ON SPIRITUAL ART: KANDINSKY'S NIETZSCHEAN LEGACY

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ABSTRACT

The 19th century German Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is generally perceived as a great critic of Christianity. However, various texts of his suggest that he was in fact viewed as a spiritual figure among various literary figures during the first decades of the 20th century. The present research project therefore explores this notion by identifying Friedrich Nietzsche's spiritualities. Furthermore, this research investigated how Nietzsche's spiritualities influenced the development of the early twentieth century abstract expressionist painter and art theorist, Wassily Kandinsky's theory of art. Therefore, a textual analysis of specific Nietzschean texts was conducted in order to specifically identify spiritual elements, and how these were interpreted by Kandinsky in his paintings. A visual analysis of specific abstract paintings by Kandinsky was conducted in order to demonstrate how Kandinsky responded to Nietzsche's spirituality in his paintings. An examination of Kandinsky's theoretical works in which he explains the development of his paintings was also carried out. This investigation identified that the Austrian theosophist Rudolf Steiner's knowledge of Nietzsche also had an indirect influence on the development of Kandinsky's theory of art, which was obtained by reading Steiner's primary texts and articles. The completion of this whole exploration demonstrated that to understand Kandinsky's visual art, one needs to understand how Kandinsky's spiritual art was drawn from Nietzsche.

INTRODUCTION

The early twentieth century Russian abstract expressionist painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky was a very erudite artist with wide interests, spanning from science to philosophy, religions, and spiritual matters such as Theosophy. He was also familiar with Theosophist and Anthroposophist Rudolph Steiner, developed friendships with German composer Arnold Schoenberg and Russian composer Alexander Scriabin, as well as with literary intellectuals he came across during his time in Berlin, all of which influenced his visual and written works.

However, this research focuses on two of his greatest influences; the 19th century German existential philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, and the Austrian Theosophist, Rudolf Steiner. In view of this, the aim of this text is to put forward a number of ideas, explicating how Kandinsky drew on philosophical themes and expressed them in his art work. I firstly demonstrate how Wassily Kandinsky's artwork was, during his later period (as of 1908 onwards) influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of decadence and theory of myth.

Secondly, via my own interpretation of certain abstract paintings by Kandinsky, I aim to demonstrate how Kandinsky represented his spirituality through his art. Thirdly, through the investigation of some of Nietzsche's texts written during his early period (1872-1876), such as *The Birth of Tragedy*, moving onto texts such as *Human, All too Human* (1878), completed during the middle period (1878-1882) of his writing career, right through into his late period (1883-1887), the period during which he penned one of his most famous texts, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85), I aim to identify the spiritual elements from his writings which influenced the development of Kandinsky's theory of art.

In view of this purpose, I aim to demonstrate that to understand Kandinsky's visual art, one needs to understand how his spiritual art was drawn from Nietzsche and Steiner. From Nietzsche, Kandinsky took the notions of morality, the *Übermench*, and inner necessity. This is a crucial point to reinforce as it was the spiritual elements

drawing from Nietzsche's texts which, as I demonstrate throughout, were to significantly influence Kandinsky's visual art and writings. I also aim to demonstrate that Rudolf Steiner's spirituality influenced Kandinsky's theory of art.

As well as his knowledge and involvement within Theosophy, Steiner's own conceptualisation of Anthroposophy ; a notion which will be fully described in later chapters, the purpose of which was to advance humanity by acquiring 'holistic completeness' with personal and social areas. In view of this purpose, I hope this research will motivate more researchers to explore Nietzsche's works via a spiritual lens, which will contribute to a greater awareness and understanding concerning the value of Nietzschean thought.

I also hope this research will contribute to greater research into Rudolf Steiner as a spiritual scientist in his own right, as opposed to his involvement within the more mystical elements of the theosophical movement. The fin-de-siècle period has been, and still is associated with a number of things throughout Europe. As maintained by Loqueur (1996), on the one hand, the fin-de-siècle in France signified being stylishly 'a la mode' and erudite, but on the other hand, was also associated with decadence, decay, and socio-cultural doubt and cynicism.

Decadence also at times held connotation of aesthetics, symbolism, and l'art pour l'art. Due to the increasing tensions between state ideals and 'private reason' of some noblemen, there was in Russia, an increasing sense of cynicism especially among Russian intellectuals, a circle of which Kandinsky was part of, which had always experienced estrangement and disaffection from their governmental leaders. Other Russian communities also shared this pessimistic outlook in that denominational populations and ancient devotees awaited the coming of the antichrist (Loqueur, 1996).

The fin-de siècle period in Russia was indeed associated with occult practices and satanist beliefs. A Schopenhauerian feeling of gloom and glumness pervaded the air, too, as did a sense of dejection. From the mid nineteenth century right into the first decades of the twentieth century, there occurred a cultural malaise in Europe. Due to a crisis

of faith, the last few decades before the turn of the twentieth century experienced and welcomed a mighty boost in scientific discoveries and developments; industrially and technologically (Pyman, 1996).

During the 19th century, aesthetics and culture were viewed as suffering from the industrial progress occurring at the time (Samson, 2014). Europe had developed, by the last fifty years of the nineteenth century, into an unrivalled authority in scientific, industrial, and technological know-how. Despite this, society experienced a sense of worry concerning cultural decay and degeneration which was thought to be caused by the lack of increasing families.

An increase in substance misuse and crime, as well as a growing record in sexually transmitted diseases also contributed to this felt pessimism (Hurstvedt, 1998). The term 'decadence' was coined by the French poet Charles Baudelaire in his 1857 volume of poetry *Les Fleurs du Mal*, to describe this failing society. Yet, the notion of decadence; its function and impact upon the modernist age across central and eastern Europe has not been as widely investigated as the role of decadence in either France or Britain at that time (Downes, 2010).

A number of remarkable aesthetic enhancements transpired due to the transfer of decadent notions which crossed over various socio-political boundaries. Nor did they hold to traditional artistic beliefs. Under the influence of decadent bourgeois and conservative speech, the development of national histories emerged through a revival of cultural myths which was generally displayed in its dispute with decadence. By the end of the century, both the terms 'decadent' and 'aesthetics ' were used to attack and censure virtually every kind of artwork that communicated innovations in aesthetic philosophy, subject matter, or style (Denisoff, 2007).

In fact, decadence held an essential position in the aesthetic compositions through which modern socio-political difficulties were conveyed by artists. Challenging the Victorian notion that aesthetics aim to create art for art's sake, to glorify the idea of artistic taste, and to peruse beauty, the ideas of creative freedom of expression and

sensuality were two features which became objects of mockery and derision among Victorian society.

Sensing a lack of orientation, people sought forgotten certainties via different artistic modes. The aesthetic world seemed much more attractive than the world of nature. The twentieth century was characterised by great artistic developments which were to shape the history of art. According to Kramer (2002), symbolist painters in Germany aimed to restore and revitalise the present socio-cultural atmosphere in accordance with an energetic, revolutionary art form.

Likeminded in their opinions and concepts about the benefits art was able to provide in order to rescue modernity, symbolists felt that to achieve this, art needed to break away from nature and its exemplification. As discussed above, it seems as though nobody with any cultural pretensions in Germany as from 1900s, could have escaped Nietzsche's influence (Van Rensburg, 1987). Aiming towards the development of a post-metaphysical philosophy of life, Nietzsche equated art with life.

While considering the literary and philosophical influences which were the most formative for the manner in which Expressionism developed, writings by Nietzsche and Nietzschean concepts were to have great impact and appeal (Bassie, 2008). The advancement of visual arts in Germany moreover, owed a great deal to Nietzschean thought. These included the glorification of instinct, inner life, and the expression thereof; which were central notions of European art at the turn of the century; notions which I have already suggested were influential to Kandinsky.

Nietzsche's notion of morality and the Nietzschean concept of the glorification of instinct manifested itself in Kandinsky's art through his desire to bring about the path to the truth. In terms of the inner life, this was a fundamental concept which he coined the 'inner necessity'; artists' inner reality which is manifested through his art. *Der Brucke* was one movement among many which desired to create a morally just autonomy separate from the thoughtless and vulgar materialism making up modern life.

In response to the existent socio-cultural decline, a wide range of aesthetic genres pervaded throughout this period as an attempt to supersede, and restore prior artistic representations (Stoleriu & Stoleriu, 2013). Indeed, no twentieth century development of any artistic mode can be viewed or analysed separately from those of the past. In terms of the influential role of religion on artistic parameters, the twentieth century was home to an increasing quest for and an experimentation with the variety of aesthetic styles through which artists voiced their need for religio-spiritual feelings.

It has been suggested by Pyman (1996) that the more academically minded communities contemplated the 'anxiety' over the modern. Wassily Kandinsky was such a man. Greatly saddened and disappointed in, as he viewed it, the loss of humanity he was witnessing throughout modern Europe, Wassily Kandinsky endeavoured through his art, to re-capture and offer a sense of purpose to man which he felt had gone adrift in this modern epoch.

More so than any other twentieth century visual artist, Lipsey (2004) posits that Kandinsky viewed spirituality as the promising mission of the twentieth century amid all this societal disarray. As will be discussed in a later chapter, Wassily Kandinsky became familiar with the 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's writings while in Munich between 1896 and 1914. During this period, Kandinsky would familiarise himself with the works by Nietzsche via his relationship with Russian Theosophist Rudolf Steiner, a major figure within the theosophical society.

The Russian Symbolists was another circle among which Nietzsche was a vast influence (Rosenthal, 2008). The 1895-1914 epoch was home to the 'Silver age' in Russia (Azadovki, 2001). During this period symbolism emerged and was to become the dominant movement of the epoch. The purpose of the members of the Russian symbolists was to place their silver age clearly on the cultural map of Europe-a Russian renaissance not to be trifled with. Symbolism was a movement that first appeared in works of European authors and visual artists between the 1870s and 1880s.

The symbolist movement was greatly attracted to the exploration of the non-rational and personal world of emotions, feelings, dreams, and fantasy.The Russian Symbolists burgeoned as a result of various foreign and home-grown influences. Their origins can be traced back to France, with Paul Verlaine's Art Poetique (Iswolsky, 1943). This particular period in Russia was characterised by an epoch of cultural flowering appearing in all artistic modes.

Various authors, musicians, directors and artists made up this constellation of prodigies composed of Dimitri Merezhkovsky, Alexander Blok, Nikolai Gumilev, Anna Achmatova, and Mark Chagall. During this time, most artistic styles mirrored the current socio-cultural ambiance in Russia-a turbulent diplomatic situation terminating in two political revolts (Rowen, 2015). The new doctrines and ideologies developing within the Russian Symbolist movement embodied a leaning towards transcendentalism in art.

The Russian Symbolists interest in spirituality was therefore reflected in the visual arts. Moreover, reinforcing the figure of Nietzsche as spiritualist, symbolist ideology was in great accord with those eschewed by Fichte, and Steiner (Iswolsky, 1943). Of great influence were the writings by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer (Young, 1987). As of 1900, late imperial Russian and early Soviet cultural life was found to be pervaded by a Nietzschean framework.

For instance, notions on national identity and religious beliefs, complicated by the contentious 'prophet', were of particular interest within Nietzsche's Russian group of followers, or, as Rebecca Mitchell (2015) named them due to their concurrent espousal and dismissal of Nietzschean ideas, as 'Nietzsche's orphans'. I shall also discuss the importance of Kandinsky's relationships with the German composer Arnold Schoenberg and Russian composer Alexander Scriabin, both who were familiar with Nietzsche's philosophy; consolidating Nietzsche's influence on Kandinsky.

Chapter 1 presents Wassily Kandinsky within the period as an expressionist painter while explaining how expressionism aimed to challenge the socio-political status quo. The chapter then discusses how Kandinsky was introduced to Nietzsche during his time in

Munich; the arts centre at that period. Chapter 2 presents Friedrich Nietzsche's conceptualisation of decadence as a major proponent of anti-decadence in the late 19th century. Within this presentation, Nietzsche's theory of myth is also presented as a challenge to the decadent era.

I will compare and contrast Nietzsche and Kandinsky on the question of myth. These will then lead me to present Wassily Kandinsky's attack on decadence which he portrayed in visual terms as my intention in this text is to argue that Nietzsche's notion of decadence was greatly influential in how Kandinsky responded to the same deleterious socio-cultural phenomenon through his paintings. This chapter thus begins by introducing the reader to the socio-cultural period of the time.

I then move on to Chapter 3, in which the link between spirituality and art is explored. This will lead me to discuss the Philoso-spiritual doctrine of Theosophy, which became a great interest of Kandinsky's. This discussion also develops how Kandinsky drew on the Austrian theosophist and anthroposophist Rudolph Steiner. Chapter 3 is pivotal as it ends by presenting Nietzsche as a spiritual figure; the main notion which I aim to present throughout this text.

The culmination of my research ends in Chapter 4, which presents and explores the role of esoteric, that is, of spiritual symbolism, in Nietzsche's texts such *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and how Nietzsche's use of textual symbolism was interpreted by Kandinsky. As will be observable during this discussion, Nietzsche's influence as a spiritual figure became increasingly evident on the flourishing of Kandinsky's art while working with the German painter Franz Marc on the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, right through to his later period at The Bauhaus. I shall now present prior research carried out on the link between Kandinsky, Nietzsche, and Steiner.

Various explorations about Nietzsche's influence on a number of disciplines have been carried out. In terms of Nietzsche's influence on art, researchers have investigated the connection between Nietzsche's texts and Kandinsky's artistic works but only as part of a

member of a particular artistic period such as modernism or the connection between Nietzsche's theory of art and specific art movements such as expressionism (Short, 2013). In view of this, a discussion on any connection between these two figures has been minimal.

Michael White (2002) has written about Nietzsche's theory of art as an influence on German expressionism. White focuses on how Nietzsche thinking about style and his judgement that the nineteenth century had been an era of cultural decay can be identified in Kandinsky and Franz Marc's (1912) *Der Blue Reiter Almanac*. This text's numerous illustrations draw from non-European cultures, as well as Western traditions. Folk art and the art of children contradicted the idea of a single style valid for all time (Gordon, 1987).

Moreover, White (2002) looks into Kandinsky's contribution to the 1912 almanac-his text A Question of Form, which emphasises the element of 'inner necessity' expressed in works of art. Kandinsky concluded that 'in principle there is question of form' or at least no question of a disparity between an internal meaning and an external appearance. White, however, solely looks into the actual exploration of a genealogical nature which traces back to Nietzsche's will to power.

White therefore does not specifically investigate texts by Nietzsche, and less so Nietzsche's theory of myths, as specific influences on artistic works and thoughts of Kandinsky. In view of the fact that, according to Nietzsche, myths were a way through which spirituality would regain a vital position in society, as well as being a robust opponent to decadence, I shall therefore bridge this gap by exploring the influence of Nietzsche's theory of myths on Kandinsky by focusing on specific texts by Nietzsche during his later years, such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *The Anti-Christ*, among others as these texts demonstrate Nietzsche as a spiritual figure.

Certain researchers have looked at Nietzsche's theory of myths in isolation, via an aesthetic lens, but with no mention of specific artists. For instance, Benjamin Bennett's (1979) research on Nietzsche did

specifically investigate Nietzsche's theory of myths, but solely from an aesthetics point of view. Bennett's research challenges Walter Kauffman's suggestion to explore Nietzsche's classic text *The Birth of Tragedy* (1993) in the shadow of the nineteenth century advancement of anthropology as a science.

Indeed, Bennett believes that despite Kaufmann's presentation of the Dionysian as just one of the various focal elements in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and therefore, a licentious figure who needs to be altered in time for its positive impact upon culture, this was not Nietzsche's conceptualisation of the Greek god. In fact, Apollo and Dionysus both had, according to the German philosopher, 'artistic power'-thus exposing their 'hidden nature'.

Nietzsche further states that the culmination of the Apollonian as well as the Dionysian artistic aims- and therefore reinforces his prior statement concerning 'artistic drives' possessed by these two Greek gods. Another area of study between Nietzsche and Kandinsky has been carried out by Art historian Alison Dernbach (2012). In her research, Dernbach explores the development of Kandinsky's abstract art until WW1. In so doing, Dernbach examines key experiences and influences, one being that of Nietzsche, which contributed to this progression in his work.

Dernbach does this by focusing on three of Kandinsky's paintings; *Angel of the Last Judgment* (1911), *Black Spot* (1912), and *Improvisation* (*Deluge*) (1913). Yet, the only idea of Nietzsche's mentioned in her work is that of the *Übermenschen* although this is not explicitly stated. Denbach's relating of Nietzsche's notion is solely conducted when analysing Kandinsky's *Angel of the Last Judgement* (1911). Theosophical principles depicted in this particular piece are explained from a Nietzschean lens. In support of this, Dernbach quotes Cork (1994), who stated that Nietzsche:

> Did not view this 'dark cloud that hangs over mankind' as a baleful threat. The storm which generated the lightning would be an emetic, purging Europe of its pervasive rottenness and heralding the vitalistic new order he cherished. If the entire continent were engulfed by the impending cataclysm, so much the

better: the renovation of society would be still more widespread and effective.

Separate studies on Nietzsche's view of decadence, have, however, been conducted. Bruce E. Benson's 2007 book *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith,* presents an interesting and remarkable notion concerning Nietzsche and religion. Challenging the notion of Nietzsche, the nihilist, Benson instead argues that in fact Nietzsche was highly religious. In doing this, Benson puts forward the idea that Nietzsche rejected the piety of his childhood and younger years, as Kandinsky also did.

Whereas Benson argues that Nietzsche replaced this piety with a new and improved 'Dionysian' faith'-one which Nietzsche characterised in his text *Twilight of the Idols* as 'the highest of all possible faiths' (1990), for Kandinsky it was abstract symbolist art which he believed would combat decadence. Benson develops his argument by conducting a stage-by-stage evaluation of Nietzsche's conceptualisation of decadence. In doing so, Benson explores Nietzsche's views on three decadents-Socrates, Wagner, and Paul-three characters who were hugely influential on and very close to Nietzsche.

Nietzsche also considered these three individuals to be decadent. Benson maintains that Nietzsche realises that his early type of religiosity and his philosophical attachments are decadent, as are his artistic attachments which he must therefore give up to surpass his own decadence. In order to do so, Benson maintains that Nietzsche developed much self-discipline, or askesis to enable him to resist his own decadence. This askesis, so Benson suggests is music-a feature he then develops.

Whereas Kandinsky described his paintings as 'visual music' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1997, p.114). Firstly, Benson argues that Nietzsche viewed music as a way through which humans can overcome the tragedy of human existence as a means to 'speak' about life. Secondly, Nietzsche believed music 'spoke' to the body, or 'great reason'; namely, unconscious reason or the body, as

opposed to the ‘little reason’; ‘conscious reason’ which was communicated to via words.

Thirdly, Nietzsche viewed music as a tool through which we could acquire ‘self-overcoming’. Fourthly, music had, according to Nietzsche, a ‘swaying’ control over us, both emotionally and intellectually. Lastly, and most crucially, music has the ability to reinstate ‘the order of the soul’:

> When one has lost the proper tension and harmony of the soul, one has to dance to the beat of the singer-that has the prescription of his healing art…In short: was there anything more useful than rhythm to the old superstitious type of human being? Or could do anything with it….Without verse, one has nothing; through verse one almost became a god (*The Gay Science*, 2017, p. 84).

I do not deny that Socrates, Wagner, and Paul were decadents, but it does however seem curious that Benson does not consider Nietzsche’s relationship with Schopenhauer in much depth, especially as texts by Nietzsche himself describe Schopenhauer as decadent. This particular relationship was quite fundamental to the direction in which Nietzsche developed his philosophy of decadence. In fact, one of Nietzsche’s main attractions towards Wagner was the composer’s vast interest in and knowledge concerning Schopenhauer.

Also contrary to Benson, who explored Nietzsche’s relationship with Socrates, Wagner, and Paul in order to support his view concerning Nietzsche as a spiritual figure, I shall explore specific texts by Nietzsche in support of my similar opinion to Benson that Nietzsche was indeed a spiritualist.

A further study of Nietzsche’s theory of decadence has also been undertaken by Acharya (2012). His paper Nobility and Decadence: The Vulnerabilities of Nietzsche’s Strong Type, suggests that from the position of Nietzsche’s hereditary construal of history, it is solely when there occurs a decay on the own terms of the Ancient Greek culture-or strong type, that a weak type, such as the Platonic Christian principles have the opportunity to usurp and take power by overturning the principles of the usurped society.

Acharya then questions how decadence occurs in the first place, and how Greek culture endured decadence. To answer these questions, Acharya turns to French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's useful examination of the inception of decadence, in his text *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962). In this book, Deleuze advances the idea of a 'topology of reactive forces', which represents their 'change of place, their displacement'.

According to Deleuze, this topological displacement of reactive forces contributes to the advent of another different, but weaker type that embodies 'ressentiment', or resentment, which in fact, Nietzsche constantly avoided by choosing activity, life and the will. The 'yes' to life, over resentment. These qualities are especially noticeable in Nietzschean figures such as Zarathustra, Dionysius, and the Overman. Kandinsky was more subtle in his appreciation and his advocacy of a 'yes' to life, which he portrayed in his visual art.

For Kandinsky, colour was the tool through which he chose life. Kandinsky used colours as conveyers of different emotions. Yellow was potentially a disturbing colour, whereas blue had a more calming effect. Acharya moves on to discuss Nietzsche's 'master and slave' model of morality. From this, Deleuze considers the 'becoming reactive' of effective forces, he views the topology of reactive forces as holding a status of leadership and standing.

Thus, according to Acharya, Deleuze argues that the topological displacement of reactive forces ensues the 'separation of active forces from what it can do'. This, in turn, contributes to the active forces obtaining the capacity to become reactive (64). Leading from this, Deleuze goes on to trace back the topological displacement of reactive forces itself to a struggle in the reactive system. However, according to Acharya, Deleuze's last interpretation is not in accord with the general understanding of active and reactive forces.

For Acharya, the last analysis of Deleuze's also stands against his argument that for Nietzsche, nullification and repudiation result from activity. Further to this, Acharya explores the actual meaning of the topological displacement of a type. In order to do this, Acharya examines Deleuze's text concerning Nietzsche, which leads him to

discuss Nietzsche's concept of the body and the concept of consciousness, and how they relate to one another. He then explores how the active forces and the reactive forces relate to each other in the Greek style type; or strong type.

From this, Acharya analyses four weak attributes of the strong - 'solitude', 'the bestowing of virtues', the 'need for challenges', and 'corruption'. This analysis, according to Acharya, exposes a deep struggle between the creative and the self-preserving instincts of the strong, which he feels contributes to a decline in the ability to forget, which, in turn indicates the emergence of decadence. Interpreters of Kandinsky have not, however, always picked up on Nietzsche's influence on Kandinsky.

Those interpreters which have, have only done so fleetingly, and in passing. For example, Armin Zweite pointed to similarities between Kandinsky and Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* but failed to explore these. Klaus Lankheit mentioned traces of Nietzsche in *Der Blaue Reiter's Almanac*, but again, failed to identify them. In light of the limited research exploring a connection between Nietzsche and Kandinsky, I intend to specifically look at the way in which Nietzsche's theory of decadence and theory of myth help us understand Kandinsky's concept of decadence, and how he responds to it in his art.

While scholarly research on Nietzsche is rather extensive, there still persists a lack of research on Rudolf Steiner. The research which has been carried out has been among mainstream non-Anthropological thinkers, and demonstrates a polarising tendency; works by Steiner advocates and critics. In 2011, Helmut Zander published a biography of Steiner, which presents him as an amateur, an unoriginal thinker, and an authoritarian leader. In contrast, biographies and studies published by the Anthropological Society mainly cast him as a great original thinker.

It must be emphasised, however, that most of Steiner lectures and works have been published by the Anthropological Society, thus potentially limiting the need or the desire to conduct further research.

Despite the limited research, pioneering thinkers such as Sixten Ringbom explored Steiner throughout the 1960s until the 1980s. As will be concurred in this research, Ringbom maintained that Steiner's thoughts contributed to the development of Kandinsky's aesthetic theory and theory of abstraction and the other members of the *Blaue Reiter*.

Yet in 'Art in 'the Epoch of the Great Spiritual': Occult Elements in the Early Theory of Abstract Painting' Ringbom grounded Steiner extensively the context of his engagement with Goethe, his argument slowly descends into a more reductive focal point on the Anglo-American Theosophy of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbetter and their theory of 'Thought-Form'. Rose-Carol Washton Long also explored the origins of Kandinsky's abstract style in her essay 'Kandinsky and Abstraction: The Role of the Hidden Images' (1972), and her book *Kandinsky: The Development of an Abstract Style* (1980).

In both these texts, Washton Long investigates the origins of Kandinsky's abstraction prior to WWI. Her focus identifies Kandinsky's potential use of 'hidden' or 'veiled' imagery. Washton Long's justification is founded on a vigilant iconographic analysis and establishment of the veiled imagery, followed by an interpretation of the motifs in view of the Biblical Revelation of John, as discussed by Steiner.

Even though her identification and enumeration of the veiled image presentation and eschatological themes used by Kandinsky as derived from Steiner is clearly demonstrated, she does not take the exploration of Steiner as an influence on Kandinsky any further. In the last few years, Christian Clement produced a critical text on Steiner's main texts, between 1884 and 1910, in which he includes an interpretation of the development of these texts.

He also contextualises the texts with details on Steiner's scholarly grounding by focusing on the various sources from which Steiner drew (2013). Clement also wrote a book about Steiner's mystery plays, in which he identifies Goethe and Schiller as influencers for these plays (2007). In his 2011 article 'Discovering a Genius: Steiner at 150', Frederick Amrine outlines the numerous disciplines in which

Steiner made vital contributions and innovations as well as the many reasons as to why Steiner thought has been neglected and misconstrued.

In his 2015 book *Idea, Theory, Emotion, Desire*, Amrine elucidates the central Steinerian notion of 'the evolution consciousness'. The first chapter stands in communication with two of Amrine's articles on Goethe. In 'Goethean Intuitions', Amrine presents philosophical context for Goethe's scientific method, while in 'The Metamorphosis of the Scientist' Amrine asserts that Goethe anticipated numerous focal areas of recent philosophy of science.

Considering Steiner's involvement in a wide range of areas such as philosophy, spirituality, art, music, pedagogy, and science, it is surprising how little scholarly research there is about him. There are various reasons for the neglect of Steiner's vital work and thought within modernist studies. In the following, I shall consider the most likely ones. One of the most salient reasons concerns the way, in which Steiner's involvement with Theosophy and Anthroposophy has been construed.

In his article 'Discovering a Genius: Steiner at 150', Frederick Amrine identifies a number of reasons as to why Steiner has been relatively forgotten within academic research. Amrine singles out that Anthroposophy has its own vocabulary and an array of notions, and Steiner's early eras as a theosophist involved the use of Sanskrit in early texts, which only added to the difficulties to follow Steiner's writings from a non-theosophical lens.

Amrine also suggests that, on the surface, Steiner might deserve the negative connotations associated with him, such as 'guru', 'mystic', or 'occultist', which Steiner himself strongly rejected. Moreover, as Amrine proposes, Steiner's anti-authoritarian position is conveyed in the same way as he described Anthroposophy; as 'a philosophy of freedom'. My research therefore intersects between Philosophy, Theosophy, Spirituality, and Abstract Art in order to formulate a philosophical argument concerning the development of Wassily Kandinsky's theory of Art.

CHAPTER 1- Wassily Kandinsky in Context

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was a Russian painter and art theorist who is widely considered the pioneer of abstract expressionism in the modernist annals (Naves, 2009). Originally a student of Law and Economics in 1886 at the University of Moscow, Kandinsky soon realised that he needed something different, something more to feel fulfilled. Having shown a great interest in art and artistic matters from a young age, when not studying for his degree, Kandinsky continued developing his artistic skills in painting.

In 1889, Kandinsky was given the opportunity by the Society for Natural Science, Ethnography, and Anthropology to conduct some research in the Province of Vologda, where he was to record the regional peasant laws and the vestiges of the non-Christian faith of the earliest Syrian people. In 1896, at the age of 30 Kandinsky and his wife left Moscow to study art and headed for Munich-a cosmopolitan city of art at the time (Duchting, 2015).

Kandinsky's decision to move to Munich was therefore one which was, it can be suggested, a well thought out one. The time Kandinsky spent in Munich would mark the beginning of his eclectic artistic career which was to go through a number of different phases. These started as representational to non-representational art, from non-objective to abstract art, and finishing with what Kandinsky himself termed as 'biomorphic' abstraction (Zhang & Yu, 2016). For instance, Kandinsky's earlier work, from 1902 to approximately 1907, was characterised by Russian peasant imagery.

This period also mirrored Kandinsky's interest in Russian folklore and ethnography-an era during which many of his paintings included specific motifs from 17th century Muscovite society and culture (Karg, 2017). Kandinsky's later periods, starting in 1908, were much more abstract in style, as influenced by his conceptualisation of 'inner necessity', a term used to define an artist's inner reality, which, as will become clearer in further chapters, was influenced by Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*.

This is the period during Kandinsky's artistic career which will be explored throughout this text. The Modernist period during which Kandinsky was painting, emerged in the decades previous to WW1. As stated by Butler (1994), this epoch witnessed a variety of socio-cultural changes from which flourished a number of artistic developments. Inspired by among others, works by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and French philosopher Henri-Loui Bergson (1859-1941), this era also exhibited various expansions concerning psycho-emotional states.

A principle artistic mode through which personal and 'inner' psycho-emotional feelings were manifested was Expressionism-a literary and art movement, that began during the nineteenth century fin-de-siècle period, lasting until the early twentieth century (Kolocotroni, Goldman, & Taxidou, 2013). Being very successful and influential in Germany, Expressionism fashioned the existent socio-cultural scene of Germany. Expressionism had therefore a wide impact on painters in Germany at the time.

The terms 'Expressionism' and 'Expressionist' emerged in the art literature in about 1911 to initially describe European avant-garde art at the turn of the 20th century (Wolf, 2004). While distinguishing his works from those by the impressionists, the Berlin art dealer Paul Casirer (1871-1926), so it has been suggested, made use of the terms when discussing the intense emotionality observed in paintings by Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863-1944), whereas art historian Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) employed the terms when defining works by French Painter Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) and other painters based in France, in his article featured in the August 1911 edition of the journal *Sturm*.

Symbolist artists aimed to separate themselves from the traditional aesthetic thought around in the nineteenth century. This suggested departure originated from the 1800s suspension of the dominant dualistic attitude held during the nineteenth century (Facos & Mednick, 2005). As far as the symbolists were concerned, an organic entity was merely a further material structure-the significant difference was not among organic and manufactured things, but

between any type of articles, and the clear notions of which they were but pallid and uninspiring nuances.

This semantic arrangement thus demonstrated by the symbolist circle was a profound danger that destabilized an array of conventions presumed sacred by the European cultural institutions. Present throughout Europe during the general epoch of anguish and suspicion discussed in the previous chapter, Expressionism in Germany aimed to alleviate the distress felt at the time by both its older generation and its youths. With the purpose of obtaining individual autonomy, the Expressionist movement was a rebellion against a strict and controlling establishment (Taylor, 1990).

Intending to recapture the people's inner feelings, painters, so posits Clarke (2002), integrated this element of 'inner' feeling as the main feature in their work. It may thus be suggested that the Expressionist painters were very quick to sense the political cognizance and responsibility they were expected to hold during the Great Depression and WWII. Painters and art critics during early 20th century Germany associated the term Expressionism with modern art's refusal of conventional Western representational standards.

The first cornerstone of Expressionist art in Germany is generally associated with the Dresden based foundation of the artist's group *Die Brucke*-The Bridge, in 1905. Dedicated German commentators of Expressionism specifically remarked upon Expressionist artists' abilities to express celestial space, infinitude, and fearlessness. They also, so maintains Washton Long (1995), portrayed the art's innovative dynamism. Moreover, German painters began experimenting with intense non-realistic coloured hues and tints, shapes, and spaces much earlier than French artists had done.

Despite certain critiques pinpointing 1920 as representing the end of German expressionist art, originating from the revolutionary post-war unrest during that year, Elger (2002) argues against this view. Elger in fact suggests that the 1905-1920 epoch merely corresponded to the period during which, as mentioned previously, the socio-political climate in Germany was expressed in this specific manner;

namely, authentic emotion, when expressionism influenced the present-day zeitgeist.

Yet, it cannot be maintained that expressionism was represented by a single style, characterised by a variety of distinctive qualities. According to Crawford (1977), 'Expressionism ignores boundaries between means and modes of expression.' Various non-expressionist styles and techniques, such as Impressionism and Constructivism', appear within many visual art pieces. Max Deri characterises expressionism as one of the three formal trends in art history, along with naturalism and idealism.

Never the less, it cannot be argued that Kandinsky played a vital role and was a driving force within the development of German expressionism. Whether in literature, cinema, or painting, the only uniform aim of expressionism was its resistance to authoritarian socio-political constitutions. As argued by Elger (2002), German expressionist painters created an idealist world to counteract its opposite-a society regulated by the disaffecting practises of trade and commerce as well as governmental authorities of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

As was noticeable in his work with *Der Blaue Reiter*, Kandinsky aimed to create new art forms in which to express an inner vision in an unconventional way (Brooks, 2016). The above-mentioned ideas about the individual expression of emotions, those concerning the lack of artistic uniformity in terms of artistic aims among works by expressionist artists is a rather important point as it relates to the emergence of abstract art in Europe during the second decade of the twentieth century (Harrison, Frascina, & Perry, 1993).

One of the most, if not the most influential form of art in the twentieth century, abstract art was characterised by a non-representational artistic style. Through the application of a different artistic process, abstract art was referred to as a specific style of art which lacked any obvious resemblance to objects and figures apparent in the world. In addition, an abstract work could also be characterised by the absence of any evident theme or focus.

According to Ruhrberg and Schneckenburger (2000), abstract art in Germany during the second decade of the twentieth century appeared as an inspirational illumination of liberty and free of any restriction in a period of complete socio-political oppression and control. Moreover, for Kandinsky historical periods during which there were no patricians of art; a time when genuine spiritual sustenance was not to be found, were recessive times in the spiritual sphere. It was then that material desires and technical advances were acclaimed.

Kandinsky's increasing interest in theosophy and the occult, at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century in 1909, lead to his increasing rejection of materialism. Yet, Kandinsky was aware that authentic spiritual progress was, at best, disparaged, at worst, completely brushed off and rejected. While exploring the subject matter of abstract art in his text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977), which he wrote in 1911, Kandinsky relates the notion of introspection to the artist's personal experience.

According to Kandinsky, by looking into himself, the painter has the ability to discover something akin to the sublime reality. He further goes on to state that:

> One point of departure is the belief that the artist, apart from those impressions that he receives from the world of external appearances, continually accumulates experiences within his own inner world. We seek artistic forms that should express the reciprocal permeation of all these experiences-forms that must be freed from everything incidental, in order powerfully to pronounce only that which is necessary-in short, artistic synthesis. This seems to us a solution that once more today unites in spirit increasing numbers of artists… (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 53)

Indeed, Kandinsky relates the concept of introspection to the traditional notion of inspiration. He achieves this by defining the artist's inspiration partially as a process of introspection as part of the traditional doctrine of art. Although it may be suggested that the forms through which the notion of inspiration appears are changeable

through the ages, the actual idea of introspection comes into being via one's looking into oneself, which appears time and again. The other concept related to introspection is that of 'true', but hidden reality.

This ideal is indicated by the idea of 'inner necessity', which was a fundamental concept in Kandinsky's work. The notion of 'inner necessity' was made reference to in a number of Kandinsky's writings, such as his text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977). Nevertheless, Kandinsky never gave any specific description as to the type of 'inner necessity' he alluded to. Neither did he ever indicate under what types of limitations 'inner necessity' manifested itself.

Instead of searching for any of the references within texts by the painter himself as an indication of any such trends, I shall explore the notion of 'inner necessity' from a philosophical standpoint; specifically, via Arthur Schopenhauer's theory of art which Kandinsky became familiar with via Nietzsche's early work. By the 1870s, philosophical thoughts of Arthur Schopenhauer's had gained ascendance, so posited Friedrich Nietzsche.

Indeed, philosophers such as Nietzsche himself, and Wittgenstein, as well as numerous composers, authors and artists such as Wagner, Brahms, Freud, Hardy, Mann, Rilke, Proust and Schoenberg had all read works by Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer took his point of departure for his philosophy of aesthetics from Emanuel Kant (Janaway, 2007). Kant's main work on aesthetics, the third critique, the *Critique of Judgement* (1790) makes up a portion of his response to unresolved questions which emerge from his 1871 *Critique of Pure Reason and Critique of Practical Reason* (1787).

Kant's Critique of Judgement is in two parts. A lengthy introduction precedes the work's two parts in which Kant explains and defends the work's importance in his critical system overall. Like Kant, Schopenhauer held that the phenomenon of beauty could only be illuminated by carefully inspecting its effect on the subject, namely, the individual. In terms of this notion of his, Kant delineates from the pre-Kantian objective view which looked for the properties of objects

such as roughness, delicacy and smallness-which were held to be the elements constituting the conceptualisation of beauty.

Nevertheless, Schopenhauer's turn towards Kant's element of subjectivity is as far as his theory of aesthetics follows that of Kant's. According to Schopenhauer, Kant's theory was far too indirect in that Kant's primary method in philosophy, the transcendent element. Moreover, Schopenhauer considered art to be the sole means of temporality escaping the fundamental futility of reality (Guyer, 2009). Schopenhauer's view of aesthetic experience was a fundamental aspect in his Metaphysics of Will.

Accordingly, Magee (1997) remarks that only via a full understanding of Schopenhauer's metaphysics 'are his aesthetics even so much unintelligible' (1819). In view of the above, Schopenhauer presents the notion that artistic experience represents a mode of knowledge as fundamentally exceptional as a main feature of his aesthetics (Boogaard, 2007). He also places great value upon aesthetics experience (Neill, 2007). Schopenhauer then goes on to state that individuals can only obtain knowledge and know-how through the guidance of the will to live.

Yet, Schopenhauer argues that one is able to liberate their knowledge from this subordinating to the will (Foster, 2010). Schopenhauer affirms that the 'subject of knowing' has the capacity to remove itself from the 'subject of willing'. This leads to a 'pure', will-less, mode of knowing. Schopenhauer therefore held the view that to know how the world is in itself, we must do so via our representations of objects in space and time, as well as through our personal and individual encounters (Guyer, 2009), and thus was, on this point, in agreement with Kant.

However, Schopenhauer aimed to unearth a way via which the acquisition of knowledge about how the world is in itself which could get around the epistemological complications identified by Kant. In short, with this goal in mind, Schopenhauer intended to oppose Kant's view. He questioned whether one can be sure to know something concerning a sphere though which these categories are essentially unable to be applied (Caroll, 2003).

According to Schopenhauer, the purpose of a genuine aesthetic life concerns a person's freedom from the un-seeing will's clutches, and that such a feeling of relief shapes the foundation to the everlasting moral freedom from willing (Vandernabeele, 2007). Aesthetic experience, as Schopenhauer sees it, involves an individual's understanding or acquisition of an intuitive knowledge of ideas. For instance, Schopenhauer presents the notion that if an individual envisions a tree as artistically beautiful in nature, namely, through an artistic lens, then the individual identifies it as an idea and not simply as a single entity.

Schopenhauer then adds that when one has achieved this, whether it is that actual tree, or trees which were willed epochs ago that the individual is seeing, becomes of no concern to them (p.271). Moreover, his theory is one in accordance with the history of aesthetics, which posits that aesthetic experience comprises transcendence of the specific, as well as the admission to the worldwide (Neill, 2007). According to Neill (2007), in order to fully understand Schopenhauer's aesthetics, one must be clear about how Schopenhauer defines the abolition of individuality.

Moreover, he suggests that through this view, Schopenhauer argues that two conditions, namely the object of contemplation and the subject, need to be achieved for aesthetic pleasure to take place. Schopenhauer adds a further step though by stating:

> Moreover, we shall see that the pleasure [Wohlgefallenl] produced by contemplation of the beautiful arises from those two constituent parts, sometimes more from the one than from the other, according to what the object of aesthetic contemplation may be. (*World of Will and Representation I*, 1958, p. 256; italics in the original)

Guyer (2009) thus proposes that this notion of Schopenhauer's argues that the meditation of the specific conception is not solely the instance during which the status of will-lessness occurs, due to the pain experienced while willing takes place, but that the reflexion of platonic ideas as such are themselves a spring of happiness. Schopenhauer views art as the sole means by which the unity of the

world can be uncovered. For Schopenhauer art achieves this unity through the beneficial, creative expression of Ideas drawn unswervingly from their clear detention in nature (Foster, 2009).

Schopenhauer's experience of art, and especially his view that understanding creates perception, which he discussed in the first chapter of his 1816 essay 'On Vision and Colours' (Schopenhauer, Payne, & Cartwright, 1994), a text owned by Kandinsky (Brearly, 2018). From the notes in the margins which Kandinsky had marked, these related to the physiology of representation of colour, as well as an interest in the retina, indicating an interest in how colour was reflected onto the eye, thus information which would have contributed to the development of his theory of art.

By cataloguing his own as well as others' experience as artists, Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spirituality in Art* (1977) established the Russian artist and art theorist as a pivotal character in the world of abstract art. The focal point of this theoretical piece was Kandinsky's assurance that a spiritual revival was taking place in spite of the existent socio-cultural discord. Following on from this section, I now present Kandinsky's time in Munich, which at the time was the centre of artistic and literary developments, and how Kandinsky's submergence into this artistic sphere contributed to his awareness of, and interest in Nietzsche.

Kandinsky's introduction to Nietzsche.

I shall now discuss how Kandinsky became familiar with Nietzsche's texts during his visit to Munich between 1896 and 1914. Kandinsky's acquaintance with literary figures such as August Endell (1871-1925), and symbolist painters such as Arnold Bocklin (1827-1901), and other artistic figures Kandinsky met through them catapulted Kandinsky into becoming familiar with the cult of Nietzsche. The period from 1896 and 1914 seems to have been the time during which, while in Munich Kandinsky was first exposed to the cult of Nietzsche (Van Rensburg, 1987).

Munich was the centre of artistic and intellectual activities when Kandinsky first arrived there from Moscow in 1896. Kandinsky's arrival in Munich also parallels the beginning of the Nietzsche cult, initiated at first by literary figures who, either lived in or were in constant contact with the cultural life of Munich. The German writer Goerg Fuchs (1868-1949) had, a few years prior to Kandinsky's arrival in Munich, written his first essay on Nietzsche and art.

In 1896, German writer, designer, and teacher, August Endell (1871-1925) relied heavily on Nietzschean terminology in his published critical pamphlet about the Munich art exhibitions of that year, reaching instant acclaim. Heinrich Mann who, with his younger brother Thomas, had already been introduced to the Munich cultural circle, published his first essay on Nietzsche. It therefore looks as though the cult of Nietzsche was on the horizon when Kandinsky first arrived in Munich.

After a few months of being in the city, Kandinsky became involved with a number of the dominant figures, so claims Peg Weiss (1979). It would not have taken Kandinsky long to realise the influence of Nietzsche upon Munich's cultural circle. In the art world at the time of Kandinsky's arrival in Munich, an artistic style known as the *Judgenstil*, was arising in Germany; a style which continued through the first decades of the 20th century.

Although it has been suggested that the name given to the artistic style derived from the Munich magazine *Die Jugend*, or Youth, according to Ahlers-Hestermann, the term actually originated from Nietzsche's theoretical image of what a youth stood for. A critique of the education youths received, Nietzsche felt that education should teach youths how to live, and not just facts (*Anti-Education:On the Future of our Educational Institutions*, 2015, p. 12.).

Nietzsche added that education 'deadened the vital spring of existence'. In accordance with Nietzsche's notion of 'yes' to live, characterised by the figure of Zarathustra as the ultimate 'yes sayer', he stated that to be in touch with life, youths needed to experience it, not just learn about it (Hinton Thomas, 1983). Only from this lived experience would there emerge the 'kingdom of youth' (*Untimely*

Meditations, 2017). Moreover, during the succession's exhibition of 1899 Henry Van der Velde was instrumental in introducing Nietzsche to Belgian cultural life.

During the development of *Jugenstil* and the German succession, Van der Velde exhibited at the successions in 1899, and was appointed at the School of Applied Arts in Weimar in 1901, highlighting Nietzsche as a major influential figure. Peter Behrends (1868-1956), co-founder of the Munich succession and a firm advocate of the Nietzsche cult had for a long time participated in the Nietzsche related activities and events held by the George-Kreis, a literary group centred on the famous charismatic German author Stefan Georg.

Arnold Bocklin (1827-1901), the Swiss symbolist painter, also co-founder of the Munich succession, was linked to Nietzsche via Goerg Fuchs, in 1895. Fuchs, Behrens, and Van der Velde would each develop friendships with Kandinsky. In accordance with a number of other youths, Kandinsky sought a vast disruption and a process of destruction to purify and drive for creativity and regeneration (Bassie, 2008).

Considering that the notion of the vigour of creation evolving from annihilation was present in Nietzschean thoughts, it is likely that Kandinsky would have been attracted to writings by the German philosopher. A way in which this notion was depicted in works by Kandinsky was via the conceptualisation of the Apocalypse-a theme which would emerge in various works by the artist; whether represented in figurative paintings or as more abstract elements (Bassie, 2008).

Another prominent literary figure linked to the cult of Nietzsche whom Kandinsky would have come into contact with was the bohemian author and poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), so suggests Rosenthal (2008). Rilke himself was in contact with a number of other literary figures who shared his interest in Nietzsche, in both Germany and France. He was friends with French author Andre Gide (1869-1951) as well as Henry Van der Velde, and the Weimar circle. German playwriter of the early 1900s Frank

Wederkind (1864-1918) was a further crucial promoter of Nietzschean thought.

Wederkind's influence on Expressionist art has often been remarked upon as he achieved wide success in Munich as of the 1890s (Weiss, 1979). For instance, Expresionism within plays by Wederkind came to represent the protagonist views and facets of the world and morality. As will become evident later in this text, these aspects were expressed by Kandinsky in terms of the inner necessity, and his work with Franz Marc and during his time at the Bauhaus.

It may be suggested that the above-mentioned literary circle within which Kandinsky was around does not suggest that he was influenced by Nietzsche, but an additional figure in Munich at the same time as Kandinsky, whose writings, it can be suggested, are likely to have introduced the Russian painter to Nietzsche's philosophy was Rudolph Steiner. As previously discussed, Steiner was a prominent figure in Kandinsky's theosophical circle. However, Steiner was also an important writer on Nietzsche (Short,1993).

Steiner became acquainted with Nietzsche's works in 1889, and was contacted by Neitzsche's sister, Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche after having been hired by the Goethe-Schiller Archives, during his time in Weimar.

When approached by Nietzsche's sister, Steiner was appointed the first archivist of the Nietzsche archives, in 1894, while the archives were still in Naumburg (van Rensburg, 1988). In addition, while in Weimar in 1895, Steiner published his Friedrich Nietzsche, *A Fighter for Freedom*, considered his most extensive work on the German philosopher. Not only was Steiner involved with the move of the Nietzsche archives from Naumburg to Weimar, in 1896, but he was also included among various other scholars to co-edit the first edition of the Grossoktavausgabe (n.d) of Nietzsche's collected works.

Suffice to say then, without going into every detail, that Steiner's knowledge of Nietzsche's texts was extensive. So much so that the year of Nietzsche's death in 1900, Steiner was invited by a member of the Theosophical Society to give a speech about Nietzsche at the Theosophical Library (Barnes, 1997). It is important to stress here

that Kandinsky's knowledge of and value of Nietzsche thought was influenced by those of Steiner. That is not to say however, that Steiner's view on Nietzsche did not inspire Kandinsky's own research and interpretation of Nietzschean thought.

Nietzsche was a highly influential figure on Russian symbolic thought during the last decade of the 19th century. When making reference to Nietzsche, symbolist theoreticians such as Bal'mont invoke him within the context of their pursuit of 'the harmonious link of all separate individualities with the world whole' (West, 1973). Kandinsky kept in close contact with the Russian art world, publishing writings in Russian art journals till 1914.

He therefore had direct contact with the Russian symbolist art movement. In accord with the majority of Symbolists, Kandinsky was of the opinion that style, like the symbol itself, was the natural expression of the inner content of the work of art (Bowlt, 1982). Nietzsche enabled Kandinsky and other modernists, to engage with subjective and personal insights while living in a world in which no ethical and just necessities delivered by a deity existed (Butler, 1994). Kandinsky voiced his lack of hope in his existent world by stating that:

> This all-important spark of inner life today is at present only a spark. Our minds, which are even now only just awakening after years of materialism, are infected with the despair of unbelief, of lack of purpose and ideal. The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakened soul still in its grip. Only a feeble light glimmers like a tiny star in a vast gulf of darkness … (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977).

The above quote by Kandinsky echoing Nietzsche's support of intrapersonal insight further consolidates my belief that the value Kandinsky gave to the concept of 'inner necessity' was influenced by Nietzsche. In support of the notion of Nietzsche as a spiritual figure, a number of Nietzschean thoughts were widely acclaimed within theosophical circles. This was due to theosophists' belief in a

common need to discover new principles in order to supplant the presently existent degenerate morals-leading to an ability to acquire a meaningful life in a meaningless world (Carlson, 1994).

Like Steiner, the poet Stefan Goerg held much influence in various artistic and literary circles. Goerg was also in close contact with a number of people such as German author and poet Karl Wolfskehl (1869 -1948) and Austrian illustrator, Alfred Kubin (1877-1959). This point is of particular interest as Kandinsky was most probably familiar with Goerg and was a guest of Wolfskel's on a number of occasions.

Goerg was indeed an admirer of Nietzsche's; concepts of whom can be identified in the poet's own works. It has been suggested by Carol Diethe (2014) that like Nietzsche, Goerg had lost hope in German culture, thus doubting a renewal of the German language. Moreover, Heinz Raschel (1984) named various poetic sources of Goerg's between 1892 and 1924, which are either about Nietzsche or in which Nietzsche's philosophy is discussed.

For instance, Goerg's first poetic work was not only dedicated to Nietzsche but also derived much of its content from Nietzsche's (1908) own poem entitled Ruhm und Ewigkeit. It had been proposed that one of Goerg's most responsive followers was in Munich-a group of like-minded people who would soon become informed about Nietzsche via Goerg himself (Weiss, 1979). So much was Goerg known to discuss Nietzsche during this group's meetings that Nietzsche became the inspiration behind the circle's festivals of the Greek deities.

Steiner as a Source of knowledge of Nietzsche for Kandinsky.

In the period during which there occurred an esoteric rebirth as discussed in the introduction, it cannot be denied that Theosophy and Anthroposophy were to have a wide influence among painters such as Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, among numerous others. Rudolf Steiner's participation in artist production involved a direct

and creative association between artists and scholars (Petritatis, 2018). Moreover, reinforcing Nietzsche's wide popularity among Modernist painters and other literary figures in Munich during the early 20th century, the prominent Nietzsche scholar Van Rensburg (1987) mentioned Reinhold Grimm, who stated that

> The vast Nietzschean heritage…seems to be uncommonly, indeed unbelievably, hidden. Hidden, I dare say, to such an extent that it has gone unnoticed by most people, critics and scholars alike, for over a century…

Nevertheless, one of the most prominent figures within the cult of Nietzsche, and well versed figure on Nietzsche was Rudolf Steiner (Coetzee, 1988). Steiner initially became familiar with Nietzsche texts in 1889, and published his first text on him in 1892. Due to these writings, Steiner was also asked by Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth Forster-Nietzsche, to become the first archivist of the Nietzsche archives in Naumburg, in 1895. Furthermore, Steiner's wide knowledge of Nietzsche was to be a major influence on Kandinsky's subsequent awareness of Nietzsche.

Steiner's views on Nietzsche's metaphysical thoughts were in accordance with his own. This was made clear in various of Steiner's texts on Nietzsche, including his 1988 Friedrich Nietzsche, a Fighter Against his Time, as well as one of his earliest pieces, Goethe's *World View* (1897) and his *Philosophy of Freedom* (1894), a text which would have been widely available to Kandinsky. Considering that Steinerian texts are known to have greatly impacted Kandinsky, it can therefore be suggested that Steiner's knowledge of Nietzsche became known to Kandinsky through his reading of various of Steiner's primary writings and articles. For instance, according to Coetzee (1988),

> Steiner's philosophical and aesthetic writings might be an important source for a clearer understanding of Kandinsky's aesthetics.

As discussed in the previous section concerning Kandinsky's time in Munich within the cult of Nietzsche between 1906-1914, Kandinsky was in frequent contact with a range of leading commentators on Nietzsche, including Rudolf Steiner. In view of the dates of Steinerian texts on Nietzsche, Kandinsky would therefore have considered Nietzschean thought following Steiner's texts. Accordingly, Coetzee (1988) views Steiner as the main influence on Kandinsky's response to Nietzsche.

According to Van Rensburg (1988), Kandinsky's awareness and knowledge of Nietzsche was of a diluted form, as Van Rensburg maintained that they 'Cannot be fully explored without considering…the subtle interaction with other influences…' Van Rensburg (1987) also suggests that certain of Kandinsky's views differed from those of Nietzsche's, which were those shared by Steiner; 'There are also some significant differences, and Kandinsky's theosophical interest might serve as the chief point of divergence (Kandinsky's exposure to the Nietzsche Cult, 1987).'

Reinforcing this view, Coetzee (1988) proposes that when Kandinsky makes reference to Nietzsche, he is actually paraphrasing Steiner's views on Nietzsche. For instance, Coetzee maintains that in his essay 'Whither the 'New Art?' (1982), Kandinsky reflects Steiner's view on Nietzsche when stating 'And our epoch is a time of tragic collision between matter and spirit and the downfall of the purely material work view (p.101)'.

According to Coetzee (1988), Kandinsky is almost mirroring word for word a quote of Steiner in one of his books on Nietzsche, while discussing nineteenth century materialism. It has been maintained that Kandinsky held a more profound knowledge of Nietzsche than other figures within the Nietzsche cult. The reason given for this view has been said to again, have been influenced by Steiner. In one of his writings, Steiner discusses his distaste for the traditional mystical aestheticising of the Nietzsche cult. Steiner posits that

> My characterisation of the Nietzsche's Superman is exactly the opposite of the caricature developed in the currently popular book about Nietzsche by Frau Lou Andreas

> Salomé. One cannot put into the world anything more contrary to Nietzsche's spirit than mystical monster she has made out of the superman (Friedrich Nietzsche; *Fighter for Freedom*, 1960, p. 212).

From the above evidence, it does indeed seem that Kandinsky's awareness and knowledge of Nietzsche was second hand, at times, heavily influenced by Rudolf Steiner.

Nietzsche: The Spiritualist.

Among the scholars who interpret Nietzsche as spiritualist or even as a religious thinker are Heidegger, Kee, Burnham, Taha, Frazer, van der Braak, and Benson. Although Nietzsche is not an obvious spiritual figure, my aim is to articulate that my interpretation of Nietzsche as spiritualist is also that of Kandinsky's. My further aim here is to draw from the interpretations of the above-mentioned scholars, as well as to understand why Kandinsky was drawn to, and influenced by Nietzsche.

Although Nietzsche's works are generally divided into periods, I also aim to argue that although his interest in religion lasted throughout his career, beginning with early works such as *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), right through to his late works, including *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1883. However, Nietzsche's spiritualism was more one of an imminent nature than that of Kandinsky's. Whereas the Russian painter's spiritualism was influenced by the occult, Nietzsche's immanent spiritualism was much more concrete.

Yet, it was also one separate to Kant's transcendent type of spiritualism. Indeed, Nietzsche offered a spiritualism which involved his 'yes' to life which he presents as the 'will to power'. Nietzsche was very aware of the consequences associated with a non-religious society. Namely, that as morality was based on religion, that if religion was to be rejected, so was morality. Nietzsche therefore advocated a re-valuing of values. He went on to posit that irreligious people still needed a world possessed with ethical significance.

For Nietzsche, the loss of religiosity equated the disappearance of the basis of life itself (Kee, 1999). In addition, texts such as C.F.Kopen's *The Religion of the Buddha* (Panaioti, 2012), and M. Muller's pieces on comparative science of religion (1854), made up books read by Nietzsche while his own penning of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1994). In fact, Nietzsche argued that his own time was ripe for the emergence of a spiritual philosophy such as Buddhism-a period during which liberation of the self was to replace 'redemption by an external redeemer' (van der Braak, 2013).

Van der Braak therefore suggests that Nietzsche is indeed a spiritualist as opposed to a conventional religious thinker; a characteristic of Nietzsche's which would have been important to Kandinsky, and one which would have drawn Kandinsky to Nietzsche. Nietzsche uses the concept of spiritualisation as the process by which humans acquire the principle of the 'inner life'.

For instance, in his 1889 text *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche maintained that 'Spiritualisation in sensuality is called love: it represents a great triumph over Christianity' (p.22). This process is achieved when passions which function aimlessly become astute and, it may even be suggested, gifted in their workings. This point is echoed in the Theosophical concept which maintains that as humans, we associate ourselves to the world in a threefold way-through the body, through the soul, and through the spirit.

By spirit of, it is suggested that as, to quote Goethe, "quasi-divine beings", (*The Experiment as Mediator of Object and Subject*, 1792) we notice the content of the world as they disclose themselves to us. This Theosophical principal therefore enables us to gain self-awareness (Steiner, 1994). In addition, Theosophy contributes to people's discovery about the human voyage towards soul-wisdom; a notion shared by Kandinsky.

This view is in line with Nietzsche's concept of the 'inner life' mentioned above, which emphasises the view of Nietzsche as a spiritual figure. Nietzsche expounded the importance of art in enabling humans 'revalue the world and human experience' (Came, 2005). For Nietzsche, art is a metaphysical addition that will help

towards the attainment of transcendence of nature; art is the highest form of human activity.

In *The birth of Tragedy* (1993, p.52), he states that 'again we may see the artistic buoyancy and creative joy as a luminous cloud shape reflected upon the dark surface of a lake of sorrow'. Thus, Kandinsky was influenced by and made reference to Nietzsche when he expounded the value of art in enabling people to look to their 'inner self', again, further accentuating Nietzsche as spiritualist. However, Nietzsche is famous for his bold condemnation of Christianity (Frazer, 2013), making him an odd choice for an account of spirituality.

Yet, Nietzsche is also the figure who was thought to be 'that passionate seeker after God, and the last German philosopher' by Martin Heidegger (1933). It may therefore, require a complex analysis of Nietzschean thoughts to truly gain a balanced opinion regarding these seemingly contradictory notions. According to Kee (1999), a critique of Christianity can be identified throughout Nietzsche's works. Yet, Kee (1999) goes on to argue that Nietzsche's stance on religion is of a complex nature-one is likely to be misinformed to view Nietzsche as an atheist.

Moreover, as maintained by Burnham (2007), although Nietzsche can seem to be a comprehensive critique of Christianity, this is not always the case, as will be demonstrated while discussing the last book I present to inform my argument. According to Taha (2013), Nietzsche's philosophy pervaded with an entrenched spirituality, which drove and defined his pagan vision of life-a vision that was manifest even in his most cataclysmic texts.

In fact, the previous arguments by Burnham (2007) and Taha (2013), support late 19th, early 20th century proposal made by Frau Lou Andreas Salomé (van der Braak, 2013). Here, I claim that Nietzsche should be understood as a spiritualist thinker as he held a strong belief regarding the importance of self-discipline, or asceticism. As already commented on, this suggestion soon lost favour post WW2. It has furthermore been argued by van der Braak (2013) that

Nietzsche's Dionysian philosophy comprises a 'soteriology'- 'a teaching of Christian liberation', a representation of salvation.

The above view, although supportive of Fraser's *Redeeming Nietzsche: On the Piety of Unbelief* (2002), counters Benson's (2007) thoughts in *Pious Nietzsche*, who presents Nietzsche's non soterority as Dionysian piety. Benson also emphasises that, resulting from the type of pietism Nietzsche experienced growing up, Nietzsche developed 'a childlike trust in God rather than doctrinal correctness.

This argument by Benson does seem more convincing as his view on the figure of Nietzsche is the same as that of Kandinsky's, who, while referring to change in his chapter on 'Spiritual Revolution' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p.14) states that 'When religion, science and morality are shaken, the last two by the strong hand of Nietzsche, and when the outer threatens to fall, man's turns his gaze from externals in unto himself'.

Similarly to Kandinsky, who rejected Russian Orthodoxy in favour of Theosophy, Kee (1999) raises the common view that the beginning of one of Nietzsche's journeys involved his rejection of religious faith which contributed to his search for a different type of faith by which to live. Indeed, the type of pietism held by Nietzsche is a less conventional one; namely 'Dionysian' pietism. Nietzsche's journey towards this 'Dionysian' pietism involved two elements. Firstly, Nietzsche needed to fight against and surpass and his own decadence (Benson, 2007).

It has in fact been suggested by van der Braak (2013), that Nietzsche's general philosophy is one of self-overcoming. Secondly, Nietzsche needed to find another askesis, or way through which he could obtain self- control, from which he could learn how to say 'Yes and Amen'. In support of Benson's (2007) view on Nietzsche's spiritual beliefs, which, according to Benson involved the importance Nietzsche felt music had on the human spirit, whereas Kandinsky obtained his askesis through his abstract Symbolist paintings, Nietzsche sought out a musical askesis; askesis being a spiritual exercise in self-development and transformation.

I will thus suggest that the type of askesis required by Nietzsche in order to obtain 'Dionysian' pietism comes in the form of music. This is therefore a musical askesis as an affirmation of bodily life, and a challenge to decadence. As identified previously, this idea is the same as Kandinsky's perception of Nietzsche, so I shall now present textual evidence of Nietzsche as a spiritualist. God and Christian religion do, whether explicitly or implicitly, widely feature in texts by Nietzsche.

Works such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, The Anti-Christ, and Beyond Good and Evil*, are some such examples. In his 1882 text *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche celebrates the death of God as an expression of the significance that the meaninglessness of life motivates us to give meaning to our life. An extract in this text describes how a madman runs through a marketplace announcing the death of God-'God is dead, and we have killed him' (*The Gay Science*, 1974, p. 182).

As will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, Nietzsche informs people of the death of God through the personification of the madman, and to the realisation that 'belief in the Christian God has become untenable in modern Western society' (McGrath, 2004). Accordingly, it has been suggested by Hamilton (2007) that Nietzsche was 'haunted by God'. Consequently, Nietzsche can appear as both a virulent atheist and as pious.

Nevertheless, through a careful analysis of certain of Nietzsche's texts, I aim to propose that Nietzsche was indeed a 'spiritual' character. In what follows, I shall present Nietzsche as a Spiritualist through a rich analysis of three of his texts. Whereas as Kandinsky obtained spiritual enlightenment via abstract art, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche presents a model that describes the process towards spiritual enlightenment. The central character in this text, Zarathustra, leaves home at the age of 30, withdraws into a cave in the mountains, in search for enlightenment.

During his 10 years stay in the mountains, Zarathustra experiences the growth of his spirit, and uncovers the riddle concerning the existence of man. For Nietzsche, Zarathustra represents a prologue that he foresees as comprising the formation of new principles and

values, as well as a new beginning finale to Western humanity's ultimate recognition that its belief in a 'true world' has been incorrect (Gooding-Williams, 1995).

Zarathustra is therefore a question about the future, and that of man's place within the world in the future. How might this be obtained? It may be wondered why Nietzsche might want these changes to occur sooner than later? As far as Nietzsche is concerned, man is composed of a blend of biological entity and conscious volition. Yet, so Nietzsche posits, man has not historically lived a carefree, productive life, as man's attributes have not been integrated as adequately as they have been in certain art forms such as Greek myths and visual art (Burnham & Jesinghausen, 2010).

Often defined as a theological exhibition, *Zarathustra* abounds in biblical symbolism (Santaniello, 1994), and was a momentous text in terms of his critique of Judeo-Christianity. In fact, Nietzsche viewed his Zarathustra as the Fifth Gospel who would pulverise the other four (Heller, 1973). Nietzsche therefore aims to develop a 'life-affirming' type of redemption (van der Braak, 2013).

Van der Braak's concept of *Zarathustra* is credible as Nietzsche's affirmation confirms Nietzsche's zest for life and life affirming view of the world; a notion that would be attractive to Kandinsky, and one which he portrayed as the 'life of the spirit' which he portrayed as a large acute-angled triangle divided horizontally into equal parts with the narrowest segment uppermost.

The lower the segment the greater it is in breadth, depth, and area……In every segment of the triangle are artists. Each one of them who can see beyond the limits of his segment is a prophet to those about him, and helps the advance of the obstinate 'whole'. Kandinsky therefore felt that an artist's purpose is to serve a higher cause amid the degeneracy of modern life and maintained that '….the internal truth of art, the soul without which the body can never be healthy, whether in an individual or in a whole people'. Reinforcing his view of the artist as prophet, and his redemptive power to transform the future of mankind, Kandinsky maintained:

> And so at different points along the road are the different arts, saying what they are best able to say and in the language which is particularly their own. Despite, or perhaps thanks to, the differences between them, there has never been a time when the arts approached each other more nearly than they do today, in this later stage of spiritual development.

In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche appoints to humans the authority assigned by Judeo-Christianity to God. In doing so, he thus rejects the Christian conventions. Nietzsche dismissed and scorned Christianity for not being pagan, or anti-Greek. He therefore, quite understandably pitted the Pagan spirit against the Christian spirit exemplified appropriately and so well, by Dionysus; namely, the life affirming God, and by the 'innocent crucified' (Taha, 2013).

Taha (2013) makes a very correct point when he maintains that by contrasting these Gods, Nietzsche is repudiating the figure of the 'innocent victim' introduced by the church, with the aim to control society by fixating on the crucifixion of Christ, when Nietzsche believed they should have focused on the exemplary life Christ had led - a life Nietzsche saw as one to follow, instead.

Nietzsche therefore supported the loss of this 'life-denying' God and the collapse of the justice and principles which preserved this authoritarian deity 'above the clouds', a world of forms first described by Plato, which was believed to be transcendent to our own world; namely, the world of substances. Nietzsche therefore aims to break down the idea of there being two worlds.

For Nietzsche, the loss of the life-defying god marked reincarnation of a truly divine figure- man was to strive to achieve a higher status without being other-worldly, and thus transcend mankind, and thus reaching the position of the Overman, namely, the *Übermenschen* (Taha, 2013), a notion supported by Kandinsky, who felt that human kind was to reach its highest spiritual potential via abstract art and inner necessity.

The ascent of the Overman is a return to nature, so Rosen (2004) posits, supporting a previous view by Schacht (1995), who maintains

that *Zarathustra* can be read as a meditation about how to acquire self-overcoming. For instance, Zarathustra's aim in the prologue's three searches is to persuade the people to take up a route to wisdom by withstanding the *Übermensch* as their greatest expectation to call to mind a yearning for the *Übermensch* as an objective of human existence.

According to Senior (2009), the purpose of Nietzsche's teaching of the *Übermensch* was to trigger the development of 'the new, the unique and the incomparable' in man and art, and thus reveal the true meaning of human kind. Senior views Nietzsche's meaning-'over and above man' or the transcendence of man as he is in the present time. Therefore, it is important to view Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as symbolising and defining the self- affirming humanity of the future.

The *Übermensch* epitomises the restoration of the divine which was preceded by the destruction of the Judaeo-Christian god. He instantly characterises the pinnacle of the eternal overcoming, the will to power, and the culminating aim of humanity, so maintains Taha (2013). Nietzsche's conceptualisation of the *Übermensch* defines the bonding between the corporeal body and the immaterial spirit; 'it is transcendence and immanence' (Urs Sommer, 2017).

We may wonder about the identity of this pagan God, who epitomises the 'yes' to life, this inherent God or constant self-overpowering, of everlasting rebirth and death. This description is very similar to that of Dionysus-the Greek god of wine, fertility and ecstasy. For Solomon (2002), the portrait of Nietzsche's Zarathustra defines a non-other-worldly philosophy; a philosophy through which human zest and vigour are celebrated and rejoiced, not devalued and opposed to.

Solomon (2002), therefore metaphorically identifies the type of spirituality Nietzsche advocated as 'overflowing'. Nietzsche's conceptualisations of the divine and the *Übermensch* are inseparable, according to Nietzsche's 'one' principled view of the world and of divinity, as well as being made of the same essence. Part four of *Zarathustra* indicates that Zarathustra has overcome his pity for the 'higher men', with whom he congregated in his cave.

Yet, Zarathustra left the cave now and again for fresh air. He also saluted the sun; a metaphor opposing the darkness of the cave, to which Zarathustra returns to the 'higher men'. This enabled him to overcome himself. According to Pothen (2000), Nietzsche exposes the values that are to supplant the seemingly doubted values related to the certainty of God.

Nietzsche, so maintains Pothen (2000) also starts to appreciate the huge responsibility in the development of new values, as well as the great liberation afforded by this replacement. Zarathustra's discourse, 'Of the Three Metamorphoses' describes the above mentioned process towards enlightenment man needs to achieve to attain freedom from old values, in order to obtain the 'right to new values'. This involves the spirit's gradual progression from its initial change into a camel, the camel which then becomes a lion, and the lion which finally becomes a child.

Nietzsche's use of the term 'spirit' is applied in two ways. Firstly, he uses it as the classic human designation or appointment, with a specific reference to Judaeo-Christian belief (spirit as soul, as opposed to the body). Secondly, the term is applied to describe the transcendence of spirit over body, mind, and soul (Burnham & Jesinghausen, 2010). The initial stage in the process of human development into a camel defines the robust deferential spirit that bears a heavy burden.

What is important to mention is that Nietzsche presents the spirit of camel as one which 'kneels down….and would be well laden' and ' presses on into the desert', suggesting a positive view of the beast of burden; one which has the capacity for 'great strength of will', as opposed to that of more of a slave (Burnham & Jesinghausen, 2010). The camel yearns to be tested with a challenge to demonstrate his strength (Burke, 2011).

Nietzsche describes the Camel spirit as one of vanquishments, and wounds. The camel asks: 'What is heaviest…that I may take it upon me and rejoice in my strength (*Zarathustra*, p. 54). How does this self- burdening benefit the development of the Overhuman (the last human)? Until now, Nietzsche has given us one complex reason;

namely that anyone who shies away from the Overhuman avoids going through any difficult or challenging process in order to maintain themselves as they are.

This process of self-overcoming is a difficult one as it defies and challenges everything held true to us. This self-overcoming is comparable to a purging of one's drives and impulses. Camels carry heavy loads and survive in the desert, whereas humans are burdened by any weight they carry. The route of weight leading into the desert is where the spirit finds itself (Meyer, 2019) through its second transformation.

The desert not only symbolises the camel's burden, and that the spirit is taken far away from the human, via this path, but it also has religious connotations. It refers to the Old and New Testaments, particularly Mathew 4 and Luke 4, thus further consolidating the view of Nietzsche as a spiritual figure. Then, the camel's change into a lion vanquishes his liberty to become his own master. The lion indeed searches for and combats his last master.

The last master of the lion was the dragon, whose name was 'Thou Shalt'. This last enunciation is clearly a reference to the Old Testament commandments, in which all moral obligations are enumerated. The dragon therefore represents all internalised values over numerous epochs. The camel 'relinquishes' all contentment and is 'worshiping' towards the 'greats' who bestow its burden, for whom it supplies its newly obtained strength. The lion slaughters his last master and proclaims 'I will'. This marks the spirit of insubordination and self-autonomy.

Yet, the lion is still unable to create new value principles; he still lacks the power of creation. Creation can only be achieved by the child. The final metamorphosis therefore involves the lion changing into a child. For Nietzsche, the spirit is a manifestation of life, Zarathustra defines the child as 'innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying. 'Yes for the play of creating, my brothers, a sacred yes-saying is needed: the spirit now wills its own will, the one who lost the world attains its own world' (p.27), a notion mirrored by

Kandinsky when stating that artists have to 'touch the soul of their perceiver'.

As manifested in his art, Kandinsky emphatically captured his own 'inner sound'. Albeit obtained via different means, Nietzsche's view concerning the need for man's path towards greater enlightenment in order to acquire freedom from materialism to be acquired via a spiritual quest was agreed by both Steiner and Kandinsky. This is reflected in Kandinsky's notion that the artist needs to reach their 'inner necessity' to be manifested in a painter's works. Yet, Zarathustra's representation of the child has been criticised.

When compared to Zarathustra's expansive description of the camel and the lion, researchers such as Benson (2007) and Gooding-Williams (1995) have commented on the shaky characterisation of the child; the reason being the 'yet to be' transformation of Zarathustra into the child when giving this speech. My next aim is to show a certain type of spiritualism in Nietzsche's *The Anti-Christ* (1888). Nietzsche, in this text, virulently criticises the two Gods- the ancient Yahweh and the Christian God (Santanielo, 2000), and writes a virulent critique of Christianity.

Moreover, according to Large (2000), the God Nietzsche stands against is one of a metaphysical nature. In addition, Nietzsche aims to reveal the social means of which he considers as partly shaping this God. There are three ways in which this text can be approached. Firstly, a contrast of the God from the Old Testament, secondly, a god as metaphysical, three, a god as a result of social forces. This trio of ideas is vital as it frames my discussion in terms of how I approach my analysis of each text by Nietzsche.

In the first few pages of this text, Nietzsche presents Christianity as 'more harmful than any vice', that has 'waged a war against the death against the higher type of man' (pp. 128-129). Taking on Christianity's most acknowledged principle-pity, Nietzsche views pity as the reverse of the stimulating passions that 'enhance the energy of the feeling of life: it has a depressive effect' (p. 130) and suggests that the use of pity is a way by which priests obtain power

over and possess people by reducing or inducing feelings of shame (Burnham & Jesinghausen, 2010).

Nietzsche also names theologians as the total reverse of people. Nietzsche viewed priests as holding completely different morals to the people, and as fake. He viewed the priesthood as hypocritical in their rejection of the life prescribed to them by Christ. In terms of the notion of pity, Kandinsky's critique of Russian Orthodox priests is different in certain ways to that of Nietzsche' when he stated the Russian priesthood had failed to comfort and support their parish during the emerging period of materialism.

While portraying what it means to be a priest, Nietzsche maintains that each one of them hold in them 'the arrogant theologian-instinct, who, having been given a God given right, plays all the great concepts out while demonstrating a 'benevolent contempt' (p.131) towards what he sees as his inferior- comprehension and appreciation, human moods and feelings, admirations, sumptuousness and empirical positivism.

Believing that no theologians demonstrate correct and honest views about anything, Nietzsche wages battles against this priestly supercilious predisposition. Nietzsche's proposed solution in order to defeat materialism is multi folded. For Nietzsche, the first two components include his critique of morality and the way it has led to the detrimental situation, or the 'no-saying'. In addition, the 'yes-saying', the glimpse of the development in a new life affirming ideal which needs to be involved to take on the same role of principles as that taken by the aesthetic ideals to bring about the moralised form.

Yet, in order for this development in a new life to occur, Nietzsche holds that one needs to acquire novel ways of seeing and feeling, which can only occur by reflecting on the old ideal and how it has contributed to how we have developed as people. In *The Geneology of Morals* (2013), Nietzsche discusses crucial ethical notions on which a new ideal would depend on. These include pre-moral values of virtue, obligation, and guilt.

For Nietzsche, the amalgamation of these notions would lead us on the route towards new refined ways in managing innately

predisposed instincts that aesthetic ideals had turned against the self (Nietzsche, 2013, II, 6; Clarke, 2015). As far as Nietzsche is concerned, God's will equalled 'the conditions of maintenance for the power of the priest', which needed to be taught and therefore required 'a revelation' (p. 150), which would consolidate priestly power.

Nietzsche believed a priest to be 'a parasitic kind of human being…abuses the name of God' (p.149). Furthermore, Nietzsche observed how he felt priests achieved this abuse '…From now on all things of life are so ordered that the priest is everywhere indispensable; at all natural events of life…..there appears the human parasite to denaturalize them….' (p.150). It is important to point out that here, Nietzsche is comparing nature with metaphysics, or other-worldly entities; not necessarily with spiritualism, thus indicating another spiritual element in this book.

Kandinsky on the other hand stated that; '….Music, which is outwardly unfettered by nature, needs no definite form for its expression. Painting today is almost exclusively concerned with the reproduction of natural forms and phenomena'. Accordingly, it seems that Nietzsche felt that priests took it upon themselves to witness, judge, and command the will of the people. Following this, Nietzsche argues that priests played a destructive role in the development of countries and cultures; a notion echoed by Kandinsky which he obtained via Steiner, when explaining the gradual rejection of Orthodoxy by the Russian people.

Nietzsche, for instance, identifies how Jewish priests destroyed 'the great epoch in the history of Israel' and reduced the result of every past historical event as characterising 'obedience to or disobedience of God' (p.149). As far as Nietzsche was concerned, the spirit and will to power of priests, as represented by Paul, were sadly characterised in Judeo-Christianity, and reigned over the world. Paul had rejected basic and simple Christianity. Nietzsche therefore stated in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that 'God, as created by Paul, is a negation of God' (p.27).

> In Paul is incarnated the very opposite of the ’bearer of good tidings’: He represents the genius for hatred, the vision of hatred, the relentless logic of hatred. What, indeed, has not this dysangelist sacrificed to hatred! (*The Anti-Christ*, 1990, p.96).

Even though Zarathustra struggled with the suffering of his dejection and sadness for them, Zarathustra held a great dislike for priests. A few points of interest are presented in part I, section 4 of *Zarathustra*. Firstly, Zarathustra disregards; some battles would be counterproductive to the advancement and elevation of the overhuman. Secondly, the value in the concept of vengeance: ‘nothing is more vengeful than their humility’ and they tarnish ‘whoever attacks them’.

The idea regarding the notion of vengeance explores the concept of pity and revenge which have been discussed previously. Nietzsche performs a revolutionary re-interpretation of traditional moral values with the aim to eradicate viewpoints which he perceived as decadent and life denying; ones he would replace with life enhancing Dionysian principles. Nietzsche tries to show how the figure of the historical Christ was distorted by St John, which led to the figure of Christ being mythologised.

Nietzsche demonstrates an admiration for, and a desire to return to the original Christ; The redeemer, a God who embodied noble virtues. For Nietzsche, there was a similarity between the 2nd and 3rd centuries and 19th century decadence. Instead of the mendacious Christianity presented by Paul, Nietzsche therefore proposed a return to the Dionysian spirit. In his 1878 text *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche identifies asceticism as an unnatural way of life, a ‘defiance of oneself’.

The ascetic ideal was, according to Nietzsche, a factor by which a good became an evil; ‘the life. In *The Geneology of Morals*, 1974, p. 98), Nietzsche advocates the difficult analyses of ascetic ideals and addresses two issues; bravery to look into the unknown and an awareness of these ideals as a fabrication via apothecary treatment.

Nietzsche rejected traditional morality and asceticism. As a replacement, Nietzsche calls for self-mastery. For Nietzsche, self-mastery was a process by which there would be, by giving back, an aim of strengthening as opposed to an aim of dejection and denial.

Thus, Nietzsche did not reject spirituality. The criticism Nietzsche affords to traditional ascetic ideals, which include, according to Van Ness (1992) both their ascetic practices and rationalisation, implies their referentiality to conventional morality. As far as Nietzsche was concerned, spiritual discipline stunted creativity and negated bodily life.

Nietzsche went on to state that being sustained by feelings of resentment, ascetic ideals were to blame for not only perverting social relationships but also for thwarting the fundamental process by which 'One becomes what one is' (*The Anti-Christ*, 1968, p. 117) by suffering and overcoming. For Nietzsche, the notion of becoming 'what one is' was a specific criticism against our lack of critical analysis of the self, and the life we chose to live.

Nietzsche further applauded and encouraged the process of becoming as opposed to the final destination, a notion supported by Kandinsky when discussing the process by which a painter developed his art form in order to acquire the ability to communicate a messianic message through his art. While thinking about the figure of Christ, he is characterised by Nietzsche as free spirited, a figure who endures the darkness of the world with bravery and optimism (Klappes, 2018), and therefore, typified this process of becoming.

Yet, this approach and engagement with life which Nietzsche's Christ adhered to was rejected by Christianity. On this appraisal of Nietzsche as a spiritual figure, it can be suggested that both Steiner and Kandinsky supported such similar notions as Nietzsche's view concerning human self-mastery and his disregard and low opinion of priests. The above analyses of the presented works by Nietzsche not only show a direct influence of Nietzsche on Kandinsky during his time in Munich, but also that Kandinsky was indirectly influenced via his readings of Steiner.

Indeed, Nietzsche's concepts of the 'Will to power' and of the *'Übermensch*' were such notions which directly influenced Kandinsky. The modernist period during which Kandinsky was painting, emerged in the decades previous to WW1. As stated by Butler (1994), this epoch witnessed a variety of socio-cultural changes from which flourished a number of artistic developments. Inspired by among others, were works by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900).

Kandinsky's stay in Munich when he became familiar with Nietzsche's works was influenced by numerous cultural figures, including Steiner. Chapter 2 explores the notion of esoteric symbolism which played a vast role at the start of the 20th century abstract expressionist movement as a way through which painters communicated their ideas.

CHAPTER 2 - 19th Century Decadence and Beyond: Discontentment during the Spirit of Modernism

As discussed above, a captivatingly multifaceted new modernist epoch between the late 19th century and the early 20th century took Europe and America by storm (Saler, 2018). Late nineteenth century decadence, as discussed in the introduction, was characterised by a society that perceives itself as failing and in decline; a people discernible by self-centredness, lacking in energy, with a 'blasé' and nonchalant attitude to life, and a perverse imagination (Grigorian, 2009).

During the Modernist period, the multi-faceted aspect of decadence was fundamental to many of the discourses and diatribes taking place at the time (Downes, 2010). Although the term Modernism was originally used to represent, in its literary sense, a novel mode of writing involving the usage of experimental techniques, it has since then encompassed a much broader scope (Lewis, 2007). This wider range of inclusions reached all different types of art forms and aesthetics.

According to Levinson (2011), Modernism, which was soon to be characterised as a movement, owed its intellectual development to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Stretching as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, and continuing at least up until the 1950s, the Modernist period encompassed various artistic movements such as naturalism, impressionism, post-impressionism, expressionism, symbolism, cubism, and dada, to name a few (Lewis, 2007).

Leading on from this broad range of inclusive aesthetics which emerged in parallel to a chaotic, and at times, meaningless world, existential questioning and search of purpose were often evoked on canvas. According to Hinrichs (1995), Modernism embodied the advent of a planned socio-cultural agenda much more so than any other preceding aesthetic mode, such as Minimalism or Surrealism. One major aspect of Modernism that was seen as highly deleterious was the notion of decadence.

In spite of the cosmopolitan origins of decadence, major literary figures associated with the start of decadence are the French poet and essayist Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), and poet Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), much of the fin-de-siècle poetry produced in France was imbued with notions of lurid and shocking content (Potolsky, 2013). Among British literary figures, the notion of decadence is mainly associated with Oscar Wilde (1854-1900).

The word 'decadence' implies weakening and collapse, and a reversal of social propriety. In terms of history, it is linked to the deterioration of wide socio-political constitutions. Such examples being Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire (Weineck, 1994). Yet, as from the nineteenth century, the word 'decadent' acquired a different meaning-as a corrupt, immoral aesthetic sensibility (Drake, 1982).

During the last decade before the turn of the 20th century, there was a strong sense of decadence and degeneracy which was as perceived by many, in need of rescuing (Frish, 2005). Decadence characterised the mood of ennui which was observable during the fin-de-siècle period. This Weltschmerz (world-sorrow) reflected much more than pessimism, and virtually teetered along the lines of clinical ill-health and the perverse (Stoehr, 2001).

The blend of non-realist aesthetics, provocative immodesty, unusual sexual preferences, and wantonness, had already by the last couple of decades of the 19th century, been viewed by writer George Du Maurier and many others as an element of society that was, according to Denisoff (2007) to be spurned. A number of these 'degenerate' behaviours were also condemned by essayist Walter Pater and author and critic Richard Le Gallienne, who had initially promoted the decadent and aesthetic movement.

For now, illustrations by Aubrey Bearsdley were thought to suggest that the decadent movement had stepped into the sphere of ridicule and mockery. This epoch was one during which such classic works of visual art and novels, for instance, by Oscar Wilde, were created such as The Decay of Lying, The Critic as Artist, and his most well-known novel The Portrait of Dorian Grey (1890). Yet, this period

was to eventually be associated with anything that revealed any innovative ideas and concepts in disciplines such as aesthetic philosophy, style, or theme of focus.

In his 1895 text Degeneration, Zionist leader, author, and physician Max Nordau (1849-1923) challenged what he perceived as characteristic of decadence-'the new aesthetic tendencies' in modern art. He specifically opposed writings on mysticism, impressionism, and symbolism, which included works by Tolstoy, Ibsen, Baudelaire and Nietzsche. In terms of music and the visual arts, Nordau denounced Wagner, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti (Marshall, 2007). Accordingly, Nordau would also have considered Kandinsky to be a decadent, with his views on Theosophy and interest in mysticism.

Symbolism was indeed an aesthetic response to changing epistemological and artistic powers shaping modernity; but an art form which diverged considerably from decadence. For instance, the decadent style of aesthetics was extremely incongruous with a symbolist world-view (Weir, 1995). While a highly decadent style of aesthetics solely related to the phenomenal world, Symbolism delved deeper into, and engaged more with the noumenal. This contiguity between the phenomenal and the noumenal was a fundamental element in Modernism.

These artists found their shared happy medium in a world as 'experienced by the senses and body' , whereas symbolisms perceived the world, and described the world via signs and symbols; a transmuted reality as opposed to things. Symbolists rejected the constituents in the natural world and kept away from any reflections concerning possible ways to, or the benefits of organising such materials in nature in any tightly and exact manner, whereas painters of decadent art captured enduring beauty of the imaginary world (Switzer, 2020).

Accordingly, the painters of decadent art saw no benefits in the use of description, which they felt was a poor medium through which the effectiveness and splendour of architecture and shapes could be uncovered; indication, insinuation, and intimation could only do so (Kolocotroni, Goldman, & Taxidou, 2013). Indeed, disciplines which

contributed to anxiety and fears such as aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics and philosophy were not thought to be able to be dealt with by more traditional styles of aesthetics (Stone, 2020).

Moreover, revelation in aesthetics and cover-up of the aesthete is, so Oscar Wilde argued in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the purpose of art. For Wilde, there was no such thing as 'moral or immoral' art, just good or bad art. This notion is in conflict with Kandinsky who considered artists to have moral responsibilities. Moreover, according to Wilde, people who see unattractiveness in beauty demonstrate a failure, whereas those who see beauty in magnificent things are the civilized.

In Germany during the Modernist period, aesthetic tastes and tendencies were concerned with conquering fin-de-siècle decadence – redefining German art and society (Peters, 2014). Yet, as early as 1888, Nietzsche already saw himself as a witness of these phenomena, which were to become, so states Scott (1998), a primary concern for Nietzsche. So much so, that he stated that 'Nothing has preoccupied me more profoundly than the problem of decadence' (*The Case of Wagner*, 1888, p. 155).

A notion, which, as will be demonstrated below, greatly informed Kandinsky's theory of art. This indeed led to Nietzsche's offering of a completed conceptualisation of anti-decadence (Weir, 1995). The next two subsections will show how Nietzsche informs Wassily Kandinsky's theories of decadence.

Nietzsche's philosophy of decadence.

Throughout Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical career, he aimed to ascribe meaning to human existence. On account of this, Nietzsche's purpose was to affirm life in spite of every hardship and suffering experienced by humans aware of the horror and misery of existence and escape nihilism (Meyboti, 2016). In his early years essay 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' featured in his text *Untimely Meditations* (2017), originally written in 1873, Nietzsche

discusses how the improved welfare in humankind could be obtained by a greater historical awareness of former times.

There was during Nietzsche's epoch, an investigation of history which centred on retaining and amassing data which was held as objective, namely, as scientifically true. Nietzsche viewed this exploration of history as a rejection of myth for history. The nineteenth century's fixation on the historical was, so Nietzsche argued, a manifestation of the decay and degeneration observed during this period. Essentially what had happened was that the use of historiography was being employed to explore the past through a rationally scientific lens.

For Nietzsche, this methodology for exploring the past was one with a hidden agenda, particularly when concepts of absolute progress, as initially proposed by Burnham & Jesinghausen, (2010). This, in turn had, so Nietzsche postulated, caused the rejection of myth. Enamoured with Paul Bourget's (1852-1935) works, a French novelist and critic who presented a remarkable example of the delicacy of literary statuses, and who along with other authors such as Ibsen, Zola, and Tolstoy, found contemporary cultures and individuals to be flawed.

Nietzsche felt Bourget mirrored his own thoughts about the state of modern society. He adopted the same terminology when defining what he felt was a pernicious society whose people were no longer interested in opposing and fighting against life's pain and hurt; namely, decadence. Bourget found the discords of modernity to be of an appalling nature. In his text *Essaies de Psychologie Contemporaine* (1883), Bourget communicated his first ever theme concerning academic life in France.

In this text, Bourget described this life of academics as having a deleterious impact on ideas and literature at the time and as being therefore, a life of decadence (Fewster, 1992). Bourget specifically made reference to the destructive effects of the French Revolution as the main cause of decadence, along with anti-royalism, freethinking and non-religious ideologies. Having experienced and surmounted

decadence himself, Bourget's purpose, so Fewster (1992) maintains, was to recondition society with his pen.

It was the vital factor leading to the phenomenon of decadence which took up most of Nietzsche's thoughts concerning its role in the deterioration of man (Scott, 1998). Species, so Nietzsche posited, develop justifications for existence through the conservation and improvement of their will; without which, the human species is incapable to live on. In true existential fashion, Nietzsche explained that due to the lack of identifiable meaning to life, humans must create their own life purpose.

Nevertheless, according to Nietzsche, Decadence led to a 'longing for nothingness as a result of decadence' (van der Braak, 2013). Decadence, so Benson (2007) suggests, represented everything Nietzsche stood against. In his first ever published article, Nietzsche's paradigm of decadence was of a complex nature-dialectically enhanced, which led him to actually be appreciative of certain of the merits of decadence. This may seem contrary to the previous paragraph's statement which maintains that decadence stood for everything Nietzsche was against.

In fact, one has to go through the decadence /nihilism in order to overcome them. Moreover, so Scott (1998) argues, decadence was more than just a disease from which Nietzsche was immune. Nietzsche was fully aware that he also had to struggle with this phenomenon. The notion of decadence postulated by Nietzsche, as well as its possible replacement, impacted greatly upon the transition to Modernism.

It has in fact been suggested by Bernheimer (2002), that the detrimental connotations linked to decadence acted as an 'agent provocateur' towards Nietzsche, which he was unable to ignore; ones which he would study extensively. Nietzsche viewed decadence as a hallmark of the modern age, Western history and metaphysics generally. He concluded, therefore, that decadence was an inescapable phenomenon. '….nothing is more modern than this total sickness, this lateness and overexcitement of the nervous

mechanism…' (*The Case of Wagner*) As far as Nietzsche is concerned, the logic of decadence involves an ultimate 'no to life'.

Nietzsche further accused Wagner of having given music a disease, and of having encouraged corrupt or depraved tastes (Krobb, 2004). A ferocious challenger to the avariciousness and greed first witnessed during the material period of the nineteenth century in Germany, there was a surge of interest in Nietzsche's writings especially among experimental visual artists and authors; the end result of which a cult of Nietzsche would be formed (West, 2000).

The modern age, so Nietzsche maintained, was a period of pessimism and unproductivity of the human spirit; of nihilism. The only way in which this epoch was to be handled was through a continual assessment of the modern age, as well as a recognition of specific principles-optimism, lack of self-pity, pleasantness towards life, and an enjoyable confirmation of life (Riser, 2006). Nietzsche thus advocated the re-emergence of qualities of distinction especially exhibited by imaginatively unrestricted, pagan spirits of the type observed in ancient Greek culture.

Nietzsche's remedy against decadence outlines the antipathy of the non-decadent self and the decadent self, opposing one another. Nietzsche's theory of decadence was mostly pertaining to the Greeks, Christianity, and the nineteenth century. Accordingly, Nietzsche posited that the Greeks had always been decadent due to their constant capacity to decline (Morley, 2004). Moreover, Nietzsche held Socrates up as the prime example of Greek decadence. For instance, in *Twilight of the Idols* (1990), Nietzsche presents Socrates as manifesting a most characteristic feature of decadence- that of a lack of spiritual unity.

Socrates, so Nietzsche suggested, perceived his energies and motivations, not as being a part of his way of being, but due to his own inability to attach any logical explanation to them as un-comprehensible features needing to be conquered by reason. In order to fight against this internal turmoil, Socrates believes he must elaborate a vast conceptualisation concerning the capability of rationality; and reason becoming the principal phenomenon.

The chief position transcending all other elements, so Socrates argued, would enable him to escape from the impact of these damaging influences. Indeed, Nietzsche considered the pre-Socratic Ancient Greek culture as embodying the affirmation of life, an ideal which he discussed in his first text *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche admired the pre-Socratic Greeks and their Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies as art developed via their pessimism. Life is redeemed in the face of their pessimistic reality through their artistic impulses, and therefore embraces life.

Although Nietzsche doesn't explicitly define nihilism in The Birth, the concept is rather noticeable in what he defines as the 'wisdom of the sylvan God, Silenus', what is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is- to die soon (*The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 42). Nietzsche therefore ascribes nihilism to the denial of the value of existence. As observed within his theory of slave morality, Christianity was also thought by Nietzsche to be responsible for the existent cultural decadence.

Firstly, Nietzsche believed that Christianity had duped modern man out of the benefits found in a number of societies. These included Greek, Roman, and Islamic civilisations. Renaissance traditions were also, so Nietzsche thought, denied to modern man by Christianity (Stellino & Gori, 2015). Moreover, Christianity, which according to Nietzsche was completely devoid of any sense of reality and incapable of dealing with any such actuality, was, as might be expected, a perishable foe of the 'wisdom of the world', namely, science. The proliferation of a decadent, house-trained type of man of a feeble disposition.

As discussed at the start of this section, Nietzsche perceived decadence as symptomatic of the nineteenth century. Anticipating 20th century notions of decadence, Nietzsche believed decadence to possess deleterious effects, with its serious and destructive elements and defects found in modern man and present cultures. Firstly, according to Nietzsche, decadence represents a lack of unity between an individual's sense of self and their culture, and any positive relationship between the two.

Secondly, decadence was viewed by Nietzsche as a physiological condition which impacted on a person's psychological well-being; disposing of individuals who suffer from it to be against life. Yet, while conceptualising his notion of decadence, Nietzsche was thinking not of licentious delights of the flesh, but more of decadence's involvement with zealous artistic rejections of these exact types of opulent pleasures.

However, neither did Nietzsche agree with a more laid-back attitude towards decadent styles of behaviour shown by mid-nineteenth century authors such as Charles Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde. Additionally, Nietzsche's theory of decadence was based on its critique relating to the difference between two types of philosophers (Benson, 2007). On the one hand, there were philosophers who philosophise out of their defects, as a support, as elevation, or as self-alienation.

Whereas the other type of philosopher philosophised out of their ability to obtain luxury, and the voluptuousness of a triumphant gratitude. All philosophies, arts and religions which originated from a weakness were decadent in nature. Nietzsche used the term 'decadence' in a very broad and deep sense; as an indicator of the presence of a critical mentality and the cult of form. He also used the term when referring to writers such as Proust or Baudelaire.

In Europe and America there occurred between 1890s and 1930s, a widespread interest in Nietzsche which was noticeable in a variety of disciplines other than philosophy (Foster, 1988). Nietzsche also, adds Huddleston, used the term 'decadence' to describe traditions and standpoints from different cultural backgrounds and ideologies, including art, religion, and philosophy which are developed by decadents and which are appreciated by decadents. Yet Nietzsche also argued against developing a general consensus about what people defined as decadence; he believed that what one individual may describe as decadent, another person may not.

The above point would be agreed on by Kandinsky, who believed that the feelings expressed via abstract art must be very individual, as might the emotions felt by the observer of abstract art. According to

Morgan (1996), art had been conceived since the 18th century, as a medium through which a decadent human way of being was able to restore itself. Acceding to religion, art was considered as being gifted with 'divine inspiration' originating from the socio-cultural advancement established by German idealism.

Despite his opposition to this metaphysical notion, Nietzsche did however posit in his text *Human, All too Human* (2004), originally written in 1878, that 'Art raises its head where religion declines; a notion which Kandinsky favoured and which became the foundation of all his abstract art. Nietzsche then went on to assert that a new form of feeling was given to life by art; one previously obtained through religion during the pre-enlightenment period.

According to Nietzsche, art also infused human activities with 'a loftier, darker coloration'. This point was reinforced by Kandinsky, who often portrayed good vs evil within his art. The particular type of art Nietzsche had in mind when considering its ability to re-establish humanity was that of myth making. According to Nietzsche, myths were a means through which a culture's healthy energy was able to communicate with itself; in turn contributing to the greater advancement of this particular culture's health.

While discussing the importance of 'myth', Nietzsche meant 'a ruling idea or ideal, that which gives a society its coherence and from which a derived personal and national identity, morality, art, science, and government' (Glatzer Rosenthal, 2007). Nevertheless, according to Nietzsche, myths had lost their meaning, new myths therefore, needed to be generated. Furthermore, as stated by Magnion (2003), Nietzsche conceptualised his notion concerning myths in terms of their possession of beneficial social values; a robust challenge to nineteenth century decadence.

It therefore seems apt to position Nietzsche's theory of myth as part of the general domain of his philosophy. For Nietzsche, the restoration of myth was the only way through which this decadent epoch could be opposed. As will be further discussed later on in the chapter, the specific myths Nietzsche considered as boasting these benefits were the Greek tragedies and the Classical Greek principles.

The appalling significance of life was to be surmounted by warranting that life was worth living in spite of its numerous disappointments and calamities.

In accord with the Greek exemplar, Nietzsche blamed a fragmented society on one within which there were no mutual bonds between its members; he therefore stated that all individuals living within a same culture needed to come together in order to put their quarrels and differences aside. According to Nietzsche therefore, the only way to overcome decadence did not just involve a fight with life, but also by getting back into step with life. This point will also be further developed later in the chapter.

According to Nietzsche, 'myth' does not oppose 'truth'-considering the continual fluidity of the Cosmos, there can be no absolute 'truth'. Neither does life hold any inherent essence- this needs to be bestowed by humans via myths. Nietzsche's position on decadence has not, however, been averse to criticism. For instance, Conway (1995) argues that Nietzsche only offered an informal introduction and a temporary analysis of decadence.

In view of the fact that Nietzsche views decadence as having been a troubling phenomenon throughout eras, cultures, and individual men, Conway furthermore posits that never did Nietzsche submit a comprehensive description of decay. However, if we are to understand decay as 'nihilism', it may be suggested that all of Nietzsche's philosophy is one of 'decay' and it's overcoming. Despite many of Nietzsche's works, especially those from his post-Zarathustran period demonstrating his 'preoccupation' with decadence, Nietzsche employs the term 'decadence' very loosely, so Conway argues.

It may also be suggested that Nietzsche did present some allegiances to certain types of materialism. Through a robust analysis of materialism which occurred during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, there seems to have been three different types of materialism; scientific, cultural, and moral. The first, and maybe, most obvious type concerned materialism of a scientific nature.

In Europe, the nineteenth century witnessed a re-developed structural setting in science relevant to such disciplines as medicine, technology, industry, and among others, biology. Mostly credited to new scientific discoveries (Gregory, 1977), the natural sciences were gaining increasing growth and interest in Germany, which was to have great consequences for religion and literature (Cahan, 2013). Yet, Nietzsche did not oppose the scientific type of materialism, arguing that the world is a material one, and which humans are part of; maintaining that things were just as they were.

The above point may however be explained by the Russian theosophist, Rudolph Steiner's thinking about Nietzsche's acceptance of scientific materialism. The second type of materialism was that of a cultural nature. Nietzsche's thoughts concerning this type of morality suggests that he aimed to surpass modernity through the creation of a superior mode of culture and society, in order to enable man to develop as much as he is able to. A text with many religious overtones, Nietzsche penned *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as an education to man.

In this text, Nietzsche uses Zarathustra as a mouthpiece for his own views. In Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, one of his fundamental notions concludes that Nietzsche argued that human kind should start to question a life without God and proposes living a life based on other values obtained through different means. As stated by Higgins (2010) Nietzsche further maintains that Man would thus come to reach, and hopefully acknowledge, this tragic insight.

This point will be developed further via my interpretation of *Zarathustra*, when presenting Nietzsche as a spiritual figure. This view was later taken up by Kandinsky, who believed that abstract art would enable man to reach greater spiritual enlightenment. The third type of materialism concerned morality. As previously mentioned, the late nineteenth century indeed witnessed an increased belief by men that every difficulty and all complications-even all problems held by man, could be resolved by natural sciences.

As of the last decade of the nineteenth century, the act of faith was thus viewed as no longer beneficial to man, which, as maintained by

Chadwick (1990), left behind the great status of biology and other natural sciences as the pursuit for each and every certainty. Yet, in the great wake of the vast capacities of the natural sciences was left the desolation that no scientific discipline was able to offer certainties that concerned man and morality, and that this type of certainty for man was no longer needed.

As I have just shown, Nietzsche not only aimed to diagnose nihilism, but also sought to overcome this destructive condition via a societal re-emergence of myths. Next, I present Kandinsky's own theory of and overcoming of decadence in which he offers a spiritual rebirth as a remedy.

Kandinsky's visual rebuke of decadence.

While Nietzsche has a complicated view of materialism, seeing it on the one hand as reductive and devitalised, but on the other as necessary to overcoming our historical fate. Kandinsky adopts the more critical and pessimistic of Nietzsche's view of matter, viewing materialism as harbouring and infecting the human mind with despair and unbelief, of lack of purpose and ideal. Kandinsky conceived of an emptiness in objective representations.

Indeed, in his theoretical works, Kandinsky remarked on 'The impossibility, and, in art, the purposelessness of copying an object, the desire to make the object express itself, are the beginnings of leading the artist away from 'literary' colour to artistic, ie: pictorial aims' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p.20). Like many other expressionist artists, Kandinsky felt himself trapped in a depression of a degenerate cultural and intellectual atmosphere (Lessem, 1974) existent at the time.

However, Kandinsky believed that a period during which there would be a 'spiritual revolution' was about to take place; a period he called the 'spiritual turning point' (Selz, 1957). According to Kandinsky, this specific epoch would enable the artist to rise above 'cruder emotions'-fear, joy, and heartache, and therefore escape 'the nightmare of materialism' (Alderton, 2011) characterised, as

Kandinsky maintained, by 'the deification of matter' (West, 2000). This fervent belief was manifest in a number of cultural displays.

From a theological perspective, for instance, theosophy was aiming to thwart the apparent materialist age. Kandinsky thus perceived the theosophical movement as a challenger to the decadence by advancing the human desire to seek 'to approach the obstruction of the inner self via 'inner enlightenment'. At the turn of the twentieth century, Kandinsky connected representational art with consumerist principles, whereas he paralleled abstract art with spirituality (Marks, 2003).

In a truly theosophical spirit, Kandinsky stated his clear desire was that 'spirit will be reflected everywhere' owing to the pledge of a 'great spiritual epoch'. In his classic text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), Kandinsky maintained that humankind no longer possessed its ability to perceive the spiritual. He further went on to state that his art had the capacity to re-invigorate and restore dormant imaginative, intuitive, and inspirational powers (Schwartz, 1997).

Many of Kandinsky's theoretical texts mirrored Russia's 'Silver Age' rejection of the increasingly material world unfolding at the time (Marks, 2003). According to Kandinsky, the bourgeois epoch's materialism was contributing to a diseased soul, which only abstract art was able to release. As mentioned above, and, it seems, almost as a reflection of Nietzsche's claim concerning art's possession of 'divine inspiration', Kandinsky was the first visual artist and art theorist to record a dialogue about the spiritual in art.

Considered the father of abstract expressionist art, Kandinsky's art aimed to reach beyond the material world, with the purpose of creating a mystical reality. In truth, it was held by Washton Long (1980) that Kandinsky's art contained a 'messianic tone'. Kandinsky's art owned a

> belief that an abstract style of painting had great potential for the forceful expression of cosmic ideas and helped to take the concept of abstraction out of the realm of decorative design and offered a way to express more powerfully the transcendental values of a spiritual vision (The life of Vassily Kandinsky in Russian art; A study of "on the spiritual in art", pp. 43-61).

The present age's manifestation of the troubling angst towards decadence ushered in via modernity further encouraged Kandinsky's advocating of the occult and theosophical principles in that they were both perceived by the Russian artist as enabling a re-enchantment of human history (Bramble, 2015). The quest for concealed permanent certainties in art and the occult, was, for Kandinsky, a way through which the world could re-capture a sense of magic, a re-positioning of mankind's past far from the void of avarice and emptiness.

Theosophy's great charm for Kandinsky was therefore, due to the collective crescendos it offered in a world becoming increasingly material. As will be made clear in chapter 3, while discussing the long-held association between art and spirituality, Kandinsky's art aimed to achieve an amalgamation of cerebral and mystical features; not only on an individual basis but also, on a universal one. Kandinsky exposed the external attires of his epoch such as materialism and lack of spiritual faith as well as his individuality to attain the everlasting and mystical in art (Carlson, 2015).

Yet, as Wolf proposes (2004), having appeared as a vital philosophical character to Kandinsky, Nietzsche remained a revolutionary philosopher in Kandinsky's eyes by offering a tremendous model of 'self-liberation away from authoritarian constrictions, bourgeois narrow-mindedness, and material thinking' (Wolf, 2004, p.8.). Kandinsky did indeed always maintain a robust rejection of positivism and pragmatism at the turn of the twentieth century which led him to reject depictions of visible items in order to infiltrate below the layer of appearances to capture 'inner' reality (Seltz, 1957).

Kandinsky also publicly associated the formalist way of looking at art with a scientifically directed route, which he regarded as a greatly

inappropriate lens through which to capture the intrinsic quality of art. Kandinsky maintained that

> The work of art is spirit, which speaks, manifests itself, and propagates itself by means of form. Thus, one can explain form and make clear what forms have been employed in a work and for what reasons. Not that this actually enables one to hear the spirit. In the same way, it is easy to give an account of what chemical substances constitute a particular food; one knows the substances, but not the taste. And one's hunger remains unappeased (*Complete Writings on Art*, 1994, p. 290).

However, similarly to Nietzsche, Kandinsky was interested in natural sciences, as demonstrated in his writing on Synthetic art, when he states that 'Nature, faced with some great task, is extravagant, and its laws determine not only the material but, to the same extent, the spiritual life' (*Complete Writings on Art*, 1994, p. 714). Although Nietzsche was often rather critical of natural sciences, he aimed to 'translate man back into nature', as he posits in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1966, p. 161).

Nietzsche therefore wanted to physiologise our most human cultural developments such as ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics religion, politics, and science. Yet, Kandinsky used biomorphic shapes in order to reflect origin of life, and its spiritual overtones (Hicks Tiernan, 2013).

This presentation of both Nietzsche's and Kandinsky's views on decadence clearly demonstrate that both Nietzsche and Kandinsky's viewed decadence and materialism as having detrimental effects on the development of individual growth and cultural expansion. This presentation has also shown how Kandinsky's notion on decadence was influenced by Nietzsche's theory of decadence. It may be suggested that abstract art denies life through its exclusion of real impressions.

Yet, as Kandinsky equated abstract art with spirituality, and viewed spirituality as a tool through which a re-spiritualisation and a 'yes' to life was to occur with modern Western society, I argue that Kandinsky's art was life affirming. Chapter 3 explains how the

artistic break away from Impressionism to Expressionism came about as well as to why and how Kandinsky fits into this novel period of artistic development.

CHAPTER 3 - Esoteric Symbolism

In 1896, at the age of 30 having shown a great interest in art and artistic matters from a young age, Kandinsky and his wife left Moscow to study art and headed for Munich-a cosmopolitan city of art at the time (Duchting, 2015).

What is Symbolism? In opposition to Impressionism, with its emphasis on reality depicted by the artist, Expressionism as an artistic movement aimed to propose ideas via the use of symbols to accentuate the actual meaning behind the shapes, colours, and lines. Moreover, the use of specific shapes, lines, forms, and colours emphasised the artist's very personal and individualistic feelings, emotions, thoughts, and ideas. In terms of subject matters, these mostly related to mysticism and esoteric notions.

Other motifs of depiction, as briefly touched on in the introduction, included decadence, eroticism, and the perverse (Goldwater, 1998). According to Goldwater (1998), Symbolism emerged as a challenge against naturalism, as an antagonistic challenging to the positivistic naturalism celebrated during the Belle Epoch, symbolism and its proponents held a central position in the progression of modernism, through their undermining of the up-and-coming materialism (Girould, 2009).

The influence of esoteric and spiritual modes of thought upon symbolist art movements transpired during the last decades of the 19th century (Lahelma, 2018). Theosophy, so it has been suggested, acted as a foundation of many of the symbolist painter's understanding of art (Lingan, 2009). At the start of the 20th century, visual artists were no longer content with depicting the 'window-on-the-world' as portrayed by Impressionist painters such as Edouard Manet (1832-1883) and Claude Monet's (1840-1926).

As a movement, so Goldwater (1998) posits, symbolism began in the 1880s, and has been described as a challenge against naturalism. Although naturalism took on its classic form in about 1870, its roots originated in the 1860s.

When seen in a larger perspective, naturalism was itself the final stage of realism which had already been carried far by the prior generation (Goldwater, 1998).

The epoch of 1875, during which the theosophical society launched itself, was, so Hammer and Rothstein (2013) suggest, the time when various streams of artistic modes came to the fore. A number of artists who dabbled in the spiritual and the occult demonstrated a large interest in theosophy, which was to influence these artists works in terms of soundness in content and in soundness in form. Symbolist artists rejected the logically empirical world to reconnect with 'vanished' previous epochs, full of connections, correspondences, and reverberations.

Like Theosophy, symbolism was a broadly philosophical-religious movement, which was eclectic in nature. Symbolism also aimed to proclaim a new and more spiritual age. Although symbolism originated in France, in Russia, it became more than a technique. For Russia, Symbolisms equated to intuition, imagination, subjectivity, mysticism, and challenged ideals such as positivism, rationalism, and populism (Rosenthal, 2008). These Russian symbolists continually drove the boundaries of the creative expanses beyond what had ever been done before (Marks, 2003).

Inspired by Blavatsky's leanings towards developing occult *Weltanschauungs*, or particular philosophies of life, via a multicultural and creative applications in comparative religion, symbolist painters followed her thoughts by amalgamating components borrowed from a number of religious beliefs from various cultures around the world.

This fusing of a variety of elements led them to create a style of art which demonstrated these artists' strong belief that art was infused with a powerful capacity to show the way towards spiritual enlightenment (Carlson, 2015).

The purpose of this new movement's artists was wanting to convey was the life of ancient myths and folk stories, hallucinations and visions, as well as the world of dreams; which involved turning inwardly on the self. The ground-breaking aesthetic approach these

artists were pioneering theoretically and demonstrating through their works lay on a deep background of esoteric thought and questioning. Symbolism also combined culture and the occult with apocalyptic and messianism.

At the start of the twentieth century, a different emphasis blossomed out of a philosophical interest in the 'inner life'. Moreover, this increasing focus was also accentuated by specific aspects found in the German vernacular. For instance, the German term '*Geist'* signifies not just spirit, but signifies emotion, intellect, immortal substances too (West, 2000). In line with this philological peculiarity, visual artists turned their attention towards the illustration of the total '*Geist'*, therefore no longer limiting their focus upon their individual feelings.

Nevertheless, it has been suggested by Stewen (2014) that while symbolism contributed to an increase in personal volition, there was also a kindred similarity between its promoters. Despite the anti-positivist stance of many artists, there was a robust relationship between the discourse in artistic, scientific, and religious disciplines. Kandinsky always held a vast interest in the psycho-spiritual reverberations of symbols, an interest in collective mythologies and archetypes.

Originating from his Slavic background, the above mentioned interests were to be vastly influential not only on Kandinsky's work, but also on German aesthetics generally, during the first decade of the twentieth century. For Kandinsky, the quantities and scopes of form, as well as their hues were as important as each other. Not only did Kandinsky include angle-less flowing and changeable forms, he also incorporated circles, points, and lines in his pieces. According to Kandinsky, colour and form shaped the lexicon of abstract art.

Contrary to letters and syllables that make up the written word and which are geared towards cognition and rationality, colour and form in abstract art 'speak' to the soul (Rachiq, 2016). Kandinsky had strong links to both French and Russian symbolist movements (Duchting, 2000). For instance, Mondrian, a Dutch symbolist painter

known by Kandinsky, was particularly interested in theosophy, and developed an abstract form between 1910 and 1920s, which had never been seen before- Neoplasticism.

This novel art form was, so Mondrian depicted it, concerned with form; a lexicon of form. Kandinsky was also in close contact with Finnish symbolist painter and Swedenborg (1688-1772) enthusiast Akseli Gallen-Kallela (Walker, 2014). While considering Kandinsky's 1911 text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, a finer exploration enables a clear identification of Swedenborgian influences. Kandinsky heralded artists involved in all artistic modes as new forecasters directed to ease the process of man kind's spiritual progression (Walker, 2014).

In keeping with symbolism, Kandinsky viewed artists as prophets capable of sensing the 'inner need' to a higher degree than others. These abilities of such visionaries would be shared and revealed via their artwork. In terms of the way in which painters were to communicate 'inner need', Kandinsky applied a Swedenborg-like 'doctrine of correspondence' by promoting the development of abstract art as the most appropriate medium through which painters were to guide the emergence of a new spiritual epoch.

Yet, as Stoker (2012) asks, how does symbolist art manage to convey the spiritual, and how, as observers, are we to interpret a specific 'spiritual' work of symbolist art? According to Kandinsky, though, as 'the artist has to touch the soul of the perceiver through the colour and form of his work', one should create non-precise styles of art, ones that are insinuations of actual reality.We should therefore understand Kandinsky's symbolism as a way through which he used colour and form in order to enable the observer to experience a particular spiritual sense of being.

Kandinsky's theory of colour and form would be one which he would develop over a period of time, between 1911-1919, working with Franz Marc and *Der Blaue Reiter*, and 1919-1933, while working at the Bauhaus. Symbolism was therefore the method through which

Kandinsky demonstrated his spirituality. In support of the suggested notion discussed in chapter three concerning Nietzsche as a spiritual figure, the nature of Nietzsche's esoteric symbolism in *Zarathustra* was one which he developed in order to help mankind acquire genuine freedom.

The way in which Nietzsche carried this out was through the use of allegorical imagery as he presents the three metaphors of the camel, the lion, and the child, which were discussed in the previous chapter. Nietzsche's allegorical imagery such as that observed in *Zarathustra* and *The Birth of Tragedy* can also be seen as having influenced Kandinsky's symbolist art. For instance, Kandinsky's 1923 piece Composition VIII offers a metaphor for man's spiritual experience and how it relates to genius, which he describes in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977, p.10).

The life of the spirit may be fairly represented in diagram as a large acute-angled triangle divided horizontally into unequal parts with the narrowest segment uppermost.

> The lower the segment the greater it is in breadth, depth, and area. The whole triangle is moving slowly, almost invisibly forwards and upwards…..What today can be understood only by the apex and to the rest of the triangle is an incomprehensible gibberish…… At the apex of the top segment stands often one man, and only one. His joyful vision cloaks a vast sorrow…… In every segment of the triangle are artists. Each one of them who can see beyond the limits of his segment is a prophet to those about him, and helps the advance of the obstinate whole. But those who are blind, or those who retard the movement of the triangle for baser reasons, are fully understood by their fellows and acclaimed for their genius. The greater the segment (which is the same as saying the lower it lies in the triangle) so the greater the number who understand the words of the artist. Every segment hungers consciously or, much more often, unconsciously for their corresponding

> spiritual food. This food is offered by the artists, and for this food the segment immediately below will tomorrow be stretching out eager hands.

As Wolf (2004) indeed suggests, members of *Der Blaue Reiter* intended to achieve the essence of a yet to come 'existential world order', fitting of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Despite Lindsay and Vergo's (1994) suggestion that Kandinsky's nod to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* was originally represented in his apocalyptic prophecy, both Kandinsky and Marc later on, also aimed to reject the current 'world order' throughout the arts, in order to search for and define art, for themselves.

This ideal mirrors the Nietzschean themes of freedom and responsibility characterised in Zarathustra. In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche makes use of a strict analogy to Dionysiac religion when he identifies and comments on the capacity to eagerly seek out a higher form of individual manifestation and communication of 'inner necessity' manifested through art is an act of freedom. In the same way as Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* endeavoured to do so, Kandinsky and Marc wanted to characterise and present the 'inner self' as a mode through which humanity was to be saved from materialism and decadence.

Another notion central to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, namely, morality, was also an ideal that members of *Der Blaue Reiter* wanted to demonstrate via their works, as demonstrated on p.67, while discussing Kandinsky's notion of the life of the spirit. Like Nietzsche's Madman in *The Gay Science* (1974), Kandinsky aimed, as the artist' to bring about 'a new truth to mankind, one which the crowd does not understand' (Concerning the Spiritual in Art, 1912). As stated by Girard (see Wahl, 2017) Nietzsche mixed wisdom and madness together in a number of his texts.

For instance, in *Dawn* (2017), Nietzsche stated that 'all superior men who were irresponsibly drawn to throw off the yoke of any kind of morality and to frame new laws had, if they weren't actually mad, no

alternative but to make themselves or pretend to be mad'(p.14). This madness was, according to Nietzsche, inherently associated with art, as he maintains in *The Birth of Tragedy* that 'the intimation is that the poet is incapable of composing until he has become unconscious and bereft of reason' (p.12). Nietzsche's madman is therefore mad at the beginning of the text, but is wise. He is in fact taking on a pretention of madness.

Not only Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912) and works by *Der Blaue Reiter*, but symbolism generally became representational of a defining moment in the history of art which, especially Kandinsky and Marc, exemplified (Batschmann et al, 2016). Kandinsky and Marc later on, also aimed to reject the current 'world order' throughout the arts, in order to search for and define art, for themselves; an ideal which mirrors the Nietzschean themes of freedom and responsibility characterised in *Zarathustra*.

The nature of Nietzsche's esoteric symbolism in *Zarathustra* was one which he developed in order to help mankind acquire genuine freedom. The way in which he carried this out was through the use of allegorical imagery as he presents the three metaphors of the camel, the lion, and the child, which were discussed in the previous chapter. Nietzsche's allegorical imagery can also be seen as having influenced Kandinsky's symbolist art.

For instance, Kandinsky's 1923 piece *Composition VIII* offers a metaphor for man's spiritual experience which he describes in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977, p.10). This is contrast to Lindsay and Vergo's (1994) suggestion that Kandinsky's nod to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* was originally represented in his apocalyptic prophecy, The capacity to eagerly seek out a higher form of individual manifestation and communication of 'inner necessity' manifested through art is, I believe, an act of freedom.

In the same way as Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* endeavoured to do so, Kandinsky and Marc wanted to characterise and present the 'inner self' as a mode through which humanity was to be saved from

materialism and decadence. Another notion central to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, namely, morality, was also an ideal that members of *Der Blaue Reiter*, wanted to demonstrate via their works. For instance, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche makes use of a strict analogy to Dionysiac religion when he identifies and comments on

> The mystery doctrine of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness. (p.74)

There emerged in the first few years of the 20th century, various artists and movements such as socio-cultural enterprises like the *'Durerbund*', whose purpose was to preserve 'culture and civilisation' (Droste, 2019). On reflection, this desire was built on an appreciation and attraction of Nietzsche's cynical view of the world. For instance, Nietzsche claimed that the role of the philosopher was not to create a civilisation, as other past thinkers such as Plato, had argued, but to conserve, civilisation.

For Nietzsche, the philosopher was similar to a medical man, in that he aimed to diagnose, and then to suggest specific routes to limit further trouble (Daudey, 2017). As discussed earlier in the chapter, Nietzsche and Kandinsky showed great defiance against materialism both through the use of symbolism. Nietzsche was a philosopher for whom music was a robust force throughout his writing; one he described as holding a 'cosmic symbolism' (Emmet, 1966).

Yet for Kandinsky, music was an art closely amalgamated with painting and other arts; correspondences, through which he explored the emotive power of colour in conjunction with music (Goodrich, 2004). In view of these the next chapter will develop the symbolic use of music in Nietzsche's and Kandinsky's works to counter the ever encroachment of materialism upon the present epoch.

Modernism, the period during which spiritual symbols began to appear as abstract forms in visual art, was a very contradictory period; especially in terms of art history (Helme, 2014).

For instance, Armstrong (2005) argues that modernism was characterised by an interest in scientific development, while at the same time, fearing it; modernism repudiated the past, but held a deep respect for certain bygone eras; it celebrated in group making, while magnifying subjectivity. In Russia, as in a number of other European countries, doctrines adhering to theosophy were amalgamated with Western principles with their own religio-cultural backgrounds.

The introduction of the notion of 'occulture' while exploring the link between modern art and culture has therefore been suggested (Kokkinen, 2012; 2013). This term amalgamates the concepts of culture and the occult; focusing on the popularity of these two disciplines, these are considered vital elements within Western society, whereas Kandinsky amalgamated theosophical principles with shapes and colour. Symbolism also combined culture and the occult with apocalyptic and messianism.

The fundamental features of the theosophical worldview brought it into close philosophical affinity with the Russian symbolist movement. Although symbolism originated in France, in Russia, it became more than a technique. In Russia, Symbolisms equated to intuition, imagination, subjectivity, mysticism, and challenged ideals such as positivism, rationalism, and populism (Rosenthal, 2008). As will be demonstrated later, echoing the novel artistic practice Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* informed, these Russian symbolists continually drove the boundaries of the creative expanses beyond what had ever been done before (Marks, 2003).

Kandinsky, in his text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977), states that theosophy is another expression of the same spiritual movement we now witness in painting (Kramer, 2006). As stated by the Russian painter

> The spiritual life, to which art belongs and of which she is one of the mightiest elements, is a complicated but definite and easily definable movement forwards and upwards. This

> movement is the movement of experience. It may take different forms, but it holds at bottom to the same inner thought and purpose. (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 4)

Expressionism was indeed a period during which a dual synchronism between esotericism and materialism was made visible in art. In fact, spirituality had a vital role in the development of abstract art. Believing they had the capacity to immerse their abstract images with esoteric significance, artists other than Kandinsky such as Piet Mondrian, Kazimir Malevich, and Frantizek Kupka also based their pieces on theosophy and spiritual traditions, which they were very familiar with (Helme, 2014).

The influence of esoteric and spiritual modes of thought upon symbolist art movements transpired during the last decades of the 19th century (Lahelma, 2018). Theosophy, so it has been suggested, acted as a foundation of many of the symbolist painter's understanding of art (Lingan, 2009). At the start of the 20th century, visual artists were no longer content with depicting the Impressionist painters including Edouard Manet (1832-1883) and Claude Monet's (1840-1926) 'window-on-the-world'.

Inspired by Blavatsky's leanings towards developing occult *Weltanschauungs*, or particular philosophies of life, via a multicultural and creative applications in comparative religion, symbolist painters followed her thoughts by amalgamating components borrowed from a number of religious beliefs from various cultures around the world. This fusing of a variety of elements led them to create a style of art which demonstrated these artists' strong belief that art was infused with a powerful capacity to show the way towards spiritual enlightenment (Carlson, 2015).

The purpose this new movement's artists was wanting to convey was the life of ancient myths and folk stories, hallucinations and visions, as well as the world of dreams; which involved turning inwardly on the self. The ground-breaking aesthetic approach these artists were pioneering theoretically and demonstrating through their works lay on a deep background of esoteric thought and questioning. As

previously mentioned, the 18th century Swedish scientist and visionary Emanuel Swedenborg was a popular figure among the esoteric culture of the nineteenth century.

Various of Swedenborg's writings including those concerning his 'doctrine of correspondences and application of synaesthesia - like correspondence while defining otherworldly and mystical spheres, were found to be especially attractive to literary and artistic figures (Walker, 2014). For instance, parallels between Swendenborg and Kandinsky can be observed in Kandinsky's text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977) when he discussed how painters are to communicate the notion of 'inner necessity'.

Kandinsky's emphasis regarding a link between painting and music discussed in the above-mentioned text, can also be traced back to Swendenborgian ideas. The first few decades of the twentieth century abandoned prior artistic tendencies, namely, a concern with human relationships and emotions, which had been based on German Romanticism. German Romanticism was the most influential intellectual movement in German speaking countries, during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Based on Johann Gottfreid Herder's notion that a native spirit was uniquely expressed through culture, visual artists aimed to create a virtual nation via art. Contrasting the Enlightenment period, the younger generation of artists sought old traditions which originated from Paganism and Christian epochs which 'defined a heritage rich in mysticism and faith' (Morton, 2002), which resulted in Romanticism. At the start of the twentieth century, a different emphasis blossomed out of a philosophical interest in the 'inner life'.

In line with this philological peculiarity, visual artists turned their attention towards the illustration of the total *'Geist*', therefore no longer limiting their focus upon their individual feelings. Nevertheless, it has been suggested by Stewen (2014) that while symbolism contributed to an increase in personal volition, there was also a kindred similarity between its promoters. For instance, despite the anti- positivist stance of many artists, there was a robust relationship between the discourse in artistic, scientific, and religious

disciplines, which Kandinsky portrayed in his art through his use of form and colour while focusing and representing 'inner necessity'.

According to Saint-Martin (2008), the French director of 'Visual Arts and Christianity, XIX-XXI century', Kandinsky's spirituality was of a very particular kind; shaped by Christian and esoteric ideas, and thus in contrast to Nietzsche's anti Christianity. These would contribute to his synthesis between different art forms. The emphasis on the whole '*Geist'*, so West (2000) maintains.

Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* was vastly influential not only on Kandinsky's work, but also on German aesthetics generally, during the first decade of the twentieth century. For Kandinsky, whose favourite shape was the triangle, quantities and scopes of form, as well as their hues were as important as each other.

Not only did Kandinsky include angle-less flowing and changeable forms, he also incorporated circles, points, and lines in his pieces. According to Kandinsky, colour and form shaped the lexicon of abstract art. Swendenborg's 'doctrine of correspondence' was streamed through 19th century symbolism. In addition, both the influences of symbolism and theosophy can be especially witnessed in his writings on 'vibrations' which Kandinsky thought to be observable in artists or the individual when viewing form and colour.

Kandinsky's mindful belief in the emergence of man's mystical growth arose out of occult transformative and very 'a la mode' philosophies existing within various psychic groups around at the time, including the theosophical society (Weiss, 1979). Kandinsky heralded artists involved in all artistic modes as new forecasters directed to ease the process of man kind's spiritual progression (Walker, 2014), who, in keeping with symbolism and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, he viewed as prophets capable of sensing the 'inner need' to a higher degree than others.

These abilities of such visionaries would be shared and revealed via their artwork. In terms of the way in which painters were to communicate 'inner need', Kandinsky applied a Swedenborg-like 'doctrine of correspondence' by promoting the development of

abstract art as the most appropriate medium through which painters were to guide the emergence of a new spiritual epoch.

While adapting the terms for the two doctrines or routes written about in The *Voice of the Silence* (Blavatsky, 2016), Kandinsky discussed two types of art; the 'art of the eye' and the 'art of the heart', which he spoke about in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. While describing these two forms of art, Kandinsky refers to the art of the eyes' as one which is produced with 'more or less skill, virtuosity and vigour': With cold eye and indifferent mind, the public regards the work.

Connoisseurs admire 'technique', as one might admire a tight-rope walker, or enjoy the painting quality', as one might enjoy a cake. But hungry souls go hungry away'. But in describing the 'art of the heart' Kandinsky states: 'There is another art…but it possesses also an awakening prophetic power which can have far-reaching and profound effects'. This art is that of the spiritual life, a type of awareness, so Kandinsky posits.

Accordingly, Algeo (1982) exclaims that the 'art of the heart' deciphers man's composite movement toward what is exceeding and above us into the ease of understanding. While illuminating the origin of the rise in modern art, Kandinsky further exclaimed that it resulted from its rebellion against avidity and pragmatism which originated from the rebellion of longstanding values in a period of transformation:

> When religion, science and morality are shaken…and when outer supports threaten to fall, man withdraws his gaze from externals and turns inwards. Literature, music, and art are the most sensitive spheres in which this spiritual revolution makes itself felt. They reflect the dark picture of the present time and show the importance of what was at first only a little point of light noticed by a few. (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 43)

According to Pittock (2016), the ascent of symbolism left a shining legacy throughout the 20th century in terms of aesthetics and thought. The inclusion of spiritual expressions in art through the use of

distortions and overestimations equalled each other in terms of their use and purpose- to depict the physical world as translucent to the psyche. For Symbolists, French art critic Jeremy Billault (2016) suggests, that art needed to represent absolute truths which were unable to be directly manifested, otherwise.

Symbolism was hostile to 'ordinary senses', to declamation, and to false sensibility. Indeed, artistic forms were becoming decent enough for the coming of the spiritual epoch which had started to emerge, as Kandinsky affirming, in the most surprising place-in the barren 'materialist art of the recent past and present' (Florman, 2014). As a challenge to the age of materialism and science, symbolism urged man to look, and indeed, to see objects as replete with transcendent meaning.

Kandinsky's certainty in art's exact celestial energies is greatly apparent in his visual work, as it is also in his numerous lectures he gave. In effect, Kandinsky's 1912 text Concerning the Spiritual in Art was, so Wolf (2004) maintains, written in order to develop an 'art of the psyche'-or Spiritualisation' as it was named by Kandinsky. It was the aura of spirituality that, according to Kandinsky, provoked and sustained rhetorical interest (Tsakaridou, 2013). In the last few decades spanning the late 20th (Washton Long, 1983) and early 21st centuries, art historians have examined the development of modern art, and its inclusion of a number of spiritual elements and themes.

Although the works of various painters such as Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) or Kasimir Malevich (1879-1935) to more contemporary artists such as Anselm Kiefer (1945) and Mark Rothko (1945) have been part of this exploration, Kandinsky has for a long time, been considered the most spiritually inspired abstract painter. Spirituality has been recognised not solely as a marginal interest of Kandinsky's, but as having a major crystallising effect in his work (Duchting, 2015). Yet, as Stoker (2012) asks, how does abstract symbolist art manage to convey the spiritual, and how, as observers, are we to interpret a specific 'spiritual' work of symbolist art? According to Kandinsky, though, as 'the artist has to touch the soul of the

perceiver through the colour and form of his work', one should create non-precise styles of art, ones that are insinuations of actual reality.

> In order 'to understand' this kind of picture, the same emancipation is necessary as in the case of realism, ie., it must here too become possible to hear the whole world just as it is, without objective interpretation. Here, those abstracted or abstract forms (lines, planes, patches, etc.) are not important in themselves, but rather for their inner sound, their life. Just as in the case of realism, it is not the object itself, not its external shell, but its inner sound, its life that are important (On the Problem of Form, p.244, 1994).

Moreover, the manner through which art historians interpret Kandinsky's art as 'spiritual' is via their analysis of Kandinsky's inclusion of two specific elements-colour and shape, or form, as Kandinsky named it. In his text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977), Kandinsky devoted a whole chapter to 'the psychological working of colour', in which he discusses the psychological effects of the use of certain colours on the observer. For Kandinsky, colour initiated more than simple 'physical' sensations: '…to a more sensitive soul, the effect of colours is deeper and intensely moving…'from which then occurs 'their psychic effect. They produce a corresponding spiritual vibration…'(p.24).

In terms of Kandinsky's aim to enable humanity to move beyond the material world to the spiritual sphere, it may thus be suggested by the above statement that Kandinsky purposefully made use of specific colours to help the observer experience a particular spiritual sense of being. Accordingly, Kandinsky maintained that '…..Colour is the keyboard….The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul' (p.25). A principal time during which Kandinsky developed and used his art work to communicate his thoughts on the 'degenerate' period during which he was living was as the major figure of *Der Blaue Reiter* art group. Kandinsky found inspiration in his spiritual beliefs to produce works of art, being specifically informed by Theosophical principles and in

readings on the Vologda-pagan architectural buildings dating back to the 12th century (Dernbach, 2012).

Der Blaue Reiter.

Fervent admirers of each other's thoughts and works since 1910 and 1909 respectively, Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc first met on January 1st 1911, at a party held by Russian expressionist painter and key members of The New Munich Artists Association, Alexei Jawlensky and Marianne Von Werefkin, in Schawabing, a famous bohemian quarter of Munich. Later on becoming former members of The New Artists Association of Munich, the two Russian Expressionist painters would also join *Der Blaue Reiter*, founded a few years after *Die Brucke,* a bohemian group of artists, which was formed in Dresden in 1905 as a challenge to the conservative and traditional German bourgeois hierarchy at the time, and which is viewed as the forebearer of German expressionism. *Der Blaue Reiter* was a collective of artists that aimed to generate a progression towards a spiritual restoration through art.

They were, however, less idealistic in their approach in attempting their desire (Gager, 2004). The desire to 'give material shape to the spiritual world' which Kandinsky and his fellow artists aimed at originated from the Romanticism period. The other historically based age from which the association obtained a further concept for its development was *Art Nouveau*. *Art Nouveau* was introduced in Germany in 1896 by German sculptor Hermann Obrist (1862-1927). The *Jugendstil* movement, the German coinage of *art nouveau*, was eagerly promoted by various contemporary publications dealing with the fine arts and applied arts. Among others, such examples included the magazines *Die Jugend* (1895-1900) and *Dekorative Kunst*, founded in 1897.

Naturalistic or sentimental floral designs were the general styles of *Jugendstil*, and found inspiration in natural forms and themes related to folk art. However, as the progression of *Der Blaue Reiter* began to take shape, Kandinsky started to move the association's works towards more abstract forms. *Der Blaue Reiter* artists were also very

much concerned with writing about the theoretical aspects of their works (Nicholls, 2008). In 1897, an architect based in Munich, August Endell, amalgamated theories of empathy and physiology. From this work, Endell identified a rupture between years gone by and the here and now. Previous architectural designs, so Endell posited, demonstrated aesthetic qualities around during their era, whereas existent times are characterised by stylistic epochs which are completely dissimilar to those presently around.

According to Morgan (1992), this theoretical notion concerning architectural praxis was to have a 'lightbulb' effect in the field of aesthetics and architecture at the time. At the turn of the 20th century, German art critic Karl Scheffler proposed that humans possess an innate appreciation of and attraction to symmetry. Scheffler further equated human organisms with instruments, strings of which are 'set in sympathetic vibrations,'. Furthermore, Scheffler viewed ornaments as 'direct expressions of this sympathy'. Concurring with this view, the architect and designer Henry van de Velde soon after suggested that 'only few creations stand in so direct, so close a relationship to their creator as line' (Koss, 2006).

A few years later, in 1908, German art historian Wilhelm Worringer, who explored the rectilinear adornments found at the time of ancient, the near east, and feudal societies, argued that these ornaments presented aesthetic awareness by their defined non-representational linear shapes with the aim of surpassing Mother Nature (Morgan, 1992). Yet, Worringer's theoretical model of abstract art did not sit comfortably with Kandinsky, who had moved to Munich in 1896. It may therefore be proposed that he would have been familiar with the existent theoretical conceptualisations concerning abstract art. Like a number of avant-garde groups at the beginning of the twentieth century, *Der Blaue Reiter* was formed by Kandinsky as a challenge to the existent institutions in 1911.

Der Blaue Reiter, named after one of his paintings, was also developed on the back of a quarrel with another group of artists, known as The New Artists Association of Munich which had been formed in 1909. Ironically, the very same New Artists Association of

Munich was led by Kandinsky. However, due to the highly abstract elements within his paintings, the chairman of the association refused to exhibit Kandinsky's vast 1911 abstract work which prompted the Russian painter into resigning and developing *Der Blaue Reiter* (Kramer, 2002). He was later joined by Franz Marc, who became co-founder of *Der Blaue Reiter*. Gabriel Munter, another German painter later joined the group (Hoberg, 2016).

Of note is that the emblematic Blue Rider was in no way innocent. As well as being the name of one of Kandinsky's paintings, there is much blue sky, in nature, in fields, as well as much of it in form and movement (Billault, 2016). According to the Paris based Centre Pompidou, Kandinsky saw the Blue Rider as a metaphor for the artist. Horses can be found throughout works by Marc; magnificent animal images represented to him all that was real and beautiful-a substitute to man (Donahue, 2005). Riders were portrayed by Kandinsky. As stated, while studying possible covers to the Almanac; 'The horse carries its rider with vigour and speed, but it is the rider who drives the horse. The talent drives the artist towards new heights, but it is the artist who masters his talent'.

Both Kandinsky and Marc have a deep and incongruous attraction towards the colour blue. One lingers on the movement and speed of the rider, while the other leans towards the elegance of the animal. Kandinsky began to foster ideas for a novel and widely abstract illustrative style of communication in painting. Comprising compressed proportions and accentuated flattened facades, new never seen before multi-dimensional and theoretical options began to emerge in Kandinsky's works (Starr & Jelavich, 2011). Although a few of Kandinsky's earliest paintings preserved pictorial elements originating from *Jugendstil* and from Slavic folk tales, most of his earlier works utilised the barren perplexity and structural vagueness of black and white designs.

For Kandinsky, painting was either pure or adherent. If adherent, paintings were limited by the physical things they tried to capture. They were adherent to them. If pure, they kept to their own terms; colour and form. When paintings were pure, they were spiritual. This

amalgamation of figure and ground were to have a wide influence on Kandinsky's development as an abstract artist, and were therefore manifestations of Kandinsky's spiritualism. The *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac was* to expound the group's views on a number of artistic modes, as well as the people responsible for creating them (Clemons, 1994). This group of artists did not solely produce this text but was also identified with its exhibitions held in Munich between 1909 and 1911.

Exhibited works included those by August Macke, Franz Marc, Robert Delauney, Arnold Schoenberg, and Kandinsky. However, these artistic events were much more than shows of artistic talents; art was to be face to face with spiritual movements shown by a transcontinental coming together of artists from Paris to Moscow, and from Rome to Milan, for a single common goal- that of uniting 'individual phenomena into one', Kandinsky stated.

The members of the *Der Blaue Reiter* broke traditions through a redefining of spatial boundaries not just of the subject, but also means of conception as well as the means of the presentation. An Encyclopaedia on the forerunners to modernism, The *Blaue Reiter Almanac* aimed to develop a reference book ranging across different artistic mediums including theatre, literature, music, the number of visual arts, and 'primitive' art.

Also included were folk and popular forms of art by associated artists who shared the desire to describe and define the 'spiritual' in art (Kramer, 1995). Accordingly, Billault (2016) maintains that *Der Blaue Reiter* went back to the 'essentials', to something deeply buried in man, from which the world resonates. The artistic works carried out by *Der Blaue Reiter* evoked otherworldly type sceneries of dazzlingly and luminously tinted pastures, which Kandinsky would later evolve from into musical abstractions of amalgamated colour hues.

For instance, in Marc's 1911 *The Large Blue Horses*, one can vaguely identify a hill, a garden, horses represented solely made noticeable through curved lines, which translate movement without actually representing it. In fact, Billault (2016), argues that Kandinsky and Marc's use of bold and vibrant colours such as red, blue, and yellow,

is an invitation to observe and feel what they aimed to capture in their art; a certain vibration and trace of what the world had left behind, and inhabited these artists.

Unlike *Die Brucke*, *Der Blaue Reiter* collaborated with international artists, which involved holding several exhibitions of the *Salon D'automne* and the *Salon des Independants*, in Paris (Kolinsky, 1999). Further interest in international directions from *Der Blaue Reiter* can be identified through the illustrations in The *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* of Bavarian and Russian folk art, primitive non-European art, and Cubist and Fauve art works from France.

According to Kolinsky (1999), through the inclusion of a wide range of interests and their involvement with a variety of European and non-European artistic forms, *Der Blaue Reiter* demonstrated their desire to come across graphic methods for notions of religio-spiritual and other esoteric natures. As 'chairman' of *Der Blaue Reiter*, Kandinsky maintained that the artistic purpose was not only to fuse depictions of the outside world, but also those from their inner world. Added to this statement was that each artist aimed to do this via a novel artistic form of representation (Elger, 2002).

In contrast to the previously described notion of abstract art proposed by Worringer, Kandinsky's own conceptualisation of abstract art transcended that of Worringer's by perceiving abstract art as style of picture representation with its purpose being that of total subjectivity.

For instance, in the *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, Kandinsky and other contributors included pieces reflecting the artist's awareness of a new beginning- a desire to embark on a voyage towards a never before experienced sphere of freedom and liberation, and of the soul (Dittman, 1989).

The perspective taken by contributors to *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* therefore goes much further than that proposed in Worringer's theoretico-historical endeavour. As can be seen in Franz Marc's contribution, the '*Fauves'* exemplifies Marc's desire to produce symbols designed for the epoch, symbols which fitted platforms of the imminent spiritual faiths. Via this technique, their creator therefore is no longer visible. In another piece by Marc, 'Spiritual Treasures',

which was also included in the almanac, he depicts his world-view in which he experienced a mystical inner construction- an aspect which, according to Marc, was non-existent in the young generation of his day.

> There are unconventional, fiery signs of the time increasing in all places today. This book is intended to be their focus until the new age dawns and, with its natural light, takes away from these works the ghostly appearance in which they are still manifest in today's world… (*Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, 1912, p.11)

As an example of the above statement by Marc, the inclusion even of the limited imprints of poetical anatomical realism, such as horses in Marc's works embodied spiritual notions. For instance, Marc's 1912 canvas *Tiger* is thought to have been inspired by the English pre-Romantic poet William Blake, which was a symbolic piece inspired by Blake's personal philosophy of spiritual and intellectual revolution by people, whereas Marc's 1911 canvas *The Blue Horses was* 'structured around the idea that colour and form carried concrete spiritual values' (*Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, p.2).

Yet, as over the next couple of years, Marc found animals to be as tainted as humans had become, animal forms also became less prevalent in his visual paintings. As his 1914 canvas *Broken Forms* show, Marc looked for comfort in colour symbolism and non-representational form. While Kandinsky was at the *Bauhaus*, his aim was to create and identify a global and ultimate visual discourse. In order to achieve this, colour and form were condensed into their basic essentials (Jacobsen, 2004).

Moreover, Kandinsky was specifically looking for an artistic mode that was able to define spiritual workings of the creative mind (Morgan, 1992). While commenting on the presence of spiritual elements in his work, art historians make specific reference to certain visual pieces by Kandinsky. These range from Kandinsky's 1912 piece *Black Spot I* or his *Composition VI* a year later (1913) and Gorge Improvisation in 1914, to his later pieces such as his *Yellow-Red-Blue* (1925). According to Stoker (2012), Kandinsky's abstract painting

Black Spot I (1912) portrays the spiritual realm as a central element of the piece.

As an expression of light opposing darkness; the light that is challenged by darkness, the sentiment of tragedy is conveyed through Kandinsky's use of colours and form constructions. Kandinsky stated that certain colours were accentuated by specific shapes and forms; namely, 'the effect of deeper colours is emphasised by rounded forms: blue in a circle' (*Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* 1977, p. 163). This conception was the foundation for the development of the Kandinsky's correspondent theory, discussed previously.

Kandinsky maintained that the essential correspondence of primary colours and rudimentary forms was resolved by the 'inner tone of inherent colours and angles' (Kharkhurin, 2012). Three dissimilar styles of angles were differentiated 'with their inner sonority by Kandinsky: an acute angle is warm, a right angle is chilly, and an obtuse angle is cold'. Each of these angles produces evident forms and gives them an individual visual timber.

Warmth is created by a triangle made up of three acute angles, whereas a square composed of right angles develops a warm-cold timber. As stated in his 1926 text *Point and Line to Plane*, 'an artist should experiment with repetition, ordering, and scale, not just with colours, but also with points, lines, and planes' while composing a piece. Marc was indeed known to have unrestrainedly commended Kandinsky's inclusion of spiritual elements in a number of paintings, commenting on their manifestation of 'complete spiritualisation, and their dematerialised inwardness of perfection' (Lasko, 2003).

It has also been proposed by Lasko (2003) that it was Marc's reciprocal passion for spiritual matters that contributed to his becoming co-founder of *Der Blaue Reiter*. According to Rosenblum (1973), Marc was indeed at the forefront of the developments of spiritual essences in modern art. The German painter did, as a matter of fact, endeavour to conceive 'symbols for the altar of a new spiritual religion' (Levine, 1979). Moreover, Marc's statement may suggest that he was familiar with, and influenced by, 'occultism'; a very spiritual-religious philosophy around at the time (Rosenblum, 1973).

Furthermore, while exploring Marc's usage of symbolic-chromatic elements in Marc's visual art, Moffitt (1985) puts forward the view that the German artist's inclusion of such colour symbolism clearly shows Kandinsky's influence on Marc's work in that his symbolic-chromatic scheme had been previously developed by Kandinsky. For Marc, the lack of any 'mystical inner construct' was a significant crisis of the generation in which he lived, so states Levine, (*Apocalyptic Vision*, 1979, p. 58).

For both Kandinsky and Marc, colour represented a measure of 'spiritual' intensity. Also, colour did not have anything to do with actual objects, so stated both these artists (Nicholls, 2008). Franz Marc made use of specific colours in order to emphasize their great importance as regulators of, and immediate mediums through which he expressed his concepts (Gager, 2004).

Kandinsky's impact on Marc's thoughts can be further witnessed in one of the German's theoretical works, *'Farben theorie*'; a colour theory based on theosophical principles, which he would put into practice in his paintings. As the progression of *Der Blaue Reiter* began to take shape, Kandinsky started to move the association's works towards more abstract forms. *Der Blaue Reiter* artists were also very much concerned with writing about the theoretical aspects of their works (Nicholls, 2008). Scheffler further equated human organisms with instruments, strings of which are 'set in sympathetic vibrations'.

Furthermore, Scheffler viewed ornaments as 'direct expressions of this sympathy'. Concurring with this view, the architect and designer Henry van de Velde soon after suggested that 'only few creations stand in so direct, so close a relationship to their creator as line' (Koss, 2006). A few years later, in 1908, German art historian Wilhelm Worringer, who explored the rectilinear adornments found at the time of ancient, the near east, and feudal societies, argued that these ornaments presented aesthetic awareness by their defined non-representational linear shapes with the aim of surpassing Mother Nature (Morgan, 1992).

Yet, Worringer's theoretical model of abstract art did not sit comfortably with Kandinsky, who had moved to Munich in 1896. It

may therefore be proposed that he would have been familiar with the existent theoretical conceptualisations concerning abstract art. Like a number of avant-garde groups at the beginning of the twentieth century, *Der Blaue Reiter* was formed by Kandinsky as a challenge to the existent institutions in 1911.

Although a few of Kandinsky's earliest paintings preserved pictorial elements originating from *Jugendstil* and from Slavic folk tales, most of his earlier works utilised the barren perplexity and structural vagueness of black and white designs. For Kandinsky, painting was either pure or adherent. If adherent, paintings were limited by the physical things they tried to capture. They were adherent to them. If pure, they kept to their own terms; colour and form. When paintings were pure, they were spiritual.

This amalgamation of figure and ground were to have a wide influence on Kandinsky's development as an abstract artist, and were therefore manifestations of Kandinsky's spiritualism. The *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* was to expound the group's views on a number of artistic modes, as well as the people responsible for creating them (Clemons, 1994).

The artistic works carried out by *Der Blaue Reiter* evoked otherworldly type sceneries of dazzlingly and luminously tinted pastures, which Kandinsky would later evolve from into musical abstractions of amalgamated colour hues. In Marc's 1911 The Large Blue Horses, one can vaguely identify a hill, a garden, horses represented solely made noticeable through curved lines, which translate movement without actually representing it.

In fact, Billault (2016), argues that Kandinsky's and Marc's use of bold and vibrant colours such as as red, blue, and yellow, is an invitation to observe and feel what they aimed to capture in their art; a certain vibration and trace of what the world had left behind, and inhabited these artists. For instance, in the *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, Kandinsky and other contributors included pieces reflecting the artist's awareness of a new beginning-a desire to embark on a voyage towards a never before experienced sphere of freedom and liberation, and of the soul (Dittman, 1989).

The perspective taken by the contributors to the almanac therefore goes much further than that proposed in Worringer's theoretico-historical endeavour. In Marc's 1914 canvas *Broken Forms* show, Marc looked for comfort in colour symbolism and non-representational form.

As Wolf (2004) indeed suggests, members of *Der Blaue Reider* intended to achieve the essence of a yet to come 'existential world order', fitting of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Despite Lindsay and Vergo's (1994) suggestion that Kandinsky's nod to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* was originally represented in his apocalyptic prophecy, both Kandinsky and Marc later on, also aimed to reject the current 'world order'. They attempted this throughout the arts, in order to search for and define art, for themselves. I, therefore sense that this ideal mirrors the Nietzschean themes of freedom and responsibility characterised in *Zarathustra*.

The nature of Nietzsche's esoteric symbolism in *Zarathustra* was one which he developed in order to help mankind acquire genuine freedom. The way in which he carried this out was through the use of allegorical imagery as he presents the three metaphors of the camel, the lion, and the child, which were discussed in the previous chapter. Nietzsche's allegorical imagery can also be seen as having influenced Kandinsky's symbolism art. For instance, Kandinsky's 1923 piece *Composition VIII* offers a metaphor for man's spiritual experience and how it relates to genius, which, as cited earlier, on page 67 while discussing the life of the spirit (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p.10).

The quote detailing the life of the spirit has become one of the most well-known artistic manifestations and visual metaphors exemplifying the spiritual life. Drawing on theosophical philosophical notions, Kandinsky compares the inner artistic tension to that of geometric shapes. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche makes use of a strict analogy to Dionysiac religion when he identifies and comments on

> The mystery doctrine of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the

> conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness (p.74).

The capacity to eagerly seek out a higher form of individual manifestation and communication of 'inner necessity' manifested through art is, an act of freedom. In the same way as Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* endeavoured to do so, Kandinsky and Marc wanted to characterise and present the 'inner self' as a mode through which humanity was to be saved from materialism and decadence. Another notion central to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, namely, morality, was also an ideal that members of *Der Blaue Reiter* wanted to demonstrate via their works, as they aimed to make use of painting to challenge and oppose materialism.

Like Nietzsche's Madman in *The Gay Science* (2017), Kandinsky aimed, as the artist, to bring about 'a new truth to mankind, one which the crowd does not understand' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1911). Not only Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911) and works by *Der Blaue Reiter*, but symbolism generally became representational of a defining moment in the history of art which, especially Kandinsky and Marc, exemplified.

The Bauhaus: 1919-1933.

There emerged in the first few years of the 20th century, various artists and movements such as socio-cultural enterprises like the 'Durerbund', whose purpose was to preserve 'culture and civilisation'(Droste, 2019). It seems this desire is built on an appreciation and attraction of Nietzsche's critic of the cynical view of the world. Nietzsche's philosophy aimed to overcome extant forms of civilisations such as Plato's metaphysics, Christianity, and even the Enlightenment.

For Nietzsche, the philosopher was similar to a medical man, in that he aimed to diagnose, and then to suggest specific routes to limit further trouble (Daudey, 2017). In view of the vast popularity and recognition these socio- cultural enterprises obtained, Kandinsky

would have come across these enterprises, and indirectly, Nietzsche's influence upon them, when he states that 'To send light into the darkness of men's hearts-such is the duty of the artist'(*Concerning the Spiritual in Art* , 1912, p. 26).

In 1912 the future founder of the *Bauhaus*, Walter Gropius became a member of the Werkbund, a pre-WWI 'association that represented the most successful and significant marriage between art and industry' (*Bauhaus; 1919-1933*, 2019, p.29). A year later, just 12 months pre-WWI, the Werkbund was endeavouring to create a harmonisation process between 'art and the machine'. A few years later, Walter Gropius established the *Bauhaus* in 1919, a state sponsored school of art and design.

The school aimed to pioneer a convergence of ideas, people, where wide socio-cultural influences were to come together to develop one of the most radical and authoritative models of arts and design. After aiming to nominate a global form of visual communication, the *Bauhaus* broke and redefined all preconditioned artistic styles, and securely advocated the use of industrial design by disrobing any décor and reducing all designs to 'clean lines of function'.

Throughout the years, two more locations; Berlin and Dessau, were added to the school's portfolio. In fact, the *Bauhaus* was a philosophy; a way of life. 'It emerged out of the late 19th century, and specifically the English founder of the Arts and Crafts movement, William Morris' desire to reunite the applied arts and manufacturing, and to reform education'. In accordance with this aim, the *Bauhaus* endeavoured to develop an idealistic beautified craft via the amalgamation of beauty and usefulness through architecture, sculpture, painting, as well as crafts and engineering (Droste, 2019).

In the first year of development, Gropius approached a number of acclaimed artists such as Lionel Fenninger, Johannes Itten, and the sculptor Gerhard Marcks to get involved in, and run lectures at the *Bauhaus*. In 1919, expressionist painter Georg Muche was asked to the join the *Bauhaus* team. Not long before he left Berlin, Kandinsky presented four murals at the Unjuried Berlin Art Show. Through free

form, these creations enabled him to deliver his notion of a synthesis of the arts.

Being aware of the *Bauhaus* as well as their shared interest in amalgamating the arts, Kandinsky's murals would probably have reduced any distance concerning spirituality with the members of the *Bauhaus*, especially during its initial period of existence (Dutching, 2000). According to Poling (1986), Gropius approached Kandinsky due to the painters' spiritual approach to art theory as well as the systemic manner through which Kandinsky addressed art through his dissection of the deep-seated spiritual significance observed in colours and form, which Gropius believed would make vital contributions to the school.

Kandinsky took up a teaching post at the *Bauhaus* in 1922, making a name for himself with a new factory. During the whole period of the *Bauhaus*' existence, the notion of form following function, art united with technology, and design paired with mass production, were the domains most associated with and emphasised by the school (Morehead & Otto, 2017). Yet, recently found archives suggest that in fact, esoteric representations structured the visual approach of many members of the *Bauhaus*.

Indeed, most of the masters at the *Bauhaus* other than Kandinsky; for instance, painters Johannes Itten (1888-1967) and Paul Klee (1879-1940), were very well informed about experimental religions. In fact, the various spiritual interests of other members at the *Bauhaus* promoted the development of spiritual matters being at the heart of the Bauhaus during the 1920s. This consequently contributed to a potent cocktail of esoteric competence at the *Bauhaus* which fostered the schools key project of creating art and objects that might initiate new ways of living.

While at the *Bauhaus,* Kandinsky taught classes on abstract form elements and analytical drawing, as well as directing the wall painting workshops. Kandinsky also continued working on his colour-form theory in terms of their spiritual impact. It was during his time as a lecturer at the *Bauhaus* that Kandinsky wrote his 1926 text *Point and Line to Plane*. At the *Bauhaus*, colour theory had,

previous to Kandinsky's appointment, been excluded from any of the courses taught.

As of Kandinsky's debut at the *Bauhaus*, the Russian Painter was very keen to introduce his colour theory on the curriculum. While lecturing on this topic, Kandinsky's starting point was the three primary colours-red, yellow, and blue. The basic shapes were the triangle, the square, and the circle. During this period at the *Bauhaus*, Kandinsky wanted to portray objects to such a degree that they would merely become 'memories' that promoted associations.

Moreover, as Kandinsky accredited definite effects to all forms and coloured hues, Droste (2019) suggests that explicit and precise elements such as colour, were to endow the whole piece with a force of expressiveness. Throughout the years he spent at the *Bauhaus*, the presence of individual geometrical elements in the background of paintings by Kandinsky started to be increasingly reduced; entering the foreground.

The vibrant warm tones once found during his Munich and Moscow period gave way to a cool, at times, contradictory, use of colour; reinforcing Kandinsky's increasing desire to develop his abstract work, and in turn his spiritual message in order to overcome decadence. In the chapter that follows, askesis comes in the form of music as a challenge to pietism. The following chapter will also develop Kandinsky's colour theory and how it influenced his use of specific colours.

Form-Colour Correspondence.

Kandinsky was the first to develop an interest in shape-colour correspondence among expressionist painters and was the first to produce a complete abstract piece (Dumitrescu, 2011). It was during his time at the *Bauhaus* that Kandinsky started working with exact, geometrical forms. Kandinsky's increased awareness of Nietzsche became evident as his inclusion of musical elements in his art increased. Music became a vital element in Kandinsky's art.

It was while attending a performance in Moscow in 1850, of Wagner's Lohengrin that seems to have released a moment during which Kandinsky experienced a flash of synesthetic elevation.

> The violins, the deep tone of the basses, and especially the wind instruments at that time embodied for me all the power of that pre-nocturnal hour. I saw all my colours in my mind, they stood before my eyes. Wild, almost crazy lines were sketched in front of me…(p.364).

Yet, Kandinsky believed in the existence of two sounds; a neural sound and a spiritual sound. He further argued that in an age of spiritual epoch, the excitation of neural vibrations is incidental, whereas the spiritual sound is dependent on inner necessity, as opposed to any neural processes (Ashmore, 1977). In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), Kandinsky therefore rejected the idea that different arts could produce similar sounds.

Kandinsky instead requested a single type of art, within which all art modes could function; 'Each art will display that extra element which is essential and peculiar to itself, thereby adding to that inner; spiritual, sound which they have in common, a richness and power that cannot be attained by one art alone' (pp. 191-193). Kandinsky thus set out to 'release the intrinsic power of colour' by treating it as a musical note through this belief that the synthesis of arts could help surmount, without hiding, the variances between the arts.

Kandinsky also used music as the foundation to abstract art, as he believed it also helped the artist determine the correct colour and form to use, which represent spirit. He indeed viewed music as the most abstract form of art, enabling listeners to have the freedom to interpret the sounds as they wished. Kandinsky therefore produced a number of canvases with musical ideas, by including musical themes in canvases in such a way that they could be brought to paper in the form of notes, eventually leading to melodies and sounds which encapsulate practically all individuals.

This endeavour, Kandinsky believed, would provide painting with the same ability to give freedom of interpretation to viewers, by creating a ‘new symphonic construction’ (Dabrowskie, 1995)

> An artist who sees that the imitation of natural appearances, however artistic, is not for him-the kind of creative artist who wants to, and has to, express his own inner world-sees with envy how naturally and easily such goals can be attained in music, the least material of the arts today. Understandably, he might turn towards it and try to find the same means in his own art. Hence the current search for rhythm in painting, for mathematical, abstract construction, the value placed today upon the repetition of colour tones, the way colours are set in motion, etc..(p. 154).

Kandinsky’s use of the term ‘material’ while describing how music manifests the artists ‘inner being’ is important, as it suggests that for Kandinsky, music is the most spiritual art form. Kandinsky indeed maintained that both painting and music had the ability to have the same impact on the ‘soul’. Most of the areas covered in Kandinsky’s 1911 text centre around a detailed development of the musical analogies within the visual arts. In the chapter on colour, Kandinsky links certain colours to sounds.

Yellow, so Kandinsky proposed, sounded like a trumpet, whereas blue sounded like a flute, or a cello. Red sounded like the soft tones of a violin, whereas green is calm, and thus sounds like the deep tones of a violin. Violet was a slow colour, and thus was associated by Kandinsky with the English Horne, or the Bagpipe. Kandinsky applied a non-formalist mode to abstraction by stating that ‘abstracted or abstract forms (lines, planes, patches, etc…) are not important in themselves, but rather for their inner resonances, their life’.

Kandinsky also argued in The *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* (2005, pp. 164-165) that ‘ in order to ‘understand’[abstraction], it must become

possible to hear [in it] the whole world just as it is, without an interpretation related to objects, thus expounding the use of symbolism. His favourite shape being that of the triangle, in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977), Kandinsky maintained that the triangle symbolised 'the life of the spirit' (p. 34). Kandinsky's philosophy concerning the association between esoteric living and art was based on the concept of a treble layer triangle comprising the whole of humanity.

The triangle segments going down from the shapes peak, increasing as they descend, the triangle gradually, almost inconspicuously moves forth fully uprise towards a greater elevations, finally reaching an enlightened state. The top tier of the triangle representing the present epoch, while the following couple of segments characterising future times. I would therefore argue that for Kandinsky, certain geometric forms, such as the triangle represented a level of human self- awareness, and used these as archetypal symbols, as Nietzsche did via the figure of Zarathustra and the three metaphors as representatives of each stage of human growth (Nietzsche, 1974).

Also echoing Nietzsche's argument in *The Birth of Tragedy,* and the description of the Dionysian principle as the most profound representation of the cosmic will, while also maintaining that the Dionysian principle is dependent on the Apollonian principle of individuation, deceit, and illusion, in order to express itself, Kandinsky, who, observing shapes and colours as having a dissimilar impact from one another, identified the existence of a potential synchronisation between both of them (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 34).

Accordingly, Kandinsky argued that a yellow triangle held a 'different spiritual value' to that of a green triangle. Moreover, 'keen colours' such as yellow are well suited by sharp forms' such as a triangle, whereas, 'deep colours' such as blue are better suited 'by round forms' such as a circle. Kandinsky did, however, acknowledge that incompatible form-colour combinations such as a blue triangle

could nevertheless still demonstrate concordance between each other when manoeuvred (p.29).

Mirroring Nietzsche's acknowledgement about the dependence of the Dionysian on the Apollonian discussed earlier in this chapter, Kandinsky argued that needing 'boundaries of some kind', colour is unable to stand alone'…. (p.28). Therefore, lines and shapes assist colour, which, without these, would have no expansion, and thus, be completely irrelevant -solely thought and impression of a shade or pigment (Florman, 2014). Kandinsky thus stated that:

> A never-ending extent of red can only be seen in the mind; when the word is heard, the colour is evoked without definite boundaries……But such red, as seen in the mind and not by the eye, exercises at once a definite and an indefinite impression on the soul, and produces spiritual harmony…But when red is presented in a material form (as in painting) it must possess (1)some definite shade of the many shades of red that exist and (2) a limited surface divided off from the other colours, which are undoubtedly there. The first of these conditions (the subjective) is affected by the second (the objective)…. (p.28).

Kandinsky maintained that only form 'has a power of inner suggestion' despite its complete abstractness and geometric property. Kandinsky suggests that a triangle of any kind has its own spiritual value, regardless of its link to any other form. The same holds true of any other form such as a circle or a square (p.29). This notion arguing against the primary position of form contra colour proposed by Kandinsky initiated a total paradigm shift within art theory which had previously relegated colour to the background.

The exploration of Kandinsky's form-colour correspondence is valuable as it determined the meticulous way in which he produced most, if not all of his abstract paintings. Moreover, Kandinsky's theoretical work *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977), which was produced in order to develop a robust attack and opposition to the existent materialism present at the time (Short, 1962), assisted

communication on his paintings (Ashmore, 1962). His theoretical works were appreciated by art critics and historians.

It is almost impossible to understand the rationale at the heart of many of Kandinsky's artwork separately from both of his texts; *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* and *Point and Line to Plane*. For instance, in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky focuses on the rapport between colour and its effect on the soul, the gesistige motif, which was manifested in his paintings as of 1910, by stating that:

> Colour is the Keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposefully, to cause vibrations in the soul.

The above quote mirrors that by Steiner who maintains that: 'When the human being hears music, he has a sense of well-being, because these tones harmonise with what he has experienced in the world of his spiritual home.' Moreover, Kandinsky quotes Steiner, who maintained that 'what the intellect perceives in the physical world as law, as idea, reveals itself to the 'spiritual ear' as a 'kind of music'. Yet Kandinsky never over emphasised his theoretical pieces against his paintings, and always found a happy medium between both his theoretical work, and his visual art.

Kandinsky's paintings signify his intellectual robustness without losing their eminence or his artistic powers, which lead to the creation of a piece of art which would portray the need for a spiritual revolution in order to counteract the effect of materialism. In support of the value in sticking to a comprehensible notion about how a piece of visual art is realised, Kandinsky maintained that:

> In art, theory never precedes practice. Here, everything, particularly in the beginning, is a matter of feeling. Only through feeling…is it possible to achieve what is artistically right. Though the general construction can be achieved in a purely theoretical manner, it is this feeling which remains the true soul of this creation (and also its being), never conceived and never found by theory, only instilled in the

> creation spontaneously (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 58).

Kandinsky evidenced this view by maintaining that the starting point of any painting, as well as its reference point and ground work originate from an artist's 'inner necessity'. When discussing the effect of such a 'pure painting', Kandinsky adds that, as a result of the paintings original method of expression; 'the paint, colour, form, the distribution of lines and planes, and their interrelations in and of themselves', the soul will become ablaze with light (Lindsey & Vergo, 1994). This point is another reinforcement of Nietzsche's influence on Kandinsky.

The *Birth of Tragedy* identifies the vital interdepenence between the Apollonian and Dionysian principles in order to obtain balance. The Apollonian principles of light, rationality, order, versus the Dionysian principles of passion, unpredictability, and energy, was fundamental in order to acquire a certain amount of meaning in life, influenced how Kandinsky developed his paintings. As previously discussed, Kandinsky was the initial painter who walked away completely from any 'fidelity to appearance' in 1911.

Kandinsky's dependence on Nietzschean texts can be easily identified as the painter had a very elaborate project in mind in order to trigger his artistic revolution. Kandinsky's specific citations of Nietzsche were distinctly carried out in order to give weight to the extreme nature of the change he aimed to 'bring to art and civilisation'. Kandinsky also made reference to Nietzsche in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), while identifying the already occurring change within his time

> When religion, science and morality are shaken, the two last by the strong hand of Nietzsche, and when the outer supports threaten to fall, man turns his gaze from external onto himself. Literature, music and art are the first and most sensitive spheres in which this spiritual revolution makes itself felt'.

The total rejection of any representation of a world by Kandinsky illustrated a clear assault on materialism, manifesting specific

agreements with Nietzsche's disapproval of the conceptualisation of the world comprised of material, durable, essential objects. Expressionism as an artistic movement aimed to propose ideas via the use of symbols to accentuate the actual meaning behind the shapes, colours, and lines. In Russia, Symbolisms equated to intuition, imagination, subjectivity, mysticism, and challenged ideals such as positivism, rationalism, and populism. Throughout his work with *Der Blaue Reiter* and at The *Bauhaus*, Kandinsky encapsulated expressionism via the concept of 'inner necessity'.

CHAPTER 4 - Art as Philosophy

This final chapter draws on the previous ones by demonstrating how Nietzschean and Steinerian spiritualities feed into Kandinsky's theory of art and symbolism. This chapter offers a synoptic account of the philosophical influences that inform Kandinsky's art. In order to achieve this, I have gone through each previous chapter, section by section, and located each and every Nitzschean concept which may have contributed to the formation of Kandinsky's theory of art. In so doing, I determined the origin of each notion by exploring links between these and Nietzschean and Steinerian spiritualities.

Each sections and every aspect of Kandinsky's theory of art was thus scrutinised in order to identify any potential link to either Nietzsche or Steiner. From this, a comprehensible association between these three figures flows within each section of this chapter. As will be noticeable during my presentation of these parallels between Kandinsky, Nietzsche, and Steiner as discussed in previous chapters, according to Kandinsky, the artist impresses spiritual forces which lay manifest within themselves (Kandinsky, 1982).

A piece of art was therefore created out of an 'inner necessity', which held a spiritual dimension. For Kandinsky, 'the Spiritual value seeks its materialisation' (Lindsay &Vergo, 1982) as art is created. While explicitly describing aesthetic experience, Kandinsky maintained that the duty of art on a spiritual level sheds light on his special and unique interpretation of art and its creation. He thus stated that the way through which this was achieved was

> The undefinable and yet definite activity of the soul (vibration) is the aim of the individual artistic means. A certain complex of vibrations -the goal of a work of art. The progressive refinement of the soul by means of the accumulation of different complexes-the aim of art…the correct means that the artist discovers is a material form of that vibration of his soul to which he is forced to give expression. If this means is correct, it causes a virtually identical vibration in the receiving soul (Kandinsky, 1982).

Kandinsky also maintained that the material epoch in which he lived was unable to see further than what it saw. He therefore believed that his perception of art was foreign to the current period. Yet, Kandinsky felt that 'spiritual art' was the promise of the future.

> That 'what' constitutes the spiritual food for that new beginning spiritual awakening. This no longer will be the material, objective 'what' of former epochs but an artistic substance-the soul of art-without which its body (the 'how') can never lead a completely sound existence, as is the case individuals and entire peoples. This 'what' is the eternal truth embraced by art, and which only art can express by means essentially its own' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 53).

Accordingly, Kandinsky aimed to reveal the beautiful and arouse in the observer the ability to 'see more'; to change and extend their perceptual capacities. Kandinsky was indeed sure that the artist's responsibility was to adopt a prophetic role by introducing humanity to a new way of seeing the world. He thus maintained

> And then, without fail, there appears among us a man like the rest of us in every way, but who conceals within himself the secret, inborn power of 'vision'. He sees and points. Sometimes he would gladly be rid of this higher gift, which is often a heavy cross for him to bear. But he cannot. Through mockery and hatred, he continues to drag the heavy cartload of struggling humanity, getting stuck amidst the stones, ever onward and upward (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 131).

The purpose of most of Kandinsky's writings was to express and define his theory and philosophy of art. Without his detailed written account of his oeuvre, his synthesis of sensory experiences amalgamated into his art may never have been made available. He indeed maintained that he was 'working…on a precise method to translate the colours of nature into music, of painting the sounds of nature, of seeing sounds in colour and hearing colours musically' (Ion &Tyler, 2003).

This rejection of representation left Kandinsky with an artistic liberation through which he presented the sense of responsibility, and thus to bring about a 'spiritual revolution' via his paintings. (Dickerman et al.; 2013). Kandinsky took a non-direct approach to ultimate reality. Generally, he was seeking to discover how ultimate reality might be manifested in painting, not what it might be in itself.

While working towards this purpose, Kandinsky made three assumptions: firstly, that some paintings contain certain features that give them 'spiritual life' when he maintained that 'A work of art…acquires autonomous life…it exists and has the power to create spiritual atmosphere' (Kandinsky, 1972, p. 74). Secondly, a painting's spiritual life is a point of contact between the artist and ultimate reality.

Kandinsky accordingly stated that 'art is subordinate to cosmic laws revealed by the intuition of the artist for his work's sake and for the sake of the spectator who is often lighted through the operation of these laws without knowing it. It is an enigmatic process' (Kandinsky, 1939, no paging). Lastly, from the side of the artist, the force leading to representation of spiritual life is feeling. In view of this, revealed ultimate reality in painting as something spiritual, but never elaborated, always withdrawn.

While pondering on the notion of painting as being spiritual, Kandinsky gave a very detailed account, which took him the last thirsty years of his life to develop in his paintings (Ashmore, 2002). He maintained that his painting 'creates alongside the [material] world a new world which has nothing to do externally with reality [materiality]. It is subordinate internally to cosmic law' (Kandinsky, 1955, p. 215).

Yet, at some minimal level, Kandinsky creates his art via the use of material tools such as paints and brushes. What Kandinsky is stating is that he is developing an art which organises materials to evoke a spiritual element. As a matter of course, the totality of Kandinsky's painting between 1909-1944 revolved around two elements; the manner in which either a painting manifested a pure reflection of spiritual life, or to make spiritual life dominate a painting.

Kandinsky chose painting as his favourite and primary point of contact with the spiritual sphere instead of words or intellect. Despite possessing a broad and active mind, his thought never superseded the development of any of his paintings. Kandinsky never abandoned his mystical utopia (Marks, 2003), and remained a philosophical idealist seeking to eliminate the subjective from his art in order to obtain enduring, elemental reality and truths; 'the illusion of cosmic reality' on canvas, as he stated.

It is quite evident throughout Kandinsky's writings that he 'felt' colours more so than others in a type of hypersensitive, spiritual and cross-sensory fashion (Nelson, 2015). For Kandinsky, there is fundamentally no difference between a form or colour in an abstract painting or a note of music; likewise, whether the sound is a note produced by a musical instrument or the musical notation of the sound on a sheet of paper (Faherty, 1992).

Moreover, Kandinsky maintains that it is not impossible to read forms and colours in an abstract painting in the exact same way as one would read the notes of a musical score; namely, with each form or colour characterising it's particular klang (Kandinsky, 2017, p.89). The role of the phenomenon in which additional perceptual experiences are elicited via cognitive concepts, namely Synesthesia, a neurological condition which it is believed Kandinsky experienced, indeed drives such themes as sound, colour, and rhythm.

While describing the inseparability of music and painting, Kandinsky stated that

> The sun melts all of Moscow down to a single spot that, like a mad tuba, starts all of the heart and all of the soul vibrating. But no, this uniformity of red is the most beautiful hour. It is only the final chord of a symphony that takes every colour to the zenith of life…like the fortissima of a great orchestra is compelled…by Moscow to ring out (Ione & Tyler, 2003).

Kandinsky's notion of composition as discussed in previous chapters was founded on the switch to abstract art, which was defined as 'concrete' art (Kandinsky, 1977). Possessing no logical, syntactic, or formalised meaning, Kandinsky named it the 'spiritual', by which he

meant the subjective qualitative content of awareness and its inner sound, as it was referred to by Kandinsky.

As it has been discussed previously, Kandinsky furthermore robustly believed in colours transcending all power between, spirit, body, and other people, as he maintained that his paintings characterised the 'inner element', which pathed the way for all, towards 'spiritual truths'. Colour and music were thus fundamental qualities which, for Kandinsky enabled people to get in touch with their spiritual selves, and were therefore vital aspects to his theory of art.

> Generally speaking, colour is a power which directly influences the soul. Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.
>
> It is evident therefore, that colour harmony must rest only on a corresponding vibration in the human soul; and this is one of the guiding principles of the inner need (Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 25). For Kandinsky, pure painting rejects the superfluous, mimetic form, while scrutinising the detail and necessary (Dabrowsky, 1995).

Moreover, while theorising his notion of 'inner necessity', as discussed previously, Kandinsky defined it as the reality of shapes, forms and colours, and therefore reintroduced them in his work by suggesting that 'any form that is devoid of inner reality is meaningless' (Ruhrberg, 2000, p. 102). In line with this belief, Kandinsky was convinced that colour and form originated from the depths of the human soul. Kandinsky was not interested in mere representation.

According to Reynolds (2000), Kandinsky shunned away from painting the external appearance of objects and endeavoured to create 'pictures that as purely pictorial objects have their own independent, intense life'. In a similar fashion, Arno (2006) maintained that 'Kandinsky found himself a slave to drawing from the model, one who only copies the external forms of nature'. Accordingly, spiritual

art thus presupposes abstraction in that it abstracts out of the natural world.

> Everything 'dead' trembled. Everything showed me its face, in its innermost being, it's secret soul, inclined more often to silence than speech-not only the stars, moon, words, flowers of which poets sing, but even a cigar butt laying in the ashtray, a patient white outer-button looking up at you from a puddle in the street….Here, Kandinsky describes how even what may be considered 'futile' materials hold an importance, a role in our how we perceive our day to day life. He goes on to say that
>
> ….. a submissive piece of bark carried through the grass carried in the ants strong jaws to some uncertain and vital end, the page of a calendar, torn forcibly by one's consciously outstretched from the warm companionship the block of remaining pages. Here, a typical day to day behaviour is brought to live, given meaning which adds to the overall story that is life.
>
> …. Likewise, every still and every moving point (=line) became for me just as alive and revealed to me its soul. This was enough for me to 'comprehend', with my entire being and with all my senses, the possibility and existence of that art which today is called 'abstract as opposed to 'objective'. For Kandinsky, every single object rings something new, something different, namely vital, by its mere existence, presence, within an instant, which contributes to this 'tapestry' that when, ends up as being part of ones story, ones lived experience, which will live on, and therefore contribute to other continuous felt emotions, situations, lived experiences, and so on and so for forth.

The above extract from Kandinsky's autobiographical text *Reminiscences* (1913), clearly demonstrates Kandinsky's thoughts on the organic and inorganic world of objects. It also smooths out any differences between them as much as the contract between nature and art. Viewed through the lens of abstraction, where purpose becomes

immaterial, living and non-living things are revealed as material objects, to possess an irrelevant quality which eludes how humans display their social world (Sobral Campos, 2018).

Objects become components within a mystifying rhetoric of relationships, a ‘new grammar of proximity between limits and shapes’ which Kandinsky states belongs to abstract art. In this world, Kandinsky dodges the question of life by releasing humans from the domineering and harshness of this world’s frame. One is thus released into an immanence of its own body existing among living and non-living bodies. Here, Kandinsky uses the term immanence philosophically; namely that humans become part of nature.

Kandinsky is interested in how things mutually affect one another, in the perceived evidence and resulting products stemming from the contact between organic and non-organic objects. These products can potentially shape a different future, one which is capable of combating and overcoming the existent materialist world. Kandinsky’s paintings therefore speak a language via the use of a specific ‘grammar of art’ in the stripped language of spaciousness, time and affect.

For Kandinsky, abstraction communicates through collusions and unities, oppositions and parallelisms, where relations of order are shattered. Kandinsky was also very much aware that the power of ‘rhythmic lines, colours and shapes’ could spiritualise compositions. Whilst including spiritual knowledge to his study of shapes and form, Kandinsky intensively wrote about their higher connection, and their expressive qualities. He thus posited that ‘The contact between the acute angle of a triangle and a circle has no less effect than that of God’s figure touching Adam’s in Michelangelo’ (Short, 2010, p. 159).

As far as Kandinsky was concerned, shapes and forms have the ‘power of inner suggestions’, which, when considered apart from geometry, can act as a way through which one can understand the spiritual. Kandinsky evidently had a spiritual mind, and was heavily guided by such spiritual thoughts which were, according to Gibbons

(2001), the main influence behind his 1911 text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

For Kandinsky, art belonged to the spiritual realm, where it helps the soul to introspect, refine, and conquer 'the period of materialistic trials…, ' and greater consciousness (Lindsey & Vergo, 1994, p. 128). This notion coincides with Steiner's idea of super-consciousness (Meecham & Sheldon, 2000); a concept which advocates visions, spiritual states, trances, and the presence of the 'sixth sense'. As there is no elementary prescription with which we can reduce the universe and contain its wonder, it is rather up to us to construct our myths in order to capture and celebrate awe and wonder.

Nietzsche's project therefore is to re-mythologise ones which are inclined to embrace life and nature; the world as it is, in its entirety. Against thousands of years of religious teachings, Nietzsche maintains that we have fallen, and that now is the time for us to pick ourselves up, in a similar way as did Kandinsky, who believes Theosophical principles as manifested via abstract art were to contribute to man's increased awakening. Moreover, Nietzsche's devaluation of all super or extra natural explanatory principles occurred through the 'death of God', as discussed in Chapter 3.

As a consequence of God's death, Nietzsche's call for a re-evaluation of each feature of natural life which had been previously defamed by Theology and metaphysics, such as sensation, instinct and affect; change, temporality and history; contingency and conditionality; procreation, growth, nutrition, decay, and death; psychology, physiology, biology, sociology, among others, contributed to Nietzsche's endeavour to 'naturalise humanity'.

Nietzsche's aim to 'naturalise humanity' was based on his belief that each of these principles of 'the world of life, nature, history' can offer us a full account of living, being, and valuing, while excluding the redundant, mendacious and deceitful claims of the super-natural. Nietzsche's 'death of God' does indeed concern the death of an epoch-the end of a Christian era and the initiation of a post-Christian one (Cole, n.d).

Nietzsche himself posits that via the death of God, 'there has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us – for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto' (*The Gay Science*, 2017, p. 181). Nietzsche's main concern is therefore historical, of the ushering of a new epoch in human existence. Nietzsche was not advocating an atheist society; as discussed in Chapter 3, he knew the importance and value of religion for humans.

In his text *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche maintains that the fall of modern Christian monotheism has contributed to an opening for a reassessment concerning superior men. He stated that 'without Christian theism as a buttress, the modern doctrine of equality appears to be a great impertinence' (p.43), while in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche argues that

> We used to be equal before God, but his God has died, since God has become unbelievable, belief in equality has become equally impossible for a rational person. It is the time for us to reaffirm the order of ranks to intensify 'the pathos of distance' that creates the psychology of the superior man. Indeed, the free spirits of modernity find themselves challenged by a momentous new task (Nietzsche, 1974).

Furthermore, Nietzsche knew very well that the Church had ruined European man by upturning all valuations by throwing suspicion on joy in beauty and by destroying the strong (Fortich, 2010). The Church had ruined and destroyed man's development when it had the greatest opportunity to shape it into something of beauty and magnificence. According to Hoover (1994), Nietzsche envisioned an Epicurean God witnessing this great defeat, with a sense of anguish. Nietzsche was arguing for a society of *Übermenschen*, who were aware that they did not need Christ as an architect for their life.

The *Übermensch* characterised a new set of values, a new way of thinking beyond the polarity of good and evil. *Zarathustra* posited that meaning in the world could be obtained via enactment of the *Übermensch*. Opposing the Christian view that meaning in the world was to be acquired in 'other-worldly' beings, the *Übermensch*

discovers meaning within himself and throughout the world; an idea which converges with Kandinsky's notion of 'a new spiritual epoch' brought about via abstract art and the artists expression of 'inner necessity' in order to oppose the material world.

Kandinsky conceived of the artist, and indeed, himself as sacrificing himself for the sake of humanity. This is a vital point as it is this aspect held by an artist which contributes to their mode of art, of expression, of their craft, without which, their art would hold no meaning or value. In return, Kandinsky felt that the observer of abstract art needed to search within themselves the purity of perception.

Kandinsky anticipated the emergence of abstract art as the purest form of influence on the human soul. In a similar fashion as Kandinsky whose manifestation and artistic representation of inner necessity were to contribute to the progress of man's development without the need for religious dogma, Nietzsche wasn't proposing existential nihilism, but a life affirming type of nihilism.

In fact, Nietzsche proposed an alternative to nihilism, because it advocates and affirms meaning and value to the world without turning away from the dark thoughts that generally are included within nihilistic doctrines (Hatab, 1987). Therefore, in order to overcome existential nihilism, one needs to re-invent oneself and move on. For Nietzsche, the *Übermenschen* is the absolute existent form; one which outgrows and surpasses everything else.

These points also reinforce the role of prophet which both Kandinsky and Nietzsche perceived themselves as; as an artist and via the figure of Zarathustra. The death of God was therefore, not one which brought about nothingness. According to Young (2003), Nietzsche was not declaring just the death of the Judeo-Christian god, but that of all gods. Young thus states that 'He meant, rather, anything that performs the function in human life that was once performed by the God of, a traditional Christianity.

A 'religion' in other words, is anything that postulates or promises a true world'. Kandinsky's overarching aim through this art was to conceive of a kind of spiral revival via abstract art. Similarly,

Nietzsche held the view that a new justification of history would take place; specifically, one of Dionysus, Eternal Return, and the *Übermensch*. For both Kandinsky and Nietzsche, it is therefore through their 'creation' that a spiritual revival will take place.

Through his pronouncement of the death of God, Nietzsche endeavours to prophesise the most substantial and calamitous event in man's history; the glorification of all values; namely the self-overcoming of humanity as a whole, and the end of all moralistic interpretations of the absolute (Iqbal, 1998). Nietzsche approaches the death of God in a manner that mirrors man's initial reaction; one which begins with relief and motivation, but which will, in time, bring about man's culture to experience a sense of 'rupture, destruction, downfall, revolution' and a 'stupendous logic of terror, an eclipse of the sun unlike any yet seen on earth' within this period for mankind (*The Gay Science*, 2017, p. 181).

Since God has been the ultimate symbol of transcendence, Nietzsche welcomes the demise of the death of God. As demonstrated in the above paragraph, the death of God is not simply a religious issue, and cannot be taken lightly. As far as Nietzsche is concerned, the death of God equals the death of truth, as divine transcendence has been the guarantee for a number of cultural constructs. Without God, we are left with just becoming. Thus, rather than supporting nihilism, Nietzsche announces nihilism as a danger for Western culture.

In fact, Nietzsche argues that nihilism is rooted in the very Christian moral tradition which he opposes. In nihilism, Nietzsche notices the will to truth, which originated in the Christian-European tradition; now turning against that tradition and concluding that all is false. One of the main purposes of *The Gay Science* (2017), is to show that even though Nietzsche is a critic of the sociological order of mythology, he is quite steadfast in his belief that nature-oriented order has its benefits, and that many of his key concepts.

The Will to Power, the Eternal Recurrence, and *Übermenschen*, are as a matter of fact, not intended to be taken at face value, but rather as mythic concepts that can empower individuals to live in harmony with their own natures and with the natural world (O'Mara, 2017).

This position on the increased harmony between man and the natural would also be taken up by Kandinsky, who would present form as biomorphic shapes. Kandinsky has indeed noticed that, in the process of nature, forms of organic growth, developed in line with structural laws, and from a force similar to that of 'inner necessity' (Ashmore, 1979).

As manifested by Zarathustra who posited that 'Man is still un exhausted for the greatest possibilities', Nietzsche nevertheless harboured the strong belief that man possessed developmental capacities. Nietzsche's principal aim was to breed the perfect being- 'free spirits,'. A vital element observed in the *Übermensch* is his overcoming of the 'herd' mentality; one which Christianity had advanced and fostered. The *Übermensch's* advanced self-governing did not therefore include links to the 'herd', nor to its politics, as these ideologies were incompatible with the *Übermensch*'s attainment of perfectionism.

As Nietzsche expressed 'Man is a rope. Fastened between animal and *Übermensch* -a rope over an abyss' (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1974, p.4). 'What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And just so shall man be to the *Übermenchen* : a laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1974, pp. 41-42). An analysis which is shared by Kandinsky who, through his art attempted to bring about the expansion of mankind and through it a spiritual awakening.

Steiner had similar aims when, as part of his philosophy of freedom endeavoured to develop a theory which would contribute to the awakening and growth of humanity

> A philosophy of freedom must set out from the experience of thinking, for it is through this experience of thinking that a human being discovers his own self, finds his bearings as an independent personality (*Philosophy of Freedom*, 2011, p.5).

Below is my presentation of the elements in Kandinsky's theory of art which can be traced back to either Nietzsche, Steiner, or to both of these thinkers simultaneously. Kandinsky broke down the barriers between painting and music. He isolated the pure emotion, known as

the artistic emotion. Kandinsky aimed to bring to painting the same power as music; the ability to give expression without the help of representation.

In doing so, Kandinsky wanted to demonstrate what is at least the logical analogy between colour and sound, between line and rhythm (Sadler, 1977).The interpretations of Kandinsky's abstract visual art demonstrate that although his paintings do include representational, albeit manifested via abstraction, elements such as the a boat with two oars slightly to the right of the piece *Composition VII,* Kandinsky stated these did indeed communicate certain themes and emotions via their location, shape, and colour.

Contemporary scholars such as head Curator Brady Robertson at Milwaukee Art Museum maintains that Fragment I for *Composition VII* has referenced this piece as 'a euphoric expression of the cleansing power of the apocalypse that brings redemption and a new' (See Fallone, E. 2015, June. From the Collection: Wassily Kandinsky's Fragment 1 for *Composition VII*). This can be traced back to Nietzsche, who made use of different styles and perspectives in each one of his texts.

While discussing the spiritual revolution, diagrammed by Kandinsky as a triangle in which different groups of people residing in different segments, he maintains that 'along the road are the different arts, saying what they are best able to say, and the language which is peculiar to their own' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 19). As well as being in agreement with Nietzsche's life affirming view of the world as discussed earlier, Kandinsky's portrayal of the large acute triangle can also be traced back to Steiner's own notion of a human spiritual evolution.

Steiner believed that humans had all previously been conferred the gift of clairvoyance; being gradually eradicated over the centuries due to an increase in analytical thought. Even though he believed this stage to be necessary in human development, Steiner felt, in accordance with Kandinsky, that the time had come to fuse scientific with spiritual understanding, in the name of 'spiritual science' (Steiner, 2008).

Kandinsky held the view that art was the only medium through which the advancement of a spiritual era could occur, a notion which can be traced back to Steiner who also believed art could serve to bridge the split between the reductive materialist worldview and an increased spiritual way of being and living, in order to provide a way 'to harmonise the spiritual-divine with the physical-earthly' (Steiner, 2008).

Similarly to Nietzsche's figure of Zarathustra who was portrayed as a prophet, Kandinsky thus viewed the artist as prophet (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 23) in order to inspire the beginning of a spiritual revolution. Kandinsky's purpose in expressing 'inner necessity' of the artist and to convey universal human ideas and emotions thus denotes spirituality as being connected to the human fate at a specific time in history.

For Kandinsky, 'inner necessity' holds three principles; 1: each artist expresses their own voice, 2: an artist speaks for their time and the environment that produced them-any artist blindly trying to copy a certain bygone artistic style without any new interpretation in order to make it contemporary produces 'dead' art, and does not speak to their present-day audience, 3: an artist as an artist gives their audience that timeless value which art is capable of giving. That value is not dependent on any time or place.

The concept which is associated with Nietzsche's analysis of the 'death of god', which although initially mentioned in his 1884 text *The Birth of Tragedy*, is elaborated on in the same year in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. In this text, Nietzsche expanded on the concept of the 'death of God' via the 'madman' who gave a warning, or a harbinger of what humans may become if one fails to pay attention to the warning.

Nietzsche's use of the madman to express this notion renders this idea as particularly Nietzschean in that Nietzsche's usage of the tragic and the warning for Europeans is quite typical throughout Nietzsche's texts such as in *The Birth of Tragedy*, but also the mixing of madness with wisdom. Nietzsche did indeed maintain that

> All superior men who were irresistibly drawn to throw off the yoke of any kind of morality and to frame new laws had, if they weren't actually mad, had no other alternative than to make themselves or pretend to be mad (*Dawn*, 2017, p.14).

As it has been shown throughout this project and discussed in Chapter 3, Nietzsche uses a variety of styles within his writing, making his texts very difficult to clearly categorise; namely, philosophy and literature (Ionescu, 2020). In addition, it is wise, while reading Nietzsche to steer clear from any attempt at interpretation by starting from the abstract to the very rigid. Moreover, one can clearly also identify in Nietzsche's different styles his wide use of aphorisms, metaphors, hyperboles, and numerous contradictions.

How are Nietzsche's different writing styles connected to Kandinsky's paintings? As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Nietzsche's use of allegorical imageries were a great influence on Kandinsky's symbolist art. Kandinsky's 1923 piece *Composition VIII* offers a metaphor for man's spiritual experience and how it relates to genius. Kandinsky suggested that the value involved sticking to a comprehensible notion about how a piece of visual art is realised; another reinforcement of Nietzsche's influence on Kandinsky.

For instance in *The Birth of Tragedy,* the need to obtain balance between the Apollonian principles of light, rationality, order, versus the Dionysian principles of passion, unpredictability, and energy, was fundamental in order to acquire a certain amount of meaning in life, determined how Kandinsky developed his paintings. Another aspect concerning the capacity to eagerly seek out a higher form of individual manifestation and communication of 'inner necessity' manifested through art was also demonstrated in Chapter 4, to be an act of freedom.

In the same way as Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* endeavoured to do so, Kandinsky and Marc wanted to characterise and present the 'inner self' as a mode through which humanity was to be saved from

materialism and decadence. Another notion central to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, namely, morality, was also an ideal that members of *Der Blaue Reiter* wanted to demonstrate via their works. Kandinsky's use of colour and form in his paintings and his desire to communicate 'inner necessity', can also be traced back to Nietzsche, whose writing styles are vital in terms of explanation.

In *Ecce Hommo,* Nietzsche himself stated that he made use of different styles in order to make it easier for his reader to understand that there was no such thing as a single style of writing, as a 'style in itself'.

> To communicate a state, an inward tension of pathos, means of signs, include ping the tempo of these signs-that is the meaning of every style; and considering that the multiplicity of inward states exceptionally large in my case, I have many stylistic possibilities-the most multifarious art of style that has ever been at the disposal of one man. Good is any style that really communicates an inward state, that makes no mistake about the signs, the tempo of the signs, the gesture ….' (Nietzsche, 1989, p.265).

While discussing the value to abstract art, Kandinsky also argued that it was a style of art that did not dictate to the observer how it should be interpreted. Neither does it impose upon the observer what kind of emotions they should experience and express when viewing such abstract pieces. This is in line with perspectivism-the idea that the way one perceives things is not the truth, but a perspective which suits them, but not necessarily everyone, is fundamental in this case, as it proposes that different writing styles bring about different perspectives and views (Ionescu, 2020).

Nietzsche's application of different styles is proposing an anti-dogmatic stance, and contra to Socrates and Plato. The fundamental problem which motivates Nietzsche to write in the various styles in which he does, is that of nihilism. As shown a few paragraphs ago, one of the ways through which Nietzsche touches on this issue is via the use of the hyperbolic term 'the death of God', which appears in *The Gay Science*.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not allude to God himself, but to what has become of God in humans. 'By its very nature, God the metaphysical entity cannot die. What is dead then, must not be God himself, as it were, but rather something that can be born and die, namely the idea of God or the belief in God' (Reginster, 2006, p.40). Although Kandinsky never actually defined the existent epoch as nihilistic, he expressed an anxiety

> …the nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip. Only a feeble light glimmers like a tiny star in a vast gulf of darkness (Kandinsky, Introduction, 1977).

While exploring Nietzsche's use of metaphors, and looking at the output of Ancient Greek philosophers, Sarah Kofman posits that Nietzsche was

> Looking neither to approve of them or refute them, for one cannot refute conditions of existence…A system must be evaluated not according to its truth, but according to its force and beauty: it is a question of knowing whether what made the system possible was superabundant or a needy form of life, whether the philosopher was affirming or denying life by it. Metaphorical style is the sign of a plenitude of life, just as 'demonstrative styles indicate a poverty of life (*Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 1993, p. 19).

There is a vital connection between different form and colours in Kandinsky's paintings. This connection is justified when one identifies how Kandinsky understands the power each of these different forms and colours possess in their ability to voice his message of 'inner necessity'. This is carried out in the same way as how we must understand the reason for Nietzsche's use of writing styles and content; a link which is justified in his understanding concerning the affective attachment between people who still hang on to Christian morality and to the values and ideals they believe without questioning them.

Kandinsky also gives a nod to Steiner, who felt that whereas the philosopher creatively divulges the essential of the natural in 'conceptual structures' (Cruce, 2016), the artist exposes the same necessity of the concrete to the senses by showing how substances work and develop (Coetzee, 1988). It was this notion of advancing consciousness and cognition towards being part of the creative laws accessible in nature which was to become central elements in Kandinsky's theory of aesthetics.

Accordingly, Kandinsky believed that literature, music and art to be the 'first and most sensitive spheres in which the spiritual revolution makes itself felt' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 14). Kandinsky states that 'Musical sound acts directly on the soul'…. (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977, p. 27). For Kandinsky, colour was 'felt', and thus caused certain emotions within an observer, in the same way that music can; a concept which, as many visual pieces by Kandinsky show, became an increasingly important area through his inclusion of musical elements within his paintings.

This notion can therefore be traced back to Steiner, who posited that when entering a certain type of consciousness, that of stillness, one has 'the sensation that he himself lives in this colour and this light, not as if they surround him, but rather he himself is colour and light…..the world of colour and light is permeated with resounding sound' (*The inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone*, 1983, p.15).

Nietzsche's view that the beauty of music is manifested through its tone's emotional power also fed into Kandinsky's notion concerning the emotional power of music. Moreover, Kandinsky's increasing use of musical elements can also be traced back to Nietzsche's text *The Birth of Tragedy*, represented music, specifically German music, as the tool via which Western culture would regain its enchantment with myths. *The Birth of Tragedy* thus operates and is manifested through musical principles in Kandinsky's visual art.

The Russian painter also expounds colour and music as being inspired by the soul as much as Steiner denotes colour of spirit aura. A direct link can thus be observed between Kandinsky's statement

that ‘blue is the heavenly colour’ (1977), and Steiner maintaining that ‘shades of blue appear in soul-moods full of devotion’ (Steiner, 1977, p. 145). Furthermore, Kandinsky discusses how and explains how different forms possess certain ‘sounds’ (*Point and Line to Plane*, 2017, p. 70) which echoes Steiner’s notion of humans’ ability to create ‘the tone’, and the deepened experience of the ‘single tone’ (*Music, Mystery, Art and the Human Being*, 2016, Introduction, p.3).

Kandinsky thus mentions a number of phrases observed in Steiner’s text *Theosophy* (1977, p. 133) concerning archetype’s possession of spiritual music. Kandinsky specifically notes ‘What the intellect perceives in the physical world as law, as idea, reveals itself to the ‘spiritual ear’ as a ‘kind of music’. Kandinsky owned twenty-three volumes of the Lucifer-Gnostis journals, but notes of his include information from a comprehensive twenty-six of the volumes.

In these notes, pages 7- 9 include information on ‘The Steps to Higher Knowledge’, an article written with the purpose of continuing and increasing the information previously discussed in a prior article; ‘How does One Attain Knowledge of Higher Worlds’ (see Ringbom, *Occult Elements in Abstract Painting*, 1970, p. 417). Kandinsky expounds colour and music as being inspired by the soul as much as Steiner denotes colour of spirit aura. A direct link can thus be observed between Kandinsky’s use of blue as the ‘heavenly colour’ (1977), and Steiner maintaining that

> A demand of our time is that the human being once again be recognised as a microcosm, formed out of the macrocosm. In affirming the microcosmic origin in every particular of the human form we find the cosmic powers which brought it forth. With the help of colour, it is possible to represent the human being in accordance with these creative powers. A requirement is that we come to gradually recognise colour as having its true being in the Cosmos, in the zodiac, in the planetary spheres (Steiner, 1977, p.133).

Kandinsky stated that despite the omnipresence of others form and colours, clarity of form was crucial to his work. While discussing the need for colour to have boundaries, Kandinsky maintained that '…when red is represented in a material form (as in a painting) it must possess (1) some definite shade of the many shades of red that exist (2) a limited surface, divided off from the other colours, which are undoubtedly there' (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* 1977, p. 28), a notion which can be traced back to Nietzsche's acknowledgement on the dependence between Dionysus and Apollo.

Dionysus' purity and superiority were dependent on the Apollonian to enable the Dionysian to be comprehensible. Seeking greater evidence regarding the notion of sound obtained in the universe, Kandinsky explored the occult and theosophy to find such details. While exploring the harmony between spirituality and art, he also needed to get an idea as to the nature of the constitution of spirit. Yet, Kandinsky did not find these two areas of investigation to be mutually exclusive as, in his eyes, art had 'the power to create a spiritual atmosphere'.

While questioning the way in which spirit manifests itself, Kandinsky felt that the answer was to be in sound, a sense which was the pervasive feature of the universe (Ashmore, 1977), a concept which can be traced back to Steiner. Besides the existence of spiritual 'sight' in the world of spirit beings, the occurrence of spiritual 'hearing' must also be accounted for.

When discussing this concept, Steiner explained that 'as soon as a clairvoyant ascends from the soul world into the spirit, the archetypes also begin to resound', which to an observer feels like being in an ocean of sounds within which spirits are expressing themselves (*Theosophy, an Introduction to the Spiritual Processes in Human Life and in the Cosmos*, 1994, p. 125). A spiritual 'music' is therefore created and revealed to the spiritual 'ear', which is perceived in the physical world as natural law.

The concept of cosmic harmonies certainly fed into Kandinsky's theory of art as can be identified in his painting *Composition VII* (1923) while creating 'cosmic convulsions' (Leggio, 2002). His 1926 piece Several Circles most likely is his piece that communicates the notion of musical spheres of the universe the most. The work illustrates a number of differently shaped and coloured circles which overlap, giving the piece a celestial intimation. The dark background reminds one of the infinities of the universe; the circles appear to be floating in space, as do planets and stars.

As previously mentioned, due to its ability to allow the listener to interpret sound into any possible way, Kandinsky firmly believed that music was the most abstract form of art. The development of his *'Composition*' pieces was initiated purposefully to include a number of different forms per canvas. Yet, each visual form could still be viewed as containing various rhythms, in the same way that music does.

Rhythm in art is indeed related to rhythm as it is in music as both consist of patterns aiming to cause a kind of emotional experience to the listener or the observer, an idea which can be traced back to Steiner, who stated that

> Every colour, every sensation of light, corresponds to a spiritual tone; every interaction among colours corresponds to a harmony or a melody, and so on (*Theosophy, an Introduction to the Spiritual Processes in Human Life and in the Cosmos*, 1994, p.126).

Furthermore, in 1911, while explaining his state of mind when he was developing his sketch for 1911 piece 'Improvisation with Horses' Kandinsky stated that

> The inharmoniousness (one might say, the negative rhythm) of the individual forms was that which primarily drew me, attracted me, during the period to which this watercolour

> belongs. The so called rhythmic always comes on its own because in general the person himself is rhythmically built. Thus at least on the surface, the rhythm is innate in people….'(no paging)

A notion which can be traced back to Steiner, as can be observed in the establishment in 1912 of his Eurithmy, a dance form which engages body, soul, and spirit, and Nietzsche who advocated a time-rhythm, or a Dionysian rhythm (Miller, 1999), observed in Greek tragedy which was characterised by constraint. Kandinsky on the other hand, engaged form, colour, and placement (Rucsandra, 2020). For Kandinsky (2009), the mystical approach of music could be captured by the artist through the use of geometric shapes and rhythmic lines.

In terms of the contribution of rhythm to a piece of art, each visual form could be viewed and interpreted as a different rhythm according to Kandinsky, just as music has different rhythms. A group of numerous shapes could thus be positioned in order to form a complex rhythm. Rhythm in art is connected to rhythm in music, in that rhythm in both artistic modes involve patterns which are meant to move the observer and listener through the composition. Kandinsky included various musical elements in his work while at the *Bauhaus*, and thus released the intrinsic power of colour.

Kandinsky was using music as the foundation to abstract art, as he believed it also helped the artist determine the correct colour and form to use, which represent spirit. Of note is that the clear distinction between body and spirit emphasised in Nietzsche's concept of the 'inner life' as discussed in the first few chapters is at the level of the living body (*Will to Power*, 2017). Spirit is thus spiritualised. That is why there is no distinction, for example, in stating that music is an affirmation of bodily life, as well as saying that music is a kind of old spiritualism.

It can thus be demonstrated that a clear relationship between the development of Kandinsky's theory of art and Nietzsche's

spiritualism is indeed present. Similarly, Nietzsche's figure of Zarathustra, as defined as the Fifth Gospel by Nietzsche influenced Kandinsky's notion of the acute-angled triangle divided horizontally into unequal parts, portrayed by the artist as a prophet to those about him.

Each one of them who can see beyond the limits of his segment is a prophet to those about him, and helps the advance of the obstinate whole'. Kandinsky therefore felt that an artist's purpose is to serve a higher cause amid the degeneracy of modern life.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this text has been to demonstrate that the development of the early 20th century Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky's theory of art was influenced by the 19th century German existential philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of spirituality. Throughout the text, I explored works by Nietzsche such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Beyond Good and Evil, Human, All too Human*, and *Ecce Homo* in order to identify spiritual notions discussed within each one of these texts.

I also examined Kandinsky's theoretical works; *Concerning the Spiritual in Art, Point, Line, to Plane*, and his autobiography *Reminiscents*, in which he explains the development of his paintings. Rudolf Steiner's knowledge of Nietzsche also had an indirect influence on the development of Kandinsky's theory of art, which was obtained by reading Steiner's primary texts and articles. This enabled me to identify the ideas and concepts of Nietzsche's, such as inner necessity, which Kandinsky echoed and applied while developing his theory of art.

I began by demonstrating how Wassily Kandinsky's artwork was, during his later period (as of 1908 onwards) influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of decadence and theory of myth. Then, via my own interpretation of certain abstract paintings by Kandinsky, I demonstrated how Kandinsky represented his spirituality through his art. Lastly, through the investigation of some of Nietzsche's texts written during his early period (1872-1876), such as *The Birth of Tragedy,* moving onto texts such as *Human, All too Human* (1878), completed during the middle period (1878-1882) of his writing career, right through into his late period (1883-1887), the period during which he penned one of his most famous texts, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85).

In view of this purpose, I demonstrated that to understand Kandinsky's visual art, one needed to understand how his spiritual art

was drawn from Nietzsche. The scope of this text did not allow me to explore Rudolf Steiner's influence on Kandinsky not only as a member of the Theosophical group, but as a spiritual scientist too. This may be an interesting and beneficial area of investigation for further research.

As my interpretation of Kandinsky's paintings included in this project were based on Kandinsky's own writings; namely his own theoretical explanations about how his paintings were executed, I think that my interpretation is robust. The intersection explored between Philosophy, Theosophy, Spirituality, and Abstract Art in order to formulate a philosophical argument concerning the development of Wassily Kandinsky's theory of Art, throughout this text contributes to the ever-increasing research areas in interdisciplinary studies. This intersection was crucial in order to identify the spiritual elements involved in the development of Kandinsky's theory of art.

The development of Kandinsky's theory of art came gradually. It began during his work with *Der Blaue Reiter*. Franz Marc, another member of the group shared Kandinsky's belief that art should possess a spiritual quality. In view of these shared beliefs, Kandinsky's spiritual notions were open to development through mutual interests and conversations between he and Franz Marc. Throughout this project, I found Kandinsky's contribution to religion or spiritual art to be substantial.

The manner in which Kandinsky depicted his vision of spirituality via expressionist, and how it could work as a force against materialism was also a novel concept. The 'altruistic' vision Kandinsky believed was to be attributed to expressionist painting and symbolism was very interesting, and is an area within expressionist history which I found fascinating due to the spiritual elements included, which were manifested in his use of specific colours and shapes through which he interpreted certain emotions.

The meticulous detail with which Kandinsky developed his paintings; the use and combination of different colours and shapes was fascinating, as recounted in every detail in his writings. Kandinsky's desire to contribute to mankind's increasing spiritual development, and the way in which it gave rise to the development of and his application of his theory of art was very interesting, and clearly another factor that was fundamental to the amount of work he put into the research behind the creation of his paintings.

He was very innovative in how he depicted spiritual concepts through his application of symbolism, through his use of different colours and symbols, which he believed held spiritual qualities and meanings, to the more classical religious and spiritual paintings associated with the Italian and Dutch masters. Chapter 1 set the stage by presenting Kandinsky within the socio-cultural epoch. The period I focused on throughout this text was Kandinsky's later periods, starting in 1908, in which his paintings were much more abstract in style, as influenced by his conceptualisation of 'inner necessity', the term used to define an artist's inner reality.

I therefore defined Expressionism as the era during which there was a focus on different psycho-emotional states. I thus explained how Expressionism was also a literary as well as an art movement, that began during the nineteenth century fin-de-siècle period, lasting until the early twentieth century (Kolocotroni, Goldman, & Taxidou, 2013). Being very successful and influential in Germany, Expressionism fashioned the existent socio-cultural scene of Germany. Expressionism had therefore a wide impact on painters in Germany at the time.

Then I moved on to discuss Kandinsky's time in Munich and how it acted as a pivotal period in Kandinsky's introduction to Nietzsche. I then discussed the importance of Munich as the centre of artistic and intellectual activities when Kandinsky first arrived there from Moscow in 1896 and the co-occurring development of the Nietzsche cult, initiated at first by literary figures who either lived in or were in constant contact with the cultural life of Munich.

Of importance, was the presence of Rudolf Steiner in Munich at the time, who would be a vital character in the increasing formation of Kandinsky's awareness of Nietzsche. While Steiner's influence on Kandinsky was considerable, my argument focussed on how Steiner's distinctive Nietzscheanism impacted Kandinsky's spiritual art. I then introduced Nietzsche who was cast as a spiritual figure by various intellectuals at the time. A further aim here was to draw from the works of numerous scholars to gain a greater appreciation as to the reason why Kandinsky was drawn to, and influenced by Nietzsche.

Although Nietzsche's works are generally divided into periods, I also aimed to argue that his interest in Religion lasted throughout his career, beginning with early works such as *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), right through to his late works, including *Thus Spoke Zarathustra in* 1883. However, Nietzsche's spiritualism was more one of an immanent nature than that of Kandinsky's. Whereas the Russian painter's spiritualism was influenced by the occult, Nietzsche's immanent spiritualism was much more concrete.

Yet, it was also one separate to Kant's transcendent type of spiritualism. Indeed, Nietzsche offered a spiritualism which involved his 'yes' to life which he presents as the 'will to power'. In chapter 2, I move on to discuss the relevance of the dazzling modernist epoch between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, that would become the period during which nineteenth century decadence was to become the most discussed aspect within discourses and diatribes taking place at the time (Downes, 2010).

I then explained how the term modernism became to signify much broader scopes as well as a newly developed writing style (Lewis, 2007). This wider range of inclusions reached all different types of art forms and aesthetics. According to Levinson (2011), modernism, which was soon to be characterised as a movement, owed its intellectual development to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

What I found to be of particular interest was how much the modernist period encompassed various artistic movements such as naturalism, impressionism, post-impressionism, expressionism, symbolism, cubism, and dada, to name a few (Lewis, 2007), in spite of its negative connotations during this period. Still in chapter 2, I then defined and described Nietzsche's theory of decadence. For Nietzsche, decadence stood for everything that is bad for us.

Nietzsche specifically alludes to the decadent being drawn to simple solutions, solutions which he applies to difficulties he minimises. For Nietzsche however, the solution to these difficulties were myths, which he believed would reenergise the world. I then began Chapter 3 by defining symbolism. Although I was aware of the importance and focus on inner feelings and emotions for symbolist painters, the emphasis of certain themes such as mysticism, the perverse, and sexuality, among others to be very interesting and very informative.

For symbolists, their aim was to move away from the mundane by concentrating on, and depicting their personal beliefs on contemporary social issues as well as other, more personal notions such as death, love and the occult. Thus, symbolists believed that through their art, they were to communicate absolute truths via metaphysical symbols. Shapes were also used to depict symbolist meanings.

The concept of a Western esoteric belief was also very important as it encompassed many of Westerns dismissed knowledge, including, but not limited to astrology, Theosophy, Gnosticism, alchemy, and Hermeneutics. I found the use and representation of these concepts and philosophies fascinating, especially as Kandinsky's use of form and colour increased in line with his more spiritual pieces. I also found it fascinating that the amount of Symbolist artists who followed Theosophical principles was so big.

The idea that Western and Eastern beliefs could be conjoined was very appealing to various Symbolist painters. The interest both

symbolist painters and Theosophy advocates held in science was also very interesting; a notion I wasn't aware of previously. It was very interesting to learn how followers of the occult, or indeed, occultists themselves, often paid attention to scientific discoveries in order to support their views.

Kandinsky's period as part of the *Der Blaue Reiter* group was a time during which Kandinsky developed his symbolist art, contributing to the wide and global impact this group was to have. Throughout my research on this period, it was very interesting to find out the history behind the given name of this group. Based on one of Kandinsky's paintings *Der Blaue Reiter* created in 1903, the rider symbolised the shift from the physical world to that of the spiritual world.

The symbolism attached to the name was very interesting to explore in that the horse symbolised energy as well as freedom from conservative artistic views and techniques. The rider was to represent the artist in control of the horse; artistic development. Another interesting aspect to the group was that despite the use of different approaches, each individual member shared the same desire to create art in order to connect to the spiritual through the use of colour, which for Kandinsky, provides a corresponding 'spiritual vibration'.

Kandinsky's period at the *Bauhaus* was one of great innovation. With a view to amalgamate art and architecture being the *Bauhaus*'s primary function, it was interesting to discover that it was during this time that Kandinsky developed his interest in theory more so than in application. Being the period during which Kandinsky's work involved a greater focus on geometric applications, was evidence of the growing interest and development of industry and technology taking place at the *Bauhaus*. While further exploring Kandinsky's work at the Bauhaus, the amount of and types of workshops offered was new to me.

Throughout this text, I have demonstrated that certain aspects of Nietzsche's spirituality informed the development of Kandinsky's theory of art. Originating from his time in Munich, and his later artistic career, as of 1908 onwards, Kandinsky aimed to spearhead a 'spiritual revolution' as a challenge to the materialist period and

decadence. While doing this, Kandinsky's use of metaphors and symbols can be traced back to Nietzsche's allegorical imagery such as that observed in *Zarathustra* and *The Birth of Tragedy*. For instance, Kandinsky's 1923 piece *Composition VIII* offers a metaphor for man's spiritual experience and how it relates to genius, which he describes in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977, p.10).

For the duration of his artistic career as a painter, Kandinsky developed his style. Originating from his Russian background, Kandinsky's first few years as a painter involved conventional themes and artforms, such as the Cossacks and Russian peasantry. However, as from 1908, Kandinsky began to experiment with different, and more abstract styles.

In order to limit or exclude the risk of abstract art turning into mere decoration, lacking in emotional and spiritual significance, Kandinsky thus felt that he needed to begin a painting with real, concrete objects, which he would then blur or simplify in order to present abstract art as possessing a 'hidden' quality. Kandinsky's artistic flourishing occurred while composing a magical visual combination of vibrant hues and shapes; hues and shapes clearly informed by a philosophical spiritualism.

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