

AFTER the end of the war will come many investigations of the culpability of artists in this tragic world conflict. At this moment, still in mid-action, it is difficult to judge individual cases of collaboration, to distinguish the degree of pressure exerted, to know how voluntary or involuntary any specific act was. But the question of what place the artist occupies in our social and political life is broader and more accessible. This concerns his convictions, or at least political opinions, and also the political situation in general. The artist is like everyone else, like every other citizen. He does not require privileges because he is an artist; and indeed he hasn't any. Like others, he draws his conclusions from what he sees, and according to how well he is informed. He often sees in a more exact way, and I believe what he has seen has not in general increased his enthusiasm for politics in the course of the few years between the two world wars.

In most cases the artist is not directly active; he does not practice politics. Politics is not his prime concern, and in this respect he is also like the majority of people for whom political questions assume importance only during the short periods of elections. But on the other hand, artists cannot remain aloof from politics, and if I may speak for those in Europe whom I know, they did not do so. But the majority of them were not believers in the type of political action prevalent during the period when politics was regarded more or less as a social and diplomatic game without danger and without consequences.

Politics, like all other human manifestations, is a part of the spiritual material of the artist. I think he interests himself much more in politics than the politician interests himself in art. But if the artist does not find in politics the moral and ethical contact necessary to him, the situation evidently becomes confused. Certainly if the events of this time have been impressive, politics have not. Since each artist has in himself a feeling of order, we can understand his difficulty in becoming accustomed to things disorderly, chaotic, and without moral value, which depend not on organic necessities, but on purely private, personal interest.

There are certain people who make politics, and there are others who only look on, who do not, and perhaps never will, understand what is really going on. Among these latter we also find artists. As everyone takes the responsibility for his profession, the politician must feel and take the responsibility for his. For this reason I do not see why artists

should be relegated to the position of second class citizens, or regarded as irresponsible because of their unusual profession. By the same token, why should they be held directly responsible as leaders in a field where they have no power?

The artist tries to understand – to grasp the fundamentals of everything which is finally in the domain of everybody. However, the artist has the ability to express himself in his work. He attempts to affirm his faith in the dignity of man. It is his idea and his program, and if I am not mistaken, that is indeed true politics. The artist is one who has confidence and who holds high the flame of hope.

In general the artist's political outlook inclines more or less toward humanism; he sees the human qualities of which he is proud, and on which he has based his creative effort. He sees the faults which he would like to correct, to soften, and to point out, without in so doing becoming a moralist or a politician. He does what he does by means of his work in which he expresses his dreams and his desires.

It is at moments when his values are at variance with the systems of the world that the artist becomes restless and unhappy. It is at these moments that he requires freedom for his vision, and it is then that he feels his responsibility. But otherwise he does not create either for propaganda or for nationalistic face-saving.

When Picasso created his picture *Guernica*, he expressed a much greater political comprehension than the majority of professional politicians. The artist needs more than a "political cliché." The conditions of his profession require "not theorizing but action – not abstract sophistication of planning, but planning itself." (I quote a phrase from a purely political article by Mr. J. F. Normand in *The New York Times* October 3, 1944.) Still less can he rely on political extremes like Nazism, a religion of hate. No artist can find spiritual background for creation in the racial fanaticisms of religions of hatred. They are the absolute antithesis of a humane basis for creation. No more can he rely on the cleverness or on the political gambling of others. His sense of individual responsibility and solidarity with others does not permit him to do so. In his profession, cleverness has no place. He does not forget that (if I may quote Mr. Bridges Adams), "It is wonderful if the whole of Piccadilly can be illuminated by turning a single switch in one direction; the corollary of that is that the whole of Piccadilly can be plunged in darkness by turning it in the other."