The Landscape of Stalinism

THE ART AND IDEOLOGY OF SOVIET SPACE

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The Art of Totality

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Translated by Mary A. Akatiff

It perhaps sounds banal to assert that the main function of totalitarian ideology is a striving for totality. Nevertheless, this claim seems to be necessary when one hears and reads that the most important goals of the totalitarianism of the 1930s were the creation of societal homogeneity and the exclusion of the other. For the other was not only negated, repressed, and deemed worthy of decimation in the totalitarian ideology of that time. Mere exclusion of the other would have left something outside of totality—even if that something were just nothingness—so that the totality would have ceased being a totality. The other was the enemy and was not to be excluded but to be fought actively. By this fight, the other, the enemy, was permanently reproduced. And it was exactly this permanent struggle with the other that constituted the totality of the world for the totalitarian ideology of the time.

In the remarks that follow I consider the aesthetics of totality, focusing first on Stalinist and National Socialist painting and then on Stalinist architecture. Totality here does not mean uniformity or homogeneity of any kind but rather a total struggle of all oppositions against each other, a struggle that simultaneously unites these oppositions by making them part of a single world event. Not coincidentally, the famous "law of unity and the battle of opposites" was the central tenet of the dialectical materialism that functioned as the official ideology in Stalin's time. Political enemies were united through the permanent struggle of the material, productive forces they embodied. It was indeed this struggle alone—one that involved all oppositions and then let them fight one another—that created a total space allowing nothing outside of itself to exist.

Such visions of a totalizing, overarching struggle from which no one and nothing can exclude itself define all totalitarian ideologies of the

thirties. The other became, as the enemy, a part of the totalizing whole, inasmuch as everybody was forced into the struggle. The only position truly excluded from totalitarian ideology was that of nonparticipation in the struggle—that is, a metaposition of pure contemplation. The total struggle, be it the struggle of the exploited classes against the exploiting classes or the struggle of the Aryan against the non-Aryan, could not actually be described from the outside. Nature itself could no longer be described with the neutrality of science, that is, "metaphysically," because science itself was split in two by the totalizing struggle: into a proletarian and a nonproletarian science or into an Aryan and a non-Aryan one.

History as well could no longer be understood, described, or classified into periods through the kind of neutral historical consciousness once attempted by Hegel's system. Through the battle of opposites, all periods of world history were synchronized, and the historical distance that might have made historical judgment possible was abolished: every historical description was seen as a contemporary position statement in the battle of opposites. The struggle itself was understood as the internal and continually self-reproducing engine of history.

Especially for the Soviet and National Socialist ideologies of the 1930s, every single individual was always already involved in a world-scale battle, in a world war that both defined and dominated every place on earth as well as every epoch of world history. Above all, this was a political-aesthetic struggle, in that one fought for dominion over signs—that is, for the privilege of ascribing to these signs one's own meaning. To be even more exact, this struggle took place on two different, though closely related, levels. On the first level, the struggle was to (re)claim the means necessary for aesthetic production—the artistic practices that could in no way be left to the enemy. A specific ideological significance had to be ascribed to all the images, devices, and forms found in the history of art. In turn, these ascriptions served to regulate the concrete use of art in all forms. Indeed, the battle for dominion over the historical heritage of art marks the split between the totalitarian aesthetes and the ideologies of the avant-garde, who practiced historical asceticism and were prepared to give up the entire pictorial vocabulary of the art historical tradition in order to relegate it to the past. From the perspective of total battle, however, this avant-garde ascetic position must be seen as mere defeatism. In contrast, the totalitarian aesthetes attempted to become proficient in the use of all historical art forms in order to utilize them strategically in actual battle.[1]

On the second level, the goal of the battle for dominion over signs was the conquest not only of time but also of space. The creation of any image, the erection of any building, the composition of any literary text could never be a neutral aesthetic act: it represented either victory or defeat in the battle for symbolic occupation of space. Works of totalitarian art do not describe the world—they occupy the world. The aim of totalitarian art is to fill the largest possible territory with specific signs that are identifiable as "our" signs, in contrast to "their" signs, or the signs of the enemy power. Thus, totalitarian art always makes itself present within the context of the total battle. It celebrates its victories and feels ashamed of its defeats according to the attendant territorial gains or losses. Indeed, totalitarian art is structurally incapable of reflecting on its own contextuality, in that it does not allow for a neutral worldview that would allow for such reflection.

Even when describing the enemy, totalitarian art must remain "partisan"; that is, the description always remains "our description of the enemy" and never becomes "a self-description by the enemy." Any theoretical reflection on totalitarian culture must therefore take into account the aggressive impetus behind it. The contrast between totalitarian art and other art movements is to be found not primarily on the level of the signifiers—in the form or the syntactic structure of image or text, as with the case of avant-garde art—but rather on the level of the aggressive appropriation of these signifiers and the ensuing occupation of them by ideological meaning. Only by investigating the ideological use of the artistic signifiers that have been taken from the archive of the art historical heritage can one expose the actual achievement of totalitarian art.

Painting Totality: The Painted Image as Virtual Photography

The art that was officially promoted and celebrated in the 1930s and 1940s in countries that were under totalitarian rule, such as the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy, has remained until the present day suspect for an aesthetic consciousness raised in the tradition of modernism. Such art lacks any established position in the history of twentieth-century art. One seldom finds "totalitarian" art in present-day museums. As a rule, its authors and works are not discussed. And because recognition by the art world depends on the rules of its discourse, the very status of such pieces as works of art is rejected through this silence. Thus, the officially established art of totalitarian states presents a rare example in today's cultural context—in a world where otherwise

"anything goes"—of a truly irreducible other. Only in the last few years has the situation begun to change.

The public's attitude toward totalitarian art has a certain moral motivation that would be difficult to contradict. In every totalitarian state, art was used as propaganda for the countries' respective leading ideologies, and the artists who actively participated in this propaganda took on a certain level of responsibility for the effects of these—in many ways—devastating ideologies. However, the strategies of exclusion on the part of canonized art history rest, in this instance, more on aesthetic than on ethical grounds.

Many leading artists of the twentieth century sensed their closeness to various outgrowths of communism or fascism, and many publicly admitted to such affinity. That barely tarnished their reputations. Moreover, the artists of the Russian avant-garde, who actively advertised for the Soviet powers, did indeed receive their earned place in the historical canon of art in that century. This was also the case with the Italian futurists, who demonstrated their loyalty to Italian fascism. The real problem in dealing with totalitarian art is posed by works that are held to express the seemingly premodern or antimodern sentiments of classicism, realism, or naturalism. As a rule, political dictatorships are judged more leniently when they have accelerated the history of art: we tend to forgive the tyrants of the Italian Renaissance many of their crimes because they were promoting aesthetically progressive art. We absolutely never forgive tyrants with retrograde aesthetic tastes.

Therefore, the value of totalitarian art is much more an aesthetic question than a moral one. In the end, we are dealing with the issue of how the aesthetics promoted by the totalitarian regimes of the thirties and forties should be judged in art-historical terms. Does totalitarian art, despite everything, belong to the history of modern art in the twentieth century? Crucial to such a judgment is an exact agreement about what we mean when we speak of the totalitarian in totalitarianism. For the purposes of this essay, it will suffice to establish that despite all the differences among individual totalitarian states, and despite the many possible and very diverse theories of totalitarianism, there exists a crucial similarity: for the totalitarian state, all of society represents a single vast, unified, homogeneous field of operation. Modern political subjects who see themselves as embodied in the totalitarian state want to free their actions from any form of dependence on external context. More precisely, totalitarian subjects believe themselves capable of reshaping context—in its totality—at any time and in any con-

ceivable sense. Such a belief is extremely modern, and therefore the art that is practiced under these conditions and dictated by this belief really cannot be premodern or antimodern art.

The era of totalitarianism comes, historically speaking, after the era of the avant-garde. And the artistic avant-garde occupied itself with nothing other than the crossing and erasing of the boundaries that had traditionally split and limited the effectiveness and influence of art. In the first decades of the twentieth century, all the traditional norms of artistic production were invalidated, all taboos were broken, all conventions annulled. Artists gained the freedom to integrate any and all possible forms and processes in their work. In this way, artistic production lost its traditional boundaries: like modern technology in general, the technology of art could be applied equally well to everything in the world. Even so, a certain border remained uncrossed despite all these expansions: the border between art and reality, or, in other words, between art and its observer.

For all the influence of the avant-garde, the contexts in which art could be presented—art fairs, museums, exhibits, and so forth—remained limited. Even more importantly, this limitation, the position of the observer, remained protected and untouched. The art of the avant-garde had been emancipated from traditional tastes and traditional criteria for judgment. But as long as the public was allowed to view art from a stable, socially guaranteed external position—a position that both influenced and limited art reception—artists could not completely emancipate themselves from the public's tastes and judgments. Even after decades of artistic revolt, the whole system of art still stood under the dictatorship of consumers, critics, and spectators. And this dictatorship must have been experienced by the advanced art of its time as hostile to art itself, for the era of artistic revolution was simultaneously the beginning of the era of the mass audience, whose sentiments seemed far removed from the problematics of the avant-garde.

Rooted in this situation was a developing "hatred of the masses" among the artists of the avant-garde,[2] as well as the desire to conquer these masses, to subjugate them to their creative will, to dictate to them the conditions of art reception. The inclusion of the spectator in the work of art represents the actual project of the avant-garde—and this project itself was from the beginning totalizing or, as it were, totalitarian. The radical historical avant-garde movement can best be described as an attempt to replace the dictatorship of art consumers with a dictatorship of art producers. Artists of the avant-garde wanted to eliminate

the aesthetic distance ensured by the superiority of the spectator: they wanted to create the entire context in which their work was situated. The aesthetic strategies used by avant-garde artists were many and diverse. Among them were aesthetic provocations and shocks created through radical innovation, intended to disempower and destabilize the spectator.

It is obvious that the disempowerment of the spectator cannot be achieved, in the end, through purely aesthetic means. Destabilization through innovation has its temporal limits: everything new eventually becomes old. An aesthetic dictatorship requires a political dictatorship able to realize and stabilize any given aesthetic project. In the case of avant-garde art, therefore, one sees an increasing preference for activist political theories and movements, such as Marxism, that promise to re-form life. The artist hopes these movements will newly commission him or her to work with the movement for the aesthetic re-creation of reality itself. The avant-garde's wish to abolish anything limiting the creative initiative of art is closely related to the wish of the modern political subject for absolute political freedom and the power to decide the economic, social, and other conditions of his or her own actions. Modern totalitarianism is merely the most radical actualization of this wish: the political-artistic subject gains absolute freedom by abolishing all of the inherited moral, economic, institutional, legal, and aesthetic limits that reduce the possible scope for political initiative. This fundamental affinity between the aesthetic and the political avant-garde of this era suffices to refute the claim that the official art of totalitarian states was not modern.

Even so, the image of this art in the thirties and forties hardly evokes the art of the avant-garde. In Nazi Germany, modernist art, even in its moderate forms, was pursued and combated by the state. In the Soviet Union of the 1920s, modernist art was merely tolerated. Beginning in the early thirties it was increasingly oppressed, and it was driven out of the official art world entirely in 1934, after socialist realism was declared to be the only valid artistic method. To the disappointment of many avant-garde artists of the time, in both these countries and others, the kind of art required under the domination of the new political powers seemed to be, at least visually, decidedly retrograde. It appeared to be a return to the traditional mimetic image that the international art of the era thought it had left behind. Thus there was the impression of a "straightforward return to the past" carried out by political leaders lacking in contemporary aesthetic education.

Totalitarian art's turn to the figurative, however—to the human image, to the mimesis of external reality—can in no way be interpreted as a "straightforward return to the past." Certainly, many artists who were traditional in theory and practice used the new political-ideological trend to give their art a new validity, having already felt betrayed by the avant-garde. But these artists cannot be viewed as "genuinely totalitarian." For whom or for what, then, could totalitarian art be called representative? To answer this difficult question requires a detailed examination of the artistic, ideological, and political context of the era; generalizations do not apply.

The return to the mimetic image involved an artistic use of new media images—for the most part, from photography and film—that were, of course, equally mimetic. This turn to the mimetic media image was noticeable everywhere in the thirties, and by no means only in totalitarian countries. Surrealism, magical realism, and all other realisms of the era began to access the images and techniques of the fast-growing mass media in different ways. Post-avant-garde art, including totalitarian art, began to pay attention to these images and techniques, but not only because their massive spread promised increased social-political impact. There is an inner affinity between the avant-garde image and the media image that suggests the possibility of their synthesis, and totalitarian art strove toward just such a synthesis.

It was hoped that through this synthesis the gulf between high, avant-garde, elitist culture and the mass culture that characterized modernity could be overcome. The sought-after totality of totalitarianism is essentially nothing more than an attempt to abolish this gulf.[3] The divide separating the tastes of the modern cultural elites from those of the masses (and therefore separating the avant-garde from any effective influence on the masses) had to be eliminated so that the artistic-political subject could gain unlimited freedom of sociopolitical design. It was thought possible to analyze, control, and manipulate the masses' tastes in order to redesign life in ways both foreign and partly incomprehensible to the masses. With the demise of totalitarian regimes, art finally gave up these goals, to the point that today art either satisfies or criticizes the tastes of the masses but no longer attempts to transcend or radically transform them.

As I have mentioned, there is a commonality between images produced by the avant-garde and those produced by modern media technology. Both, though for different reasons, can be understood as unconsciously produced. Photography arose through the direct effect

of visual reality on film—an effect compelling for the spectator. Criticism of photography has certain limits: the spectator cannot completely deny its relationship to reality (at least when the image is not computer generated), something one can always do in the case of the traditional painted image. The partially unconscious character of photography, its results not always controlled by the artist, forces the spectator to accept the photograph's reality, thus partially renouncing his aesthetic distance.

The artists of the avant-garde, on their part, repeatedly claimed that their images were created unconsciously and manifested, as it were, a quasi-photographic imprint of a transcendental, hidden, true reality. Thus the spectator was required to accept the reality of these images as well. The reference to the unconscious serves to eliminate or, better yet, to transcend the aesthetic distance separating the spectator from the work of art. If the work is supposed to have been created unconsciously, then it attains the status of reality and thus gains a certain power over the spectator. In doing so, it manages, to a large extent, to overcome the institutional, political, or economic impotence of art. Aesthetic distance turns into an illusion that both strengthens and hides the unconscious influence of the image.

Kandinsky wrote about the role of the unconscious in this artistic seizure of power in his famous book *On the Spiritual in Art* (1910).[4] In particular, he claimed that certain forms and colors have a magical, unconscious effect on the spectator, in that they transport him into a specific mood—one could say that these forms leave an imprint on the nervous system of the observer, not unlike the imprint of images on film in photography. Indeed, only very few sensitive and, at the same time, analytical souls are able to consciously grasp and produce such unconscious effects. These chosen few are the true artists. Their images are created as the expression of an unconscious but nevertheless reflective "inner necessity." In the act of giving himself over to this inner necessity, the artist begins to explore it. The task of modern art, for Kandinsky, is found in the act of experiencing inner urgency in order to master it technically. The artist who has experienced the unconscious effect of images is in a position to control the soul of the spectator, to manipulate him, to mold him into a new and better person.[5] This ability to control and manipulate distinguishes the artist as a member of a societal elite: for Kandinsky, society is strictly hierarchical, so the majority of humanity can and should be unconsciously controlled by artistic influence.

Characteristically, Kandinsky emphasized that artistic style, innovation, and originality play no role in the inner necessity of the image. Every image, be it figurative or abstract, old or new, conveys specific moods through the unconscious influence of its colors and forms on the soul of the spectator. The common criteria of conscious art-historical judgment, through which the spectator hopes to gain control over art, are rendered invalid. For the most part, images can be distinguished from each other not along formal-aesthetic lines but rather by their unconscious effects, which can be perceived and controlled only by the artist. The spectator no longer controls the image; on the contrary, the artist controls and steers the spectator through the image.

The artist therefore becomes a magician, manipulator, and trainer whose power has a controlling effect on the spectator's unconscious. This figure—the covert manipulator of another's unconscious—captivated the imagination of the era in which the artistic avant-garde flourished: examples range from the gloomy Dr. Caligari and Dr. Mabuse of German expressionist film to the kindly Dr. Freud with his psychoanalysis and Dr. Steiner with his anthroposophy. The avant-garde artist, similarly, wanted to become a "doctor" who researched and applied the unconscious effects of colors and forms. Formal distance and effortless identifiability obviously weakened the unconscious, direct effect of the avant-garde analytic image. Out of all this derived the project that ruled the art of the 1930s and 1940s: to combine the unconscious imprint of outer reality in the form of photography with the imprint of the "inner necessity" in order to achieve the maximal effect on the viewer.

This combination was central to the artistic strategies of surrealism, magical realism, new objectivity, and other realisms of the time. The presence of the inner, hidden reality of dreams or desires was suggested by the artistic implementation of quasi-photographic modes of depiction. The result was an identification of dream with reality, of the factual with the possible, of the outer with the inner. Totalitarian art was part of this shared project of the 1930s. The use of photographs and mimetic images was combined in this art with the expression of "inner necessity." But the new artist was no longer concerned with the inner necessity of sexual desire, as the surrealists were, or with the apocalyptic vision of death common to many artists working in magical realism or new objectivity. It was the collective unconscious—of a race or of a class—that was thematized in totalitarian art.[6]

Thus the manipulative effect of the image became less visible—and

so more effective. The image of totalitarian art aligned itself, above all, with color photography, and by no means with the image of traditional painting. The individual, expressive, and stylistically distinctive artistic elements of the traditional image were consistently eliminated. The artist strove for the anonymity, neutrality, and sterility of conventional photography in order to achieve maximal credibility with, and maximal effect on, the viewer. In this way, the artist evaded the standard aesthetic judgment that was presupposed by the autonomous position of the viewer: the corresponding image looked somehow "normal." The manipulative effect of the image was, at the same time, ever so much more calculated.

The presence of such calculation can be demonstrated especially clearly using the example of Paul Schultze-Naumburg's treatises, which are perhaps the most representative of the aesthetic consciousness of the Nazi era. In his book *Nordic Beauty* (1937),[7] Schultze-Naumburg attempted to define and illustrate as specifically as possible the ideal of the Nordic Aryan. He reproduced images from classical art of different periods, photographs portraying "real" people, fashion sketches, and so forth, without concern for differences of style, era, artist, or technique (painting, sculpture, or drawing). For Schultze-Naumburg, these differences were irrelevant. He was interested solely in details that, according to him, exposed racial differences: the form of the foot, the line of the shoulder, the posture of the head and neck. Distinguishing between an ancient Greek sculpture, a work by Raphael, Dürer, or Rubens, and a contemporary photograph was of no great concern for Schultze-Naumburg, because in all of those cases, he claimed, the creators of the images were unconsciously establishing and handing down specific racial features.

Moreover, Schultze-Naumburg referred to the corresponding visual material in an extremely fragmented way—a shoulder here, a foot there. Given such a presentation, the borders between high and mass culture, between classical art and modern photography, as well as between various historical epochs and aesthetic styles, were erased. The whole world of images presented to the viewer became itself a totality in which the spectator himself was included, likewise as an image. This occurred, above all, through the neutral photographic portrayal. Here the spectator lost the independent, secure, aesthetic standpoint from which he otherwise would have been able to observe and judge. He was now himself judged by these images—and possibly also sentenced. Instead of being able to enjoy Greek sculpture or the paintings

of Raphael and Rubens calmly, the spectator, having read Schultze-Naumburg's book, must compare his own feet and shoulders with those he sees before him, shivering to himself all the while.

The disinterested observation of which even Kant spoke does not occur here any more. The aesthetic judgment—a spectator's means of control over the artist—is rendered powerless when the artist begins to design his images consciously in accordance with racial criteria. And indeed, the human body in art of the Nazi era looks completely neutral, extremely desexualized and anesthetized. It is less a living, "real" body than a body design that strives for the visual optimization of the Aryan appearance. Consequently, there are hardly any stylistic differences between photographs and painters' portrayals of naked models. The "photographicity" of painting is used to portray the timeless Aryan body—an ideal as incontrovertible reality—and therefore to identify its timelessness with the National Socialist present.

For Schultze-Naumburg, the reading of images against the background of their racial unconscious was by no means limited to classical art or official Nazi art. In his earlier book, *Art and Race,*[8] he attempts to build visual analogies that, in his opinion, shows ties between photographs of mentally ill people and the portrayal of individuals in German expressionism. Again, the issue is not the aesthetic positions and strategies of the respective artists but rather a comparison of the images for their inherent racial characteristics, beyond all formal-aesthetic limits. Modernity is therefore by no means excluded from the totality of the image-world that is produced. More importantly, Schultze-Naumburg was concerned with the especially dangerous potential for "degeneration" under an enemy influence—a degeneration that the observer is to avoid and fight against once he has learned of its dangers.

The naked human body played a central, if not always explicit, role in the German art of the Nazi era, in that the ideology of the racial unconscious applied most prominently to the disrobed individual. All body parts became significant and began to speak a dangerous language. In comparison, Marxist theory of the class-specific unconscious can be formulated only in the language of clothing: one's class identity is recognizable above all in the way one dresses. It is no coincidence that Mikhail Bakhtin placed "carnivalesque" individuals, who continually change their clothes, in the center of his subversive cultural philosophy, written in reference to the Soviet Marxism of the 1930s.[9] One begins to understand the vehement struggle against both

nakedness and fashion in the Stalin era. This rejection of nakedness had little to do with official prudery. More importantly, the disrobed individual evaded his social identifiability—much like the person who made sure he was dressed in the latest fashion—and was therefore dangerous. The sexuality manifested in fashion posed dangers for both the separation of the races and the separation of the classes. The art of the Nazi era responded to this danger by desexualizing the body; the art of the Stalin era, by strict enforcement of a clothes ordinance.

At least from this perspective, the Soviet art of the Stalin era differs externally from the art of the Nazi regime. Other differences between the National Socialist and Communist ideologies, and between the two nations' artistic traditions, are expressed in the artistic practices of the countries at the time. Even so, a fundamental similarity is obvious, enabling us to talk about totalitarian art as a unified phenomenon: in both cases, the issue is the replacement of customary rules governing the writing of art history with a vision of a single battle. This battle penetrates the innermost part of all history. Hence, all periods are synchronized, and all places are housed in a single, total space. At the same time, this battle splits apart the seemingly homogeneous historical styles at their core. In the case of Marxism, it is an issue of class struggle; in the case of National Socialism, it is one of racial struggle. Accordingly, images from the art tradition are dealt with on the same level as mass-produced images from the media—as handouts for the ideological classroom.

This pathos of timelessness is clearly visible in those of Hitler's speeches dedicated to the role of German art in the Third Reich. He argued against the notion of the "timeliness of art," which he characterized as a "Jewish invention."[10] In this way he also established his rejection of the term "modernity." In his view, the label "modern" maliciously subjugated art to changing eras and, above all, to fashion, "for true art is not subject to the law that governs seasonally bound evaluations of the achievements of a tailor's studio."[11] According to Hitler, true art was much more than that—it was the expression of the "nucleus" of the Aryan "race," and it united the art of the German people with that of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as with all other high points of European culture, in a timeless, inner, "essential" way. Therefore, it would be wrong, according to Hitler, to search for a new artistic style for the Third Reich that could be produced on the basis of specific rules: true art comes into being spontaneously if it stems from the innermost part of those individuals who have an Aryan

"genetic makeup" and hence possess the true weltanschauung.[12] Hitler thus demanded a radical rejection of all external, formal, stylistic criteria for the assessment of art. Art must lose its stylistic, aesthetic differentiability so that, in the end, just one differentiation exists: that between what is Aryan and what is non-Aryan. But this differentiation has no external criteria that can be neutrally defined. More exactly, it is the place of battle that admits no outside observer.

The official programmatic goal of Stalin-era socialist realism can hardly be differentiated in this respect from the goal of Hitler's speeches, though of course the race struggle is replaced by the class struggle. The classification of artworks according to historical, stylistic, and aesthetic criteria, as well as the characteristic positions of bourgeois, formalist critique, is rejected. The meaning of individual works of art, as well as their quality, depends much more on whether the artist identified internally with the upward-striving, progressive classes during the creation of the work or with the historically surviving reactionary classes. The high points of art history—again, ancient Greece and Rome and the Renaissance—are thus interpreted as expressions of the optimism of the historically progressive classes of their time. Because the progressive class of the twentieth century is the working class, socialist art must be the successor of this earlier progressive art, rather than separated from it by means of formal-aesthetic innovation, as the Russian avant-garde wanted. Socialist realism declared that the avant-garde falsely believed that the new proletarian art had to break with the past and take on a new formal-aesthetic look. In accordance with the famous "Leninist theory of two cultures within one culture," every cultural epoch is defined by the battle between two class cultures, one progressive and the other reactionary. But the ideology of artistic modernity homogenizes the culture of a specific historical time and in this way prevents the making of a decisive choice between the art of the progressive and reactionary classes.

In essence, the theoretical-ideological strategies of both totalitarianisms consisted in the deconstruction—if I may use that term—of the formally definable and aesthetically controllable borders that organized and structured the field of image production. This deconstruction was executed by pointing out a hidden, unconscious struggle that brought these borders into a state of confusion. Following the avant-garde discovery of the unconscious, attention was shifted from the aesthetic form itself to its unconscious effect. In this way the image-world of art was transformed into a battlefield for totalitarian power, which

alone could decide what was Aryan and what was not, or what was proletarian and what was not. One can easily recognize the old avant-garde "inner necessity" in the form of the unconscious, internal battle. To be sure, avant-garde artists still dealt with the traditional task of differentiating their art from earlier art on formal grounds—and thus they created new lines of separation. It was only through the utilization of new media images, images both unconsciously produced and traditionally mimetic, that even these last borderlines were put aside. Totalitarian art proved to be thoroughly modern, even if it rejected the term "modernity" as too stylistically narrow and formally defined.

The evolution of Soviet art in the 1920s and 1930s demonstrates most clearly the transition from the avant-garde to the new mimetic image via the fresh application of photography. This transition is especially noticeable in a group of leading representatives of the Russian avant-garde such as Alexander Rodchenko, El Lissitsky, and Gustav Klutsis. In the twenties, Rodchenko professed his belief in the truth of photography—because, unlike the printed image, photography operated beyond the realm of artistic will.[13] Rodchenko, however, like El Lissitsky and Klutsis, used individual photographs over and over again as elements of consciously designed photomontages whose geometric construction tried to symbolize the rational construction of the new world.

Even when Rodchenko was not making montages but only taking photographs, his individual photographic images demonstrate the subjugation of the human figure to the logic of geometric form. This subjugation is often celebrated as sport: his photographs glorify a geometrically ordered human mass that consists of well-trained bodies formed through the help of athletic technology, reminiscent of the films of Leni Riefenstahl, such as *Triumph of the Will.* But even unathletic individuals are linked into the geometric construction, as is evidenced by Rodchenko's presenting one of the first camps of the future gulags as entirely positive—a place for the disciplining of the human body, for people's enrollment in a geometric order that grants them the majesty that their bodies obviously lack.

Although the Soviet art of the thirties was increasingly dominated by painting, it is that very painting which shows, through qualities of its own, its dependence on the photomontage of an earlier time. Images of socialist realism from the Stalin era look like color photographs, and indeed, this "photographicity" is not concealed but rather publicly admitted and celebrated. Accordingly, Boris Ioganson, one of

the leading official artists of the Stalin era, claimed that the place of creativity in the art of socialist realism lay not in painting technique but in "management of the image" itself. It follows that the work of the "painting artist" was not differentiated from that of the photographer in any essential way.[14] The images of socialist realism function as virtual photographs—they had to be painted only because the technology for computer-manipulated photographs did not yet exist. This use of painting as virtual photography can be demonstrated clearly, for example, in Soviet paintings that show the masses parading before the (never built) Palace of Soviets.

The images of socialist realism display the same neutrality, impersonality, mediocrity, and lack of artistic expression found in the images of National Socialist art. In this way they differ from the images of surrealism or magical realism, both of which likewise used a quasi-photographic painting technique in order to create the effect of a virtual reality—a photograph of a dream. But the art of surrealism still complies with the traditional demand for artistic originality, whereas totalitarian art consciously strives for impersonality of expression. Completely aligned with the totalitarian aesthetic, this art avoids any stylistic or formal-aesthetic definability. At least in the context of Soviet art criticism of the 1930s, any stylistic identifiability was deemed a deficiency of the image, the regression of the artist into "formalism"—this critical reaction was always the same, no matter which style was in question. The art of the Stalin era wanted to appear indefinable, "informal," inconspicuous, in order to evade the accusation of formalism and to ensure that it did not end up in the archive of ideological control. In essence, the goal was not to stand out. The indefinability of aesthetic position is the most important prerequisite for successful ideological appropriation. Only after an image is completely immunized against the aesthetic judgment of the spectator does the image itself begin to judge the spectator; the viewer loses his outside perspective and autonomy, is transplanted into the image, and becomes part of it.

Designing Totality: Architecture as Unity and the Struggle of Opposites

The same strategy of aesthetic, art-historical anonymity was also practiced in Soviet architecture, which, unlike National Socialist architecture, had time to demonstrate its own developmental dynamics. The most conspicuous and amazing aspect of the architectural debates in

the official art press of the Stalin era is that they always assumed the form of total critiques that were essentially against all sides. Far from being laudatory or even approving, the official art criticism dealt with Soviet architects harshly and uncompromisingly. All of the individual positions and achievements of these architects, of any and every kind, were portrayed as inadequate, if not completely wrong or even harmful. At the same time, architects were systematically hindered from taking the detours that might have allowed them to evade the criticism. On reading this total criticism, even today's reader is overcome by a feeling of hopelessness and frustration. One cannot imagine how anything might have been built or created in such a situation.

An example of this sort of criticism is the famous instructive essay "Against Formalism, Schematism, Eclecticism," written in 1936 by Karo Alabian, who was an architect himself. Alabian's article lives up to its title: he criticizes not only constructivism, and indeed any formal innovation, but also the imitative adoption of the classical tradition, the eclectic use of various models (old and new), and the programmatic rejection of any specific architectural form.[15] Such wholesale criticism, in the context of which socialist realism was formed, was continually repeated in the publications of the thirties. Indeed, in the same year the magazine *Architecture of the USSR* issued an editorial statement criticizing "supermonumentalism," pure virtuosity in the mastery of traditional architectural forms, slavish imitation of Palladio and of Renaissance art in general, and lifeless "addiction to stylization." For the editorial board of the magazine, this criticism did not indicate a return to the formalism of the constructivist avant-garde but rather a call to arms against any and all formalism, including the classical tradition, itself understood along formalist lines.[16]

The architecture of the Stalin era is generally associated with an emphasis on decoration and facade. But the architectural critics of that era led an indefatigable battle against "facade-ism," that is, against the fascination with decoration in architecture, arguing instead for the functionality and "livability" of buildings that were to correspond to human scale and human needs. This did not mean, however, that buildings were to look constructivist and cold, purely functionalistic and inhuman. Indeed, the idea of serving the people that was demanded of every Soviet architect also implied emotional connection: the socialist building was to look monumental but at the same time seem intimate, human, cozy.[17]

A few analysts of Stalinist culture have concluded that the demands

critics made on architects were too paradoxical to be fulfilled. If they could be neither innovative nor traditional nor eclectic in building, they basically could build nothing at all.[18] Supposedly, these demands meant nothing less than the total subjugation of the architects to the tastes of the Party leadership. Both Alabian and the anonymous author of the aforementioned editorial piece from *Architecture of the USSR* praised the Moscow underground transit system as the only incontrovertible achievement of Soviet architecture; they explained this unique success as resulting from the underground's having been built under the personal direction of Lazar Kaganovich, a Party leader in close contact with Stalin. Even so, on a deeper level, Stalinist art criticism did not function as a simple justification of the then current political-aesthetic party line, although various tactically motivated attempts at justification always played an important role in it.

In analyzing individual ideological and critical strategies of the Stalin era, one must not forget that they were part of the all-embracing discourse of dialectical and historical materialism, the fundamental principles of which were doled out by the Party leadership. And the most important principle of dialectical materialism in its Leninist-Stalinist form—constituted and solidified in the mid-1930s—was, as I mentioned, "the law of unity and the battle of opposites." According to this law, two contradictory claims are valid at the same time: "A" and "Not A" are not mutually exclusive but rather are situated in a dynamic relationship. A logical contradiction, in its inner structure, dismantles the real conflict between the opposing historical forces that make up the core of life—this core is living *because* it is struggling. Therefore only those sentences that are internally contradictory are "living" and thus true. "Bourgeois" thought is criticized on the grounds that it wants to eliminate internal contradiction and attain a logical consistency that is one-sided, purely formal, and internally "dead." Indeed, the thought of the Stalin era valorizes contradictory statements over statements lacking contradiction. Whereas for "bourgeois" thought, any internal contradiction in a statement is assessed as a defect in that statement, in "socialist," Stalinist thought, the opposite is true: any lack of internal contradiction is indicative of the discourse's lack of liveliness, truthfulness, and force.

There was no more pejorative epithet in the Stalin era than "one-sidedness." Any and all more or less logical, consistent, and uncontradictory thought was considered one-sided. Dialectical materialism clearly inherited this valorization of the internal contradiction from

Hegelian dialectics. Indeed, just as in Hegelian dialectics, such internal contradictions could never be overcome historically or observed retrospectively. All contradictions were always present—they struggled against each other and always formed a unity. Anyone who insisted on a specific claim was bound to render himself guilty, because he lost sight of this crucial unity of opposites. The message of the unity of contradictory opposites forms the basic structure and the entire inner mystery of Stalinist totalitarianism.

This totalitarianism requires unification within itself of literally all oppositions. Stalinism discards nothing but rather takes on everything and finds for everything a fitting place. The only thing that is unbearable for Stalinist thought is an individual's insistence on the logical, consistent, uncontradictory nature of his own position, which excludes the opposing position. Stalinist ideology sees this as a refusal—one that could be dictated only by bad will—to commit oneself to life and to the collective. The basic strategy of this ideology functions in roughly the following way: if Stalinism has already unified within itself all oppositions, then what sense can there be in insisting on a single position? To do so could not be rational, because the corresponding, opposing position also is always already contained within the totality of Stalinist ideology. Therefore, the only basis for such defiance would be an irrational hatred of the Soviet power, a hatred personally directed against Stalin. There is no possibility of further discussion with such hate-filled individuals—unfortunately, they can only be displaced or eliminated.

This ideological basis was preserved, above all, in the public trials against opposition factions within the Party. No matter what these factions claimed, they were always told that their demands had already been met by the Party and personally by Stalin himself. One wonders why, under the circumstances, a faction nonetheless insisted on its one-sided position. The answer was clear from the beginning. The basic mistake of all opposition factions was in failing to recognize that the absolute totality that was the goal of Stalinism took away any chance of logical, noncontradictory description. Consequently, these factions resembled earlier religious heretics, who wanted, similarly, to grasp the Divine Absolute with the terms of human reason. By comparison, the orthodox position (at least in eastern Byzantium) always defined the divine through the paradoxical, the internally contradictory—that is, anything at all could be said about God, while at the same time God evaded everything that was said about him.

One striking difference between Stalinism and classical religions is that the latter attempted to characterize only God in self-contradictory terms. For Stalinist ideology, the entire Soviet Union was a totality, right down to every material subsection. Therefore, Soviet people spoke about the various aspects of everyday life the way they used to speak about God alone. They saw everywhere the unity of opposites and the attempts of troublemakers trying to destroy this unity. Above all, the concern for internally contradictory unity applied to art. There, the logical conclusions derived from internal contradiction were associated with stylistic, aesthetic consequences.

This short excursus into the teachings of dialectical materialism allows us to formulate the criterion that internally defined the artistic work of the Stalin era: the goal was to maximize the internal-aesthetic contradictions within an individual piece of art. This criterion also defined the strategies of art criticism of the time. Stalinist art critics reacted negatively every time they discovered a clearly definable, consistently represented, and nonambiguous aesthetic position within a work of art. They did not criticize the artistic position as such, because they were altogether in favor of the acquisition of the classical tradition, the respect of modern functionality, and the combining of the various "achievements of architecture." The Stalinist art commentators targeted *visible* artistic strategy and the emphasis of a specific problem with a specific solution. They reprimanded everything that was specifically and clearly defined, for the perfect building was to be absolute, total, and all inclusive. It was to look highly individual, disregarding nothing that had happened in the history of architecture. It was to be utterly modern, that is, of its time, yet it was to preserve continuity with classical antiquity. It was to serve the everyday needs of the people and at the same time generate a sense of celebration and the extraordinary.

A perfect building, however, was to be above all alive, powerful, and effective. That meant that the architect was not allowed to follow any specific aesthetic or formal principal in planning the design, for any such "abstract" principle was seen by definition as undialectical, one-sided, dead. The demand for stylistic purity, in fact, could originate only in a pluralistic, "bourgeois" society in which an architect gained recognition by doing something different from others.

In Stalinist architecture, unlike in bourgeois architecture, every architect attempted to build something total, absolute, undifferentiable, and indescribable. Every building is internally contradictory and

indefinable—while the whole looks unified, with its own unmistakable style. This strategy was correctly apprehended and enunciated by Party leaders from the very beginning. In this light it is especially interesting how Nikolai Bulganin, who was close to Stalin and Kaganovich, defined the term "architectural ensemble" in a 1937 speech at the First Congress of Soviet Architects. First, Bulganin dismissed any attempt to define "ensemble" formally or aesthetically. Then he argued against the suggestion that an "ensemble" be created by having a single architect build an entire district. That, he remarked, would lead only to monotony and not to the origination of a true ensemble. Last, Bulganin gave his own definition: "Given our current conditions, the ensemble means high-quality planning, the conscious, responsible relationship between architects and planning, high-quality selection and granting of projects, and equally high-quality construction."[19]

At first glance, this definition seems void of content and meaning—as do many other ideologically related formulations from the Stalin era. But its key term is "high quality," which means something fundamentally different from the word "quality." A work is "quality" when it is good in relationship to other works. A work is "high quality" when it embodies something superlative, incomparable, total, and absolute. Thus, any building that embodies the superlative constitutes an "ensemble." The ensemble does not result from stylistic homogeneity, which, according to Bulganin, would lead only to monotony. Rather, it should reveal the internal unity of "high quality." If every building is a constructed totality, then the ensemble of these buildings is the expression of the concept of totality itself. The entire city of Moscow, and later the entire Soviet territory, was supposed to be such an ensemble of constructions, every one of which was to manifest this wholeness. Thus the strategy of Stalin-era art criticism is clarified. It demanded from every architect that every single one of his buildings be "high quality," that is, that each building represent the totality. Each building was to be functional but not adherent to functionalism; inspired by classical antiquity but not adherent to classicism; highly individual but not individualistic; monumental but geared to human proportions; decorative yet simple; cognizant of all meaningful architectural developments from history yet not eclectic; and so on.

Such "high-quality" buildings could be called "our socialist" buildings, in that the socialism of the Stalin era was understood as the living unity of all the oppositions that had previously torn society apart. Only Stalin himself could "think" totality, and only Soviet socialism

itself, as a whole, could embody totality. Neither an individual building nor an ensemble of such buildings would ever be able to bring about much more than an approximation of the true unity of opposites. Therefore, even a harsh criticism of the work of an architect did not mean a final rejection of his project. The most important question for the criticism of the time was that of the architect's subjective attitude to the socialist whole—whether or not he worked, in Bulganin's words, "consciously and responsibly." Another way to phrase this would be to ask whether the architect strove for totality in his work, whether he was willing to relativize his own position and make himself a medium for the unity of opposites. Or did he, on the contrary, insist on his position "one-sidedly," oppose others, and fail to contribute to a reconciliation of contradictions, thus sharpening the contradiction, destroying the unity of socialism, and placing the whole right back in the condition of the bourgeois struggle—every person against every other person? The discussion of this question led to the judgment of each artist as either a loyal, even if misled, Soviet citizen who could be helped through criticism or a troublemaker, disguised or undisguised, who had to be rendered harmless.

The concern for totality and the unity of opposites, for the living paradox that opposes dead, logically functioning reason, has its roots not only deep within the Marxist dialectic but also in Byzantine Christianity. The synthesis between Hegelian German idealism and the tradition of Russian Orthodox Christianity of Byzantine origin has dominated all of Russian thought since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Urs von Balthasar wrote about the aesthetic teaching of the most important Russian philosopher of the prerevolutionary era, Vladimir Solov'ev:

> At the end stands not only the absorption of all things into an absolute spiritual subject, but also the resurrection of the dead. Therefore, for Solov'ev, eschatology practically collapses into aesthetics. . . . Solov'ev's art and technique for the integration of all partial truths make him, along with Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the greatest ordering/organization artist in the history of thought. There is no system that does not provide him with an important building block once he has robbed and emptied it of the poison of its negations. . . . Therefore it is less the power of distinguishing between the usable and the unusable in a system that makes integration possible—though this power is both eminently available and used—but more

> the art of assigning to guests places at table, in accordance with their rank. All are united in a vast totality that severely limits the possibility of independent ideological vision.[20]

This passage actually supplies the best possible description of architecture in the Stalin period, which conceived of itself as the eschatological art after the end of history—understood as the history of the class struggle—and which allowed all historical styles and aesthetic systems to rise from the dead, providing they had been emptied of their historically necessitated negations. Stalin was especially gifted as an artist of seating assignments. And Stalinist architecture, in just this way, wanted to direct every historically founded aesthetic style to its own place in the whole. Thus Stalinist architecture became a constructed ideology.

The constructions of the Stalin era are understandable only within their ideological context and only in light of their internal project. The architects of the time always built the same building—the building of Stalinist ideology, in which everything either must find its place or be destroyed—independent of its geographical position or external function. Because of this, Stalinist architecture is simultaneously monotonous and fascinating. It constantly offers the image of the same collective effort, the same social ecstasy, the same internal paradox—and the same failure of the individual. Two things form the inner tension of this architecture: the hope for the saving unity of opposites, in which the architect wishes to be contained, and the danger of standing out as different from this unity by fault of one's own. This inner tension manifests itself in obsessive repetitions, and it is through these repetitions that it is made visible even to the outside observer.

Situating Totality: Utopia as Underground

The Moscow metro played a central role in the total project of Stalinist architecture. Its central position was certainly not coincidental, for we are dealing here with the opposition of perhaps the greatest ideological importance—that of heaven versus hell. If classical utopianism, including avant-garde utopianism, wanted to construct a heaven on earth, then Stalinist culture constructed heaven underground, that is, in mythological terms, in hell.

The topos of the metro is definitely a u-topos, even if a demonic, subterranean one. Humans do not normally live underground: living space there first has to be developed, created. In this space there can be

nothing inherited, traditional, taken for granted, or unplanned. One is completely dependent on the will of those who create it. This gives the metro planner the opportunity to utterly redesign people's lives, provided they set foot in the metro. It is especially important that the entrances and exits—which link the subterranean space of the metro with normal human living space—be easy to monitor and control. At the same time, the normal denizen of the city cannot possibly imagine just how the tunnels of the metro course beneath the surface. The u-topos of the metro remains concealed forever; the path to utopia can be cut off at any time, the pedestrian passageways closed, the tunnels filled in. Although the metro belongs to the reality of the metropolis, it remains fantastic—it can only be imagined, and not really experienced.

Of course, citizens of the Western metropolis experience the underground not as a utopian space but as a mere technical convenience. The Moscow metro of the Stalin era functioned in a completely different way, and traces of this earlier utopian function are still there to be found. The Moscow metro of the Stalin era was not, first and foremost, an ordinary source of public transportation but rather the design for an actual city of the communist future. The effusive, palatial, artistic interior design of Stalin-era metro stations cannot be explained except by reference to their inherent function of communicating between the kingdom of heaven and the subterranean empire.

In building the metro, an object of prestige par excellence, no expense was spared. Only the best, costliest, and most impressive materials were to be used. The *metrostroevtsy*—the metro builders—were called the heroes of the new culture. Poems, novels, and plays were written about them. Films were made about them. Newspapers were filled with reports of the metro's progress. Delegates from the metro builders attended all important political events and received all sorts of decorations and medals. The metro became ever present in Stalinist culture—it was its most important metaphor. Its role in society was to lend an explicit form to the utopian project of establishing communism.

The conquering of hell simultaneously implies the conquering of the past. Not only the living but also the dead—who were banished beneath the earth by the logic of historical life—were to be admitted into the totality of Stalinist culture. In the same way, Christ visited not only earth but also hell, whose inhabitants he led to light. Thus the Moscow metro stations affirm the image of a never-existent, utopian, transformed, and saved past. They resemble the temples of Roman antiquity or are reminiscent of the noble palaces of old Russia from

the time of the Russian Empire or the Russian baroque. Or they are quotes from the priceless architecture of the Islamic East. The metro is replete with marble, gold, silver, and other expensive materials associated with the glorious past. In the midst of all this glory are innumerable frescoes, sculptures, mosaics, and panels of stained glass that lend an atmosphere of sacredness. To be sure, the heroes of antiquity or of Russian history are not the subjects of this artwork, but rather Stalin and his loyal followers, workers and farmers, and revolutionaries and soldiers from the Soviet era. The past is thus occupied by the utopian present. In the building of the Moscow metro, all traditional artistic styles were severed from their historical ties and used in a new way. In the process, the past lost its differentiability from the present and the future. Even in the depths of antiquity all one could see was Stalin, Soviet flags, and a people who looked optimistically toward the future.

The relationship of metro visitors to this architecture is even more unusual and complex. The temple serves the purpose of silent contemplation. The palace likewise invites languorous amusement; one sits in the inner parlors, reflecting upon them attentively, and engages in a long, intellectually rich conversation with the master of the house. Nothing of the sort happens in the metro. It is almost always full of people incessantly hurrying off in all directions. One hardly has the time, desire, or opportunity to observe the glory of the metro's architecture. The individual is pushed onward by the crowd, which would be impeded by his pursuit of leisurely amusement. Most of the travelers are tired, embittered, rushed. They want only to get in and out quickly. The trains arrive rapidly and often. Because the metro lies fairly deep beneath the surface, people spend a long time standing on the escalators, without the possibility of looking around.

This incessantly in-transit mass seems not to need the glory that is offered it in the metro. Riders cannot and do not want to enjoy the art, value the precious materials, or decode the ideological symbolism in a way that would do it justice. Mute, blind, and indifferent, they hurry past the countless artistic treasures. The metro is not a paradise of silent contemplation but a subterranean hell of incessant movement. In this way, it is heir to the utopia of the Russian avant-garde, which was likewise a utopia of incessant movement. In the Moscow metro, the dream of those such as Malevich, Khlebnikov, and the De-Urbanists survives—the dream of a utopian individual who is moving continually and has no specific place or topos on earth. Only now did this dream find a suitable place to be realized: under the ground.

The dialectical-materialist utopia of Russian communism was never a classical, contemplative utopia like those of earlier eras. The dialectical individual was supposed to be in constant movement, to constantly overcome himself, bring himself further, raise himself higher—both ideally and materially. Therefore the subterranean utopian city of communism was also a place of constant movement, of constant entering and exiting. The images of the Moscow metro were not to be contemplated, understood, or admired. Rather, the images themselves observe the passengers, the masses in transit. Stalin and others, the depicted administrators of this utopian hell, continually observe and judge the behavior of the people rushing past them. And people in the metro continually sense the observant and judgmental glance that follows them. Today all the gods have fallen, but not long ago one could notice how differently Muscovites behaved when they set foot on the holy ground of the metro. Suddenly all conversations were hushed, no one spat on the ground, no one dropped garbage—one behaved "culturedly," as it was called back then. For one was being observed! One was in utopia and could find no spot in which to possibly behave "naturally" and not "culturedly."

The metro had yet another dimension that was directly linked to the utopia of the avant-garde: it was illuminated with artificial, not natural, light. The battle against the sun and moon in favor of artificial, electric light is perhaps the oldest theme of Russian futurism. Not coincidentally, a programmatic work of the Russian avant-garde, the 1912 mystery-opera by A. Kruchenykh, K. Malevich, and M. Matiushin, is called *Victory over the Sun*. The futurists understood the abolition of the sun as the final conquest of the old order. The light of reason—be it divine or human, natural light—was to be extinguished, because it was a light that had given shape to the topology of our world. In contrast, a new, artificial, utopian light was to appear that would create a completely new world. Resonances with this large theme are found in Lenin's famous formulation, "communism equals Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire country." To electrify the country meant "to conquer the sun" and create a new utopian space, beyond the cycle of night and day. The electrified night is the only true daytime of utopia. The Moscow metro is the consistent embodiment of the eternal, electrified Moscow night, in which all the times and time zones of life on earth and under the sun—past, present, and future—are united in an artificial eternity.

Conclusion

The limits of totalitarian space—for instance, the borders of the Soviet state—were so bitterly guarded and defended in their time because the aesthetic borders that divided this space from others were extremely indistinct. Everything characteristically Soviet consisted of specific, content-driven, ideological (and thus invisible) operations with signs, words, and images. These operations were not restricted to the formal-aesthetic dimension. Such a restriction would have required a neutral observer capable of differentiating between the Soviet and un-Soviet based on formal-aesthetic criteria. The total claim of Soviet ideology, however, did not allow for such an outside observer. The Soviet individual stood in the middle of a conflict over the meaning, application, and interpretation of culture that could not be decided on the basis of neutral, objective criteria. In totalitarian systems, artists are undercover agents who carry out an invisible ideological struggle for which the superficial aesthetic of their works serves only as camouflage. And this camouflage is good only when it is not especially conspicuous.

And so we return to the point made at the outset. To a certain degree, the entire strategy of modern art has its origin and teleology in the desire to escape aesthetic judgment, to bar the neutral observer, to overwhelm his competence to judge. With this goal, the artists of the avant-garde continually produced something new, in order to escape the criteria of traditional aesthetics—that is, they exhibited objects and images for which there were no criteria for judgment in the repertoire of existing art theories. It quickly became obvious that this very differentiation between old and new at best served the construction of a neutral system of differentiation and ordering that in turn served objective art-historical description. In order to escape this neutral judgment, the synchronization of all historical periods had to be completed, in place of a controllable, chronological sequence of artistic styles and periods. This synchronization thematized a single event that manifested itself in the various periods. An event such as the battle between two fundamentally opposing attitudes could no longer be comprehended through art-historical periodization and description. The totalitarian aesthetic aimed primarily at escaping art-historical description—and it succeeded in this aim to a large extent. Therefore it is difficult today, if not impossible, to describe the aesthetic space of totalitarian ideology, in that after the collapse of the totalitarian regime we have again at our disposal only the long-trusted art-historical conceptual framework for such a description.

NOTES

1. See Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin* (Munich: C. Hanser, 1988); translated into English by Charles Rougle as *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

2. See John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

3. Clement Greenberg refers to totalitarian art in the area of mass kitsch in his famous essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), in Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1: 5–22. More importantly, it deals with the attempt of totalitarian art to overcome the opposition.

4. W. Kandinsky, *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst* (1910; reprint, Bern: Benteli Verlag, 1952).

5. At the end of the book, Kandinsky speaks about the power of art that raises the artist to king and imposes on him the corresponding moral duty to raise the people to greater levels; the main topic is the moral responsibility of the artist in relationship to himself (ibid., 133–36).

6. See Rosalind Krauss, "The Photgraphic Conditions of Surrealism," in Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 87–118.

7. Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Nordische Schoenheit: Ihr Wunschbild im Leben und in der Kunst* (Berlin: J. F. Lehmann, 1937).

8. Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Kunst und Rasse* (Munich: J. F. Lehmann, 1935).

9. M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. Helène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

10. Hitler's speech at the opening of the "Grossen Deutschen Kunstausstellung" of 1937 in Munich, in *Nationalsozialismus und "entartete Kunst"* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), 242–52.

11. Ibid., 244.

12. Adolf Hitler, "Die deutsche Kunst als stolzeste Verteidung des deutschen Volkes: Rede vom 1 September 1933 auf der Kulturtagung des Parteitags," in *Reden des Führers: Politik und Progaganda Adolf Hitlers 1922–1945,* ed. Erhard Kloess (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1967), 113–15.

13. Alexander Rodchenko, "Gegen das synthetische Porträt—für die Momentaufnahme" (1928), in *Die Zukunft ist unser einziges Ziel . . . Rodtchenko. Stepanowa* (catalog of an exhibit of MAK), ed. Peter Noever (Vienna, Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1991), 232–37.

14. Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin,* 60–62.

15. K. S. Alabian, "Protiv formalizma, uproshchenchestva, eklektiki," *Architektura SSSR* 4 (1936): 1–5.

16. "Bor'ba za masterstvo," *Arkhitektura SSSR* 5 (1936): 1–4.

17. "Stalinskaia zabota o cheloveke," *Arkhitektura SSSR* 10 (1937): 10–12.

18. See Vladimir Paperny, *Kul'tura dva* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1985), 28–29.

19. N. A. Bulganin, "Rekonstruktsiia gorodov, zhilishhnoe stroitel'stvo i zadachi arkhitektury," *Arkhitektura SSSR* 7–8 (1937): 18.

20. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik* (Einsiedelen: Johannes Verlag, 1962), 2: 651–52.