

ART IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

I. WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE EVOLUTION OF ART?

The purpose of this article is to attempt to discern better the situation of art in contemporary society. To do this we will examine essentially the exterior forces which influence it. These multiple and diverse evolutionary forces are in a certain manner centripetal, and ultimately they modify our concepts of art as such. Without going so far as to state that contemporary society has completely overturned our ideas on this question, signs of change are nevertheless visible which challenge fundamental characteristics up until now attributed to art.

For a long time it has been said that art participates in eternity. What is the reality of such a statement? Is it not man who is both the creator and the beneficiary of art? And since today it is possible to imagine that the human race could disappear suddenly from the face of the earth, it is equally possible to fear that art could know the same fate. Beyond this eventuality, the question can still be asked: is art unchangeable? Are we absolutely certain that the beauty of the Venus de Milo or that the truth of the theater of Racine can be appreciated at any given moment of history in all places? We can doubt this, for, if the future is unknown to us, the past allows some suppositions. And so, everything leads us to believe that Hakuseki Arai, the Japan-

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ese encyclopedist of the 18th century, would hardly have been delighted by the nude goddesses of Greek sculpture. In the same way we can ask if Russian peasants of the 17th century would have found pleasure in reciting the verses of Racine. One thing is sure: if *Le Rouge et le Noir* had been translated into Japanese before the Meiji period (1868), the translator would have been placed under house arrest with handcuffs on his wrists. It should also be noted that this masterpiece was not well received by Mérimée, who was a friend of Stendhal and known for his keen perception in literary matters.

For idealistic aestheticians, the work of art has a universal value whatever the period and the place considered. But is this idea justified? It is certain that conditions have changed a great deal from the time when each region of the globe was relatively isolated from the others. Today the world has shrunk with the development and the acceleration of information, technology and progress in the means of communication. Now the French can appreciate African sculpture, North-Americans can admire the painting of scholars of the Song period. Despite this mixing, some forms of art are disappearing; others, such as Greek drama, have already disappeared for whatever reasons, but particularly due to changing tastes. Still today young Japanese are moved when listening to traditional melodies from the Edo period (17th to mid-19th centuries); will this continue for long? It is certain that all over the world, culture and art have the tendency to become uniform. Within this uniformity some dominant currents and other minor currents are appearing little by little. The dominant currents will succeed in imposing themselves. Will they become the art of future periods?

And then, what is the meaning of the concept of unchangeability? Is not nature itself also subject to the spectre of historic determinism, that is, subject to the hand of man? Are not the riches of nature transformed into industrial products? During the euphoric period of technological progress, nature was still synonymous with quality and authenticity while things artificial were seen as cheap or even junk. And yet, today, do we not have proof that, for example, synthetic rubber is in every respect superior to natural rubber? Even nature is threatened by death if man does not pay heed. Consequently it would be best to use

the term eternity only with caution to define art!

For a long time we thought that art was the objectivation by an extraordinary individual of his subjective experience. Thus the individual occupied an essential place in art. Was he the sole craftsman of this work? This concept of the individual genius of the creative artist is of European origin; it is located spatially and is of relatively short duration in the long history of humanity. Moreover, the Japanese writer Naoya Shiga said, while standing before the statue of the goddess of Mercy of Yumedono in the temple of Hôryûji (Nara): "I am before a masterpiece whose creator I do not know; but it is 'beautiful,' and that is the essential thing." The epic poems of antiquity and medieval cathedrals are also anonymous masterpieces. Have not the periods during which art was considered a collective work, fruit of the creativity of a group of men, been more frequent than those which favored the work of the solitary genius, conscious of the abyss which separated him from society? Dante and Li Po for their part certainly never had co-workers, but they did not intend apparently to cut themselves off from the common consciousness of the society to which they felt they belonged. They had the desire to perfect the common good, and there was their unique ambition. Literature, moreover, is not representative of art in general.

Scientific and technical progress has permitted the flowering of new means of expression—radio, cinema, television—which have been from the beginning a center of collective creation. These are truly new art forms, even if certain people accept them with difficulty and even if their art is in no way comparable to that of Hölderlin.

Originality has long been considered a vital characteristic of art. In its traditional concept originality referred not only to the idea of creation and to that of origin (original as opposed to a copy and to reproduction), but also to the idea of a unique, incomparable and irreplaceable object. The originality of the work described the originality of the artist. In this way Jean-Jacques Rousseau expressed his originality by his opposition to society. Today this model of the exceptional individual set against society seems a little bit out-moded. We think we can say that this concept is in the process of modifying itself under the pres-

sure of new forces; it no longer corresponds to our present sensitivity.

The second meaning of originality is, today, subject to a still more severe trial. In modern art the unique object becomes the multiple object through different reproduction techniques. And so artistic value is confused with the number of reproductions, successful artists being those whose work has the greatest number of buyers. Even if the authentic artistic value of a novel is not dependent on the number of copies sold, it is no less true that the writer who has not been able to publish his manuscript is nothing but a mute poet, condemned to solitude. No one can advocate reading a text in manuscript form! Moreover, who is concerned with knowing what has happened to the originals of radio, cinematic or televised works? The new art is stripped of its original, it exists completely in its reproductions. It is the same for painting and sculpture. Technical progress made in reproduction is such that it has become practically impossible to distinguish the original work from its copies. It is even possible, for example, to reproduce the original colors, the relief of the brush stroke characteristic of each Western painter of past centuries. The expert who comes up and taps you on the shoulder while you are plunged in contemplation before a high quality Renoir and who warns you, "It's a fake": is he a friend or an enemy of art?

The disappearance of the unique character of the work implies the disappearance of a quasi-mysticism, of an absolute adoration and respect which was the basis for our admiration of art. The mass production of standardized works brought to our knowledge by the mass media has changed the image which we had of the work of art which is now nothing more than a consumer product. If it is not possible to maintain that the photo-novels published by the daily press and the magazines are not works of art, it is still difficult to speak of the eternity of the work of art when we see it abandoned, after being read, on a seat in the subway or in the gutter. This "industrial literature" in the sense that Sainte-Beuve intended, presently is enjoying a great success in Japan, as confirmed by the architect Noboru Kawazoe: "Made to be thrown away, to be burned after use, works are born and die, immediately replaced by others: an

art which is not art..."

For a long time it was thought that the image of eternity was to be associated with the notion of resistance to the effects of time, a kind of solidity symbolized by a statue carved from marble. True art could not be deformed and would not disintegrate when abandoned. Similarly to modify a sentence or to change a single word in a literary text was out of the question. The work of art was endowed with permanence in time, completely unalterable. However, when we finish seeing a film, for example *High Noon* by Zinnemann, at the very moment when the lights of the theater come on again, the scenes which were the most emotionally charged, those which we would like to retain, escape us by becoming fuzzy. The movie is reduced simply to a few rolls of film in cylindrical metal boxes. It is true also that, since antiquity, there are "momentary arts," such as dance and the theater. Modern arts all tend more or less to this ephemeral quality. Maybe this is due, among other reasons, to the fact that the ego of the contemporary creator is, more than in other times, impregnated with his environment and that, because of this fact, he loses firmness and precision. Whatever may be the case, the originality of the creation is less clear, perhaps even leading to a feeling of non-existence, to a kind of "inconsistency" of the work of art.

The reproduction of a work in multiple copies implies ultimately a standardized production of art. And so it is with the length of records or the size reproductions of old master paintings. This standardization imposes norms on the creator's sensitivity and, insidiously, on that of the viewers or listeners. There is no doubt that progressively the one for whom the work of art is destined becomes the victim of this standardization and that there develops in him a reflex of passivity and submission. From the amplification of the reproduction system there results then a modification, an evolution of our sensitivity attracted by minor works without great consistence. In these conditions, we can no longer limit ourselves to the study of "pure art" alone.

In his work, *Marginal Art*, published in 1960, the Japanese critic Shunsuke Tsurumi, after having noted that which in art is the product of "agreeable signs" or of "signs directly creative of the aesthetic experience," distinguished three types of artistic

creation: "pure art," "popular art" and "marginal art." For him, "pure art" corresponds to the classical definition of art as "the work of a specialist who has a regular audience for each kind of work produced." Opposed to this is "popular art" which is made up of artistically poor works or even vulgar works: "popular art is produced by professional artists, but the process of creation in this case takes the form of a co-production by an industrialist and a professional artist, and it is intended for the general public." Finally "marginal art" is located at the boundary between art and daily life: "with regard to marginal art, it is the work of amateur artists and is meant for an uninitiated audience."

A characteristic of present popular art is that it is the product of the collaboration between an artist, on the one hand, and a business man, on the other. In advanced countries where the consumer society reigns, literature, for example, has become a veritable sector of industrial activity. The writer who in the past had only his inspiration for master tends more and more to a standardized production which is ordered up in advance similar to other consumer products in the capitalist countries. It is not by chance that N. Wiener writes: "Art is from now on in the hands of industrialists who cannot allow themselves the slightest financial risk." And so literature is increasingly in the process of becoming a programmed production.

The example of Japan in this respect is enlightening. Since 1868 Japan has been modernized at an accelerated pace; its economy has experienced a prodigious development following the two world wars, which has created favorable conditions for the growth of a consumer society. Modern literature of quality, which the country already enjoyed with writers such as Ogaï Mori or Sôseki Natsume, for example, quickly proved to be insufficient to satisfy the demands of an increasingly important reading public, and the appearance of a popular literature was received enthusiastically. Today this popular literature continues to develop, particularly thanks to the publication of serials in several major national daily newspapers whose circulation exceeds seven million copies. Parallel to this, "pure" literature, written by an elite and for an elite, has declined, and the great master of this art also went to work writing novels destined for the masses. And this to such an extent that after World War II the

quality of popular literature noticeably improved, to the point that from then on it was difficult to distinguish it from pure literature. The point was reached where the question was asked whether the real criterion for distinguishing literary genres was not simply the number of copies sold. Now it is recognized that a book which sells well is not necessarily a mediocre book. Certainly there are still writers who are little concerned with fashions, alone in the presence of their subjectivity. In the minority, they perpetuate a traditional concept of literary creation.

The most striking fact of recent years is the adoption by the Japanese printing industry of modern methods for promotion of their new products. Each work is introduced in the context of a vast advertising campaign, using all the resources of the mass media: press, radio and television. The cinematic adaptation follows shortly. Thus it is that a certain novel could sell four million copies, bringing in the equivalent of 28 million U.S. dollars for its author, and the tenth place on the list of the highest incomes of the year. On this same list published each year by the Tax Bureau, can be found regularly two or three writers among the first one hundred taxpayers. Their income greatly exceeds that of baseball or golf champions, movie stars or singing idols. This is a phenomenon unique in the world.

But the most original component of artistic life in Japan is certainly the place occupied by marginal art. Of very ancient origin, it was especially developed during the Tokugawa era (from the beginning of the 17th century to the middle of the 19th), in rural communities as well as in cities. Such was the case of the "Dances for the Feast of the Dead" in which everyone could freely participate and which were performed by all the inhabitants of the community. A refrain reflects well the mood of the dancers:

"Some fools are in the circle, other fools watch;
As long as we are fools, let us join the dance."

Another example of marginal art is given to us by the best known folk songs; composed by amateurs, they were taken over by those other amateurs made up of the people. We can even classify with the marginal arts the growing of dwarf trees, the *bonsai*, an agreeable pastime which is accessible to everyone.

One can deny this broad conception of art and refuse to consider as artistic the aesthetic experience of an amateur who addresses himself to an audience of the uninitiated. But where can we draw the line between the winner of a radio talent show and the performance of a confirmed singer? It was for this reason that I wrote in 1946 in *The Second Art* that there was no separation between the work of a master of Haiku poetry and that of amateur poets such as can be found in the humblest classes of Japanese society. In the West, the man in the street does not compose sonnets any more than in China he composes quatrains in verses of seven feet. The great critic Nyozekan Hosegawa, on the contrary, saw in the ability of every Japanese to be on an equal footing with art a specific trait in which the culture of this country can rightly be proud. This is a form of marginal art open to all, thanks to the profound penetration of culture in an homogeneous society where the creator does not seek so much to take the spotlight as to play the modest role of symbol, lost as he is in the heart of society. Here there is no egocentric affirmation. No problem like that of the priority of inspiration, such as was the case in Europe before Pascal. If Japan has no doubt also had its unknown artists, it is remarkable that there has not been a single Stendhal, unknown during his lifetime and raised to the heights by posthumous honors.

“Is poetry a trinket?,” asked the poet Shirô Murano in the September 6, 1968, edition of the daily newspaper *Asahi*. In response to a poetry contest organized by a publisher, some 35,000 letters were sent to him before the closing date. But upon reading these poems, Murano could not help but note that, “most of them were nothing but a series of pretentious poetic clichés..., poems formed in the same mold, like the latest fad in jewelry stamped out in quantities...” And Murano continued with a quotation from Paul Valéry, “I would like to write a poem which would be read a thousand times by one single person, rather than one which would be read one single time but by a thousand people.” He stated, “This flowering of cheap poetry which we see today, far from leaving dead or living poets indifferent, can only vex them to the highest possible degree.”

Against the thesis of Murano, which is located in the purest

artistic orthodoxy, we must mention opinions expressed with vehemence in two letters sent to the same newspaper by "angry readers." One was a cafe owner, the other a student. Both criticized the "selfish Mandarin attitude" of Murano; for them poetry is not "the solitary business of an isolated individual, but a vast collective operation in which its advocates also participate."

The tradition of a "national mentality enamored with security and with the unfinished" (Tsurumi) is still quite alive in the Japan of today and does not stop growing stronger thanks to the growth of industrial society and to the development of the mass media. In this regard we can quote the poet Kenji Miyazawa: "First, every action can set itself up as an art; secondly, by increasing our means of seeing, it is possible to consider as being art the slightest element of human life." It is important to note that the author of these daring lines (even dangerous if we take them from the strict point of view of Western aesthetic orthodoxy) still has a number of followers.

The movement in the modern age from an aristocratic society to a democratic society, the general raising of the level of life, the diffusion of culture to the masses are excellent occurrences. And it is normal that art be for the people one of the elements of the happiness to which it aspires. But the masses do not enjoy the same artistic education as the elite, and this leads to a certain vulgarization of culture. In any case the most striking fact of our post-war period has been the improvement in the quality of mass-distribution literature.

II. ADVERTISING AND POLITICAL POWER

"The fate of our civilization depends on its struggle, not against communism, but instead against Madison Avenue," wrote Toynbee. In fact, according to him, of all the liberties which have been lost to man in the United States, one of the most precious is the liberty which has been smothered by advertising. Madison Avenue is the avenue in New York where the largest advertising agencies have their headquarters.

If we wish to form an idea of the power of advertising in

the United States, let us first consider the annual amount spent on advertising: 17.3 billion dollars. Then let us not forget that it was advertising people that ex-president Nixon went to consult when he was entangled in the corruption scandal known as Watergate, and that he asked their advice on action to be taken. As everyone knows, after the United States comes Japan; her annual expenses in the area of advertising were 1.46 billion yen in 1947 (or 0.15% of the gross national revenue), increased to 349 billion in 1964 (1.71% of the national revenue), and then to 459.4 billion in 1967. Certainly these expenses did not attain the level of the total merchandizing costs of commercial companies (700 billion), but practically equalled the budget of the national education ministry. Let us cite, for example, the Japanese company Dentsû which was the leading advertising agency in the world for the year 1973. Consequently it would seem to me impossible that such a sum has no influence on popular consciousness, and on art!

The success in senatorial elections, with the highest number of votes in the entire country, of the famous novelist Shintarô Ishihara, associated with the largest-selling brand of beauty products in Japan, will suffice to illustrate the impact of advertising in a society where the combined effects of production and mass media make themselves felt. It seems to me that it would be unrealistic to gloss over the responsibility of advertising in this electoral success, even more so since most people were opposed to his political program and to his party, the Liberal Democrat Party. And, moreover, every artist who might have wished to campaign against him would have been obliged to use the mass media as well to create his own propaganda. In like manner, any person who seeks to play a role in society is forced to use advertising. To what extent does this dependence influence artistic creation? I do not know if psychologists have addressed this particular problem, but one thing is undeniable, and that is that there is an evolution whose effects are visible.

Let us refer to what Norman Mailer wrote in his work entitled *Advertisements for Myself*. "History is made up of the actions of man, not of his feelings, but the individual action; particularly his action in society, in history, is very little in relation to his whole being. But what can be set in motion by the mass media,

and which in fact is, is that minute part which unfortunately history writes.”

Let us now examine the matter of weekly magazines which each week publish scandal articles on the intimate lives of show business stars. Journalists justify their indiscretions by saying that all they do is respond to the desires of their readers. Is this not an infringement on the private lives of artists? Certainly. In any case it can happen that it is the very person concerned who wants to make himself known at all costs, even at the risk of seeing his private life violated. Recently in the course of a television discussion with a group of artists, a newspaper director was accused by the artists' spokesman of having violated the private life of one of the group. Willingly recognizing his failings, particularly of having printed in the headlines of his newspaper the news of an actor's divorce, he then noted that a certain other actor had come to him spontaneously to ask him if he would like to publish an article on his approaching marriage, the place and date, to the actress who was for only a very short time his girl friend. Every viewer could guess, with no difficulty, that he was speaking of his accuser, who did not dare utter a word. In fact if we consider the case of actors or actresses who are sure of their talent and who want to break through, why should they deprive themselves of this marvelous occasion for making themselves known to a large audience? In fact, popularity is, for everyone in our society, indispensable for moving forward, just as it is for the artist or the actor, methods considered apart. And so it is normal that the artist wishes to make his talent known, if only to be able to progress. But how difficult it is for him to protect his private life! Inevitably publicity takes control if he lets things happen without reacting. To resist this influence, he must adopt the attitude of firmness of a Faulkner, for example. The effects of publicity in modern society are, in fact, quite subtle. Also it is exaggerated to qualify it as an enemy of art.

One day the major dailies opened an advertising campaign to launch a brand of beauty products by showing the photograph of the wife, the mother and the daughter-in-law of a famous progressive historian. This strategy proved especially effective; beyond its direct impact, the message delivered by these three

beautiful and famous women indirectly led the public to see a relation between the quality of the products and the fact that members of three different generations of the same family were there to speak of it at the same time. My purpose here is not to analyze the influence of this advertising on public consciousness, but I am convinced that the impact was all the greater since it was the family of a progressive, rather than that of a conservative and right-thinking intellectual.

“Modern advertising is a form of magic which sets in motion all the techniques of symbolist art,” wrote Denney in *Astonished Muse*. And Marshall McLuhan noted in *Understanding Media* (1964) that, “Advertising is like a potion working on our subconscious for the purpose of exercising a hypnotizing action on people, particularly sociologists... More attention and reflection go into the process of creation of an advertising masterpiece than is seen in the composition of articles and newspaper editorials. Teams of sociologists are exceeded by teams of advertising men.” Later McLuhan notes quite correctly that, “A day will come when historians and archaeologists will discover that the advertising of today, more than that of any other age, never ceased enriching the field of social activities and that it is advertising which constitutes the most faithful reflection of such activities.” (*Ibidem*).

A work of art cannot give rise to a press campaign if it exists in just one unique copy. If it is true that a unique work of art can sometimes give rise to a rivalry in the domain of advertising, it is no less true that, in principle, this supposes a standardized production in series. In fact, in our days, it is not so much a matter of selling pre-existing products as it is of creating needs in order to come up with the products which can respond to them. In other words, advertising is highly programmed. It follows that the artist who bends himself to the needs of advertising and publicity becomes a producer himself and accepts the principle of standardization. Ultimately he associates himself with the process of industrialization. Best-sellers are a successful illustration of this process.

If we compare the advertising messages in a weekly or in a monthly publication, it is frequently difficult to determine which of them have a real literary value. The writers themselves re-

cognize that there is room for confusion. And so, “the action brought to bear on the knowledge and the needs of our contemporaries, and the capacity to modify them (as the writer Hiroyuki Itsuki says) is the same for literature and for advertising, and it seems that both share the same purpose of opening the way to new types of needs.” Moreover, everyone knows that a good number of advertising writers are authentic poets!

The positive side of standardization cannot be denied, and company directors must bring their various areas of activity to benefit from it. As Michitaro Tada quite correctly notes in his book *Art and Reproduction* (1962), artistic creation should escape this process. But how can this be when all the areas in which it is evolving and all the channels of communication which it uses are subject to the same unifying tendency. In literature, for example, we rarely find short stories or novels, especially in the magazines, which do not contain love scenes. Authors must conform to the fashion, and few have sufficient talent for imposing their own personal style on such passages. Most have recourse to an intensive use of images and situations and of stereotyped phrases. Their role is to hand over to the publisher a product without risk.

Some will maintain that these are not true works of art. But for me, it is practically impossible to differentiate between the work of art from what is not. Without necessarily delighting in this kind of literature, no one who is even minimally realistic can deny the role which magazines have played in the formation of the post-war Japanese consciousness. Despite the absence of any kind of sociological analysis of this matter, it is obvious that this press has influenced Japanese readers of every educational level. News and the photo-romances published in the magazines will not fail to bring about an evolution in the relationship of the Japanese with literature, I am sure, especially with literature written to please a public eager to read this weekly press. This is also the case for other forms of art.

Also, whether we like it or not, individualism is declining. Naturally I do not mean to say that all solitary artists gifted with personality and originality have disappeared. Simply, the limits of contemporary society are such that personal creation encounters more and more difficulties in expressing itself. We

are thus witnessing the successes of artistic productions which are content with obeying the demands of fashion. Among other things, few members of the public are sensitive to "serious" art; most prefer entertainment. These consumers of pure pleasure art are increasingly numerous.

We find here the parallel between the artistic creator and the advertising man. Advertising writers are not lacking either in psychology or in a sense of observation; but they are satisfied with skillful manipulation of language and of words without ever taking any risks. Moreover, with the exception of certain particular cases—the anti-war movement or the struggle against racial discrimination—advertising is conformist and socially conservative most of the time. On this point there is a certain similarity between advertising in capitalist countries and press articles in socialist countries which avoid giving a personal point of view in order not to offend the system. For example, the Soviet press did not allow a single line to appear which might have been considered self-critical at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The problem of advertising and of art thus seems related in certain cases to the problem of power and art.

Artistic creation needs freedom, an opinion which is accepted practically everywhere today. But history teaches us that rare have been the periods during which art was able to enjoy total freedom. This is why in China numerous thinkers, such as Tseu Ma Tsien or Hi Kang have never stopped demanding freedom of expression, even at the risk of their lives. In the West, artists did not enjoy true freedom until the 18th century. We need only recall the finicky surveillance practiced by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages over all forms of art, and in particular the institution of the Index. With the coming of the 18th century, progress in industry permitted a flowering of philosophy which made this the century of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* was condemned to be burned, proof that censorship had not disappeared. In fact, the European artist did not become independent until the beginning of the period of free trade, born in England, and the regular growth of science and technology which has continued into the 20th century. It is in this context of general progress that culture and the arts in the West have been able to flourish. The case of Japan

is special; the fact that it has an homogeneous population and society has allowed it to avoid subversive ideologies. And so artists as victims of political power were extremely rare up until the beginning of the Meiji era. It goes without saying that in a troubled period humanism and liberty are seriously threatened. There was no artistic freedom in Japan during the civil wars of the 15th and 16th centuries, in revolutionary France, in Russia in 1917. In today's China freedom in that form is totally unthinkable.

More than ever it is the power of the State which endangers creative freedom. In his work *The Decline of American Democracy*, Hans Morgenthau denounces "the passage of effective material power from the hands of the people to the hands of the government; likewise the passage of effective decision power. The government acquires a power which, while promising to defend its own population, can finish by annihilating it." The discovery of nylon formed the strength of the industrial trust Dupont de Nemours. But, today, intercontinental missiles and H-bombs can be built only with the protection of a powerful state. We can hope that these devices will disappear, but it is still no less true that our era is that of the State and that States confront one another on questions of pride. Fundamentally there is the idea that the progress of a nation and of an entire people is more precious than the freedom of some. We allow ourselves to be convinced that freedom of thought and freedom of art should be restrained if this allows an increase in the material happiness of the many. Then intervention of a monstrous central power in the area of art is justified.

In all ages human beings have felt the need to express themselves without restraint. "There is a weight in the stomach when one refrains from saying what one wants," (Okegame, *Memoires*, 12th century). This freedom, so necessary to man, has grown parallel to the evolution of society. Formerly it was not permitted to an individual to propose thoughts or to have feelings different from those of other members of the social body; more exactly, there were none! With the differentiation of social classes was born the possibility of expressing oneself, but this remained the privilege of the powerful. Then, in the contemporary period, we have seen, with the development of the forces of

production, the progressive democratization of power and the liberalization of society. It is in bourgeois society that the individual has gained his identity and that freedom to express himself; it is in this context that the artist has been able to claim total freedom and to strive toward "art for art's sake." Then, as we saw in relation to advertising, the growing pressure of technology on society caused new forms of coercion to appear which have restrained the creative freedom of the individual by entangling him in limiting structures.

In other places, developing countries throw themselves into the economic and social revolution in order to attempt to make up for lost time and to taste, at last, the happiness of the industrialized countries. In this respect the socialist revolution is exemplary. Because it is a matter of a colossal work realized by an entire nation, it cannot employ the means of individualistic liberalism. The brutal character of this operation is inevitable. With the first positive results of the revolution, when the separation from the developed countries begins to be less apparent, liberalization appears quite naturally. And the alternative arises: happiness of the individual or happiness of the entire people? An awakening of thinkers and artists, or happiness for the entire society?

France in the 19th century had no thinkers of a radicalism comparable to that of a Kierkegaard or of a Nietzsche. Bourgeois society was still afloat in happiness. At the very most it produced a Baudelaire, a Rimbaud, pure rebel spirits. To desire the existence of free artists in a happy society is to restrict oneself to a blessed optimism and idealism. Placed in such a context, art would be nothing but a purely decorative phenomenon.

It is an idea quite widespread among men of politics, who are basically interested in reforming society, that the happiness of the entire population must be sought above all else. If they grant art the right to exist, it is with the idea that it must be at the service of their objectives or, at least, that it must not be a hindrance thereto. It is curious to note in this respect that thinkers of true genius, such as Plato, Pascal, Rousseau or Tolstoy, to name only these, have thought the same thing. Political designs must certainly have guided the efforts of Khrushchev to bring intellectuals under the authority of the Party,

while in the background the myth of the “socialist paradise” was being postulated. In this paradise, the musical background is permeated with the echoes of the music of Shostakovich. The public, which has come to admire the classical movements of the ballerinas, is composed of workers who have reached the end of their day of producing. The spectacle is carefully measured out. The rather 19th century aspect of dancers wearing *tutus* is compensated for by the accompanying music which tries hard not to be too bourgeois, that of Shostakovich for example. Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Should this happy world be renounced? Should usury and prostitution be brought back and the ideal of productive forces be abandoned so that Maïkovski might find his freedom to write once more and not feel himself driven to the brink of suicide? The answer is not easy.

Of course one cannot accept the kind of repression of which Soviet artists are victim. But this situation has given them for the first time the chance to show the world their indomitable character and to cause confidence toward artists to be reborn in the hearts of men. What pushes Soviet writers to turn deaf ears to the Lenifying background music and to dare write texts which can only bring down governmental wrath upon them? In their eyes, especially in the eyes of writers, an artist should lead the way and acknowledge that there is a “naked” man before him, if such is in fact the case, even if the man might be the emperor. To do this, creativity requires total freedom. All this shows that, even if a collective paradise is desirable, the life of an individual cannot easily or eternally be a paradise. Perhaps we can see here a variation on the text of Stalin: “The writer should be an engineer of the soul.” It would seem that Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are still alive in the Soviet Union, and that the orthodox and classic concept of art still exists, solid, at least among artists.

Solzhenitsyn, in an open letter written in 1967 to the Fourth Writers’ Congress, stated, “Our literature is still subject to this weighty medieval vestige, contrary to our constitution, illegal: censorship. By censorship literary works are forbidden which could express opinions maturing in the midst of our people or which speak to the conscience of our compatriots. However, a

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literature which is incapable of breathing in the air of its social milieu has not the value of a piece of paper. I propose, therefore that this Congress demand the abolition of all forms of artistic censorship and work toward this goal." And it was not because of his indignation brought on by the refusal to authorise publication of *Cancer Ward* that Solzhenitsyn wrote: "It is with calm that I express myself, for I have always accomplished my duty as a writer, and I am ready now to risk death in order to continue to fulfill it. Nothing will be able to hold me back in my march toward the truth, for which I have decided to make the sacrifice of my life."

In civilized societies, censorship has always existed, at least until the 19th century. Those who see in its survival in the U.S.S.R. proof that this country is backward (and who are content therein) would do well to recall that there was not a single artist capable of writing a similar letter in censored militarist Japan before and during the Second World War. At least they should not forget to congratulate the Soviet people for having writers sufficiently courageous to dare undertake such an action.

Alain loved to quote Kant whose dove believed that it could fly even better in a vacuum. Certainly the atmosphere slows the flight of the dove; but the bird is not capable of understanding that it is precisely because of this resistance that it can fly. The artist is not a bird. Nevertheless, his obligation is endlessly to seek his impossible freedom in the face of political power and the force of mercantilism.

Takeo Kuwabara
(*University of Kyoto*)