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THE DIALECTICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THOMAS MANN

EUGENE LUNDBERG

THE basic theme of Thomas Mann's work, as defined long ago by a certain school of literary criticism, and hallowed ever since by literary tradition, is the decay of western civilization. According to the garrulous reactionary Martin Havenstein and his disciple Arthur Eloesser, the entire range of Mann's work is encompassed by a single idea: man's life is the prototype and symbol of the historic destiny of western bourgeois civilization; and both humanity and civilization are doomed to extinction, for death lurks within the embryo itself, death is the inner law of their development. Thus to his critics Thomas Mann's work consists of one long elegy written over the graves of his kinsmen in the vast cemetery of civilization.

Fate and the human race, prototype and symbol, the embryo concealing death—is not this set of philosophical problems, found in his first important novel, *Buddenbrooks*, too narrow for so great a creative life as Thomas Mann's? Can it be that the Thomas Mann of *Buddenbrooks* is the equivalent of the Thomas Mann of the Joseph legend, or the Thomas Mann of the journalistic essays of the past decade?

In the case of a writer like Thomas Mann, lest some very important aspects of his art be overlooked, one must examine the artist's development in relation to his time rather than seek out a single "dominant idea." The evolution of Thomas Mann is of a curious antithetical nature, unique in the history of European literature. His development moves along two planes: the plane of realism and the plane of metaphysics. As Mann's realism becomes increasingly penetrating and relentless, his metaphysical patterns, at the opposite pole, reveal a parallel tension.

The more vividly Mann depicts his epoch, the more colorful and profound his metaphysics. His concern with revolutionary ideas, with remaking the world, his hatred of decadence, does not prevent him from evolving Freudian ideas and intertwining them with "prophecies" from ancient mythology. While his journalistic work is clear and transparent, his metaphysics of the last few years is often reminiscent of a piece of music whose basic melody is scarcely discernible in a maze of discordant notes. During the second half of Mann's creative life, that is, just when he develops politically, mythology as a literary method, as a system upon which he can effectively set out his psychological material, becomes a symbol, a secretive bearer of the truth. (The symbolical second plan of *The Magic Mountain*; Hans Castorp's dream; the structure of the entire trilogy *Joseph and His Brothers*.)

For many years Thomas Mann attempted with increasing persistence to determine the causes of the European crisis. Yet until very recently he tried to avoid thinking about the reasons for the social order, hiding himself now behind biological motives, now behind fatalistic conceptions, or again behind certain abstract laws rooted in the innermost nature of the race and of humanity, and sealing their doom. However, the vital symptoms of the decline of European civilization, as reflected in the ruination of specific generations—their futile struggles with their descendants, their demoralization, their complete loss of the zest for life, their dismayed sense of homelessness—finally overwhelmed Thomas Mann and wrenched him out of his beloved *Buddenbrooks* atmosphere. A profound thinker, a man of conservative leanings, he has indeed devoted his literary life to comprehending and portraying the crisis made manifest by these symptoms; but nevertheless this does not mean that his entire work can be reduced to a "single idea" and the "course of development" of that idea.

The nature of his subject matter has led Mann into social generalizations despite himself. These generalizations Mann avoided for a long time. His conservatism is evident not only from the slowness of his development but also from the fact that he expected to be able to retain at least the remains of the crumbling world of the *Buddenbrooks*. His metaphysical afterthoughts represent a feverish effort to find a support for a tottering world, rather than a solution of an historical problem. It would seem that during the first years of his work Thomas

Mann did not trust, even feared his own analytical inclinations. For a long time he was a master of detail. No doubt for the better part of his life Mann had to struggle with his own inner restlessness to a certain extent. Perhaps he regarded his inherent curiosity as something perverse. Thomas Mann versus Thomas Mann is a theme far more compelling than the theme of fate and the human race in his works. This long-standing distrust of his own healthiest and most constructive side misguided Mann's critics, leading them to concentrate their attention upon his subject matter, and, overwhelmed by it, to lose sight of his development.

Martin Havenstein, for example, reduces Mann's writings to a single color, the smudgy color of despondency. According to Havenstein, every one of Thomas Mann's important characters, with but a few ambiguous exceptions, are either diseased or mortally tired people, or people suffering from mental injuries inevitably fatal.

Sick and "ripe for death" are Paolo Hoffman (*The Will to Happiness*), Albrecht van Qualen (*The Wardrobe*), Gabriele Klöterjahn (*Tristan*), Hanno Buddenbrook, Hans Castorp, Joachim Ziemssen, and the entire population of the Magic Mountain, including the physicians trained in the art of simulation. Piepsam (*The Way to the Churchyard*), Tobias Mindernickel, Jacoby the lawyer and his disgusting Amra (*Little Lizzy*), the adventurous Felix Krull and Bajazzo are dying, overburdened with grief. Thomas Buddenbrook and the various members of high society (*Royal Highness*) are wasting away, drained of all vitality.

Havenstein goes on cataloguing in fastidious fashion Thomas Mann's typical dying characters, but when he includes Mann himself among them he reveals his lack of understanding, for Mann himself and his creative art are far more vigorous than his moribund characters.

Havenstein further observes that Mann's penchant for manifestations of decadence is reflected also in his treatment of healthy and happy characters. Herr Klöterjahn (*Tristan*) and the Consul Tienappel (*The Magic Mountain*) do not interest Mann—he brings them upon the scene merely for the sake of contrast with his unfortunates prostrated by their maladies. It is true that Mann spares no colors in painting average, simple, unalluring people like Hans Hansen and Ingeborg Holm (*Tonio Kröger*), but these portraits lack the ardor which went into his ironical

description of Tonio Kröger himself, who envies the health of ordinary people. The care and unconcealed passion with which Mann traces the consecutive stages of the decline of the patients at the Magic Mountain testify to his concern with the ghastliness of life and death. This fervor and absorption was evident at the very outset of Mann's creative life, from his masterly canvas depicting the protracted demise of Thomas Buddenbrook.

What does Mann himself think about all this? "I do not deny," he declares, "that the pathological has always had a powerful psychological appeal for me." In *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* ["Reflections of a Non-Political Man"], Mann formulates even more starkly and graphically his critics' conception of himself. He refers to himself as "an historian and interpreter of decadence, an admirer of pathology and death, an aesthete with a penchant for bottomless pits." It would seem that Mann prefers to agree with his critics rather than defend the "bright" aspects of his creative art: here again we run into one of the basic contradictions of his creative character.

Mann, like many others, is indeed an historian and interpreter of pathological bottomless pits, but the depth of these pits and their powers of attraction for Mann are greatly exaggerated by his commentators. The aestheticizing of the repulsive and the depraved is by no means characteristic of Mann as a writer; it is merely an expression of one of the numerous aspects of his personality.

In 1919, at a time when Germany and Europe were undergoing a most frightful period, Mann wrote a little book of idylls: a study of a dog, *Bashan and I*, and an idyll in hexameter, *Gesang vom Kindchen* ["Song of Childhood"]. It was then that his critics found that this poet of the decay and death of civilization, this "tragedian," this "scoffer," was capable also of emotions of a totally different order. And here his critics were furthermore reminded that even prior to this sudden departure Mann had occasionally revealed a taste for the idyllic and for the joy of living. There are many scenes in *Buddenbrooks* that are filled with the serene charm of family life. Friendship and light humor sustain the Buddenbrooks during their darkest days. Idyllic colors make up the entire background of *Royal Highness*. The stolid Peeperkorn, who, because of his temperament, manliness and primitive sensuousness is perhaps the only true tragic figure in *The Magic Moun-*

tain, with every movement and with each turn of his head calls upon all the immature "moribunds" to surrender to the joy of living.

Interpreters of western bourgeois literature must not for a moment overlook the nearly century-old tradition, especially strong in Germany, according to which the artist disguises his precise meaning and portrayal of reality. Disguises have been used to hide the artist's ignorance, his faults, or his suppressed desires; or to express dreams too sublime to be entrusted to his contemporaries. The struggle against this complex and at times glittering inheritance of a dying culture has begun only in our era; but German writers of recent decades have retained the disguise as a sort of fashion, out of respect for society. The cheapest and most common philosophical disguise, a kind of factory product to be used alike by "intellectuals" and prominent writers, has been the idea of the decay of western civilization. Playing around with this idea, writers of various schools, particularly the German expressionists, have ransacked all the philosophical systems in quest of metaphysical disguises of one style or another favored by the bourgeois intelligentsia.

Among the outstanding writers of the twentieth century who paid tribute to this trend was Thomas Mann. Despite his inherent irony he retained for a long time his penchant for half-false disguises and grandiose philosophico-historical illusions. To be sure during the last few years this "admirer of pathology and death" has dropped a good deal of his disguise, but regardless of theme or era, illusions are not easily dispelled.

We also know another Thomas Mann—the slow and cautious realist, the sceptic striving for faithfulness to life, for a free insight into its laws—an insight free of prejudice. This is the Mann who is gradually developing politically, who recently abandoned his fatherland and his home, declaring: "It is not unlikely that if I were silently to retire to my Munich villa and close my eyes to everything going on around me, the National Socialists would tolerate me and leave me in peace. But how can I remain silent when I see how everything which was formerly most precious in German culture is collapsing? How can one who always regarded freedom as mankind's greatest inheritance remain where only oppression, tyranny and hatred reign supreme?" This same Thomas Mann, attentively and conscientiously scrutinizing the newly developing forms of life, realizes that "it is an urgent require-

ment that the world's economic order should become rational, assuring decent conditions of human existence." Despite the calmness of his reasoning, this Mann is as passionate in his condemnations as the other Mann—Mann the artist—in his fantasies. His irony compels him inexorably to dramatize the controversy between the ideas and the tenets of decrepit Europe, which he succeeds gloriously in doing by staging the debates between Naphta and Settembrini, by depicting the dreams of the helpless Hans Castorp, by describing the despicable cleverness of the Freudian disciple, Dr. Krokowski.

Buddenbrooks. "The life of the generation is the prototype and the symbol of the historic destiny of western bourgeois civilization." I am by no means certain that Thomas Mann would agree with this formula, however tempting he might find it. It is significant that in 1901, when Mann was but 26 years old, "the recent metaphysical truths," which might have held great sway over the young man, did not attract him at all. He was determined to write about subjects he knew well—his father's family, or his childhood impressions. He himself believed that he was not strong at fiction.

From whom did he learn the art of writing? From Leo Tolstoy, after discarding his philosophy; from the de Goncourts; from the Scandinavian novelists—psychologists who disregarded the subject of the story and patiently, with a certain amount of senile indifference, assembled the psychological details, trying to depart as little as possible from life's truths.

Mann became perplexed when the scope of the novel expanded and it became necessary to turn to more distant generations, to surmise and generalize. Eloesser tells us that Mann even attempted to arrange a pact with his brother Heinrich, a writer of different habits of mind, whereby he conceded to the latter the subject of the origins of the Buddenbrook clan, and retained for himself only that with which he had had immediate contact. He not only averted his eyes from the past but from the future as well. Here is where the basic passion for particularizing and psychologizing is rooted. "Thinking" is avoided by particularization. The social angle, the non-Buddenbrook future, exists—but it is better for him to ignore this foreign blemish upon his time.

Did Thomas Mann adopt the theme of decay because of the fact that

his generation was dying? Mann's generation was dying because other, related generations were declining, because the ground which upheld their castles, their town halls and market stalls was trembling more perceptibly each day. Thomas Mann even then saw this inter-relationship, but he decided to circumvent it by substituting a passing illness for what was in reality a fatal disease. He maintains that if his generation had been healthy he would not have become a writer, for a writer comes into being as a result of the ravages inflicted by worms upon the sturdy trunk of an old tree. He was most interested in these worm-holes during his *Buddenbrooks* period. As for himself, he recoiled from the rotting generation, considering himself not a member of it, but rather its judge, who had luckily escaped its fate. This realization of good fortune and strength is not reflected in the writings of Thomas Mann, nor are certain other of his optimistic aspects which have sustained his remarkable genius during the course of his long life. And it is this self-restraint, this curious reticence, which his critics, absorbed in his outer "monotony," have overlooked.

In spite of all his circumvention, Thomas Mann in his early works did not succeed in escaping "history," in the narrow sense of that word. For us the fall of the Buddenbrooks and their kind represents, symbolically, history. No, declares Mann, this is not "history"—these people are real, and besides, they are my kinsmen. It falls upon Trine, the cook, in that excellent though formless and awkward novel, to speak of history in our sense. That which for us is history—the history of the March revolution—is for the Thomas Mann of that period simply material for short genre sketches. The approaching breath of the revolution Thomas Mann would rather not notice; the fireplace in the house is left unlit. Neither the fireplace, nor the lamps, nor the lack of a carriage for Herr Consul, nor the fearsome and menacing mob whose power is suddenly perceived by the nobility and the respectable tradesmen—symbolizes revolution. Nevertheless, not only the crisis and the decay of the generation but revolution as well proceed quietly to undermine the Buddenbrooks. The revolution flanks Thomas Mann and the Buddenbrooks from the rear: energy is at a low ebb, adventurers penetrate the family, happiness disappears, the exclusive "Lübeck," "Hamburg" and "seashore" modes of life, in imitation of the ways of the aristocracy, are rotting away. Patricians become bourgeois, and

the bourgeoisie, by the will of fortune, continue to roll downwards to the bottom—the one “bottom” common to all strata of society.

Thomas Mann's remoteness from any ideas relating to the social causes of the decline of the generation can be seen from the meticulousness with which he assembled the biological symptoms of the decline of the Buddenbrooks. The closer the Buddenbrook family approaches modern times, the more physically infirm they become. Stubbornly ignoring the socio-historical crisis, Mann busily recorded the biological crisis, dwelling upon the general constitutional weakness of his “kinsmen,” the pallor of their brittle skin, the extreme prominence of their facial veins, the shrunken foreheads contracted between their temples.

The change in their psychology and character Mann ascribes directly to these physiological changes. Here again it becomes necessary to call attention to Mann's intellectual remoteness and ideological obstinacy. The catastrophic “bottom,” the crowding out of the Buddenbrooks by newcomers, is not biological. Mann must know this, for he is a scrupulous artist and a sensitively impressionable observer, yet he insists on erecting a partition between his perceptions and his consciousness. Biological problems saturate Thomas Mann's world outlook. He is overcome by the thought of the frailty of everything earthly. A deep sense of crying sin, a feeling of revulsion at the weakness of the flesh, mingles with an appreciation of the temptations which beset the flesh: this is yet another source of Mann's irony. Mann, the appreciator of the sensual, tried to construct a very intricate ascetic superstructure over life, but it crumbled like a house of cards, whereupon Mann, passionately, to the point of fortissimo, intensified these contradictory tendencies of his creative personality—the temptations of the flesh, the æsthetics of “bottomless pits,” a revulsion against the weakness of the flesh, and a keen and premature sense of universal frailty.

Already in *Buddenbrooks* Mann employs this method of double, at times treble, sounding of the same string, the same character detail. This method becomes especially apparent in Mann's repetitious biological characterizations. In *The Magic Mountain* he employs this method with unusual, almost obnoxious persistence. The more violent the spiritual outburst, the more pronounced is the intervention of the body, of biology and medical science. The romance of Hans Castorp

and Clavdia Chauchat is based upon these contrapositions. For their sake Hofrat Behrens delivers a lengthy lecture on physiology. Later Castorp passes this lecture on to Clavdia, clothed in an amorous, lyrical style but retaining its scientific terminology. Mann attains the desired effect: the tortuous dual sensuousness of this scene is intensified by the impropriety of the anatomical nomenclature and by the fact that the conversation takes place in a language alien to both of them. He is German, she is Russian, and they carry on their momentous dialogue in French.

In *The Magic Mountain* Mann's thoughts sometimes descend to physiological processes, rendering him pathetic, righteous and intolerably talkative. At other times he ascends to the loftiest emotions and the most abstract ideas of his characters. Then, sneering, he extravagantly reiterates his derogatory characterizations and hollow epithets, unembarrassed by their banality and fatality. This applies with equal force to Settembrini's humanism, to Ziemssen's clandestine love affairs, and even to the grief of the Mexican mother over the loss of her two sons.

Whenever, in *The Magic Mountain*, in order to insinuate himself Mann becomes tender, one may rest assured of receiving the loathsome whiff of a decomposing corpse. Together with Hans Castorp, Mann sympathetically nurses his *moribundi* in their last hours. He combines a certain artificial ritualism with a distastefully derisive attitude towards people dying of tuberculosis. He arranges his funerals quite sumptuously, taking care that precisely at the moment of the burial procedure his naively hypocritical assistants are discussing the meaning of life and death. Whereupon the deceased mechanically bares his poorly-set teeth and ambiguously winks his eye at those he leaves behind him, while Mann, pleased by it all, helps the grave-diggers slam the casketcover over the body of their troublesome client in such a way as to make it impossible for him ever to get out again.

Startling as it may seem to venerators of Greek mythology, Nietzsche and Tolstoy, Thomas Mann gauges men's creative abilities by the extent of their physical decline.

Mann's entire creative life has been steeped in the idea of artistic talent springing from physical debility and hereditary decadence. This notion follows him from the closing chapters of *Buddenbrooks*, through *Fiorenza* and the extremely mediocre novel *Royal Highness*, down to

the cruel and bitter pages of his novelettes about men of art.

A progressive increase in the sufferings of the Buddenbrooks and decrease in their physical resistance, results in their becoming increasingly egocentric and detached from the external world. Their entire psychic energy is wasted upon the events of the "internal world." To a certain degree this process is not unlike the dissolution of a person addicted to hashish or opium. An aggravated sensitivity inexorably brings about a wretched sense of commiseration, a sterile self-torment, and an inability to deal with one's vital problems. The painfulness of contact with life creates the need for self-defense. Where is this to be found if not in feverish flights of the imagination, such as the older Buddenbrooks shunned?

Endlessly Mann reiterates variations upon his thesis of the worthlessness of the artist, whom he, like Plato, stands ready to banish from human society.

Axel Martini, the poet of *Royal Highness*, is unable to lend his own feeble and ailing body to the very joys of life to which he dedicates his rhymes. "A poet is a person entirely unfit for any kind of activity." Thomas Mann once wrote an insignificant sketch entitled *In a Looking Glass*, in which he discusses himself in the manner of Axel Martini. There is ample ground for the assertion that both Thomas Mann and Tonio Kröger alike condemn themselves to a life of involuntary and burdensome artistic labor.

Tonio Kröger "worked, not like a man who works that he may live; but as one who is bent on doing nothing but work; having no regard for himself as a human being but only as a creator; moving about grey and unobtrusive among his fellows like an actor without his make-up, who counts for nothing as soon as he stops representing something else. He worked withdrawn out of sight and sound of the small fry, for whom he felt nothing but contempt, because to them a talent was a social asset like another; who, whether they were poor or not, went about ostentatiously shabby or else flaunted startling cravats, all artistic and charming without the smallest notion of the fact that good work only comes out under pressure of a bad life; that he who lives does not work; that one must die to life in order to be utterly a creator."

For Tonio Kröger, creative work is a curse resulting in the artist "depicting humanity without having any part or lot in it."

Individual reactions are not a criterion for the solution of problems dealing with the inter-relationship between society and the artist; but Thomas Mann has done everything in his power to clarify a thesis, the antithesis of which is being established by current history. History has brought Thomas Mann himself around to this antithesis. Mann's work is distinguished by the fact that he has never called a halt to the development of his thesis, but obstinately prescribed for himself increasing doses of the poisons which he considered to be the essence of objective truth. This is indicated in the strengthening of his biological attitude, as just mentioned, and especially in his alternately ironical, restrained and romantically-colored laments concerning the fate of the artist. Kröger is a perplexed burgher who accidentally becomes an artist. He is a blunderer and a wanderer, longing for a respectable family hearth. Spinell of *Tristan* is a neurasthenic, a quaint outcast—undoubtedly Mann's nearest of kin. Here is what Spinell writes of the doomed Gabriele Klöterjahn, bearing witness to Thomas Mann's unwillingness to vary in the least the environment surrounding his characters: "An ancient stock, too exhausted and refined for life and action, stood there at the end of its days; its latest manifestations were those of art: violin notes, full of that melancholy understanding which is ripeness for death." Detlef in *The Hungry* is hardly different. Van der Qualen retires from life to a degrading slumber without the aid of opium and hashish [*The Wardrobe*]. The galaxy of artists doomed to art is completed by the eminent writer Gustave Aschenbach [*Death in Venice*], the most gifted of Mann's kinsmen, the subject of Mann's supreme experiment designed to install the artist beyond the pale of real life.

Eloesser tells us that Mann searched many years for a "model" for his Aschenbach. He needed a powerfully creative and absolutely solitary artist who had severed his last link with society, who had done with love and passion. This lonely master must be overtaken by some overwhelming, unrealizable passion which would be extraneous to life, and, if possible, of a higher order than the passions with which he had to wrestle in the days of his youth and adolescence.

The first "model" for Aschenbach was Goethe, specifically the episode of his hoary love for Ulrike von Lewezow. Mann's interest in this pathological erotic episode is quite easy to understand: passion and

death, passion and impotence, passion and the disgrace of its untimeliness, the great Goethe trembling before a lashing storm, the fatal blow of hopeless love terminating the life of a famous man, the damning shadow of bliss.

Yet even this conflict seemed to Mann insufficiently tragic and "isolated."

He places in the path of the aging Gustave Aschenbach a beautiful boy, whom he sees at the Venetian Lido, as if in a dream, although fully awake. An epidemic of cholera rages in the town, but the revelry at the beach does not cease, as it did not pause yesterday and will not adjourn tomorrow. Carefree people, loafers and simpletons, children of that "normal life" for which Mann yearns while despising it, rejoice at the sea and their own fiesta.

His love for the boy leads Aschenbach far beyond ordinary human fondness and sensuality. Here everything is vain, fruitless and impossible of fulfillment. In the name of a vacuum Aschenbach repudiates the accomplishments of his whole life, and he dies. Thomas Mann was pleased with his latest and most vivid variation upon the theme of the estrangement of art and the artist from life.

Mann could go no further. Before him stood a wall, that wall which he himself had erected to hide from the disaster visited upon his family, his world. Persistent, gifted, egotistic, distrustful like the older Buddenbrooks, dreamy and morbid like the later Buddenbrooks—Mann strove behind that wall to find a refuge from life's unwelcome impressions, from the deluge of historical events which threatened to upset his theories of artistic isolation. For decades Mann has been reinforcing that wall. All his works serve to bolster it up.

Came the war, and even Mann, who once again tried to retire to the sidelines, could not wave it away. He was forced to concede that the pages of his novels were being invaded in one way or another by mankind in general, and that somehow the biological defeats suffered by his family coincided with the political defeats of the class to which they belonged. The dividing wall shook from its very foundation to the tip of its nationalistic Gothic roof. An unexpected blow was dealt Thomas Mann by an unforeseen event originating with the greatest inventor of all, life itself, which Mann had always served so faithfully.

In 1912 life presented him with a gift in the form of a new theme—the *Magic Mountain* theme. Thomas Mann personally lived upon the Magic Mountain. His wife was taking the cure at Davos, and the writer went to visit her, just as his hero Hans Castorp was to visit his cousin Ziemssen. Mann caught cold in the sanatorium and developed a “moist spot.” But the author did not linger atop the magic hill; he returned speedily to the “flatland,” taking with him the plot for a satirical reproduction of what he had seen. The satire expanded into two volumes, resolving itself into a broad canvas depicting bourgeois society on the eve of the World War. Mann again gave much more than he had originally plotted. All the “spiritual values” of the old world are subjected to analysis in *The Magic Mountain*, by means of the acids of desperation, killing melancholy, enforced idleness deadlier than tubercular germs, forebodings of an everlasting separation. The Magic Mountain decreed the renouncement of the “flatland”—making even keener the anguish of the doomed people longing for that same normal life which Thomas Mann lost in his Lübeck, and for which he was forced to substitute another “normal” life—the life of the fidgety artist.

The “Magic Mountain” is an enchanted peak, a sort of “Venusberg,” legendary haven during the Middle Ages for paying pagan homage to the flesh. This subject has been treated more than once by German classical writers and poets, and more than once it has proved to be a sort of safety valve for freedom-loving Germans gasping for breath among charlatans and hypocrites. But never has “Venusberg” been sought in the Davos sanatorium, or tubercular patients been transformed into bacchantes and bacchanals. What incongruous material, what mutually exclusive values! The very idea is a parody, flagrant and derisive. But this sardonic cloak is lined with the silken mythological wisdom and ambiguous padded historical generalities so dear to Thomas Mann. This ancient mythological lining is worn to shreds; but Mann, with youthful vigor, attacks and annihilates all these broken, lost inhabitants of that strange “Venusberg” with its equivocal passions and even more equivocal Venus in the person of Frau Chauchat, a lady with a French surname married to a Russian official in Daghestan, who is in love with Spain and is giving herself to Peeperkorn, a venerable colonizer. How inventive Mann becomes in fabricating ridiculous

incidents and situations which characterize the absurdity of life, or rather death, in this Davos "international" contaminated by tuberculosis and poisoned by a vain wish to ward off the final hour! In the writer's hand the pen is now a whip, now a surgical knife. Indeed, the Mann of the World War epoch, when *The Magic Mountain* was written, is an altogether different Mann from the one we have known hitherto. His irony, like the tide, rises as the cultural crisis of Europe deepens. Mythology and Freudism, well-intentioned nationalism and a dignified devotion to duty, in the manner of the late cousin Joachim Ziemssen, bedeck the façade of Mann's philosophy, like statues placed before a temple about to be filmed. But his myths are devoid of their former monumentality. Mann himself suspects that he has overvalued his material, and that that which he regarded as marble and granite cannot withstand the elements. What will happen when these temples are set afire? Thomas Mann stares at the bonfires which illuminate the European chaos.

But Mann is a product of a departing epoch. The real and imaginary values of that epoch have penetrated his system as the fingernails of a Hindu monk who has vowed never to open his hands, grow into his palms. Thomas Mann is unable to shake off his phantoms. Despite the sanity, lucidity and soundness of his political articles and manifestoes, his novels consist of more than fifty per cent mythological mysticism. A fierce controversy rages among his contesting heroes. As we listen to the confused spokesman of his pet verities, we are sometimes at a loss to understand what Mann himself thinks about the spiritual inheritance.

Who are these spokesmen?

Do you wish to meet an honest and honorable soldier? Here is cousin Joachim Ziemssen, a German counterpart of Nicholas Rostov. Mann repeatedly attaches the epithet "honorable" to his name, so that his eventual death may seem all the more senseless. Cousin Ziemssen is an upright man, conscientious in his work, courageous, straightforward, and not very bright.

Settembrini and Naphta? Two sages and pedagogues debating Hans Castorp's soul. These two portraits Mann paints with superlative contempt. Think of their ancestry: Settembrini is the bearer of the naive, outmoded ideas of Roman democracy. He is the grandson of a Car-

bonaro whose occupation was journalism. His father was a philosopher, and he himself is a pseudo-revolutionary, pseudo-philosopher and pseudo-writer. A grandiloquent prattler, he has stationed himself in the "sanctuary" of the mountain sanatorium hoping to stave off death. The descendant of a revolutionary, he has become a tiresome scholastic. The son of a scholar, he chatters away about a gigantic organization of Masons allegedly directing world politics in the name of twenty thousand secret lodges.

More colorful is Leo Naphta. A Jew, the son of a "shochet" who was crucified upon his own door during a pogrom, he has become a Jesuit. His betrayal and apostasy is threefold, fourfold graver because he is not aware of the abomination of his apostasy. His world outlook is based upon shameful frauds. He uses the authority of the Jesuit order for his personal gain. A Papist, he attempts to employ Socialist slogans. In this daydreams he substitutes for Socialism a modern form of the Church communes established during the early centuries of Christianity by the Inquisition.

As already mentioned, Naphta and Settembrini fight for Hans Castorp's "soul." In their idleness this fight seems to them to be a matter of tremendous importance. Hans Castorp listens, but quietly laughing it off he goes on living as he sees fit. They, however, talk and talk... Thomas Mann involves himself and the reader in interminable verbal battles between a "humanist" and a Jesuit. Settembrini and Naphta discuss absolutely everything in the world, and in the course of doing so they occasionally shift sides. The Hellenist fences for the Hebrew and the Hebrew for the Hellenist. The debaters themselves and the objects of their debates are so unreliable that these exercises in eloquence succeed only in boring the reader. This verbosity mars the construction of *The Magic Mountain*. Mann lacks the succinctness which under comparable conditions would have distinguished the work of Leo Tolstoy, who could reveal the emptiness of a contestant's reasoning by the merest emphasis or shifting of words.

The literary methods of Thomas Mann and Leo Tolstoy have much in common notwithstanding differences in historical circumstances.

Thomas Mann and Leo Tolstoy are alike the victims of a moralistic outlook on life. Both condemn their contemporary scene—spontaneously, by conviction and creative impulse, independent of their meta-

physics. But in the course of Mann's ideological development, his metaphysics becomes covered over with a mossy growth of sickly emotions, fear and regrets, which, like a century-old rock—one of the many significant rocks in the European graveyard—lie across his path, blocking his progress. Thomas Mann is a recalcitrant defender of the culture of the past, and he not only condemns the dear bourgeoisie and their beloved ones who wither away in the well-appointed mountain sanatorium, but he exposes bourgeois science and philosophy, as well as the symbols of democratic belief and religion. Medical science at the Davos sanatorium is sheer quackery, characterized mainly by outspoken cynicism and devotion to the rules of profitable business. The physicians at the sanatorium have accumulated a store of assorted knowledge. Unlike the "savage" Tolstoy, Mann does not deny the positive qualities of this knowledge. However, so many considerations of a "business" nature govern the relationship of doctor and patient that the physician forfeits his traditional dignity and the patient is just a number and a subject for elaborate manipulations.

Such are the methods and materials upon which Thomas Mann based his work before the invasion of Fascism in Germany. This latest catastrophe still further complicates Mann's position. Changes have come over him which demand close and careful study. His new trilogy *Joseph and His Brothers* is, he states, a still more profound "inquiry" into mythology and the nature of ancient cultures than his former brief excursions into the past. On the other hand, from his recent journalistic articles, which breathe a surprising air of optimism and confidence in the social movements occurring in the world today, it would seem that Thomas Mann no longer hides from reality behind the Buddenbrook wall.

—*Translated from the Russian by A. CHOROVER*

DIALECTICS invites discussion on the foregoing essay, for publication in the next issue.

A book of criticism on Thomas Mann is now in preparation, for inclusion in the Critics Group Series.

WHAT IS DIALECTICS?

A BIBLIOGRAPHY

HAVING received many requests for a "brief definition" of *dialectics*, we offer the following selected list of works on this subject as the briefest guide we can give to an understanding of dialectics:

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- J. D. Bernal: *Engels and Science*
- C. Dutt: "Dialectical Materialism and Natural Science" in "The Labour Monthly," Feb. 1933
- F. Engels: *Anti-Dühring; Dialektik und Natur; Ludwig Feuerbach*; introduction to *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*
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L. Rudas: *Dialectical Materialism and Communism*

Science at the Cross-roads [papers presented by delegates of the U.S.S.R. to the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology held in London, 1931]

—Compiled by ANGEL FLORES

[NOTE.—Future issues of *DIALECTICS* will contain further bibliographies dealing with the application of dialectics to astronomy, biology, economics, mathematics, religion and the arts.]

KARL MARX ON BYRON AND SHELLEY

... Those who love and understand Byron and Shelley consider it fortunate that Byron died at the age of thirty-six, for had he lived longer he would have become a reactionary bourgeois; on the other hand they deplored that Shelley died at twenty-nine, for he was a revolutionary through and through, and would have belonged always to the vanguard of socialism.

[Quoted by Edward Aveling and Eleonore Marx Aveling: "Shelley the Socialist," *Neue Zeit*, 1888, p. 541.]

SPAIN

Arise, arise, arise!

There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread;

To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead.

Be your wounds like eyes

What other grief were it just to pay?

Your sons, your wives, your brethren, were they;

Who said they were slain on battle day?

Awaken, awaken, awaken!

The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes;

Be the cold chains shaken

To the dust where your kindred repose, repose:

Their bones in the grave will start and move,

When they hear the voices of those they love,

Most loud in the holy combat above.

Wave, wave high the banner!

When Freedom is riding to conquest by;

Though the slaves that fan her

Be Famine and Toil, giving sigh for sigh.

And ye who attend her imperial car,

Lift not your hands in the banded war,

But in her defence whose children ye are.

Glory, glory, glory,

To those who have greatly suffered and done!

Never name in story

Was greater than that which ye shall have won.

Conquerors have conquered their foes alone,

Whose revenge, pride, and power they have overthrown:

Ride ye, more victorious, over your own.

Bind, bind every brow

With crownals of violet, ivy, and pine;

Hide the blood-stains now

With hues which sweet Nature has made divine:

Green strength, azure hope, and eternity:

But let not the pansy among them be;

Ye were injured, and that means memory.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

[An Ode, "written October, 1819, before the Spaniards
had recovered their Liberty."]

ANDRE GIDE vs. the USSR

LION FEUCHTWANGER

WHEN André Gide became converted to Communism, during the course of a journey into the interior of Africa, it was primarily an æsthetic affair, an emotional upheaval on the part of a sensitive man of letters touched by the misery of the exploited Negroes of the Congo. Gide's avowal of Communism, set forth in his fine book of travel, was accepted in the Soviet Union as an objective political statement. It was not meant thus, however. Gide's Communism was the outcome not of logical considerations, but rather of a mood. It was only an accident that he did not decide in favor of Catholicism at the time, for he might just as well have declared himself for Jesus and Mary as for Marx and Lenin.

Gide came to the Soviet Union with false preconceptions. He did not understand the draft constitution, for he confused true democracy, which is the aim of the Soviets, with the purely formal democracy of western European countries; and he was profoundly disillusioned when in the Soviet Union he did not find freedom of speech and press in the western European sense. Apparently he was greatly disappointed to find that the people of the U.S.S.R. were not willing to trade in their Socialism for a parliamentarianism of the western European variety.

André Gide travelled like a Parisian, snobbish, fastidious, utterly egocentric, regarding Paris as the obvious center of the universe. The great things to be seen here in the Soviet Union he observed without interest, but the thousand undeniable minor crudities to be found here he observed closely and with great interest. Just as the French for a long time could not recognize Shakespeare's greatness, criticizing him incessantly for bad taste and barbarity, crediting him, at best, with being an inspired savage, so Gide examined with a hypercritical eye the thousand minor crudities and petty inconveniences of the Soviet Union without perceiving the great, sublime structure of the whole.

Today the Soviet Union is so well established, its course so maturely rational, that a judgment of this country reveals more about the

observer than it does about the observed. In the Soviet Union the tremendous achievements of Socialism are everywhere apparent; one can see how life has become more spirited, richer, more aware, and happier; but it is also evident that life in this country is as yet by no means comfortable, in the western European sense. For instance, in most toilets one finds newspaper instead of the toilet paper to be found in the well-appointed European toilet. André Gide preferred to devote his attention almost entirely to this lack of toilet paper.

So far as his more serious objections are concerned, Gide criticizes chiefly, in a most vehement fashion, the "adoration" of Stalin. It is true that Stalin is extravagantly celebrated in the Soviet Union, to the astonishment of the European. It is obvious, however, upon a closer analysis, that this excessive veneration is bestowed upon Stalin not as an individual but simply as the representative of Socialism. This veneration of Stalin is not artificial; it has developed with the results of socialization. The people are thankful to Stalin for their bread and their meat, for their education and organization, and for the defense of these by means of the newly-created army. When the people say "Stalin" they think of their increasing well-being and organization. When the people say, "We love Stalin," that is the most natural and naive human expression of their approval of Socialism and of the government.

Gide also makes some sarcastic remarks about Stakhanovism. He thinks that only the proverbial laziness of the Russian makes this method necessary. Is Gide unaware that man all over the world is by his very nature indolent, and that many methods are needed to overcome this inertia? Does not a mere glance at the results in the Soviet Union prove that this work must have been performed with greater love than anywhere else? Could such results have been achieved by the use of force? Does not a glance at any factory, or into any home in Moscow, show that the masses approve the intensity of the work which is being asked of them? Is it surprising that a country guided by the principle, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work," should seek to increase its productivity by means of wages, rewards and rational methods? These remarks about the alleged proverbial laziness of the Russian reveal most clearly, perhaps,

Gide's western European snobbishness, his prejudice, his lack of objectivity.

Gide protests very violently against spiritual regimentation in the Soviet Union, against increasing uniformity. He forgets that we are dealing here with a culture in its infancy, that a large section of the population has just learned how to read, so to speak. The letters of the alphabet, the elementary rules of individual branches of study, are in the nature of things uniform, not individualized. It is not to be expected, nor is it to be desired, that a man learning how to read an *A* or an *O* should pronounce these letters individually, like an *E* or a *U*. Only when education has advanced to a higher stage—which is simply a question of time, and that very short—can individuality be emphasized.

Moreover, it is not to be denied that in certain fields greater tolerance would be desirable; but is Gide unaware of the fact that the Soviet Union is being seriously threatened, and considers itself in a state of war? Does André Gide not realize that the people of the U.S.S.R. have to work like those Jews in the Bible who were building their second temple, their trowels in one hand and their swords in the other? Under these circumstances it is not easy, nor is it advisable, to let discipline relax. The leaders of the Soviet Union know that they must not let loose the reins until they have removed the dangers of threatening fascism.

Gide came to the Soviet Union not as an unprejudiced observer but as a jaded aesthete, seeking new sensations. It is his privilege not to have enjoyed them; but to have said these things now, when the attack on Spain is endangering the cause of Socialism in France and in the entire world, constitutes—and even Gide the aesthete must have realized it—aid to the enemy, a blow against Socialism and against world progress.

André Gide lived for a long time in the ivory tower of pure æstheticism. He felt at home there, and in its rarefied atmosphere he wrote fine books. Then he left his tower because he was getting bored, and he wanted to stretch his legs a bit. Now he has returned to his ivory tower. May he enjoy its comfort.

—*Translated from the German by SOL SIEGEL*

THE MARXIST APPROACH TO ART

MILTON W. BROWN

THE following essay is not to be taken as definitive. It is merely a tentative and necessarily abridged consideration of art from the Marxist point of view which I hope to develop more fully at some future date. I am concerned here with the structure of the art forms in general, and the development of historical style in the plastic arts (painting, sculpture and the graphic arts), rather than with a consideration of differences between individual artists within the great cultural whole. A knowledge of the basic Marxist concepts is assumed because I think the point has been reached where a summary of historical materialism before every Marxist essay is no longer necessary.

Unfortunately, time and space do not allow for a fuller discussion of controversial points, nor for proof of theories which may sound crudely categorical, nor for an examination of important deviations from the hypothetical norm.

The culture of any given period is generally homogeneous. This statement is true of those historical eras in which one class completely dominates society and the lower classes are subjugated to a slave or serf status. Of course the greater the freedom and power of the lower classes of society, the more heterogeneous culture becomes. Elizabethan drama has throughout a character indicative of all of its contemporary English culture, while on the other hand during the early nineteenth century French painting produced such diverse figures as Delacroix, Ingres, Corot and Daumier. This latter was possible only because of a multiplicity of cultural trends. Previous to the economic and political liberation of the lower classes under bourgeois society, culture was exclusively a product of the ruling class, while the great mass of humanity experienced, if anything, a decidedly limited and degenerated form of this upper class culture, or else only its own primitive attempts at self-expression, such as, for instance, the crafts,

folk-lore, or dancing. Aside from more recent developments towards a heterogeneous culture, which reaches its highest stages during periods of decay and revolution, culture is generally homogeneous. Every work of art is stamped with the cultural image of the historical period to which it belongs.

This does not mean that there is a stereotyped formula dominating each culture, or that every work of art can be explained by broad generalizations. Every subdivision of culture—and we are here concerned with the various arts and in particular with the plastic arts—has a character and a development parallel to and harmonious with the general stream of culture, and yet peculiar to itself. The relationship of these subdivisions is analogous to the phenomena of family resemblance where the basic physiognomic characteristics are similar and dependent upon a common heritage, yet each is different because of individual configuration and individual variation.

The differences between the specific cultural forms within the general body of culture are due to the fundamental structure of each of these forms. While they may each express the same ideological content and employ somewhat the same subject matter, they all have a different inherent form. And it is this inherent form which determines the individual solution of the common problem.

In the first place each art has a function of its own. Not only has it a peculiar function at a given time, but changes in society change its function. Thus a painting may at one time be an expression of religious piety and an object of worship, and at other times an expression of a personal æsthetic, or of sensual indulgence, or a call to revolutionary action. It is also true that within a single cultural milieu sculpture, for example, may be relegated to the decoration of buildings while literature deals with fundamental social problems. Further, a single art may have different functions at the same time. So that a given art may have more than one function in a single cultural era, while differing in function from other arts at the same time and from itself in other historical periods. The function of an art is therefore the first determining factor in its final character.

The second and purely material limitation of an art is its technique. Obviously, arts differ primarily because they have different material

means at their disposal, either as to choice of subject matter or effectiveness of the final art product. For example, music must either eschew the expression of thought content or create something of doubtful value. In the same way sculpture cannot attempt the simulation of movement, or if it does the artistic result will probably be ineffective. Therefore although all the arts of a given period will express the same content, this content will be transformed by the æsthetic limitations of the individual arts. The dominance of a specific art form at certain times is due to its adaptability to ideological needs. But aside from the purely physical limitations of sound, movement, light, color, time, rhythm, etc., there are æsthetic limitations which must be taken into consideration. While a writer may investigate and describe minute psychological experiences, attacking his problem, furthermore, from a temporal point of view, an artist can present the inner spiritual values of the human mind only through external and static physical features. Similarly a writer can develop very precise distinctions of ideology while music is completely unable to transmit ideas even in their simplest form.

Finally the artistic creation of a period is bound up with the historical development of the art form itself. That is to say, every art form has a history of technical and æsthetic development out of which the new art form grows and to which it turns for knowledge and inspiration. The accumulation of æsthetic experience over a long historical development most certainly affects form which any new experience takes. The appearance of the new is dependent upon the character of that which has come before.

This is not all to be taken as merely a discussion of certain abstract æsthetic principles. It is necessary to understand these mitigating factors before one can explain the endless variations which art forms will take in the expression of the same fundamental ideas. If culture were a direct result of economic forces then the problem of cultural history would be ridiculously easy, but these economic and social forces create the ideas which are transformed in the formal crucibles of each individual art.

Having investigated the nature of the individual arts in terms of

function, technique, æsthetic limitations and tradition, as the formative forces in the expression of ideas, let us see how the arts—in this case the plastic arts—are determined by economic and social forces. We have spoken of function as one of the basic material agencies in the creation of art. It is only logical that as its function changes so an art changes. At this point we should distinguish, of course, between the general function of an art, or of all culture, which we are now discussing, and the specific expressed function of a single work of art, which in itself may be a variation from the general function of the art.

Now as we have already noticed, the function of art has a history. In primitive times art was a collective occupation. So far as we know its purpose was either religious-magical, or decorative (which also may have been magical). Whether or not the entire tribe took part in artistic production, which is unlikely, they all took part in the ceremony in which the production of the work of art was probably the climactic feature. In the dance this collectivity is much more obvious. So far as the plastic arts are concerned specialization must have occurred at a relatively early date, but the function and creation of primitive plastic art was collective. It was probably in connection with decoration, such as painted pottery and other ornamented products, that art first assumed the function of creating luxury goods. While religious-expressive art is a function of all of society, commercial-decorative art is a sign of personal wealth, power and distinction.

In civilized society (class society), the decorative arts develop into an established luxury industry, while the expressive arts become the function of the dominating class—or a section of that class—whose object is either the propagation of the ideas of that class or the demonstration of its wealth or power. One must be extremely careful to distinguish between art which is the expression of certain class institutions (church art) and art which is the expression of a general class ideology (secular art). Institutional art is certainly less mobile so far as change is concerned.

Since art has become not a social product but rather a class product, we must consider the relationship of patron and artist as a primary factor in the creation of art. The artist's services are either commanded,

if he be a slave, or bought if he be a free artisan. The artist has become a member of the producing class, in a society which is definitely divided into working class and leisure class. It is obvious, therefore, that to understand the art of any given period one must first understand this patron-artist relationship, which changes with time and historical events.

One of the important effects of this relationship is that the patron class determines not only the function, but the actual material form which the art takes. The requirements and desires of this class dictate whether the work of art be a decorated cross, a fresco, a miniature or an easel painting; whether a musical composition take the form of a chant, a cantata, a quartette, a symphony or a concerto. Literature has at various times taken the form of epic poem, drama and novel, according to historical necessity. The requirements of the ruling class, as limited by its wealth, also govern the actual material form of the plastic arts. It should be noted here that the form which is most suited because of its inherent character to the needs of the class in power becomes during that time the dominating form within that art. When fresco painting became the logical medium of expression, during the Italian Renaissance, even miniature book illumination, which had hitherto held the leading position, took on the character and style of fresco painting. It is ever true that an art technique can become so dominant as to influence not only the technique within its own realm, but other arts as well. Romanesque sculpture has very recognizable connections with manuscript illumination. Drama has been influenced by the novel and, even more recently, the novel by the motion picture.

The content of art is dependent upon the ideology of the patron class. A work of art expresses some special idea within this ideology. Whether this content is dictated by the patron, as in mediæval art, or whether the artist produces a work spontaneously in conformity with general cultural opinions, is really not the important consideration but only the special problem of each historical period. The character of this patron-artist relationship changes with each change in society. The important fact is that all art is the expression of some class ideology. In those hierarchical systems in which one class dominates, the artistic

expression is directly dependent upon the single ruling class ideology, and the artist upon the single patron class, while in those fluid societies in which there is a heterogeneous culture, art is the expression of any one of the many ideologies. In such latter cases the artist's relationship to patronage is very much less consistent, much more complicated. In bourgeois society the disappearance of a dominant and consistent patron class has created a new situation. Instead of an established patronage there is a nebulous market for which the artist produces. The selection of content is therefore the more or less personal will of the artist. That is why an artist today may express a revolutionary content, something quite unknown prior to the French Revolution.

If we say that the content of art must be considered as emanating from the patron class, this does not mean that the artist necessarily creates through compulsion, for in hierarchical societies the artist is almost always in agreement with his patron. It is only in those fluid societies in which the artist has both economic and intellectual freedom that he achieves the cultural right to disagree with his environment. And all our examples of revolting artists date from after the first emergence of the bourgeoisie, after the emergence of the artist as an intellectual as differentiated from the guild craftsman.

Each class has its own ideology or thought image of the material world, its own basic concepts to explain natural and social phenomena. In its art it attempts to present this ideology by formal means. This ideology is the content of art.

Subject matter, on the other hand, is the external or material form which this content takes. The subject matter of art is the result of a compromise between the necessities of content and traditional usage. We must expect the greatest amount of cultural lag in subject matter, for while content and form vary more or less directly with social change, subject matter tends to persist as a cultural heritage. This is comparable to the persistence of external institutional forms in spite of changing social systems. The external form of the church has existed for centuries, and similarly the religious theme of the Virgin and Child is to be found in Mediæval art as well as during the Renaissance. In Mediæval portal sculpture this subject is the expression of

feudal religious hierarchy, while in the paintings of Raphael it is the expression of a bourgeois humanism and rationalism.

Content is not the result of personal idiosyncrasy, although there are individual variations, but is consistent with the sum total of any specific culture. Classical man was as incapable of producing a realistic landscape as he was of building a battleship, for man is limited by his time.

While most critics will go so far as to concede the fact that content in art is the formal equivalent of a social and cultural milieu, or even that it is a class expression; that the function of art has a direct relation to social needs and that technique is certainly the result of material developments, they will not agree with the Marxist that form or style is also explainable by virtue of these same social conditions. This, of course, is the crucial point in all Marxist discussions of culture. How is style the result of technological, economic, social, political, cultural progress? This involves, of course, the Marxist concept of economics as the basic force in society, with culture dependent upon social forces.

Let us approach the problems of style with certain conceptions which we have already established. In the first place, we realize that a certain content is either consciously or unconsciously to be expressed. This content naturally develops a subject matter or invests a subject matter with special meaning. Every new content is confronted with a form which, as has already been stated, is limited by function, tradition, technique and inherent æsthetic characteristics. Style is the result of the struggle between content and the established historical stage of artistic development. That is to say, each new content finds at hand the cultural remainder of the last preceding era out of which it has emerged. The final product is then a synthesis of the content and the artistic residue. It is in a sense quite like the development of language. A certain formal syntax is largely constant. A new type of content arises which must be expressed and which finds the heritage or residue inadequate or unsuited to its ends. Out of the resulting revolution a new style of expression, in fact a sort of new language, emerges. New words are created, old ones are given new meaning, idioms develop, word order is changed, in short the entire character of the language is altered. For example, there is a very clear and im-

mediately perceptible distinction between Elizabethan, Victorian and modern English.

The same is true of every art form. The new need, the old form, a period of struggle or transition, a synthesis in a new artistic era, a new artistic style. The contemporary artist desirous of expressing a revolutionary content is faced with an artistic heritage of abstractionism, expressionism, theories of art for art's sake and of personal aesthetics, and a hundred other artistic and cultural traditions. Some of these must be immediately rejected, others accepted, still others transformed until finally a new style will emerge, a style fitted to the direct expression of a revolutionary content.

Once an artistic period has developed an integrated style, that style becomes the language of the time, the accepted formula for artistic creation. Artistic vision is henceforth conditioned by this formula, and it spreads to all the lesser related fields such as decoration, costume, furniture, the crafts, etc. The artist of the seventeenth century saw a landscape in quite a different manner from the artist of the nineteenth century. Not because visual perception had changed, but because of an evolution in the means of expression. This oneness of vision during single artistic epochs is a well-known historical fact. Its explanations, however, leads to difficulty among the idealist critics. Style is accepted as something spontaneous, which comes unaccountably into being, colors and forms art for a time, and then unaccountably dies. This evolution is to some critics merely fortuitous, or to others the inherent development of a formal evolution. Once established, style does have a sort of biological growth, but only in so far as society itself has such a growth. Changes in style can be adequately explained only if we assume the recurring revolutionary changes in content.

Although the art of a given period has a homogeneity and a consistent development, there are certainly variations in artistic personality just as recognizable as changes in historic styles. Each of these variations, and that means each individual artist, is a problem in itself, just as is each change in artistic style. Since this discussion is limited

to the general aspects of art we cannot at present enter fully into the laws of such variation except to enumerate briefly certain important factors to be taken into consideration. The first determining factor is the specific artistic group to which the artist belongs, i.e., his preliminary training and mature style. For within each culture, no matter how homogeneous, there are group variations due to various factors—national, geographic, etc. Then we must establish the peculiar personal character of the artist, his psychological temperament, since within even a small artistic group there are the inevitable personal differences explainable only through a thorough knowledge of the life of each individual.

To go even further, if we are to completely understand any single work of art we must place it within the personal development of the artist and consider its specific purpose as a work of art.

This, then, is a complete picture of a work of art dependent for its accuracy upon the extent of our knowledge. It is an attempt to present the problem in all possible lights, to explain as fully as possible. And that is Marxism. Not a short-cut to wisdom, not an alchemy of knowledge, but a scientific investigation of all available facts, to the end of a fuller explanation of the nature of this our universe.

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A magazine devoted to the discussion of literature and the arts from the Marxist viewpoint, CRITICS GROUP DIALECTICS is the only publication of its kind in the United States. The appearance of the first number was hailed as an event in American letters.

DIALECTICS is designed to supplement the CRITICS GROUP SERIES, which it is intended shall not only influence but be influenced by its readers.

Communications are therefore invited. DIALECTICS will publish as many of these as considerations of space allow. Communications will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope.

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