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SCIENCE AND NAZISM

The unconfessed collaboration of scientists with National Socialism

Monograph coordinated by Martí Domínguez

Nazism is all too often trivialised as a movement led by a handful of unstable enlightened people. Films and television series (as well as comic books and video games) where National Socialism has been shown as a gathering of disturbed people on the verge of nonsensical histrionism have notoriously contributed to this perception. But in recent years, historiographic revisionism has shown that the German (and Austrian) academic world was involved, and has evidenced that the apparent arbitrariness with which their actions were conducted was actually based on major philosophical and scientific foundations. Concepts such as *Lebensraum* (“living space”), *Weltanschauung* (“cosmovision”), *Entartung* (“degeneration”), or *Heimat* (“identity”) were extensively explored by the German academy, with the aim of creating a solid and apparently scientific theoretical corpus to legitimise Nazi politics.

This monograph seeks precisely to show the level of involvement of the German academic world with Nazi postulates. Reading the articles, we can deduce that renowned scientists participated in the policies of the Third Reich, fully integrated within Nazi ideology, which resulted in the death and forced displacement of millions of people. This active and often even enthusiastic participation should motivate a deeper reflection on how educated minds of exceptional scientific value were abducted by the Nazi postulates, warning us against the resurgence of totalitarian and far-right movements in the world and thus redoubling our efforts to combat them from the very first moment.

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All the artworks that illustrate this monograph have something in common: they were once catalogued by the National Socialist regime as «degenerate art». Kandinsky, Kokoschka, Emil Nolde, Paul Klee, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner... They and many others saw their works censored in Nazi Germany, where currents such as Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, or Bauhaus were considered attacks on German cultural identity. The other end of the spectrum was art considered «correct», of classical inspiration and responding to the Nazi ideals and an alleged German spirit. The Nazi regime catalogued all aspects of society as they did art, between «German» and «non-German» (or even «anti-German»), and the scientific and academic world, as shown in these pages, suffered the same fate.

On the left, Oskar Kokoschka. *Sturm Plakat*, 1911. Tempera on canvas, 70×102 cm.