun in Moscow) through two different art mediums paint and music in precisely the same way. In this we understand still better the words: Art is the language of the Soul.

19. Method (2): Colour is a means of voyage of the soul. It ignites while on the palette a spiritual impetus, that translates its voyage on the soul. For there is Analogy, between the two; the physical colours and their imprints on the soul.

This means that the inner qualities of colour are not subjective; they have a true philosophical reasoning, which is manifested by experience (i.e. without philosophizing with arguments, Kandinsky will therefore send us to experience).

20. But let us start at the start:

What are the actions of the pure elements on the soul (in this case, the elements are colour)?

Taking isolated colours, we recognise that their action on our soul is Heat and Cold, and Clarity and Obscurity.

Of Heat – Cold: the colours are Yellow and Blue respectively, and these are dynamic; there is movement. Moreover these colours tend towards materiality and immateriality, respectively. In this relation the movement is horizontal, where heat approaches the

spectator and cold distances itself. There is also another dynamic relation, ex-centric for the Yellow (tending to dispersion), and concentric for the Blue (tending to reintegration).

21. Already with these two dynamisms we can see how Art provides the support and symbol of the “Itinerary” we mentioned.

This “Approaching – Distancing”, “Material – Immaterial” actually conforms to the secret structure of things, which Art will try to reveal.

22. The 2nd major Contrast is Black – White (Dark – Light). The movement is as the previous (Yellow – Blue) but its form is no longer dynamic but remains static and fixed. In this way they are Poles, bringing matters to the extreme, that is absolute light or darkness. Yellow and white are family as there can be no dark yellow, and Blue and Black are family as Blue can merge into black and be indistinguishable from it.

23. Now, besides the physical, there is a moral resemblance. Here we enter a psychical domain, which demands concentration (presence) to be grasped; that is a concentration on oneself. The scenography of the Soul can be simplified as follows:

- a. The existence of a space of displacement.
- b. The time of displacement.
- c. The necessary movement, which will allow for the space to be covered within an allotted time.

24. IN SHORT:

- a. The 1st Contrast: Yellow – Blue, give the movement: near – far, they are respectively typically earthy – typically heavenly. Mixed they give Green which annuls both in passivity.
- b. The 2nd Contrast: White – Black, give the movement: ex-centric – concentric. The movement of resistance White, is a resistance full of possibilities = Birth. Black on the other hand is the end of all possibilities = Death.
These are two silences, and mixing them we have Gray = hopeless immobility.
- c. Then comes Red into play through the analysis of Gray. The darker the shade of Gray the more it gives despair, but as it gets lighter it may be seen to have hidden in it a certain hope. This hopeful Gray is composed of Green and red, which are self-contented Passivity and very active Radiation, respectively.
- d. The 3rd Contrast: Red – Green. Where Red is a self-movement, masculine, live, hot colour, knowing where it is going and maintains its direction through its strength of impetus (This knowledge of direction is unlike Yellow, which though active spills over everywhere).
Green on the other hand, is self-contented passivity, extinguishing the extreme contrast Yellow – Blue, into utter passivity.
- e. The 4th Contrast: Orange – Violet, is born out of the direction, which the masculine Red will decide to take: whether outwards and Corporeal towards Yellow, or inwards and Spiritual towards Blue.

- f. The 3 Contrasts define the life of Colour from Birth (White) to Death (Black). Schematically given by Kandinsky as a large circle. As a Mandala, resuming spatial manifestation: It is the image of the World. Kandinsky will here take his exercise to the highest level (which we are not completely ready to follow), namely that it is representative and actualization of the Divine Powers, thus capable of transporting those who meditate on it to the highest summit; thus the spiritual Itinerary.
25. Going back to the Scenography (#23 above):
- a. Yellow – Blue; Corporeal – Spiritual, provide the ideal space for the Itinerary.
 - b. White – Black; Birth – Death, provide the time to cover the field.
 - c. Red: Movement in-itself, represents the motor energy.
 - d. As for orange and Violet, they are possible stages on the journey.
 - e. Green, the refusal to voyage in self-satisfaction.

End Kandinsky. (May we not be Green)

B. The guiding principles of harmony for the ancients.

- 26. The masculine – feminine balance (Study on Hermes of Praxiteles).
- 27. Beauty and its imitation of the Divine, by way of a Meditation.

C. Sacred Art Symbolism.

- 28. The Icon.