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Niccolò Grimaldi: The Aesthetic Experience ... An Experience of Understanding and Teaching

Abstract

This article explores Niccolò Grimaldi's philosophy through the concept of waiting (*attente*) as the fundamental condition of consciousness arising from the gap between desire and fulfilment. It argues that disappointment constitutes the negative origin of philosophy and grounds an ontology marked by solitude, melancholy, and expectation. The study further examines Grimaldi's understanding of aesthetic experience as distance, play, and a metaphysical journey, in which art both estranges and reorients human existence. Focusing on painting, particularly Grimaldi's reading of Van Gogh, the article analyses the autonomy of artistic creation, the expressive power of colour, and the fragmentation that leads to aesthetic synthesis. Ultimately, it shows that for Grimaldi, aesthetic experience is an experiential mode of understanding that reveals truth beyond conceptual knowledge and situates art at the intersection of ontology, desire, and lived experience.

Keywords: *Niccolò Grimaldi, aesthetic experience, Waiting (Attente), desire and disappointment, Philosophy of Art*

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Nikkolo Qrimaldi: estetik təcrübə ... anlama və tədris təcrübəsi

Xülasə

Bu məqalə Nikkolo Qrimaldinin fəlsəfəsini arzu və yerinə yetirmə arasındakı boşluqdan irəli gələn şüurun əsas şərti kimi gözləmə (diqqət) anlayışı vasitəsilə araşdırır. Məyusluğun fəlsəfinin mənfi mənşəyini təşkil etdiyini iddia edir və tənhalıq, melanxoliya və gözlənti ilə xarakterizə olunan ontologiyayı əsaslandırır. Tədqiqatda Qrimaldinin estetik təcrübəni məsafə, oyun və meta-fizik səyahət kimi başa düşməsi araşdırılır ki, bu səyahətdə sənət həm uzaqlaşır, həm də insan varlığını yenidən istiqamətləndirir. Rəssamlığa, xüsusən də Qrimaldinin Van Qoq əsərlərini oxumasına diqqət yetirən məqalədə bədii yaradıcılığın muxtariyyəti, rəngin ifadəli gücü və estetik sintezə aparan parçalanma təhlil edilir. Nəticədə, Qrimaldi üçün estetik təcrübənin konseptual biliklərdən kənarda həqiqəti ortaya qoyan və sənəti ontologiya, arzu və yaşanmış təcrübənin kəsişməsində yerləşdirən təcrübə bir anlayış üsulu olduğu göstərilir.

Açar sözlər: *Nikkolo Qrimaldi, estetik təcrübə, gözləmə (diqqət), arzu və məyusluq, incəsənət fəlsəfəsi*

Introduction

Niccolò Grimaldi, a disciple of Vladimir Jankélévitch, has founded and continues to find to this day a philosophical thought distinguished by its cogency and originality, fundamentally predicated upon the idea of “waiting” (*attente*). He is a fervent advocate for the value of sharing sensations and emotions in constructing an ontology of waiting. Grimaldi is characterised by a pronounced inclination towards prolonged contemplation, a contemplation replete with melancholy and affection.

Born on 24 December 1933, he obtained his agrégation in philosophy in 1955. Since 1963, he has served as a professor at Sorbonne, where he has successively held the chair of the history of modern philosophy and metaphysics. From 1983 until 1988, he presided over the Centre for Cartesian Studies.

Grimaldi prefers the practice of philosophising to merely reading the works of philosophers. He has not been captivated by great philosophical names, which have often exerted pressure and constraints upon certain philosophers who were striving to pursue their distinctive philosophical projects. For us, however, Grimaldi is the philosopher who has distanced himself from the “trend” of the great names, for in his works, the names Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger are but rarely encountered. Instead, he chooses to orient his philosophical practice towards philosophical and occasionally even literary and artistic figures who have not held a prominent place in the works of contemporary philosophers. Thus, his writings include references to Diderot, Montaigne, Proust, Alain, Ravaillon, Malebranche, Condillac, and Bergson.

Research

Grimaldi is regarded as one of the most distinguished and accomplished readers of Descartes, to whom he has devoted numerous writings throughout his philosophical career. Grimaldi speaks in the very manner in which he writes; unlike many contemporary philosophers, he presents us with the possibility of philosophising beyond the predetermined pathways of philosophy, which today are widely circulated and recognised, such as analytic, hermeneutic, pragmatic, and even phenomenological traditions. Accordingly, Grimaldi prefers to engage with his subjects in a manner that is free and unencumbered, rejecting any attempt to reduce philosophy to mere opinions, ideas, or intellectual luxuries. Thus, such philosophising would not require toil or perseverance to attain it. Philosophy, for the Grimaldi, is not a matter of settled thought; instead, its resolution remains a locus of anticipation and expectation. This is revealed in his writings, which are imbued with a particularly intense sense of strangeness, a feeling of alienation that is almost gnostic, an estrangement from the world, life, and existence.

The experience of deprivation is one directly linked to desire, wherein a conspicuous gap appears between what life bestows upon us and what we await from it. Human desire does not align with what one wishes to obtain; life may at times encounter its most violent collision with radical impossibility. This distance and the act of reflection, on the one hand, and the “noncoincidence” between desire and its fulfilment, on the other hand, have led Grimaldi, since his earliest works *Desire and Time* (*Désir et Temps*, 1971), to assert that the origin of all philosophy is “disappointment” (*déception*). This negative origin enabled him to link philosophy with the wager of waiting. This wager forms the very foundation upon which his philosophical project rests. Since the intention of consciousness is one thing and its possession another, this state creates a kind of “gap” (*écart*) that renders waiting an inescapable condition. Indeed, there is no desire except where there is waiting; for consciousness, waiting is what tendency is for life. Waiting is the principle of consciousness, and tendency is the principle of life.

Accordingly, philosophy ought to possess the capacity to discern what must be done, wherein one finds the most significant topics indicative of its fecundity and originality, those related to the investigation of desire, disappointment, melancholy, solitude, love, alienation, and strangeness. For Grimaldi, philosophy is “the sum of answers capable of adducing arguments and justifications for the many questions that existence poses to us (Grimaldi, 2014, p. 7).” Whereas the thought of many philosophers is circumscribed by the systematic ideas they propose, the case is otherwise with Grimaldi: he regards thinking as the path upon which one walks in order to discover something, without knowing its proper destination. When, in 1968, he resolved to think in radical isolation, he acquired for himself a “semaphore”; at that time, the matter concerned the search for suitable conditions for thinking, whereby the place came to reflect Grimaldi’s ontological solitude. It was not merely that his solitude was provoked; instead, it continually reminded him of solitude, reminding him that truth can be encountered only within an essential solitude, grounded in scepticism towards existence at the borders of reality. In our view, Grimaldi does not prefer to flee from his ghosts; instead, one finds him persistently and stubbornly intent on illuminating a corner of existence’s

darkness. This has enabled him to enter into a rigorous dialogue with philosophers, writers, and even artists to comprehend what they wish to contemplate.

The origin of philosophy, Grimaldi contends, carries within it an element of disappointment; it is difficult to embark upon the search for the truth of life and the history of life, a difficulty that, for Grimaldi, is bound to the decision to undergo two experiences through which he has passed since his youth. He affirms that his orientation towards seeking a truth other than that established by the sciences and forms of knowledge, which we have long awaited from science, yet in vain, was decisively shaped by these experiences. Thus, it may be said that the turn towards philosophy was justified: “My first experience”, he states, “dates back to the period of captivity and occupation during 1942–1943, the time of the siege of France, which was marked by fear, obsession, and anxiety about the future, feelings experienced by the peoples of Europe, as if intimating the necessity for the advent of another, different world.” Grimaldi continually observes: “The great peace of nature exists everywhere. At that time, it appeared as although man had become lost and bewildered in nature and estranged from it.”

Here, for Grimaldi, the first issue that preoccupied him for a long time emerged, namely, the truth of the foundational transcendence of human existence in nature. While we find that what is in man is of nature, we are nonetheless confronted with such a sensation, the sensation of being alien to it.

Grimaldi regards the second experience as a continuation of the first, whereby, in addition to the concept of nature, another fundamental concept emerges: “life” (vie). Here, his early engagement with the works of Nietzsche becomes apparent. Accordingly, the two experiences related to nature and life revealed something of the ennui of existence that began to pervade and take root within Europe during and after the Second World War, a time when all rushed to possess what others had. In those moments, European humanity was compelled to seek waiting and desire, which might allay its fears and anxieties, even if only temporarily. Here, Grimaldi, for his part, is also inclined to pose the following question: How is it that, in all these circumstances, human beings search for something beyond life, in pursuit of a meaning that appears to be lacking? Life itself, he maintains, carries its meaning; it is that which nature reveals. It is at this point that the exceptional presence of Nietzsche arises, whose works he encountered in one of his family’s libraries and immediately set about reading, a reading that, as he states, “granted him a fundamental ontological revelation, consisting in that which reveals the finitude of our existence in writing. Writing here is a ceaselessly flowing current that resides within us as sentiment, as overwhelming passion; it is thought to be accessed through the energy of its rhythm. Moreover, since, at that time, everyone recognised Nietzsche as a philosopher, I began to incline towards philosophy as although he were the true inspiration for the new experience to which I would devote the greater part of my life. To this day, after sixty years, I still confess neither to have neglected nor forgotten it (Grimaldi, 2020, p. 12).”

That which is most sensitive and most concrete is the very subject upon which philosophy exercises and practises its analyses, such as those relating to waiting, solitude, disappointment, and desire. All these terms enable us to engage in authentic philosophical practice and render it experimental, thereby allowing us to sense its materiality. It is, of course, from this ontological tension and brilliance with which Grimaldi lives alongside his ideas that he never, in my view, harboured an ambition to establish a philosophical doctrine or a self-contained intellectual system. When asked what led Grimaldi to devote such unparalleled attention to the ideas of other thinkers so much that he undertook to analyse them without concerning himself with clarifying or developing his thought, he responded: “My ambition was never to find an original system of thought, but rather to approach the truth. This is what drove me fundamentally towards philosophy. The truth obliges each one of us to search tirelessly, as if it imposes itself upon us just as we impose ourselves upon it. Naturally, this state is fundamentally due to the very nature of truth; it is for this reason that error becomes the sole, authentic element in philosophy.”

The second observation concerns the history of philosophy, affirming that the failure of early philosophers to open themselves to their predecessors, or even to their contemporaries, prevented them from deepening their reflection on their ideas and thus from attending to them to understand the

difficulties these thinkers faced. The history of philosophy is a “cartography of thought”, a “mapping” that grants us the possibility of inhabiting it (Grimaldi, 2020, p. 13).

For this reason, I believe, from a rigorously pedagogical perspective, that there is no better method for teaching philosophy than for the study of the principal doctrines with the greatest possible precision. The most important aspect of their study does not reside in knowing what this or that philosopher asserts but rather in the capacity to comprehend how they were led to think and even how they conceal their preference for one self-evidence over another. “When confronted with any doctrine or creed, as both a teacher and philosopher, my primary concern was to describe the problem for which I began to seek a possible solution, then to understand the experience that led to its emergence, and finally, I was obliged to clarify how the question under consideration demonstrates that the presuppositions of this method implicitly contained the doctrines.” (Grimaldi, 2020, p. 16).

Aesthetic Experience as Distance and Journey

How is it possible for us to depart without any movement? How might we change the world without changing places? Moreover, how can journeying become metaphysical? The estrangement of art lies in its metaphysical dimension, which is, of course, fundamentally related to play as the primary feature of the artistic experience. This condition manifests itself most clearly in dance, theatre, and especially in those who do not mask in their embodiment of a particular role. For, from behind the mask, the dancer does not affirm his natural individuality within his existence, which is enclosed within appearances. Nor does he ever affirm it in the person whom he is invited to embody, by this new manifestation. Accordingly, he neither affirms the individuality of nature at the moment of donning the mask nor can he, in that instant, become the very person whom the mask invites him to incarnate and perform. The mask may direct the dancer toward a place other than that assigned to him by his natural existence.

This pertains to the actor (the dancer); as for the spectator, if the mask dances for the spectator, it simultaneously obliges him, on the condition that he, too, joins its play. For this reason, the spectator feigns ignorance of what the masks conceal and pretends not to encounter them. This extraordinary genius, the mythical animal that the dancer embodies, plays through him the game of naïveté, the game of surprise, and thereby enables the internal gesture (*mime intérieur*) of the self to be acknowledged as one of the essential features of the experience of play that defines the experience of art.

At this juncture, a fundamental question may be raised: If art has no function other than to estrange us, does strangeness then become the very essence of art? To address this question, we may point to the following essential consideration: it is not sufficient merely to possess the capacity to believe in the reality represented by art; instead, desire must also grant us the belief in it. This underpins every style, enabling us to see the thing as although we had never seen it before. Style is that which allows us to confer meaning upon what is represented. Diderot, as Grimaldi noted, insisted that painting ought not to represent to us, from those most banal scenes and commonplace images, anything other than the possible realities contained within them. If Diderot rejected the presence of ambiguity, anomalies, and absurdity within art, it was because art ought to bring us closer to that which it represents; for art, it transports us only to the extent that it convinces us and only insofar as we can believe in it. However, we are often mistrustful of the possibility (Grimaldi, 2020, pp. 17–18).

However, if, as Diderot suggests, art must always bring us closer to that which it represents, as if it were natural, it must not reveal it to us as we perceive it in its natural state. Art draws us back, once again, towards the world. Of course, we ought not to reduce the function of art solely to wonder, as to claim that the marvellous is always beautiful, no matter how marvellous something may be, it is beautiful, and there is nothing marvellous except that which is beautiful. Apollinaire introduces another function, surprise, affirming that surprise in art is a powerful stimulus towards that which is serious. In this way, Picabia shares the taste for adventure for the sake of adventure. Suppose it is true that not all that is marvellous thereby possesses aesthetic value. In that case, it is equally the case that no aesthetic experience is possible without the sensation of distance and transformation with respect, of course, to the naïveté of existence and the familiarity of language. Art may bewilder us by its

subject when we discover worlds previously unseen; however, it may also perplex us by its style, when we see the world as although we had never discovered it at all. The experience that arises from art is always, inevitably, an experience of journeying (Grimaldi, 2020, p. 194).

However, can we claim that art reflects only the image of strangeness and the marvellous? Moreover, if art is a journey, of what surprise, distance, and strangeness is it a matter? The experience of art is not confined merely to viewing a painting as although it were a game of forms and colours assembled within a particular system; rather, it is founded upon the recognition of oneself within these forms and colours. "Painting is poetry without words," like a text filled with signs that demand translation, interpretation, and understanding. Pictorial deception, such as narrative or comedic deception, transports the spectator to other places, other times, and other lives. In the perpetual temporality of deception, the experience of art achieves a crossing of the boundaries of our existence; art is a metaphysical journey (Grimaldi, 2020, p. 198).

Forms, colours, and signs are what paintings indicate; however, what the painting expresses in all its parts and details are emotions, sensations, and human feelings. The visible space gives expression to the invisible space. Nor can the painting be reduced merely to a composition of forms or relationships between colours; colours and forms are nothing but sensations, which the viewer must recognise and acknowledge. This entails experiencing them imaginatively, which in turn means, through imagination, reconstituting their lives across other places and times, that is, enabling them to journey.

In line with these theoretical observations, we find an experimental horizon among many painters, foremost Eugène Delacroix. In one of his letters dated 8 October 1822, he writes: "They say that when I complete a painting, I am not writing a thought. How superficial! For in so doing, they strip painting of all that is uniquely its own. If the writer says everything to be understood, we find that in painting, a marvellous bridge is established between the souls of the characters and the soul of the spectator. Although the latter sees images and external nature, he inwardly contemplates the true contemplation shared by all humanity. The act of artistic creation is, rather, dear to the heart of every person." (Grimaldi, 2020, p. 200).

Aesthetics and the Cogito of Painting

Niccolò Grimaldi offers a precise characterisation of Van Gogh's artistic aesthetics, describing it as a "fragmented aesthetic" (*esthétique en miette*), an apt description of Van Gogh's artistic life, which he developed over eighteen years. This fragmentation ultimately led him to establish a distinctive system that characterises his artistic experience. In his interpretation of this experience, Niccolò Grimaldi relies upon Van Gogh's correspondence with his brother Theo.

First, it is pertinent to highlight the following issues through which Niccolò Grimaldi commences his interpretation of Van Gogh's correspondence, principally concerning his artistic career in painting. There is, first, a reference to the foundation of genius, followed by particular observations that distinguish Van Gogh's pictorial language, and finally, the issue of what the artist imitates when he affirms his imitation of nature. Thus, Van Gogh's artistic experience is constituted through a triad: genius (*génialité*), innovation (*renouveau*), and revolution (*révolution*). However, what is meant by a "fragmented aesthetic"? According to Niccolò Grimaldi, when Van Gogh began articulating his thoughts on art, he presented them in the following terms: What do we expect from painting? What is the true nature of its expressive tools? What is the relationship between painting and nature? What is the significance of painting? Moreover, what is the meaning of colouring and colours? In short, Van Gogh, through these questions and stages, developed a fragmented aesthetic. Starting from this fragmentation, as a fundamental and radical stance in Van Gogh's work, he was then able to move directly towards coordination once he had completed the process of synthesis (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 18).

Van Gogh's genius led him to dissolve and merge into painting, following the catastrophic and troubled circumstances he endured for so long. In the face of numerous disappointments in love, the renunciation by his family, and his unsuccessful attempt to become a preacher and religious evangelist, painting became the sole purpose for which he lived. His relationship with painting was marked by profound tension, and he never knew of stability. Van Gogh's conception of art bears its

sublimity and its capacity to transcend our consciousness; that is, art becomes more than our rational comprehension. It stirs the imagination within him, and although human hands execute it, it is not solely the product of those hands. Instead, it flows from the deepest source of our spirit. Thus, everything in art is the result of our skill and dexterity, alongside the requisite technical mastery; accordingly, art is both mechanical and natural, and without all this, there would be no work.

In his correspondence with his brother Theo in 1889, a year before his death, Van Gogh addressed a number of conclusions concerning the relationship between art and nature, a relationship whose significance can be grasped only by referring to another relationship: that between man and nature. While man may find himself within a natural environment, the artist lives in nature itself, as although he has become nature.

Van Gogh is the artist who achieved a humanistic vision upon a natural foundation. From his youth, he was open to the study and care of the subject of nature and its relationship to art under the influence of the painter Millet and the writer Zola. This is a point he continually affirms in his correspondence with his brother Theo, stating: "I have found no finer definition of art than this equation: art is man added to nature" (*l'art, c'est l'homme ajouter à la nature*), whereby nature, reality, and truth enable the artist to extract meaning, interpretation, and individuality (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 95).

Painting teaches us the discipline of seeing nature. Among the aesthetic conclusions that arise from this, as articulated by Van Gogh, are that nature becomes both principle and law; nothing attains universality unless it is truthful, and there is no truth except in nature. Accordingly, it is necessary to search for the possibility of discovering natural means so that we may articulate what nature wishes to make heard. "Continue your walk, your wandering," Van Gogh writes to his brother in February 1874, "Continue your love, longing, and passion for nature; it is the sole essential element through which you may gradually learn art. The painter understands (*comprendre*) nature and teaches us (*apprendre*) how to see it" (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 98).

In his correspondence from 1881, Van Gogh declared that he has become a painter, having succeeded in developing his vision of the relationship between art and nature, particularly through his affirmation that nature becomes both principle and law. Nature manifests its violence and harshness towards the painter, and only one who strives to confront it is impelled to triumph over it until the painter and nature come into harmony. After a period during which nature displays a certain violence, tranquillity eventually emerges. Here, Van Gogh borrowed the phrase "Mauve," which he deemed to reflect his fundamental principle in work: "Penetrate nature deeply, the way is marked out." This, for him, signifies the first distinctive moment in the relationship between nature and art.

The second moment, as Niccolò Grimaldi deduces from his continued reading of Van Gogh's correspondence, relates to when nature becomes a work, at which point painting takes precedence over nature. At this stage, Van Gogh is wholly absorbed in the perpetual search for models. In his correspondence from 1888, he writes, "It is impossible to paint without models, as these remain attached to nature. The obsession with seeking out models delayed his progress as a painter due to poverty and deprivation; nevertheless, he overcame this condition, subsequently announcing his absolute immersion and dedication to painting, devoting himself entirely to it. He states, 'I have come to do everything in my power to maintain myself in painting without departing from it, for it has become the backbone of art and the skeleton upon which everything else rests and coheres. Thus, it will be my duty to devote all my energy and vitality to my paintings.'"

"I have begun to paint with passion, for now see no other path but that of painting, a path that can lead me to my aim: to paint without ceasing" (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 86). This prompts us to posit Van Gogh's case as a hypothesis for the "cogito" of painting, wherein the artist's entire self and existence are inseparably bound to painting his "self" (*moi*), in which rigour and madness commingle. Thus, can we conceive of Van Gogh's existence without painting? How might we interpret the autonomy of painting for Van Gogh? Moreover, does the escape from the imitation of nature signify a lack of fidelity to painting itself? In other words, can we affirm the value of painting without the imitation of nature?

On this point, Van Gogh stated, “Nature told me something, and I proceeded to condense it—sténographie.” This indicates the radical transformation that painting began to undergo in his practice. This transformation would have a profound effect on the birth of artistic movements that rebelled against imitation in its Aristotelian sense. From 1885 onwards, a period that Niccolò Grimaldi designates one of revolution and liberty, he affirms the following: “The autonomy of painting from the colours of objects found in nature reflects a fundamental turning point that led Van Gogh to prefer painting a canvas less faithful [to nature] rather than producing a painting notable for its precision and resemblance to nature” (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 89).

Naturally, paintings find no composition other than nature itself. However, it cannot remain perpetually subject to nature’s principles and laws because painting does not express the same thing in the same way. Thus, the utterance of painting is not that of nature, even though this utterance was the beginning and point of departure for every painter. Colors, for instance, do not impose themselves upon the painter; he is free to refuse subordination to nature, and in this act of rebellion, he becomes creative. The painter freely selects his rhythms and tones, summoning colours one after another, in succession, until they form a harmonious whole, as although we are confronted with a painter composing a unique symphony in colour. Painting must express the very thing itself, for it constitutes, for itself, its own language. Painting resembles only itself and never resembles nature, just as sténographie cannot be likened to Latin script. There thus exists an authentic and fundamental autonomy of painting (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 88).

According to Niccolò Grimaldi, the autonomy of painting originates from a genuine theorisation of the painter’s relationship with colours and colouring; there is no such thing as colour in itself. “If the small church in which I painted my Pietà (*The Virgin Weeping over the Body of Christ*, 1889) was dim and pale,” says Van Gogh, “to the extent that I did not know how to complete my painting, I was compelled to continue it only after having cast over Christ’s body shadows of Prussian blue and gleams of pure iridescent yellow.” This is what Van Gogh’s theory of colour teaches us: from nature to canvas, through the freedom of colour selection, or what we might term the theory of intentional colouring.

The second theory that we may ascribe to Van Gogh calls upon the painter to effect a genuine revolution in painting. Rather than allowing nature to impose its colours upon the painter, the latter is invited to choose freely the colours that enable him to represent nature. Nature does not grant its colours to the canvas; rather, the reverse is true: the painting bestows its colours upon nature. In other words, the painting becomes our window through which we view nature. Nature exists in the painting, not the painting in nature. It is as if we are presented with a second intentionality: the intentionality of the painting itself, which is directed immediately towards its colours, independently of nature.

For the third theory, Niccolò Grimaldi suggests that it may be summarised as follows: colours express something using themselves. This principle does not constitute a thesis that can be refuted; rather, it is a truth that requires only that we open our eyes to verify it, such that it cannot be denied and, therefore, ought to be utilised. The beautiful is truly beautiful, and it is, moreover, true. Where demonstration proves unavailing, a particular manifestation occurs: what cannot be demonstrated is revealed. Demonstration concealment; revelation discloses. This is the experience of the painter Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) when he set about painting his beautiful world in *Les Noces de Cana* (“The Wedding at Cana,” 1563), where one observes an opulent use of his palette from deep violet to radiant yellow, celestial blue, and pearlescent white (unblanc nacré) (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 91).

The fourth theory points to the necessity of engaging with painting as a whole rather than as a collection of parts, given that what color accomplishes is identical to what painting as a whole achieves. We can never truly understand what painting ought to be if we are unable to observe and discern what colouring accomplishes. According to Niccolò Grimaldi’s observation, Van Gogh was astonished by the secrets he discovered within Dutch painting, to which Hegel had already drawn attention.

The legacy of Van Gogh compels us to practise colouring as superior to nature itself. The tension and crisis he experienced, Grimaldi contends, enabled him to transform his relationship with his art,

to alter his attitude towards the motivation for painting, and even to change his choices in colouring. It is as if the crisis played a decisive role in accelerating the transformation he had been preparing for during his years of seeking his creative self. After being influenced by the paintings and style of Rembrandt, Van Gogh was no longer concerned with fidelity to nature; instead, he was liberated from it. In terms of both figures and landscapes, the painters tended to affirm that the painting was something other than a mere reflection of nature. In nature, something beyond mere imitation exists; rather, it is a recreation (recréation) (Grimaldi, 1995).

Conclusion

Van Gogh rejects the pursuit of legitimacy conferred by institutions that evaluate his work as remarkable or correct. What does it mean for one's work to receive the approval of one's mentors? Is one, then, seeking their satisfaction at the expense of oneself? Accordingly, Van Gogh, as Niccolò Grimaldi notes, never thought, "contrary to what Kant and Hegel considered, that when the visible expresses the invisible, art resorts to nature in order to express something unnatural. Painting touches upon the infinite, which can only be expressed in this manner, and yet it is also the most marvellous means for expressing the states of the soul" (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 97).

Is it possible for an artist to create a work entirely removed from himself or herself and his or her humanity? The work itself bears witness to the human being. Van Gogh never believed that an artist could depict a situation, attitude, or condition unless he perceived it as about himself or unless he was in some way implicated in it. Ultimately, the artist paints only himself; he awaits nothing from others but expects everything from himself. The state of waiting is internal, not external, because the work is capable of revealing radical intimacy, something previously hidden from the artist himself. The work reveals itself to the artist. In regard to work, we ought to pay attention to the human being who creates it, not merely to the work of art; that is, to care for the artist rather than the product of his creation. In all the images and scenes I have produced, says Van Gogh, my aim was not to open the way for the expression of a kind of sensual melancholy but rather to express tragic suffering. Who am I in the eyes of people? In their view, I am but a powerless man, an undesirable human being. However, I wish them to say only this of my work: "this man" (cet homme) (Grimaldi, 1995, p. 103).

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