

[typoscript]

[Holtzman Deposit/James. Box 1, no.12b]

[*Typoscript waarschijnlijk van Holtzman; correcties niet van Mondriaan.*]

No Axiom But the Plastic

Our time ⟨sees the impossibility → regards it as impossible⟩ ⟨of holding → hold⟩ universally valid principles. It sees ⟨the → as⟩ ⟨untenability of → untenable⟩ a fixed view of the perceptible, ⟨- of⟩ an ⟨unshakable → unchangable⟩ conception. ⟨- It accepts⟩ No human opinion ⟨+ is accepted⟩ as serious or true. ⟨- It sees⟩ Everything ⟨+ is seen⟩ "relatively." This view grew out of art, philosophy, science (the theory of relativity, etc.), and out of practical life itself. We are beginning to break with tradition. We no longer want to build on doctrines or even on logic. Nevertheless, by understanding the relativity of everything, we gain an intuitive sense of the absolute.

Moreover, the ⟨relative → relativity⟩, the ⟨mutable → mutability⟩ ⟨+ of things⟩ creates in us a desire for the absolute, the immutable. The human ego desires the immutable. Because this is unattainable, we return to the relative and try to perpetuate ⟨it : since → it. Since⟩ that is impossible, we again seek the immutable and even ignore ⟨+ e⟩ the mutable. So it has been throughout the centuries.

The desire for extremes ⟨caused → causes⟩ the tragic in life - in art, expressed through the lyrical. Until the present, culture was based on the relative ⟨and → or⟩ on a traditional representation of the absolute which ⟨became → has become⟩ axiomatic; this representation of the absolute ⟨was → is⟩ "form", just as the relative is "form", and ⟨+ it⟩ constantly changes. In art, both were always cloaked in form: the relative always dominated. Therefore, art was always more or less descriptive (lyrical) even when symbolic. In the symbolic, the purely plastic becomes impure because the symbolic manifests itself not as art but as truth - therefore impure, untrue, because then the element of form becomes "a form" (in the cross, for example).

Today we see ⟨- a⟩ resistance to such "representation," to this disguising of the absolute ⟨+ ,⟩ as well as to the naturalistic capriciousness of the relative. The masses, however, believe that only the relative can be knowable because it is directly perceptible. But although they deny it, they unconsciously, intuitively, the need to emphasize the absolute, the need to abstract the natural. They are also compelled to do this because of external pressure - the new necessity.

Our products show this, as well as the general search for clarity and purity in everything. The relative in our environment, at first predominantly natural, is now assuming an increasingly mathematical appearance. Thus the absolute is beginning to express more purely all around us.

There is increasing homogeneity between man ⟨, → -⟩ who is now outgrowing his ⟨formerly → once⟩ ⟨dominating → dominant⟩ naturalness ⟨+ -⟩ and his environment. Within this relativity, a new relativity is slowly growing in which the absolute is also expressed. This greater equilibrium already plastically expresses the character of the future. Thus the search for extremes is abolished: equivalence between relative and absolute becomes possible. But far more purely than in our environment, equilibrated relationship between the relative and the absolute has been achieved in art, the field of intuition.

The freest art, painting, could be the most consequent. Gradually but rapidly, natural appearance was abstracted in the plastic: form as well as color. In Cubism, form was broken up and tensed. Neoplasticism broke with form altogether by abstracting it and reducing it to the pure elements of form. The closed curved line, which did not express plastic relationship, was replaced by the straight line in the duality of the constant perpendicular position, which is the purest plastic

expression of relationship. From this ⟨it → NP⟩ constructed its universal plastic means, the rectangular color plane. Through the duality of position of the straight, it expresses equilibrium (equivalence) of relative and absolute. It opposes the ⟨color-plane → color plane⟩ to the ⟨non-color-plane → non-color plane⟩ (white, gray, and black), so that through this duality, the opposites can annihilate one another in the multiplicity of the composition. The perpendicular position expresses the constant; the rhythm of the composition expresses the relative. Thus painting shows plastically that the manifestation of both relative and absolute can be plastically expressed through the straight. Thus ⟨+ ,⟩ equivalence ⟨- ,⟩ as well as opposition and variety. This is possible only through the straight. The straight cannot be made more abstract: it is the most extreme possibility of the purely plastic. Thus in Neo-Plasticism, a principle has been plastically expressed: immutability, constancy. Color and line and composition have fixed laws. This principle of equilibrated relationship of relative and absolute, seen purely plastically, can become a general principle of life. It states that for the fully-human man pure equilibrium can only be achieved through the most deeply interiorized naturalness within us and around us, and by intuition becoming conscious within us. Thus, through ⟨- the⟩ equivalence of the dissimilar.

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