

THE ASCETIC-THERAPEUTIC DIMENSION AND the Art of Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis

by Captain Fly (Dimitrios Mistriotis)

The Ascetic-Therapeutic dimension

A lot of artists in today's art seem to feel that something is missing. That art is not functioning in its full potential. Some strive against commercialism and others strive against art as a spectacle and others against the elitist uniqueness of the art work, to name a few issues..

Without us wanting to refute the existence of these problems, we want to throw the headlight of our attention in another problem that we believe is connected to them in a more root level. And that problem is basically the lack of mature and true spirituality.

Because the Art works are not means to themselves but paradigms of the way our senses connect to things inside and outside us and God—if there is such a distinction- the true Art works are our collective and individual selves. So we see that, there is a creative and transformative effect that Art has on us, we can call Ascetic or Therapeutic. This Ascetic-Therapeutic dimension of Art however, can't be fulfilled without true spirituality.

However underdeveloped, there is in fact, an ascetic-therapeutic dimension, we can find in western painting: Handbooks relative to Impressionism, free hand and construction drawing, Cubism, Abstraction, Expressionism, even Surrealism, have a wide appreciation and allow the average person to practise his senses in the meeting either with reality or with his internal world.

The crisis of Minimalism

There exist however, movements in the western art world that did not manage to acquire an ascetic dimension and remained enclosed in the sphere of Art History, reduced to a fetish quality, and to a great extent misinterpreted. They are the movements that spring from the Black Square of Russian Painter Kazimir Malevich, as the movement that followed much later, of the American Abstract Expressionists, that some call Minimalism, or the dissimulations of the French artist Man Ray and the Bulgarian Christo, to name the most characteristic, that have as a common denominator a reference to what exceeds the concept of form.

The reason in my opinion, that these movements haven't acquired an ascetic dimension for the average person, is that the sense with which they are connected, is absent from the western world's main stream perception of human physiology. Thus the Art of Minimalism is usually misinterpreted as conceptual while the artists themselves would never give their consent to such a position.

This sense is named by Greek tradition **Nous** in English the word would be **Mind** -distinguished from the **Intellect**- and its organ is the heart. The heart is for many traditions the centre of our existence where the person can accept the Spirit of God. American Minimalists would frequently refer to the **nous** and to the element of the Sacred It is connected with. Through the research of the Canadian Dr. J. Andrew Armour in 1991, one of the early pioneers in neurocardiology, it was certified by science as well, that the heart is 60-65% nerve cells. Other researchers have certified that the heart is a kind of brain that manages what they called **intuitional information**. Intuitional information has to do with the ability of the **Mind** to come immediately in contact with things without the intermediation of forms and qualities.

But, what is exactly the nature of this mysterious transcendental form of information and how do the senses of the brain relate to it? If we depict the heart sense as an amorphous centre point, are the brain senses on the perimeter of its circle? Or can the brain senses be mapped on a spiralling line emanating from it? In the former case all brain senses are equally differentiated from the heart sense. In the latter case some are closer to it. In this case which brain senses are closer to the nature of this heart sense? In other words which senses are more spiritual or sublime? These questions are very important for Art as they are for the way we connect with the internal and external world and God.

Today western culture can be found everywhere in the world but its origins can be pin pointed in medieval Italy when Christian spirituality started to forget the ways of the nous and started to depend solely on the senses of the brain. Thus God and reality became a specified constructed projection of the human brain with devastating effects on true spirituality, science, Art and every aspect of social life. The absolute was confused with things relative and vice versa since the brain handles only form in a quest for knowledge. Consequently a chain reaction of divisions and specializations was commenced. The *Renaissance man* allegedly symbol of wholeness, in his many endeavours however, used a portion of his senses for each endeavour, thus alienating himself from it. In traditional cultures wholeness has to do with the senses used, not the endeavours. With the rediscovery of the **nous** the west has come full circle and all this incredible body of knowledge that has been accumulated can be

existentially internalized and organically unified.

The American Heartmath Institute (<http://www.heartmath.org>) is one of many that funds research on the functions of the heart brain, but holds educational programs as well, with practices for stress management through the care of the Heart-mind. Adapted to the needs of modern life, these practices are very close to the Christian Orthodox **Heart Prayer**.

Thus the cultivation of the Mind has already begun to culminate in western culture, opening the way for an ascetic consideration of Malevich and the Minimalists in general, from the wide public.

We consider as pioneer of this form of exercise, the Greek painter and writer Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis, who with his alphanumerical method, energized /sanctified daily his heart-mind during the process of creating his works. Without the comprehension of this dimension of his artistic production it is impossible to evaluate the importance of his work and this is the reason that unfortunately, he doesn't have the place he deserves in Modern Greek and world conscience.

The Quantum key

The research that concerns the heart mind and the appearance of the new science of Neurocardiology constitute for western culture, perhaps the most radical development in all its history, if we consider that with the discovery of such a central sense, a new perception of human physiology is emerging and that this culture could be defined as the culture without conscience of the **mind**.

This new physiology is the climaxing of a series of revolutionary view points that supplement it. In mathematics it is perhaps Gödel's incompleteness theorems. In Quantum Physics a particle can be in several places simultaneously in a cloud of probabilities and more importantly, human thought affects this cloud.

In a more practical level the Japanese alternative healer Masaru Emoto found a method of crystallizing water that allows us to see how the shape of the crystal is influenced by the energy of thoughts, music, photographs, and even written words. He also found that he could make a diagnosis on an energy level, of patients from a distance, only with the measurement of their photograph or their name. Precisely this energy characteristic of forms may be key in comprehending, the way the cardiac mind communes with forms and things.

The ascetic dimension in the Art of Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis

Mister Nikos as he was called by those who personally knew him, had personally shown me the way he worked, a few months before his blissful departure. He had stacks of school exercise books in his library, where he had already transcribed to numbers, with the Pythagorean alphanumerical method (A=1, B=2 etc) the whole compilation of the biographies of Neomartyrs of St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain that he considered a very important monument of literature but at the same time, because their Author was a Saint who wrote about the life of Saints, considered a carrier of Sanctifying energy. Each exercise book had the numbers from the biographies of Saints of one month. He painted therefore each day transcribing, with a system of equivalences, the numbers derived from the biography of the Saint that celebrated that day, into colors and quantities of brushstrokes, subject matter that most of the time had no apparent relation with the Saint. The representations, composed of small brushstrokes bring in mind Impressionism but in reality they serve the expression of a number. The art work had to have an x number of brushstrokes for each color, from a total of nine colors he used.