

CHRISTIAN ICONOLOGY
TEACHING FINE ARTS HISTORY
IN AN ADVENTIST COLLEGE

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1. INTRODUCTION
2. THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE FINE ARTS
3. ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY, VISUAL ARTS AS APPLIED THEOLOGY
4. ANALYSING A PAINTING- FOR EXAMPLE
5. CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

A Dutch art-historian, the late professor of the Free University of Amsterdam H.R. Rookmaker, makes an interesting observation in his book Modern art and the death of a culture:

"Today it is well known that within Evangelical Christian circles there is little interest in the arts. As a change becomes apparent, as a younger generation, born and raised within these circles, comes to understand the importance of the arts, all kinds of problems and tension arise. Any sort of critical way of thinking is almost completely lacking. There is no artistic insight, nothing to point to, no answer to the relevant questions of the rising generation. Many want to be artists in a Christian sense, but have to find the answers themselves. How should they go about it? What does it mean? Many have turned away from Christianity, or more tragically, from Christ, as they have come to feel that, if this vital aspect of human life is outside religion or faith, then something basic must be defective in faith. In different ways they have to join in spiritual battle against the spirit of the age which is expressed so very strongly in the arts- and many succumb. It is only too possible of course to take the same puritan position today: keep away from the arts, they are worldly, they are secular and unholy. But that is no answer. It misses the point. For one thing, it ignores the fact that the arts are particularly strong protagonists for a new non-Christian way of thinking. It could well be that the arts are 'avant-garde', in a sense that they are ahead of the rest in the quest for a non-Christian way of spirituality. Why? Because for so long Christians have taken no part in

artistic discussion or activity."
(H.R.Rookmaker, Modern art and the death of a culture,
Intervarsity Press, London, 1970. pp.31,32).

In the last two decades circumstances in Holland have somewhat changed. The Evangelicals and some members of the Christian Reformed Church founded an Evangelical nation-wide Broadcasting Company with a definite Christian undertone. They developed a Christian Graduate School for visual arts, languages, literature and drama. They started a crusade against the production and distribution of those forms of visual art, literature, drama, film and music, which in their opinion are of an anti-Christian or base morality. Nowadays the Evangelicals do not keep away from the arts. They like to use them and to make them part and parcel of their distinctive Christian culture.

In a more modest way the Dutch Calvinistic Reformed Church started earlier to adjust its attitude towards culture, similar to some groups in the Christian Reformed Church in the U.S.A. and Canada. The exchange of thoughts between like-minded Christians in Europe and Northern America in fact began in the second half of the 19th century. The exchange of ideas between the Calvinistic Free University of Amsterdam, the institute for Christian Studies in Toronto and some other institutions of higher learning in the New World took place on a larger scale in the fifties and sixties of this century. The new attitude towards the visual arts, literature, poetry, drama, dance and music is striking.

The Protestant Churches become more and more organized in their reactions on secularisation of western society. They unite in producing books and articles, exhibitions and television programmes in which the problems of secularisation are recognized and analyzed. Orthodox pietists, Calvinistic Reformed intellectuals and Christian artists abandon the former puritan, nearly iconoclastic way of life in order to create a conscious appreciation of the Christ and Culture tension. In doing so they choose to support their ideas with the conclusions of a number

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3

of Christian scientists, who are inquiring into the matter of the complicated aspects of culture in relation to the Biblical world view.

The modern, consciously and often scientifically working artist (e.g. computer art, environmental art, conceptual art, mathematical concepts in design and colour, three dimensional works of art, modern music) likes to know what the premises of Christian art are, in order to be able to respond adequately and create art in the perspective of a consciously chosen Christian philosophy. To illustrate the general complexity of the Christ and Culture tension and the solutions which are offered by some Christian thinkers and scientists, some positions or suggestions are recalled here.

2. THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE FINE ARTS

2.1. THE CULTURAL MANDATE

To define culture we may use a description of H.R.Niebuhr:

"What we have in view when we deal with Christ and Culture is that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity to which now the name culture, now the name civilization, is applied in common speech.

Culture is the 'artificial, secondary environment' which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes and values.

This 'social heritage', which the New Testament writers frequently had in mind when they spoke of 'the world', which is represented in many forms, but to which Christians like other man are inevitably subject, is what we mean when we speak of culture."

(H.R.Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, New York, 1975. Paperback. p.32)

Some of the characteristics of culture are that it is social, human achievement, full of value aspects, and concerned with the temporal and material realization of values and conservation.

Moreover, culture is pluralistic, that is: the values a culture seeks to realize at any time or place are many in number. The biblical approach to culture is sometimes called God's cultural mandate, referring to Genesis 1:26, 2:15, and Psalms 8:6-8:

"You made him (man) ruler over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the sea,..."

"The Lord God took man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it.."

2.2. DR.ABRAHAM KUYPER

Probably the cultural mandate was consciously formulated for the first time by Dr. Abraham Kuyper, prime-minister of The Netherlands 1901-1905, scholar, journalist, politician and founder of the Free University of Amsterdam.

In his six Stone lectures on Calvinism, which he presented October 1898 at Princeton, his thesis was that God made us in His own image, to steward our own and nature's resources creatively and wisely.

"To confess God as Creator and Christ as Lord is thus to affirm His hand in all life and thought. It is to admit that every part of the created order is sacred and that the Creator calls us to exhibit His wisdom and power both by exploring the creation and developing its sources and by bringing our own created abilities to fulfillment. For while all nature declares the glory of God, we human beings uniquely image the Creator in our created creativity. Implicit in the doctrine of creation is a cultural mandate and a call to the creative integration of faith with learning and culture."

(Arthur F.Holmes, The idea of a Christian college, W.Eerdmans Publ.Comp. Grand Rapids Mich. rev.ed.,1987, p.21; see also: Calvinism, W.Eerdmans. Grand Rapids, Mich.,1943, pp.142,156-157.)

The application of this thesis, formulated or not, resulted in the founding of an educational system, a calvinistic political conviction (Anti Revolutionaire Partij) and a joining in with cultural life on many levels. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Abraham Kuyper's thesis has been accepted by Calvinistic believers in the Netherlands and other places in the world.

(Cultuurmandaat en Vreemdelingschap, Dr. M.J. Paul, lecture at the Evangelische Hogeschool, 05-09-1989). M.J. Paul also mentions Kuyper's doctrine of General Grace, which explains that all nations and all individuals may take part in the artistic and

scientific creation proces, but the Christian nations received a better portion of the creative gifts (Kuyper's positivisme). Critical remarks are formulated by K. Schilder and and the French theologian Jacques Ellul. The latter stresses the fact that human beings in these times have to be stewards and protectors of God's creation and that they may not create without thinking of the effects for man and nature.

2.3. MAN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF HIS CREATOR

An extreme position in the doctrine of creation model is taken by Harold M. Best. His proposition to this theory is that God created out of nothing (ex nihilo), of which He is not, and that humans create out of something else, of which they continue to be a part. In analogy with God's creative activities, human beings are allowed to create. God did it, man may or should do it.

"God entered creation as a servant in Jesus Christ; so human artists must be willing to use their talents in ways that serve others".

In this adagium Harold M. Best also finds the reason to defend and to promote the making of non-representational art (abstract art). Man as a creator may create new forms and structures as the Creator did when he created plants, animals and man as objects which were never seen before.

M. Coppenger criticizes this creative analogy, saying that we know little more about God's creative acts than we know about our own, centering his critique around the question: "How much like God are we in our artistic ventures?"

(see: H. Heie, D.L. Wolfe, "The Reality of Christian Learning, Essays of H.M. Best and M. Coppenger. pp. 249-289)

2.4. H.C. NIEBUHR.- CHRIST AND CULTURE

Interesting is H.C. Niebuhr's analysis of the Christ and Culture tension in the history of the Christian church. He recognizes three attitudes.

1. Christians against culture. Christians who object

institutions, organisations and art, because they distract the spiritual mind and distort the Christian world view.

(Tertullian, monastic movements, hermits, spiritual Franciscans).

2. Christians in favour of culture. Christians who see the need to integrate completely with culture and national civilisation, completely accepting temporary science and arts as media to carry the Christian message. (Gnosis, Abelardus, Ritschl, Schleiermacher).
3. Christians living in tension, Christ and culture in paradox. Christians who can be divided into those who see Christ above culture, the synthesists, those who see Christ and culture in paradox, the dualists, and those who see Christ as the transformer of culture, the conversionalists. (Augustinus, John Calvin, Wesley and I. Edwards).

Niebuhr distinguishes the conversionalists from the others by their more positive and hopeful attitude toward culture. Their more affirmative stand seems to be closely connected with three theological convictions:

- i. The creative power of God is working in the world and particularly in man.
- ii. Human work and custom are to be seen in the nature of man's fall from his created goodness.
- iii. To God all things are possible in a history, which is fundamentally not a course of human events but always a dramatic interaction between God and man.

The conversionalist, with his view of history as the present encounter with God in Christ, does not live so much in expectation of a final ending of the world, of creation and of culture as in awareness of the power of the Lord to transform all things by lifting them up to Himself.

(H.C. Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, Harper and Row, New York, 1951/1975.)

"The Christians and the non-Christians alike are subject to the inherent constraints of cognition and are responsible for self-transcending judgements. Though the Christians will

understand those constraints and that responsibility as flowing from the Creator and the non-Christian may well deny his root of the matter, both are nonetheless subject to the same state of affairs insofar as they are knowers. In this spiritual climate the Christian artist can breathe and materialize his imagination and convictions and world view." (D.L.Wolfe, The reality of Christian learning, ed.H.Heie. Eerdmans. Grand Rapids, Mich.1987. p.331.)

Apparently the conversionalist, transforming world view, suits Adventist educators best as a working hypothesis in the field of the arts and music.

2.5. AESTHETICS IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM.

In the philosophical paradigm we often find a division into three categories: the categories of metaphysics (dealing with the nature of reality), epistemology (dealing with the validity of knowledge) and axiology (dealing with the question 'what is of value?').

In the category of axiology we find the realm of ethics (study of moral values and conduct) and aesthetics (principles, governing the creation and appreciation of beauty and art). Apparently they are akin, and they affect each other. As aesthetics is a realm of theory that relates closely to imagination and creativity, it tends to become highly personal and subjective. Aesthetic evaluation is a part of daily experience and cannot be avoided. Living, nolens volens, in a cultural setting one has to choose, to appreciate, to decide what is beautiful or ugly, what one should like or not. Arts invite us daily to decide what part they will play in our conduct and life-style.

We live in a modern society, full of instability, deterioration, materialism, utilitarianism, revolutions and throw-away objects. One is requested to reflect and take position. In evaluating the issues of beauty and honesty in art one should keep in mind that aesthetic belief is directly related to other aspects of one's philosophy, one's world view, one's idea of morals. Aesthetics is not a realm divorced from the rest of life. A person's aesthetic values are a reflection of his total outlook.

C:\WP\KHIS6

8

(see: G.R.Knight, Philosophy of education, Berrien Springs 1980.)

Should art be criticized on two levels, one aesthetic, the other moral?

"The question is in fact related to the old philosophical problem of form and content.

...I can only say that form can never be without content, nor content without form. For as McLuhan has shown, the meaning is in the medium- that is, in the artistic way of expression itself...

A work of art is much more complex in structure than can be analysed by these two concepts of the aesthetic and the moral: if it is a great work of art, it is a unity in which very many elements can be discovered."

(Prof.Dr.H.Rookmaker, Modern Art and the Death of a Culture, Intervarsity Press, London,1970, p.233.)

Whatever the aesthetic rules may be and whatever the historical and stylistic times were in which they were used, the imperative is that "the Christian artist has to create in an open and positive relationship to the structure of the world in which he was created by God; he has to act on the foundation of Christ as his Lord and Saviour, in love and freedom". This is the main principle governing the creation and appreciation of beauty and art.

2.6. ART NEEDS NO JUSTIFICATION

H.R.Rookmaker accepts the making of fine arts, music, poems, etc., as an undeniable fact of human creativity, without looking for much theoretical and biblical support for his conviction.

He writes in his book Art needs no justification:

"God gave humanity the skill to make things beautiful, to make music, to write poems, to make sculpture, to decorate things... Art has its own meaning. A work of art can stand in the art-gallery and be cherished for its own sake, we listen to a piece of music, simply to enjoy it... Art nearly always has a gratuitous more than a functional quality to it."

(H.R.Rookmakers, Art needs no justification, Downers Grove, Intervarsity Press, 1978. pp.38,39.)

2.7. CALVIN SEERVELD

In his studies Calvin Seerveld, senior member in philosophical aesthetics at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, concentrates on the problems of fundamental categories in aesthetic theory and on the methodology of art historiography and literary criticism. As he studied philosophy (Herman Dooyeweerd, Karl Jaspers, Benedetto Croce), theology (Karl Barth) and literary criticism, he has the ability to approach the fine arts from different angles.

Standing in the tradition of Abraham Kuyper's cultural mandate and the Christian Reformed Church with a theological and cultural inheritance of the 16th century reformer John Calvin, and being equipped with a sense of biblical wisdom, he is especially interested in the development of art in society, acknowledging that it is man's Christian business to transform culture, to enjoy creation and to play with imagination.

One of his theses is that art is a reliable knowledge, rich in suggestion:

"Art rightly has a suggestion-rich character; art is defined by neither analytic distinctness nor lingual clarity; nevertheless it represents specific, reliable knowledge for others to grasp. I am assuming that artistic painting, for example, is serious work and not a diverting pastime like cutting and pasting paper dolls, and that when artistic painting is pursued normatively and obeys certain aesthetic ordinances of creation, the result is an artistic capturing of real meaning.

I also know, as an adopted son of God, that the heart of a human artist serves God or Mammon and that the artist-man's or the artist-woman's partially sanctified vision or God-ignoring perspective or will to suppress the Truth in unrighteousness colours, however obliquely or inconsistently, the work of their artistic hands too.

An exegesis of art throughout history could demonstrate that fact, how a committed religion-alliance hides between the lines and colours of a painting.

By nature, a good painting or sculpture presents us with sound discernable knowledge, albeit in its own particularly imaginative, painterly or sculptural way--in colour shades and texture, positioned shapes, nuances of line (mass and rhythm) and weighted design, all stamped allusively. One misreads the knowledge won artistically if one thinks the painting or sculpture is simply a carbon copy of what is visible."

(Calvin Seerveld, Rainbows for a fallen world, Toronto,

1980, pp.78,79.)

Calvin Seerveld likes to analyse the ordinances of God which hold for all kinds of things and especially for the arts. In his opinion there are various, mutually irreducible, interrelated but prime, relative structurations which classify all things, events, acts and whatever, as members of some kind or other. These can be analysed in a scientific way and show the underlying pattern of God's wisdom and truth.

He made a special contribution to fine arts education by stressing, within schooling, the fundamental importance of imagination among the qualities, ability, language, and thought, a human person should develop. He stresses imagination as an important aspect of creativity and defines it as celebrativeness, becomingness, tastefulness, adventure, entertainment, wit, expressivity, playfulness, fantasy and fun. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they can develop, dynamically and inductively the ability to grasp the character and history of works of art, or the ability to work as an artist. As a student in aesthetics he has developed a very elaborate paradigm to systemize the various contents and forms of a work of art in relation to its contemporary world views and in the context of historical events.

This paradigm can be of great use for lecturing history of fine arts, provided that the lecturer has a good working knowledge of cultural and mentality history as well as doctrines and history of the Christian Church.

2.7. CONCLUSION

The S.D.A. lecturer on history of fine (visual) arts could choose the conversionalist model (Christ the transformer of culture) or the cultural mandate model as a working model in class. The propositions supporting these models are in tune with S.D.A. world view.

In lecturing history of fine arts the complicated paradigm based on the cultural mandate thesis, constructed by Calvin Seerveld,

could be useful (However the one developed by Erwin Panofsky and the ones developed by his disciples are useful in order to get more inside information about method and grammar by the search for meaning of the objects of visual art). He calls this paradigm a "cartographic methodology of art historiography". In his opinion this cultural mandate thesis needs extension with notions as "this is God's world- we may enjoy it, we may play in it, we may have our imaginations and fantasies, let's use our talents and senses, let's look for the structure and beauty of creation, let's sing and enjoy poetry, drama, dance and literature as long as they are true and honestly enjoyed."

Some methods for decoding the structure of the hidden and unhidden messages (meta-language) in the works of the visual arts could easily be integrated in his dynamic paradigm as long as the lecturer has a knowledge of the relationship of the many aspects of western culture and its history, as one will see in §3.

3. ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY- VISUAL ARTS AS APPLIED THEOLOGY

3.1. AREA OF HISTORY OF FINE ARTS (VISUAL ARTS)

The study of fine (visual) arts usually concentrates itself on architecture, sculpture, painting and the graphic arts (lithography, engravings in copper or other materials, etching techniques etc.), the decorative or applied arts (industrial design ceramics, furniture, wall decorations and hangings).

Sometimes photography and related techniques are included. In the field of modern art the boundaries of the above mentioned disciplines are of a shifting nature.

3.2. PARADIGMS

Outlines, schemes, paradigms are artificial means in ordering data. In the complexity of data in the realm of Fine Arts History many a system or ordering structure has been developed. Often they suit the author of the system in the first place. Happily enough they can often serve others as well.

The first and most important thing is to find a general

characteristic which can be used in structuring the data. For example, one could use the one-, two- and three- dimension characteristics of the art object or art performance.

One-dimension arts are: music, poems, because they can only be enjoyed during the performance or recitation. They are the arts of the very moment.

Two-dimension arts are: paintings, murals, mosaics, reliefs and graphic arts; their main characteristic is their flatness. A third dimension, if necessary as imaginative aspect, is suggested, sometimes by a linear- or colourperspective.

Three-dimension arts are: architecture and sculpture.

Dimensional hybrids are: films, music, artistic neonlight structures, drama, two-dimensional pictures projected at a speed of 24 per second, ballet (consisting of music, changing coloured light patterns, body-movements on a three- dimensional stage, decors, stage frame) and opera (consisting of drama, dance and music on stage).

In modern art artists deliberately cross borders to make paintings three-dimensional or sculptures moving objects, using all in one, time, sound, space and light effects. Modern inventions like computer-controlled devices and laserbeam-generators serve in kind and way highlightening certain aspects in order to foster the imagination of the spectator.

3.3. MATERIAL ASPECTS

Another general characteristic is to be found in the material aspects of the object of art. The first step taken could lead to the artist's tools, instruments and materials. Does the artist use his body, hands, voice, man made instruments of any kind, or trivial, holy or special material. The second step could be to look at the object of art or the performance: movement, rhythm, colour, line, light, composition, etc. These are important in the first encounter between object, performance and the spectator. Then the adventure with the artist's work starts. Regardless of whether it is a representational or non-representational theme, the spectator may then start to unveil the reasons of its

C:\WP\KHIS6

13

individual and characteristic composition, subject and hidden meaning as well as the structural truth in all its parts. Form and content go together. Analysing form is paving a way to understanding content.

3.4. ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY

A work of art, according to its kind, communicates via its special language, grammar and idiom. A student of the fine arts spends quite some time learning particularities and rules of the hidden and unhidden laws of this expressive language, symbols, metalanguage, types and archetypes. Iconography, is that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form (In Christian Art it is the description of saints and their emblems, symbols or symbolic tools (like the keys of St' Peter, the cross of St' Andrew, the grid of St Laurente, the prescribed colors of the garment of Mary or the white lily, flower-de-luce, the flower of the Madonna; their special message or reference to stories in the Holy Scriptures or Vitae). Iconology concerns itself with the interpretation of symbolic values, which are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he conciously intended to express. Both, Iconography and Iconology, serve the scientist, the student, the connoisseur, as well as the spectator. These ancillary sciences make visual art accessible.

Calvin Seerveld gives the Christian artist some rules for his artistic creativeness, which in reverse could easily be used by art historian and spectator, while reflecting on the meaning of the object of art with which they are confronted:

1. become filled with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit (put yourself in the right attitude and be honest to yourself);
2. conceive art as work and undergo its training like a trade (trade, form);
3. distil a fruitful christian art-historical tradition in your own blood and pioneer its contribution in our day (tradition);
4. integrate yourself as a band of christian task-forces in

other cultural areas in order to reach out as a peoplehood of God to the public at large (Christian culture);

5. persevere in unfolding art historically, with a generation-long patience and hope (pass on certain values).

Undoubtedly these rules are applicable for the artist of today. Certainly they were applied, for example, by the icon painter on Mount Athos and the illuminist of Monte Casino, by Matthias Grünewald or the artists decorating the church walls in the 17th and later centuries. By keen observation and study, Calvin Seerveld established this truth. In a way these rules are applicable to much of the mediaeval and religious art in Europe of later centuries.

3.5. CONTEXT AND RELATION TO CIRCUMSTANCES

Hugh Honour and John Fleming draw our attention to another aspect in structuring the amount of art-historical data and works of art.

"Works of art cannot be fully understood unless they are related to the circumstances in which they were created. Context is all-important in art as it is in language. Iconography, the study of the meaning of visual images, seeks to elucidate the original significance of works of art by setting them in their general cultural ambience.

In many works there are, however, superimposed levels of meaning, which cannot always be recovered. For meanings have been conveyed visually in a variety of interconnected ways... from the most direct... to the symbolic... and the allegoric."

(Hugh Honour, John Fleming, World History of Art, papermac-McMillan Publ.Lt. London 1985, p.9).

Leland Rijken adds to the observations of Honour and Fleming:

"The arts are rooted in the image-making and image-perceiving nature of people. People do not live by ideas alone. They also express their affirmations and denials through paint on canvas, the tension and release of sound and poems and stories."

(Arthur Holmes, ed., The making of the Christian Mind, The Creative Art Intersvarsity Press, Illinois, 1985, p.106.)

3.6. IMAGINATIONS AND THE BIBLE

Arthur Holmes makes some interesting comments about the connection between imagination and the Bible. He says:

"Christianity affirms the artistic enterprise. The Bible itself endorses both the image-making and the imaginary impulses of the arts..."

He then gives 4 main lines of evidence:

1. The natural world of created objects: these visible images, in turn, are said to communicate truth about God Himself. (Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:19-20).
2. The literary nature of the Bible: the bulk of the Bible consists of stories, poems, visions and letters, all of them literary forms.
3. The Christian sacraments of communion and baptism have also been important in attempts to arrive at a Christian aesthetic manifestation of creative imagination in a fallen world.
4. Old Testament worship: In the Old Testament worship is surrounded by a wealth of music, visible and verbal art.

He continues:

"It is no wonder that Christianity has been the most artistic religion in the world. Much of the doctrine has been enshrined in music, visual symbol, poem and story... For more than 15 centuries of western history Christianity provided the human influence and content for the creative arts."

(Arthur Holmes ed., The making of the Christian Mind, pp. 108, 109,110.)

Indeed, much of the History of Fine Arts consists of Christian Art, which served the Christian Church and Christian communities. In most of the cases the bridge between the arts and the Bible can be demonstrated by the symbols or stories which are used and which found their origin in the Old or New Testament.

3.7. ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY-AUXILIARY SCIENCES

Iconography concentrates on:

1. The study of the different representations of certain themes, topics or subject matter, which are classified as corresponding images;
2. the study of the representation of a certain theme or topic in a work of art;
3. the study of the complex unity of book-illustration (illuminated manuscripts) and single compositions.

In explaining and interpreting Christian art it is very helpful to have adequate information about Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox or Protestant church-practices, sacraments, saints, symbols, allegories, Biblical type and antitype contrasts, local or national traditions in connection with veneration and worship of

saints, disciples, Mary, Jesus Christ and the Trinity, flowers and tools, and last but not least a working knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the history of dogma.

Iconographic information can be found, for example, in iconographic encyclopedias, emblem books, the Bible itself, vitae (lives of the Saints), mythology, liturgical and trivial utensils and all kinds of historical material.

Understanding and interpreting form and content of a particular work of art, one has to keep in mind the following aspects:

1. the artist (character, education, nationality, historical consciousness, world view, religion, social background etc.);
2. the commissioner (status of person, institute, artist);
3. the kind of commission (religious, trivial, commemorative etc.);
4. the general world view or Weltanschauung, which was current at the time;
5. the artistic language at the time (romantic, realistic, mythological, religious etc.) and its metalanguage;
6. the reason why it was made and its proposed function;
7. the artistic theories at the time, expressive rules;
8. the development of style and cultural particularities at the time;
9. the interaction of all these aspects in its cultural context at the time.

3.8 E. PANOFSKY AND HIS ICONOLOGICAL SYSTEM

Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) analyzed the formation of images and visual archetypes, their evolution through the ages and in different countries, their symbolic role and meaning, the ideas they express. His findings on Renaissance art and the method he developed in studying the humanistic themes, were for the first time published in 1932 and published in revised form in the fifties or sixties.

Panofsky meant a work of art to have at least three superimposed levels of meaning, which could each be interpreted in four different ways (a. object of interpretation, b. act of interpretation, c. equipment for interpretation, d. corrective principle of interpretation). He elaborated his thesis in the course of his scientific career several times and materialized it into a practical paradigm. In short this paradigm reads as follows:

First level: Pre-iconographical description.

One sees the beauty or the ugliness of a piece of art at first sight. It is the first impression. One recognizes the story, images, symbols etc.. One encounters the complete composition, the totality of form and content. On this level the four different ways of interpretation lead to (a.) primary subject matter, factual in the sense that one can explore the material aspects of the piece of art as well as the artistical expression and general set of applied artistic motives (b.) pre-iconographical description, a quick overview of the composition and theme (c.) practical experience and related familiarity with object and events and (d.) style and insight into its place in the development of historical conditions.

Second level: Iconographical analysis.

One starts to interpret images, symbols and allegories, stories or historical events and other aspects of information. One needs knowledge of literary sources and a working knowledge of artistic themes. The art historian ought to know how themes, concepts etc., were used and how they developed in a certain cultural period. Again the four forms of interpretation may be applied by exploring on the second level, using one's knowledge of literary sources and one's knowledge of the history of themes or concepts.

Third level: Iconological analysis.

The art historian, the spectator, tries to discover the deepest structures of the piece of art and the context in which it was created. The piece of art will be approached as a cultural expression, as part of a cultural period, as a link in a development or evolution of form and content. Here again the four forms of interpretation may be applied in exploring the third level, which lead to information about the intrinsic meaning and symbolical values, the iconological interpretation, psychological explanation of the theme(s), and the cultural conditions of the period and the "Zeitgeist" (essential tendencies of the human mind and the way they are expressed in specific themes and concepts).

Erwin Panofsky founded his thesis on the observations of G.C. Hoogewerff and Aby Warburg. Both, each in their own way, were important for the development of iconology (Hoogewerff, a Roman Catholic priest and scientist, exploring the art of the catacombs (during the twenties), the early and mediaeval church, especially developed iconography; Aby Warburg, the scion of a rich German family of bankers, founded the Warburg Institute

18 C:\WP\KHIS6

(Warburg - Courtauld Institutes, London) where he and his assistants devoted themselves to the interpretation of symbols, allegories and world view concepts, in short, the metalanguage of the visual arts and literary documents of Renaissance and Baroque.

Panofsky, being a member of the Warburg Institute, concentrated his research on the intrinsic meaning or content of the world of symbolic values. It led ultimately to his famous paradigm that was to be used for research on items of Renaissance visual arts and literature. This paradigm, however, can also be used for the interpretation of art of other style periods. The lecturer on Fine Arts history can use it to uncover the superimposed levels of meaning and to discover the wealth of cultural and artistic information of the artistic object of study.

3.9 CALVIN SEERVELD, THREE DIMENSIONAL CARTHOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY

A more elaborate interpretative paradigm, undoubtedly in the tradition of Erwin Panofsky's, was developed by Calvin Seerveld. He called his paradigm "Three dimensional cartographic methodology". In contrast to the rather static paradigm of Panofsky, Seerveld's paradigm is meant to be dynamic, including not only information about the superimposed layers of artistic themes and concepts, but of all sorts of relevant information. The information covers political, religious, social, philosophical, scientific, in short, all cultural areas. Events, ideas, individuals, movements etc., can find a place in a cultural context and structure of interrelations.

The three dimensional cartographic methodology was proposed in 1980 as a plea for an imaginative theory of historiography which would do justice to the rich complexity of the Enlightenment-period. He suggested however at the same time that "it would be servable for historiography in other cultural times too, Renaissance-art, Victorian literature, or whatever". It also was developed in defence of the dialectical scheme of Arnold Hauser and others who reduced cultural developments in the field of art

THREE DIMENSIONAL CARTOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY
 (BASIC COÖRDINATES)

SYNCHRONIC REALITY

1. DIFFERENT WELTANSCHAUUNGEN OR WORLD-VIEWS

POWERFUL MILIEU FOR ALL KINDS OF INDIVIDUAL ACTS

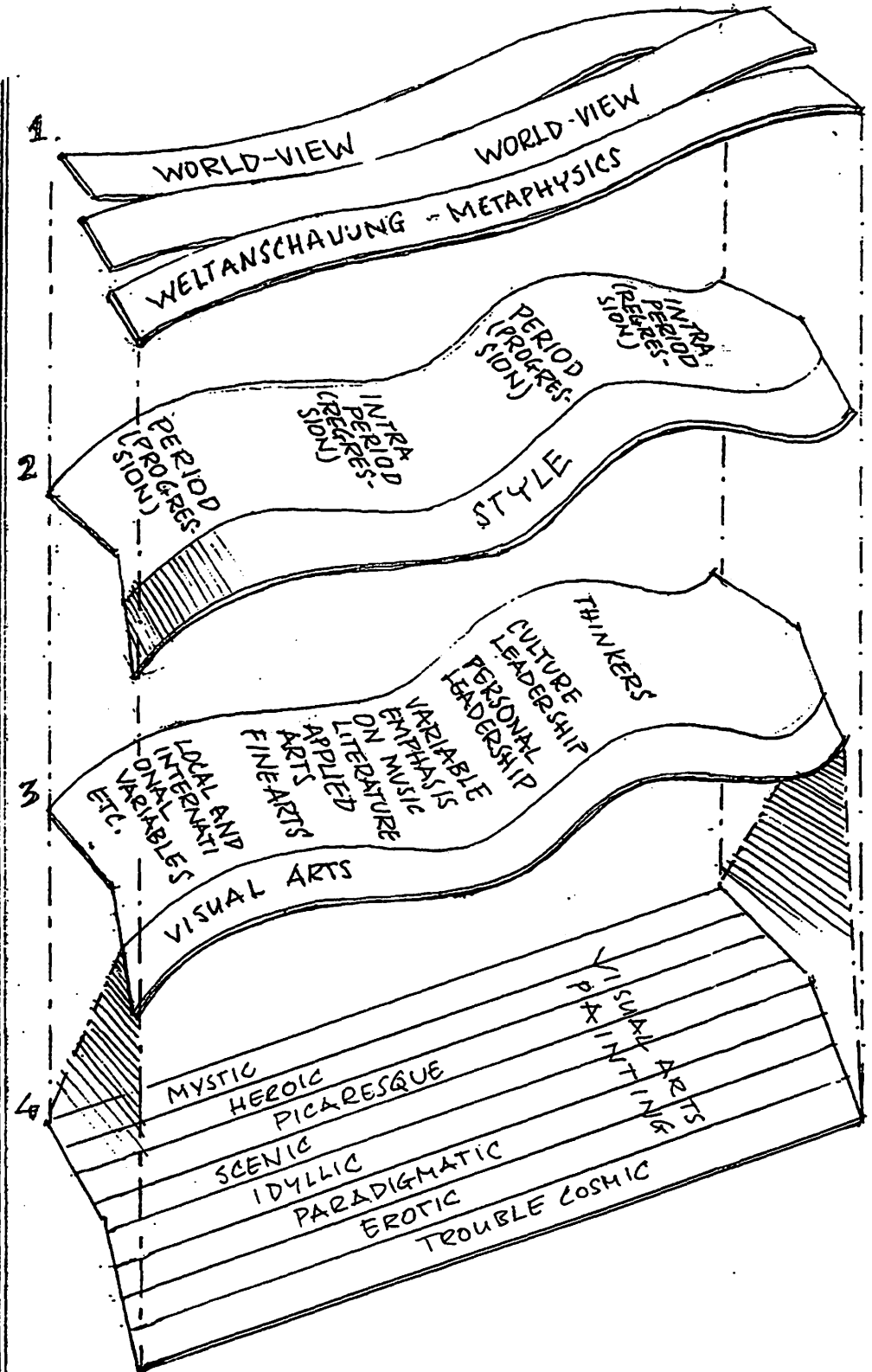
DIACHRONIC REALITY OF HIST. DEVELOPMENT

2. HISTORICAL PERIODS, HOMOGENIOUS CULTURAL EVENTS WHICH DO NOT RECUR, PERIODS OF PROGRESSION / REGRESSION OR CHANGE

PERCHRONIC REALITY

3. VARIOUS ARTS, DIFFEREN CULTURAL AREAS, DIFFERING PACE - PERFORM ON DIFFERENT LEVELS, SUBMISSION TO THE DOMINANT CULTURAL SPIRIT

4. VISUAL ARTS PAINTING-PAINTERS VARIOUS TYPES OF ARTISTS - WORKS OF ART



and literature to "pawns of a fated class struggle" or Marxist scientific model; or those who stress some aspects of cultural life (Minguet and Ronald Paulsen); or those who think that cultural pattern setting elements are introduced by strong political or spiritual leaders (Sedlemayer and Hatzfield). The superimposed layers in Seerveld's three-dimensional paradigm offer a rich and elaborat interplay of relations. At a glance one can see the complexity and the interrelation of facts, movements, development of concepts and ideas, carachteristics of style, individual contributions, general world view (Weltanschauung, Zeitgeist) and historical development. Provided that Seerveld's paradigm is furnished with sufficient, relevant information on all levels, keeping in mind that on each level one should be able to discover a multi-linear expressed historical development (or regression) by following the sequence of events, the over-view is really dynamic in its kind.

Seerveld's paradigm can be described succinctly by a few key features of three basis coordinates, which are categorial factors constantly operating in art and literature an of special concern to historians:

1. The SYNCHRONIC REALITY

The synchronic reality of a period is pancultural and takes its defenition from the most dynamical leadership, whether it prevails over all fields or less than all.

However, cultural leaders, various arts and different cultural areas have a differing pace and often perform at various levels of submission to the dominant cultural spirit

"The structural macro-unity of a period is more like a snake of European currency values."

2. The PERCHRONIC REALITY

The perchronic reality represents the fact that a number of world visions, local and national characteristics, language, long lasting traditions, co-exist at the same time and often at the same place. The recognition of this living perchronic reality of multiple, coexistant world visions (weltanschauungen) and art traditions, stops one from treating periods as one dimensional phenomena. A period needs te be read not as an one-line Gregorean chant melody but as a symphonic orchestra.

20 C:\WP\KHIS6

3.The DIACHRONIC REALITY

The diachronic reality draws our attention to historical developments (the third dimension). Changes, new conditions, enrichment or wastage of a heritage in certain cultural areas, formative and creative actions, are to be registered as a diachronic reality. On the basis of living and quickening world views new artistic styles can be developed which find practitioners who consolidate specific artistic gains for their own generation and the next. The importance of new style-movements also lies in its long-range service in opening up certain artistic areas to a more normative performance.

Calvin Seerveld poses that the forte of his paradigm or methodology is "that any historical period is conceived concretely in three-dimensional structure, so that the relative simplicity, complexity and flexibility are structurally assured. Every art or literary artefact considered historically will be immediately scrutinized comparatively as to current milieu, traditional matrix and eventful import." (Calvin Seerveld, Towards a Cartographic Methodology, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXXIX/2,1980,USA,p.148).

In applying this methodology "one would need to test the spirit and cultural contribution of each specific item, and one can be kept from making easy generalizations if one always takes into account the three dimensional mesh which is present and relevant for understanding what is going on".

(Calvin Seerveld, *ibid*, p. 148)

The Faith-Learning Integration aspect is imbedded in the approach to the piece of art. The world view of the spectator or scientist helps to choose the relevant data and impose the relevant meaning on the outcome of the analysis on the various levels.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In analysing a work of art, particularly a work of visual art, the methods which are embodied in the auxiliary sciences Iconography, Iconology and Seerfeld's Three Dimensional

Methodology, could be used. The emphasis on analysing one or more aspects of a piece of art or performance helps to decide what method will be used; but Seerveld's methodology is of a general and probably universal character.

Attitude, world view, Christian convictions and traditions will determine one's approach and way of inquiry.

It is here that the Faith-Learning act happens. Ethical as well as aesthetical norms, views and conceptions will find their battleground in the dialogue between the piece of art and the investigator. After all, it is the lover of the arts who decides on the basis of his personal preferences, convictions and cultural tradition (syn-, per- and diachronic realities).

A Christian will look for the revelation of God's Truth in the arts. Sometimes this can be conceived directly, sometimes one has to search for the deeper meaning and this can be very problematic. Just one illustration to show the difficulty of interpreting facts: Rookmaker starting from the same propositions as Seerveld does, sees 20 th century Western visual arts as the illustration and the produce of the Death Of A Culture (Western Christian Civilization).

Seerveld, however, interprets contemporary Western visual arts as the illustration and outcome of the Birth Of A New Culture. Seerveld's observations are undoubtedly more encouraging than Rookmaker's. His is a needlessly pessimistic view on culture and especially on the visual arts.

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ANALYSING A WORK OF ART

Analysing a work of art, for example the Tympan of the Romanesque Church, "La Madeleine de Vezelay", France, 12 th Century (ca. 1130), the lecturer could apply the following methods (by preference comparing it with similar works of art of an earlier or later period):

a. Iconographic Analysis: A description of the composition and the material aspects of the image as well as a description of persons, symbols, allegories, etc..

b. Iconological Analysis (according to E.Panofsky's paradigm)

first level: first impression, first sight information;

second level: interpretation of images, symbols, allegories etc.

explaining their deeper meaning and tradition in the language of the arts.

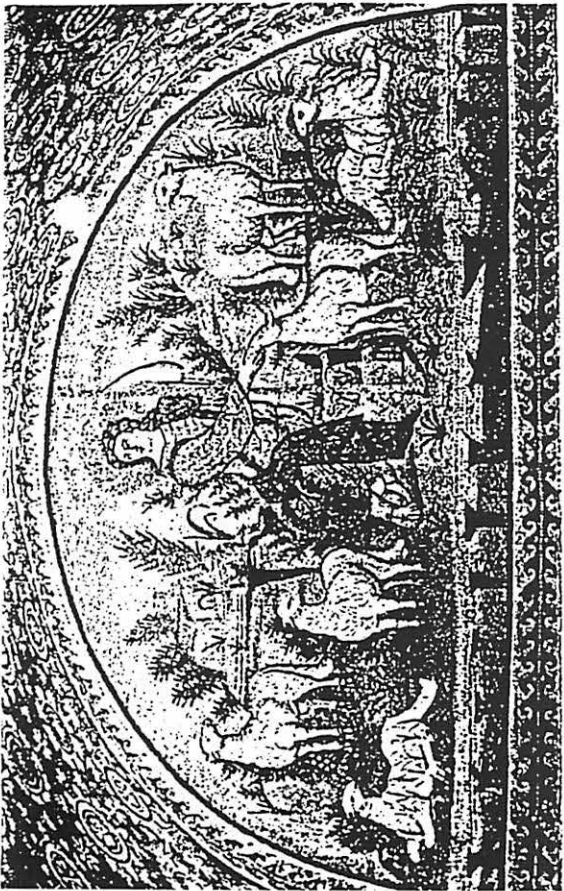
third level: uncovering the deepest meaning of the images, symbols, allegories, etc., uncovering their metalanguage and iconographical grammar, following the development of the traditional representation of the theme and its subject matter through the ages, analysing the impact of worldview, theology and popular beliefs on theme and subject matter.

c. Cartographic methodology for Art History: the basic three coordinates could be applied : worldviews (x), historical periods (y), different pace on different levels of art's development and cultural areas (z).

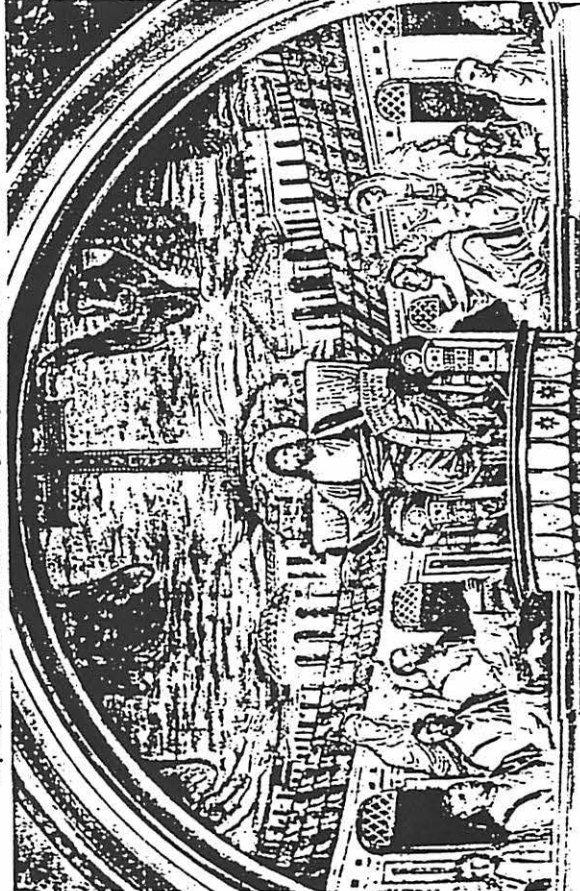
Each method gives plenty room for aesthetical, ethical and theological reflexions. Method c. with its synchronic and diachronic approach, in covers nearly all possible areas, in my opinion. It provides plenty room to interpret the facts according to the lecturer's S.D.A. worldview.



ÉGLISE DE LA MADELEINE, A VÉZELAY. TYMPAN DU PORTAIL INTÉRIEUR DU NARTHEX (VERS 1130). LA MISSION DES APÔTRES. Des mains du Christ partent des rayons qui, aboutissant aux têtes des apôtres, traduisent en quelque sorte la parole : - Allez, enseignez toutes les nations. - L'influer des miniatures byzantines, l'effort pour traduire en vivants reliefs des modèles peints s'accusent dans ces rayons et dans les remous des draperies. Les petites figures qui encadrent la scène grandiose représenteraient les peuples de l'Univers.



VENISE. MAUSOLÉE DE GALLA PLACIDIA. MOSAÏQUE DU BON PÂTEUR (MILIEU DU V^e SIÈCLE). Transformation d'un thème symbolique suivant les principes de l'art triomphal. Le pasteur a reçu les traits du Christ, le costume broché d'or et l'attitude souveraine d'un empereur; il tient sa houlette comme un sceptre, mais flatte une brebis d'un geste plein de naturel. — Cf. ALBERT.



ROME. MOSAÏQUE DE L'ABSIDE DE SAINTE-PUDENCIE. Le Christ enseignant, fin du IV^e siècle; parties inédites. Grandiose composition annonçant les scènes de majesté de l'art byzantin; mais la tradition hellénique s'affirme dans l'attitude pleine de liberté et de naturel des apôtres, ainsi que dans le paysage qui les entoure. — Cf. ALBERT, op. cit., p. 146. — Cf. ALBERT, op. cit., p. 146.

22 C:\WP\KHIS6

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