

Art and Personal Evolution: *A Pair of Shoes of Vincent Van Gogh*

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Introduction

In this opportunity we will analyze the painting *A Pair of Shoes* of Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), continuing with the ones dedicated to the concept of the **personal evolution**.

“Nobody pours new wine on old wineskins, well new wine breaks the old wineskins, wine spills and wineskins get lost, but the new wine on new wineskins should be poured”.
(Matthew 2:18-20)



Artwork Description

The laborer's worn out shoes express its owner's hard work, and each one of the folds, deformations and tears of its leather (*Cf.* Heidegger) indelibly carry all of the spent journeys. The brown colour and its nuances dominate the scene, while the mud fragments stuck to the footwear, remind them of their last property, origin and end of all things: "From the earth you come and to the earth you will return" (*Cf.* Rilke). Nevertheless, beyond their evident fatigue and certainty of the somber destiny ahead, they stoically and uprightly await until the call of the dawn.

Artwork Analysis

An ancient tradition compares the human feet with a tree's roots, when considering them a symbol of that which connects the human being to the earthly world (*mundus*), as opposed to the head which is the one that connects him/her with the transcendental thing (*alter mundus*). The term "*alter mundus*" does not refer to an afterlife world, but to a world that is physically present, but on another level of the consciousness. The result is that from this logic, the footwear represents the socialization process that is to say: the patina of rules, attitudes and prejudices acquired by the individual ("I" psychological) on its passage through the diverse social wombs (the family, the scholarship, the work space and social environment), a process that ends to shape a personality (footwear) which allows him/her to transit through the *mundus*.

The problem is that frequently, the acquired "footwear" (false personality) is not designed to transit through the real pathway, the transcendental pathway (*alter mundus*). The *mundus* pathway is structured based on the marked separation between what is ours, giving place to an illusory fragmentation of reality (uniqueness), which unfaithfully conducts to a destructive behavior.

The transit through the *mundus* is the somnambulism, where the human being merely executes the received programming, locked up on its own individuality, from where he/she divides everything and to everything he or she confronts (the diabolical is what divides). However, in the middle of the way (*nel mezzo dil cammin* of Dante) it must be reborn (changing shoes), change perspective (true personality), if it wants to be able to "walk on water", it means to live physically in the *mundus* (false personality) but live psychologically in the *alter mundus* (true personality); given that the key is not to abandon the mud of the world (escapism), nor handing itself to its mechanical destruction (somnambulism), but to evaluate on each step what has real value and what apparent value (separate wheat from ashes). For that reason, the psychological shoe's state (personality) must be taken care of, trying to avoid that the shoes, like those of the laborer, become worn out because of the negative emotional erosion, the one which begins to corrupt the spirit and end up consuming the body (as the Dorian Grey's portrait from Oscar Wilde).

We conclude that the art work *A Pair of Shoes* of Vincent Van Gogh, constitutes an excellent opportunity to understand the fundamental difference between the false and true personality.

References

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