

[typoscript 32a]

[Holtzman Deposit, Box 1, Folder 32]

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[De handmatige correcties zijn met behulp van diacritische tekens aangegeven.]

I.

Piet Mondrian. //

THE TRUE VALUE OF OPPOSITIONS⟨- .⟩⟨+ in life and art.⟩ //

Good and evil – the two principle oppositions of life -- ⟨everybody → all the world⟩ / knows them⟨. → ,⟩ Everybody → all the world⟩ suffers or is happy on account of one or the other / of them. But ⟨everybody → all the world⟩ is not aware of the true value of ⟨these → this⟩ ¬ opposition⟨-⟩, / and in general does not even see the⟨- ir⟩ necessity ⟨- ;⟩ ⟨+ of them :⟩ one demands good, escap- / ing, if possible, from evil. //

By intuition, man wants good, unity, poise, especially for himself. It is / thus that he falls back into the search for false ease and static equili- / brium, which is contrary to the dynamic equilibrium of ⟨+ true ⟨- real⟩⟩ life. He is self- / satisfied with false unity and in searching for this he obviously discards / ⟨that → all⟩ duality of oppositions, which, at bottom, is only apparent, but which / is, nevertheless, real to us. //

It is evident that, so far, man in general, ⟨feeling → has felt⟩ the profound / unity of ⟨+ true ⟨- real⟩⟩ life, but⟨+ ,⟩ living in this unbalanced world, ⟨does → has -- does⟩ ¬ not accept simul- / taneously the ⟨duality of → two⟩ oppositions : ⟨does → did⟩ not ⟨life → live⟩ life as a whole in / which th⟨is → e⟩ duality is lost. For such life we should ⟨have a more → need ⟨reality → a ¬ world⟩ which is⟩ perfect ⟨+ :⟩ / ⟨reality, also a more advanced development and more culture → also further development --- ¬ longer culture.⟩ That is why / one is satisfied with unity which is only apparent and confines oneself / continually in particular forms of all sorts. Living among ⟨- these non- / equivalent⟩ ⟨- ⟨+ unballanced⟩ ⟨+ non equivalents⟩ oppositions and being ⟨him → one⟩self a ¬ complex of these oppositions, / ⟨man → one⟩ has not the certainty of the possibility of real harmony in life. It / is natural that ⟨he → one⟩ merely seeks “the better” in the oppositions that life / offers ⟨him → one⟩, taking it as an ⟨experienced → conscious⟩ unity. However, life shows us / that its beauty consists in this ⟨- ,⟩ that is precisely the inevitable un- / balanced oppositions that pushes us to the search of ⟨equivalent → ⟨- ⟨+ ballanced⟩ ¬ ⟨+ equivalents⟩ oppose- / tions, which alone create real unity, that unity which, so far, has only / been realized in thought and in art. ⟨- Thus⟩ ⟨i → I⟩t is ⟨+ thus⟩ in reality. But equally / on the moral plane, the opposition of ideas and conceptions bring us to / ⟨- the⟩ truth : ⟨- the⟩ unification, the annihilation of ⟨oppositions → opposites.⟩ ///

⟨− In⟩ Creating apparent unities, man tries to go too fast. But ⟨− in⟩ stopping /  
 at these, he goes too slowly. That which emerges forcefully is the ⟨− purifica- /  
 tion⟩ ⟨+ purifying⟩ and mutual separation of false unities : of particular forms. ⟨− [verwijzingssteken:] ¬  
 ✕⟩ ⟨+ Art shows it us. He shows us that it⟩ is /  
 thus that oppositions ⟨show themselves → com⟨− m⟩e⟩ in true relation to one another, ⟨− The⟩ /  
 equivalence ⟨of these → is⟩ found, ⟨− the⟩ rhythm comes out, the way is clear, open /  
 to ⟨+ true⟩ life. //

If at present we imagine ourselves ⟨+ to be⟩ able to live in true unity and do /  
 not see the ⟨− existing⟩ lack of balance ⟨+ in existence⟩, we shall be disillusioned. ⟨Life → Art⟩ ¬  
 shows /  
 us that we have to “create” this unity, and that this ⟨− ⟨+ in life⟩⟩ is only done in sepa- /  
 rating, ⟨− in⟩ breaking, and in reconstructing the apparent unities which exist /  
 or easily appear anywhere. Being within ⟨+ this⟩ reality, one must take ⟨reality → it⟩ into /  
 account, and for that one must face it ⟨− ,⟩ and observe that ⟨reality → ⟨− ⟨+ [xxx]⟩ ⟨+ it⟩ is not a /  
 shut, completed form, but a perpetual movement of changing oppositions. //

Life, history, science, art teach us that it is only by the discern- /  
 ment and experience of oppositions that slowly we reach unity, the fullness /  
 of life, and find that life is but a constant deepening of the same thing ⟨+ : a continual progress.⟩ //

Fortunately, man in our days believes no longer ⟨, → :⟩ ⟨but → he⟩ observes. It is /  
 therefore of the greatest importance that we ⟨establish → find⟩ in the midst of the /  
 chaos and abundance of life, ⟨+ establish on⟩ the free domain of art, the true way to arrive /  
 at a balance of oppositions which creates, in full relativity, complete lif⟨+ e,⟩ /  
 harmony, happiness. Art justifies in ⟨− a⟩ plastic way what is difficult to /  
 state literally. //

Generally, in life, one observes ⟨− many oppositions as so many⟩ ⟨+ the⟩ particular /  
 forms, but one misses seeing ⟨them as “rapports” → their oppositions⟩. However, it is exactly the /  
 proper and mutual ⟨“rapports” → relations⟨−hips⟩⟩ between the elements ⟨+ (forms)⟩ which ¬  
 determines the /  
 whole. //

⟨+ Plastic⟩ Art has never failed to search for these ⟨“rapports” → relations⟩ nor failed to /  
 break the static aspect ⟨that reality imposes upon → ⟨− ⟨+ of [xxx]⟩ ⟨+ which reality imposes.⟩ ¬ In  
 plastic art, the /  
 artist has detected ⟨− ,⟩ and studied attentively the oppositions of reality, /  
 searched to compose lines, forms, and colours in just and equivalent rela- //

⟨− [verwijzingssteken:] L : ⟨their relations mutual → their mutual relations⟩ ///

tions, so as to create the dynamic equilibrium which annihilates the static / equilibrium of things. It is there that the work of art emotionalizes us / by its harmony <- <+ unification> (<- the) unification of good and evil). It is there that we re- / cover <+ the unification of) suffering and joy - there that it is complete. <- <+ [xx] //

<+ [verwijzingssteken:] ✕ In <+ plastic) art the <- chief) <+ chief) oppositions <+ are absolute, ¬ constant. They) express themselves in rectangular rela- / tion (established or not) <- established)) <- which is absolute.) But this <“rapport” → absolute relation / of position (height and breadth)) gains a relative and living expression through secondary <“rapports” → ¬ relations) : <- other) / <- “rapports” of position, “rapports”) <+ relations) of <[xxx]sion → scale), <“rapports” → relations) ¬ of value, al- / ways varying. The work never shows repetition of plastic means, but always / a constant opposition of these. //

Although these <“rapports” → relations) have always been established intuitively, / the artist, <(by nature → primitively) only seeking to express the beauty of particular / forms(<+ ,) became more and more conscious of <(what he was doing → the value of <- relations) ¬ their proper and mutual relations.) It is thus / through centuries that a <+ “)culture of <“rapports” → relations”> was born, which in these / days opens out. In the past this culture <(opposed itself to → was mixed with) the culture of / particular form <+ and opposed to this) and it is through the reciprocal action of these two cul- / tures that we can now-a-days consider this last as <(reaching → nearing) its end : the / search for <“rapports” → relations) has annihilated particular form, which had been more / and more separated and broken up, and ne<[x] → ut)ral form, pure line, and colour / have become the only means of expressing these <“rapports” → relations). The culture of / <+ “)pure <“rapports” → relations”> <(is born → has appeared.) //

It is thus through the culture of particular form, and not through / the neglect of this, that art, the new art, has arrived at the culture / of <+ “)pure <“rapports” → relations”>. For centuries and centuries form never lost its natural / istic aspect, until these new times (since Impressionism) having been / first modified, it was then annihilated.

Let us rejoice to be alive in the period when <+ plastic) art has liberated itself / from the domination of particular forms. It is these forms which prevent / full delight in the unity, that only neutral form, pure line and colour / can <(establish clearly → give), if these <+ “)means<+ ”> are lost in the composition. //

[verwijzingssteken:] ✕ Life has to grown to the equivalent opposition of its chief / oppositions and to the equivalent me<+ a)sure of its secondary / relations. ///

The study of the culture of art gives us certainty that we are ap- /  
 proaching a life which is no longer dominated by particular forms, nor by /  
 unbalanced ⟨− “rapports”⟩ ⟨− ( )oppositions⟨− ⟩⟩ : a life of pure ⟨+ and equivalent⟩ relations -- ∩  
 a ⟨+ “human⟨+ ”⟩ /  
 life. //

If the remark is made that art has always shown harmony, we can s⟨ay → ee⟩ /  
 ⟨− that⟩ in the new art ⟨− ,⟩ that it is only by the power of genius (intuition) /  
 that the art of the past, in spite of everything, has expressed a ⟨+ “clouded⟨+ ”⟩ /  
 harmony. Even though the art of the past expressed balance, there was al- /  
 ways something which dominated in the forms and the ⟨“rapports” → relations⟩. For exam- /  
 ple, the predominance of figures and of bodies in pictures, and the predom- /  
 inance of height in Gothic, etc. ⟨+[*verwijzingssteken:*] F⟩ //

Art, from antiquity until these days, shows us that we are moving to- /  
 ward a life that is open, clear, free, although we find ourselves still in /  
 the life of the past, where all is confused, where parts dominate, where /  
 all is mixed : good and evil, goodness and wickedness, love and hate -- where /  
 all is unity that is only apparent. //

However one could say that the artist composes the work of art, but /  
 that life composes life, and that we are as if thrown into the world. But /  
 we must not forget that the artist himself is impelled by life, and then /  
 that we are all part of life, of that life which does not reckon with time /  
 and space, and which is at bottom, the same as art, always the same. Life /  
 has only to develop in us. Even in spite of ourselves we are part of the /  
 great ⟨− perfect⟩ composition ⟨+ of perfection⟩ which is ⟨+ true⟩ life, ⟨− and⟩ which, if we observe ∩  
 well, /  
 establishes itself in according to the development of art. But don't let us /  
 forget that the present is the unity of the past and of the future. //

Piet Mondrian. //

Paris. //

December 1934. //

[*verwijzingssteken:*] F It was the same in life. And still /  
 now-a-days the world is composed /  
 of non-equivalent forms by non-equi- /  
 valent relations. ///