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THE PHILOSOPHIES AND THEORIES OF KANDINSKY AND KLEE,
DEMONSTRATING THEIR MUTUAL CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY
WHICH MOULDED THEIR ENTIRE LIFE'S WORK

INTRODUCTION:

When looking at the entire work of both Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee one is confronted with a whole "other-world" of colours, shapes and images. One finds oneself sometimes finding refuge in a figurative explanation, sometimes resigning oneself to accepting a symbolic definition of a painting. Altogether, images range from quasi-impressionist, expressionist, cubist or fauvist, to images reminiscent of child art, the art of the insane, primitive art or the hieroglyphic of ancient cultures. These dance vivaciously before one's eyes. There is a paradoxical quality to their work; almost a silent communication into sound. The Irish mystic G.W. Russell describes the true theosophical mystic in saying; ¹ "The unmanifest maybe suggested and shrouded by the manifest, and the mystic experiences this through his endeavours to translate his insights from the region of things felt to the region of things understood" - a description which is equally apt for the quasi - mystical works of Kandinsky and Klee. Having looked at their work, one is left with the irresistible curiosity to understand the exact concerns, significance and purpose which inspired both artists in their work.

The exploratory and celebratory aspect of their work is evident from the first, as is seen in two early works "The arrival of the Merchants" painted by Kandinsky in 1905 and "Garden scene with watering can" painted by Klee in 1905. The mode of their

quest can be seen to expand and then mature throughout their painting life and the notes which they kept from the beginning also serve to clarify their progression.

Both artists shared an equal appetite for finding the meaning, truth and eventual strength in their art. However, their painting and indeed philosophies, are by no means the same. What is, infact, beneficial about considering the two simultaneously, is that frequently one finds that they have examined the same subject and arrived at alternative conclusions. Thus, one artist often appears to answer the other artists question.

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed great changes throughout society. The birth of the technological age saw new discoveries which threw new light on religious and social issues, which for centuries had remained unchallenged. Therefore, psychology gained unprecedented strength within society. Sigmund Freud studied many cases of hysteria and depression and emphasized for the first time the role of sex in human behaviour - he associated many forms of mental ill-health with occurrences or obstructions in early childhood.

Along with Carl Jung, Freud recognised the extent and significance of the unconscious in man and isolated the levels of "the self" and its function. Jung researched extensively on the role of dreams and their function as the expression and 'collective unconscious' of the unconscious. Friedrich Nietzsche proved almost revolutionary in his free thinking, he stated "God is dead" and he, along with Henri Bergson, developed new theories on man and the importance of intuition as well as intelligence - the super human. These rather controversial theories on the unconscious and mans' complexity were further instated by the growing interest in the Religion,

culture and art of the primitives. The name primitive was somewhat more generally applied in the early twentieth century. Art from the East Africa, America, the South Seas, the Mayas, the Aztecs and Incas was being enthusiastically collected and exhibited in Europe. Many artists (mainly in France and Germany) found inspiration in the strength of primitive works and thought they found a spirituality lacking in their present age. However, most especially for those artists working in pre-war Germany, there was severe antagonism shown towards those who were seen to be influenced by the primitives. They were viewed by the Catholic, conservative and nationalistical sectors of society as pagan and anarchistical polluted by barbaric primitive influences. However, one cannot avoid seeing the irony of the situation, in that an aggressive dismissal by the establishment strengthened the ideals, solidarity and conviction of those artists. Certainly, if society had assumed an apathetic role towards such works it would have been at best disillusioning for them.

Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow on the 4.12.1866. He came from a wealthy family, and being intelligent, he followed an academic career, studying economics and law in the Moscow University from 1886. He appears to have been an extraordinarily receptive character as he possessed a passion for such varying subjects as law, the natural sciences, French literature, music and, above all, painting. Finally, in 1896, his need to paint seemed to over-ride his already successful work in law and economics and he moved to Munich with the intention of devoting himself entirely to painting. There he studied anatomy under Professor Molliet and attended the academy class of Franz Stuck. From the first it was the spiritual aspect which captured the imagination of Kandinsky as opposed to the purely academic concern. He later refers to this feeling in his book 'Concerning the spiritual in art' when he says² 'I remember that drawing put an end to that state of

uneasiness in making me live outside time and space, so that I didn't even feel I was myself'. He began keeping journals on his ideas and their developing stages from the very first, and through these works, we are able to get a first-hand knowledge of all his main artistic concerns etc.,

Paul Klee was born in Munchenbuchsee in Switzerland on the 18.12.1879. He also came from a well-to-do middle class background and was very intelligent. He had a passion for music and was a very accomplished violinist. However, Klee decided on his painting career early in life and attended the Munich private art school of Kuirr in 1898, starting at the age of nineteen. Then, in 1900, he joined the academy class of Franz Stuck. Kandinsky and Klee met first at the academy but their friendship grew in later years. Klee (as with Kandinsky) was rather disappointed in the classes of Franz Stuck where he felt that he did not get the stimulation in the development of colour that he so anxiously required. 1900 saw Munich as one of the leading European art centres, captivated by Art Nouveau and Jugendstil. However, Klee searching as yet to understand his life, as well as art, went to Italy. There, he visited Milan, Genoa, Pisa, Rome, Naples, Pompeii and Florence. He was struck by the brilliance of Michelangelo and yet found his work chilling in its austerity, he was greatly moved by the naive style of the early Christian works. He was impressed with Rodin and Boticelli. He greatly admired Boticelli's use of colour. However, it was the Frescoes in Pompeii that inspired him most; he felt as though they had a significance for him especially. After his Italian trip he attended life and anatomy classes in Berne and became more maturely aware of the conflict of classicism and the humanities, both of which strongly influenced him. As with Kandinsky, Klee also kept detailed accounts of his progression and theories. Again these written works enable us to get a clearer insight into the exact concerns and meanings of his work.

From this brief synopsis the early history of both Kandinsky and Klee, questions arise as to what exactly inspired them to explore such a previously untouched area of art and life. Both artists were, without doubt, of an intellectual disposition. The sudden burst of discoveries and new philosophies must have had a rather daunting affect on all individuals at the time, especially those who sought to understand the genesis of these occurrences.

The undermining of many long held beliefs and Religions contributed either to an ignorant unbending blind faith mentality in some, while in others, it caused them to reject totally all values that could not be scientifically proven. Generally speaking it was the dawn of the highly materialistic age. Kandinsky and Klee obviously being both questioning and sensitive individuals, must have sensed an unbalancing of human reason in their time, as exemplified in the extremes of Rationalism versus Existentialism. I think, therefore, it is reasonable to suspect that they saw humanity was fast tearing itself away from what for centuries was sacred and the centre of all life.

In the drive to further mans intellectual and materialistic needs, a denial of mans soul and very essence of life seemed imminent. It was, perhaps, this social void that inspired Kandinsky and Klee. With soul-searching ardour, opposing the materialism of the age. In a way, their very notes and paintings serve as a kind of psychological record of humanity at the time. The dilemma that many must have felt - the sense of being lost and finding one's way back to the very core (creation itself) is always present in both their art and literature.

CHAPTER 1

SPIRITUALITY, PRIMITIVE ART AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN RELATION TO THE THEORIES OF KANDINSKY AND KLEE

Man's sense of the spiritual is claimed to be one of the major differences between him and the rest of the animal kingdom. However, within the whole history of mankind, on a personal, social and historical level, that spiritual sense differs vastly. It is, perhaps, the fact that the spiritual does not exist as a biological state but lies in the realm of the metaphysical, that makes it so illusive and indefinable. Describing a spiritual sense is similar to describing a sense of smell, where an exact direct description becomes impossible and comparisons become the only aids to comprehending. The spiritual nature of art becomes yet more complicated. Art has been used by many civilizations throughout thousands of years as a form of honour to, or representation of, a spiritual existence. The spiritual in painting is a depiction of the intangible in visual terms, left to the viewer to interpret in many ways.

However, Kandinsky found both guidance and support in his quest for a spiritual art, from the mystical group known as the theosophical society, and most especially from Madame Blavatsky. Madame Blavatsky (1831 - 1891) was a Russian mystic. She, with W.Q. Judge and Rudolph Steiner, founded the Theosophical Society. The object of the society was firstly¹ "to form the nucleus of a universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, cast or colour". Secondly "to promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern Literatures, Religions, Philosophies and Sciences and demonstrate the importance of that study". Thirdly, "to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the psychic powers

latent in man". The movement looked to the stages of ancient India, the Upanisads, Bhagavad Gita and Yoga Sutras in an endeavour to learn the truth of "what is". The motto of the society was ²"There is no religion higher than the truth". Kandinskys' admiration and respect for the teachings of Madame Blavatsky is evident when he says in his work "Concerning the spiritual in art" that ³"Theosophy, according to Blavatsky, is synonymous with eternal truth". Though Kandinsky may not have been an actual member of the Theosophical Society, he empathized with its philosophies and ideas. Through Kandinsky the "Blaue Reiter" group bore many similarities to the Theosophical Society in its open-mindedness and aspirations for a better future. Although, Klee had independently considered various concepts of the primitives, the core of life and the cosmos - he found further inspiration in Kandinsky's theories which often ran parallel with Theosophical ideas. Klee suggest this in his plans when he says ⁴"... I met Macke, Kandinsky and Marc and moved closer to their aspirations", and he shows his respect of Kandinsky when he writes ⁵"He was further along his development than I was: I could have been his pupil and in a certain sense I was, because one or other of his words, confirmed and illuminate my searching".

In Blavatskys' book "Isis unveiled", she speaks of a true teacher figure - a super being, who transcends the ordinary physical boundaries - ⁶"I tell you, he is no real teacher who cannot rise beyond the world of sense and darkness, and awaken the links within us from plane to plane; who cannot see within the heart what are its needs and who has not the power to open the poor blind eyes and to touch the ears, which have heard no sound of the heavenly harmonies". This concept of the pure prophet figure calls to mind Kandinsky's triangle analogy and the individual(s) who might occupy the position at the very apex, or alternatively, Klees' "Crystalline type".

Both Kandinsky and Klee found stimulation in arts of a more primitive nature. Before Klee became involved in the "Blaue Reiter" group he had formed an interest in swiss folk art. He frequently painted on glass around 1905. However, although he may have borrowed the idea from the folk tradition of glass painting, he approached both the subject matter and method of painting in an entirely independent manner, as is obvious in his painting "Houses at the edge of a wood" 1900. Kandinsky would have had experience of the rich colourful imagery of the Russian icon paintings, which surely had an immense impact on him, as his colour treatment of his earlier fantasy themes would suggest - such as "Couple on Horseback" 1906. Kandinsky was especially captivated by folk art after his ethnographical expedition to Vologda in 1889 in which he experienced the full extent of peasant painting and their decorative art. He started painting on glass from 1908. Kandinskys' glass paintings are based more on a traditional theme than those of Klee. Paintings such as "St. Vladimir" 1911 and "St. George" 1911, seem consciously interpreted in the iconographic style of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The growing interest in primitive work proved advantageous, in that many museums, exhibitions and private collections made it possible for Kandinsky and Klee (and many more) to broaden their knowledge of primitive works.

Primitive art works were outstanding in their vigorous depiction of mythical figures, gods and their symbols for various aspects of life. The boldness of primitive imagery seemed to Kandinsky to communicate an essential truth, inspite of the centuries that separated them, he says⁷ "Like ourselves these artists sought to express only internal truths, renouncing in consequence all consideration of external form" and⁸ "... the internal truth which only art can divine, which only art can express by those means of expression which are hers alone". This desire for inner truth was shared by all

concerned with the Blaue Reiter group as is clear when Franz Marc states⁷ "Today we search beneath the veil of appearances for hidden aspects in nature... it is not fancy or the desire for something new that makes us seek and paint this inner spiritual side of nature, but it is because we see this side".

Ultimately, Kandinsky and Klee were each aware of a need for a Renaissance in art. Not merely an altering of the final stage the 'painted image', but a review of the whole meaning and purpose of art. The extensive accounts and theories, which both artists kept, help us to understand the structure or object of their artistic renaissance.

Kandinsky's book "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", describes spirituality (in relation to art) as an expression of man's spiritual potential. He attempts to rationalize spiritual - artistic theories. Such theories on such an illusive subject can be enlightening, yet he states in this very book that¹⁰ "No such theories of principle can be laid down for those things which lie beyond, in the realm of the immaterial". Perhaps on account of his very academic background, Kandinsky formulated theories of the most illusive concepts in a very authoritative tone. At any rate, in the first chapter of "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" he insists passionately that there is a real art and then an unworthy art. He felt that the primitives were aware of this and that the art they produced was of the truest form. He expressed this when he says of these artists that they sought the expression of "internal truths". The belief of art for arts' sake was a notion he could not share. He saw art as having a far greater purpose, in which the artist could penetrate the innermost truths and communicate them to other men, thus revealing the most sacred and essential human elements. This concept is, infact, reminiscent of Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. Kandinsky felt that art which did not endeavour to fulfil this ideal was of no value and ultimately degrading. He felt that if the painter sought

out the "inner need" he could create works of powerful strength. He expressed this concept when he says "... Art, that which is capable of educating further, springs equally from contemporary feeling, but is, at the same time, not only echo and mirror of it, but also has a deep and powerful prophetic strength". It appears, therefore, that he saw art as having a potentially religious, mystical, super-significant role. Kandinsky's interest in mysticism becomes evident at this stage. His belief in a spiritual renaissance where man could communicate on many levels, where true harmony might exist for both the self and community indicate the influence of Madame Blavatsky. He explains his perception of generations of man through an analogy of a triangle. He likens a generation to an equilateral triangle. This triangle, he says, moves continuously forwards and upwards, slowly but surely. He then draws a line two-thirds up from the base and compares it to the division within each generation. The larger division at the base are the majority within a generation. The smaller division at the top are the minority - the pioneers of the time. Among this minority he believes the true artists live - the prophet of the future. However, he reminds us, the triangle moves forwards and upwards and what was revealed by the pioneers of yesterday, is accepted by the majority of today. Likewise, the pioneers of today will have to wait to be understood by the majority of tomorrow - and thus it moves on eternally. But that is a time honoured truth; one only has to look at the story of Gallileo or, later, Charles Darwin.

During this time there were some revolutionary concepts within the music world, finding parallels within the changes occurring in painting. Both Kandinsky and Klee shared a great enthusiasm for music and saw in its changing form a growing relationship to painting. Kandinsky admired the work of Alexander Scriabin who was one of the pioneers of the "new music", and also shared many of Kandinskys' theosophical ideas. He mentions Scriabin in "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" and he included both

Scriabin and Arnold Schonberg in his Almanac for "Der Blaue Reiter". He expresses his love for music when he says¹² "Music ... the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena, but rather to the expression of the artists soul in musical sound". Music, because of its very nature, always expressed an emotion in sound which had its origins within the inner most spiritual sense of man. From the purity which he sensed in music, Kandinsky found strength in his exploration of colour. Klee also shared this perception of the parallels between music and colour, as is clear when he says (speaking in his diary about Cezanne's work)¹³ "Primitivity out of capacity for reduction ... the use of spots as factors in the chord of colours" Kandinsky believed that colour had a far greater significance psychologically than it was credited for having at the time. He felt that colour had the ability to reach directly into the souls of man thus moving him to various emotions; that true spiritual vibrancy could be triggered by a harmony of colours which could enable an unprecedented communication of souls. In order to achieve this he worked unfalteringly as he felt that a truth could be discovered in the exploration. He states,¹⁴ "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". He felt that if an excellence or pure unity of colour and form, was achieved, a painting would then be born. This painting, coupled with sound would exist as a symphony for the soul, thereby inducing great spiritual harmony.

Perhaps it was in order to best achieve this revolutionary play of colour and form that Kandinsky felt a necessity to lose the figurative or 'materialistic' representation in his paintings. At any rate, he states¹⁵ "The more abstract is form; the more clear and direct is its appeal". He seems to have seen abstraction as the language of the spirituality he worshipped. His complete faith in the sacredness of abstraction becomes

quite clear in his statement that ¹⁶"In any composition the material side may be more or less omitted in proportion as the forms used are more or less material, and for them substituted pure abstractions, or largely dematerialized objects. The more an artist uses these abstracted forms, the deeper and more confidently will he advance into the Kingdom of the abstract". I think Kandinsky appears somewhat biased in the above statement. Surely a finished painting is inarguably itself a material object and as a finished piece it may or may not possess spiritual quality. A spiritual sense within a painting does not depend on whether it is a figurative or abstract work, but on the emotion which created the work, whether one can almost see the blood or passion with which the work was painted. After all if one looks at some of the most passionate works of say Goya, Breughel and Van Gogh one sees a whole history of human tragedy - love, jealousy and fear expressed in a face and ones last suspicion would be that these artists might have better described this passion by use of a circle or square. Kandinsky refers to an 'inner appeal' of form as a type of spiritual insight that man may or may not have. He felt that this inner appeal was truly essential if one was to appreciate or understand an abstract composition. He states that ¹⁷"to anyone who cannot experience the inner appeal of form, such compositions can never be other than meaningless. Apparently aimless alterations in form - arrangement will make art seem merely a game". Again, at risk of sounding like the kind of heathen Kandinsky describes in the above statement, I think that every individual has inward reactions to outward forms, what else can explain peoples value - judgements of beautiful or ugly, their likes or dislikes. Consequently, if one paints, one chooses ones own central or principal elements of that form and, therefore, be it a figurative or abstract work, an inner echo is always present. The question of whether the painting is good or bad surely depends on the strength of that inner echo of the outward form.

Kandinsky seems to have believed that, as each colour had its inward echo, it was also possible to develop a language (or series of echoes) through the harmony of one colour with another, he states¹⁸ "This sharply defined working of individual colours is the basis on which various values can be built in harmony". The importance he placed on this harmony, when achieved, is remarkable as can be seen in such a statement as, ¹⁹"The composition arising from this harmony is a mingling of colour and form each with its separate existence, but each blended into a common life which is called a picture by the force of the inner need".

In the chapter 'Theory' in "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", the emphasis which Kandinsky places on the spirit and art reaches its highest pitch. He does not see the spirit and the will to paint as necessarily combined, and yet he cannot conceive of an art attaining any level of success without such a combination. He seems to feel that colour, the language of the spirit, must consciously be developed and studied by the painter. He says that²⁰ "The artist must train not only his eye but also his soul, so that he can test colours for themselves and not only by external impressions". It is said that Kandinsky had a theory that it was possible to paint without using canvas, a brush or paint itself (although this remained a theory, or at least, if he did try to realize it, it is not evident to us today)! However, this belief came from his conviction that a spiritual existence previously unknown, could exist where communication could transcend the traditional physical boundaries and life itself could assume an abstract existence. These very radical and perhaps excessive ideas become evident in the chapter 'Theory' in statements such as ²¹"The nerve vibrations are there ... but they get no further than the nerves, because the corresponding vibrations of the spirit which they call forth are too weak" and "when we remember, that spiritual experience is quickening, that dissolution of matter is imminent, we have reason to hope that

the hour of pure composition is not far away". Perhaps it is because the whole subject of the book is after-all, concerned with the spiritual that the book reaches an almost messianic tone at this point. This is unfortunate as some of the ideas are interesting and could be enlightening but the dogmatic overtones have a crippling effect on them. However, when he says ²²"It is the conviction that nothing mysterious can ever happen in our everyday life that has destroyed the joy of abstract thought" he touches on a very interesting point, most particularly if one considers the climate of thought at the time. This point seems almost a prediction of what the future might hold - the death of innocence, end of the shock of the new, when active materialism is rife and the ability to be surprised becomes a thing of the past. However, Kandinsky seems to have been quite optimistic about the future of his spiritual wonder land, where all arts combined to free the soul. He says - ²³"The achievement of the dance - art of the future will make possible the first ebullition of the art of spiritual harmony - the true stage composition - (1) musical movement (2) pictorial movement, (3) physical movement. These three, properly combined make up the spiritual movement which is the working of the inner harmony".

In his final chapter 'Art and Artists', Kandinsky clarifies his idea of the 'Real Artist', as he sees it, and he also sets a standard of rules which the artists must comply with in order to attain any success. He states that ²⁴"The work of art is born of the artist in a mysterious and secret way, from him it gains life and being". In order to create art he feels that it is necessary to have absolute freedom so that one can be receptive without prejudice to any worthy influences or emotions which might arise. He also emphasises the importance of the soul in the creation of art. He refers to this as the vibrations of the soul, an idea which is strongly connected to his belief in the 'inner need' - which justified a work, giving it sincerity. In this final chapter Kandinsky's aspirations appear very

idealistic and somewhat elitist. It is a passionate chapter and the tone is one of enthusiasm in the fight for the real, spiritual art. He speaks very strongly of the role of the artist as a leader and guide for his generation, and the ones to come. He says that²⁵ "painting is an art, and is not vague production, transitory and isolated, but a power which must be directed to the improvement and refinement of the human soul - to the raising of the spiritual triangle". He feels that art which merely reproduces an image of life on to canvas is virtually redundant and serves no purpose. He says that the artist must absorb the forms and sights around him and then visualize the echo of these forms, as they are understood inwardly or by the soul.

Klees' writing is at the barest minimum in his "Pedagogical Sketchbook" and he uses key words or very simple, brief sentences. He uses quite an amount of diagrams, however, and this mode of expression is both unique and thought-provoking. When one looks at the book one sees writing and then diagrams and the effect makes one question writing, and the basic shapes it makes, as compared to the more illustrative diagrams. The manner of description, employing a basic and elemental approach, emphasizes the exploratory nature of the book. He appears to use this clear approach in an effort to avoid any misinterpretation or preconception. He seems to look firstly at the most microscopic, most primal elements and to explore them through a half pictorial, half mathematical, musical and literary invention of his own. He seems to create his own language in which he feels best able to communicate this previously uncommunicable concept. Looking firstly at one single line and then its development into a complex shape created by the inter-action of many single lines, he notes with great intricacy how there is a constant battle of opposites between positive and negative aspects within the most elemental of forms. Gradually, one finds that this seemingly confounding exploration begins to take shape and one line or shape opens

the door to another. Thus, Klee gradually builds his own type of hieroglyphic language whose impact can finally be appreciated when one sees how he expresses it in his paintings (eg. "Picture Page" 1937).

Through his patient study of the elemental, he finds a structure in which there is a play of factors. He names these factors according to their role, within the structure, calling them the 'passive', the 'medial' and the 'active', also the positive and the negative states, all of which react with one another in the creation of even the most basic of forms. He then regards higher forms of life as he examines plants and the human skeleton and its capacity to move. He clarifies the common characteristic shares among these structures which serves as a basic rule ie. an interdependence of several factors - this rule being the secret to the very existence of such phenomena. Klee had already considered the interaction of several elements in the art of creation as is clear when he says in his diary:²⁶ "Pictures have their skeleton, muscle, and skin like human beings. One may speak of the specific anatomy of the picture... first one builds an armature on which the picture is to be constructed. How far one goes beyond this armature is a matter of choice; an artistic effect can proceed from the armature, a deeper one than from the surface alone".

Klee's method of study, inspite of its concentration on the basic, is in effect, a very cosmic or universal way of understanding. He finds that in all elements of existence from small to vast and from both a personal scale to an interrelationship level, the same basic code is mirrored throughout. His method of examination, can be likened to a stone being dropped into the very centre of a pond, and then his understanding grows like the expanding ripples, one caused by the other, stretching eventually to the very perimeter of the pond.

Klee then studies the cosmic form. Firstly he examines a pendulum. Then by plotting its movement from right to left and allowing the pendulum to make a complete round he introduces the circle or the cosmic. From the cosmic shape he explores the spiral and the meanings it can express. Then, to further clarify this meaning he notes the importance of 'direction' and uses an arrow to describe it diagrammatically. He further unites these stages of exploration in an attempt to describe the state of man's existence in the world. Klee's tone now assumes a philosophical note as he explores the physical state as against the spiritual or intangible sense. He finds that man's physical state has limitations far greater than his ability to desire or think. He expresses this when he says that²⁷ "Thought is the mediary between earth and world. The broader the magnitude of his reach, the more painful man's tragic limitation". However, his response to this situation is not entirely pessimistic, as he recognised that this fact should not hinder our struggle for our dreams but feed and inspire them, to quote "Be winged arrows, aiming at fulfilment and goal, even though you will tire without having reached the mark".

All in all he searches out the natural eternal law of the universe. His method of study is humble and searching. One feels Klee is constantly aware that in his study of small to large, the study of himself is included. This sense of humility, I feel, prevents him from becoming prejudiced or one-tracked.

CHAPTER 2

THE PAINTING OF KANDINSKY AND KLEE REVEALING THE GROWTH OF THEIR PHILOSOPHIES

Both Kandinsky and Klee experienced an academic tutoring in painting and drawing during their early stages of art study. However, it is clear from their practical work and notebooks that they recognized the scope for exploration and discovery within the art. Klee, as yet a student in Bern, wrote ¹"My constant hope is that I will be inhibited less by lack of ability than by authenticity of purpose". However, Klee was rather hesitant during the early part of his career as he considered himself mainly in terms of a graphic artist and lacking in a true sensitivity to colour. Klee's travels to Italy and Tunisia proved encouraging, but his meeting with Kandinsky and consequent involvement with the Blaue Reiter group provided him with an opportunity to discuss and expand on his theories among a group of like-minded individuals. Kandinsky appears to have started his career with a great confidence and certainty of purpose; Klee both identifies with and was stimulated by Kandinsky's growing theosophically influenced concepts. Both artists perceived certain parallels between painting and music and found inspiration in one another's theories. Klee indicated the extent of his attachment to the 'Blaue Reiter - Kandinskian' group when he said ²"I believe in the movement and also the real earnestness of one or other of the Munich Expressionists... The boldest among them is Kandinsky who is also an active writer".

Kandinsky's early landscape work is generally seen as separate to his work which he produced when his philosophies became more clarified. He later states that such works were by way of an exercise and called them 'impressions'. However, I think his painting "The Old Town II" 1902 has a strength and vitality approaching that of his more commonly recognized vital period

of 1911 and 1914. "The Old Town II" was painted after a visit to Rothenburg in which he delighted in the fairytale, fantasy like quality of the place, being reminded of the fairy stories and the magic quality of light which had captured his imagination as a child. He maintained that child like wonder in his painting and one is reminded of his claim of how colour had impressed him from an early age. The painting is somewhat 'impressionistic' in style, yet its bold and vigorous manner gives it a very individual quality. The bright and energetic colours, are interrupted with dark shadows and plants which surround the dancing red roof tops, which in their turn, highlight the chaotic skyline increasing the movement of the yellow-blue sky. Already in this painting one can see how Kandinsky uses colour and line in a separate way. His use of line in the path and fence etc., complementing the play of colour.

The years between 1900 - 1907 saw Kandinsky experiment with both his method of painting and his subject matter. The painting 'Motley Life' 1907 is painted on a dark background. I think the first impact this painting has, on seeing it, is the obvious delight which the painter felt in marking down each colour. In spite of its quiet detailed account of swords, bow and arrow, boat and crosses in the background and detailed designs and spots of colour to the fore, the painting remains free and moving and full of energy. He accounts all aspects of life in this painting, love, pleasure, youth, age, birth, death, religion and war. All these human states and consequences appear almost in the manner of a play, with the stage - Nature - Rising above them majestically in an all encompassing way. Such early paintings display the enthusiasm and delight which the painter felt in actual painting and his great sense of freedom. In my opinion, Kandinsky's earlier works have far more vigour and life than some of his later hyper-intellectualized paintings such as "Thirteen Rectangles" 1930 or "Animated Stability" 1937.

In the years before 1906, Klee saw himself largely as a graphic artist and felt quite daunted by the materials of oil and canvas. This probably emphasizes the fact that he was not merely concerned with the finished art work but was highly sensitive to the materials and potential of colour. Around this period he experimented with watercolour and painting on glass. Klee's painting "Portrait of Frau Von Sinner" 1906 is an example of his early very graphic painting and method of glass painting. The painting is quite unique in both its expression and manner of execution. Set against a bright green background the figure sits tall and angular with a gaze that reaches over and beyond eye level. The greatest concentration is fixed on the head with its unusual shape emphasized by the thick dark hair surrounding it. The eyes become the focal point of the portrait. Her torso is described in a stark and simple manner resembling much of his later treatment of the essential elements of form. At the base, her arm lies resting on her other curiously distorted hand. The arms serve to balance out the head and also lend a strange uneasy sense to the pose. Altogether, the portrait has a very personal air to it. He seems to use hatch lines in the various descriptions which adds a solidity to the figure - the painting does not have the fluidity of some of his other paintings on glass. Although the painting is basically very different from his later work, some similarities in its sensitivity to its subject and method of description.

Klee's painting 'Girl with Jugs' 1910 (oil on panel) is quite drastically different from his work of four years previously. During this period he had become acquainted with the French Impressionists and the approach towards Cubism. His admiration of Cezanne's work is apparent in his painting. Klee further explores colour in this work and he has concentrated more on a purely basic structural description of form.

These four examples of early work of both Kandinsky and Klee reveal many aspects which would strengthen and become the very core of their later work. However, with Kandinsky less than Klee, the full extent of their quasi-spiritual philosophy expressed through their work and, indeed being the very purpose of their work, is not entirely evident at this stage.

Kandinsky's theoretical work became more evident in his painting around 1910. He had spent time travelling in Europe and Africa during this period and had stayed in Rapallo and Tunis from May 1906 to June 1907, he was in Paris and gained experience of the work of the Impressionists, Cubists and Fauvists. He became acquainted with Matisse through his friend Jawlenski and found his work inspiring, as he did the Fauvists for their freedom and energy. Kandinsky's theosophical interest was growing throughout this period and it helped him not just in his opposition to the growing materialism around him, but also to clarify and inspire his own theories and reasons for painting. Kandinsky saw painting in terms of the sacred, and strongly rejected the generally French attitude of "L'art pour l'art".

Although he had painted a large quantity of landscapes or works derived from nature, around the early 1900's, which he called 'impressions', Kandinsky grew firmer in his conviction of art being an entirely separate entity to nature. He appreciated nature in all its glory but he felt that true painting was not a work of reflection or imitation, but indeed a world where the spirits could communicate, enlighten or predict, rendering the unintelligible intelligible. He later expresses this when he says³ "Painting is like a violent and thunder-wracked collision between different worlds that are destined to create a new world by fighting one another..." "Painting with an Archer" painted in 1909, in my opinion, is strongly intermediary in its situation between his 'impressionist' work and what he called his 'improvisations' - work which was created from his

experience and emotions of the 'inner world'. 'Painting with an Archer' has a great dynamic quality and the almost colliding appearance of mountains, sky, figures and all the elements reminds one very much of the manner his work took until the 1920's. His approach is still quite representational. Yet, on this occasion it almost serves to confuse one and enhances the sense of mystery. The galloping horse and rider are immediately striking - the horse is strained but strives in a definite direction while the archer aims behind with his bow and arrow - one feels they are being chased; but by what? There are two figures standing in the foreground to the left and their purpose or concern remain a mystery. Hills, rocks, a house and tree-like structures, colliding with an equally dynamic sky - all contribute to the energy and fantasy - quality of the painting. The whole theme is still reminiscent of his love of fairy stories. One can clearly see how Kandinsky saw canvas as giving reign to a world in which the imagination could act with freedom and spontaneity.

In 1911, Kandinsky along with Franz Marc set up "Der Blaue Reiter". This was not so much a movement, but it provided a group which shared similar theories on the purpose of art. Both Kandinsky and Marc published philosophical and theoretical essays in their 'Almanac' and also organized two 'Blue Rider' exhibitions, the first in December 1911, the second in January 1912.

The centre figures of the Blue Rider Group were Kandinsky, Marc, Klee and August Macke. Klee was introduced to Kandinsky (for the second time) by their mutual friend Macke. Kandinsky was the major figure in the Blue Rider Group and, owing to him, there was a strong theosophical tendency among them. Both Klee and Kandinsky saw strong parallels between music and art. Colour was of great significance to them and they saw comparisons between the whole spectrum of colour ranges and scales of musical notes. However, Kandinsky and Klee held

opposing views on nature, Kandinsky saw nature as being entirely separate to painting, and though he appreciated it fully he drew his inspiration from within; on a spiritual, non materialistic level. Klee, however, felt constantly inspired by nature and saw his painting as an extension of the basic laws of nature. His value of nature is evident in his 'Creative Credo' of 1920 when he says -⁴"An apple tree in bloom, its roots, the sap rising in it, its trunk, the cross section with the annular rings, the blossoms, its structure, its sexual function, the fruit, the core with its seeds - one single organization of states of growth... Art is a simile of the creation. Each work of art is an example, just as the terrestrial is an example of the cosmic". However, the Blue Rider Group provided an atmosphere in which the painters could share their ideas - it was an almost essential refuge in the growing nationalistic pre-war Germany. What all the painters shared, most particularly Kandinsky and Klee, was the desire for both a 'poetic' dimension and a deep expressive quality to their work.

The Blue Rider proved invaluable to Klee around this period, but it was his visit to North Africa in 1914 that saw him finally attain his goal of true sensitivity to colour. Feeling that he was lacking in this before, had inhibited and confined his work. The bright stark colouring of North Africa with its Moorish architecture and landscape, also helped him to come to terms with his personal approach to cubism. Previous to his visit, he had attempted a cubist construction in his work, but had failed to see its echo or justification within nature - his source of inspiration. He had felt that a cubist treatment of the figure, for example, did nothing to enhance the life of quality which the living form contained. However, cubism attracted him in its attention to colour and he saw in it an opportunity to expand his theories on colour and its relationship to music. Being a productive period for Kandinsky in his progression towards abstraction, Klee can be seen to be

influenced greatly by his work. At this stage he began to look at abstraction and explored the language of symbols or hieroglyphic type signs. "Red and White Domes" 1914 was painted after Klee's visit to Tunisia. He has disregarded perspective, using in its place, tones of colour to express depth and vibrancy. As colour has been the reward of his Tunisian sojourn, this painting seems to celebrate his new sensitivity to colour as much as the memory of Tunisia itself. The mood of the painting is very contemplative. One feels that the painter had patiently absorbed the sights there the colour, the shapes. The whole experience seems to have been absorbed deeply by his 'mind's eye'. In "Red and White Domes" there is a strong sense of the after-image of night, day, sunset and shadows; a changing beauty which had impressed him deeply. The painting records these images through the memory and experience of Klee, and his sensitivity and love of nature is well expressed through a rather abstract approach.

From 1908, Kandinsky stopped working in two distinct styles. He now saw abstraction as the means by which he could fulfil the potential of his painting. His book "concerning the spiritual art" was published in 1912 and this pre-war period saw Kandinsky immersed in theosophical views and quite obsessed with apocalyptic predictions and dreams of death and the re-birth of a new spiritual age. These, perhaps excessive if not prophetic beliefs seem to have fuelled him with a ceaseless energy and imagination in these pre-war years. He seems to have seen himself in the light of a visionary. He wanted to create paintings that were unprecedented in their communication to the soul. Paintings which he felt had achieved an outstanding level, he named as compositions and numbered them, in a similar way that a musical composer will number a symphony. Kandinsky describes what he called a composition in his Essay "Reminiscences" when he states - ⁵"The word composition moved me spiritually, and I later made it my aim in life to paint a composition... This word affected me like a

prayer". The painting 1911 "Composition V" he saw as greatly significant among his pre-war work. There is no expression of space as we can begin to understand it, in a physical sense. The colours rather describe atmospheres, than they do a sense of depth. The painting is apocalyptic in tone, some of the imagery is almost an abstraction of some of his earlier works; - he suggests the angels of the last judgement and the fall of man - A triangle (he explains its symbolic meaning in 'concerning the spiritual') is seen rather lost yet still struggling upwards against the falling elements around it. The strong black line reminds one of the strong outline he uses in his glass painting "Saint Gabriel". The line also serves to add a new dimension and direction to the painting. During these years, Kandinsky's paintings intensify. The painting "Improvisation Gorge" painted almost a month before World War I broke out is again intensely apocalyptic in tone. There is a chaotic swirl of activity taking place and his colour ranges from intense luminous tones to deep blackish-greens and solid thick colours to transient pastel, whitish shades. To the lower centre there is a couple in bavarian costume on a bridge - they are the only direct reference to humanity and tradition and the bridge they walk on looks precarious and unsure. Marks, suggestive of water, dance to the left, while on the right there is a falling effect suggestive of a water fall or cliff edge. From his study for the painting one can see that a mythical rider gallops from the left holding a scales in his hand representing the horseman of the Apocalypse. However, in the actual painting it becomes quite difficult to identify the man or horse, and the scales looks like a lantern of sorts. Ladder-like structures stretch up into a fiery sky reflecting the glow of an ominous red ball or setting sun. To the upper left is an indefinable, yet impressive structure, to my mind it looks almost like a battle ship. The whole painting is

vigorous and emotional - the colours are so vivid that they seem to over-ride any pictorial element to begin with. There is a strong clashing quality among each element and as one explores all the areas of the painting, one sees a repeated, disjointed overlapping of little worlds on little worlds. To my mind, the pre-war period marks the most emotional and prophetic period in Kandinsky's painting. His apocalyptic tone was influenced by the theosophical prediction, according to the revelation of St. John. An era foreshadowed by great catastrophe (then already imminent), would be followed by the attainment of an undreamed of spirituality and rebirth of mankind.

When war broke out Kandinsky returned to Russia and Klee was drafted for service, Franz Marc and August Macke were also drafted, but were both killed. Thus, war brought a close to the Blue Rider years and unavoidably altered the situation of the surviving artists. The war years were not very productive for Kandinsky; he mainly painted watercolours and variations of themes already expressed. In 1918 he was offered the professorship of the Free State Art School. In 1920 he became honorary professor at the University of Moscow and in 1921 he founded the Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences but could only hold the post of Vice-President, as the president had to be a member of the Communist Party. He did not find the Russian Art climate as inspiring to him as what had existed in pre-war Germany and in 1921 he returned there. Fortunately, he was offered a position as a professor in the Bauhaus in Weimer, a post which Klee had persuaded Walter Gropius to offer Kandinsky.

The war also proved a rather non-productive time for Klee as regards painting. When he did paint, while in the army, it was brief sessions in secret. However, the war proved a time in which he could contemplate his past work and gain an appetite for the work to come. His post-war work has a marked

maturity and vigorous quality about it. In 1920 he wrote the 'Creative Credo', an essay in which he expresses much of his strengthened philosophies on art and life. The same year he was offered a position as professor in the Bauhaus by Walter Gropius.

Klee's painting "The Ambassador of Autumn" 1922 is an exceptionally fine watercolour. The atmosphere is calm and contemplative. The tonal gradations are well controlled, yet there is nothing rigid or stifling in their alignment. The orange oval (or tree) has just the right intensity of colour to enliven the tonal lines - which echo something of the orange glow. Although it is almost a pure exercise in colour, the balance, sense of colour and perhaps the title, make this an intriguing painting. There is indeed an atmosphere of autumn with translucent fading summer lights mingling with the grey darkness of winter, while the orange oval seems to glow with an inward energy. In my opinion, this painting clearly marks Klee's maturity. It has a silent quality about it, both reflecting the past and contemplating the future - a truly post-war feeling to it.

After the war, Kandinsky's paintings assumed a quiet, more controlled character. Yet the actual meaning became more illusive. "Composition VIII" 1923 is one such painting where Kandinsky expresses sphere and lines drifting hypnotically like heavenly bodies in space, There is no suggestion of gravity or actual depth, but sphere gain in strength by the intensity of colour or 'aura' around them. He plays with density and translucent qualities, in accordance with his wishes to describe dynamic and immaterial shapes. He uses light washes to describe atmospheres and to add to the mood of the various elements in space. One senses from this painting that Kandinsky has sunk further into his spiritual world. In, the works of this period one sees Kandinsky's new concerns which he explores in his book "Point and line to Plane" 1926. The

influence of Klee on Kandinsky is also apparent in this book. He places new importance on the essence of line and acknowledges that the core of creation or nature has strong echoes in art. He interprets the meanings of line as it moves from horizontal to vertical, and sees a colour equivalent to angles. All these theories provide an almost entirely symbolic language which he paints in his later years. Grohmann wrote an article on Kandinsky's work in 1925, in which Kandinsky felt he had not been represented accurately. An insight into his personal view of his work is seen in his consequent letter to Grohmann of November 21st 1925, in which he states:⁶ "I really wish that one finally sees what is behind my painting... and that one does not content oneself with stating that I use triangles or circles... I also occupy myself... so thoroughly with form on the theoretical level, because I want to penetrate into the inner dimension of form and want to elucidate it also for other people in a way that is clear, very clear."

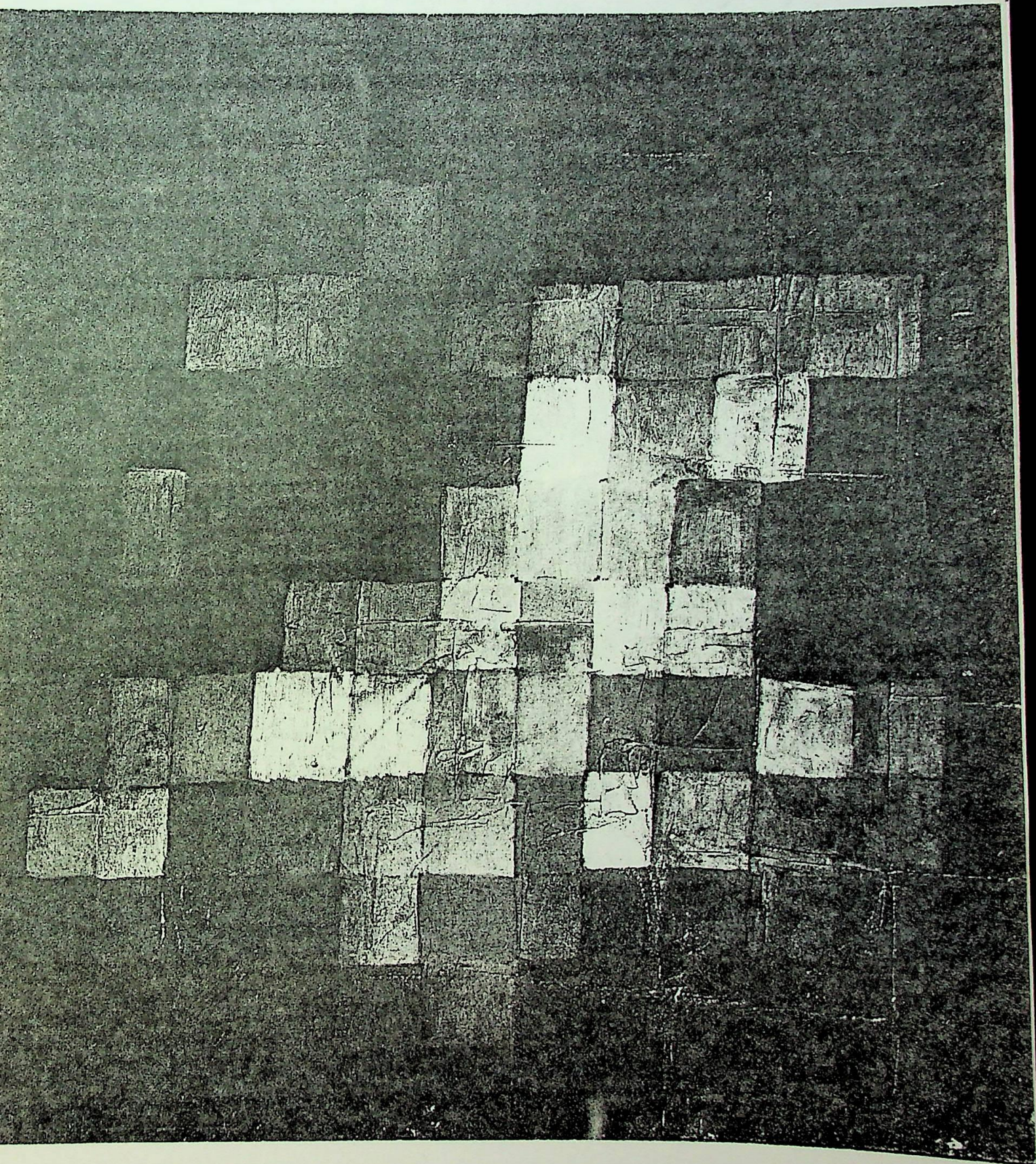
The period in which both Klee and Kandinsky were teaching in the Bauhaus provided them with an ideal opportunity in which to discuss their expanding theories and find inspiration or solutions to one another's paintings. Many of their paintings share similar themes and sometimes bear a striking artistic resemblance in the 1920's. Klee can be seen to have been greatly impressed by Kandinsky's "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", as his diaries of 1913 to 1917 show. He separates the characteristics of art into three categories namely (1) Abstraction, (2) The genesis of the art work and its cosmic character and (3) The role of the artist. Both Klee and Kandinsky saw abstraction as the dematerialization and spiritualization of art. This concept echoes much of the theosophical beliefs and both artists seem to have embraced theosophical concepts and music in an effort to come to some realization of their concepts in art. Klee said⁷ "My hand has become the obedient instrument of a remote will". This statement seems to describe what he called the "intuitive"

process in a work. He believed that the intuitive work and abstraction transcended the materialistic world into a spiritual, cosmic realm where the artist ceased to require the sustenance of material life such as food and water.

Klee's painting "Ancient Sound" 1925, is a good example of his developing spiritual concerns. The painting bears a resemblance to his earlier North African watercolours, yet, on looking at this painting, one sees those earlier works more in the light of sketches or studies for the painting "Ancient Sound". He is greatly concerned with music in this painting where he parallels his colour blocks from tone to tone with musical scales altering in notes and pitch. The tonal colours are like those of the old masters, where he employs a chiaroscuro affect. However, the painting has an extraordinary silence about it primarily, and then, as one's eye travels from one shade to another, an inner vibrancy emerges, first murmuring softly in the shadowed tones of the perimeter and finally growing clear and definite towards the centre. The painting is not stationary and yet it is not bursting with an action packed obvious dynamic quality. There is a growing, exuding atmosphere about the work which seems to both radiate outwards and draw inwards expressing the seemingly inexpressible. Klee recognises this potential in art when he says⁸ "Art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes visible... today we reveal the reality that is behind visible things, thus expressing the belief that the visible world is merely an isolated case in relation to the universe, and that there are many more other latent talents."

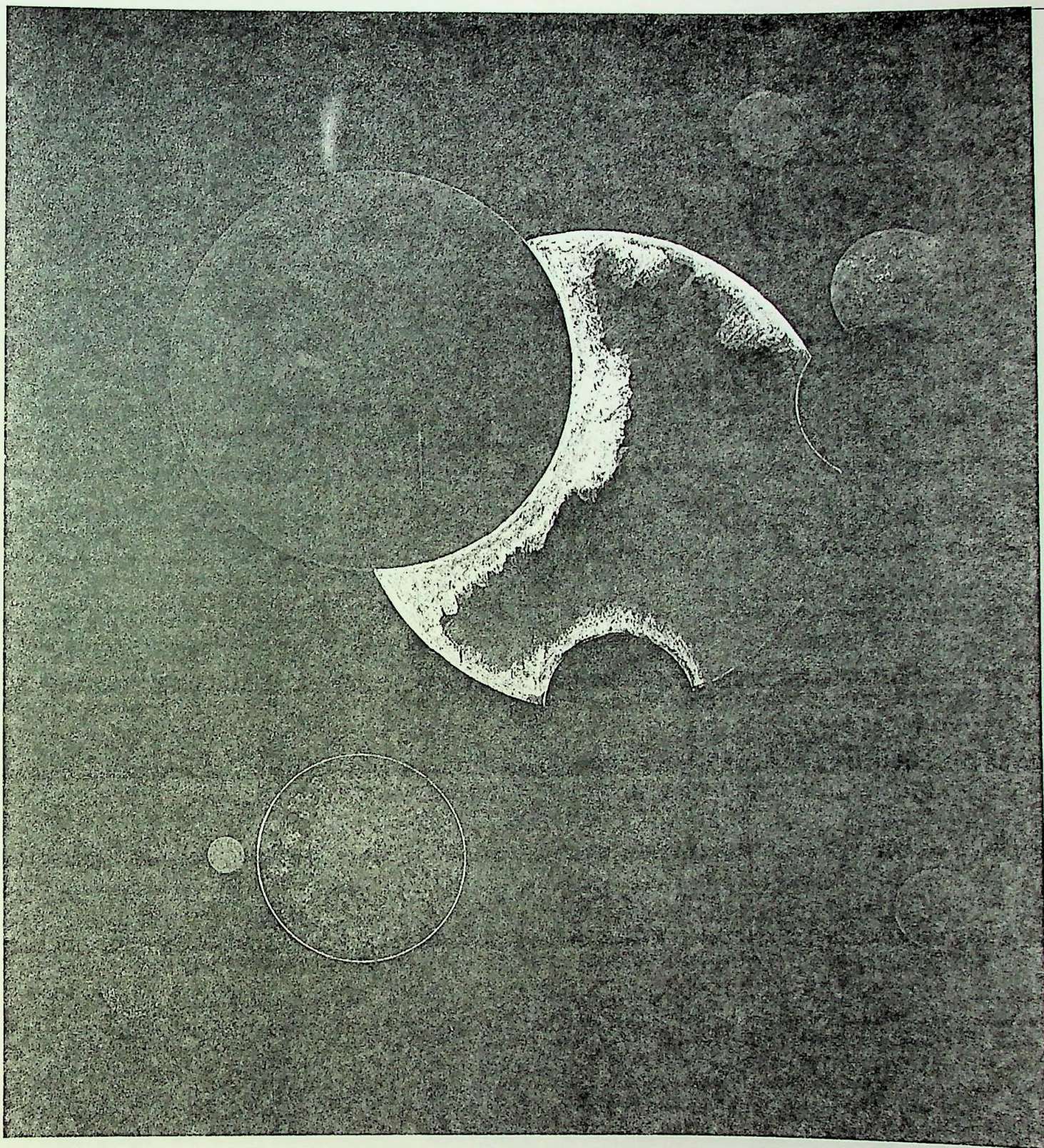
Kandinsky's painting "Weighty Circles" 1927 shares much in both colour and atmosphere with Klee's "Ancient Sound". The different choice of geometric shape is the one opposing factor within the works. Kandinsky's fascination with the circle is evident in "Weighty Circles". He saw the circle as the most powerful of forms. He was enthralled by the versatility which

he felt it possessed. He said the circle could appear as minute a mere point, a speck, altering its position in space it could appear a perfect round - a planet another change and it could be vast, eternal - the cosmos. Sometimes a circle might appear closed - a closed oneness, next the circle could embrace eternity in its universal unity. He describes its character in a letter to Grohmann in October 1930; ⁹ "The most modest form, yet recklessly affirming itself... a tenseness embodying innumerable energies. The circle is a synthesis of the greatest contrasts". The painting "Weighty Circles" has a similarly old masterly use of colour to that of Klee's. Kandinsky paints the circle sometimes opaque, sometimes translucent and sometimes shadowed. The circles vary from large to small, from overlapping to being isolated. Some exude in a rich colour warmth, transmitting outwardly, while others reveal an endless eerie introverted aspect. As with the blocks in Klee's painting, some of the colours are under shadow giving a ghost like whisper, more affirming the traces or memory of their existence than depicting their actual presence. Again, as with "Ancient Sound", "Weighty Circles", captures that strange still movement. In both paintings one feels as though the image transcends the boundaries of time as we know it and that its movement is on a cosmic scale, that does not merely dwarf oneself but mankind as a whole. Both paintings, to my mind, appear almost as silent on-lookers, their existence and wisdom outspanning our lives a million fold. Both paintings call to mind Kandinsky's view of the essential art... ¹⁰ "That which is generally valid in art being the element of the purely and eternally artistic which is constant in all ages and among all nationalities, found in each work of art at all times. As the main element in art knows neither time nor space". Klee was exceptional for his keen interest in Primitive Art, Folk Art, Child Art and the Art of the Insane. His fascination for Primitive Art namely African, Oceanic and pre-Columbian was equal only to that of Gauguin, and he fed this passion by visiting the various anthropological exhibitions and historical



ANCIENT SOUND

Oil on cardboard, 1925, Paul Klee.

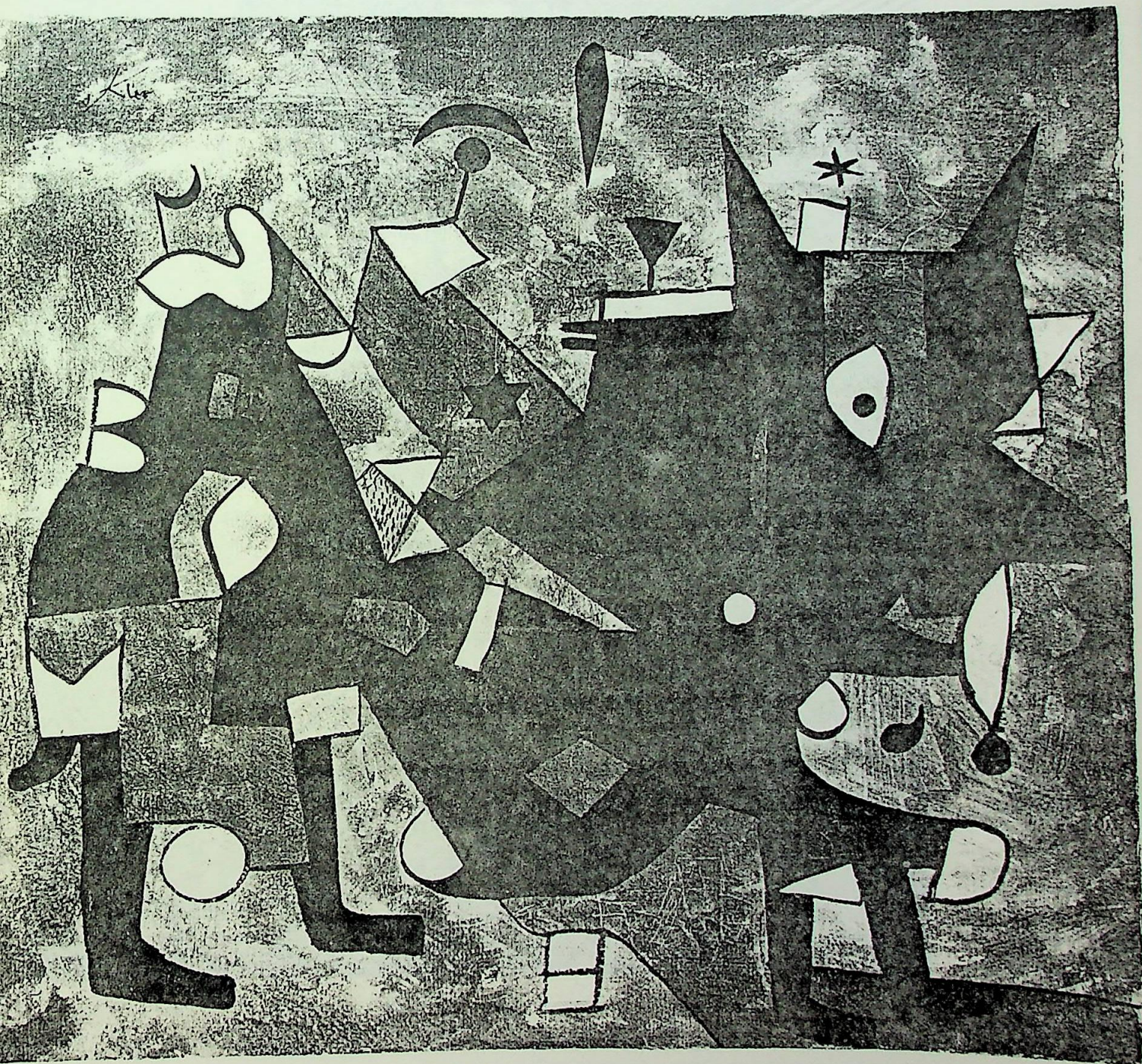


WEIGHTY CIRCLES

Oil on canvas, 1927, Kandinsky.

museums which displayed such primitive work. There was also a large exhibition of Islamic art in Munich in 1910 and generally there was a growing interest in collecting primitive art. It is evident, therefore, that Klee has quite an experience of such works. His perception of 'primitive art' covered a wide variety of works ranging from African to the great American and treasures of the Mayas, Aztecs and Incas. Klee collected African Spears, arrows and masks which he refers to in some of his notes. Klee saw in such works a vitality and expression which was sadly lacking in much of the contemporary European Art. Kandinsky also shared this notion and in their quest for truth and spirituality in their art, they saw the work of the primitives as a guide and source of inspiration to be greatly valued. Klee's admiration for such work is clear when he states -¹¹"There are still the very beginnings of art which one finds in ethnographic collections or at home in the nursery... all this should be taken in dead earnest if we are going to reform things".

Klee's painting "Overburdened Devil" 1932 has strong primitive qualities. The mood is not without humour. The combination of jagged up and down shapes, together with an eye of sorts, nose, mouth, ears, tail and legs, suggest an animal of some kind. Simultaneously, however, it could represent some eccentric machine or a child's wind-up toy. The strong outline of the head with its points and gaping mouth reminds one of strength, yet simplicity, of some African Masks or the animal god, tiger like heads frequently represented in Mexico (eg. the Toltec pyramid dedicated to the Maya God of life force, who later became the planet Venus and the Rain God in the Zapotec city of the gods at Teotihuacan). However, "Overburdened Devil" has a quick unselfconscious air to it, which makes one feel that Klee must have painted this spontaneously as the image emerged within his mind. The painting reminds one of Klee's concern for totally uncontrived images as being nearer to the truth of the genesis of an image, or indeed, all art - He expresses

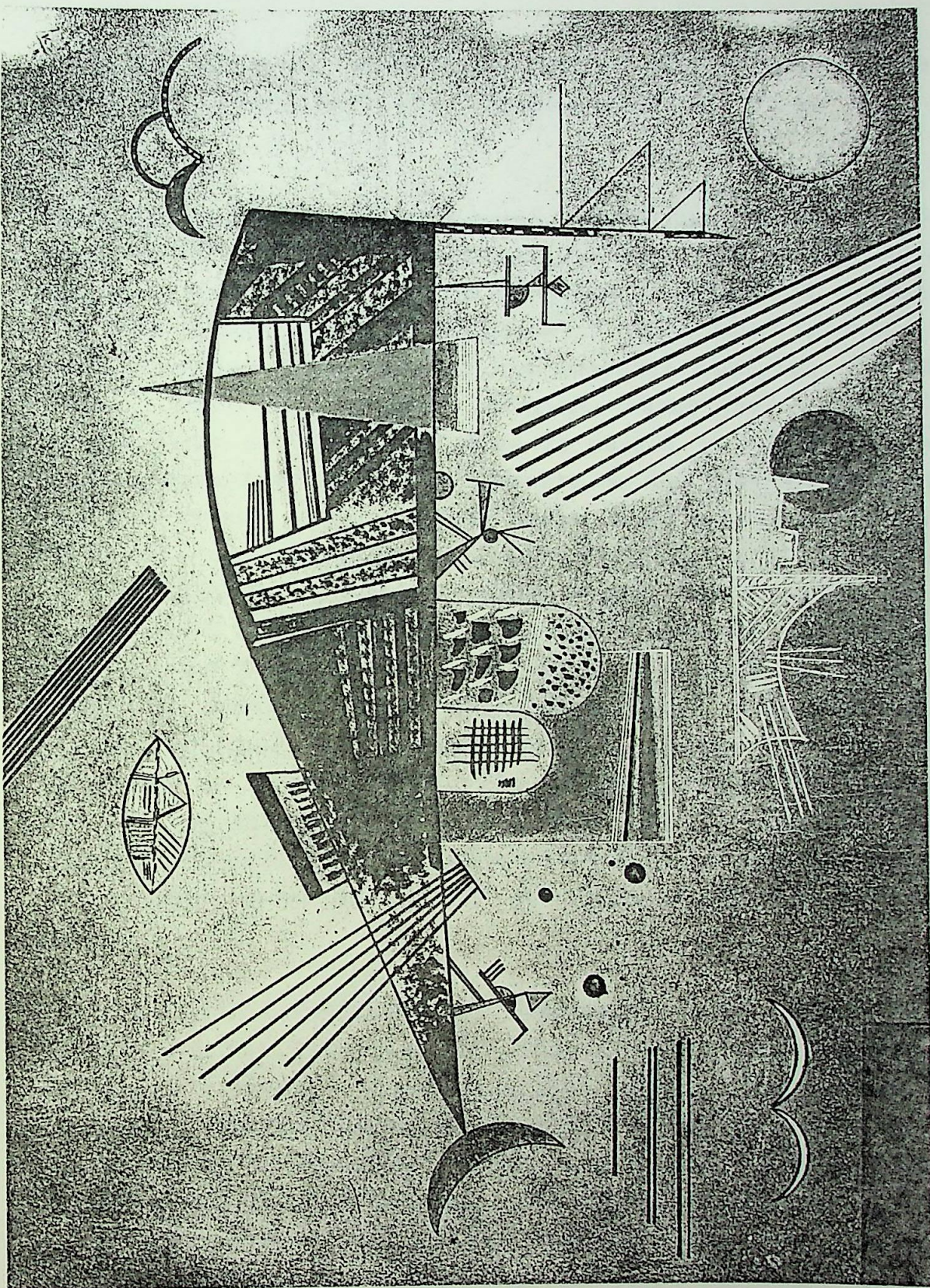


OVERBURDENED DEVIL

1932, Paul Klee.

Overburdened Devil, 1932

To turn to a painting is once again to find the anecdotal subordinated to a self-contained image. In *Overburdened Devil* (fig. 60) a wolf-like monster with two long, thin



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CAPRICIOUS

Oil on cardboard, 1930, Kandinsky.

this when he says, "When is the Spirit at its purest? In the beginning. Here work that becomes (Dual). There work that is".

Kandinsky's painting "Capricious" (1930) has the same playful attitude of Klees' "Overburdened Devil". After his detailed accounts of the significance of lines, angles and colours in his book "Point and line to plane", "Capricious" appears as a rather humorous enactment of his academic theories, in visual terms. There is a constant ambiguity about this work, as seen in the light of "Point and line to plane" it can appear as an entire demonstration of the elements he has discussed in purely abstract terms. Alternatively there is an unavoidable tendency to see the central image as a boat floating, and, as one's eye travels about the picture, symbols suggestive of water, fish, a seagull and suns constantly imply a figurative interpretation. "Capricious" demonstrates the influence of Klee on Kandinsky. Kandinsky maintains that ambiguous state, suspended between representational and abstraction, a quality which seemed perpetual in Klees' work. The triangle flag-like structures the varying attitudes of lines, dots and circles creating the boat in "Capricious", all contribute to an amusing toy-like image which seems to 'clank' playfully along at some remote pace.

From the 1930's Kandinsky and Klee became more immersed in the concept of the intuitive. Kandinsky uses increasingly more biomorphic forms, thus diverging from his rather more geometric, angular forms of the previous decade. The painting "Many Coloured Ensemble" 1938, is a good example of the direction he was then taking. The painting depicts a cell-like structure, whose shape appears somewhat ambiguous, suggestive of its potential for growth and change. Contained within the "skin" of this cell, there is a vast array of forms changing in shape and ranging from large to microscopic suggesting infinity. Suspended to the right of the cell is what could

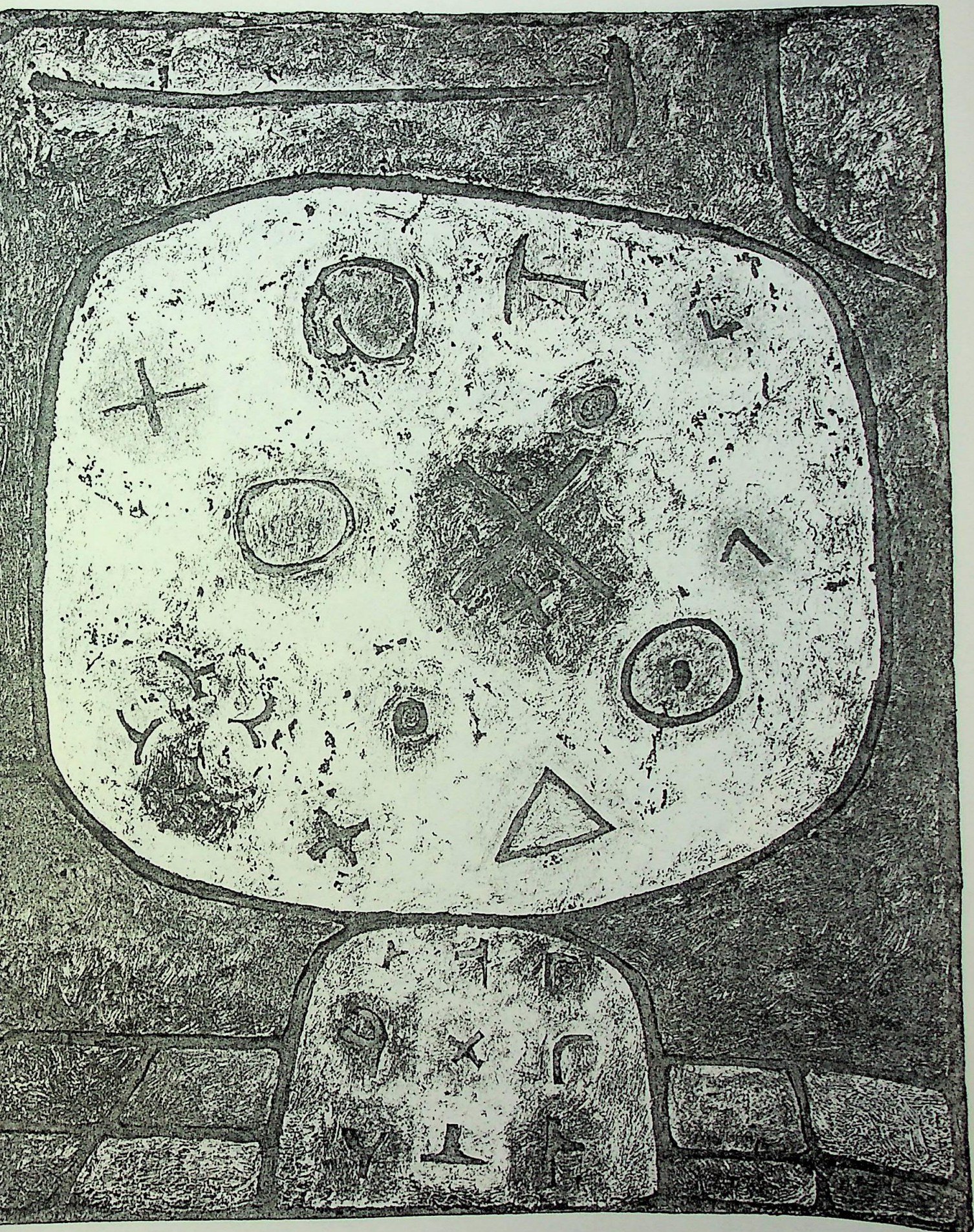
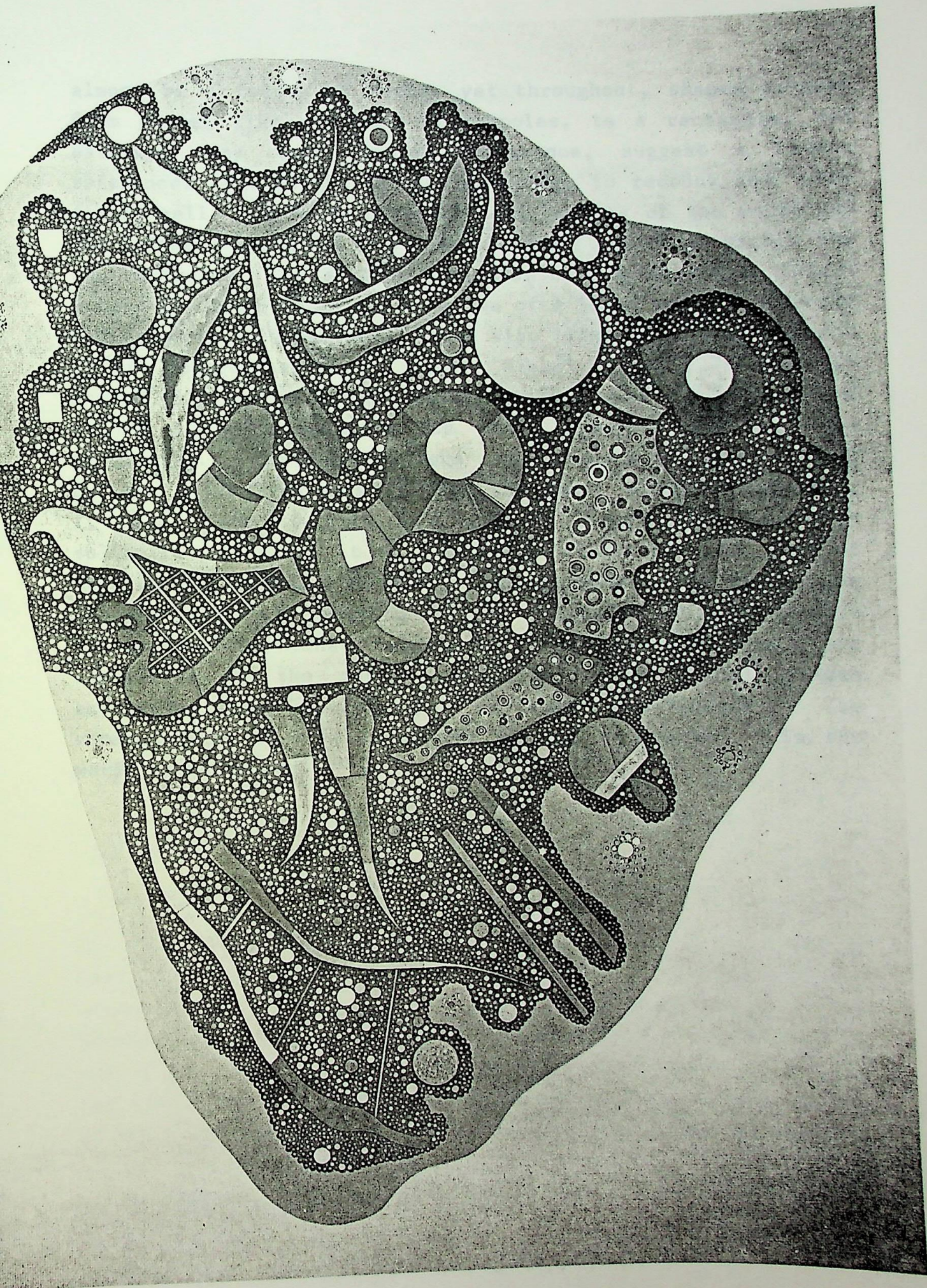


Plate 44 Flowers in Stone

FLOWERS IN STONE

Oil on cardboard, 1939, Paul Klee.



MULTICOLOURED ENSEMBLE

Mixed media on canvas, 1938, Kandinsky.

almost be a foetus of sorts, yet throughout, shapes ranging from planet like circles, to tadpoles, to a rectangle, and assuming many more complex appearance, suggest a cosmic reference. Ultimately the image appears to recount the 'very first' cell. There is a paradoxical quality of the universal and infinite (with all its possibilities) contained within the one membrane. The eternal opposite, or the essential interaction of opposites in the creation of a form, seems constantly expressed in this painting. Klee also illustrates this concept in his pedagogical sketch book. Klee's painting "Flowers in stone" 1939 has an equally primal concern, yet the imagery and method of painting make its exact meaning somewhat more perplexing. The central form is strengthened with a dark outline which separates it from the deep, earthy orange-red. It also seems to sit on a smaller shape which lends it solidity, and gives it an appearance almost of some sort of megalithic monument. However, elements such as the lines, the purpose of which remains unsure, question the megalithic interpretation. The hieroglyphic type signs, however, are emphasized as the central elements, their primal shapes expressing some secret, yet profound significance - The communication of what is secret by what is secret" - in the words of Kandinsky.

CONCLUSION

Kandinsky stated in "Point and line to plane" that¹ "only by a process of microscopic analysis will the science of art lead to an all embracing synthesis, which will ultimately extend far beyond the boundaries of art into the realm of 'union' of the human and the divine". Both Kandinsky and Klee saw in art, the potential to communicate a spiritual existence and explore the deepest levels of the unconscious. The philosopher Nietzsche outlined three stages of the artist, as he perceived it:

² "Art as the redemption of the man of knowledge - of those who see the terrifying and questionable character of existence but want to see it, the men of the tragic knowledge".

"Art as the redemption of the man of action - who not only sees, but lives the terrifying existence the tragic war like man - the hero".

"Art as the redemption of the sufferer - as the way to states in which suffering is willed, transfigured defied; where suffering is a form of great delight".

The early 20th century seems to have been the age of idealism most especially in the arts. Both Kandinsky and Klee searched primarily for 'the truth'. While on this quest, they formulated many theories or discoveries. Klee wisely stated in one of his diaries³ "when you set out, the truth you are looking for lies hidden at the bottom of things". Similarly the works of both Kandinsky and Klee can be seen to gradually uncover

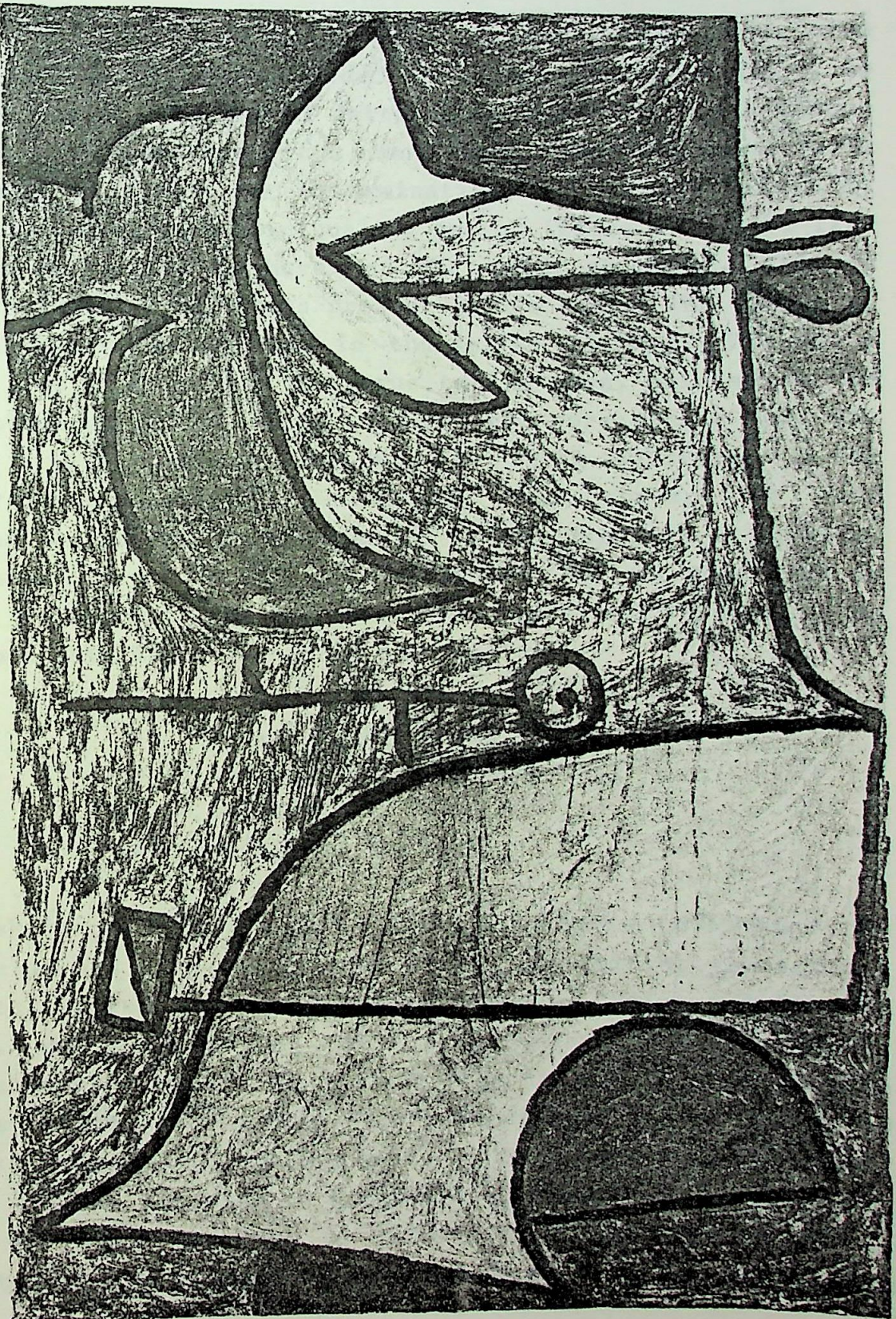


Plate 48 Still-life on Leap Day

STILL LIFE ON LEAP DAY

Colour in paste medium on panel, 1940
Paul Klee.

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layer after layer, right through to the very essence or truth of their spiritual art world.

"Still life on leap day", 1940, captures that intuitive spontaneity which Klee regarded as so utterly essential - so near the truth. The actual painting in this work has a unique boldness and unselfconscious confidence, and the dark thick lines move with ease and determination. Klee once said,⁴ "My aim is to create much spirituality out of little". "Still life on leap day" seems to have had that wish at heart. Klee's literary interest is always present in his work. The titles of many of his paintings are in themselves poetry. The title "Still life on leap day" was true to its name, painted on the 29th February, yet it seems to carry far more weight than its purely literal meaning and suggests, with subtlety, a far greater significance. Ultimately, Klee appears to have attained an almost transcendental or non-physical - physical existence. It was in this pure state that he felt most able to create works of a pure, intuitive, spiritual nature. He described this state in poetic form saying:

⁵ "I am armed, I am not here,
I am in the depth, I am far away...
I am so far away...
I glow amidst the dead".

Kandinsky's painting "Tempered Elan" 1944 seems to combine the essence of his many theoretical works. Containing geometrical elements, it reminds one of his concerns in "Point and Line to Plane". He also uses the circle or point, and the line in its dynamic possibilities. He includes the triangle and arrow like symbols (which call to mind Klee's interpretation of the arrow in his "pedagogical sketchbook"). The outer forms appear amoeba - like, floating in a restful sea of colour. Kandinsky states in "Point and Line to Plane", that⁶ "the work of art is reflected on the surface of consciousness. It too comes from

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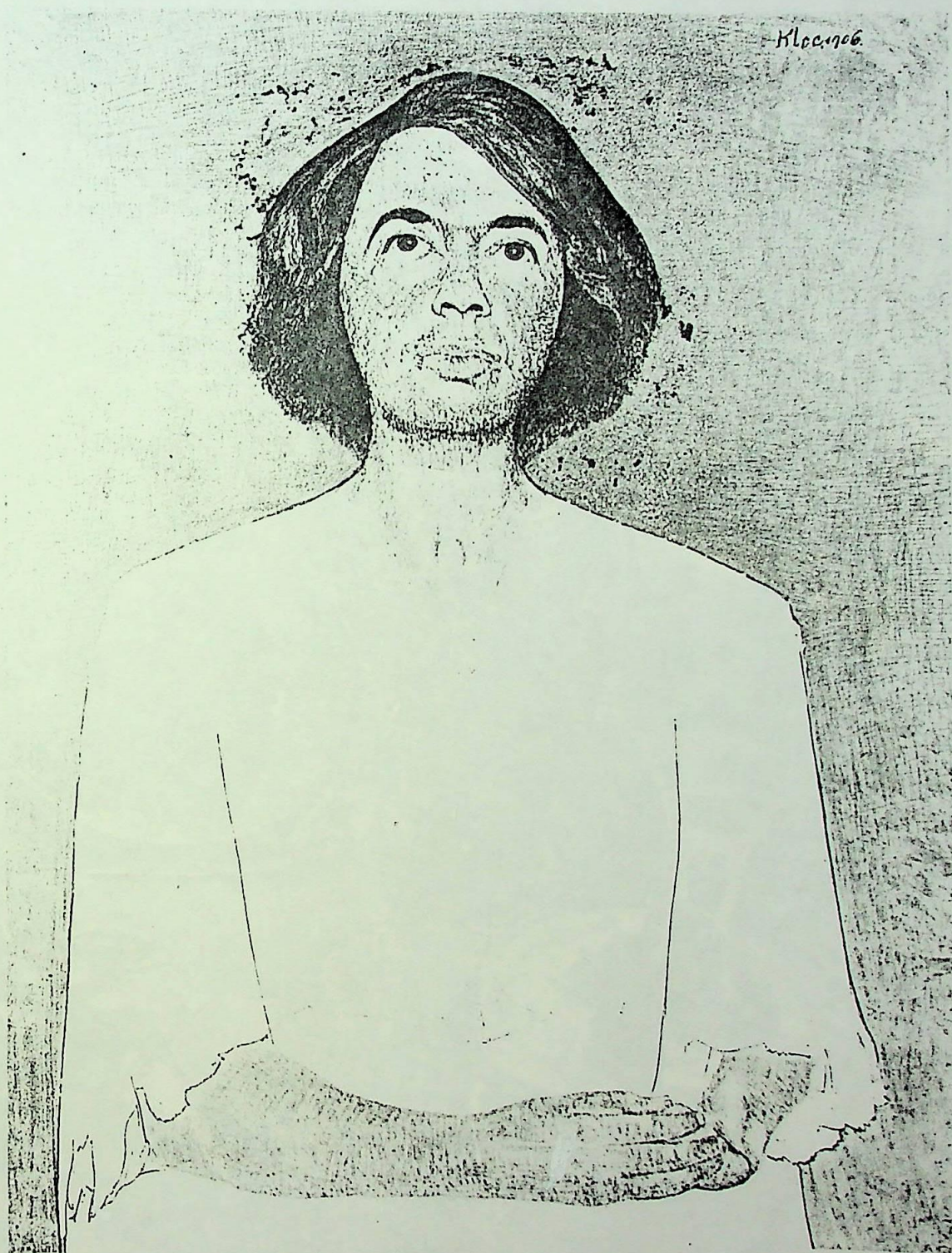
TEMPERED ELAN

Oil on cardboard, 1944, Kandinsky.

'another world'... it is possible to penetrate inside the work of art and become an active part of it experiencing its pulsations with all your senses". "Tempered Elan" appears to be a very 'intuitive' painting and seems to beckon the viewer into the endless possibilities of the painted world.

The psychologist Erich Newmann said that ⁷"Artists are both lovers of God and lovers of the world... it brings with it a reinforcement of man's existence". Kandinsky and Klee do not belie this statement, for they valued immensely the unending mystery and wisdom of the physical and spiritual worlds. In effect, those worlds were the greatest masters and revealed to them the endless wonders contained even in the smallest of forms; - as in the words of Kandinsky ⁸"As with an explorer venturing into unknown lands, we make discoveries in our 'daily life' and our surroundings, ordinarily silent, begin to speak to us in an increasingly comprehensible tone. Dead signs become living symbols and what was dead comes back to life".

1906



3 Portrait of Frau von Sinner, 1906

PORTRAIT OF FRAU VON SINNER

Glass painting, 1906; Paul Klee.

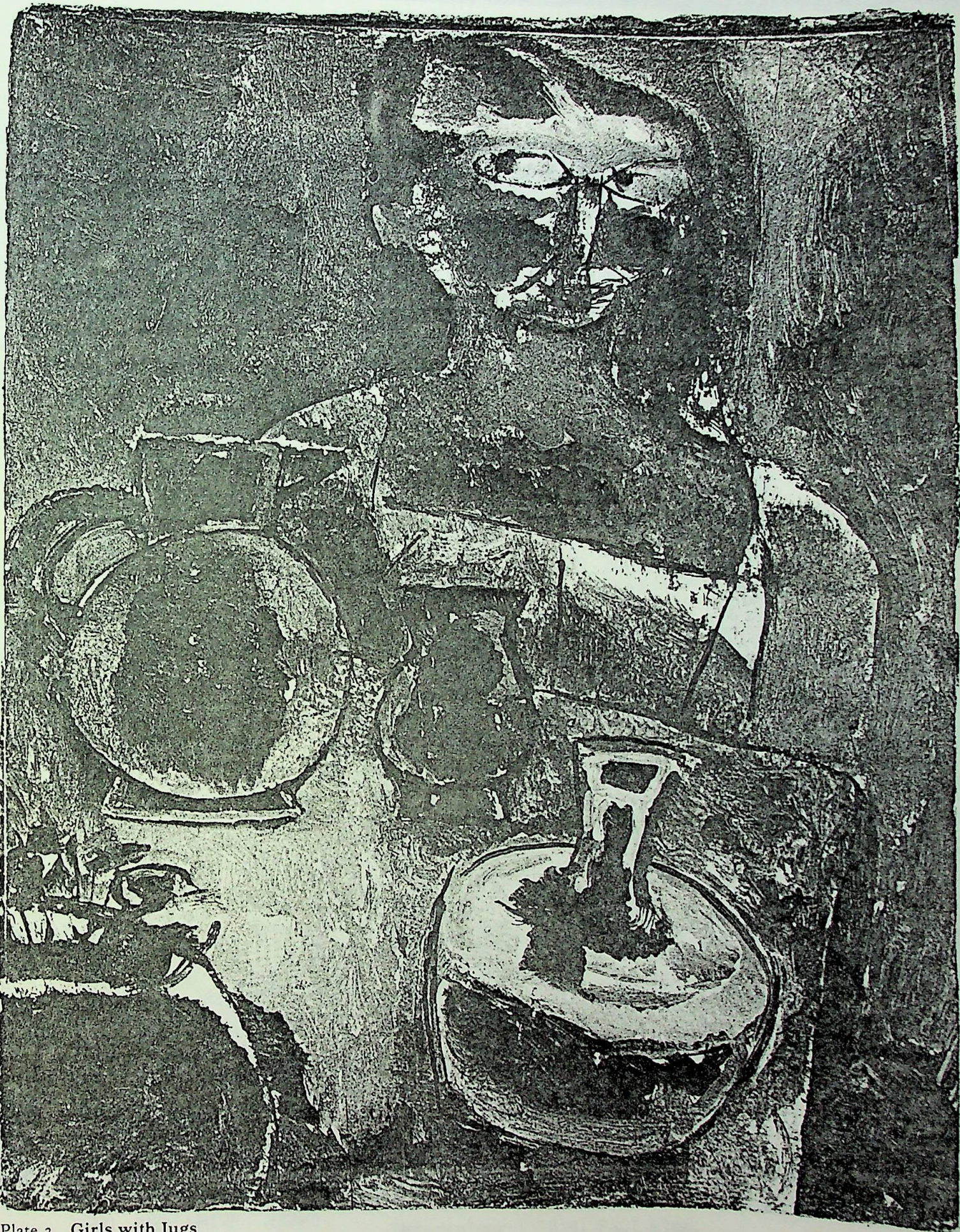


Plate 3 Girls with Jugs

GIRL WITH JUGS

Oil on panel, 1910, Paul Klee.

Printed in Czechoslovakia

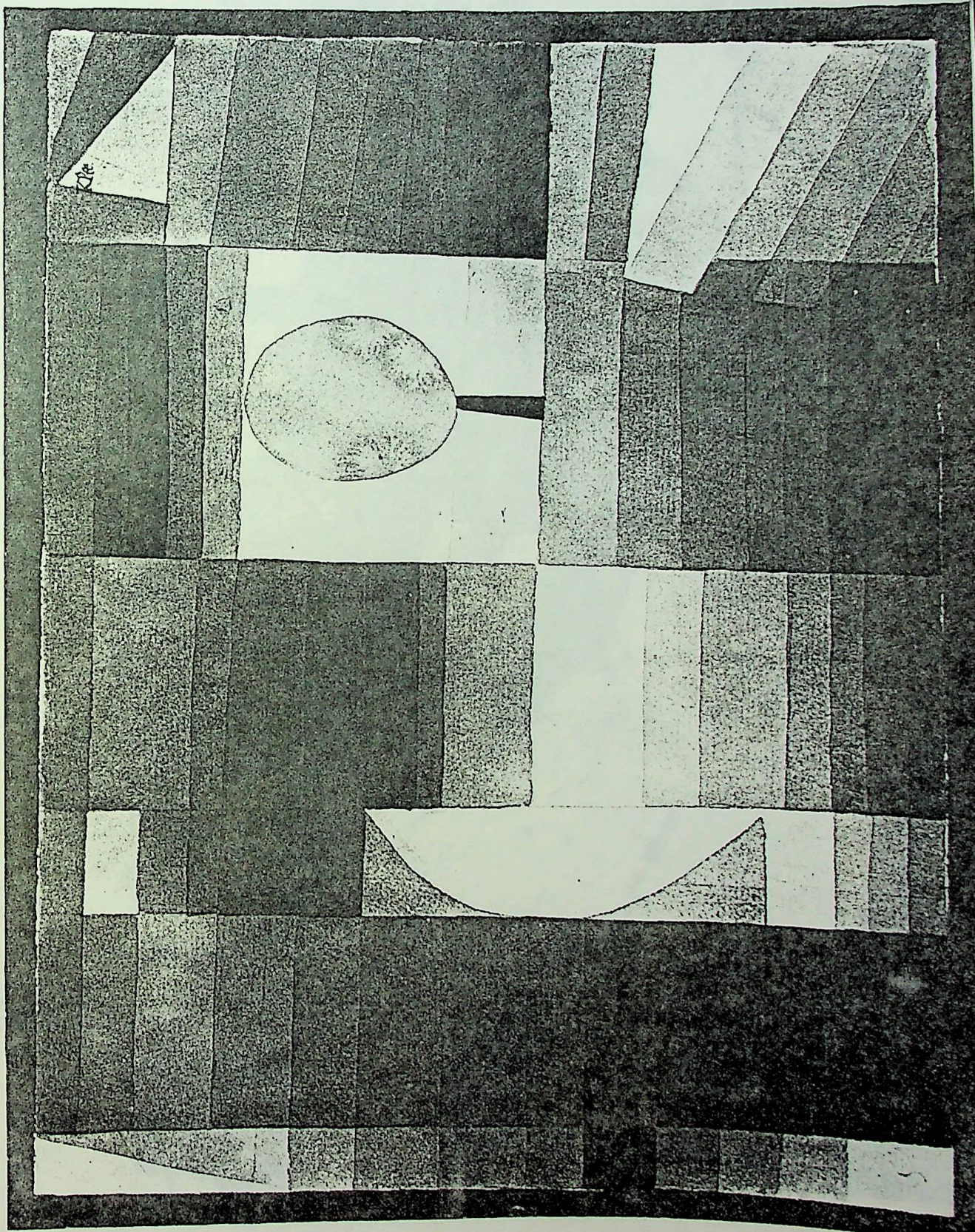


RED AND WHITE DOMES

Watercolour , 1914, Paul Klee.

Red and White Domes, 1914

He also writes that, "like people, a picture has a skeleton, muscles and skin. One may speak of an anatomy peculiar to pictures." At the same time he induces the artist to practise a "dialogue with nature", which means listening



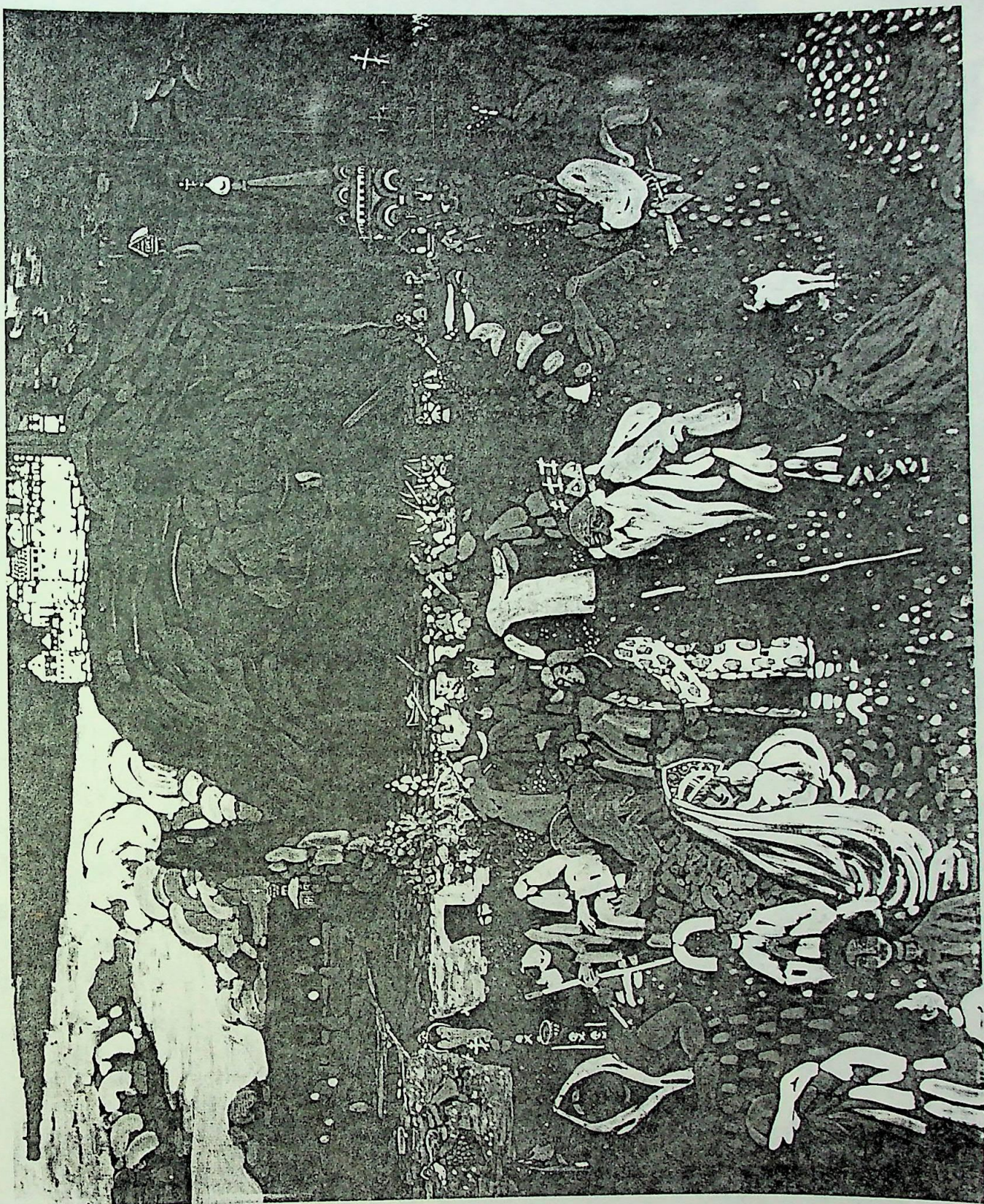
AMBASSADOR OF AUTUMN

Watercolour, 1922, Paul Klee.



THE OLD TOWN II

Oil on canvas, 1902, Kandinsky.



MOTLEY LIFE

Tempera on canvas, 1907. Kandinsky.

insky wrote: "In Mot-
ing task was to depict
es I have applied the
ble me to put my fig-

miscescences he indicated in *Life*: "Sometimes in those that left only vague memories when I woke up. However I saw a complete transformation, however, fell into pieces 11 years I painted *The Road* and then, later, *Motley* succeeded in expression in *Composition II* have become conscious

Springs," by Mikhail
art of which Kandin-
Blue Rider Almanac.
and opposing phenom-
into words that are

od almighty.

all is a gift of God

wers and grapes of the

is a gift of God al-

Travel Death and For-

Gift of God almighty.

- 's eye, honor of the

—all is a gift of God

·k-walls, and the re-

It is a gift of God al-



PAINTING WITH AN ARCHER

Oil on canvas, 1909, Kandinsky.



COMPOSITION V

Oil on canvas, 1911, Kandinsky.

arded as the result of an on, an abstraction must stence. However, inas- ve motifs resulted from rmal" human or animal id seem justified. "Non- n adequate term for his ded, for his later paint- es and forms. And as to e bold black line which lf an "object," just as gles are objects, in the ble elements?

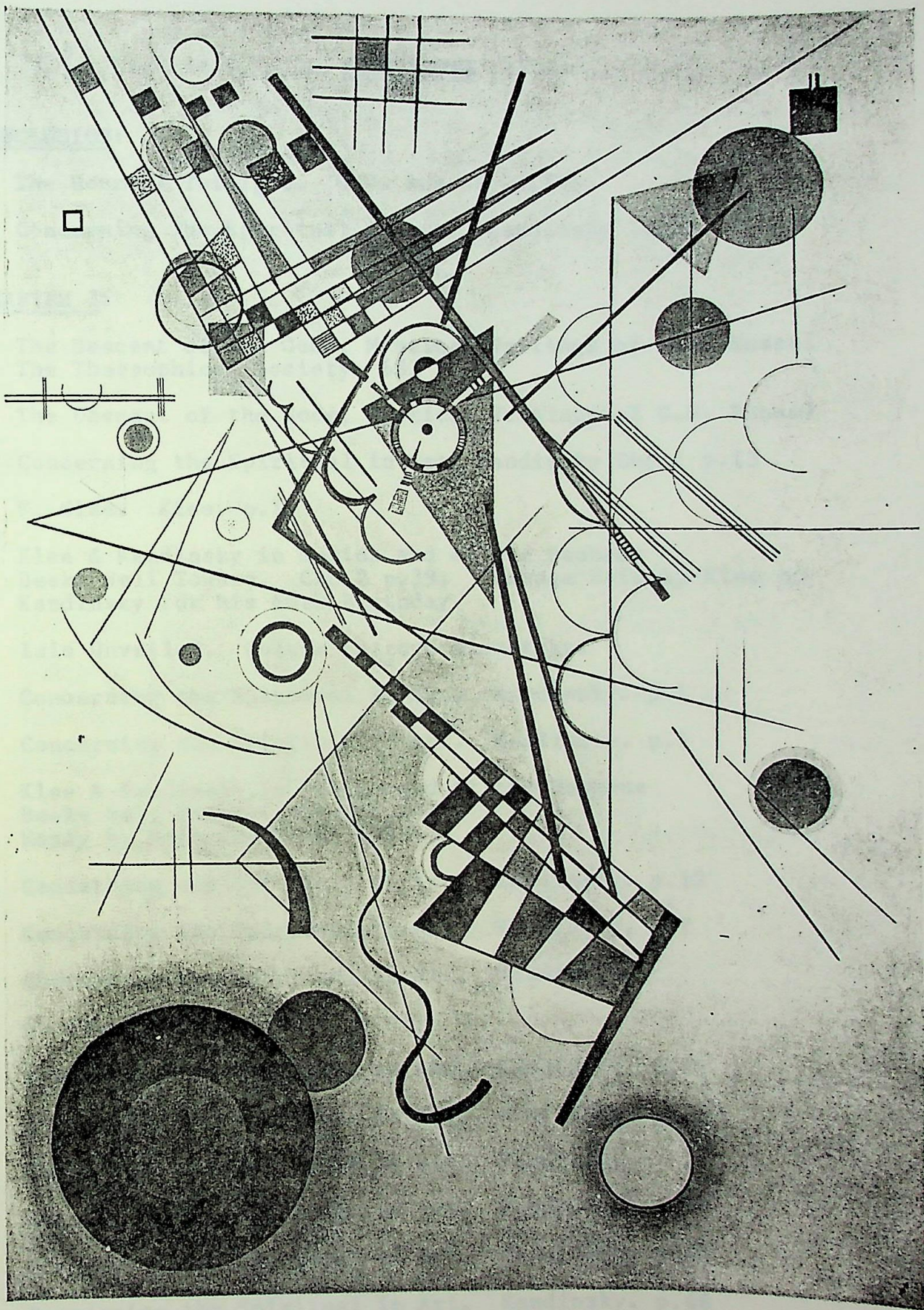
ing philosophical pre- may in fact come clos- use in his work some- dition and "set free" in ings were not related ents. Kandinsky's space e defined by itself (*ein*). Or, in more general enberg: "It may not be man on this earth, for ly by himself—he can ponent."⁴⁸

, at this time, felt him- a, it should not be too ition V is yet another ation with death and ing angels of the Last he downfall of a city, dinsky's iconography late 11). The dominat- meaning can be traced rchangel Gabriel, the



IMPROVISATION GORGE

Oil on canvas, 1914, Kandinsky.



K-6*

COMPOSITION VIII

Oil on canvas, 1923, Kandinsky.

FOOT NOTES

CONCLUSION:

- 1 * The Hour of Twilight. G.W. Russel p.195
- 2 * Concerning The Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky Intro.

CHAPTER 1:

- 1 * The Descent of the Gods, Mystical Writings of G.W. Russel
The Theosophical Society. 653
- 2 * The Descent of the Gods, Mystical Writings of G.W. Russel
- 3 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky Chp.1 p.13
- 4 * F. Klee. Klee. p.14
- 5 * Klee & Kandinsky in Munich and at the Bauhaus
Beeke Sell Towers. Chp.2 p.39. Hommage Paid by Klee to
Kandinsky for his 60th Birthday.
- 6 * Isis Unveiled. Helena Petrova Blavatsky.
- 7 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.1
- 8 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.1
- 9 * Klee & Kandinsky in Munich and at the Bauhaus
Beeke Sell Towers. Chp.3 p.54
Essay by Marc for 'PAN' 1912
- 10 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.12
- 11 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.7
- 12 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky.
- 13 * F. Klee. Klee. p.14
- 14 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.31
- 15 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.33
- 16 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky.
- 17 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.39
- 18 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.40
- 19 * Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.46

- 20* Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.48
- 21* Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.50
- 22* Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. final chp.
- 23* Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. final chp.
- 24* Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. final chp.
- 25* Klee Diaries. p.232 No.842
- 26* Pedagogical Sketchbook. Klee. final chp.
- 27* Pedagogical Sketchbook. Klee. final chp.

CHAPTER 2:

- 1* Klee Diaries. 411/12
- 2* Kandinsky & Klee in Munich and at the Bauhaus
Beeke Sell Towers. Chp.2 p.41 Klee & The Blaue Reiter
- 3* The Meanings of Modern Art. J. Russel. Bauhaus. p.253
- 4* Creative Credo. Klee. p.28
Essay Published 1920 in the Symposium Schopferische
Konfession.
- 5* Reminiscences. Kandinsky
- 6* Kandinsky & Klee in Munich and at the Bauhaus
Beeke Sell Towers. p.151 letter to Grohmann Nov.21 1925
- 7* Klee Diaries
- 8* Kandinsky. Letter to Grohmann. Oct. 1930
- 9* Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky. p.52
- 10* Tagebucher. 274 - 275. No.905 (1912)
- 11* Kandinsky & Klee in Munich and the Bauhaus
Beeke & Sell Towers
Klee Diaries

CONCLUSION:

- 1* Point and Line to Plane. Kandinsky. p.537
- 2* German Art in the 20th century
Nietzsche. The Will to Power. p.13

- 3 * Klee Diaries. 1081
- 4 * Klee Diaries. p.232. No.842
- 5 * Klee Diaries. p.308. No.931
- 6 * Point and Line to Plane. Kandinsky. intro
- 7 * The Place of Creation. Erich Newmann.
- 8 * Point and Line to Plane. Kandinsky. intro.

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