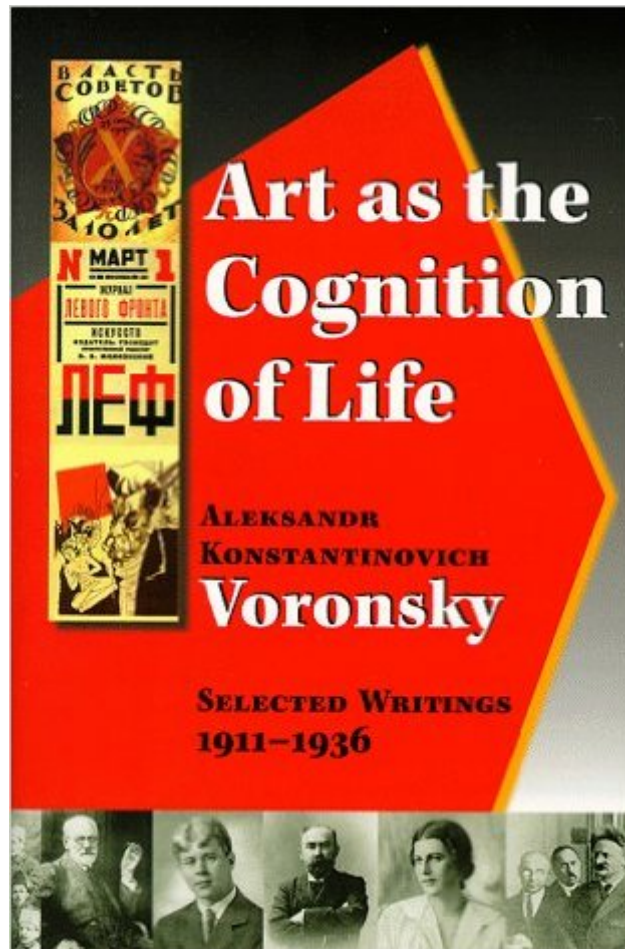


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Art As The Cognition Of Life: Selected Writings 1911-1936



Synopsis

First English translation of 26 articles by the major Bolshevik literary critic and member of the Left Opposition. Includes *Art as the Cognition of Life*, and the contemporary *World* as well as writings on Tolstoy Gorky, Pilniak, Esenin, Esenin, Larisa Reisner and Freud, newspaper articles, a satire, two letters addressed to his Stalinist persecutors, and an appendix of six documents crucial to an understanding of the events of the 1920s. Glossary, biographical notes, name, subject and works indexes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Review in "Artscene" December/January 1998/9 *Art as the cognition of life* (Mehring Books [£19.99](#)) is a large selection of critical writings by A.K. Voronsky. It is impeccably translated and superbly presented. Voronsky was a Bolshevik critic and editor whose life and work was expunged by the Stalinist regime. Predictably, then, he is in the Engels camp of Marxist criticism ("The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art") and not the Leninist camp ("Literature must become Party literature!"). Voronsky is not a radical critic, but openly develops his key notions from the work of the 19th century writer V.G. Belinsky, and the title-piece of this book is in some ways the least relevant of the collected essays. More intriguing are those which dwell on the circumstances and the figures of the time; some well known to the West (Maxim Gorky or H.G. Wells), other much less so (the poet Sergei Esenin or Voronsky's friend Mikhail Frunze). This is a significant historical document, a window onto a smudged world and into a giddy time that wants for levelheaded commentary. Voronsky is an authoritative voice rather than a great critic; but you have

to remind yourself of the constant barrage or personal attack he was under and marvel at the near complete absence of self-justification and cheap vitriol in his writings. Reviewing the "disgraced" political activist and thinker G.V. Plekanov he bemoans: "The revolution is ruthless. Like Saturn it devours its children, without slowing its furious pace for even a second". 17 years later this "furious pace" saw Voronsky shot and buried in an unmarked grave near Moscow. Sheffield's Mehring Books deserve huge credit for publishing Art as the Cognition of Life, but who can pretend there is a ready market for it? There are many kinds of censorship but the "free economy" is, in telling ways, the most efficient of them.

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