

## [typoscript]

[typoscript in Holtzman Deposit, Box 2 no.40c]  
[annotaties en correcties van onbekend persoon]

---

[362 – 370]

### ON ⟨– THE⟩ OPPRESSION OF ART BY THE DICTATORS

#### 1. Introduction

It has become evident that the evils of Nazi and Soviet ⟨oppressive→oppression⟩ are continually spreading; writers and thinkers have explored them to the depths and considered their consequences. Although at present the most urgent ⟨factor→requisite⟩ is destruction of the oppressive powers, anything that will clarify the evils ⟨are→is⟩ useful ⟨to→for⟩ present and future. They must be understood unless they are to continue in still another form after the war. Destruction is followed by construction.

Plastic art is a free aspect of life. It tolerates no oppression and can resist it, not being bound by physical or material conditions. It is disinterested. Its only function is to "show", and it is for us to see ⟨–wh⟩ what it reveals. It cannot tell anything new, but can evoke conviction through its presentation. Amid ⟨the→a⟩ terrible reality it is difficult to think of our future, confidence in life's progress weakens. Where shall we find a true optimism for the future of mankind.

If we can visualize the development of art as a continuous growth toward a full realization of its freedom, then there is one optimistic approach. It must be first understood, however, that art is not merely an entertainment, an enjoyment in the midst of our daily lives, but the esthetic establishment of a complete life, a unity free from all oppression. We can ⟨see→visualize⟩ this pure expression of life which art establishes as a dynamic movement-in-equilibrium. Our daily life is "life" oppressed by all sorts of things. Therefore it is not the complete life that we enjoy in art.

Many do not see either art or human life as a continual progress, only as a continual changing.

#### 2. The Facts: Art Killed

It is generally known that not only ⟨+have⟩ a great many modern works of art been rejected by German and Soviet rulers but the dictators exercise a tyrannical censorship on actual art-production, that they abus[e] art as propaganda and political education.

The Soviets were the first to tyrannize over artists. Whereas at the beginning of the Russian revolution modern art was seen as a revolution also, and was therefore accepted, it was soon thrown over⟨– board⟩ as being "not real". They did not see that modern art, freeing itself from passing events and feelings, is able to establish a more enduring reality. For when art is forced to ⟨– be⟩ represent⟨– ation of⟩ daily life in its common aspect, directly understandable to the masses, then modern art's free vision becomes no longer acceptable.

Certain our daily life is reality for us. But at present - - quite apart from the actual war – it is incomplete. It does not ⟨express→denote⟩ life in its fullness; there is no balance between material and moral values.

Before the Nazi dictatorship, modern art in Germany was rejected or appreciated ⟨– as⟩ ⟨+according to the way⟩ it conformed ⟨to→with⟩ individual conceptions and feelings in the rest of the world; ⟨–and⟩ to a⟨–n even⟩ greater extent, perhaps ⟨+it⟩ was acquired by museums. Suddenly modern art was evicted from Germany, and there was such a constraint as was never

known in art before. History can reveal despotism in politics and religion, - - even in science (Galileo)- - but art in its great periods was free. <-The> Despotism arising out of egotism and terror, did not <+then> fear art.

In the past, art itself was more or less veiled by other oppressive factors, it was often chained in the service of state religion. Plastically the freedom of art was less manifest than it <had→has> become in our day. <- It previously> It had never gone more than half-way in the plastic direction.

### 3. Art of the Past and Modern Art

Let us see whether the condemnation of modern art by the Nazi and Soviet rulers is really progress, as they claim, or merely decay. If we compare the two methods of expression, old and new, where are we to mark the boundary between the past and modern art? We see only a gradual detachment from the natural vision and a progressive determination toward the real plastic content. The <two→rival> expressions dissolve into each other until in recent years a <real→true> difference of expressive means (form, <- and> colors <+ ,> relations) is created.

However, every one detects a difference in the conception of these expressions, even though the <- y may → works might> be identical in subject-matter. It could not be otherwise; for men in the past, living under quite different conditions, obviously must have other conceptions. We can truthfully say that much of what was veiled in the past becomes clarified, certainly this applies to plastic art as well as to life. Human culture - - science, technics, our whole daily life - continues <their→its> way without results; until another reality is created among <- the> relics of the past. And through the plastic arts as well as through daily life we can see <+that> modern times <is → are> rising out of the darkness to the light. This statement may seem contradicted by the recent terrible events, but it is true nevertheless. We must remember that life is free from time and space, and that it creates by destruction and construction.

Antique art, even that of the highest quality, reveals itself to the man of our time more or less as darkness,- - even when the work itself shows no real darkness: a white marble statue can be oppressive as well as a murky picture; peaceful, dreamy romanticism, the devout religious conception, as well as dramatic history, are events from the daily life of the past.

We might say generally that anything peculiar to the past alone casts an oppressive darkness upon our actual life. Yet the past has a tyrannical influence upon us that we cannot always escape. The worst of it is that there is always something of the past - - an echo of oppressive darkness - - within us ourselves. We have a memory, we have dreams, - - and outside we hear the old carillons, enter the old museums and churches, see the old buildings everywhere. Fortunately we can also enjoy new constructions, the marvels of science and technics of all kinds, as well as modern art. In normal times we can enjoy a real jazz with its dance; we can see the electric lights of luxury or utility, the wonderful shop-windows. Then do we feel the great difference between the past and modern times. In spite of everything modern life and art are annihilating the oppression of the past. Neon-lights, posters, technical constructions of all kinds compensate for the lack of new architecture in any appreciable quantity.

In the present war many relics of the past are being destroyed, - - among them <beautiful→fine> specimen of art. It is naturally hard to see these beautiful things disappear. But life is always right. It will surely construct new surroundings, nearer to us. Where? In the same places? We must make sure only that new construction <must→shall> not be in the spirit of the past, shall not be merely repetitious of what was there before.

Like our surroundings, modern art reveals change. It is a conception that conforms to our time; yet it would be a mistake to limit it by [-the] narrow frontiers. There are two principal expressions revealed, -- one that utilizes <- more or less> naturalistic forms and colors, and another that <uti→uses> a more <- or less> geometric and purified expressive means. These

methods of expression appear under different names, but they are all approximate, partial, and therefore misleading.

The two methods of expression apparently oppose each other, but when we observe that they both show a search for freedom in different ways, then we can see a certain unity. Deliverance from the past is the aim of all modern art. The method of expression ⟨-(+ to that) ⟨- of past art) is opposed, but the real content is continued. It continues what the art of the past has begun: the transformation of the natural vision. What past art -- restricted by the conventions of its epoch -- has done almost unconsciously, modern art accomplishes more or less visibly.

All ⟨good→ important) art of the past betrays an exaggeration in the tension of lines and forms, a deformation ⟨-of the) of ⟨-the) natural colors and proportions. There has always been a transformation of the natural aspect of reality, and never a copy of nature. For such a copy would never have had the strength to evoke human emotion. The living beauty of nature cannot be copied, it can only be expressed.

Modern times projected a greater transformation of reality; sometimes a novel composition, freer forms and colors (academic art, realism, surrealism) sometimes ⟨tendencies of more searching consequence→a more consequential esthetic structure) (abstract art). Bound together by unchangeable plastic laws the different ⟨approaches→factions) continue the struggle for a more real establishment of art's true content.

#### 4. Art and Life need Freedom

The complications of human culture require many generations ⟨+for fulfillment). Continually new people are born; they must obtain experience themselves so that they may begin their cultural life from ⟨that→the) point ⟨-in) which progress has already ⟨advanced→reached). Apparently they ⟨must→can) choose past or present but in reality they must follow progress. A common progress is never possible, but ⟨- progress continues its way →somehow the way is continued), does not wait. Fortunately individual culture accelerates the tempo, the light of modern times makes the way clearer.

The inequality of men ⟨+is) manifest⟨- s itself) in art and becomes an obstacle to simultaneous progress. Instead of ⟨-continuing) furthering the esthetic traditions the young artist is apt to search out something new. But while art is intuitive creation ⟨on→in) a free domain, the obstacles are more easily overcome than in life.

It is right that a new generation should be opposed to convention and go its own way. But it is dangerous in that it conflicts with the existing progress, and this is often what happens in art and life. It happens from personal conviction, it also happens from personal interests. Thus progress can be delayed for a time. ⟨-The) Inequality among men does not mean that human life has become degraded. But egoism is not excluded. The difficulties of maintaining one's self and earning a livelihood evoke it. From the inevitable struggle oppression appears. Particular interests prevent social life from being free. But Art is disinterested. For just this reason it is free. Its only need is to establish the beauty ⟨- and unity) of complete life, -- unity. In its search for particular interests of all sorts, social life lacks unity.

Of course, our existence requires us to be more or less self-interested, but not ⟨necessarily →(necessarily)) to the detriment of others.

Although subjected to all sorts of pressure, humanity has always been in search of unity. More and more the world becomes conscious that unity must be created -- just as in art -- by the establishment of purer ⟨- muti) forms and ⟨- and) purer mutual relations.

Humanity as a whole is always going the right way. Better social forms are continually born, merely through necessity. But as long as there are tyrannical powers ⟨to→that) create a false unity by force no better world order is possible. Humanity needs freedom as much as art.

⟨-Just as unity can be established in art by means of varied) Plastic art shows that real freedom is not mutual equality but mutual ⟨equilibrium→equivalence⟩. In art there are forms and colors that are different through dimension and position but have an equal value. Art always creates a certain mutual ⟨equilibrium→equivalence⟩ through its composing forms. Because of inequality among men, a certain constraint must govern their social lives, and reality has shown that this can exist without tyranny.

## 5. The Real Content of Art

The problem "what is Art?" cannot be solved by explaining our personal conceptions. There are obviously varying definitions for it. Plastic art, however, falls into two principal categories, - - realistic art and abstract art.

Realistic art is the expression of our esthetic feelings as evoked by nature or life. Abstract art shows form and space as projected through more objective (often geometrical) forms; ⟨It → it⟩ does not follow the aspect of nature, but seeks to construct a new reality. But these definitions, which merely depict intentions, are incomplete and even misleading.

Even art of the most abstract quality does not arise from an inner source alone. Like all art, its origin is the reciprocal action of ourselves and our surroundings. It is unimaginable without feeling, while realistic art is to a certain extent an expression of form and space. From this viewpoint the difference ⟨becomes→derives from⟩ the means of expression.

Where the conception of beauty does not change in a progressive direction there is something wrong in human life, there is either a stand-still or a going backward.

Truth is another aspect of life. And in art that expression of life which is the most constant, the most objective, the most free from oppressing particularities is the most true. As an expression of life, all art is true but it depicts truth in different grades of clarity.

Intuition, the most direct reflection of life, creates art. In daily life, social life, intellectual life, -- all segments of life, --intuition can lose its force through all sorts of oppressions. In art it is free in so far as it is not oppressed by subjective factors. Through its force a free life can be established in art, which is human life united in the splendor of all its partial manifestations.

The expression of "life" is constant through all works of art, --we call it harmony, ⟨-rhythm,⟩ unity, equilibrium. A beautiful moment in reality can also be revealed strongly, but confusedly, because all our senses are active and the light has more force. Reality, however, is changeable in time and space; a work of art is constant. The esthetic content is evoked by a rhythm of forms, lines, and colors. The manner in which it will be established and seen depends on our individual feeling and conception.

These are not the only expressive means by which the rhythm is established; there are also their mutual relations and the empty spaces between them. Forms, lines, colors, and spaces are no more important than their relations to each other. The course of art-history shows an increasing pre-occupation with these basic elements, until today they can appear by themselves alone, - - the elements of form, purified color, and carefully determined space. The freeing of form and color from associations in nature was necessary to free the rhythm. Clearer rhythm produces a clearer equilibrium.

In nature and reality as a whole everything is so expressive, so strong, so "living", that we feel only harmony and ignore rhythm. Art, on the other hand, has to accentuate rhythm in such a manner that, even in the most abstract art, a unity will evolve.

Viewed objectively, all realistic associations ⟨in the→of⟩ forms and colors oppress pure rhythm.

Objective truth, however, can be no more than an aid to strengthen our conception and to control our feelings -- it cannot create art. And so it is in human life. Nothing can tell us what we have to do. Philosophy, religion, science, art, can show the general ⟨way→path⟩ of human

progress; they can be a help or a hindrance, but they cannot dictate the way an individual has to go.

The art of the past established a rhythm not only veiled in subject-matter, but oppressed by the spirit of the past. We might state ⟨where→that when⟩ freedom from this oppression began modern art was born.

In modern times we see rhythm more and more accentuated, not only in art, but in our whole mechanized reality. Marvelously determined and full of life, it ⟨is also expressed→finds expression⟩ in the real jazz. As a consequence of this ⟨accentuation of→ emphasis on⟩ rhythm we ⟨+see⟩ the subject more and more lose its importance. This is for some a gain, for others a loss. Some find subject-matter a help, others an obstruction to the enjoyment of art.

Seen objectively, the subject is tyrannical. It pushes plastic art back upon literature, psychology, philosophy, always in the direction of narrative. To enjoy a plastic conception to the utmost one has to rule out such alien factors as the subject awakens.

Impressionism took more account of the impression on reality than of its representation. The Cubists delivered a further blow, the Surrealists transformed it, the Abstract artists excluded it.

Sometimes ⟨veiled→obscurely⟩ and sometimes clearly, rhythm expresses dynamic movement by the continuous opposition of its composing elements. There are oppositions ⟨-of oppositions⟩ of position and dimension⟨-s⟩. The principal, the most exact, and only constant opposition of position is the right angle, in which two straight lines are opposed. ⟨- It is the⟩ Correct opposition ⟨-that⟩ prevents ⟨+the⟩ rhythms from becoming static.

In art as in life it is the equivalence and not the equality of the opposite factors that creates unity. Art shows that the opposite factors can annihilate each other in such a manner that there is no oppression. The result is unity. In human life we see opposites ⟨+mainly⟩ as good and evil. The reciprocal action of these oppositions forms the rhythm of human life: it brings ⟨- that⟩ life toward unity. Thus we see evil as not in the world for nothing, but we must oppose it with what is called "good" if we are not to be destroyed by it. When our force is not strong enough, the will prevails for a time until it meets a stronger force.

In plastic art we see mutual oppression of forms and colors annihilated by the creation of mutually equivalent values. If in art this is a moral struggle, in life ⟨- is⟩ the struggle is physical as well. There the victory is to the strongest; one must vanquish or perish. How shall equilibrium and equivalent values be established? Time must solve the problems. Life, being equilibrium, ends oppression through the resistance created by itself. The new life is certain.