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Jaspers Johns, *Libro, or Book*, 1957

¹ "That is art, [said] 'the woman within [Jung]'.
[Jung replied]: "No, it is not art! On the contrary, it is nature."
Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 186.

That which belongs to the spirit of the future can only be realized in feeling, and to this feeling the talent of the artist is the only road. Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning The Spiritual In Art (1913),12

Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. C. G. Jung, CW 15, p. 82

I can understand modern works of art only as idols from the underworld, and they become accessible to me only through a knowledge of the psychology of the unconscious. They do not affect me aesthetically. It may very well be that my attitude is that of a Philistine, but God knows I can't find them beautiful. Perhaps other centuries will, in which case I am thankful to the Creator that man doesn't live for 200 years, otherwise he would suddenly find himself in an age in which he would choke to death. C.G. Jung's Letter to Hans Welti 12/23/1932, L1

We can therefore attribute to modern art a conscious or unconscious intention to turn the beholder's eyes away from the intelligible and enjoyable world of the senses and to enforce a revelation of the unconscious as a kind of substitute for the loss of human surroundings. C.G.Jung, CW10 ¶ 754

Contemplation of an abstract painting always starts me off on the following train of thought: it is not an object of experience in the outer world, nor is it meant to be. If nevertheless there are hints of something recognizable, this is an unintentional lapse or an unavoidable concession to the understanding of the beholder, or to a desire to communicate.

10/21/60 C.G. Jung's Letter to the Swiss Painter Rene A. Kipfer, L2, 604-5

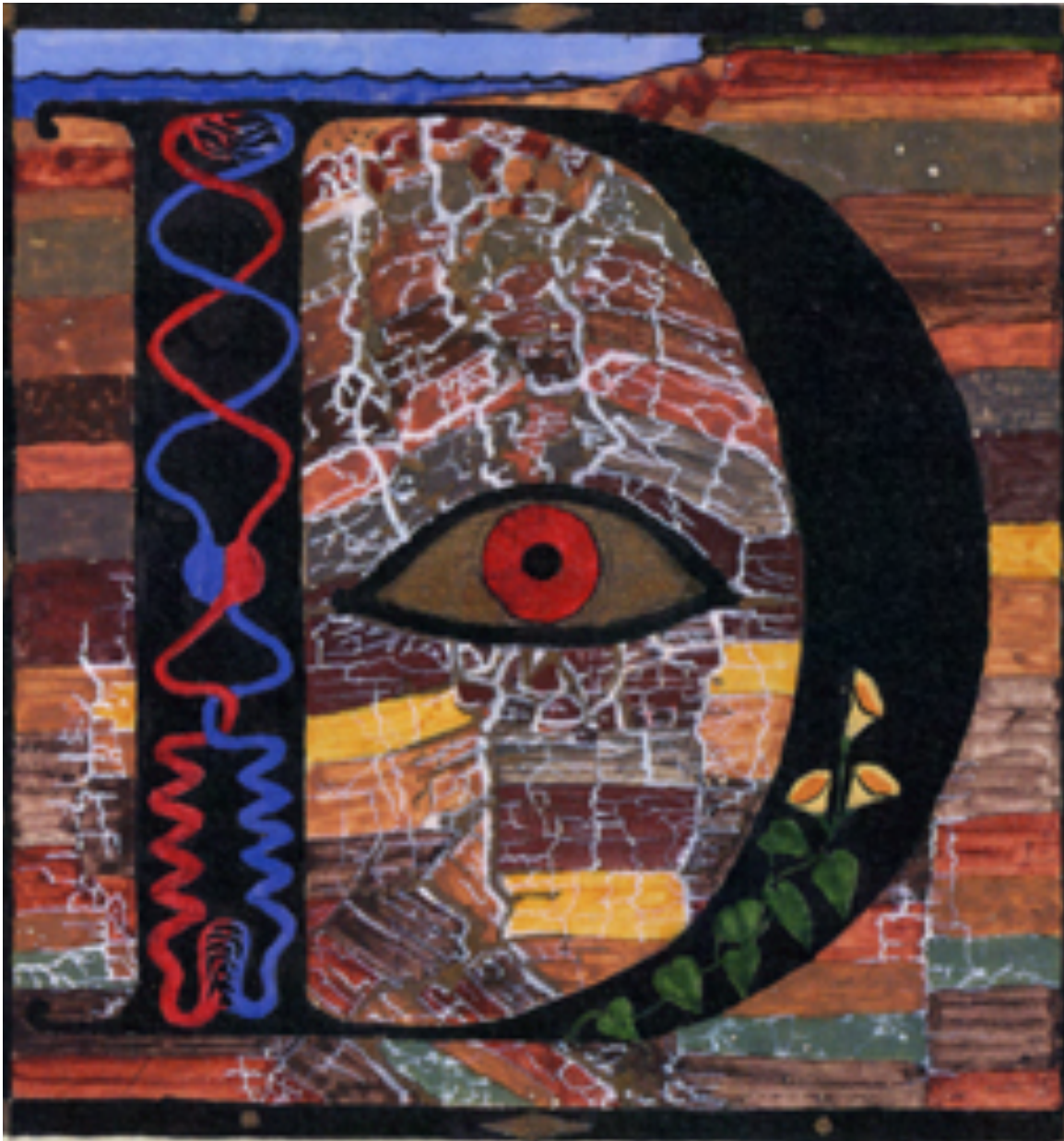
IT IS NOT ART

In the first part of this paper I will present a visual amplification of Jung's *Red Book* paintings, juxtaposing them with works of modern abstract art. I ask the reader/viewer to make his/her own judgment of how similar or different are his works from the representative works of abstract artists, his contemporaries, and draw their own conclusions.

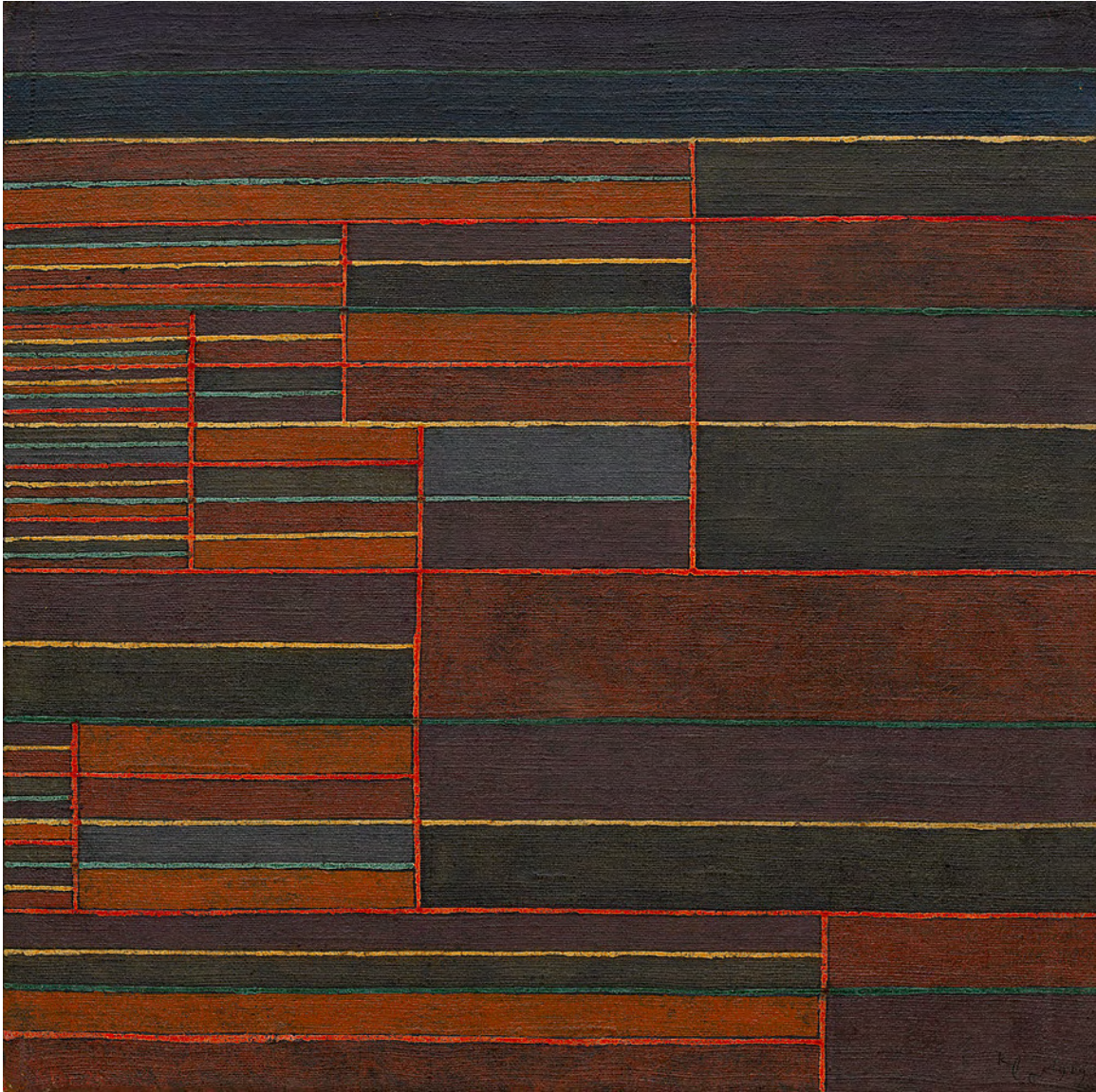
In the second part I will discuss Jung's attitude towards modern art.

In the third part I will present a selection from the artwork and writings of spiritual abstract artists that reflect on their understanding of their work. Their elucidation of their process resonates with Jung's understanding of the psyche.

THE VISUAL ARGUMENT



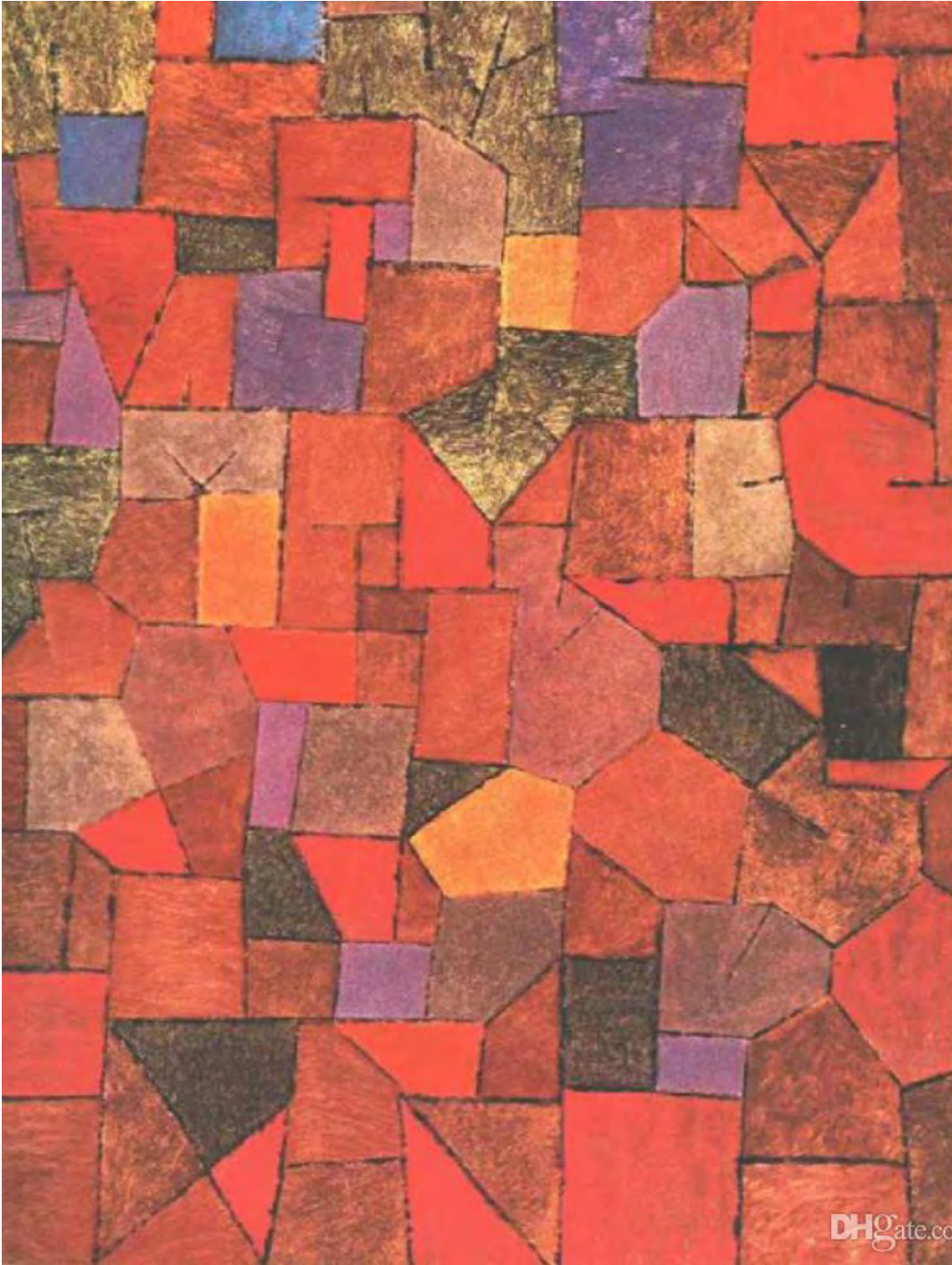
Red Book, Liber Secundus, p.1



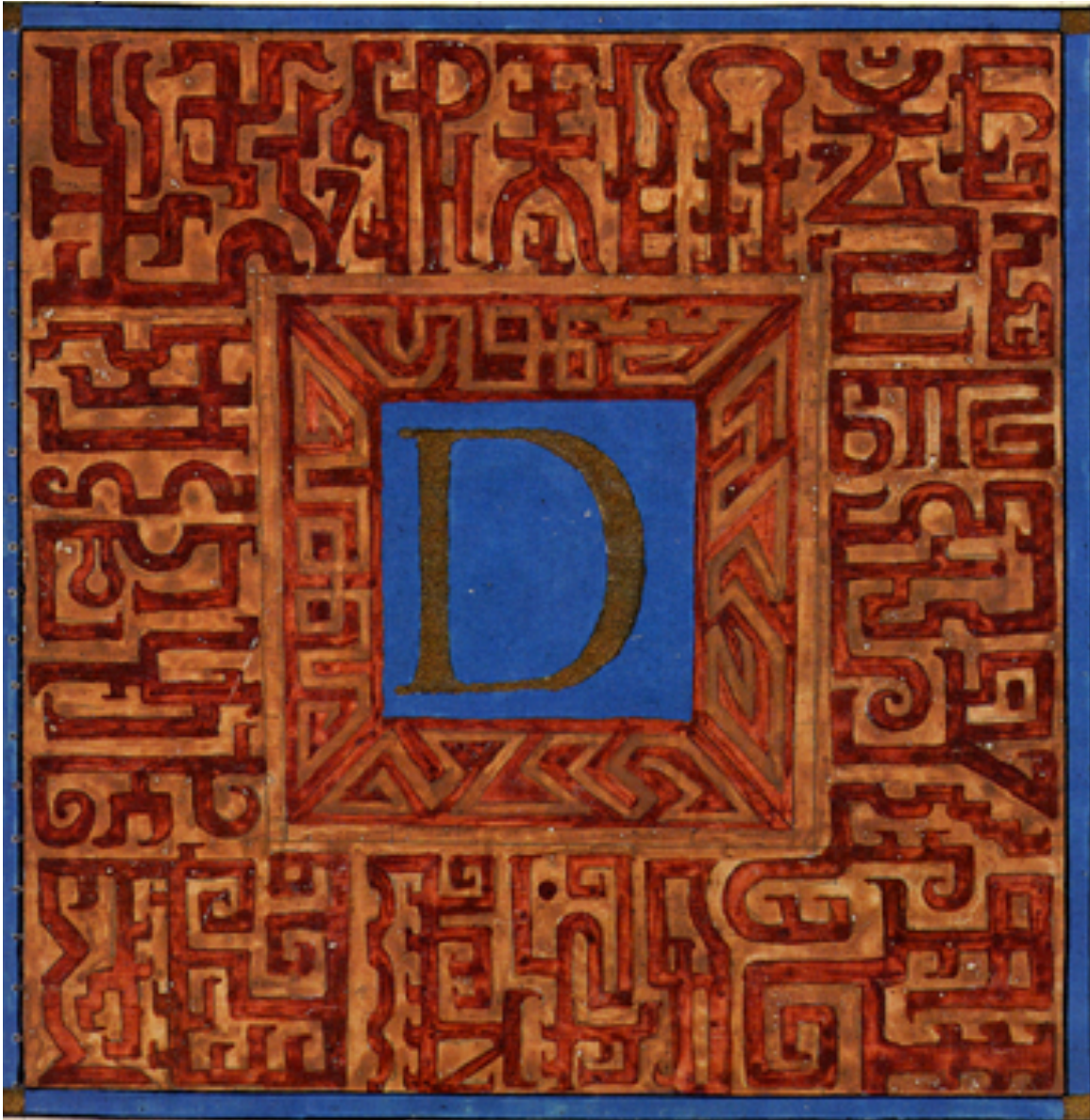
Paul Klee "In the Current Six Thresholds" 1929



Liber Secundus, One of the Lowly, p. 11.



Paul Klee, Mountain Village Autumnal, 1934



Liber Secundus, The Anchorite, p. 15



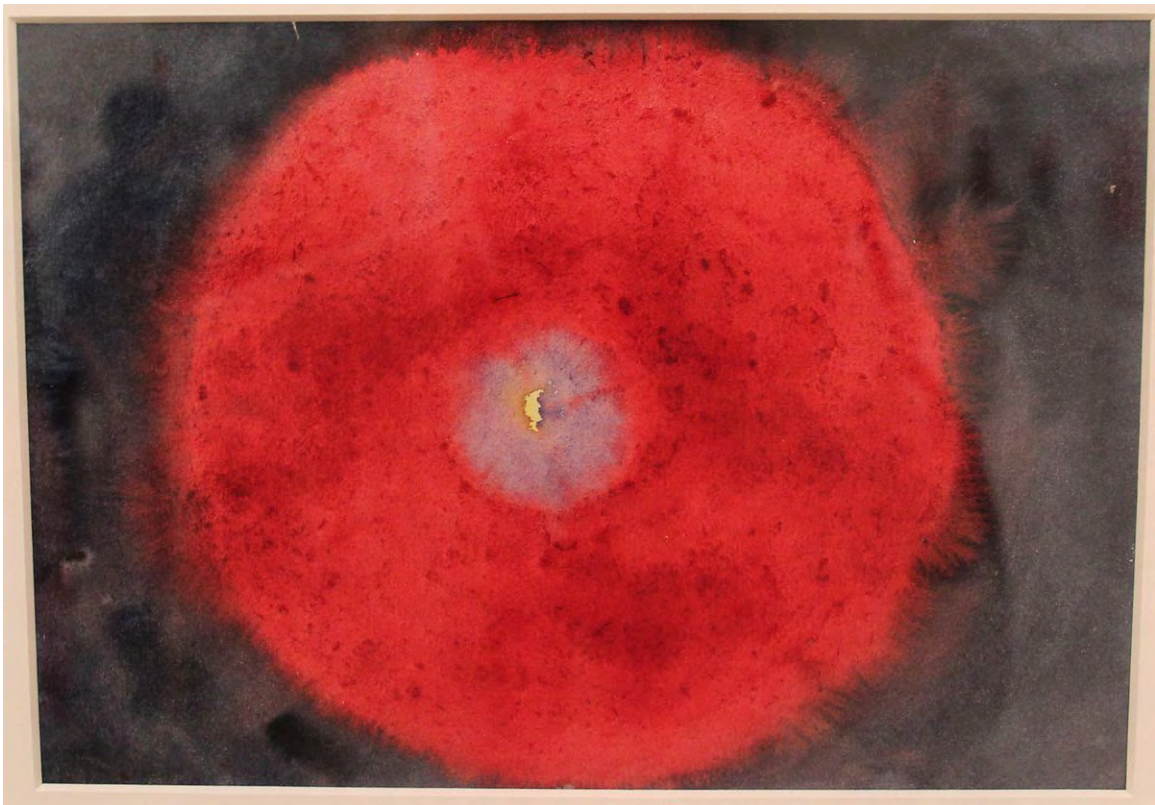
Marcel Schreur, a contemporary Dutch artist, Series "Trust" Letters and Numbers, 2015



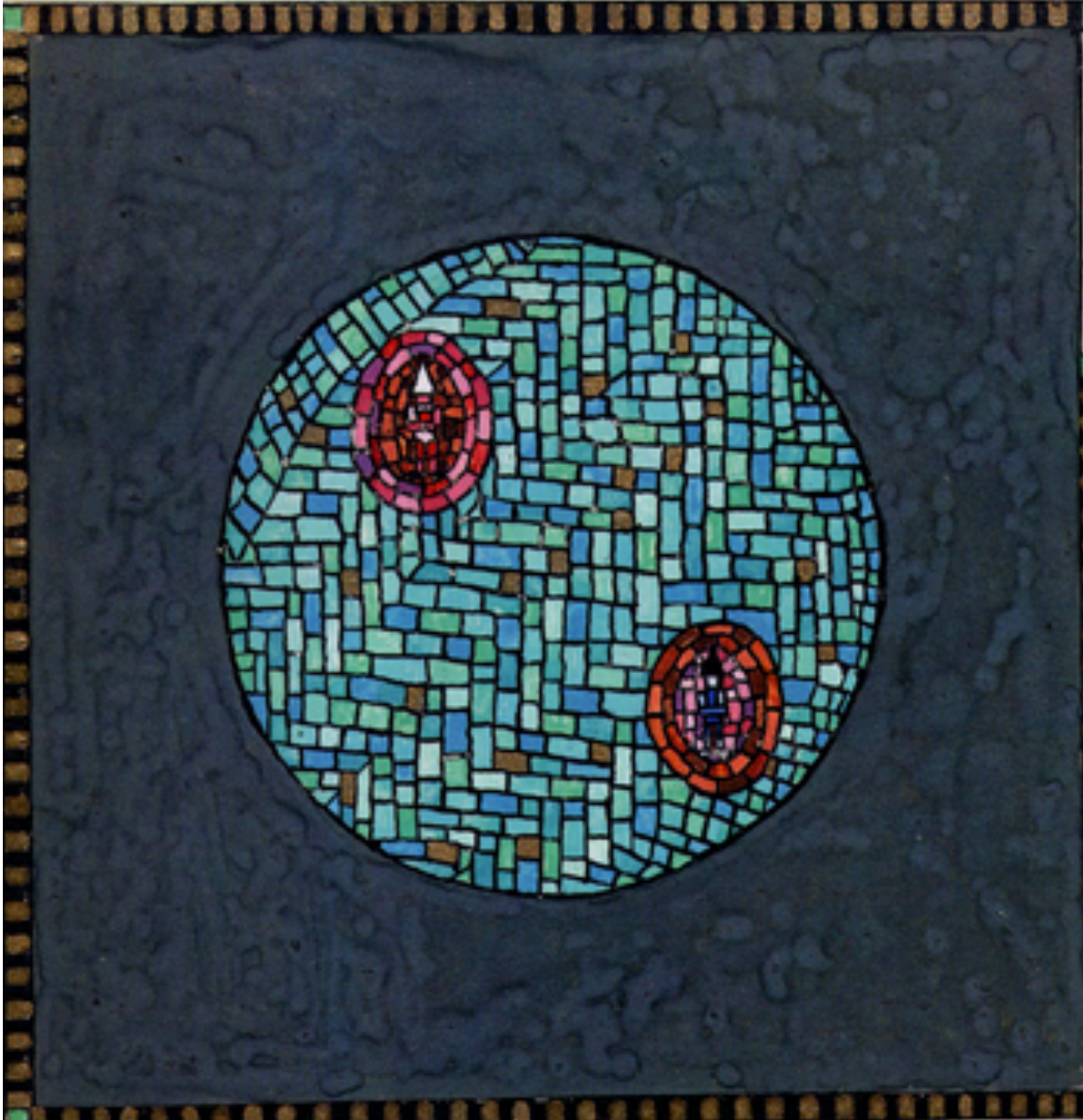
Liber Secundus, Atmavictu, p. 29



Atmavictu, detail



Hilma af Klint, *Birch*, 1922



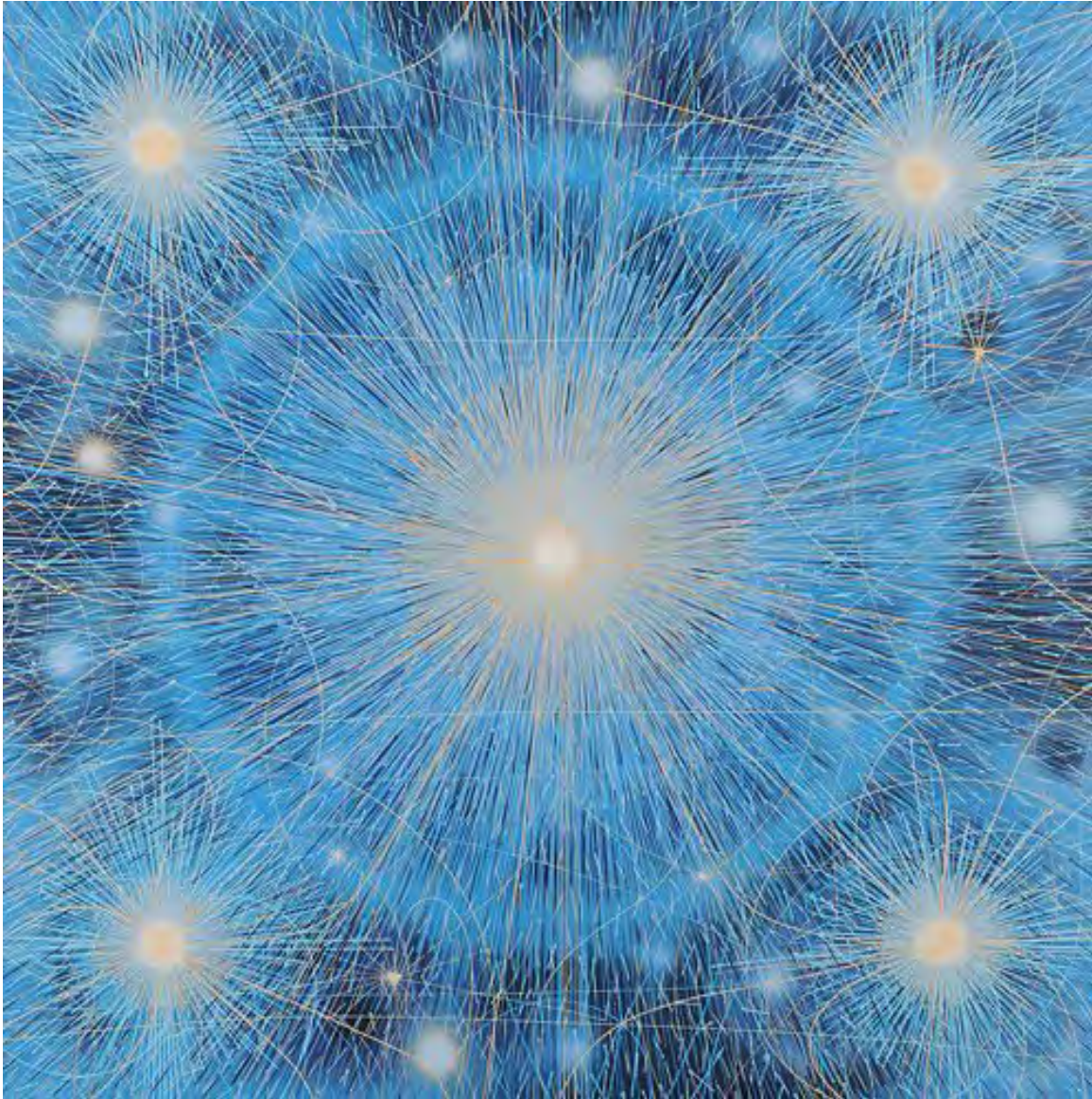
Liber Secundus, The Remains of an Earlier Temple, p. 32



Robert Delaunay, Landscape with the Sun, 1906



Liber Secundus, 'I' wandered toward the South, p. 45



Hilma af Klint, Untitled



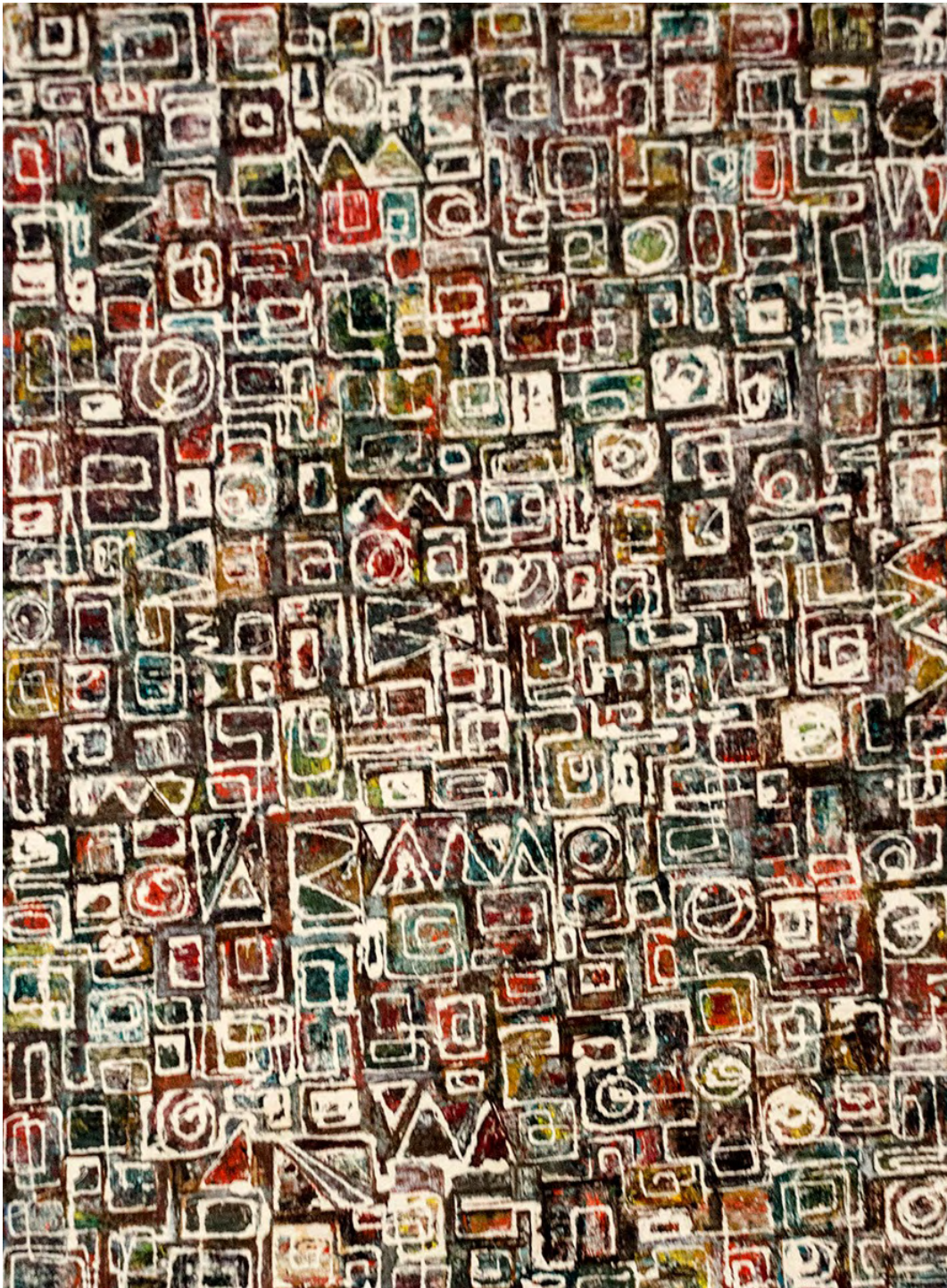
Liber Secundus, p.42.



Sonia Delaunay-Terk, 1913 Poster Project for Dubbonet.



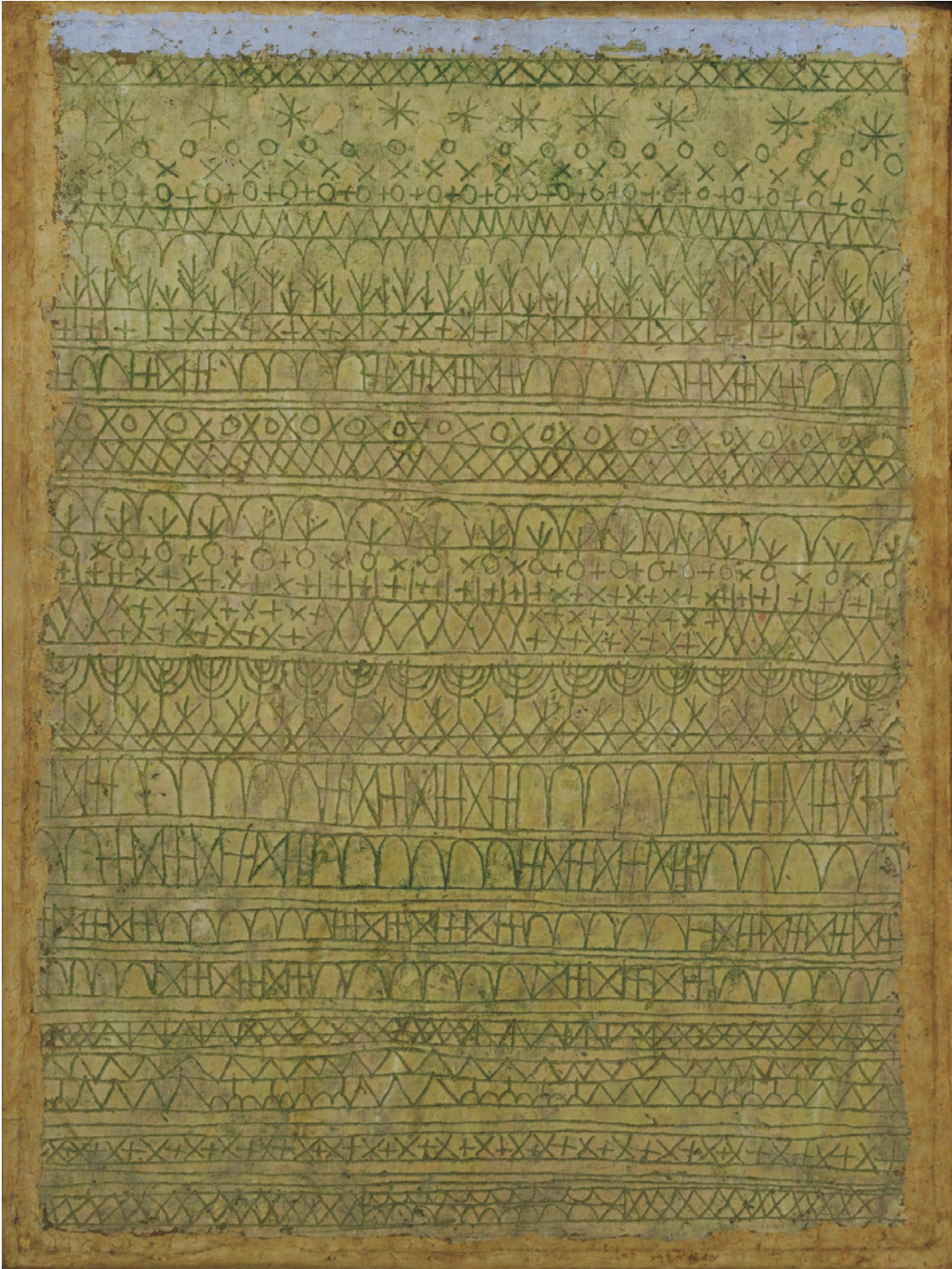
Liber Secundus, p. 42 detail 7



Lee Krasner, Composition, 1949



Liber Secundus, p. 42 detail 3



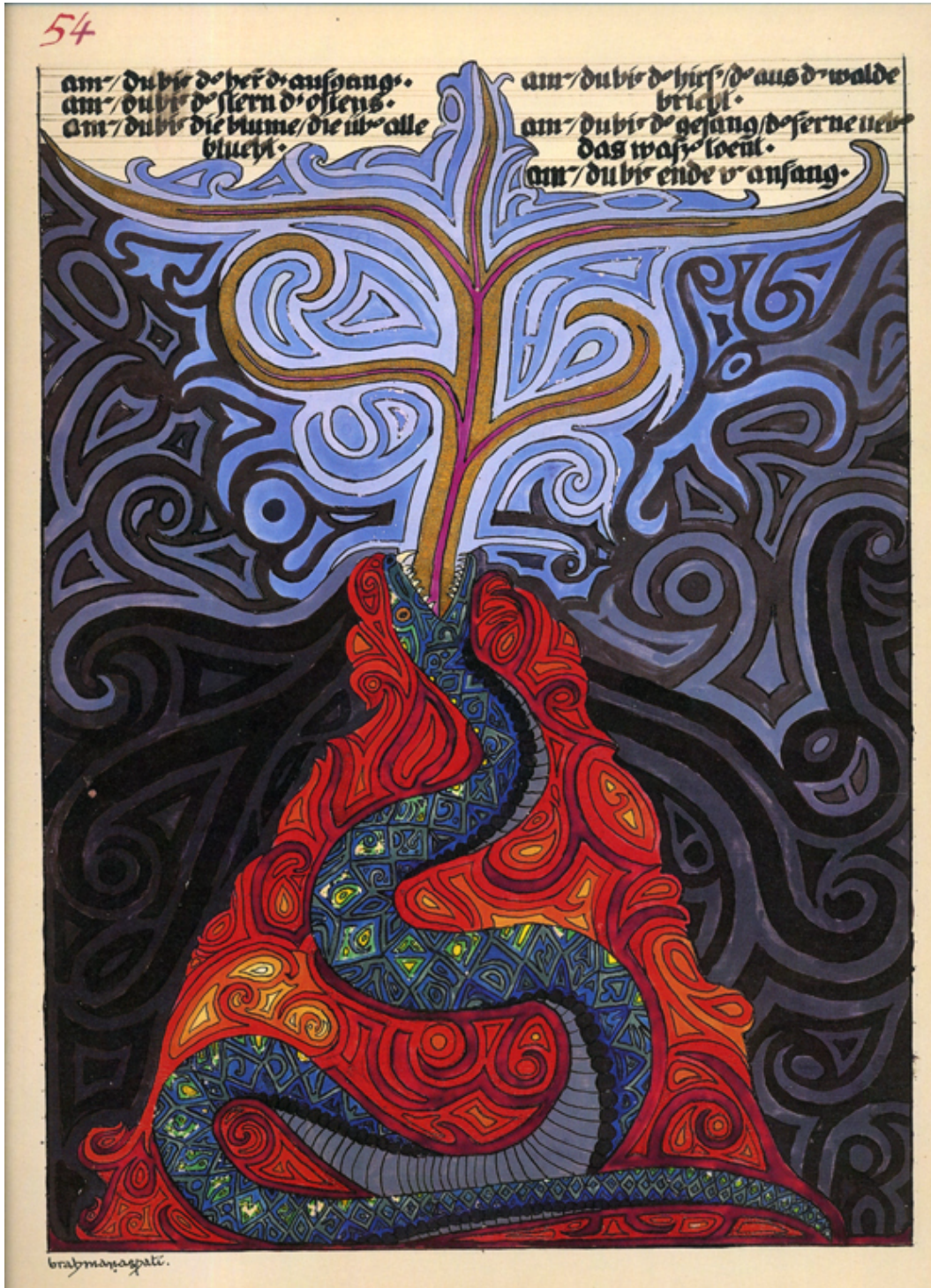
Paul Klee, Pastorale, 1927



Liber Secundus, p. 42 detail 4



Lee Krasner, Untitled 1948



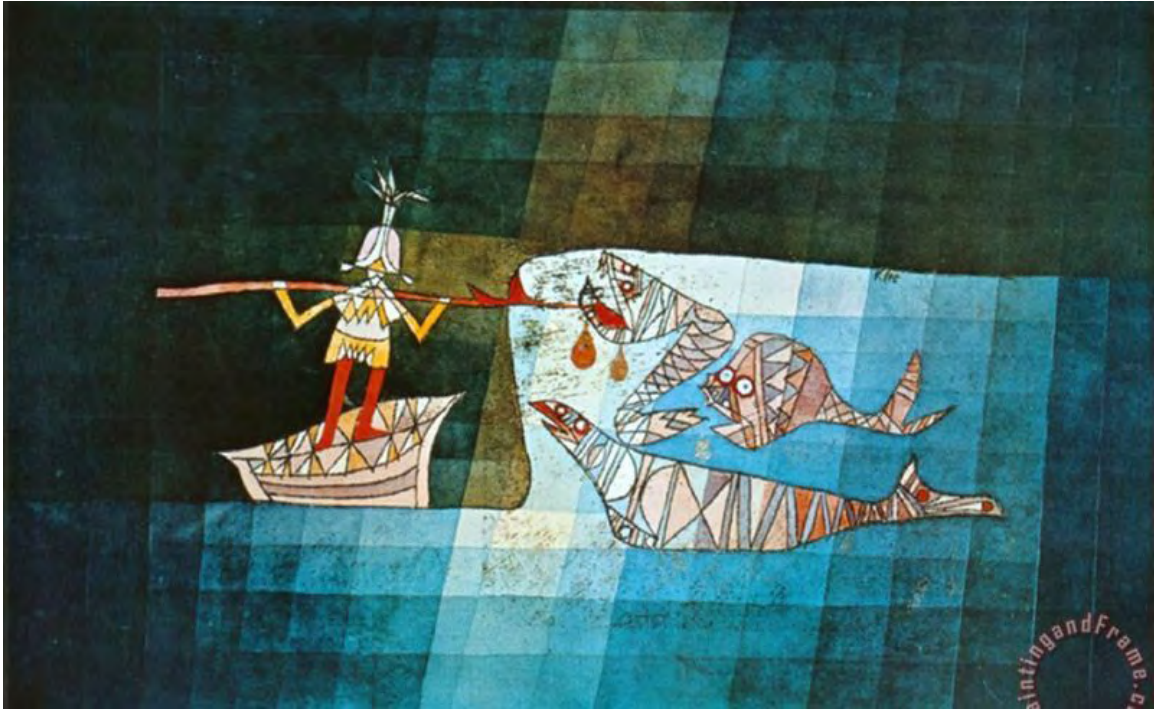
Liber Secundus, p. 54



Mardsen Hartley, *the Lighthouse*, 1915



Liber Secundus, p. 55. Solar Barque.



Paul Klee, Sindbad the Sailor, 1923



Liber Secundus, p. 59



Paul Klee, "Walpurgi's Night," 1935



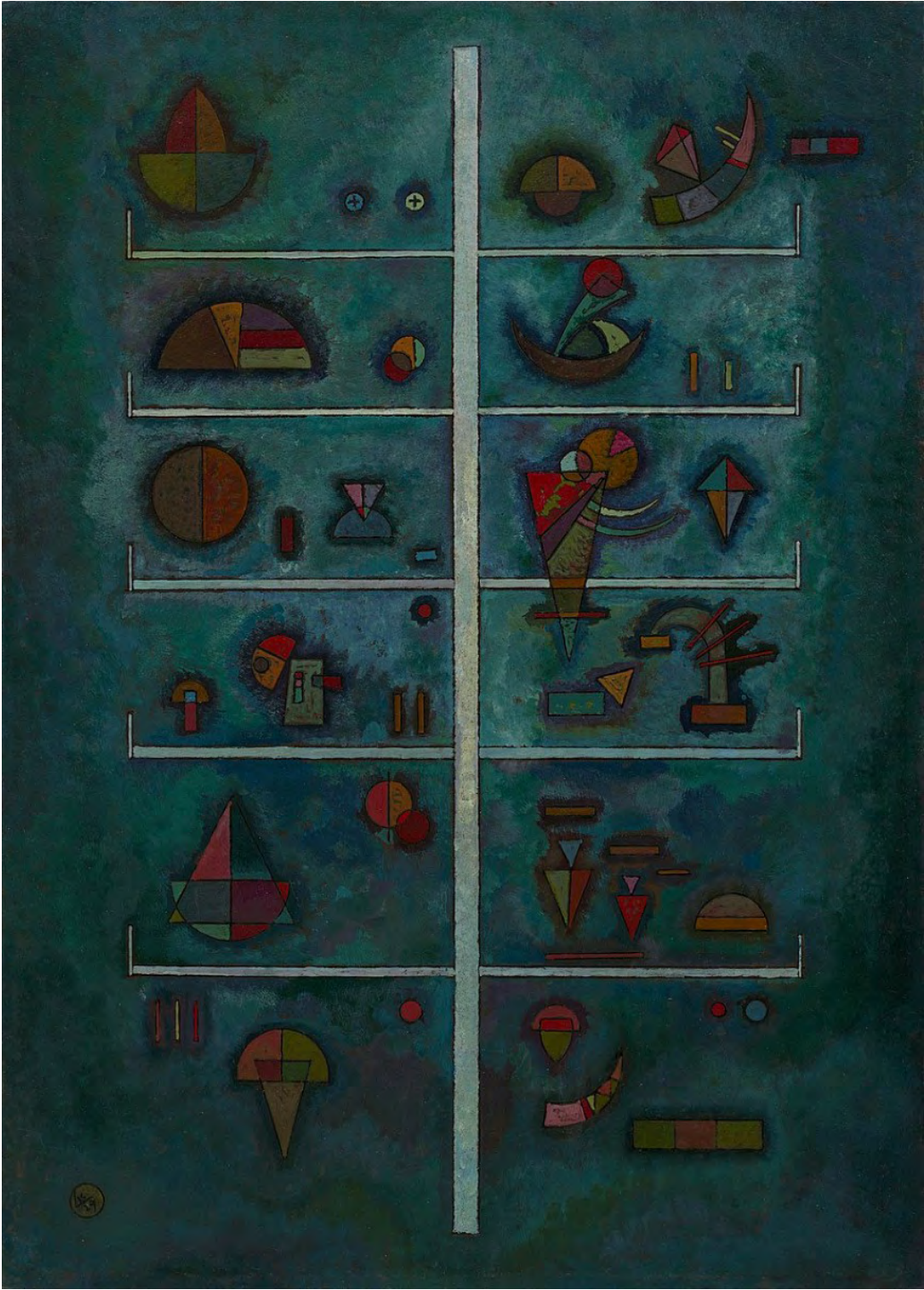
Liber Secundus, p. 60.



Frantisek Kupka, Cathedral, 1912-13



Liber Secundus, p. 63.



Wasily Kandinsky, Levels, 1929



Liber Secundus, p. 64.



Frantisek Kupka, Kosmické Jaro-Stvoreni, 1919-21



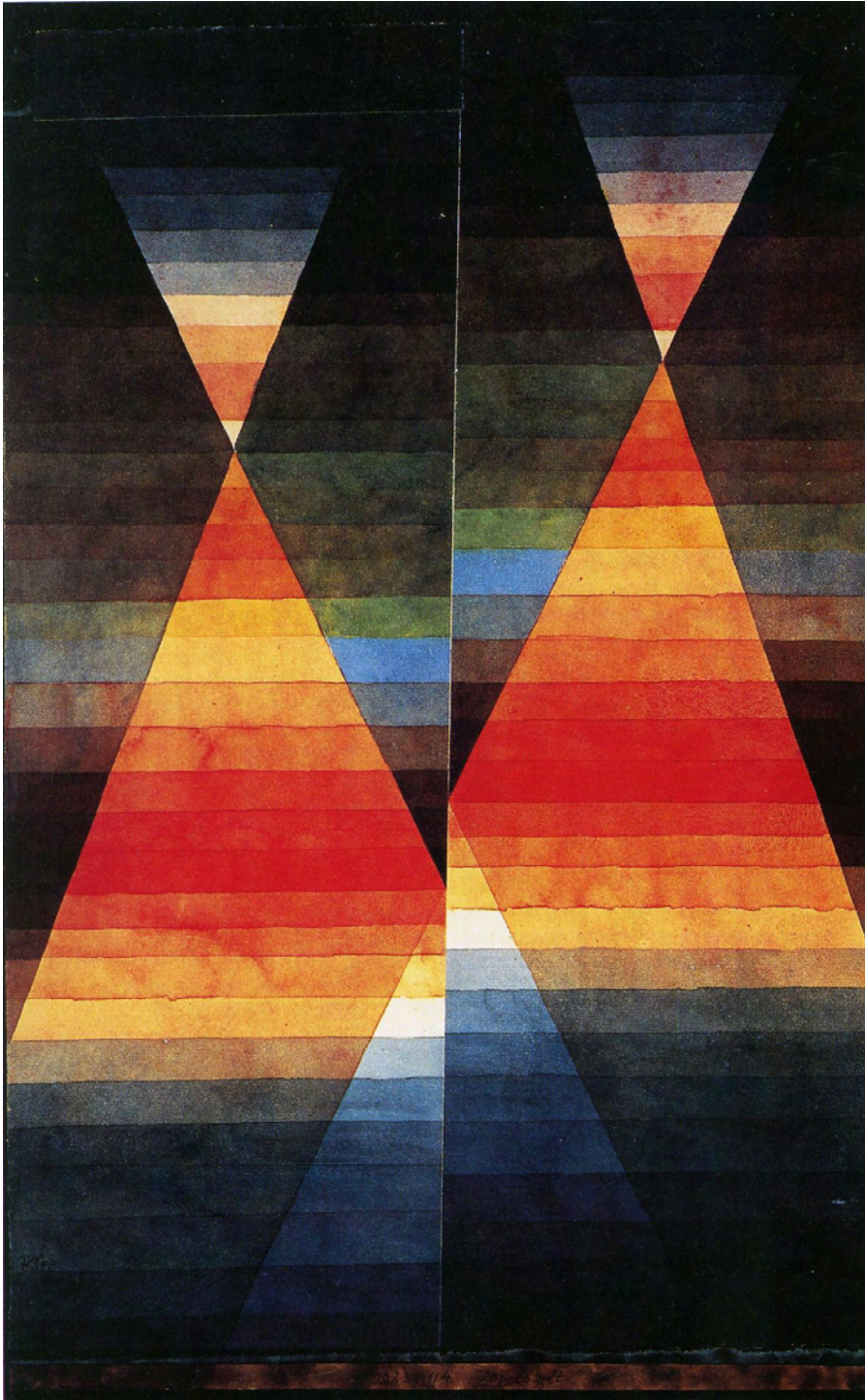
Liber Secundus, p. 65 detail A



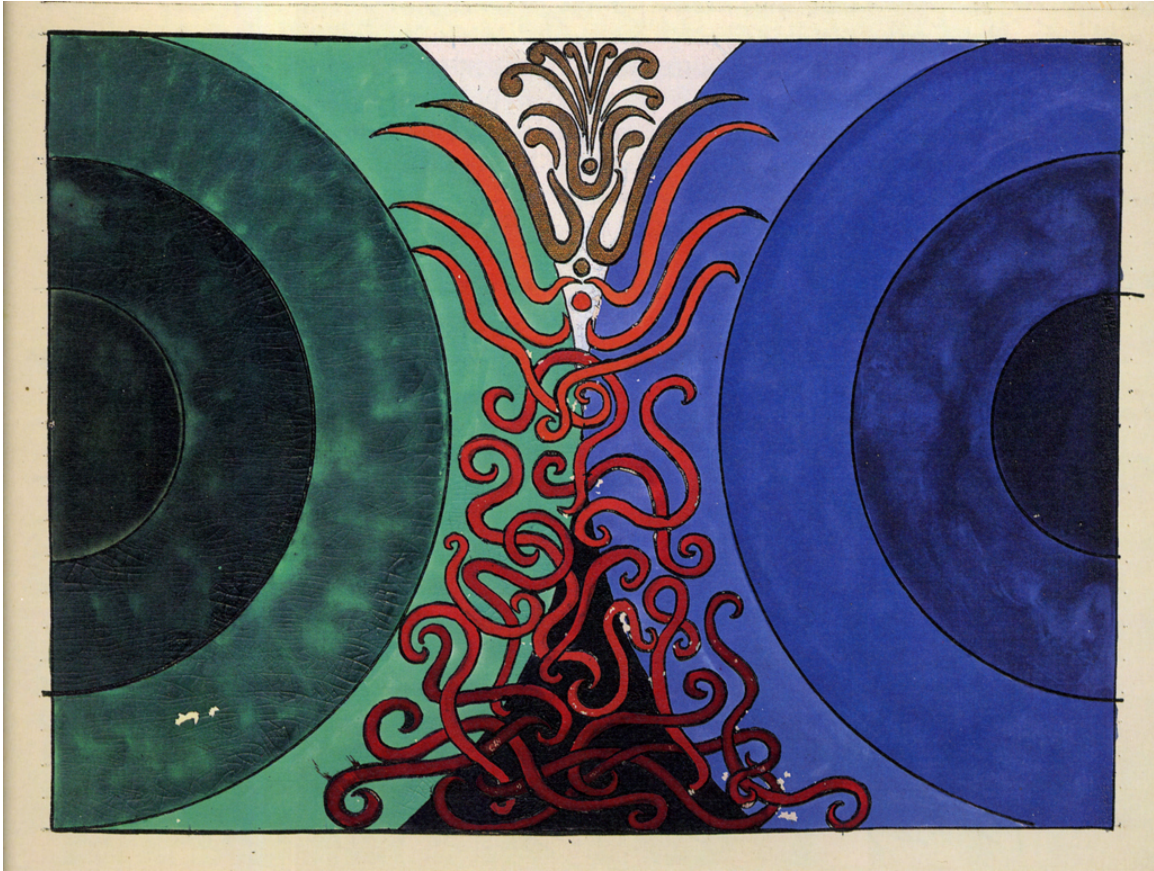
Sonia Delaunay, Pierrot Éclair costume for the set Rene Le Somptier's film La Ptit Perigot 1926



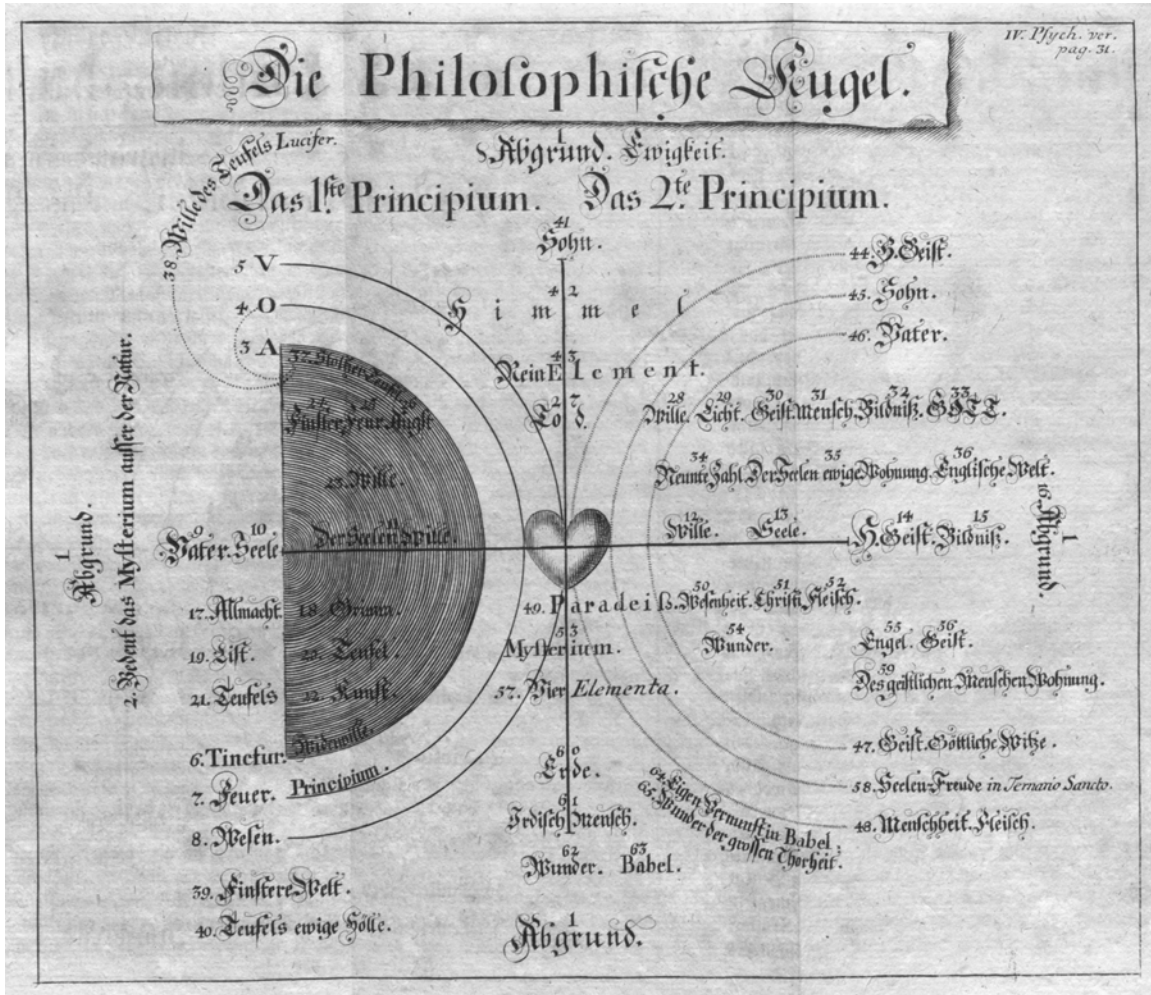
Liber Secundus, p. 72.



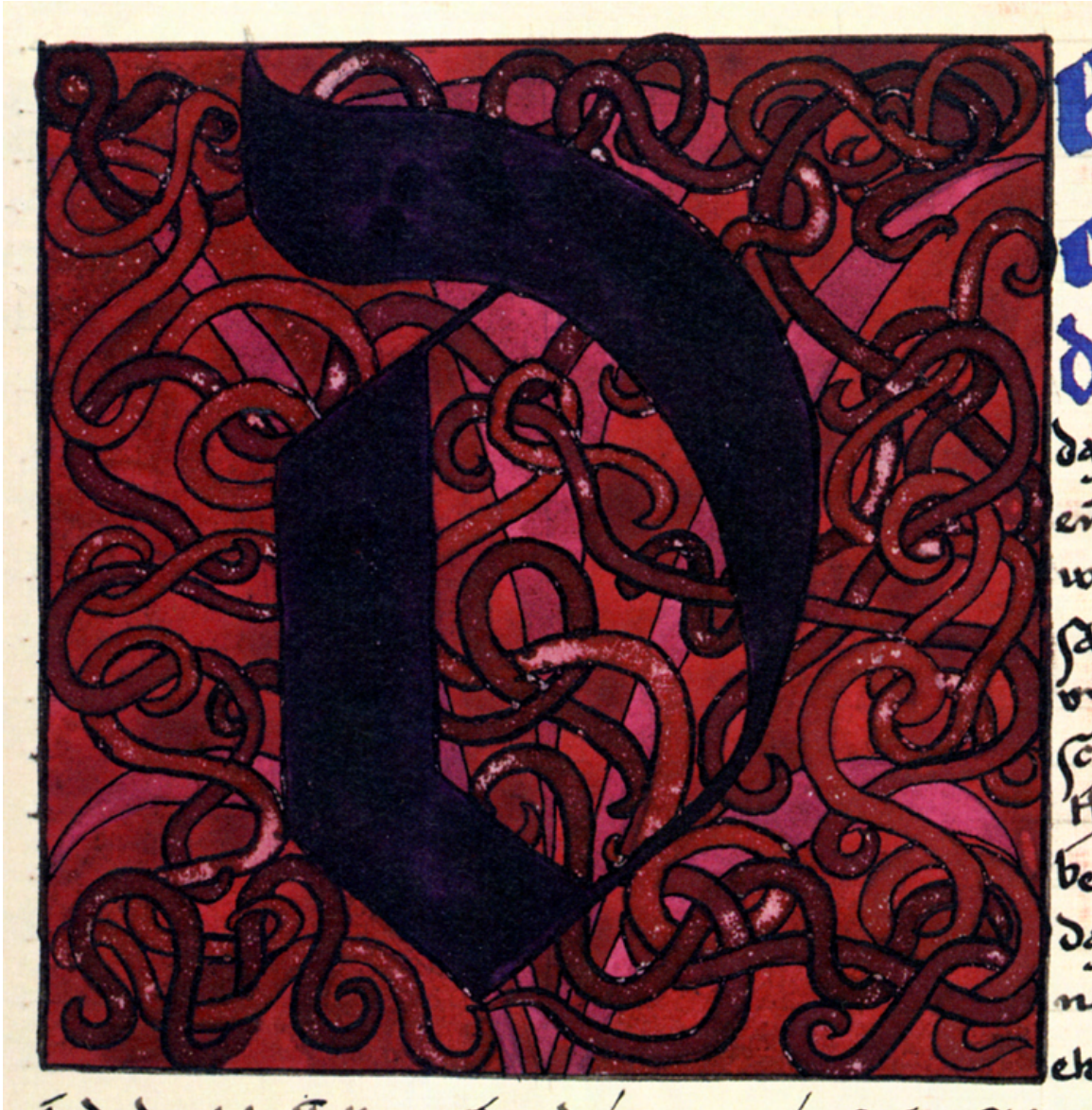
Paul Klee, "Double Tent 1923"



Liber Secundus, p. 75 detail



Jakob Boehme, Philosophische Kugel, 40 Questions for the Soul, XVII century



Liber Secundus, p. 76 detail



Frank Stella, Imola-three-iv., 1984



Liber Secundus, p. 79



Kandinsky, Several Circles, 1926

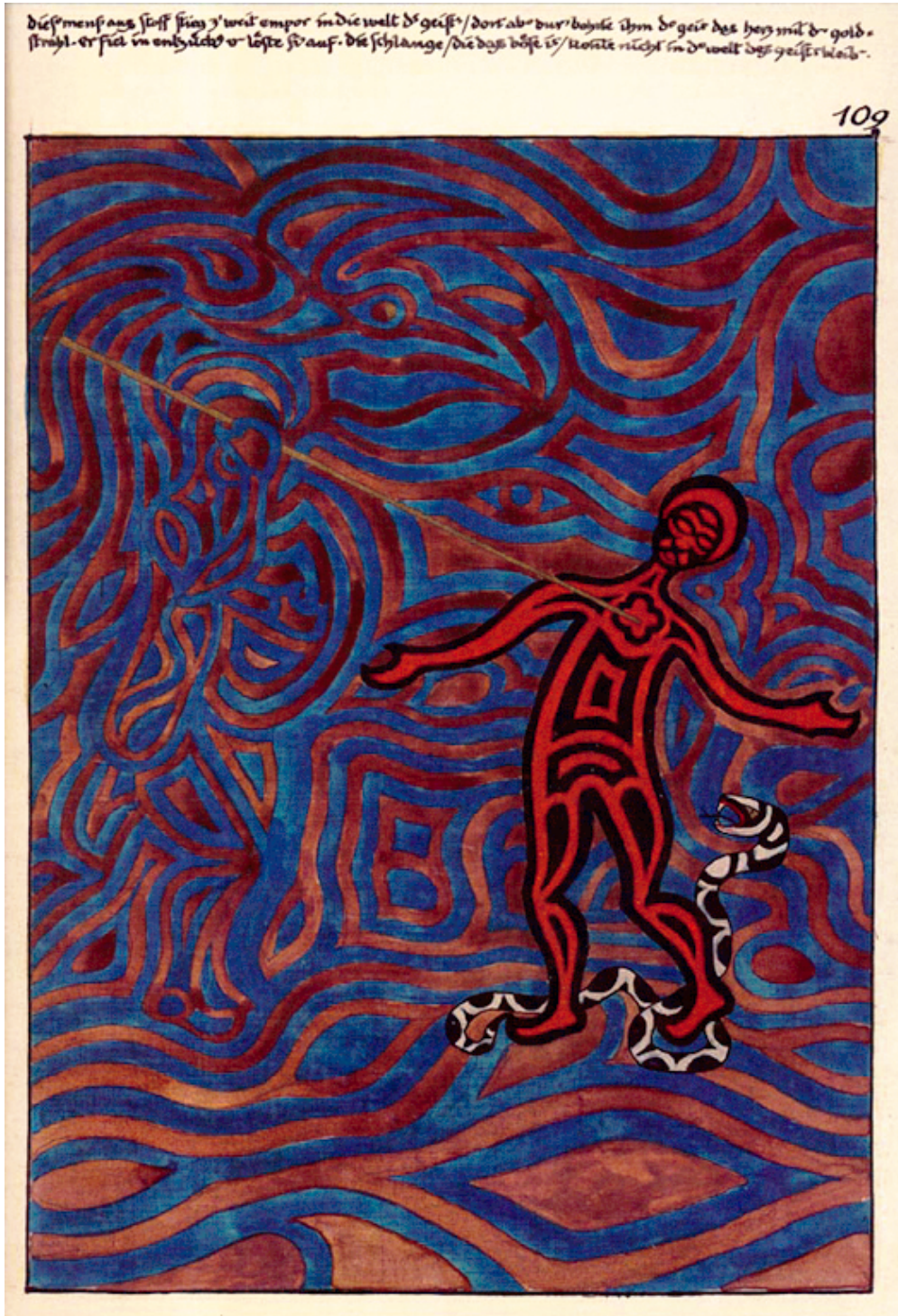


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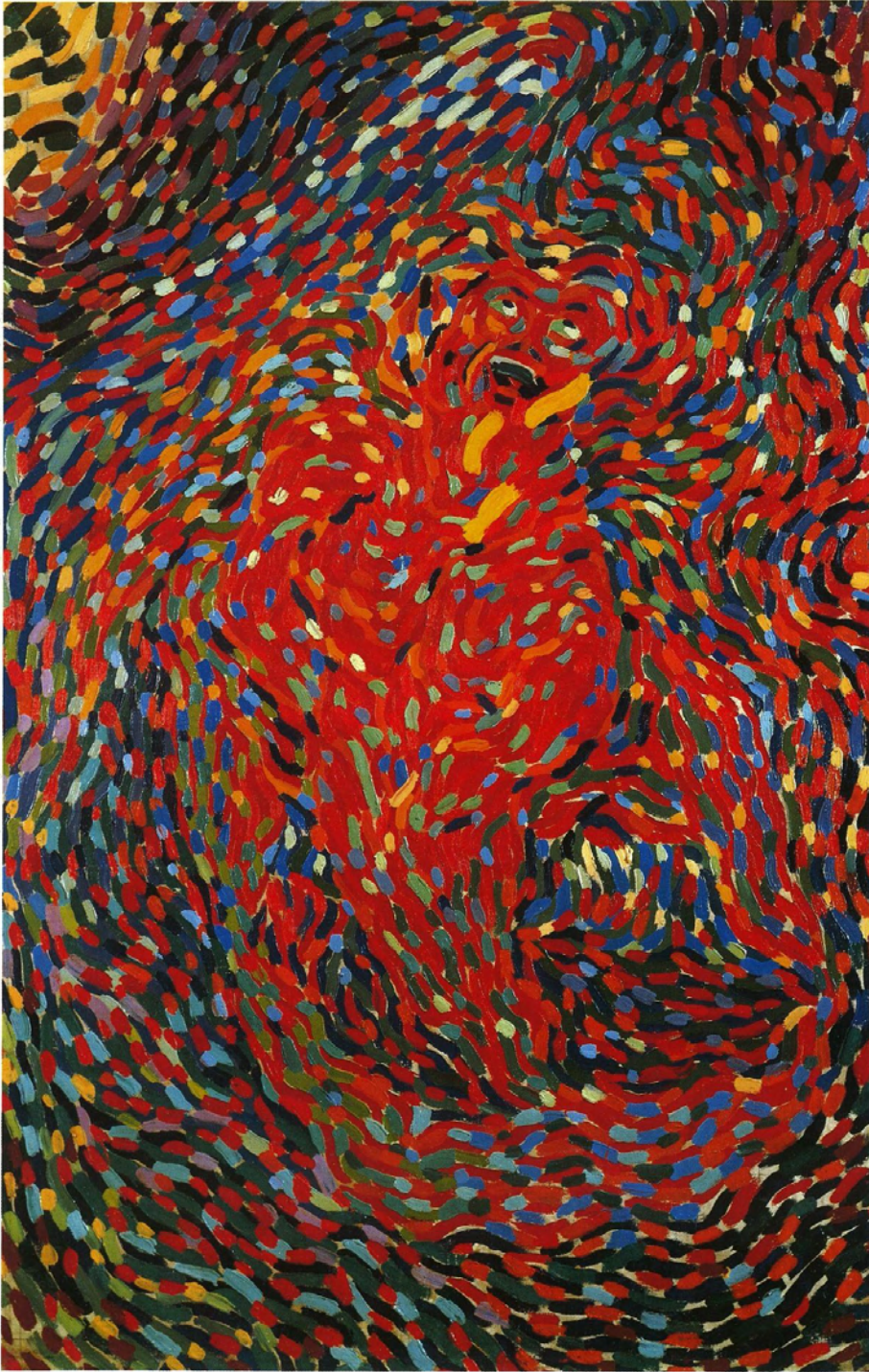
Liber Secundus, p. 105.



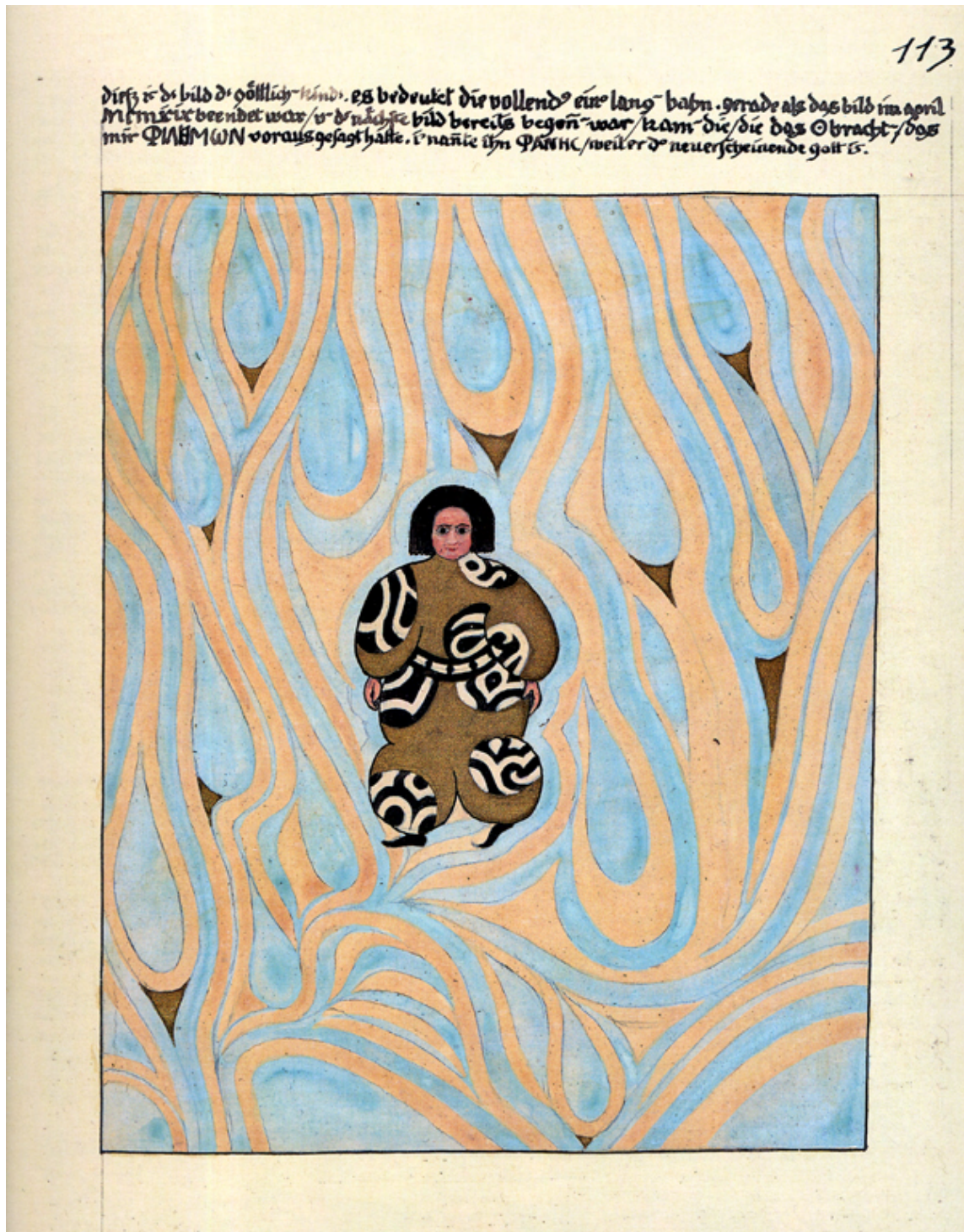
Charles Filiger Notations Chromatiques: Tete de la Vierge



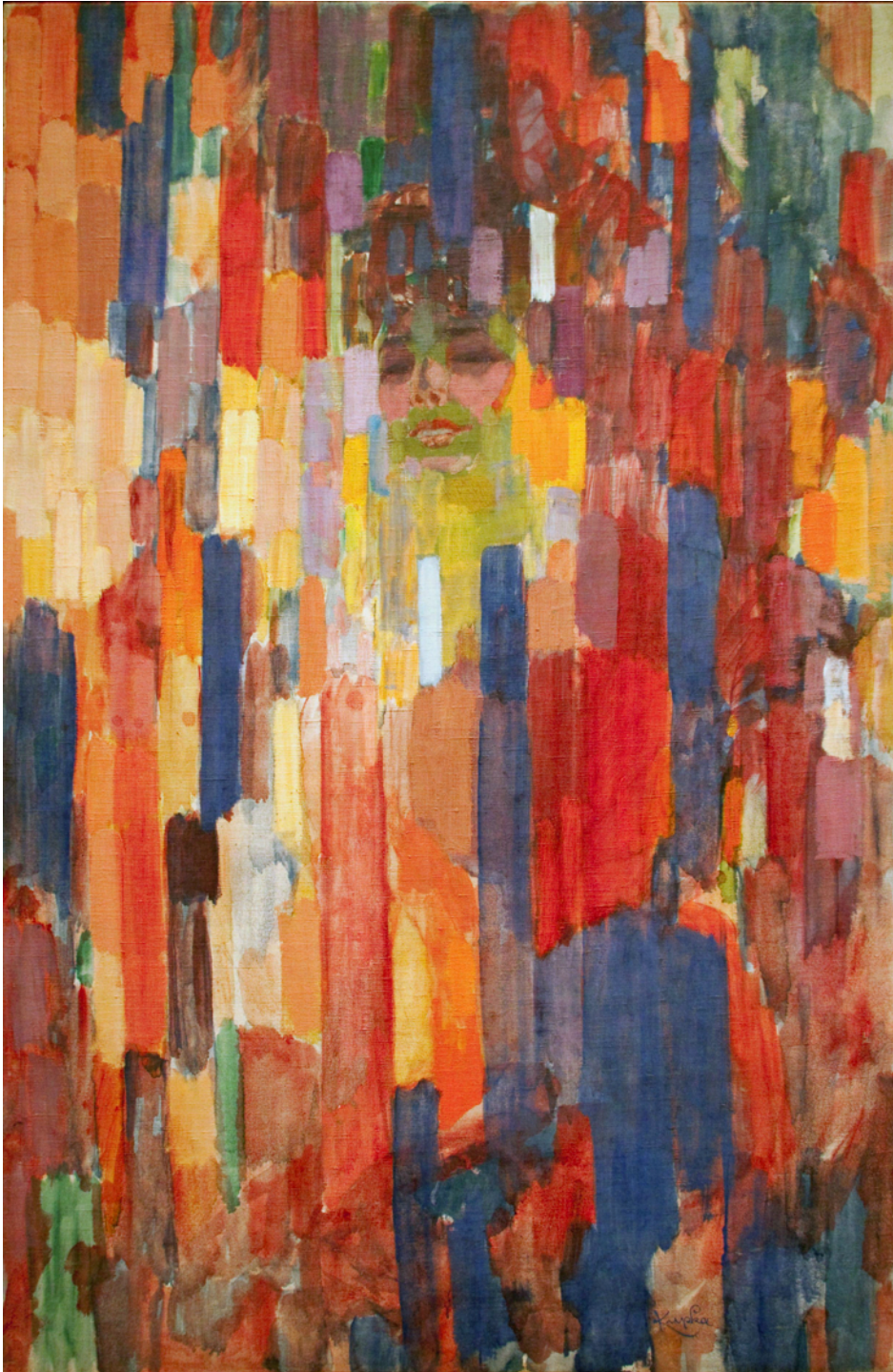
Liber Secundus, p. 109.



Wilhelm Morgner, German expressionist (1891-1917) , "Friendly Apparition" 1911-12



Liber Secundus, p. 113



Frantisek Kupka, "Mme Kupka among Verticals" 1910-11



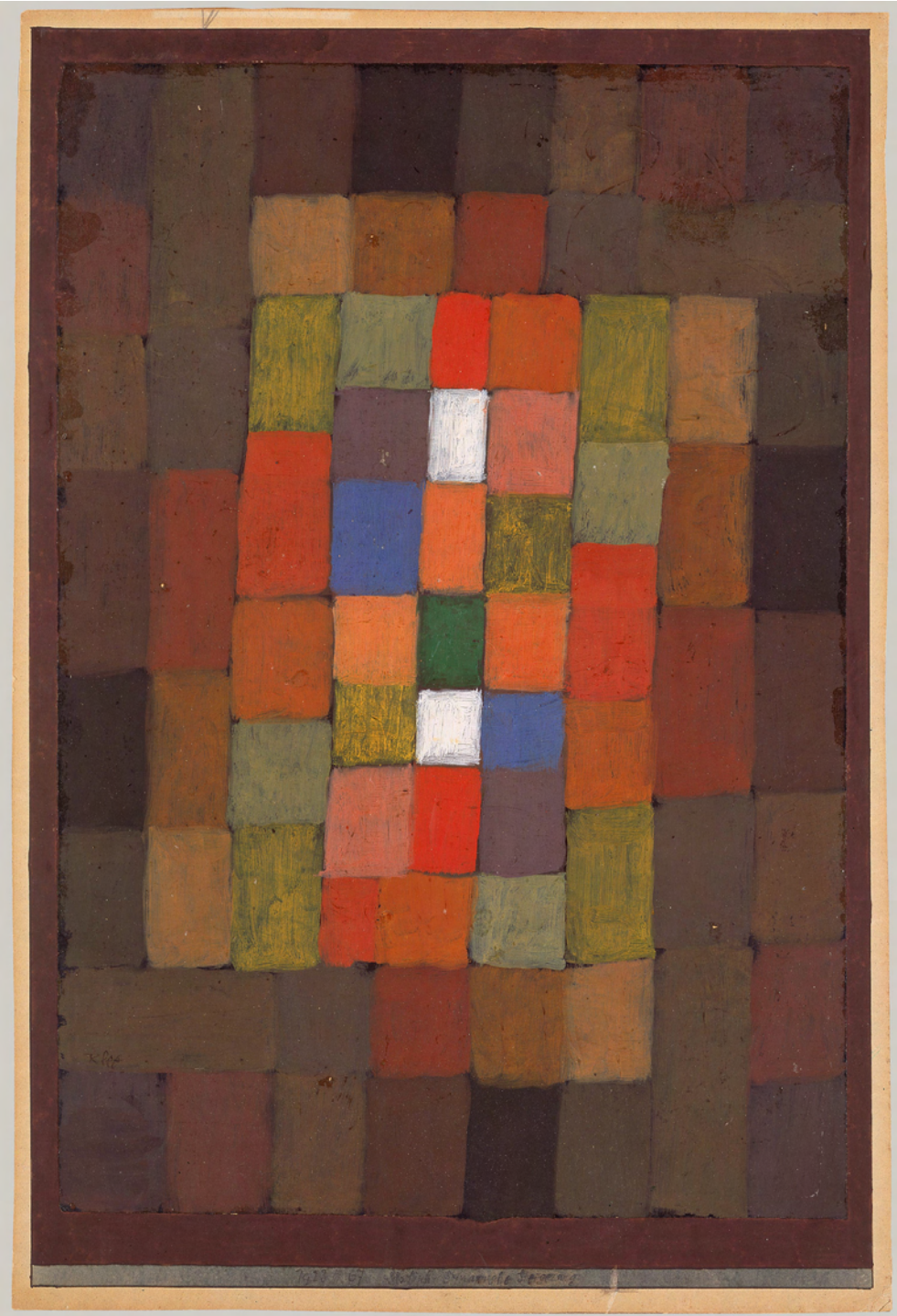
C.G. Jung, "Cultic Scene, 1917



Frantisek Kupka, *The Way of Silence*, 1900



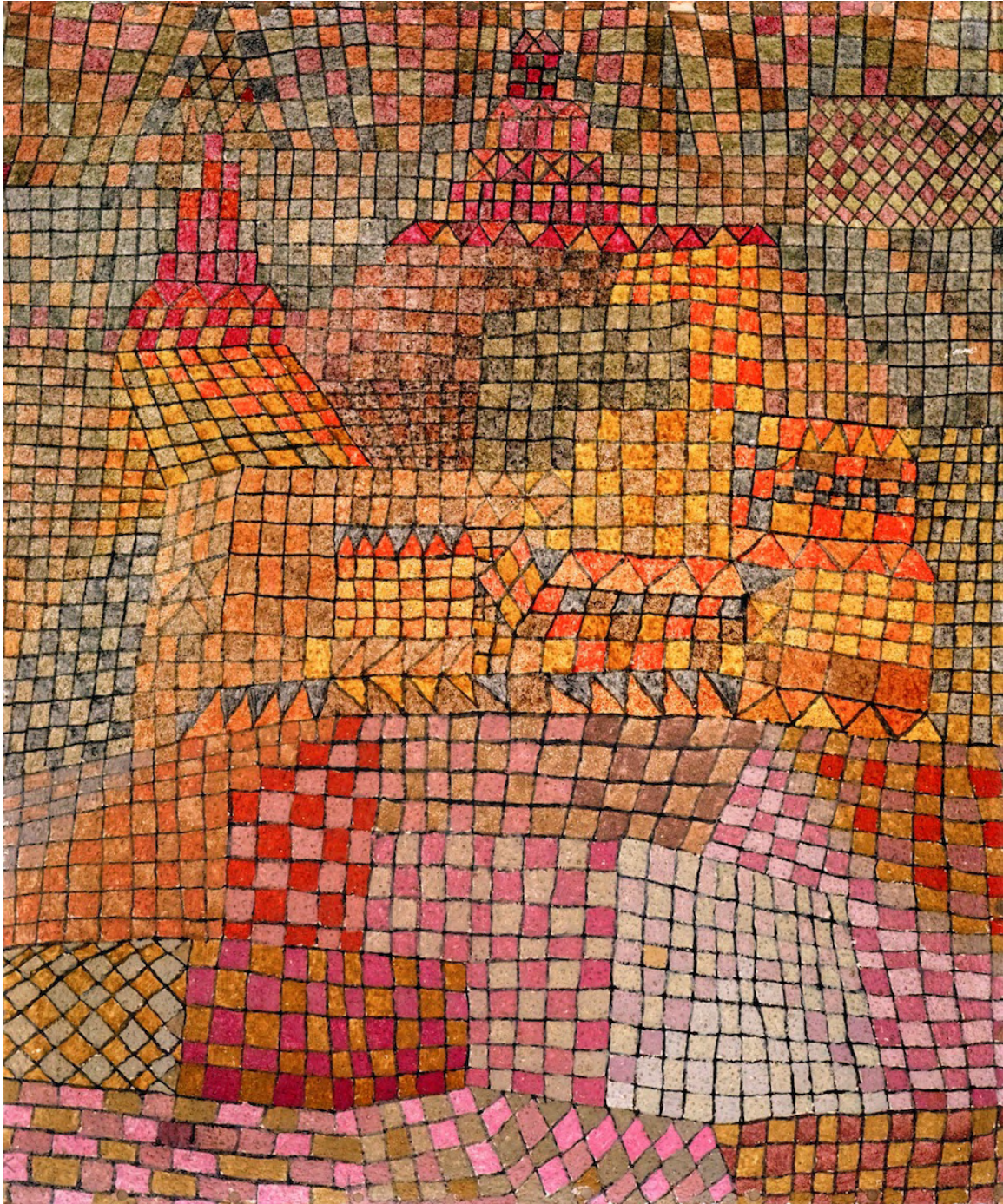
Liber Secundus, p. 115



Paul Klee, *Rose Garden*, 1920



Liber Secundus, p. 115, detail



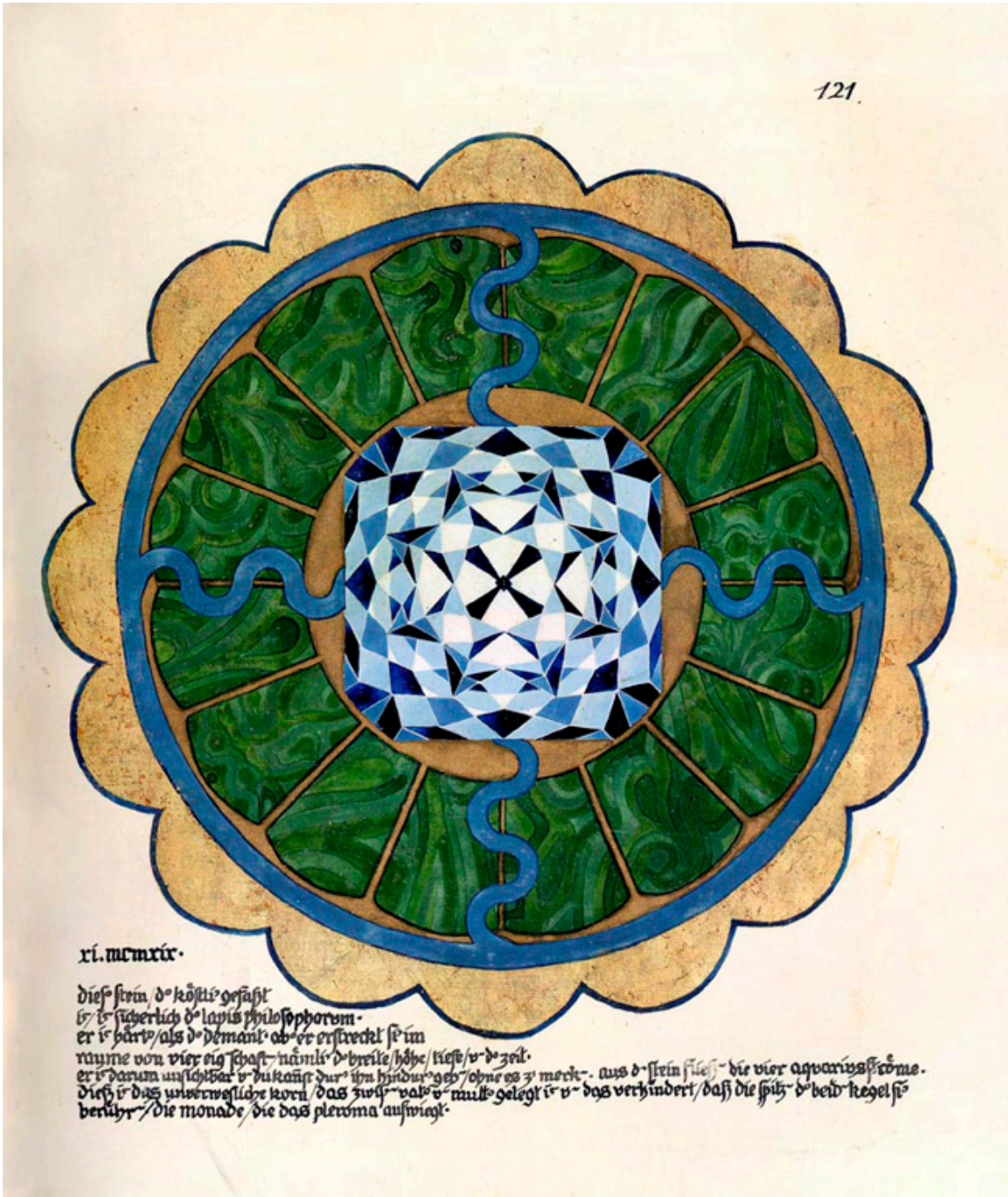
Paul Klee, *Town Castle*, 1932



Liber Secundus, p. 119.



Kandinsky, *St. George III*, 1911



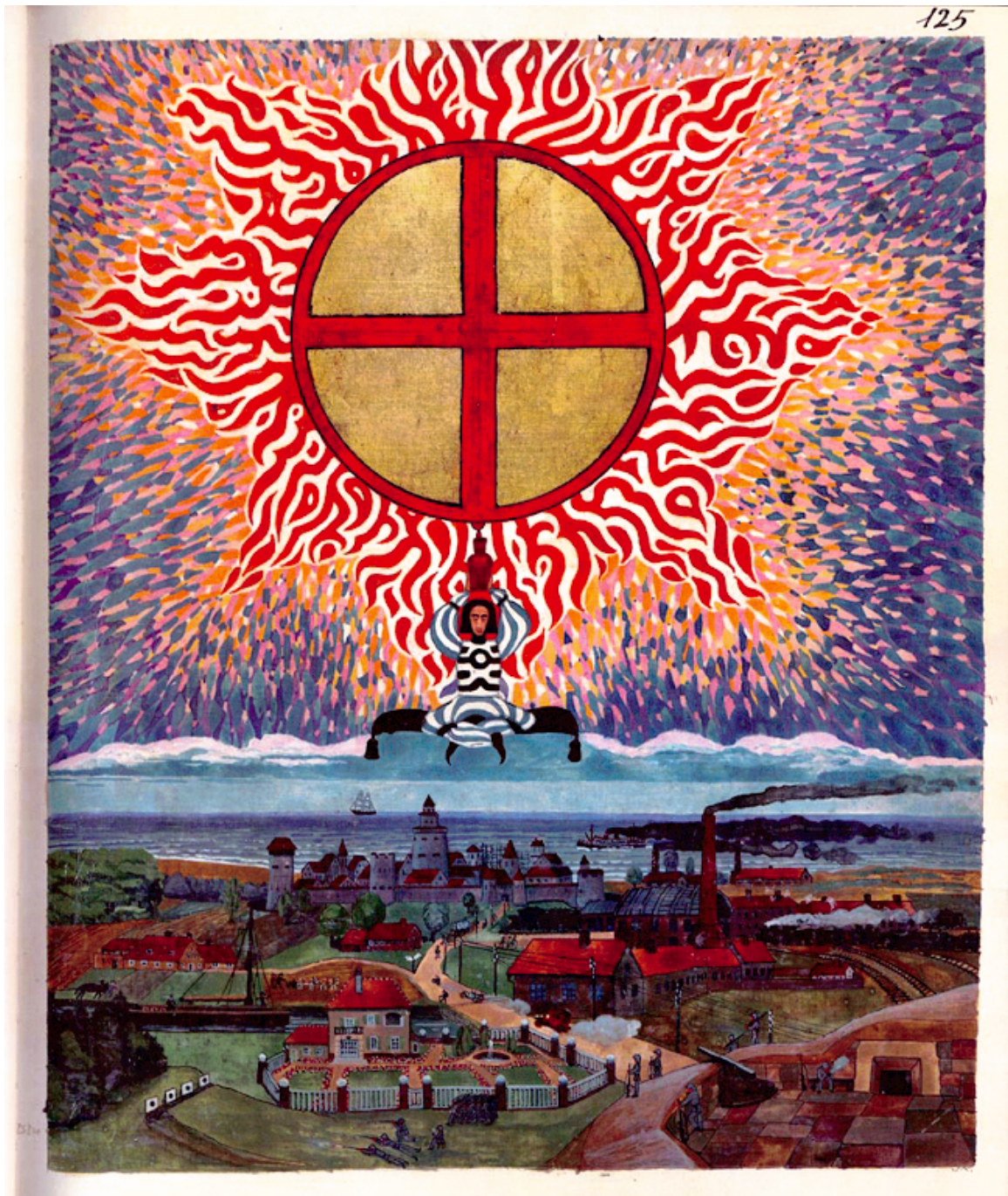
xi. m. c. m. c. x. x.

dieß stein d' költi gefäst
 is sicherlich d' lapis philosophorum
 er is härte als d' demant ob er erstreckt se im
 raume von vier eigenschaft naml: d' breite höhe tiefe v' d' zeit
 er is darun unlichtbar v' dukant dur' ihn hädur geb' ohne es z' merck. aus d' stein fließ die vier aquariss körne.
 dieß is das unvertigliche kern das zwölft v'alt v' mult' gelegt is v' das verhindert das die spit d' beid' regel se
 berühr' die monade die das pleroma aufsviagt.

Liber Secundus, p. 121



Charles Filiger, *Lion Head, Notation Chromatique*, 1915-1928



Liber Secundus, p. 125



Annie Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater, *Thought Forms-3*, 1901



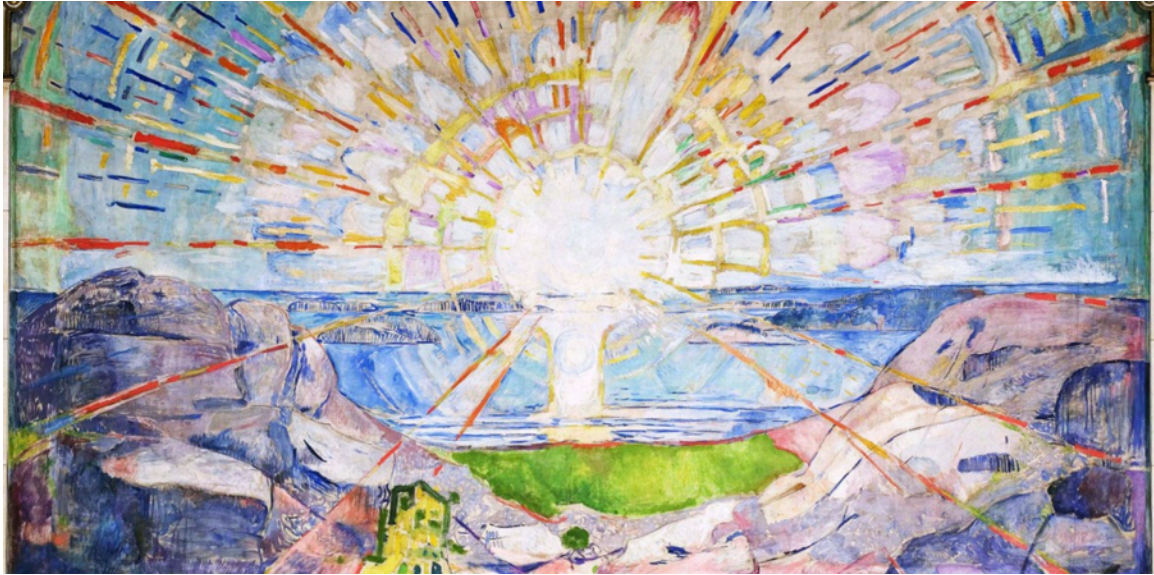
Liber Secundus, p. 129



Luigi Russolo, an Italian futurist (1885-1947), *Solidity of Fog*, 1912



Liber Secundus, p. 131.



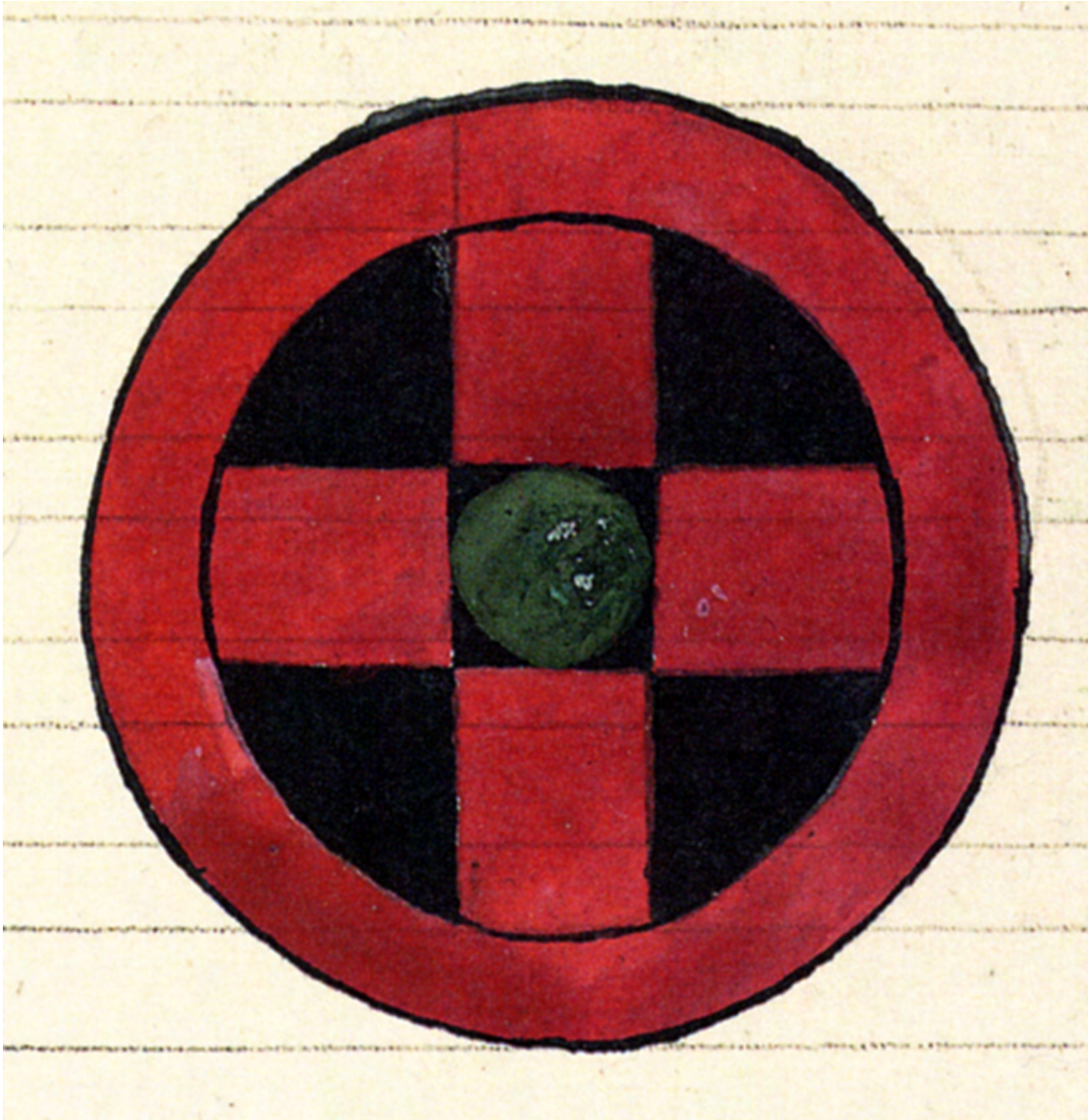
Edward Munch, *Solen (The Sun)*, 1911



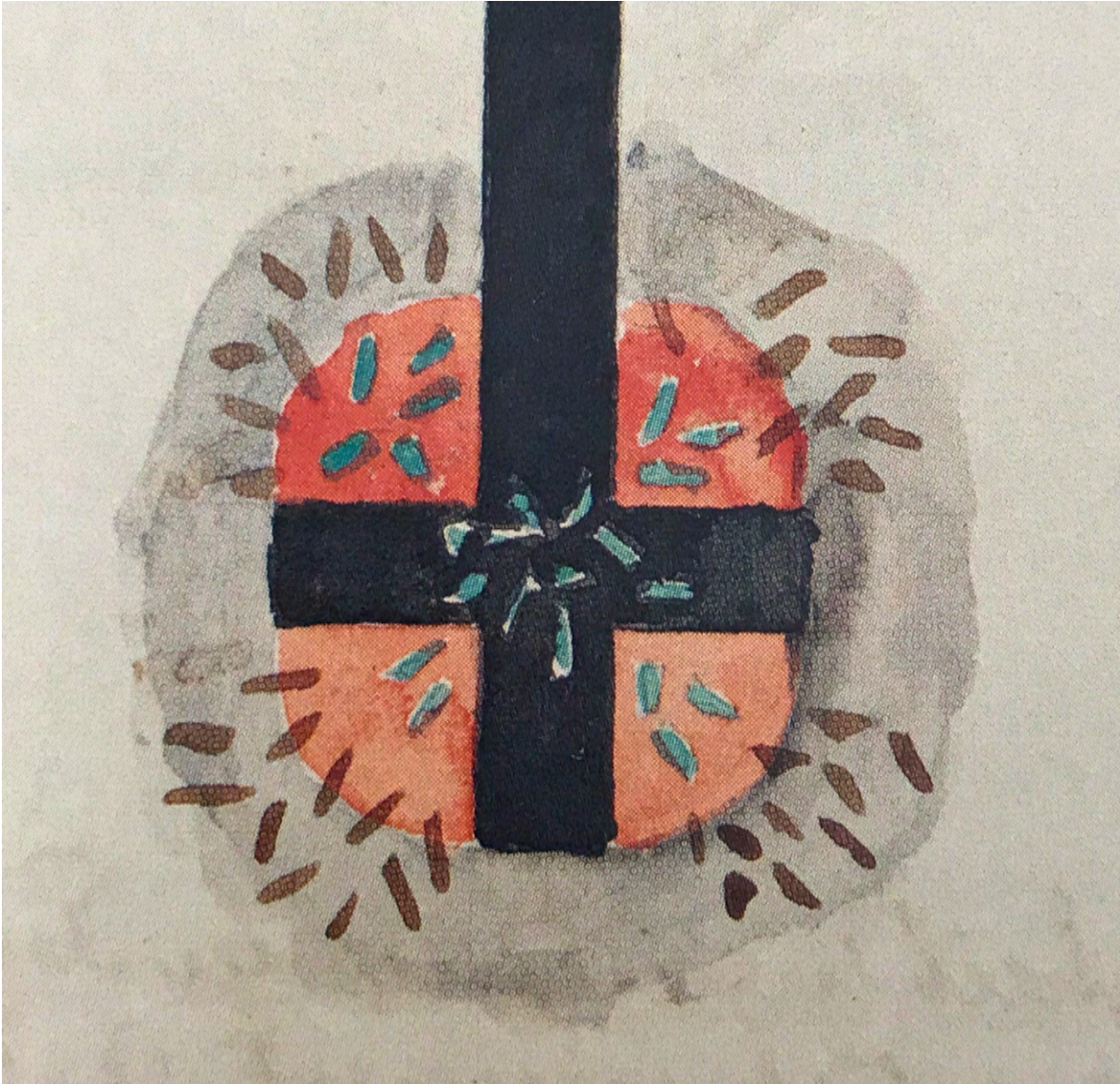
Liber Secundus, p. 135



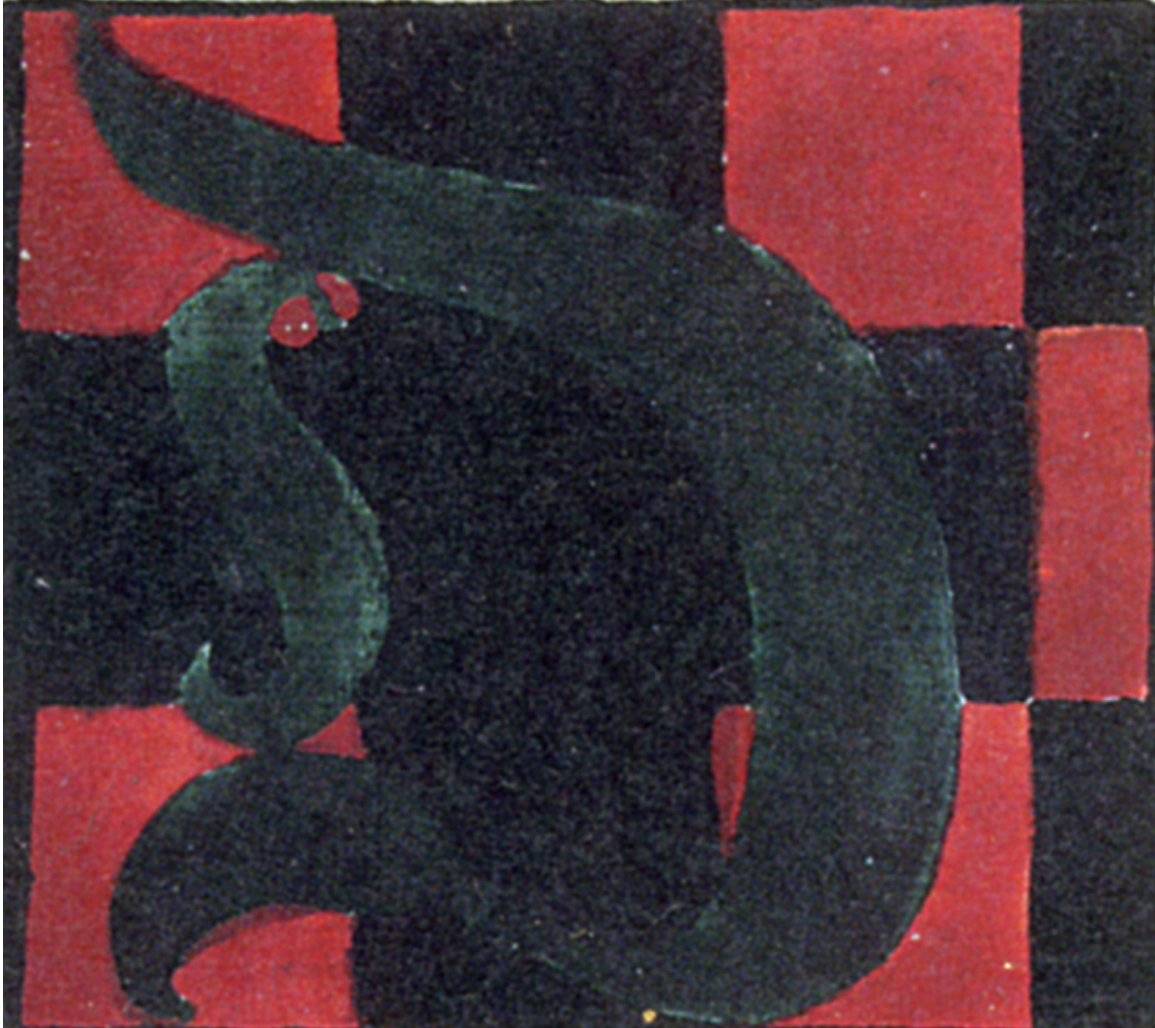
Giacomo Balla (1871-1958), An Italian futurist, *Street Light*, 1909



Liber Secundus, p. 136 detail



Hilma af Klint, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, 5/27/1920, Spiritual essence of vernal grass.



Liber Secundus, p. 136 Detail



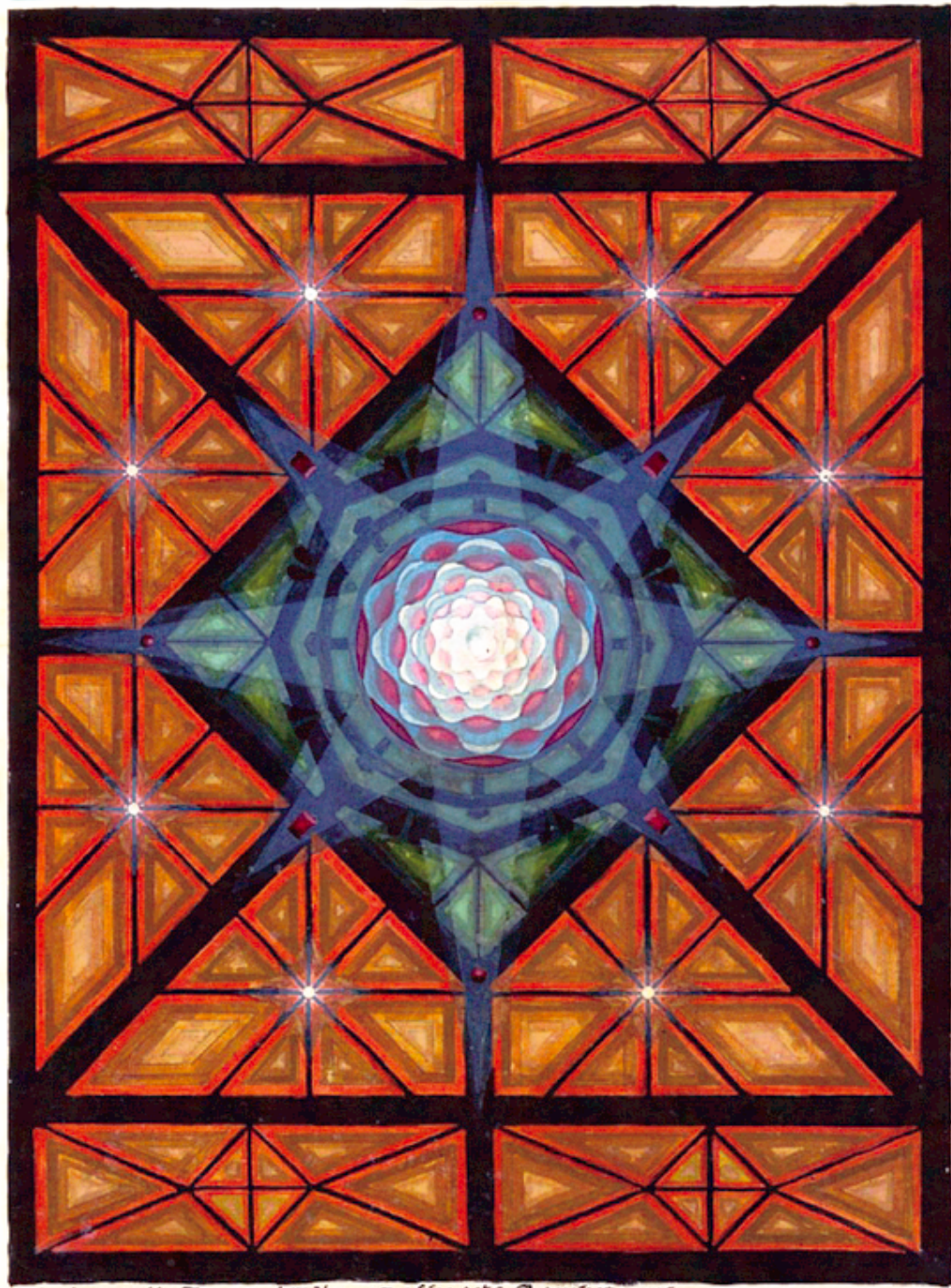
Carmen Herrera (1915-), a Cuban-American abstract painter, *Iberic*, 1949



Liber Secundus, p. 139 detail

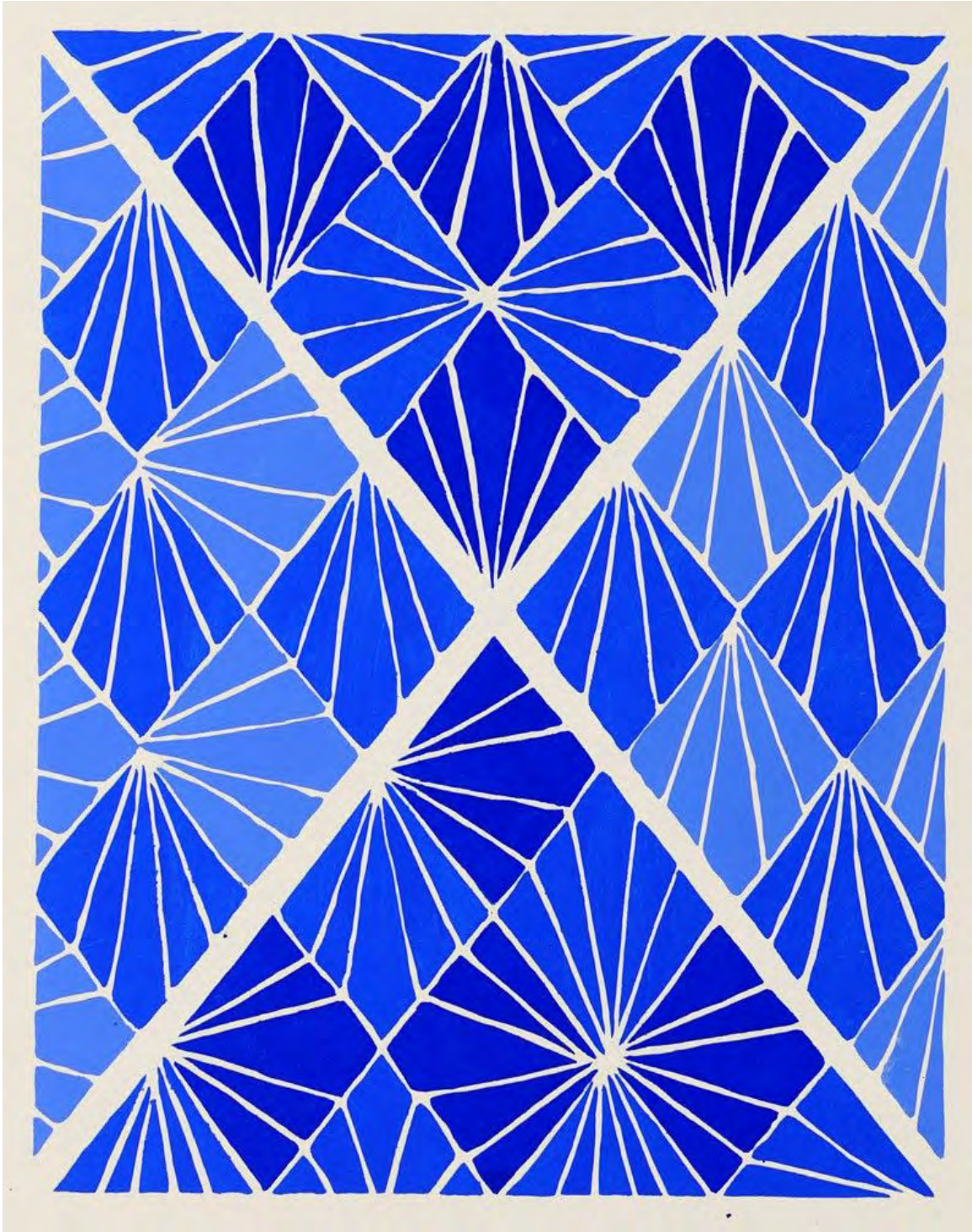


Paul Klee, *Rhythmisches*, 1930



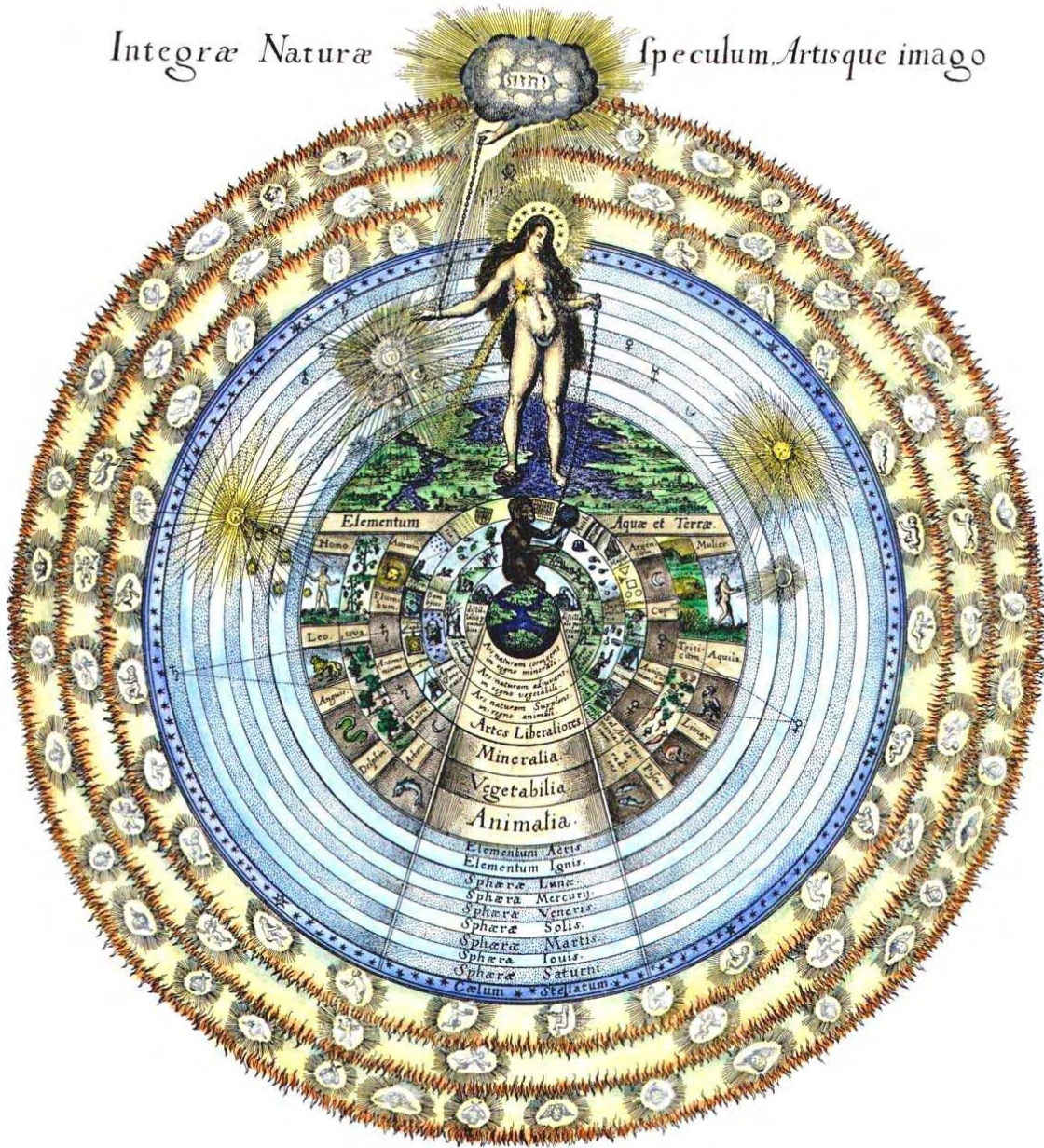
Dix Januarii a^{no} 1927 obit^o Hermanos S^og^o aet. 52 amicos meos.

Liber Secundus, p. 159



Sonia Delanuay Plate 24 "compositions Colors Ideas", 1930 color stencil

Integræ Naturæ Speculum, Artisquæ imago



Robert Fludd (1574-1637), *The Macrocosm and Microcosm*



Robert Delaunay (the founder of Orphism, 1885-1941) 1912-13, *Le Premier Disque*

JUNG AND MODERN ART

The turn of the twentieth century brought radical changes in the European spirit. Across disciplines profound shifts were taking place. Mathematics explored non-Euclidean geometries. Physics was moving from Newtonian to Einsteinian theories. Chemistry experimented with radiation. Music was transforming from classical to atonality and twelve-tone technique. Psychoanalysis was emerging and diversifying. Artists were experimenting with abstraction. Imperial politics were brewing the first World War. All these synchronous changes can be seen as an expression of the same *Zeitgeist*, *lux moderna*.

I consider the emergent Analytical Psychology of Jung as yet another manifestation of these transformations of the spirit. In my presentation I will focus on the parallels between Jung's "unintentional" artistic legacy and the abstract art of the period. As Jung wrestled with the spirit of the times and the spirit of the depths to fathom and find a form for "what is to come," modern artists were engaged in their own spiritual struggles to express the invisible in art. German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters developed an understanding of an artistic image—"The picture is a self-contained work of art. It refers to nothing outside of itself"²—that is remarkably similar to Jung's appreciation of fantasy-image: "Above all, don't let anything from outside, that does not belong, get into it, for the fantasy-image has "everything it needs." [CW 14, ¶ 749]

Through his research on the archetype and amplification Jung was accustomed to treat art objects: paintings and sculptures instrumentally, for purpose of identifying timeless universal patterns and symbols. These artistic artifacts were only interesting for their usefulness to support his theory or to amplify the archetypal themes and not in their aesthetic

² Kurt Schwitters in the first issue of *Merz* magazine, 1923. [Kurt Schwitters, Tate Gallery, Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.), 1985, p. 14]

import. They were treated like the dreams of his patients, as manifestations of the unconscious and expression of archetypal images. Jung emphasized their symbolic meaning and manifestation of the creative spirit and not their aesthetic value or artistic skill. *Symbols of Transformation*, CW 5, written in 1911-12 contains dozens of photographs of sculptures, engravings and paintings illustrating archetypal themes. In his own active imagination in *Liber Primus* of his *Red Book*, when Jung described the figures he saw flashing in the crystal: Mary, Eve, St. Peter, Buddha, Kali, he instantly recognized them. In order for his imaginal perceptions to be accurate (as these figures did not explicitly identify themselves as some of the others did, e.g., Elijah, Salome, Philemon, etc.) the figures must have been represented in their iconic form, that is, as depicted in art over the centuries. Jung was interested in the symbolic meaning of art as expression of the psyche and not in its aesthetic value. Thus, he believed that modern artists were unaware of the [symbolic] meaning of their works: "It is rather conspicuous that creators of modern art are unconscious of the meaning of their creations." [*Jung on Art*, 28 footnote 79, 1959] It is as if Jung considered art as incomplete active imagination, only the expressive part, without attempt to understand its meaning. I argue that with regard to his own artistic endeavors, Jung was so focused on their meaning that he ignored, or was unconscious of, their artistic value and dismissed them as aestheticism.

For all his critique and misunderstanding of modern art³ Jung was prone to grand declarations about art: "It is, indeed, a law of painting to give visible shape to the dominant trends of the age, and for some time now painters have taken as their subject the disintegration of forms and the "breaking of tables," creating pictures which abstractly

³ See my essay "Wrestling with Azazel—Jung and Modern Art, a Critical Appraisal" Online at *ARAS Connections Issue 2, 2015*.

detached from meaning and feeling alike, are distinguished by their “meaninglessness” as much as by their deliberate aloofness from the spectator. [CW10, “Flying Saucers—A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky,” (1958/59), &724, p. 383.] Jung’s appraisal of modern art was distorted by his art complex⁴, and he would not apply to art his paradoxical understanding discovered in *The Red Book* that meaning and absurdity belong together in the psyche: “The development of modern art with its seemingly nihilistic trend towards disintegration must be understood as the symptom of a mood of universal destruction and renewal that has set its mark on our age.” [CW10, “The Undiscovered Self” (1956/58) &585, pp. 303-4] Thus he considered his approach aiming more at renewal than destruction. Jung’s attitude to modern art was expressed succinctly in the 5/21/1958 letter to Ceri Richards, a Welsh painter, [Jung’s Letters, vol. II, p. 440]: “I have no relation to modern art unless I understand the picture.” Definitely, in relation to art Jung privileges understanding over other modes of comprehension like feeling or aesthetic appreciation.

Jung focused on the aspect of modern art that expressed fragmentation or disintegration, (as his analysis of Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending the Staircase*, or the critical essay on Picasso attest), but ignored, or was unaware of, the emergent spiritual abstraction in art.

Jung was firmly convinced that modern art comes from the unconscious: “There can be no doubt that the unconscious comes to the surface in modern art and with its dynamism destroys the orderliness that is characteristic of consciousness.” He compared it to “episodic or regular disruptions of the accustomed order,” and regarded it as a “psycho-hygienic measure” giving “vent from time to time to the suppressed forces of chaos.” [Letter to Horst Scharschuch, 9/1/1952, Letters II, p.81] However, he considered modern art as “the opposite

⁴ See my essay *Jung’s Art Complex* (San Francisco, 2008) [Online *ARAS Connections Issue 3, 2009*

of art⁵," "since it lacked order and form. At best he gave modern art a value of clearing the air "by abolishing the constrains of order." He hoped with *holosalgia*⁶ that it is a transitory state, that "uprushing chaos seeks new symbolic ideas which will embrace and express not only the previous order but also the essential contents of the disorder" and "will have a magical effect by holding the destructive forces of disorder spellbound, as been the case in Christianity and all other religions." [Ibid] As you can hear Jung considers art as having a religious purpose, and grants it magical apotropaic function. So it is really troubling to him that modern art does not fulfill this traditional role. It is as if modern art is not art⁷ (what he calls an opposite of art) because it will not spellbind the forces of chaos, and instead displays disorder, while "true art" would express wholeness. He considers it "black magic" that "exalts the destructive forces into the only valid truth." [ibid., 82] He even applies an epithet "infernal" to long stretches of modern art in all its forms. [83]

Although Jung approvingly quotes Worringer [from *Abstraction and Empathy*⁸]: "The

⁵ "Opposite of art" is a strange designation. In MDR, in his dialogues with anima who asserts that what Jung is doing in the *Red Book* is art, Jung disputes it, calling it "nature," which begs the question of if "nature" is an "opposite of art"? In his essays on the relationship of depth psychology to poetry Jung considered creative impulse behind art as "nature." In his 1936 essay "Psychological Factors Determining Human Behavior" Jung, with some hesitation recognizes "creativity" as one of the instincts: "Though we cannot classify it with a high degree of accuracy, the *creative instinct* is something that deserves special mention. I do not know if "instinct" is the correct word. We use the term "creative instinct" because this factor behaves at least dynamically, like an instinct. Like instinct it is compulsive, but it is not common, and it is not a fixed and invariably inherited organization... Therefore, I prefer to designate the creative impulse as a psychic factor similar in nature to instinct, having indeed a very close connection with the instincts, but without being identical with any one of them." It is as if when Jung thinks about art all his doubt disappears and creativity is affirmed as a natural instinct. So the "creative instinct" is really a confusing, paradoxical notion. While it does agree with Jung's idea that for a psychological statement to be true its opposite has to be true as well, I attribute all these confusing designations: "modern art as opposite of art," "it is not art, on the contrary it is nature," "creative instinct" to Jung's art complex.

⁶ See my essay on "Wrestling with Azazel—Jung and Modern Art, A Critical Appraisal" for the notion of *holosalgia*, *ARAS Connections Issue 2, 2015*.

⁷ Paradoxically, this is what he considered his pictures. So perhaps his paintings were themselves the "modern art" he so despised.

⁸ Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* was published in Munich in 1908, and the *Blue Rider* artists: Franz Marc, Alexei Jawlensky, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee read it and were influenced.

urge to abstraction is the origin of all art," he immediately undermines it with pathologizing reflection: "This idea finds weighty confirmation in the fact that schizophrenics produce forms and figures showing the closest analogy with those of primitive humanity, not only in their thoughts but also in their drawing." [Jung, September 1913, a presentation at Psychoanalytic Congress in Munich "A Contribution to Psychological Types" CW 6, &874, p. 506]

Thus, Jung bemoaned the modern artist's attitude towards abstraction: "the prophetic spirit of art has turned away from the old object-relationship towards the (for the time being) dark chaos of subjectivisms" C.G. Jung, CW10 ¶ 584

It seems that Jung ignored, or was unaware⁹ of, the spiritual current among early abstract artists, whose ideas were similar to his own. It makes me wonder how Jung would regard the abstract geometric art with its simple geometric order, absence of fragmentation and distinctly defined color shapes. Would he see it as a display of the pure spirit, a form of wholeness, or a fulfillment of the goal of modern art as he expected and like the artists themselves believed it was?

⁹ In my research over the years, I've not come across Jung's comments on the early abstract modern art.

ABSTRACT ART



Kandinsky, *Improvisation 26*, 1912

In 1911, unbeknown to Jung¹⁰, Wassily Kandinsky, in his seminal essay on *The Spiritual in Art* wrote:

The great epoch of the Spiritual which is already beginning, or, in embryonic form, began already yesterday... provides and will provide the soil which a kind of monumental work of art must come to fruition. [Wassily Kandinsky, 1910-11].

¹⁰ At the 2019 Art and Psyche: The Illuminated Imagination Conference in Santa Barbara, CA 4/3-4/7/19 Jay Sherry, Thomas Fisher, Bettina Kaufman independently discussed the possibility of Jung's exposure to some of the early abstract artists ideas about their work and viewed some of their artwork. Thus, Jung might have chosen not to discuss any such works in his writings [hitherto known].



Kandinsky, Composition IV, 1911

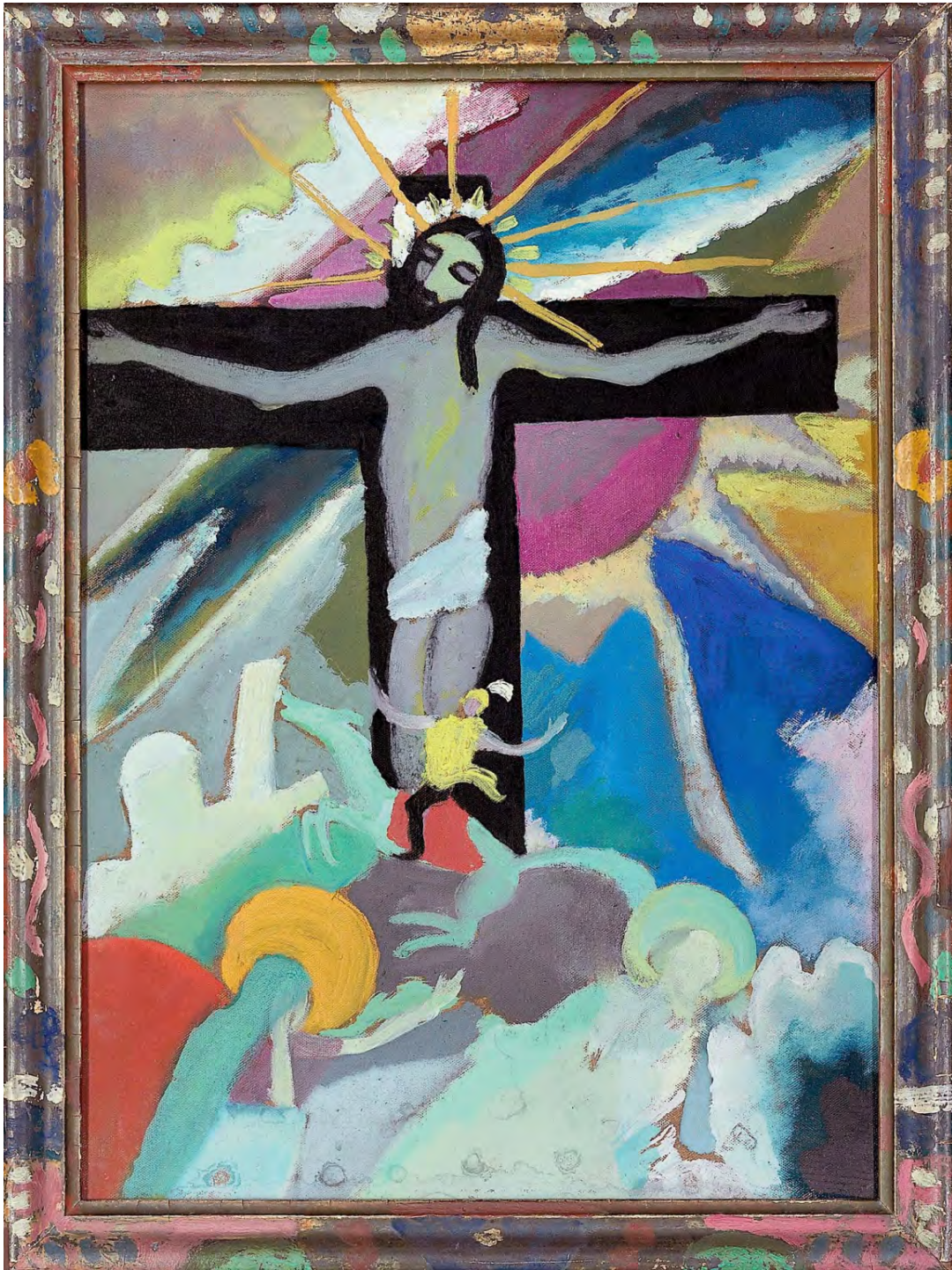
Earl Powell in the foreword to exhibition catalogue *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-95* states that “in the 1890’s interest in the occult and mysticism fused with the genesis of abstract painting, then in its ‘embryonic form.’” [p. 11]

Hilma af Klint in Sweden,



Hilma af Klint, Altarpiece 5

Wassily Kandinsky in Germany,



Kandinsky, Crucified Christ, 1911

Frantisek Kupka in Czechoslovakia,



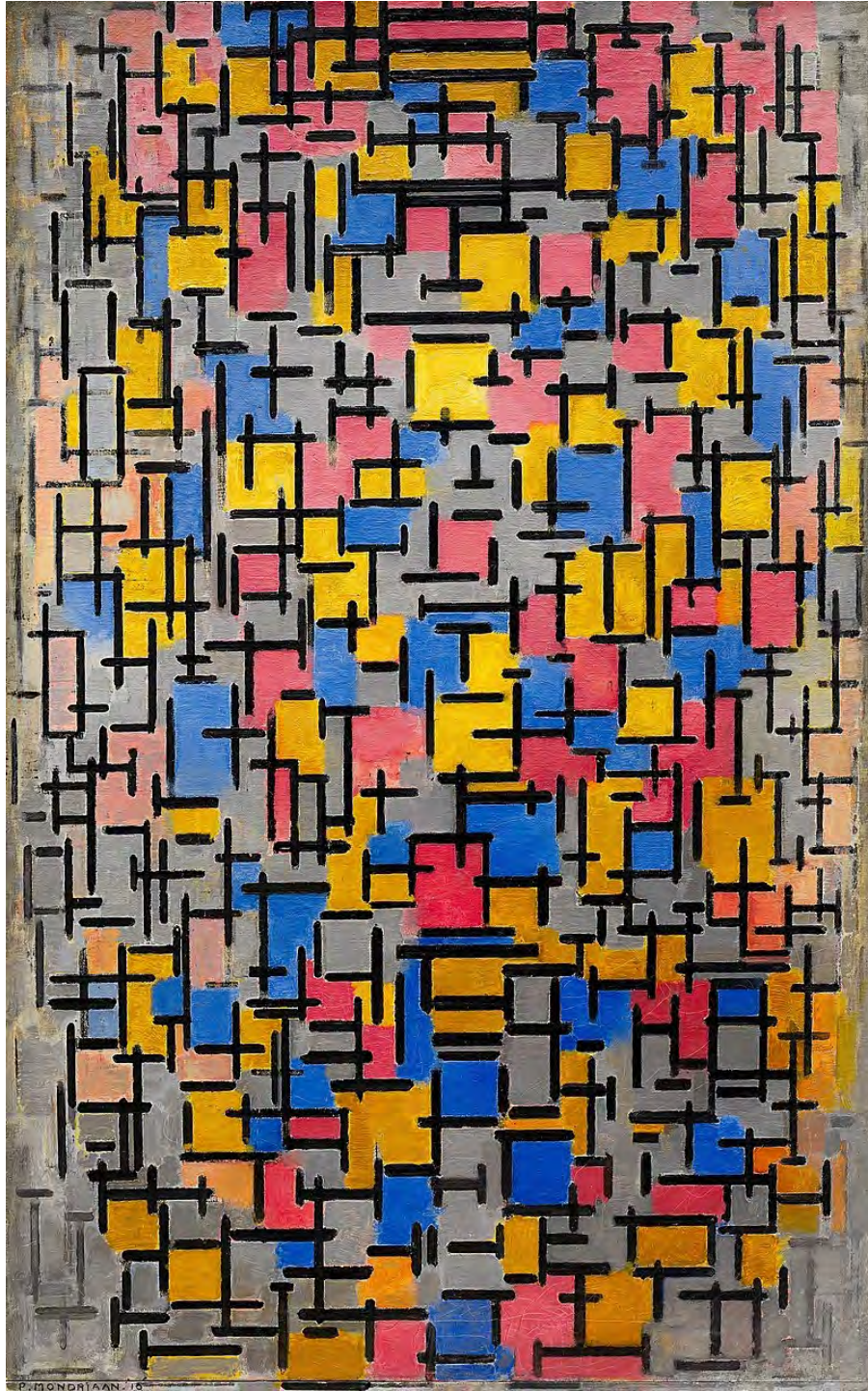
Frantisek Kupka, The First Step, 1910

Kazimir Malevich in Russia,



Malevich, *Mystic Suprematism (Black Cross on the Red Oval)*, 1920-1922

Piet Mondrian in Holland,



Mondrian, Composition, 1916

“created a pure abstract vision that embodied their involvement with esoteric thought.” [ibid]

Already in 1913 an art critic, Arthur Jerome Eddy, identified the goal of contemporary art as:

“the attainment of a higher stage in *pure art*; in this the remains of the practical desire are *totally separated* (abstracted). Pure art speaks from soul to soul, it is not dependent upon one use of objective and imitative forms. ... the forms used are necessary to express a spiritual content; the result is a *living work of art*. *The world reverberates; it is a cosmos of spiritually working human beings. The matter is living spirit.*” [p. 17 quoted from Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Cubists and Post-Impressionism*, Chicago: McClurg, 1919, pp. 122, 134]



Piet Mondrian, *Tree A*, 1913

Similar ideas were emerging in the art world at the time when Jung was engaged in his *Red Book*. Like Jung in psychology, contemporary artists and critics advocated art that spoke directly to the soul, was capable of expressing spirit, had cosmological impact, and questioned duality of matter and spirit.

Our current understanding of abstract art, as “non-figurative subjective expression, art that does not attempt to represent external reality, but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, colors, and textures.” [quoted from the Tate gallery website <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abstract-art>] is a result of over a hundred years of art history and reflection. My favorite definition of abstract art is over sixty years old, formulated in 1952, by an American art critic and philosopher Harold Rosenberg in his classic essay “The American Action Painters” (*Art News* 51, September 1952, p. 23). He understood Abstract Expressionism as a moment when artists stopped “trying to paint Art (Cubism, Postimpressionism)” and “decided to paint... just to PAINT. The gesture on the canvas was a gesture of liberations, from Value—political, aesthetic, moral.”



Jackson Pollock, Number 28, 1950

It seems to me that it has taken more than a generation for artists and critics alike to come to terms with abstraction as abstraction, with abstraction as such, to say that the painting is not about something but about paint, painting process, color and form. Prior to such contemporary appreciation, some ideological validation of the value of abstraction from beyond the aesthetic dimension was required to legitimize abstract painting. Usually such reasons took the form of spiritual aesthetics: expressing the invisible through color and form. Kandinsky in his seminal essay goes to great pains to distinguish spiritual art from decorative art or simply ornaments:

“A terrifying abyss of questions, a wealth of responsibilities stretched before me. And most important of all: what is to replace the missing object? The danger of ornament revealed itself clearly to me; the dead semblance of stylized forms I found merely repugnant.” [Kandinsky, "Rückblicke," 1913]



Kandinsky, Life Changing Composition VII, 1913

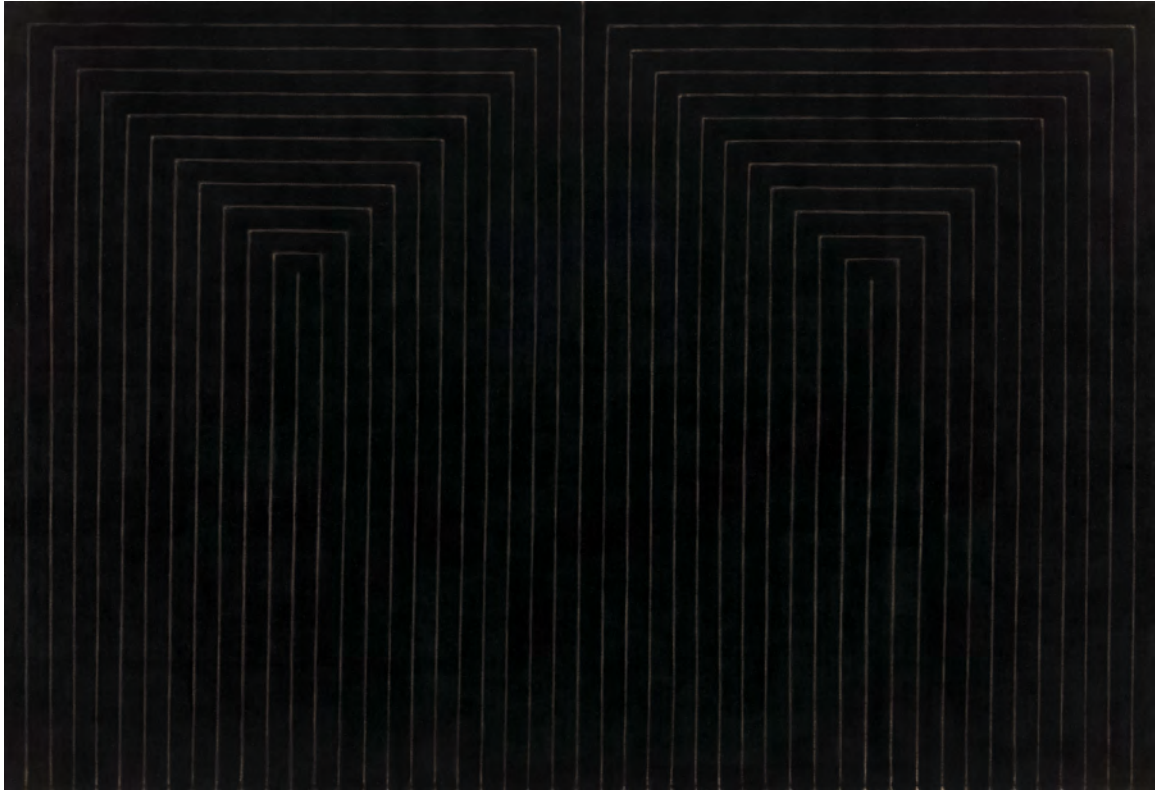
The German artist Sigmar Polke playfully criticized this mystical period in "Higher Powers Command Paint Upper Right Hand Corner Black," 1969.



This work suggests that 60 years later, abstraction stood firmly on its non-representational ground, and neither needed to "represent" the invisible nor to "be guided" by spirits to exist and have value.

In 1984 Frank Stella expressed his skeptical view on the spiritual ideology of early abstract art:

"I have no difficulty appreciating (and up to a point understanding) the great abstract painting of modernism's past, the painting of Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian, but I do have trouble with their dicta, their pleadings, their defense of abstraction. My feeling is that these reasons, these theoretical underpinnings of theosophy and anti-materialism have done abstract painting a kind of disservice which has contributed to its present-day plight." [Blotcamp, 1986]



Frank Stella, *Marriage of Reason and Squalor*, 1959¹¹

Today we tend to view abstract painting as something completely autonomous, that does not need any external narrative to legitimize it. And we consider Jung's illustrations to *The Red Book* to be art, as the recent publication *The Art of C.G. Jung* confirms. Let's look at the early abstract artists' understanding of their work. Note how some of their statements resemble Jung's ideas.

¹¹ Compare *The Red Book's* "Marriage of Madness and Reason."

EARLY ABSTRACT ART AND SPIRITUALITY¹²

Wassily Kandinsky

Art historians¹³ have found that pioneers of abstract art were followers of spiritual ideologies of the time: theosophy, spiritualism, anthroposophy and often painted under “spiritual influence,” and I don’t mean absinthe or Armagnac as the generation of Van Gogh and Gauguin did. Visionary artists of the early abstractions felt that they were guided by spirits, or painted in trance to depict messages from another realm. It seems to me that without this spiritual ground, the artists themselves would not have been able to justify the value of the work that often would consist of a monochromatic simple geometric shape, and often required minimal painting skills. Kandinsky, inspired by Rudolf Steiner’s *Luzifer-Gnosis* states:

“Words, musical tones, and colors possess the psychical power of *calling forth soul vibrations* ... they create identical vibrations, ultimately bringing about the attainment of knowledge.” [*On the Spiritual in Art* (1912), p. 35]

¹² In this section I will present abstract artists perspective on their work, selecting the material that closely resembles Jung’s view of the soul, spirit, matter, etc.

¹³ *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Abbeville Press Publishers, 1986

Kandinsky has imagined evolution towards ever purer forms of abstractions: initial forms were *impressions* of external nature expressed in painting;



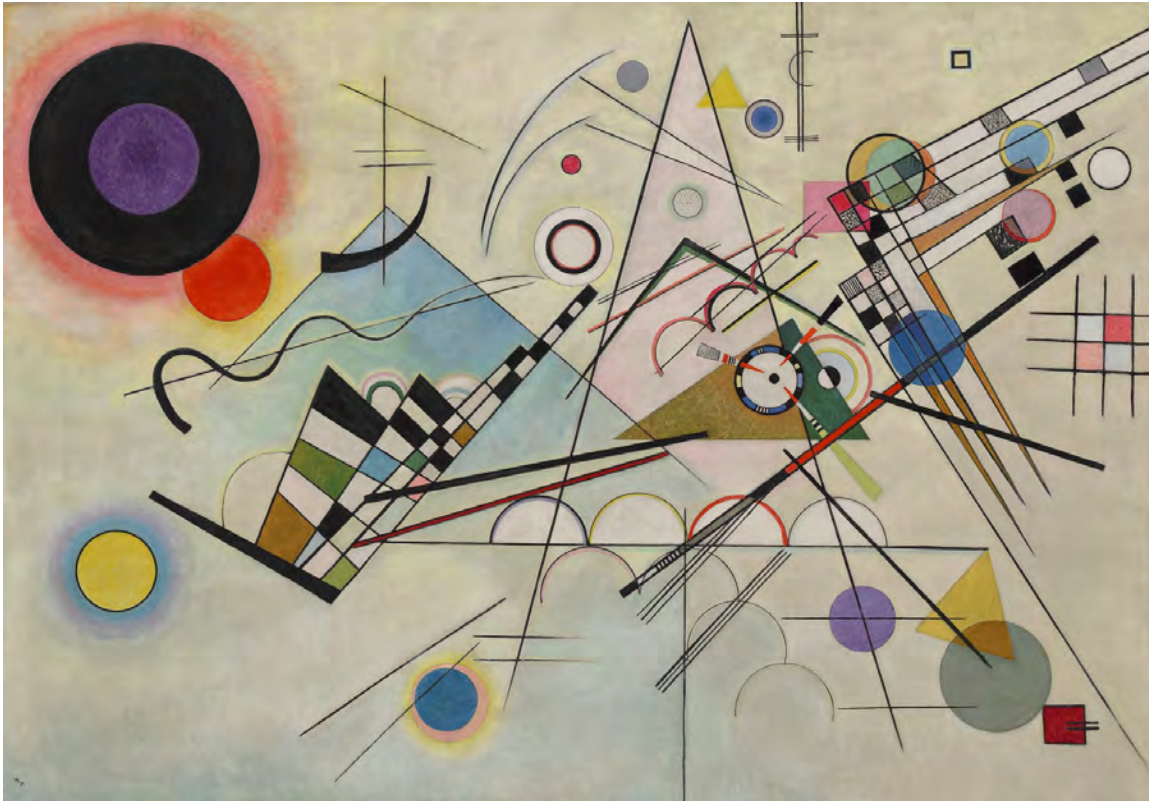
Kandinsky, *Impression III (Concert)* After attending Arnold Schoenberg's String Quartet #2, Opus 10, 1911

followed by *improvisations* that consisted of “expressions of events of inner character, hence impressions of “internal nature”;



Kandinsky, Improvisation VII, 1910

and finally *compositions*, or "expressions of feelings that have been forming within me in a similar way (but over a very long period of time), which, after the first preliminary sketches, I have slowly and almost pedantically examined and worked out." [ibid. p. 145-46]

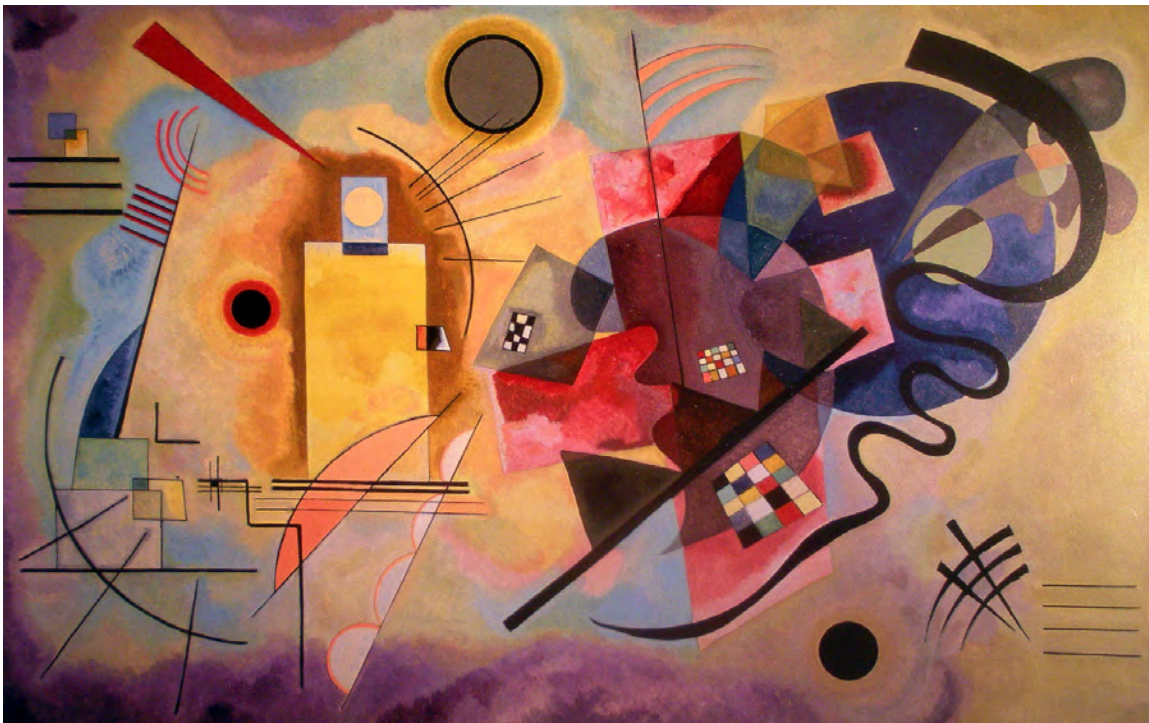


Kandinsky, *Composition 8*, 1923

For Kandinsky the purpose of painting was "to serve ... the refinement of the soul" [*On the Spiritual in Art*, 93].

Kandinsky's understanding of the subjective is also akin to Jung's: "Every artist chooses, from the forms which reflect his own time, those which are sympathetic to him, and expresses himself through them. So the subjective element is the definite and external expression of the inner, objective element. The inevitable desire for outward expression of the objective element is the impulse here defined as the "inner need." Kandinsky also recognizes the struggle between the demands of the spirit of the times and inner need which

echoes Jung's spirit of the depths: "The artist must be blind to distinctions between 'recognized' or 'unrecognized' conventions of form, deaf to the transitory teaching and demands of his particular age. He must watch only the trend of the inner need, and hearken to its words alone. Then he will with safety employ means both sanctioned and forbidden by his contemporaries. All means are sacred which are called for by the inner need. All means are sinful which obscure that inner need." [p. 35]



Kandinsky, *Yellow-Red-Blue*, 1925

Kandinsky considered a notion of "inner need" (*innere Notwendigkeit*) as an engine of spiritual expression in art. The inner need has three guiding principles: 1. Form is the outward expression of this inner meaning; 2. Form-harmony must rest only on a corresponding vibration of the human soul; 3. The choice of object (i.e. of one of the elements in the harmony of form) must be decided only by a corresponding vibration in the human soul.

“The inner need is built up of three mystical elements:

- (1) Every artist, as a creator, has something in him which calls for expression (this is the element of personality).
- (2) Every artist, as child of his age, is impelled to express the spirit of his age (this is the element of style)--dictated by the period and particular country to which the artist belongs (it is doubtful how long the latter distinction will continue to exist).
- (3) Every artist, as a servant of art, has to help the cause of art (this is the element of pure artistry, which is constant in all ages and among all nationalities).” ... [pp. 33-34]



Kandinsky, Capricious Forms, July 1937

Kandinsky conceives of the art for the future. Such art “is full of the third element, [it]

will fail to reach the contemporary soul. For many centuries have to pass away before the third element can be received with understanding. But the artist in whose work this third element predominates is the really great artist." [p.34] Kandinsky is an advocate for the art expressing values of the soul: "at those times when the soul tends to be choked by material disbelief, art becomes purposeless and talk is heard that art exists for art's sake alone. ... This cry "art for art's sake," is really the best ideal such an age can attain to. It is an unconscious protest against materialism, against the demand that everything should have a use and practical value. It is further proof of the indestructibility of art and of the human soul, which can never be killed but only temporarily smothered." p. 54 Both Jung and Kandinsky detested "art for art sake": *This neglect of inner meanings, which is the life of colours, this vain squandering of artistic power is called "art for art's sake."*



Kandinsky, *esquisse pour autour du cercle*, 1940

In his later writings (*Assimilation of Art*, 1937) Kandinsky speculated on the idea echoing Jung's notion that art is nature: "Who knows, maybe all our 'abstract' forms are 'forms of nature.'" [ibid., 150] Kandinsky in the 1937 interview with Karl Nierendorf alluded to the cosmology present in abstract art: "abstract painting leaves behind the 'skin' of nature, but not its laws. Let me use the 'big words' cosmic laws. Art can only be great if it relates directly to cosmic laws and is subordinated to them." [ibid., p.150]

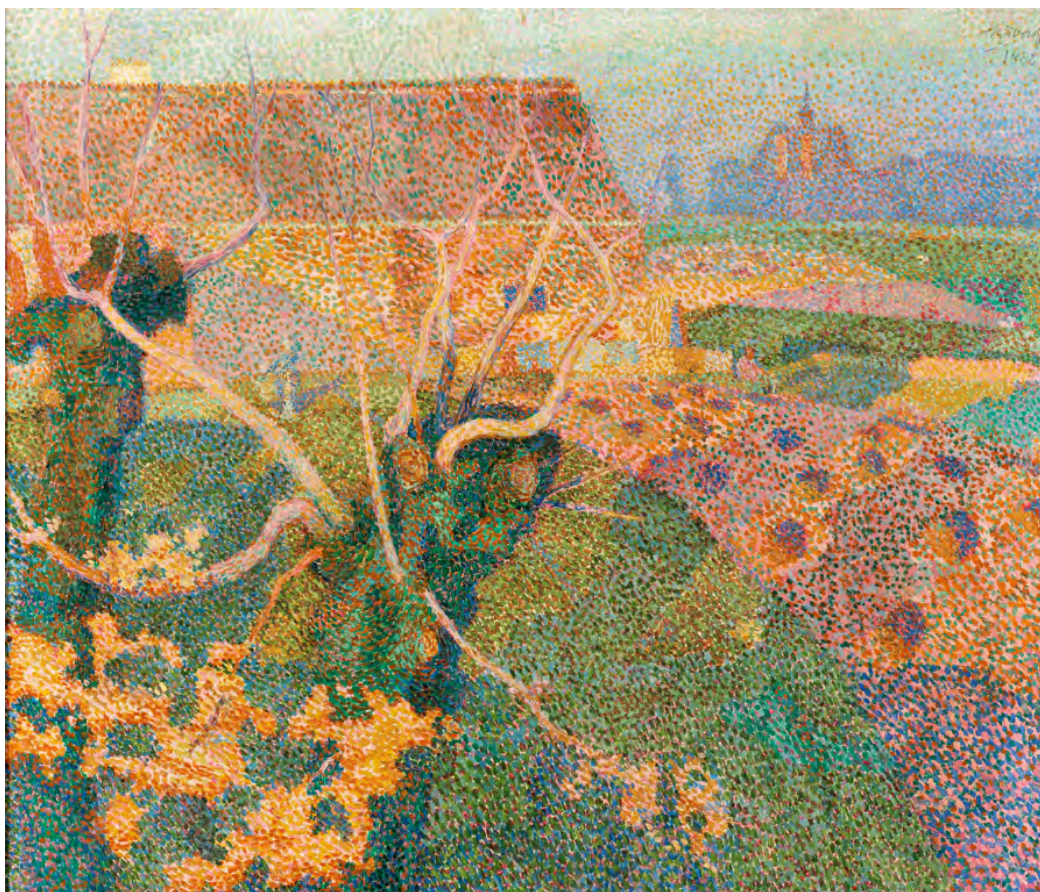
Piet Mondrian

Piet Mondrian's transition from naturalism to abstraction was influenced by "intense involvement with theosophy." [Robert Welsh, "Sacred Geometry: French Symbolism and Early Abstraction", 82]. He incorporated geometric theosophical signs of hexagrams, circles and triangles, into his paintings like *Evolution* 1910-11.



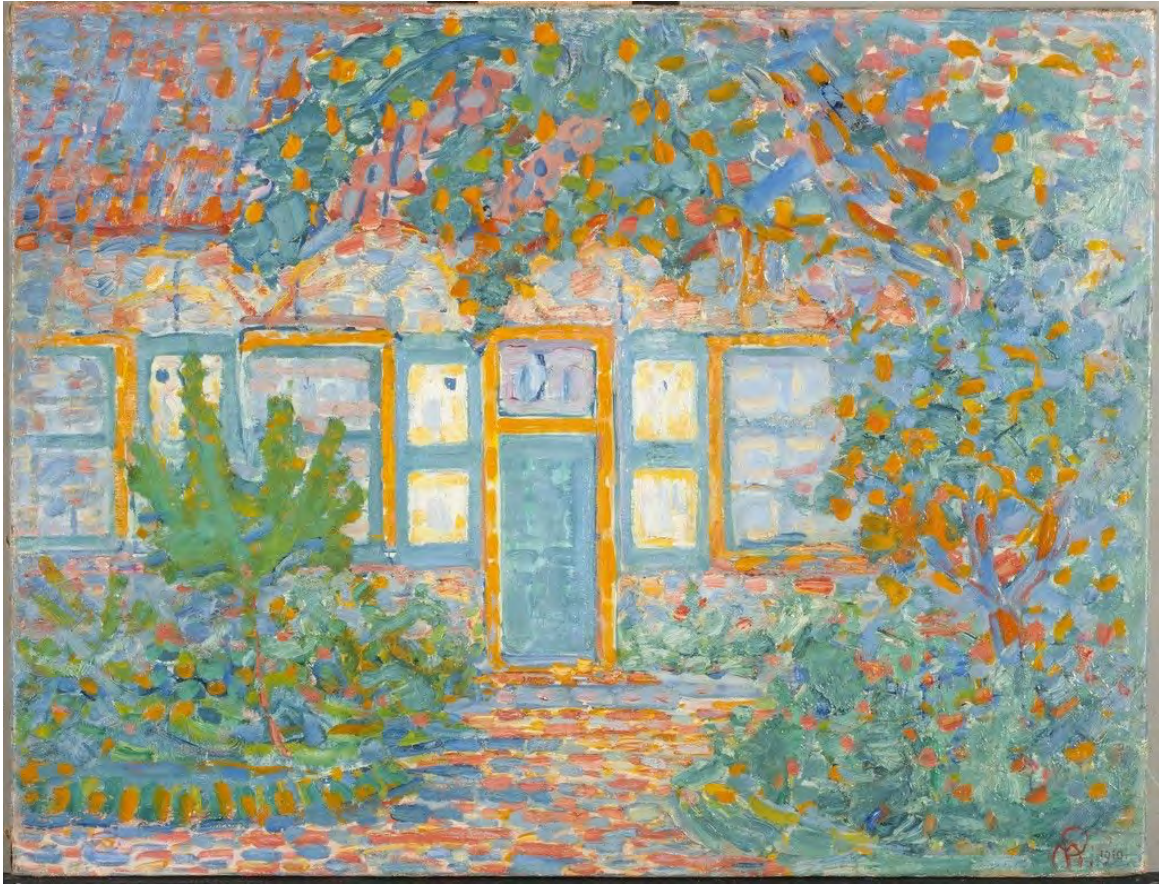
Mondrian, *Evolution*, 1911

He was also influenced by the catholic artist Jan Toorop who was advocating for art of spiritual purity... simplified into straight or quietly undulating vertical and horizontal lines” using “contrasting complementary colors.” [Welsh, 83]



Jan Toorop, Novemberzon, 1888.

Later, Mondrian reduced lines to horizontal and vertical and colors to the basic red, yellow, blue and black and white.



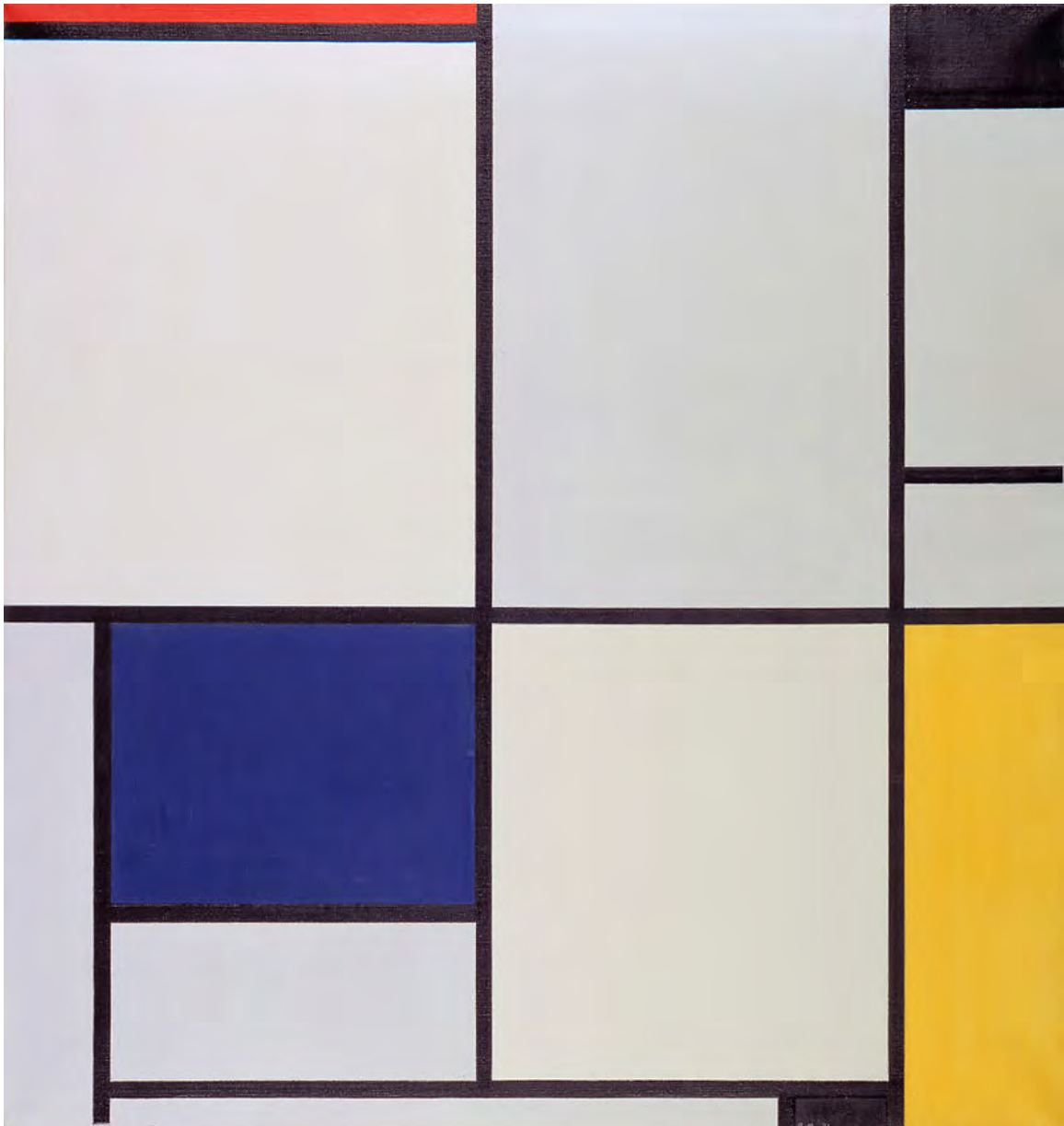
Mondrian, Little House in the Sunlight, 1909

Mondrian, who joined the Dutch theosophic society in 1909, believed that the spiritual ideology of the turn of the century and abstract art are manifestations of the same spirit: “Theosophy (in the true sense of the word; not as it is usually understood) is another manifestation of the same spiritual movement that is to be seen in painting.” [Ringbom, 1986]



Mondrian, Gray Tree, 1912

In his sketchbooks Mondrian depicted his view of the ideal art:



Mondrian, Tableau I, 1921

“There are two paths leading to the Spiritual; the path of learning, of direct exercises (meditation, etc.) and the slow certain path of evolution. The latter manifests itself in the art. One may observe in art the slow growth towards the Spiritual, while *those who produce it*

*remain unaware of this*¹⁴. The conscious path of learning usually leads to the corruption of art. Should those two paths coincide, that is to say that the creator has reached the stage of evolution where conscious, spiritual, direct activity is possible, then one has attained the ideal art." [ibid., 137]



Mondrian, Composition with Color Planes, 1917

He envisioned an artistic evolution towards the "pure" Spirit:

"If one conceives these intermediate forms as increasingly simple and pure, commencing with the physical visible forms of appearance, then one passes through a world of forms

¹⁴ Compare C.G. Jung: "It is rather conspicuous that creators of modern art are unconscious of the meaning of their creations." [Jung on Art, 28 footnote 79, 1959]

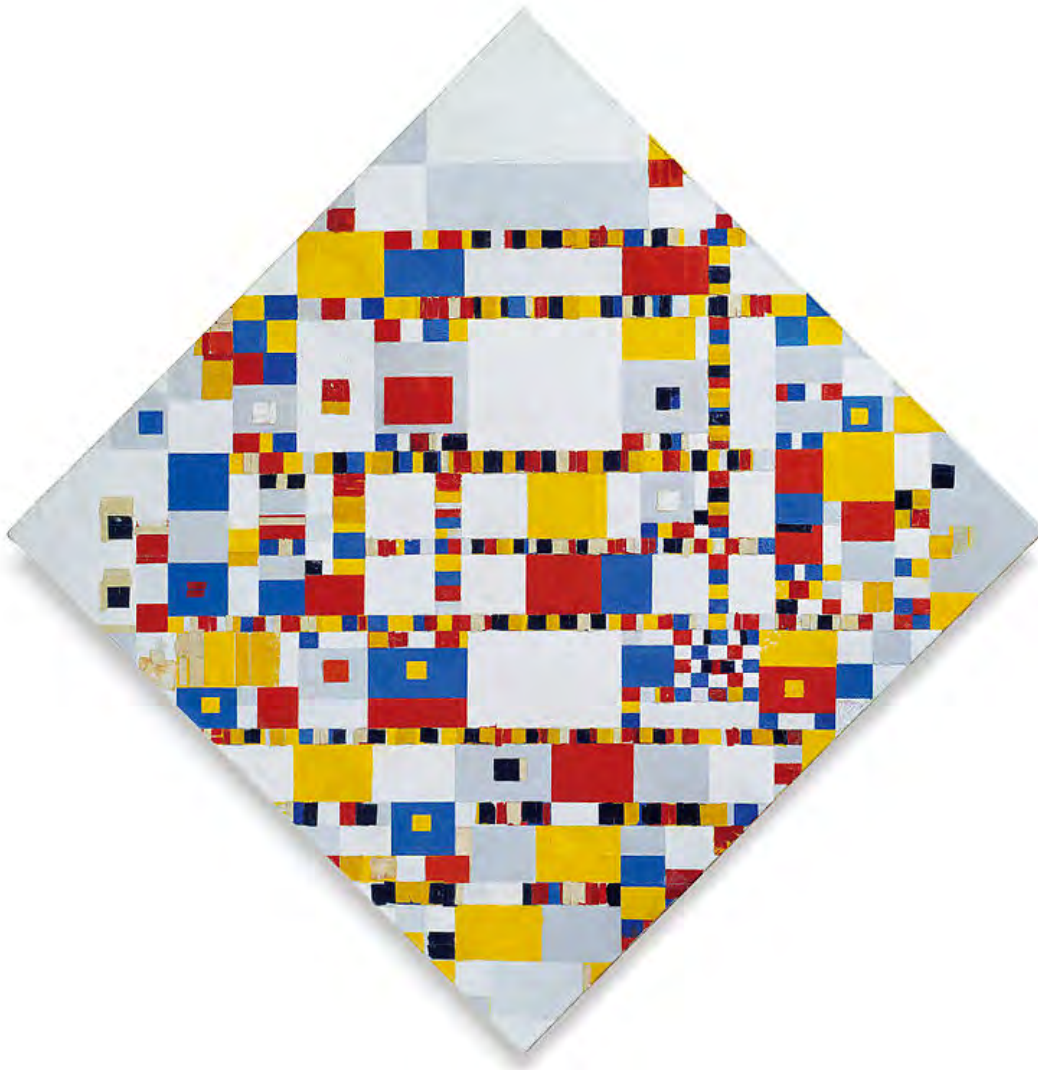
ascending from reality to abstraction. In this manner one approaches Spirit, or purity itself. It follows from this that Spirit is more easily approached by means of form which is closer to Spirit—and indeed least of all by the physical form.” [ibid, p.138]



Mondrian, *Composition 8*, 1914

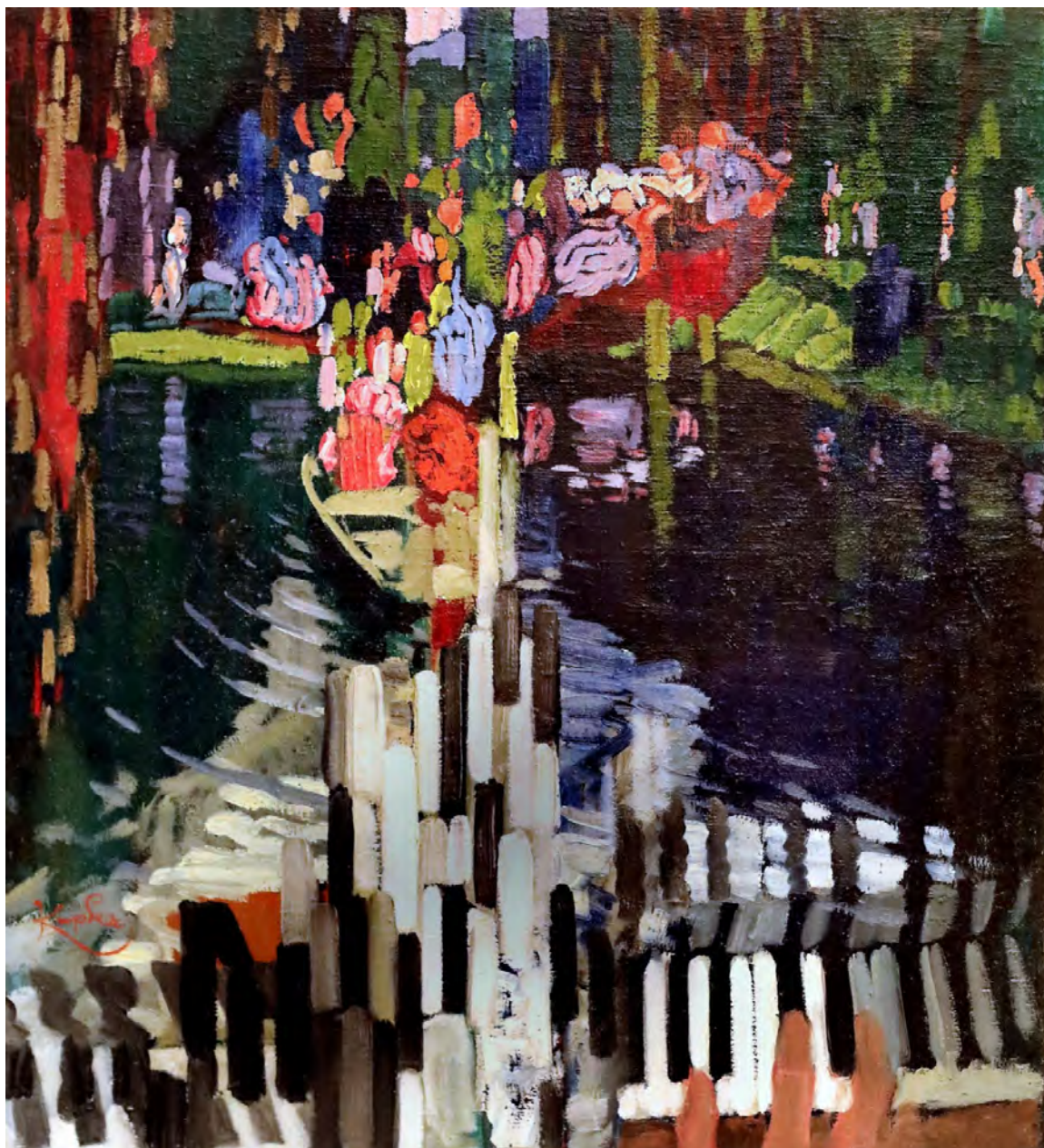
Mondrian in his essay *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art* (1920/1937/1945) considers art as struggling to achieve “a balance between the subjective (esthetic expression of oneself) and

objective (direct creation of universal beauty)" 115-116. "abstract art is opposed to a natural representation of things. But it is not opposed to nature. It is opposed to the raw primitive nature of man, but is one with true human nature.... In order that art may be really abstract ... the law of the denaturalization of matter is of fundamental importance."



Piet Mondrian, Victory BoogieWoogie, 1942-1944

Frantisek Kupka



Kupka, Piano Keys Lake, 1909

Frantisek Kupka, in *Creation in the Plastic Arts* (Liverpool University Press, 1997/1923) wrote: "Great art consisted in making the invisible and intangible reality—a reality which is not simple replica of—in image form--the ideal mechanism common to all, but which

as a created work has a soul and a life of its own and imposes itself masterfully on the spectator's senses." p. 171 (quoted in Wunsche (2016), pp. 21-22)



Kupka, Cosmic Spring, 1914

He considered art as possessing organic structure although different from nature:
"Art expresses itself by constructing its own organism. The work of art possesses a specific organic structure quite different to what is found in nature." [from *Creation--the Basic Problem in Painting*, 295, quoted *ibid*, 22]

Frantisek Kupka became a sun worshiper inspired by "hues flowing from the titanic

keyboard of color." [Maurice Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art," in the *Spiritual in Art* ((1986), 36]



Kupka, Kosmické Jaro-Stvoreni, 1919-21

Similarly, Jung in his imaginal peregrinations into the desert prayed to Helios and sang hymns to the sun.

Kazimir Malevich



Malevich, *Self-portrait*, 1933

Russian avant-garde artists of the turn of the century developed their own spirituality, proudly asserting their revolutionary independence; in the words of a playwright Igor Terentiev [John E. Bowlt, "Esoteric Culture and Russian Society" in *Spiritual in Arts*, p. 166]:

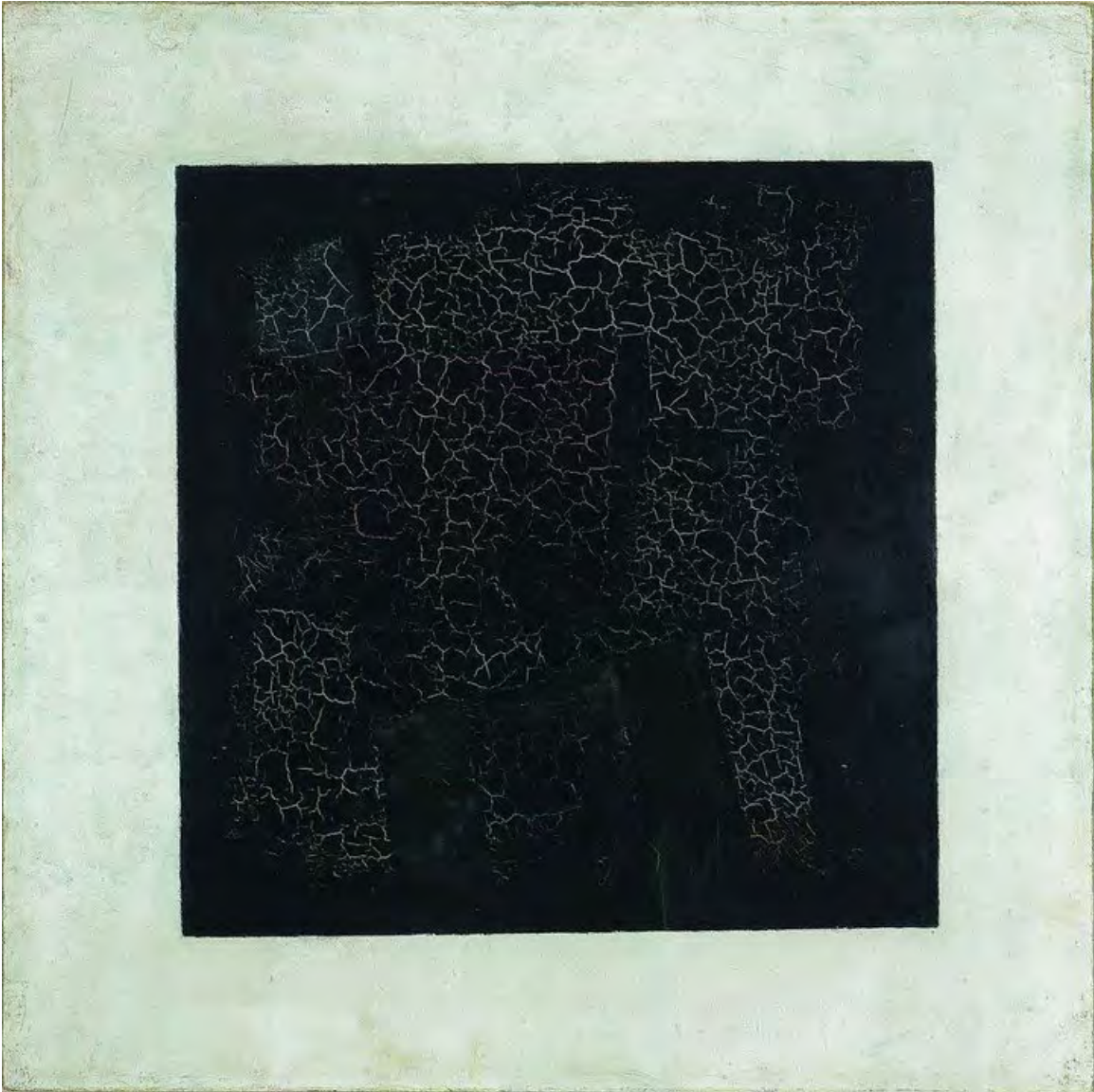
“We are neither Theosophists, nor Hindus, neither Yogis, nor followers of Steiner, no way.” Poets expressed the spirit of this group of “mystics and obscurantists” stating that [ibid., 169]: “Art has no meaning beyond the religious one.” [Andrei Bely], “Religion is what will be, mysticism is what is and was.” [Alexandr Blok]. The Saint Petersburg bohemian spiritual society Golden Ship proclaimed: “God is the spirit. His garments are beauty. His prayer—creation. His temple—art... God is that which creates ... this divine quality of the soul we call genius... the Holy Spirit is belief in its genius...” p. 175) Kazimir Malevich was an active participant in these circles.

Initially Malevich adopted a poet Alexei Kruchenykh’s idea of ZAUM, or “beyond reason,” “beyond logical mind,” and created “zaum realism” paintings, expressing a higher order of reality.



Malevich, *Morning in the village after the snowstorm*, 1912

He was fascinated with nothingness, coining notions of “zero of forms” and “world is nothing.” He called his work [*Black Square*, 1913-15] “the icon of our times.”

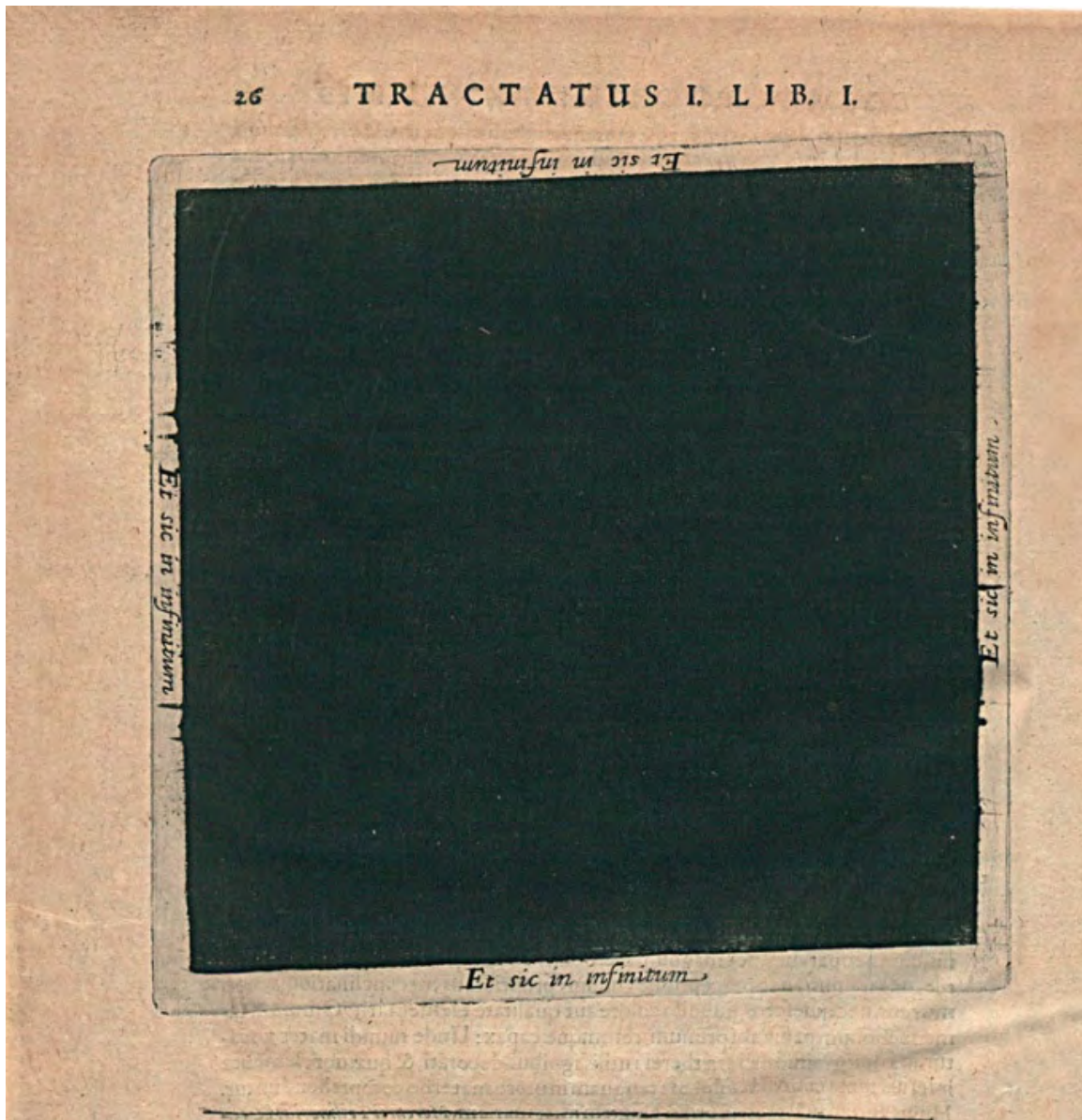


Mahlevich, Black Square, 1915

In a handout to accompany the first showing of the painting in the exhibition the Last Exhibition of Futurist Painting 0.10 [zero ten] in 1915 he wrote:

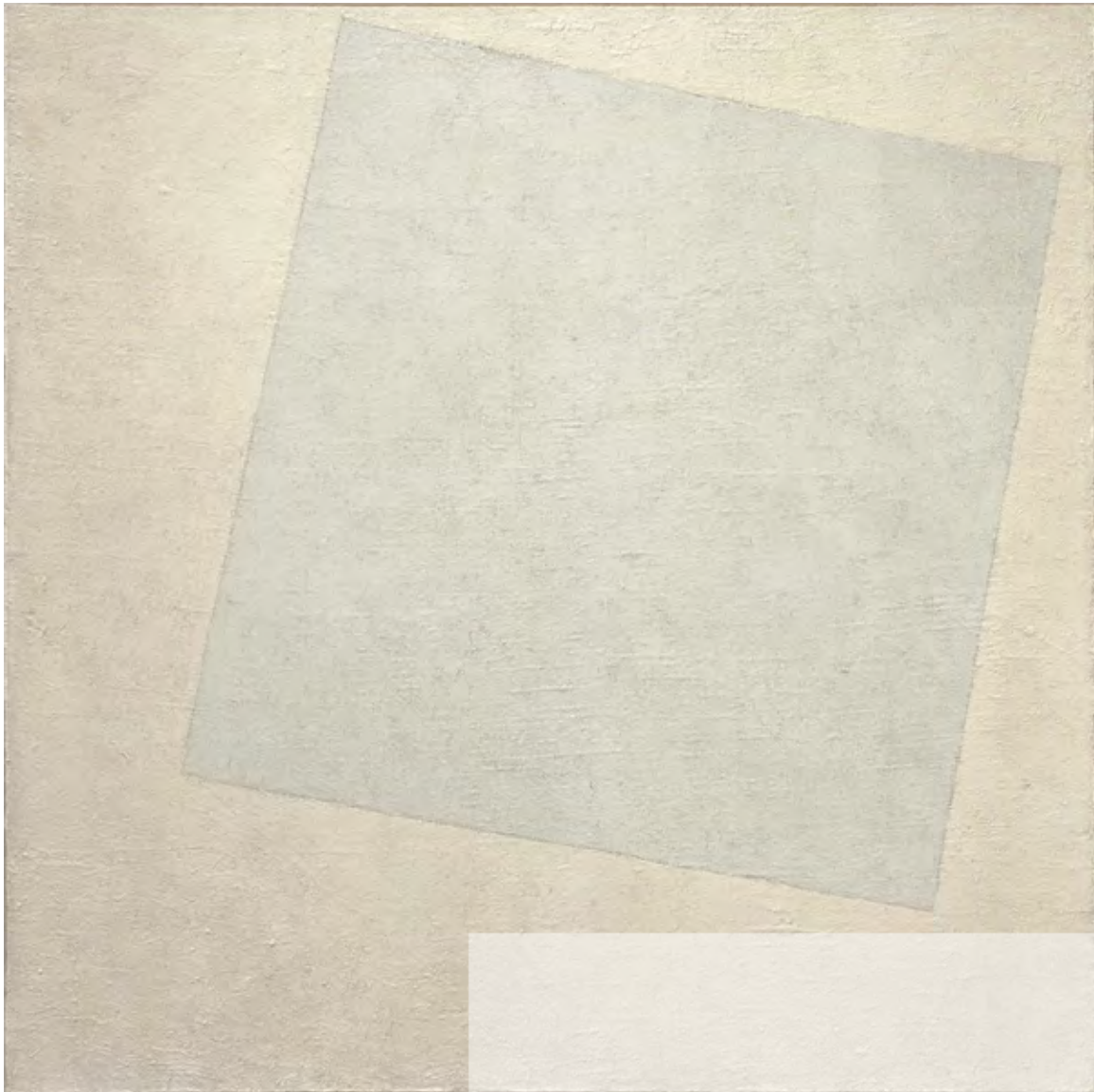
“Up until now there were no attempts at painting as such, without any attribute of real life... Painting was the aesthetic side of a thing, but never was original and an end in itself.” [Tate Gallery (2019)]

The notion of “zero of form,” or nothing, was supremely creative, full of cosmic energy; he felt that it had given him everything. [p. 176]



Robert Fludd, the black page from *Utriusque Cosmi, Maioris scilicet et Minoris, metaphysica, physica, atque technica Historia* (The metaphysical, physical, and technical history of the two worlds, namely the greater and the lesser), published in Germany between 1617 and 1621. The alchemist's painting of the square of nigredo is a laudable spiritual precursor of Malevich's black square.

In his 1927 book *The Non-Objective World*, Malevich reminisced: 'In the year 1913, trying desperately to free art from the dead weight of the real world, I took refuge in the form of the square.'



Malevich, White on White, 1917-18

Malevich referred to his new abstract art as suprematism, which in the opening line of his 1927 essay *Suprematism*, he understood as “supremacy of pure feeling in creative art.”



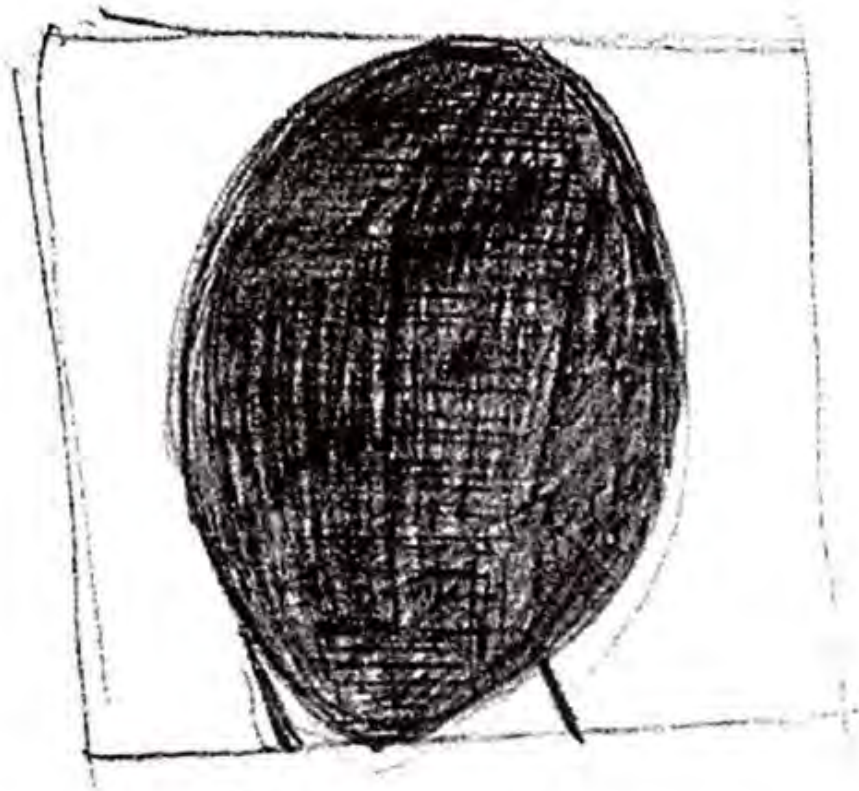
Malevich, Suprematist Painting 1918

Suprematism expressed supremacy of color and shape in painting. He considered "the concepts of the conscious mind worthless," and "pure feeling" as the sole determining

factor. Thus, art reaches a “desert” in which nothing can be perceived but feeling... But this desert is filled with the spirit of non-objective sensation which pervades everything.” [p.94]



Malevich, Mystik, 1930?



Малевич
 Милопон

Malevich, Mystical Religious Rotation of Shape, 1930?

"The *Black Square* was not only his initial refuge from the chaos of WWI but became Malevich's life-icon. He says [1927] "It is no "empty square" that I had exhibited but rather the feeling of non-objectivity." [Douglas, 1986, p. 95] After the Bolshevik revolution when the official propaganda promoted social realism and Malevich painted the obligatory figurative paintings of peasants and workers, he signed them with a little black square.



Malevich, Head of a Peasant, 1934

After he died his corpse was exhibited in a room with "Black Square."

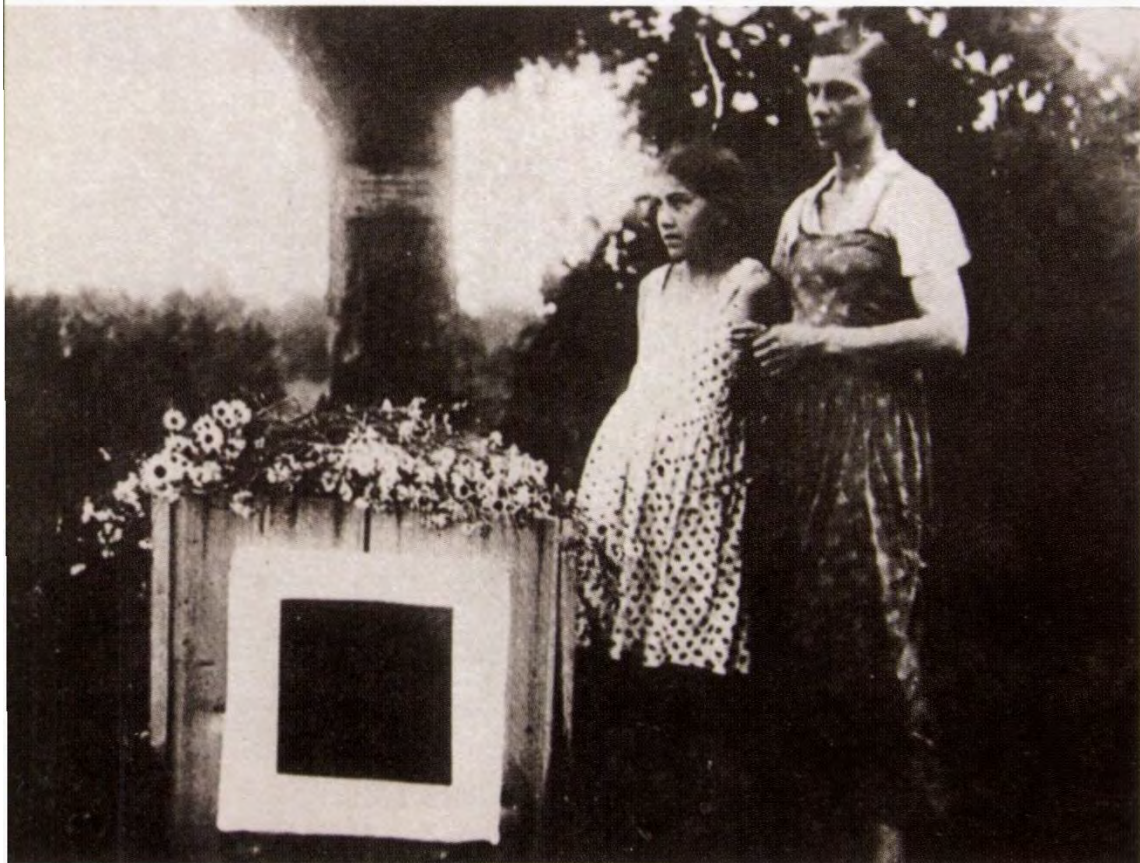


Malevich in his deathbed surrounded by his works, 1935

At his funeral, mourners carried flags with black squares, and a flag with a black square was also fixed above his suprematist-style coffin.



It went on to mark his grave¹⁵.



Malevich's daughter and widow at his grave, May 1935

¹⁵ The funeral description is based on the Tate Gallery website, 2019

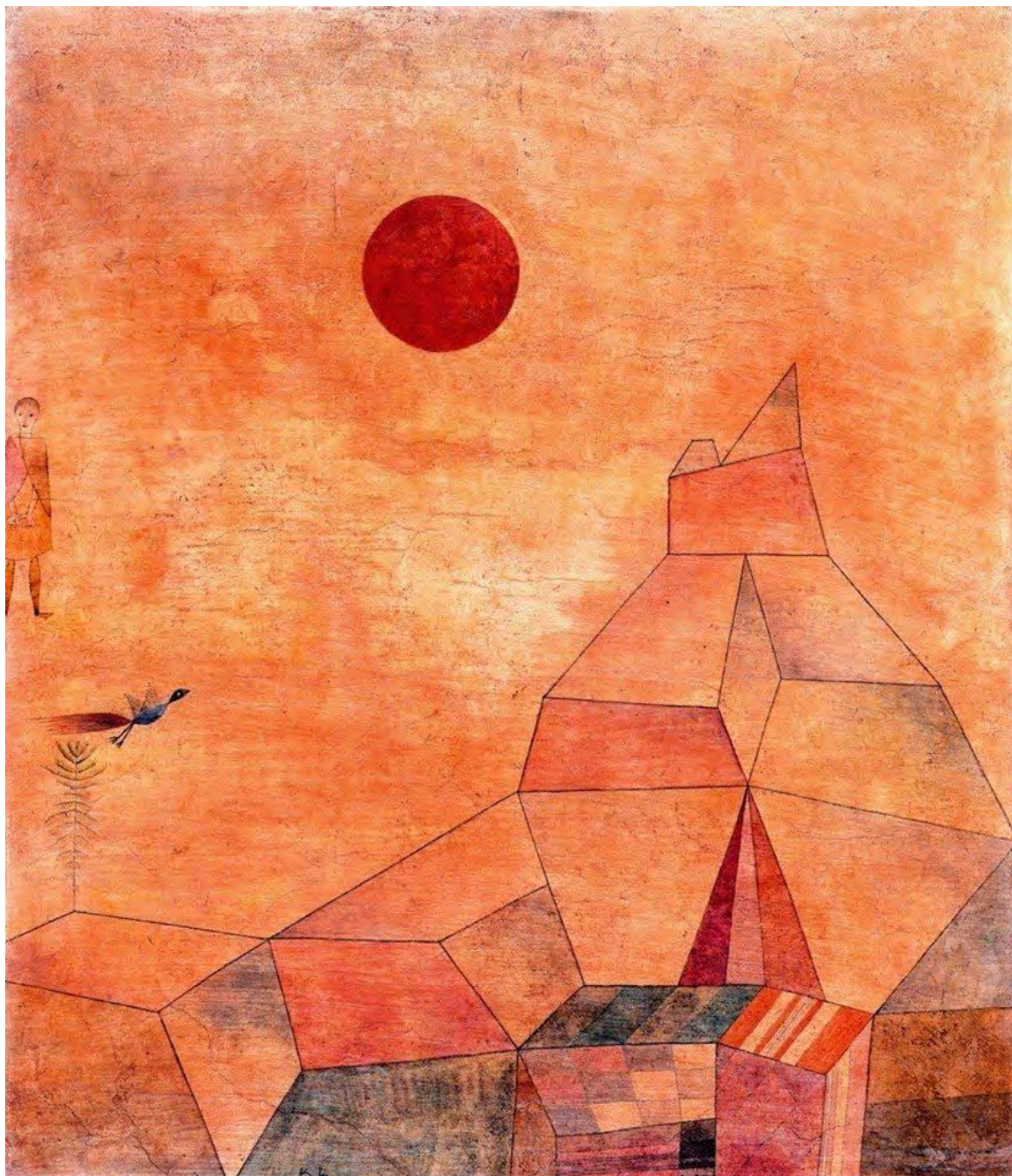
Paul Klee



Paul Klee, *Senecio, [Going Senile]*, 1922

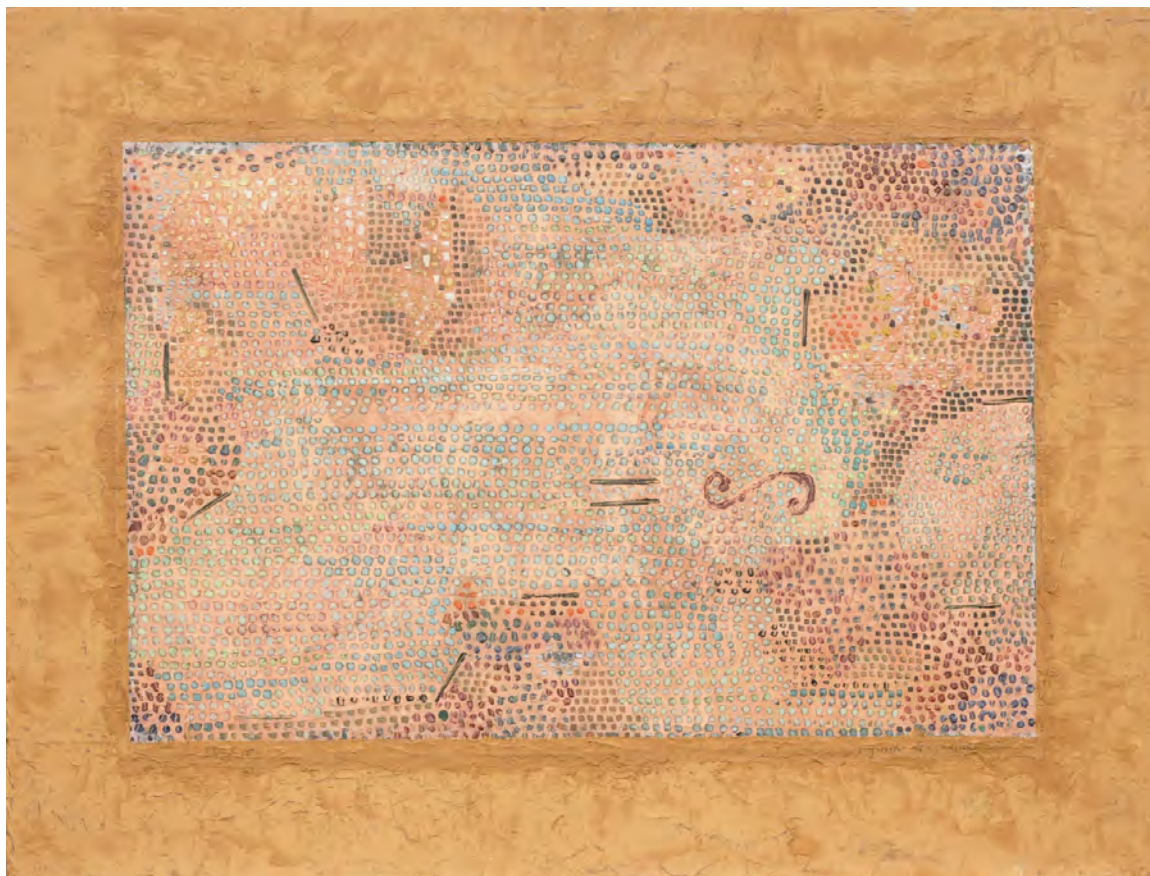
In his 1920 essay *Creative Credo* Klee declared:

“Art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible. The very nature of graphic art lures us to abstraction, readily and with reason. It gives the schematic fairytale quality of the imaginary and expresses it with great precision.” p. 1



Paul Klee, The Fairy Tale, 1929

"In the beginning is the act; yes, but above it is the idea. And since infinity has no definite beginning, but is circular and beginningless, the idea may be regarded as the more basic. In the beginning was the word, as Luther translated it", *ibid*, p. III



Paul Klee, Equals Infinity, 1932

“Abstract formal elements are put together like numbers and letters to make concrete beings or abstract things; in the end a formal cosmos is achieved, so much like the Creation that a mere breath suffices to transform religion into act.” *ibid*, p.v



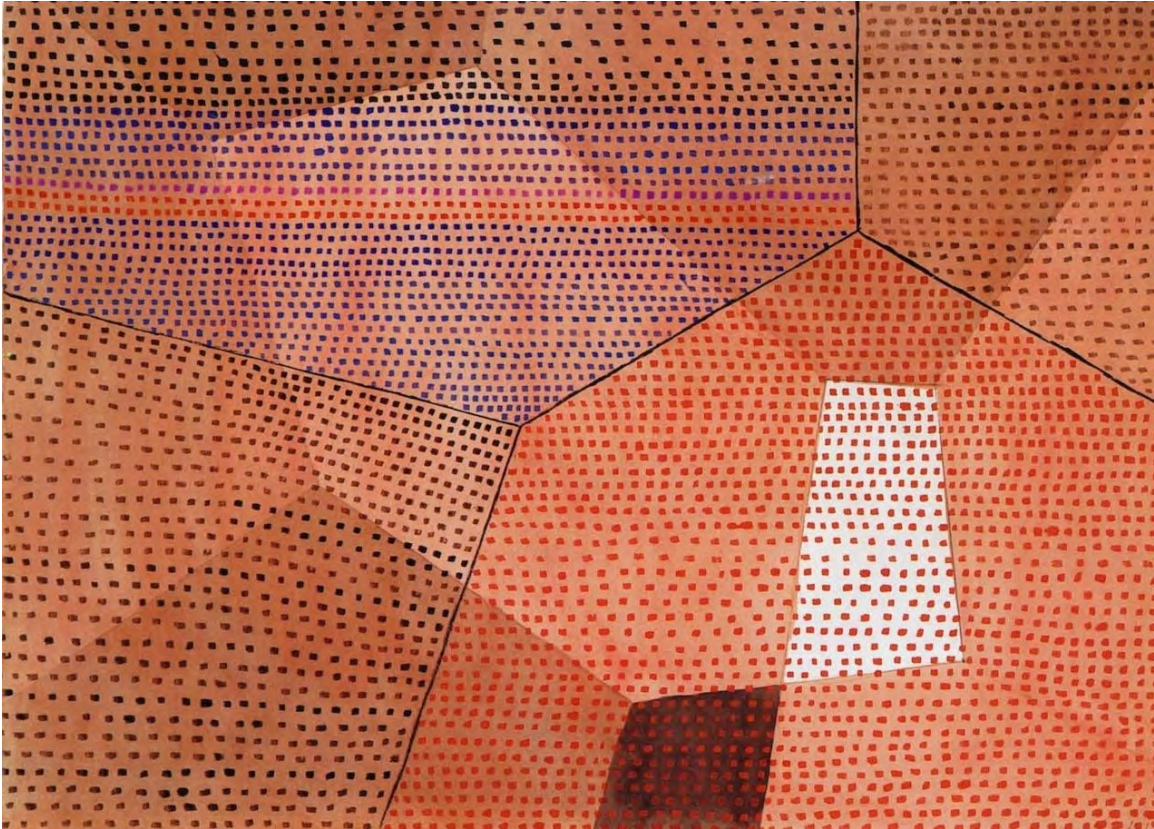
Paul Klee, *Stylish Ruins*, 1915-1920

In his lecture "On Modern Art" at Jena Kunstverein in 1924 (Published in German, 1945, trans. in 1948 [Faber and Faber], into English by Paul Findley) Klee uses a simile of a visionary artist as a tree: "from the root sap flows to the artist, flows through him, flows to his eye. He stands as the trunk of the tree. Battered and stirred by the strength of the flow, he molds his vision into his work. He does nothing other than gather and pass what comes to him from the depths. He neither serves, nor rules—he transmits." pp. 76-77 [Herbert, 1964]



Paul Klee, Spirit on the Tree Trunk, 1930

Further, he considered art as an attempt to express a whole: "It is not easy to arrive at a conception of a whole which is constructed from parts belonging to different dimensions. And not only nature, but also art, her transformed image, is such a whole." *ibid.*, p.77



Paul Klee, Polyphony in Color, 1931

Klee imagined art conceived “In the womb of nature, at the source of creation, where the secret key to all lies guarded. But not all can enter. Each should follow where the pulse of his own heart leads.... What springs from this source—whatever it may be called, dream, idea, or fantasy—must be taken seriously only if it unites with the proper creative means to form a work of art. Then these curiosities become realities—realities of art which help to lift life out of its mediocrity. *ibid.*, p. 89



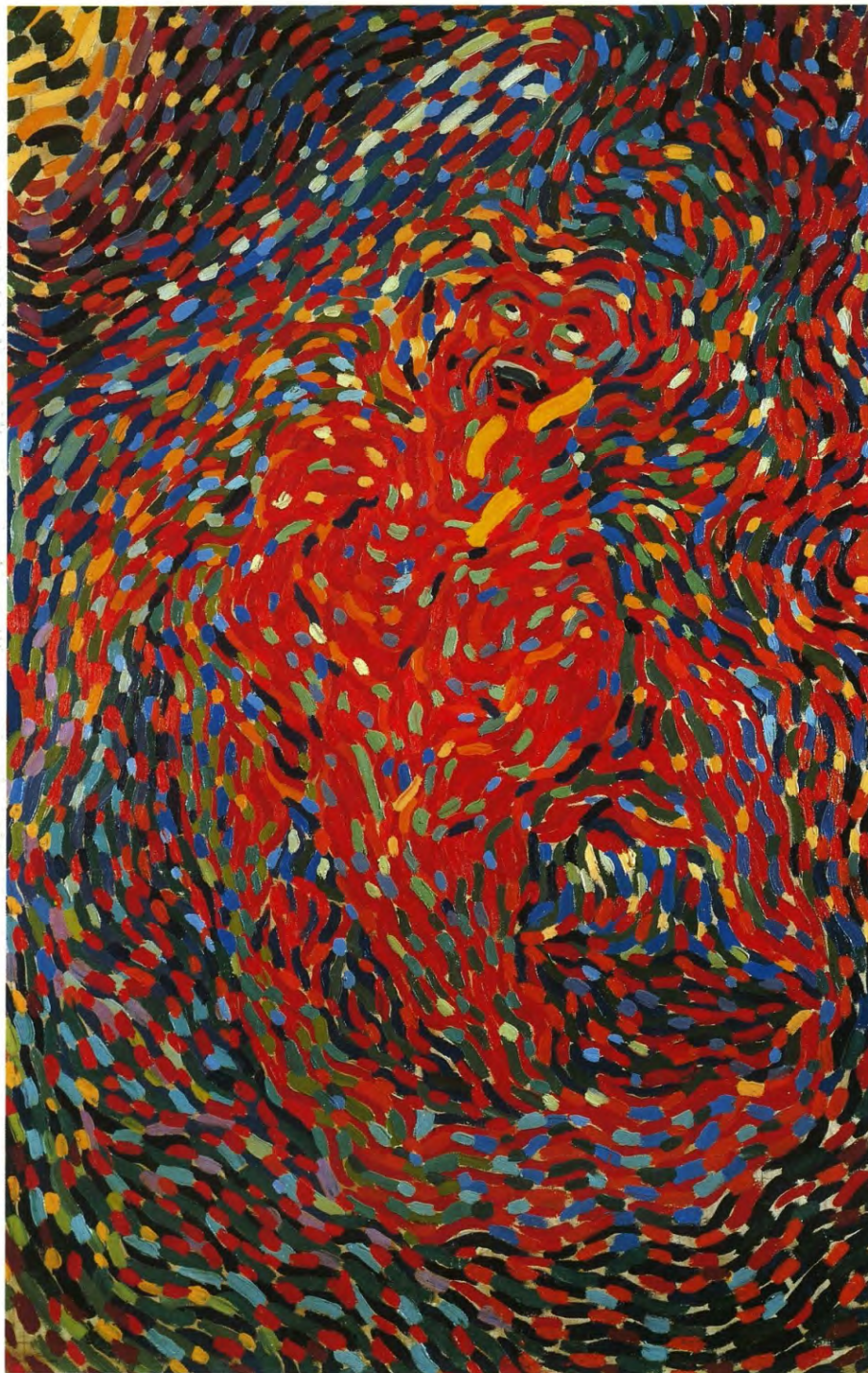
Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920

Parallel Interests and Influences on Jung and Abstract Artists

It seems that both Jung and the early abstract artists were on a similar quest for depiction of the invisible.



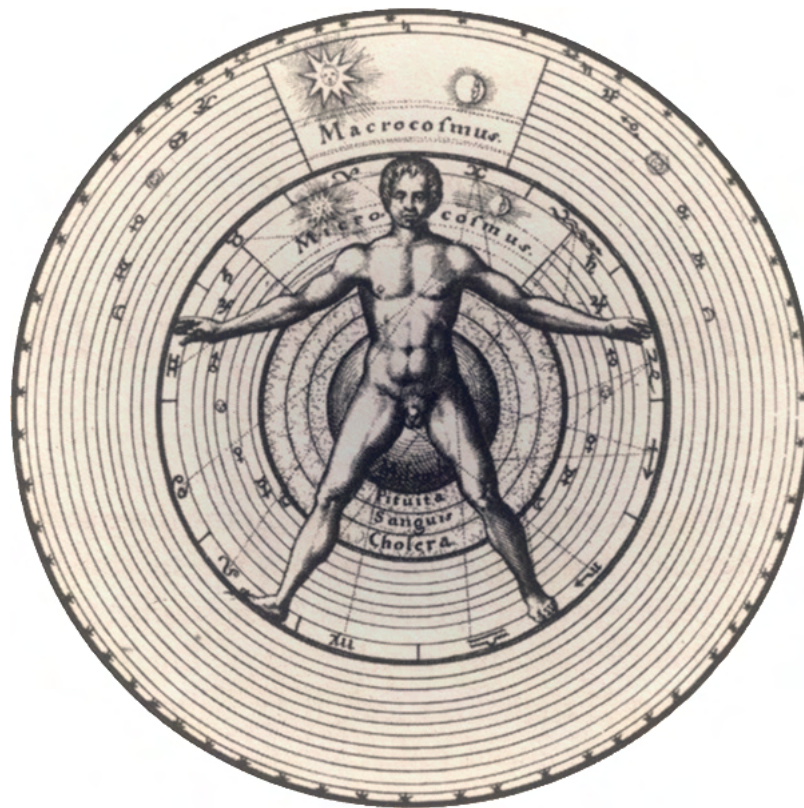
Jung, Liber Secundus, 109



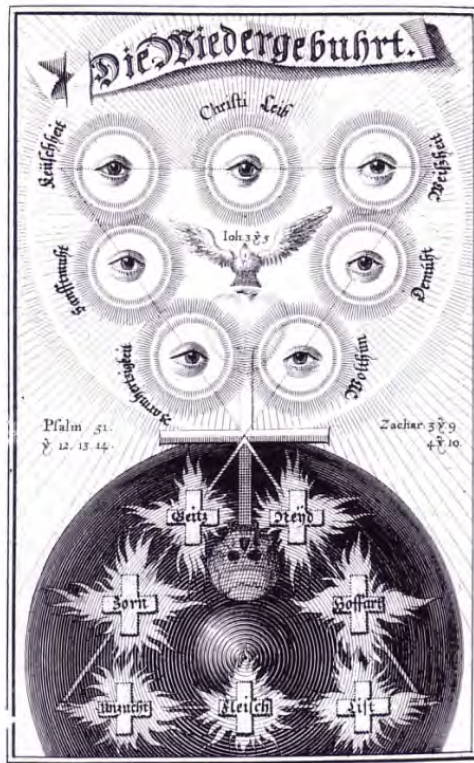
Wilhelm Morgner, German expressionist (1891-1917) , *Friendly Apparition*,1911-12

One of the aims of occult and spiritual movement of the turn of twentieth century was the search for underlying original and originating life-forms, "Ur-forms," original image, or as

Jung called it "Ur-Bild," an archetypal image. These forms, since the time of alchemists like Robert Fludd or Jacob Boehme, were imagined as geometric figures, as spirals, the double ellipse, circles, squares and triangles.



Robert Fludd, "The Macrocosm and the Microcosm"



Robert Fludd "The Macrocosm and Microcosm"

Both Jung and abstract artists were inspired by the same alchemical and mystical ideas. Jung and Kandinsky [via Steiner] were influenced by Goethe's notion that "artistic creation cannot be essentially different from natural knowledge." [ibid. p. 147]



Red Book, The Veiled Woman in the Temple



Kandinsky, LudvigsKirche in Munich, 1908

Johannes Itten, a German expressionist teaching at Bauhaus, was inspired by Jacob Boehme, (1575 1624), 17th century mystical shoemaker.



Johannes Itten, Encounter, 1916



Johannes Itten, Sheet with the text by Jacob Boehme, 1922

While painters were affected by Boehme's artwork, Jung focused on his mystical philosophy and his ideas on the relationship between human and divine. Boehme received his revelation at the young age of twenty-five. He felt penetrated by the Light of God while seeing the sun's reflection in a pewter plate, realizing that light can be recognized only in contrast to darkness:

"The UNGRUND, the being of all being is but the single being, yet in giving birth to itself, it

When Jung was still unaware of this cosmological tradition of alchemy that often employed geometric schemas and diagrams to depict alchemical transformations, abstract artists were already drawing on it. Jean Arp, a Dadaist, introduced Jacob Bohme's mystical work *Aurora* at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich on 12-19 May 1917.



Jean (Hans) Arp, Untitled (Collage with squares Arranged according to the Laws of Chance), 1916-17

In his 1935 essay "Zwei Richtungen" (Two Directions, quoted by Watts¹⁷, 240) Kandinsky states that the same universal laws govern both the cosmic world and creative processes of art making.

¹⁷ Harriet Watts "Arp, Kandinsky, and the legacy of Jacob Bohme" *The Spiritual in Art*, 238-255.



Kandinsky, Deepened Impulse, 1928

He believed that spirit reveals itself in forms of nature as well as in man's creations:

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“divinity discovers yet another facet to its limitless potential.” As some of the participants in the Zurich art scene were also frequenting the analytical psychology club, there may have been some cross fertilization between Dadaists and early Jungians.



Jung, Golden Fabric where the shadow of God lives, fragment.

Maurice Tuchman (1986) identifies five impulses underlying what he calls a spiritual-abstract nexus: cosmic imagery, vibration, synesthesia, duality, and sacred geometry. I can identify all but synesthesia in *The Red Book* paintings. However, Jung's initial descent into the depths, is described as full of multisensory texture, sounds and smells, besides visual display of images. Also, his “carpet-like” depictions of incubatory incantations have musical meter portrayed in color.



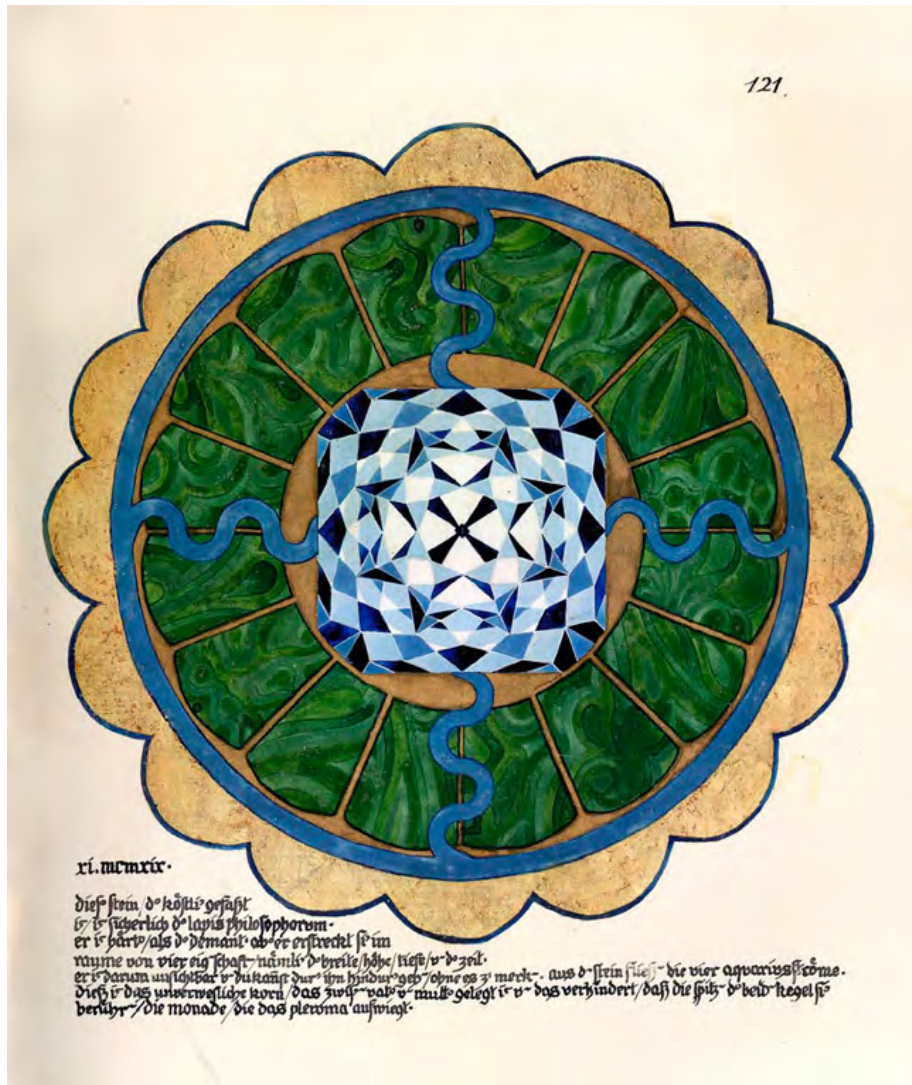
Jung, Liber Secundus, 50-53

So perhaps his artworks satisfy the requirements for synesthesia as well.

Some other abstract artists' paintings resemble Jung's pictures. Charles Filliger who was a friend of Gauguin and the Nabis, was influenced by the geometrizing theories of Father Desiderius Lenz and the school of Beuron. His geometric figures and "chromatic notations," bring to mind forms of Jung's mandala.



Charles Filliger Notations Chromatiques, 1915-28



Jung, Liber Secundus, 121

In his seminal essay *La Lumiere, Light*, 1912, Robert Delauney stated his vision of man: “Simultaneity in light is *harmony, the rhythm of colors* which creates the Vision of Man. Human vision is endowed with the greatest Reality, since it comes to us directly from the contemplation of the Universe. [Chipp, 1968, 319]



Robert Delauney, Circular Forms 1930

Early American Abstract painter, Marsden Hartley, began painting abstract forms in 1910.



Marsden Hartley, Pre-War Pageant, 1913-15

In 1932, in Mexico, he painted *Yliaster* (Paracelsus), a canvas inspired by the evolutionary theory of Paracelsus. It was an illustration of the Paracelsus' creation myth: "When Evolution took place the *Yliaster* (Paracelsus's name for *prima materia*) divided itself ... melted and dissolved, developing from within itself the Ideas or Chaos... or Primordial Matter." It is visualized as a ray beaming from the *Yliaster* sphere into the Popocatepetl volcano. Paracelsus was also a subject of two of Jung's essays.



Marsden Hartley *Yliaster*, 1932

Hilma af Klint



Hilma af Klint, Self-Portrait, date unknown

Jung's art has most in common with the works of Hilma af Klint (1862-1944), a Swedish abstract painter unrecognized during her lifetime. She was an early pioneer of abstract spiritual art, who never exhibited her abstract work and stipulated in her will that her paintings should be kept hidden for 20 years after her death.

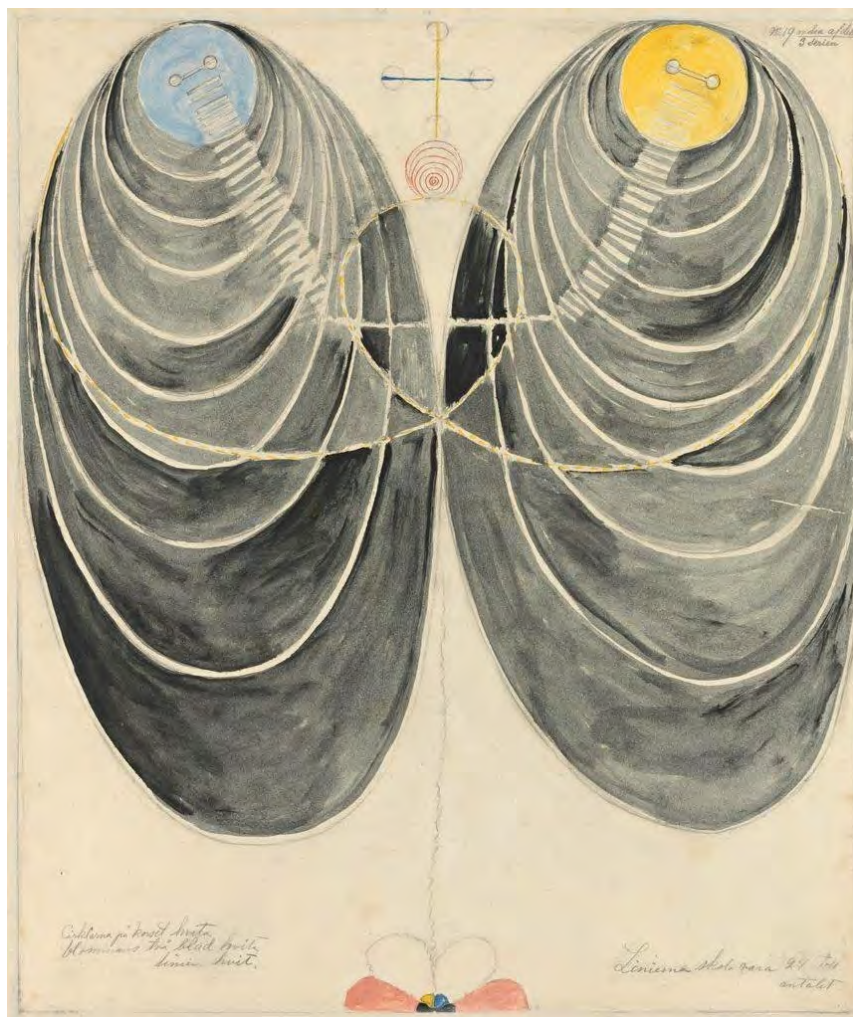


US series, group VII, 1913

We can see a resemblance to the fate of Jung's *Red Book*, which was developed in 1913-1929, but was published only in 2009. And I will argue that there are some similarities in their artwork, and art making process, as well. Jung worked almost exclusively on paper and kept his sketches in the Black Books. Af Klint created a substantial part of her oeuvre on paper as well, and in her sketchbook painted miniature copies to catalogue her larger works

on canvas. Hilma's work became internationally known only after the 1985 exhibit at the Los Angeles County Museum as a part of *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*. Subsequently she had a major retrospective in 2013/14 in Stockholm, Berlin and Malaga. And a few months ago her work was shown in a large solo exhibit at the Guggenheim NYC; the show had been extremely popular so it was extended (October 12, 2018—April 23, 2019).

Af Klint paintings preceded the abstract work of the recognized and celebrated male artists by several years. She left over 1300 paintings and 125 (26,000 pages) notebooks and sketchbooks of her ideas and drawings (according to *Stiftelsen Hilma af Klint Verk Foundation*).



af Klint, *Seven-Pointed Star 19*

In 1906-1915 she created her central body of work in series *The Paintings for the Temple*, 193 paintings. 111 of these she painted in the 18 months from November 1906 to April 1908, guided by the inner figures *De Höga*, or *The High Ones*: "The pictures were painted directly through me, without any preliminary drawings and with great force. I had no idea what the paintings were supposed to depict; nevertheless, I worked swiftly and surely, without changing a single brushstroke." (Muller-Westerman, 2018, 38)

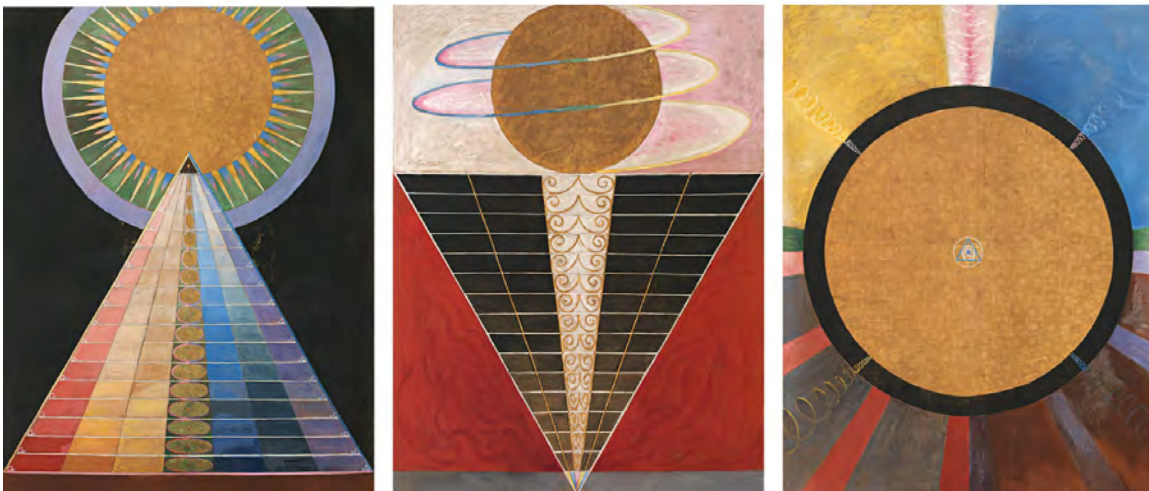


af Klint, *Swan 18*, 1915

This was akin to Jung stating that the inner figures did not have the speech center so he lent them his own.

Af Klint's spiritual interests were influenced by two female figures in her life. Her

interest in spiritism developed after the death of her sister, in 1880, when she was 18 years old. One could imagine that initially she tried to contact her sister through mediumistic seances. And in 1908 as Hilma's mother went blind, she suspended her painting to take care of her mother (until 1912). Her paintings tend to portray processes of creation, separation of oneness into polar opposites, evolution of mankind, division of the human soul into feminine and masculine and longing to return to unity. Return to oneness is expressed in 3 altarpieces.



af Klint, *Altarpieces*, 1915

During 1892-1906 she was involved in the mediumistic seances¹⁸, or psychic studies with the group of women called De Fem, or "The Five," producing automatic writings and paintings. She was a member of the Swedish circle of theosophists and followers of Rudolf Steiner. She met Steiner twice in 1908 and 1920, and his less than enthusiastic response to her creations might have influenced her decision to not exhibit them. Rousseau describes that Hilma:

"conceived her mediumistic practice of painting as a double revelation: at once a

¹⁸ During that time Jung attended mediumistic séances of Helene Preiswerk, his young cousin, and wrote his dissertation on psychological interpretation of them in 1903 *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*.

hieroglyphic transcription of the mysteries of the beyond and the corporal meditation sublimating the body/spirit frontier, which explains the ubiquitousness of the masculine/feminine couple, as a metaphor for the division between the spiritual life (symbolized by the letter "u") and the material (the letter "w"), in which the physical union of bodies is constantly being transposed onto a celestial and telepathic communion of souls. She adopted the idea of a masculine principle fertilizing the female womb and designated the feminine with blue and the masculine with yellow." [Series on Primordial Chaos, 1906-1907]



af Klint, *Primordial Chaos*, 25



af Klint, *Primordial Chaos*, 17 and 4

Her great cycle *The Paintings for the Temple*, created in 1906-1915 was dictated by the inner figures whom she called “High Masters.” Hilma af Klint painted these works under the authority of external psychic forces which, according to the artist’s declarations, decided on the messages delivered and chose techniques, formats, and time frames for painting (the time of the execution of the works, the gaps, and delays in the reception times and so on)¹⁹.

¹⁹ [In footnote 5: “In the note dated August 1907 Hilma af Klint points out that for the choice of the cycle of *The Ten Largest* it was the Mahatmas [who] decided that the format should be 32 by 24 decimeters.”]



It is as if after several years of Hilma af Klint's diligent practice, in February 1901, High Masters relaxed their dictates and promoted "the liberation from imprisoning form" (ibid.,169). It seems that with experience Hilma gained more conscious control over her expression and considered the later part of the series as commissioned by the spirits, since she was now (1912-15) inspired by words and images within herself. "The fundamental idea behind the commission was to convey knowledge about the unity of all existence, which lies hidden behind the polarized, dual world in which we live." (Muller-Westerman, 2018, 38)



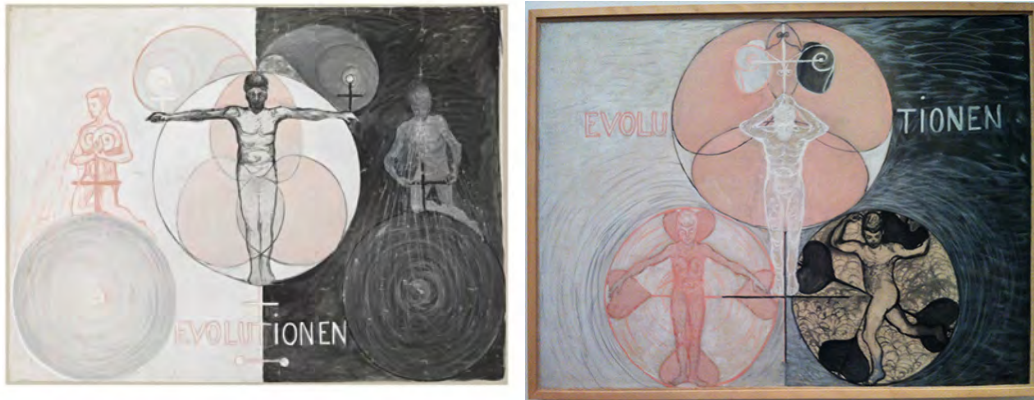
af Klint, *Seven Pointed Star 2, 5, 13, 1*

Hilma shied from the exhibiting her work because women artists faced social and professional prejudices and biases²⁰ at the time. In artistic circles the anatomy was the destiny, as Freud would confirm for the culture in general 20 years later, in 1924. So for Hilma, both as an artist and spiritualist it was a challenge to break out from such ideology of “biological determinism.” Perhaps given these misogynistic prejudices, most of her inner spirit guides bore male names Gregor, Clemens, Gidro, Amaliel, Ananda and governed spiritual planes. Only one—Esther--was female, governing the material plane). Nevertheless, a then-prevalent idea that women are more receptive to spiritual messages and had

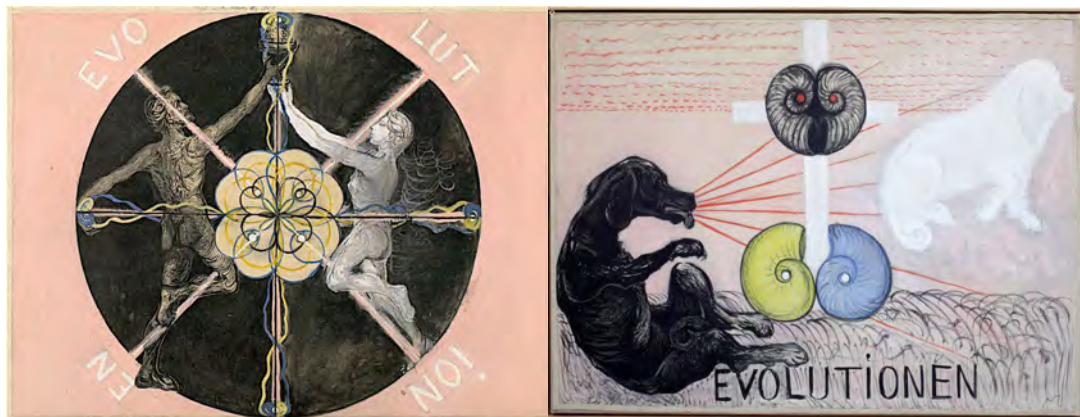
²⁰ An influential Austrian-Jewish doctor, and later a renowned Zionist at the end of the century, Max Nordau claimed in *Entartung und Genie*, or *Degeneration and Genius* (1894) that only male artists had “sufficient vital energy to create and therefore performed the ‘higher function of the spirit.’” He did acknowledge that original women did exist but they were “unnatural, mannish” and their originality was “an intellectual inversion of the gender.”

mediumistic abilities, assisted Hilma in her endeavors.

In her series *Evolution*, male and female figures create a union, originally explicitly sexual, culminating in a hermaphrodite.



Evolution 1 & 2



Evolution 3, 5



Evolution 13, 14

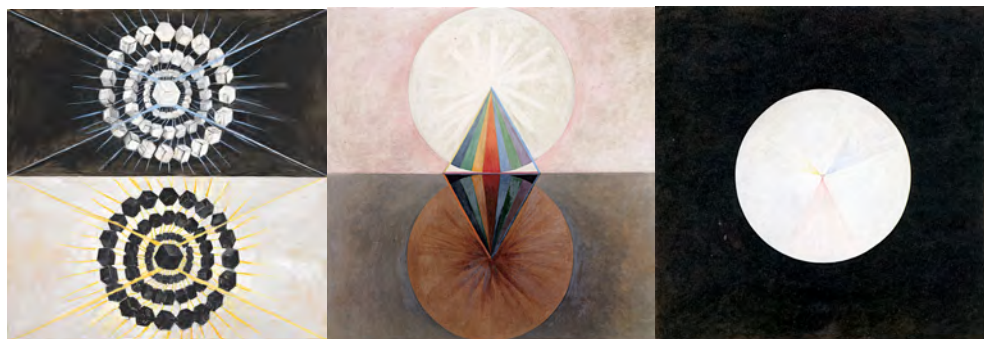


Evolution 15 & 16

Her series of 24 canvases *The Swan* (CAT. 96-111), executed from 10/1914-3/1915 (at the beginning of World War I) constitute a “representation of astral plane.” (170). Initial paintings in the series portray the black and white swans, as representing opposites, leading to the union of increasingly abstract forms, gradually gaining colors “in the combat of the soul.” (Rousseau, 1983,170). The forms become abstract and geometrical squares, circles, triangles, crosses, spirals and occasional snail-shell like shapes.



Swan 1,2,3



Swan 8, 12, 14

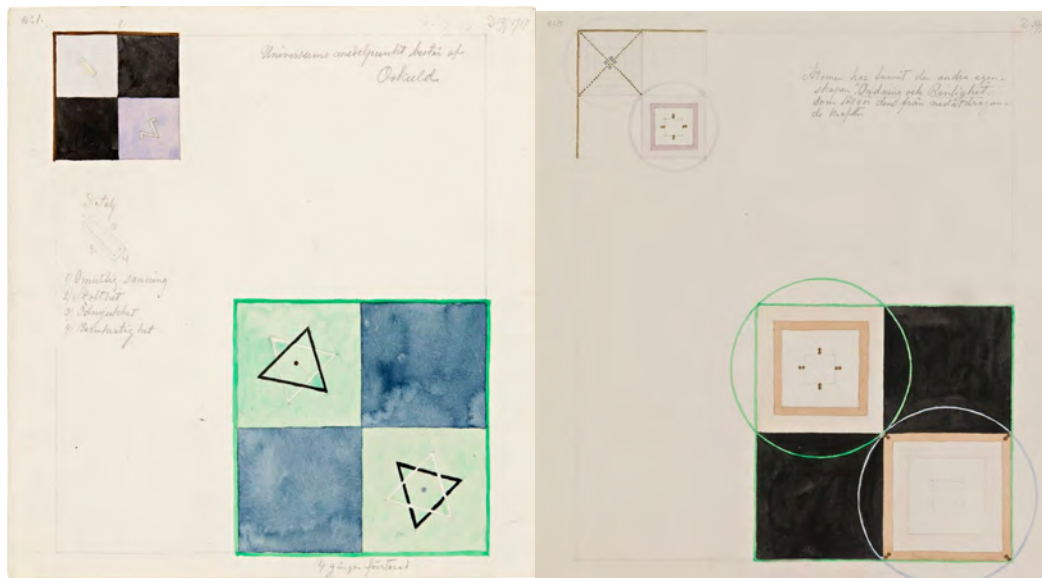


Swan 17, 21, 23

She portraits psychic opposites in forms of male and female figures or black and white swans gradually transforming them into more abstract geometric colored forms. Blavatsky, the founder of theosophy, considered swan the “mystery of mysteries”, the symbol of “majesty of the spirit,” the Black Swan, in Sanskrit, Kala-ham-sa. A spirit flying over the waters, in gender

forms constitutes “androgyny on the mental plane.” (ibid, 170)

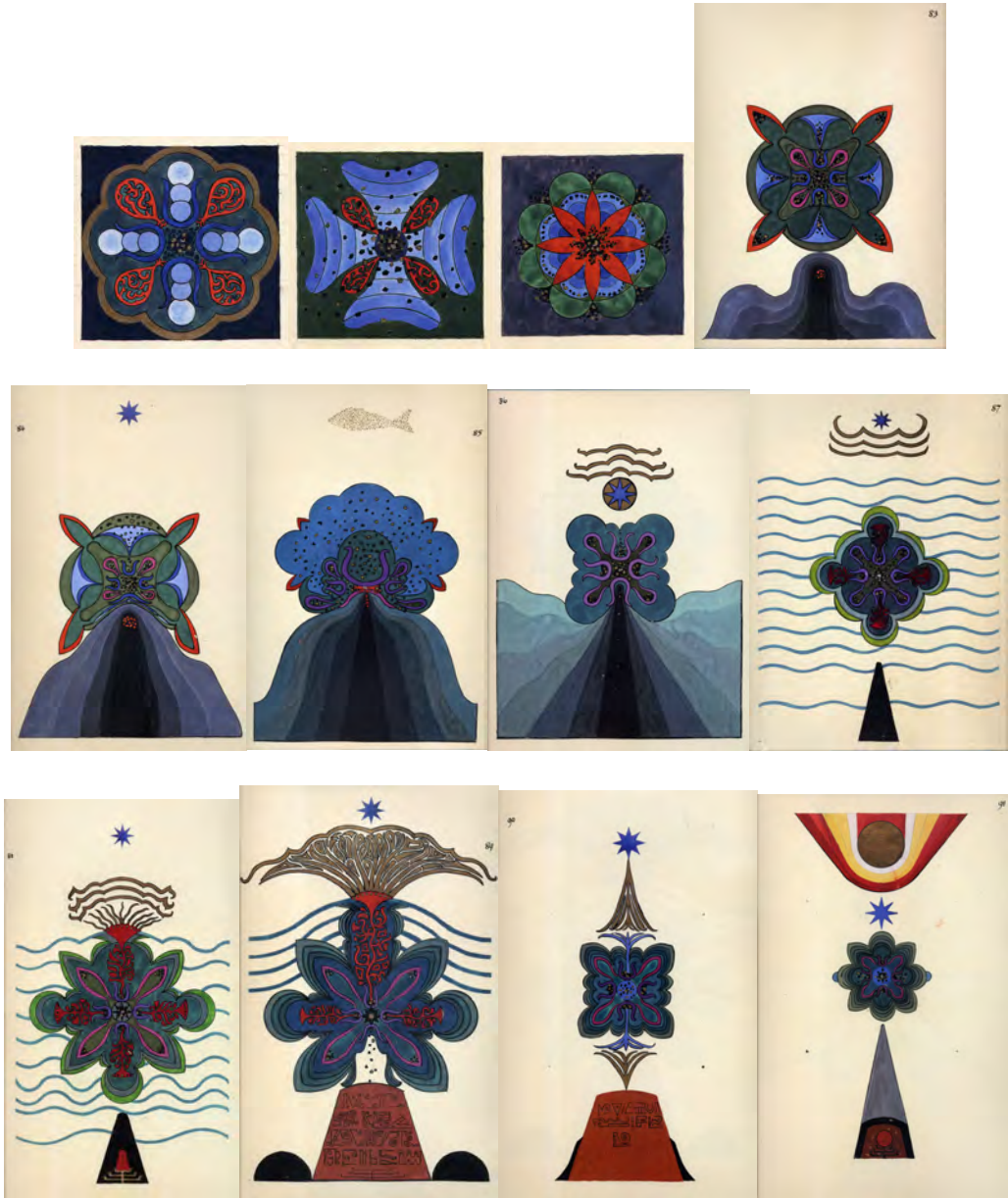
As Klint was fascinated by the bisexuality of flowers which possess both male (stamens) and female (pistils) sexual organs. In this sense hermaphroditism is a norm in plants, as it is in snails. She explores spiritual macrocosm with cubes representing atoms, as if portraying “access to the physics of thought itself.” (ibid,172)

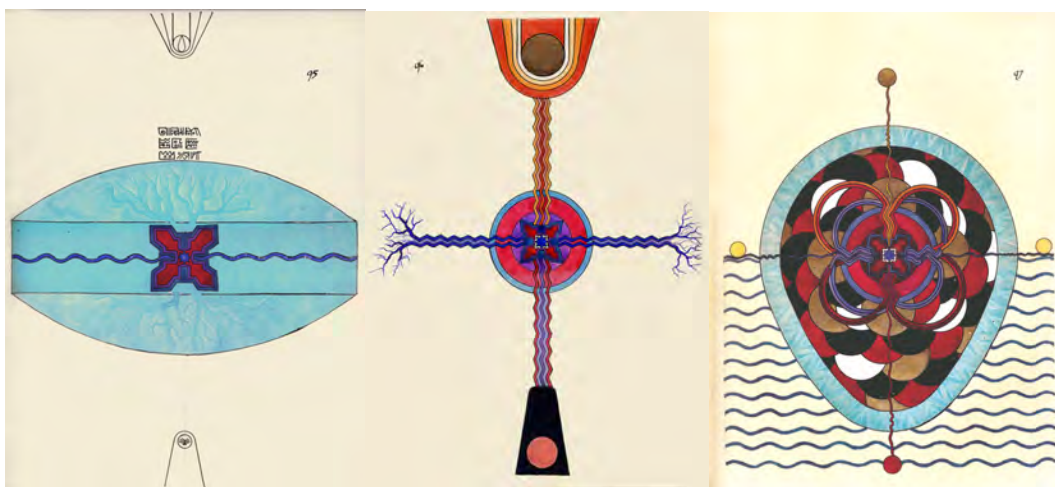
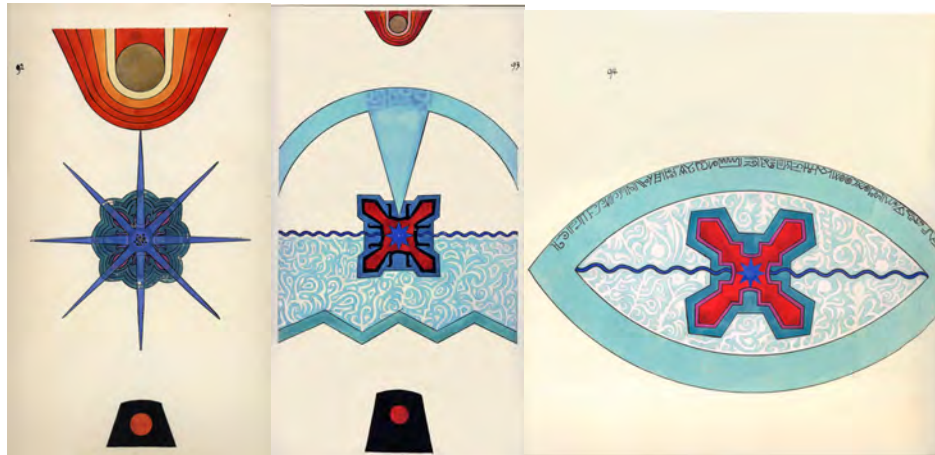


af Klint, Atom 1 & 15, 1917

She called her “inner” spirits ‘avonwener’ beings, who try to guide humans. She portrays the metamorphosis of matter into light in her golden paintings, or the incarnation of the divine spirit in matter. Some of her paintings feature a set of letters, constituting a symbolic language, speech of spirit.

Her series of 16 pictures “US and WUS” depict a gradual (spiritual) transformation processes akin to Jung’s mandala cycle.





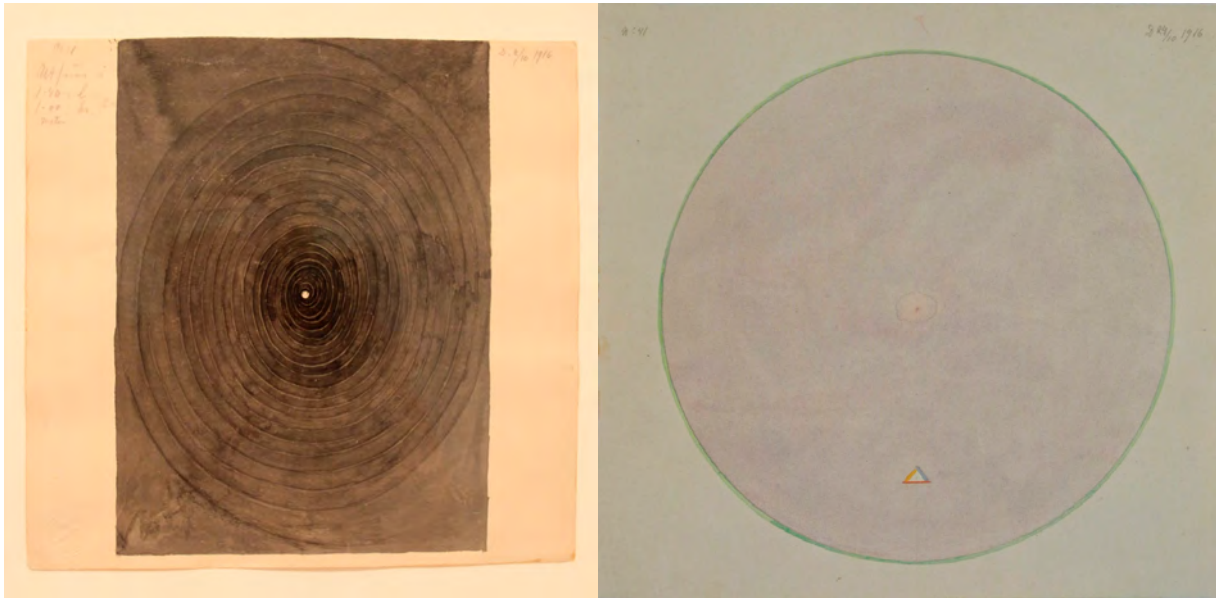
Jung's Mandala Series

Both Jung and Hilma af Klint were deeply interested in the subject of Parsifal, as a spiritual search for the holy grail. Jung has considered Parsifal his personal myth²¹, af Klint

²¹ I had entered the theater; those two over there are part of the play: Amfortas and Kundry, or rather, just what am I looking at? It is the librarian and his cook. He is ailing and pale, and has a bad stomach, she is disappointed and furious. Klingsor is standing to the left, holding a feather the librarian used to tuck behind his ear. How closely Klingsor resembles me! What a repulsive play! But look, Parsifal enters from the left. How strange, he also looks like me. Klingsor venomously throws the feather at Parsifal. But the latter catches it calmly.

The scene changes: It appears that the audience, in this case me, joins in during the last act. One must kneel down at the Good Friday service begins: Parsifal enters—slowly, his head covered with a black helmet. The lionskin of Hercules adorns his shoulders and he holds the club in his hand; he is also wearing modern black trousers in honor of the church holiday. I bristle and stretch out my hand avertingly, but the play goes on. Parsifal takes off his helmet. Yet there is no Gurnemantz to atone for and consecrate him. Kundry stands in the distance, covering her head and laughing. The audience is enraptured and recognizes itself in Parsifal. He is I. I take off my armor layered with history and my chimerical decoration and go to the spring wearing a white penitent's shirt, where I wash my feet and hands without the help of a stranger. Then

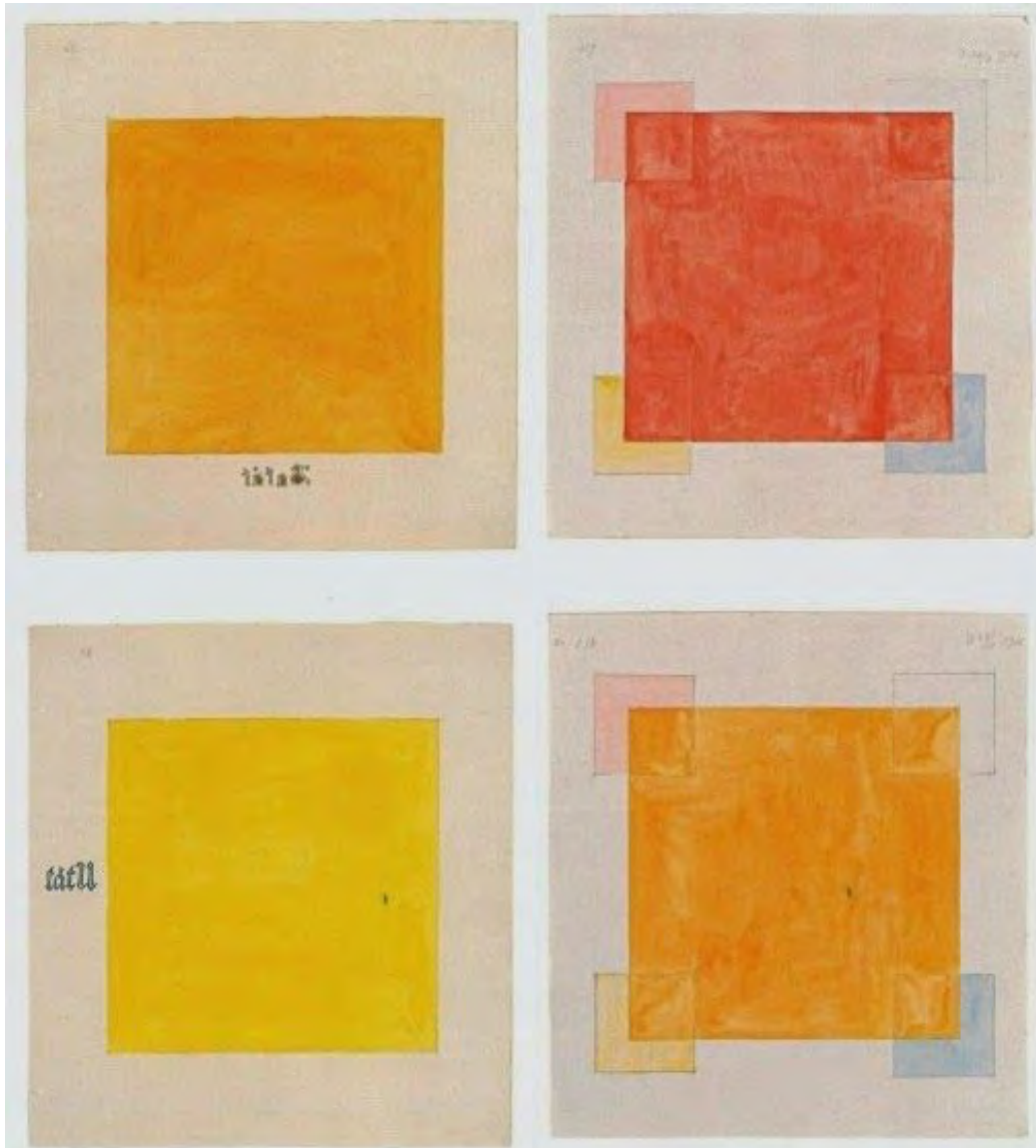
devoted a long series of paintings of 1916 to her own exploration of Parsifal. Jung explored Parsifal myth in symbolic language, af Klint through abstract imaginal reflection and painterly reverie.



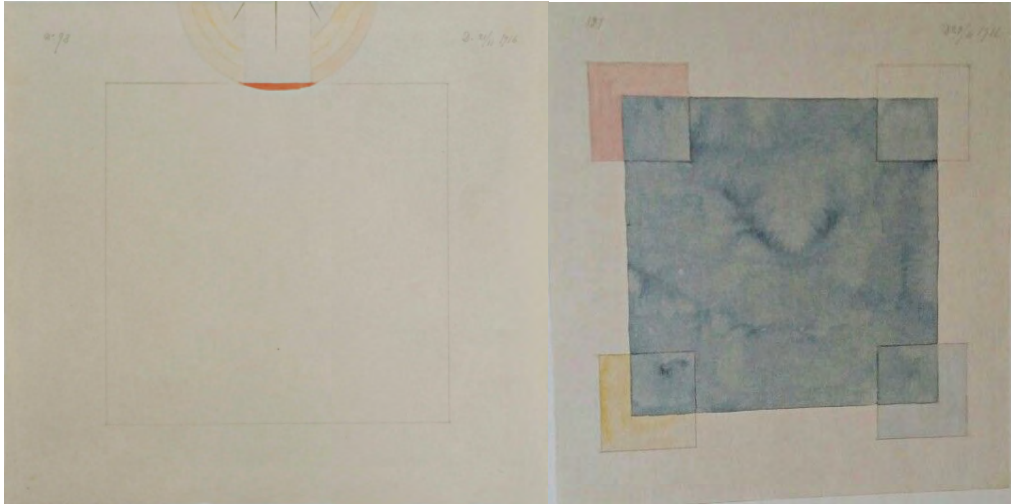
af Klint, Parsifal 1 & 41

I also take off my penitent's shirt and put on my civilian clothes. I walk out of the scene and approach myself—I who am still kneeling down in prayer as the audience. I rise and become one with myself. *The Red Book*, 303

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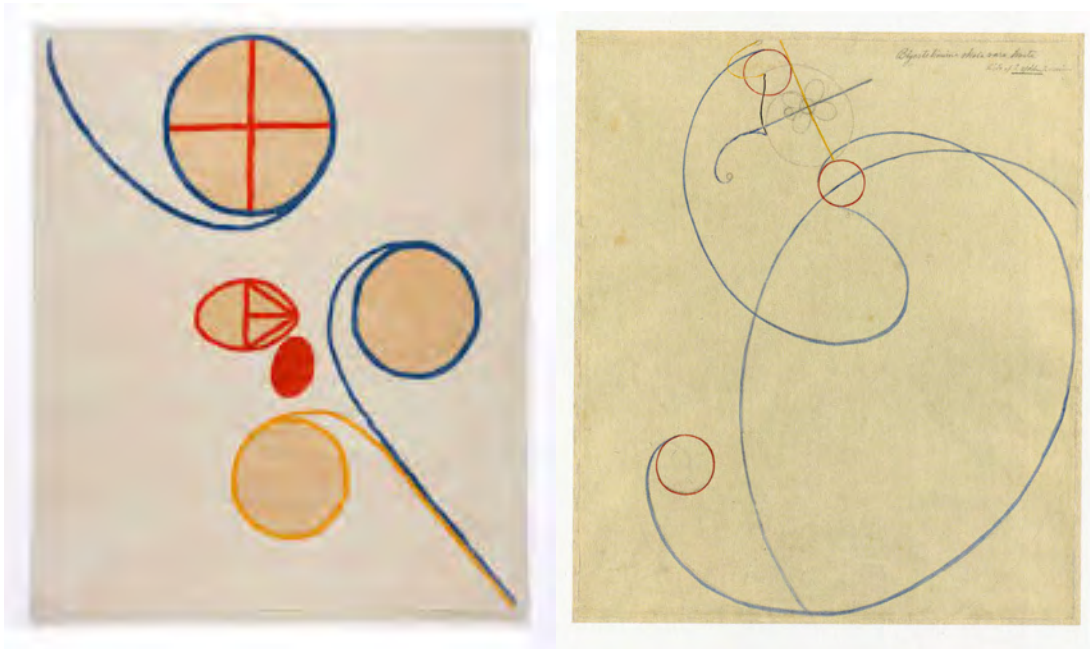
Parsifal 69, 70, 117, 118



Parsifal, 98, 121

In her prismatic color paintings Hilma may be representing not just emotional spectrum of states of soul (a la *Thought Forms* of Leadbeater and Besant), or Goethe's (via Steiner) chromatology of vision, or "visual metaphor for the ascending scale of states of consciousness, but becoming the spirit beyond the terrestrial cycle, announcing the future of the species itself in the history of humanity." (ibid,172) Rousseau concludes in her essay: "it is in this sense that the spiritist path very naturally constitutes an anticipation of abstraction... because it approaches abstraction as a *form of anticipation* in itself. Abstraction would be the language of the future of the species in the 'mental' era of bodies rid of their fleshy husk." Jung pursued his own mode of anticipation, bordering on prophesy in the *Red Book* whose *Liber Primus* is subtitled *What Is to Come*.

For Alois Riegl, an Austrian pioneering art historian of the turn of the twentieth century, "the self-propagating tendril-line ... contains within itself a generative force that he designated *Kunstwollen*, a *will to art*." (Lomas, 2013) David Lomas (2013) considers the coiled up tendril "an avatar of the abstract geometric [logarithmic] spiral," in Hilma's work.



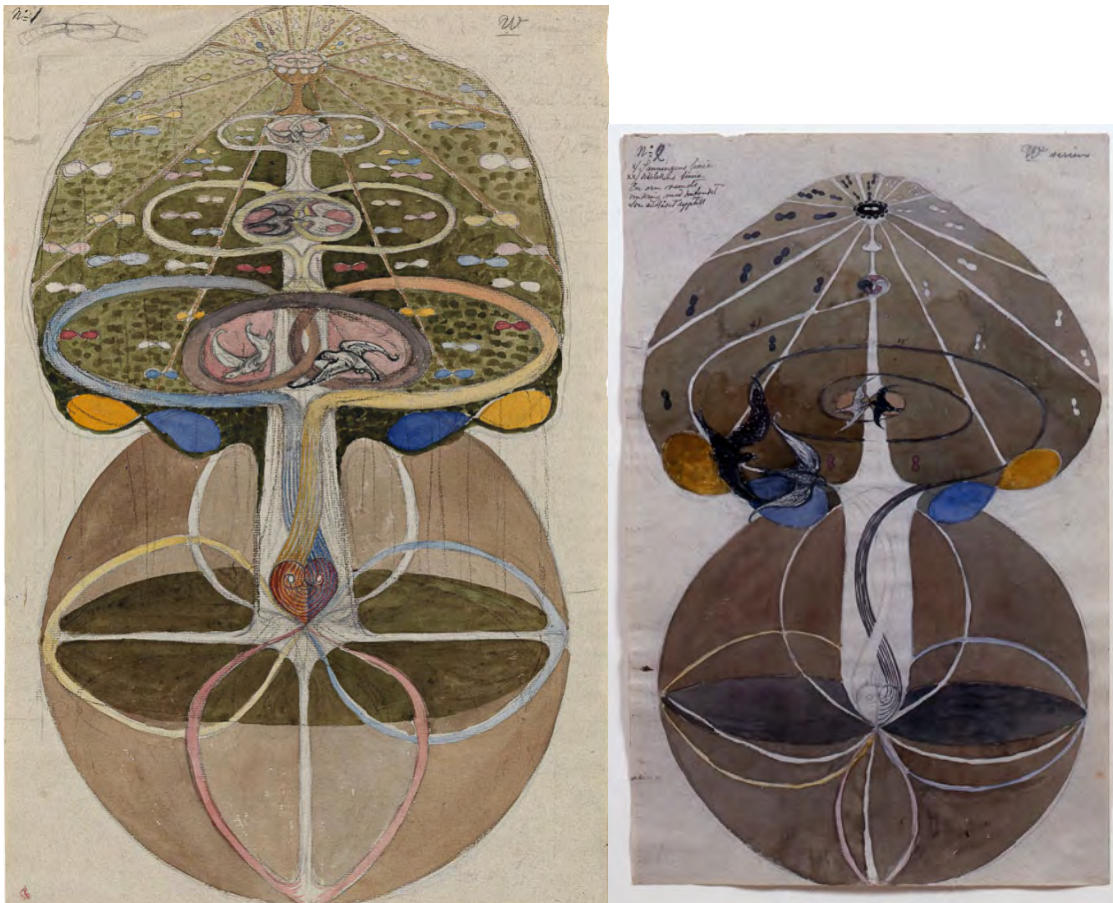
af Klint, Seven-Pointed-Star 25 and 14

While Hilma af Klint uncritically accepted mediumistic explanations for her work, psychologically her guides represent spontaneous unconscious personifications of dissociated parts of her psyche. She may have been under the influence of vitalism, the end of the century doctrine that postulated a soul that distinguishes organic life from mineral, lifeless matter. (Lomas, 232) She painted series of pictures depicting spiritual essences of plants.

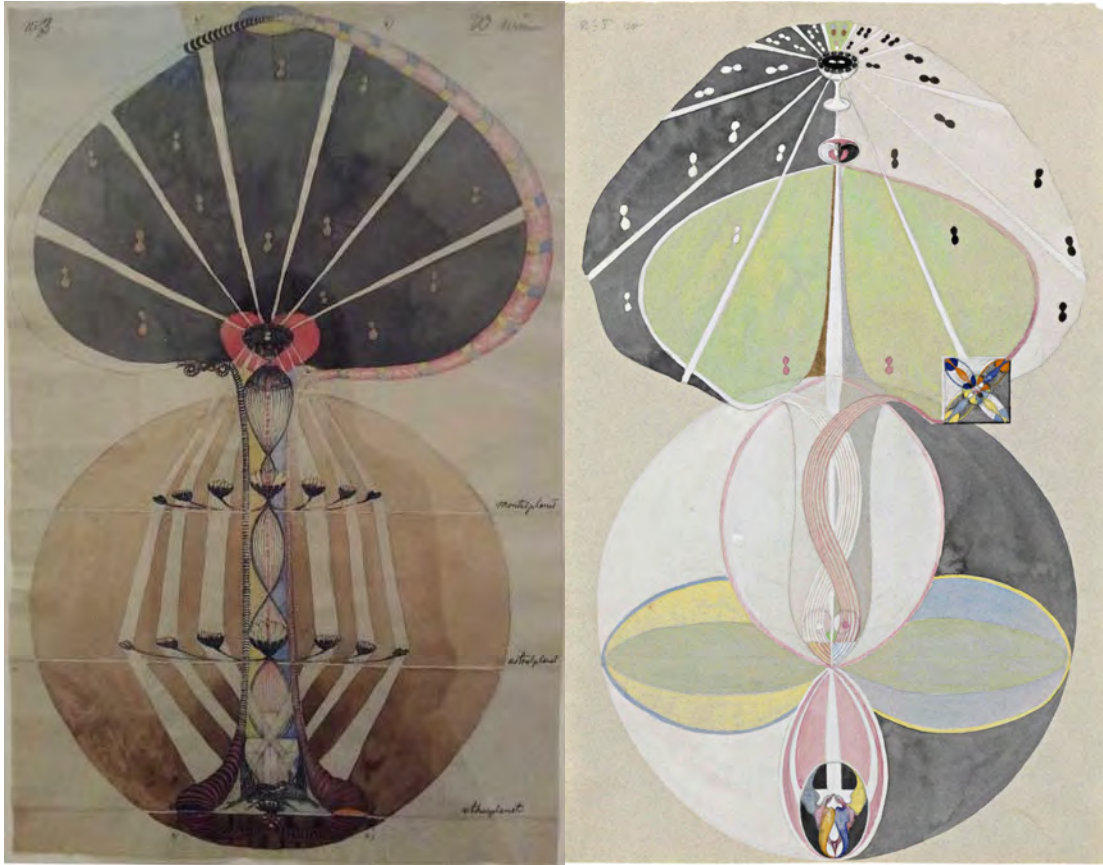


af Klint, Violets with Guideline

She was not alone in her view as a pioneering German psychologist Gustav Theodor Fechner postulated the psychic life of plants (“Nanna, or the Spiritual Life of Plants”). Jung painted a series of plants in the *Scrutinies*. In her series *Tree of Knowledge, the W Series* she attempted to “portray the moment when passion has succeeded in penetrating a part of the human soul.” (ibid, 232) In *The Red Book* Jung explored relation between pleasure and desire in human soul, and wrote an essay on the philosophical tree.



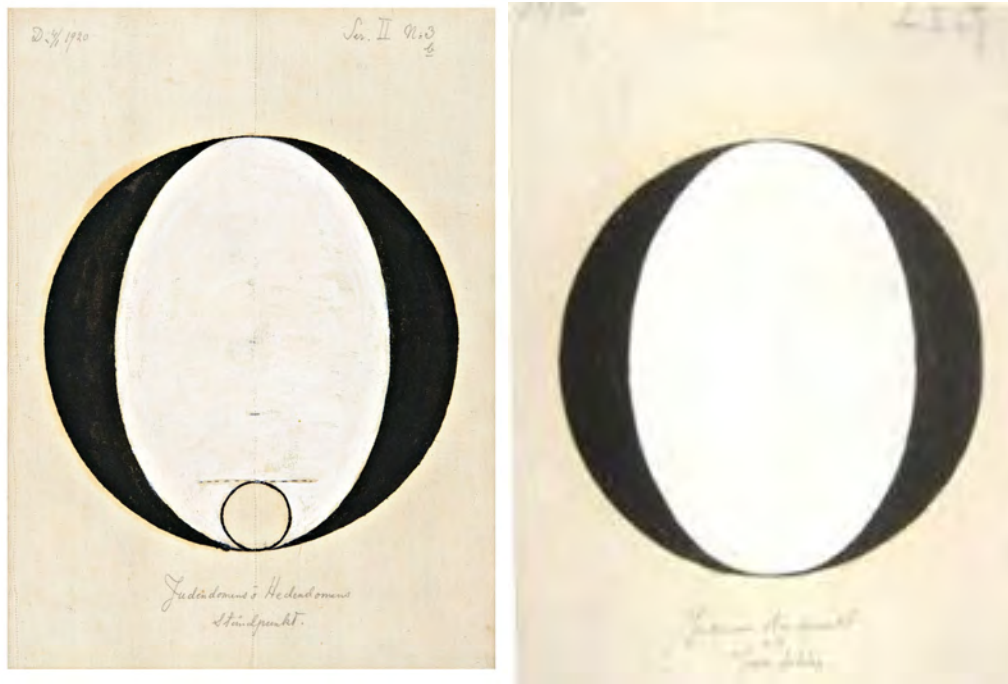
of Klint, *Tree of Knowledge 1 & 2*, 1913



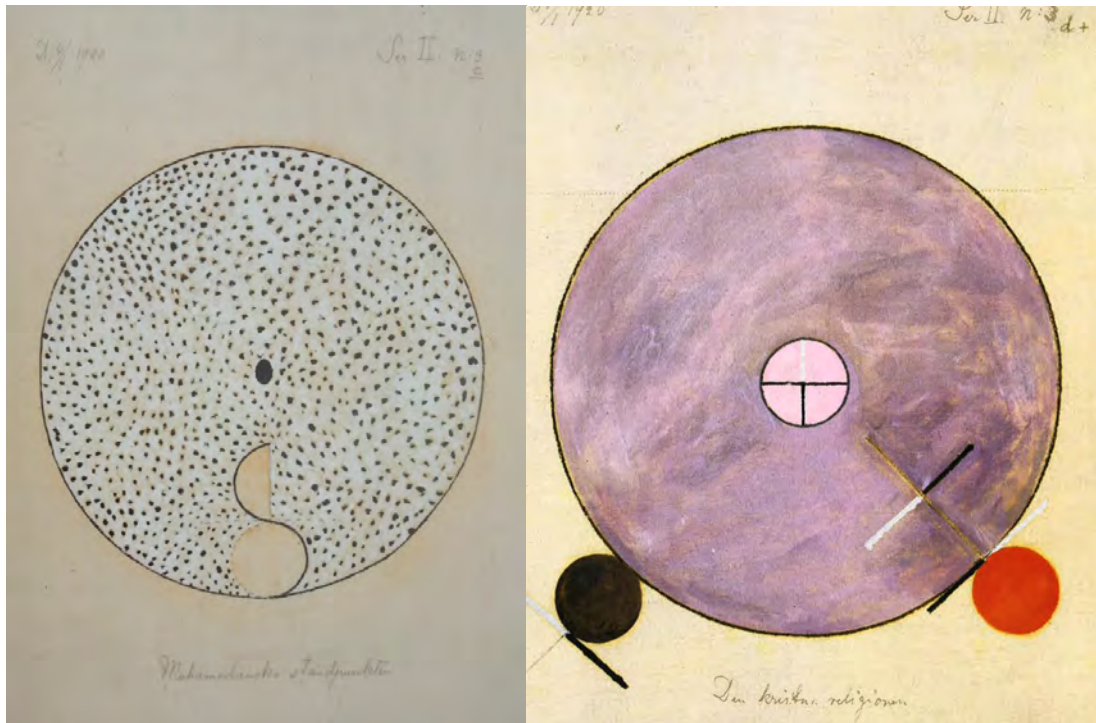
af Klint, *Tree of Knowledge 3 & 4*

Wilhelm Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), a work that was highly influential for Jung's development of psychological types, believed that in the reception of the work of art we "empathize with life,... life [as] energy , inner working, striving and accomplishing," (235) as artistic experience affords access to " the mysterious power of organic form, in which one could enjoy more intensely one's own organism."

Both Jung and Af Klint engaged in the comparative studies of religions. Jung wrote many essays on psychology and religion. Hilma created spiritual portraits (standpoints) of world religions.

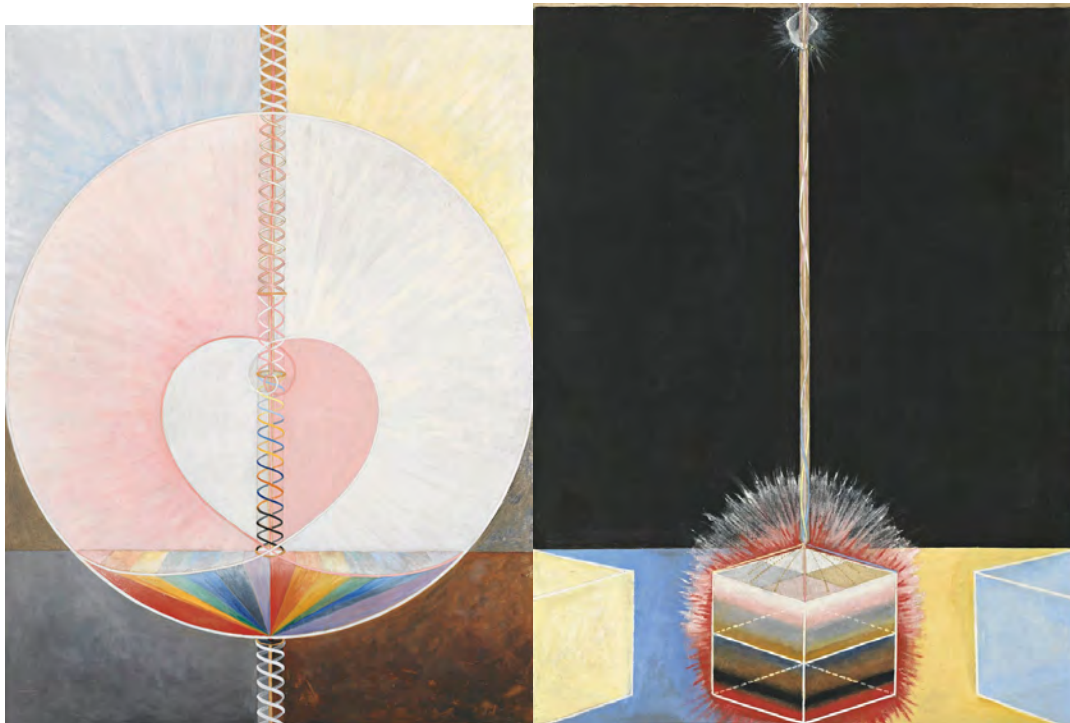


Standpoint of Judaism and Heathendom & Standpoint of Judaism at the birth of Jesus



Mohammedan Standpoint & Christian Standpoint

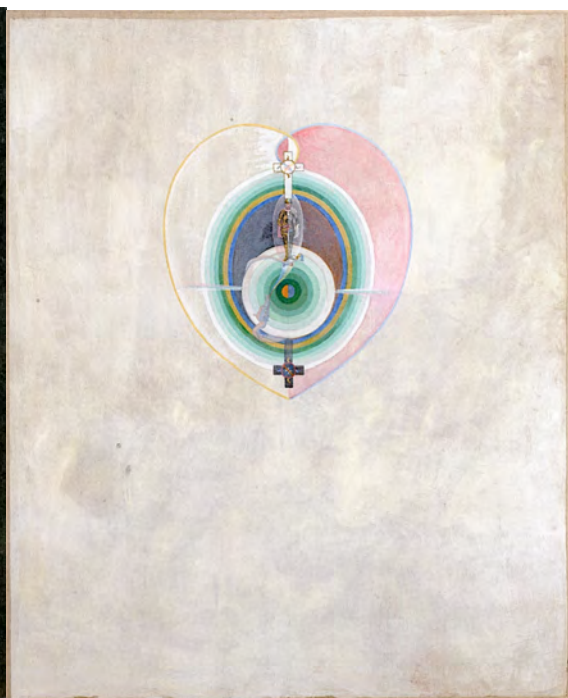
Jung's dream of the dove changing into a little girl (MDR, 171) immediately preceded his confrontations with the unconscious, and in the *Red Book* his soul, in her celestial form, is represented as a white bird (likely a dove). Hilma af Klint created beautiful and moving exploration of the spirit in her series on the *Dove*.



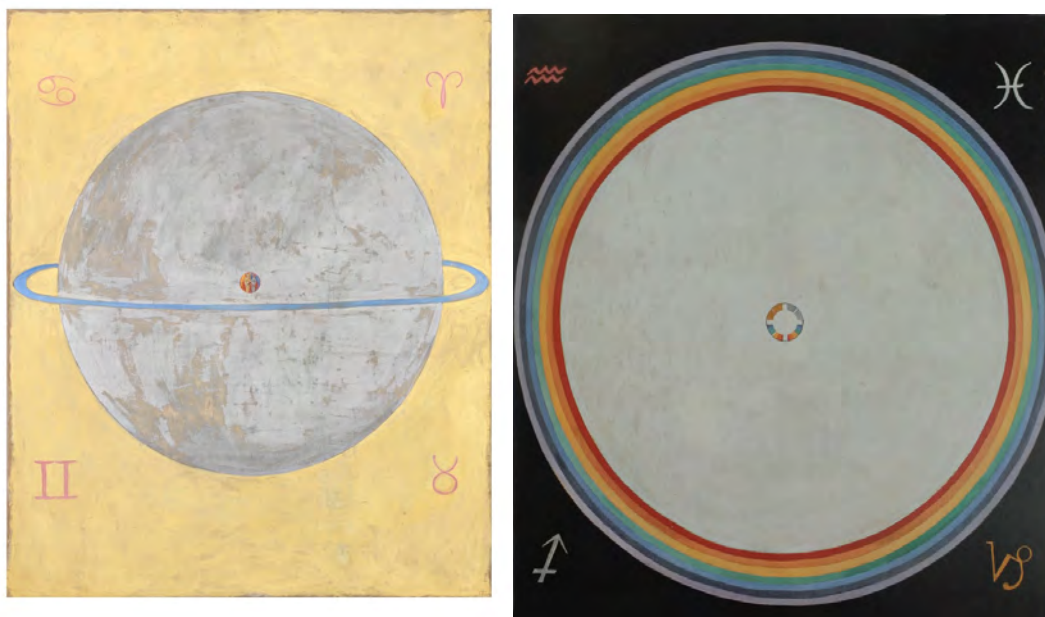
Dove 1 & 3



Dove 4 & 5



Dove 7 & 11



Dove 12 & 14

I think that in his *Red Book* paintings Jung shares a similar sensibility. He could not imagine them as standing on their own. They were an integral part of the book, of the faux medieval gothic manuscript. Furthermore, for him they were not art, they were part of the psychological processes of engagement with invisible soul and contained symbolic ideas that couldn't otherwise be expressed. They were a visible, graphic record, illustrations of inner transformative processes. In effect they contained a substantial psychic projection (as all art does), that could not be separated from the graphic depictions. I think that this focus on the psychic rather than aesthetic in the artwork is what Jung emphasized and that led him not to consider his pictures art. It is as if granting them artistic value, or designation of art would diminish their psychological meaning; as if just calling his work art [rightly or wrongly] would have the magical effect of dismissing its psychological meaning. Definitely, as the recent

publication of the illustrated volume *The Art of C.G. Jung* indicates, to our current sensibilities his work is considered art. And that designation actually enriches the value of *The Red Book*. I think I have demonstrated that Jung's paintings belong in the cannon of the early abstract art, when spiritual ideology inspired, informed and legitimized the art. I believe that designation of Jung's graphic work as art can only add value to his psychological exploration. Do you think that if *The Red Book* had been published without the pictures (as the *Readers Edition* was a few years later), that it would have had the impact it had? I think that it is Jung's artistic expression that adds value to *Liber Novus*, and his artwork reveals him as an accomplished abstract spiritual painter.

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